

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 45 (2018)
Heft: 3

Rubrik: News

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Tim Guldmann



“The international councillor” was the slogan Tim Guldmann used to promote his National Council campaign in 2015. The 68-year-old Social Democrat, who lives in Berlin, was elected to the Swiss parliament on the list of the SP in Zurich. As the first genuine foreign-resident member of parliament, this was a real coup. A total of 56 Swiss Abroad tried and failed to get elected that year. The chances of being elected are slim because most candidates are almost unknown. This was not the case for Tim Guldmann, who is an eminent Swiss diplomat.

However, Guldmann stepped down at the end of the spring session in the middle of his first term in office. Since he was living abroad, he had been unable to spend enough time in his constituency, he said. It wasn't easy living in one place and being a politician in another because you needed personal contact to gauge the mood of the people you were representing politically. After all, “The metro in Berlin is not the same thing as the tram in Zurich”. Guldmann also pointed to family reasons: his wife is extremely busy professionally because she is the deputy head of Spiegel magazine's Berlin office. His two school-age daughters therefore need their father to be there and relocation to Switzerland would be out of the question.

In parliament, Tim Guldmann was mainly involved in European policy. He has an outstanding network of contacts and was Switzerland's ambassador to Germany until his retirement in 2015. He previously made a name for himself as the Swiss ambassador in Tehran and in the 1990s as a crisis diplomat in Chechnya, where he negotiated the ceasefire as head of the OSCE mission. His political career has now come to a somewhat less illustrious end than his diplomatic one.

JÜRG MÜLLER

Swiss cities in global ranking

A new study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers reveals how competitive the major Swiss cities are compared with those in other countries. This is the first time that Swiss cities have been included in the consultancy firm's annual ranking. Zurich occupies 5th place out of 34 cities behind London, Paris, Toronto and Singapore. Basel lies in 13th place, Geneva in 17th and Berne in 20th. Criteria such as the economy, adaptability and quality of life were evaluated. The Swiss cities performed particularly well in terms of quality of life. Berne actually topped the ranking in the health and safety categories.

Novartis to divest over-the-counter medicine business

The Basel-based pharmaceutical group Novartis transferred its over-the-counter medicine business to a joint venture with the UK company GSK three years ago as part of an exchange of several lines of business. Novartis satisfied itself with a 36.5 % holding in over-the-counter medicine operations. The company is now completely divesting this line of business. GSK will pay 13 billion US dollars for the remaining stake.

CHF 80 million for the ICRC

Switzerland is supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) again this year. The Federal Council has pledged 80 million Swiss francs with retroactive effect to the headquarters in Geneva for 2018, which is exactly the same amount as last year. In addition to the contribution to headquarters, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is providing 60.9 million francs to fund specific humanitarian operations carried out by the ICRC. Some 62.5 million francs was made available for this purpose last year. Switzerland was the fifth-largest contributor to the ICRC's total budget in 2017.

New systems for air defence

The Department of Defence plans to reorganise air defence. The Swiss army is to be equipped with ground-to-air missiles with greater range. They must now be able to travel a distance of 50 kilometres and fly at a height of up to 12 kilometres. In addition to range, the missiles must also be able to cover at least 15,000 km². New requirements have also been placed on the fleet of aircraft that will replace the Tiger and F/A-18 from 2025. Four fighter jets must be able to protect Swiss air space continuously for a four-week period in future. The air force must also be capable of carrying out aerial reconnaissance and combating ground targets in the event of an attack.