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Dimitri Rougy



Young activist sparks small revolution: that is the canned version of 21-year-old Dimitri Rougy's life story. Since March 2018, the independent campaigner and student of cultural studies, who was previously little known on the national scene, has risen to become a Swiss political star. Almost singlehandedly, he organised the referendum against social detectives that will be put to the vote on 25 November 2018 (see page 12). Here is how it came about: multi-prize-winning author Sibylle Berg ranted on Twitter about the social detective law passed by parliament in March 2018. Rougy chimed in. He contacted parties and organisations but with no success – none of them wanted anything to do with a referendum. Then we will just have to go it alone, Rougy and Berg told themselves.

Rougy orchestrated it all online. Within three months 50,000 signatures had to be collected. The two-person democratic guerrilla shock troop searched for donations and signature collectors via an online collection platform. Soon there were 11,000 online supporters. In July 2018, 55,861 signatures were submitted. For the first time, a referendum petition that had its origin in social media had become a success. Political analysts speak of a possible sea change if it is no longer only the big parties and organisations who can call for a referendum, but thanks to digital democracy, also small, spontaneous citizens' movements.

Dimitri Rougy's political engagement is nothing new. With a colleague he founded the Berner Oberland Youth Parliament and sits for the Social Democratic Party (SP) on the Interlaken Municipal Council. Always on the go, he organised, among other things, the demonstration against Donald Trump at the World Economic Forum 2018 in Davos. And following the November 2015 Paris attacks, he virtually singlehandedly organised the illumination of the parliament building in Bern in the colours of the French tricolour. Now he is giving Swiss domestic politics a few striking splashes of colour. JÜRIG MÜLLER

Switzerland – world champ in innovation

Switzerland is the most innovative country in the world – for the eighth time in a row. That's according to the annual ranking published by the World Intellectual Property Organization. What determined the top ranking was, in part, Switzerland's high investment in research and development as well as its technological excellence. Switzerland did well primarily in the area of patents and intellectual property. Following right behind Switzerland in the ranks are the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain and Singapore. (JM)

More modern, colourful and balanced

All those who voted on 23 September noticed it: the Federal Council has changed the way it informs the public about proposals submitted to the vote of the people. The voting booklet it issues has a new, more colourful layout and the content has been changed. A new element is the column for readers in a hurry who want to be informed at a glance. Initiative and referendum committees are now given the same amount of space as the Federal Council to present their arguments: the information is thus more politically balanced. By making these changes, the Federal Council is taking new reading habits into account and attempting to improve the knowledge of voters. (MUL)

Tiger mosquito invades Switzerland

The tiger mosquito was originally a native of the tropical areas of South and Southeast Asia. In the meantime, however, the mosquito has spread worldwide – including to Switzerland – through the transport of goods and tourist travel. More than 20 years ago it established itself in Ticino. Now it can also be found north of the Alps. Most recently it was sighted in the Basel area. The tiger mosquito is feared because it can transmit the Zika virus or dengue fever, among others. Since these diseases are rare in Switzerland, though, the risk of infection is low. (JM)

Switzerland sweats

For Switzerland, this summer which is drawing to an end has been one of the most problematic on meteorological record. In many places temperatures rose above records set in 2003. Lack of precipitation aggravated the situation. Meteorologists spoke of it being the summer with the lowest amount of precipitation in 100 years, which brought with it a high risk of wildfire. The consequences for Swiss agriculture cannot yet be assessed. Water temperatures rose in many places to a life-threatening level for native fish. In view of the high temperatures, river water-cooled nuclear power plants had to scale down their operations. (MUL)