

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 46 (2019)
Heft: 4

Rubrik: Top pick : Sven Epiney

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Download PDF: 02.05.2026

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Sven Epiney



On a Saturday evening in March, the final of the dance show “Darf ich bitten” is showing on Swiss German-speaking television. Excitement levels remain within reasonable limits. Then the live programme takes a surprising turn. The well-known TV and radio presenter, Sven Epiney, who is a contestant in the show, goes down on one knee and proposes to his dance/life partner. Michael says yes, they hug and then cry tears of joy. Someone brings them a bunch of red roses. “What an exciting moment,” cheer the media, “Epiney writes television and gender equality history!” Something like this was not really to be expected. The ever-pleasant 47-year-old from Valais, who presents quiz and lifestyle programmes, had never really stood out before. Declarations of love during a live broadcast can be viewed as touching or disconcerting, but one thing is clear: the private sphere moved into the political realm in this instance. Soon the Swiss Parliament will debate whether same-sex couples may marry. Nowadays they are able to register their partnership. It is a type of civil marriage, but not with the same rights and obligations as the traditional form. The legal change may find a majority, but that does not suit everyone. After Epiney’s appearance, the comment columns were flooded with shocking homophobic comments. Complaints were made to Swiss television. It was alleged that the TV star had used a fee-based programme for his own purposes. And also that it is “unnatural” when two men kiss each other. The television ombudsman firmly rejected all complaints. Meanwhile, the boulevard press has reported that the newly engaged couple are enjoying some quality time together. It remains to be seen when Epiney’s publicly initiated wedding will take place, or rather may take place.

SUSANNE WENGER

Insurance for the older unemployed is in the pipeline

The Federal Council is planning a new bridging pension for the older unemployed. Anyone who loses their job at 58 should no longer automatically have to live off welfare benefits. At present, bridging benefits are only an option for those who find themselves unemployed after their 60th birthday. This planned social welfare expansion is also intended as a response by the Federal Council to the freedom of movement of persons with the European Union. This is causing increased competition in certain industries on the Swiss employment market. (MUL)

Donald Trump and Ueli Maurer in discussion

In the middle of May, an American president officially received a President of the Swiss Confederation in the White House for the first time. The discussion between Donald Trump and Federal President Ueli Maurer (SVP) included topics such as Switzerland’s role during political crises. It represents the diplomatic interests of the USA in different countries, such as in Iran, where the USA does not have an embassy. In the future, Switzerland is to take on the same role in Venezuela. The Swiss in turn hope that the dialogue with Trump has a positive impact on the trade discussions between Switzerland and the USA. (MUL)

The heavens are full of fighter jets

In the last few months, an above-average number of fighter jets have crossed Swiss airspace. There is an explanation: the Swiss army is planning to purchase new jets, so it has been conducting more in-depth tests of five different models, namely the Eurofighter (Airbus, Germany), the F/A-18 Super Hornet (Boeing, USA), the Rafale (Dassault, France), the F-35A (Lockheed-Martin, USA) and the Gripen E (Saab, Sweden). The focus of the testing included the operational capability of the jets in Switzerland’s topographically small-scale, mountainous territory. (MUL)

A football club in disarray faces relegation

It is a watershed for the Swiss football world: the Grasshopper Club Zurich (GC), founded in 1886, has been relegated from the top league, the Super League. The 27-time Swiss champions hopelessly crashed out of the top division in the 2018/2019 season, but they did not go quietly. Rowdy GC fans caused games to be abandoned and forfeited, and further damaged the image of the former flagship of Swiss football. Bern’s Young Boys finished the season as record winners at the top of the table. Never before has a team clinched the title so early. (MUL)