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The big election survey

“Swiss Review” asked the country’s seven most popular political parties to give clear and concise answers to some fundamental questions. We have printed their answers here as a guide to all those who wish to vote in the federal elections on 20 October.



Conservative Democratic Party (BDP)

centrist party founded in 2008 as a splinter group from the SVP. 2015 election: 4.1 %. Current political weight: 7 seats in National Council, 1 seat in Council of States. www.bdp.info



Christian Democrat People's Party (CVP)

centrist party with conservative/Catholic roots. 2015 election: 11.6 %. Current political weight: 26 seats in National Council, 14 seats in Council of States, 1 seat in Federal Council. www.cvp.ch



Formerly Free Democratic Party (FDP)

merged with the Liberal Party (2009) to establish FDP. The Liberals. 2015 election: 16.4 %. Current political weight: 33 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.fdp.ch



Green Liberal Party (GLP)

centrist party founded in 2007 as a splinter group of the right wing of the Greens. 2015 election: 4.6 %. Current political weight: 8 seats in National Council. www.grunliberale.ch



Green Party (GPS)

Left-wing party whose roots go back to the anti-nuclear movement as well as civil society groups. 2015 election: 7.1 %. Current political weight: 11 seats in National Council, 1 seat in Council of States. www.gruene.ch



Swiss People's Party (SVP)

right-wing national-conservative party; strongest party since 2003. 2015 election: 29.4%. Current political weight: 64 seats in National Council, 5 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.svp.ch



Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP)

only left-wing party in government; roots go back to labour movement. 2015 election: 18.8 %. Current political weight: 42 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.sp-ps.ch

Demographic change is affecting social welfare funding. Should the current Swiss retirement age (64 for women, 65 for men) be increased?

YES

Not only must the retirement age increase, it must also be tied to life expectancy. That is the only way to ensure future generations will also be able to receive a pension.

YES

A gradual alignment of the retirement age is the key to sustainable welfare funding, but women should not be left to shoulder the costs. Any payment gaps during maternity leave will need to be offset.

YES

Firstly, men and women need to have the same retirement age of 65. In view of demographic change, genuine measures need to be discussed over the long term.

YES

Demographic change gives us no choice but to increase the retirement age and take a more flexible approach to retirement.

NO

Women face a considerable pension deficit due to lower wages and unpaid care leave. Unless we offset this deficit, increasing the retirement age is unfair.

YES

A retirement age of 65 for men and women is essential to cover the cost of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI).

NO

The situation for older workers on the job market is alarming, with long-term unemployment and the proportion of welfare recipients both increasing. Age discrimination is a real problem..

Swiss healthcare costs and health insurance premiums continue to rise each year. What are the three most important ways to counter this trend?

➤ Strengthen patient autonomy, either through integrated forms of healthcare or through a deliberate increase in the excess and the co-insurance amount.

➤ Take action to cut healthcare costs – the CVP is petitioning for a referendum on this matter to prevent premium increases from outstripping wage growth. Prevention

➤ There is no single panacea. Instead, all stakeholders must work together to address the problem. A whole body of measures is necessary. For example, patients want to

➤ The GLP wants a healthcare system that provides coverage to the entire population while encouraging personal responsibility and prevention.

➤ Our priority is to strengthen primary care while improving prevention and coordination, e.g. through public health insurance.
➤ We must focus more on

➤ We all need to take greater responsibility ourselves. For example, outpatient visits to GPs or hospitals should incur a symbolic excess fee for every new case,

➤ Manage outpatient admissions more effectively – the cantons need to be able to determine which new GP practices are to be opened according to demand.

- Facilitate uniform funding of inpatient and outpatient care. Premium payers are being charged too much under the current system.
- Embrace digitalisation by making greater use of leading-edge communication. It is high time to introduce electronic patient records.
- of unnecessary treatment will allow the healthcare sector to cut costs but maintain the same standard of care.
- Avoid expensive and potentially harmful overtreatment of medical cases. It is high time to change the healthcare sector's excessive and outdated tariffs.
- Promote outpatient care and reduce hospital capacities.
- see a correlation between quality and cost.
- Put an end to expensive false incentives such as the "arms race" among cantonal hospitals.
- Patients, too, need to be more aware of the cost of their own healthcare. Innovations such as voluntary health savings accounts offering Pillar-3-style tax exemptions could be the way forward.
- We need freedom of choice and competition – not false incentives. A standardised approach to funding inpatient and outpatient care is one of the things that would help in this regard. Volume-based wage incentives for hospital doctors ought to be abolished.
- We must strengthen and promote awareness of patient rights.
- promoting and funding projects that offer an intelligent combination of advice, prevention, treatment and care.
- As long as the socially unacceptable principle of per capita premiums continues to apply, corrective measures are needed. The Greens are in favour of socially responsible premium reductions and oppose cost-cutting.
- payable in cash. This amount should be twice as much at hospitals as at independent GP practices.
- We need to stop expanding the range of mandatory benefits in Swiss primary care in an ill-thought-out fashion (e.g. fertility preservation for cancer patients).
- Reduce the price of medicine by introducing a benchmark pricing system and by improving transparency in relation to pharmaceutical research costs and ex-factory pricing.
- Introduce pricing models that promote cooperation among service providers and enhance coordinated care (overhaul of the TARMED tariff system).

Well-integrated foreign nationals barely have any say in how Switzerland is run. This, in turn, has led to criticism of the voting rights enjoyed by Swiss Abroad who have never lived in their home country. Should foreigners who have lived in Switzerland for at least ten years be allowed to vote?

NO	NO	Neither YES nor NO	YES	YES	NO	YES
Having the right to vote is a key privilege of being Swiss.	The right to vote should continue to be limited to Swiss citizens. Only then can we ensure effective social and political integration.	Cantons and municipalities should be free to decide themselves.	Well-integrated foreign nationals should at least be able to vote at cantonal and municipal level.	It should be a given that anyone who lives here is able to vote. We have launched corresponding initiatives in a number of cantons.	Swiss citizens have both rights and obligations. Hence, people should only have the right to vote if they become Swiss citizens.	The fact that a quarter of Switzerland's resident population have no political rights is a scandalous stain on our democracy.

A popular initiative submitted this summer aims to put a limit on arms exports. Should there be a ban on arms exports to countries that are at war or affected by civil war?

YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES
The BDP helped launch the initiative. The Federal Council should no longer be left to rule on this. The arms industry will also benefit in the long term if we achieve dialogue and a broad consensus.	We support the Swiss arms industry. Our current provisions are adequate and significantly limit the extent to which arms can be exported to countries that are at war or affected by civil war.	A blanket ban would be a step too far.	The GLP is a member of the initiative committee.	The Green Party wants a total ban on all arms exports. Switzerland should actively promote peace by taking advantage of its special role as a neutral country with a humanitarian tradition.	Our national security depends on the arms industry and its ability to export. Our arms exporters are already subject to stringent regulations.	Switzerland has better things to offer to war-torn regions than weapons. Its own security is also dependant on being able to resolve conflict through negotiation.

Air traffic is having an extremely negative impact on the world's climate. Should Switzerland introduce a CO₂ tax on airline tickets?

YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
We need to protect our climate. We should not let major carbon emitters off the hook.	Air travel is too cheap at present. The airline industry must also work to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.	However, any tax will need to be economically viable, with most of its proceeds redistributed to the Swiss population, and the rest going towards a climate fund to finance a range of innovations.	We submitted a motion on this to the National Council quite some time ago.	The airline industry must also do its bit to combat climate change. All of the countries neighbouring Switzerland already have this tax in place.	An individual tax in Switzerland is of no benefit to our climate. Aero-planes will continue to take off regardless. Do we want the wealthy to be the only ones who can afford to travel in future?	Any green tax on plane tickets should vary depending on the distance and the cabin class flown. The Swiss population should be refunded the cost of this levy in full.



Switzerland's relationship with the EU is of crucial importance for Swiss who live in EU countries. Is limiting immigration more important than maintaining Switzerland's bilateral agreements with the EU?

The BDP is against Switzerland joining the EU. However, this does nothing to alter the fact that Switzerland has close economic and social ties with the EU's member states. The bilateral approach that we have taken is good for our country – and has been approved by voters more than once. Some of the treaties are good and some have been criticised. Others need revising. Nevertheless, it would be extremely dangerous to think that an unnecessary initiative to limit immigration would neither jeopardise this proven partnership with the EU nor compromise our prosperity.

No other partner has contributed as much to prosperity in Switzerland as the EU. The EU also benefits greatly from Switzerland. We want a relationship with the EU that hurts neither Switzerland nor the EU. The bilateral agreements are non-negotiable in our view. Switzerland's voters have already approved them more than once. From enjoying freedom of movement in Europe, to selling our goods and services freely across the EU and sharing knowledge – the arrangement benefits us every day. The CVP has always advocated the bilateral path and blocked isolationist attacks. We consequently reject the SVP's "termination" initiative aimed at torpedoing free movement. An end to free movement would have grave consequences for the economy, for research and for jobs in Switzerland. It would negate all other market-opening agreements (including our research agreement) with the EU.

The bilateral approach means that we can enjoy tailored access to the EU Single Market without having to join the EU. It has brought jobs, growth and prosperity to Switzerland and enabled hundreds of thousands of us to live and work in the EU/EFTA. The conservative isolationists are jeopardising this success story with their "termination" initiative. Switzerland needs to be able to continue to rely on highly skilled workers from abroad in future. At the same time, the FDP takes the concerns of many Swiss on immigration seriously. We therefore want to take firm action to combat abuses and other detrimental situations such as benefit tourism, restrict the later admission of family dependants of immigrants from outside the EU, and resolve asylum-related issues.

Not only do we want to keep the bilateral agreements, we also wish to continue improving them. From the outset, the GLP has been the only party committed to a framework agreement.

Switzerland is part of Europe. As the pro-European party, we are committed to Switzerland having good relations with our neighbours from the EU. The bilateral agreements benefit the citizens of both Switzerland and the EU. We want this partnership to be strengthened, particularly with regard to education, research and environmental protection. However, good neighbours also play by the rules. A framework agreement with the EU is essential to further development of the bilateral agreements. A pro-European stance will never command majority backing in a popular vote if the accompanying measures on free movement are undermined. To ensure that the EU gives us better protection against wage dumping, Switzerland finally needs to make progress on providing administrative assistance in relation to tax and taking action against tax dumping.

Controlling and managing immigration is extremely important. Since the introduction of free movement, net immigration to Switzerland has totalled 1.1 million. The squeeze on wages and jobs is noticeable, particularly in the case of the over-50s. We therefore want to restrict the right to immigration through our limitation initiative, while maintaining mutually beneficial trade relations with the EU.

Freedom of movement – the privilege of being able to live and work anywhere in Europe – is a wonderful thing and must be defended at all costs. European integration is the foundation of peace and prosperity on our continent, of which Switzerland is part. However, free movement should not be about companies recruiting as many people from abroad as possible. Instead, we must combat the shortage of skilled workers through massive investments in education. The pool of suitable employees will also increase if we make it easier for people to reconcile family and career as well as ensure that men and women finally receive equal pay. We must enhance labour market integration through additional measures to educate migrants and through extra protection for the over-50s. All of this is necessary to counter the inclination among companies to look exclusively abroad for talent.

Overdevelopment is changing the face of Switzerland. Should more be done to protect the countryside, e.g. through stricter building regulations outside existing building zones?

NO

We are already engaged in combating overdevelopment. In 2013, voters approved the revised Spatial Planning Act that is now being implemented at cantonal and municipal level.

NO

We must make better use of existing built-up areas and be proportionate in our choice of building zones. The Spatial Planning Act effectively combats overdevelopment and encourages inward development.

YES

We need to stop the drip-drip effect of building exceptions outside existing building zones.

YES

The GLP is in favour of reforms.

YES

Construction activity outside building zones is eating up the valuable cropland and semi-natural habitats that help to preserve biodiversity.

NO

The people decisively rejected stricter regulations by voting "No" to the Urban Sprawl Initiative. To protect our countryside more effectively, we need to curb excessive immigration.

YES

Building stock outside building zones should not be allowed to increase. We should only authorise new builds that are needed for agriculture, and restrict the available options for converting properties.

Animals that were thought to have disappeared from Switzerland are now back in our countryside. However, the return of wolves, lynx and bears is becoming a source of conflict. Should we relax the laws that protect large predators such as these?

YES

If their populations begin to disturb the local environment, we should relax the laws on a case-by-case basis.

Neither YES nor NO

The CVP is in favour of relaxing the laws on wolves and beavers, but not on lynx.

YES

There is general agreement within the FDP that we should alter the laws to control wolf numbers as and where appropriate. We are against relaxing the laws across the board.

NO

The GLP will actively campaign for a referendum against the National Council's anti-wolf law.

NO

The federal government should invest in preventive measures to protect farm animals, as this would benefit both wild animals and livestock.

YES

As a densely populated country, Switzerland is an unsuitable habitat for certain large predators.

NO

The SP is against any weakening of the laws protecting lynx, beavers, wolves, etc. We cannot tolerate wild animals and birds being preventively decimated – without them having done any harm.

How should we ensure that the Swiss Abroad are actually able to exercise their political rights – and particularly their right to vote?

Electronic voting is a necessity, particularly for the Swiss Abroad. However, we need to ensure that e-voting is fraud-proof.

Our member of the Council of States, Filippo Lombardi, has already submitted a motion demanding that the cantons be obliged (as part of a federal scheme) to offer e-voting to all Swiss Abroad who are eligible to vote.

E-voting is crucial if the Swiss Abroad are to exercise their political rights. Postal voting is unreliable as the voting papers often arrive too late. Participation from the Swiss Abroad has been significantly higher in cantons that have tested e-voting successfully. The FDP has always advocated the use of e-voting by voters abroad. We take security concerns seriously and favour a pragmatic ethos of security over speed in rolling out e-voting across the country. We very much regret any technical hitches that may directly affect the Swiss Abroad during this election year.

Firstly, it is important that people are sent their ballot material in good time. Secondly, the GLP backs the use of e-voting solutions for voters abroad. However, we are against electronic voting being rolled out across the board for general use due to current security concerns.

The "Fifth Switzerland" accounts for some three quarters of a million people. As a key standard-bearer for Switzerland's democratic culture, the expatriate community should be able to actively exercise its political rights. In many countries, the voting papers arrive too late or are not even delivered at all. That means a lot of people miss out on being able to vote. This is unacceptable. Given that no e-voting system is completely fraud-proof at the moment, electronic dispatch should be tested as an interim solution, as this would enable punctual delivery of voting papers via the internet.

The Swiss Abroad can continue to exercise their voting rights in the same way they have always done, i.e. primarily via postal vote.

The SP has long been calling for speedy implementation of secure e-voting, at least for the Swiss Abroad. This makes delays all the more regrettable. E-voting will probably not be rolled out in all cantons any time soon, so we must look into making improvements to the current system, e.g. centralised delivery of voting papers via cantonal chancelleries or cantonal capitals (as practised by the city of Zurich in the canton of Zurich) instead of via every individual municipality; electronic dispatch of documents; and the option of submitting votes in person or by post via a consulate.

Swiss living abroad have precious little opportunity of being elected to parliament. A dedicated constituency would significantly improve Swiss expatriates' electoral prospects. Would you welcome such a thing?

NO

We believe that Swiss who live abroad have no less a chance of being elected than Swiss who live in Switzerland.

NO

Swiss expatriates are on an equal legal footing to their compatriots with regard to representation on the National Council. We need to remove the obstacles to exercising voting rights (via e-voting).

NO

"Quotas" or constituencies for individual communities go against Switzerland's federal ethos and principles of democracy.

Neither YES nor NO

The GLP has not yet formulated a position on this issue.

YES

The "Fifth Switzerland" needs some form of political representation that will take account of its specific interests and circumstances.

NO

The cantons play a very important role in our federal system. They are the 26 electoral constituencies, and we should keep it like that.

YES

The SP has been advocating this for some time. Countries like Italy, France and Portugal have proved that it works.