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The “Fifth Switzerland” helped to drive the green trend

Post-election analysis clearly shows that the “Fifth Switzerland” voted strongly in favour of the Greens in the 2019 National Council elections. On the other hand, they had little say in the Council of States’ elections.



MARC LETTAU

Unprecedented gains by the green parties, more women, more left-leaning and slightly younger: this was how the “Review” summed up the National Council elections held on 20 October 2019. Since then run-off votes have taken place to complete the composition of the smaller chamber, the Council of States. Here we see a similar result: it is not more left-leaning but instead far greener, contains more women, and is younger. Female politicians including the two 31-year-olds Lisa Mazzone (GE, Greens) and Johanna Gapany (FR, FDP) as well as 35-year-old Céline Vara (NE, Greens) have brought down the average age.

The deciding ballots of the Council of States were a rather unsatisfactory affair for the “Fifth Switzerland”. The lack of e-voting was particularly noticeable because the documents for the run-offs were sent out at extremely short notice. Many Swiss Abroad were unable to take part as a result. The voters of the “Fifth Switzerland” had more influence on the National Council voting: they strengthened the political turnaround. A

quarter of the votes from abroad went to the Greens.

This means that the green vote of the “Fifth Switzerland” was far greater than that of domestic voters. Voting behaviour could not be fully analysed because the votes cast by Swiss Abroad are not noted separately by all the cantons. However, the figures from the densely populated cantons present a clear picture. For example, in Zurich, the most densely populated canton by far, voters from the “Fifth Switzerland” amplified the green trend considerably. The Greens and the Green Liberals (GLP) received a joint percentage share of votes from abroad of almost 38 per cent. At the same time, the two large pole parties, SVP and SP, were relegated to positions two and three (the strongest party in terms of voting share is highlighted each time):

| Party | Overall results | Voting behaviour |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Canton Zurich | Fifth Switzerland |
| SVP | 26.7 % | 18.3 % |
| FDP | 13.7 % | 13.1 % |
| CVP | 4.4 % | 3.6 % |
| BDP | 1.6 % | 1.3 % |
| GLP | 14.0 % | 15.4 % |
| Greens | 14.1 % | 22.4 % |
| SP | 17.3 % | 17.9 % |
| Others | 8.2 % | 8.0 % |

The pattern repeats itself in a number of cantons in German-speaking Switzerland. The Swiss Abroad’s support of the Greens was above-average, also in cantons that predominantly voted conservatively, such as the canton of Aargau. Overall, the Greens improved their share of the vote in Aargau to 9.8%. On the other hand, the percentage of green votes from abroad was 21.7%.

There is an obvious explanation for the strong support given to the green parties by voters living abroad. Climate change is by far the most international topic and from the perspective of the “Fifth Switzerland”, it is easier to relate to than the domestic Swiss dispute on pension reforms or similar.

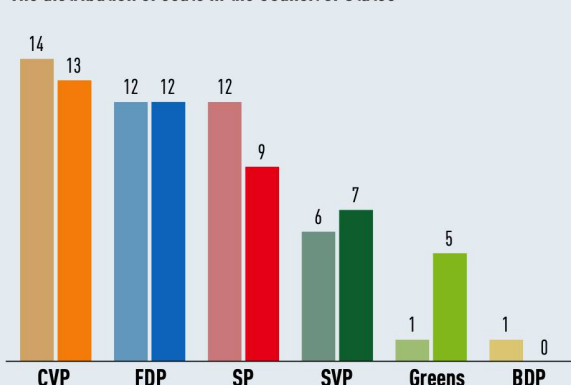
French-speaking Switzerland voted greener than ever before this year: in Geneva and Neuchâtel, the Greens and the Green Liberals more than doubled their voter percentage. The Greens achieved the same in the canton of Jura and – to a lesser extent – in Valais as well. The Greens also gained considerable ground in Vaud. However, in the western Swiss cantons, the voting behaviour of the Swiss Abroad generally deviated less markedly from that of the domestic Swiss. Geneva serves as an example of this trend:

| Party | Overall results | Voting behaviour |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Canton Geneva | Fifth Switzerland |
| SVP | 13.7 % | 14.6 % |
| FDP | 17.9 % | 17.1 % |
| CVP | 7.7 % | 6.8 % |
| BDP | 0.4 % | 0.4 % |
| GLP | 5.4 % | 4.9 % |
| Greens | 24.6 % | 20.4 % |
| SP | 14.7 % | 12.2 % |
| Ensemble à gauche /PdA | 7.4 % | 8.0 % |
| Others | 8.2 % | 15.6 % |

At the time of going to press, it was not clear what the outcome would be of the bolstered Greens’ demand for a seat in the national government. We will provide the results of the Federal Council elections on 11 December in the next “Review”.

Data research collaboration: Stefanie Mathys-Zerfass

The distribution of seats in the Council of States



Left columns 2015; right columns 2019