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The “Fifth Switzerland” defends international mobility

Almost 80 per cent of Swiss Abroad opposed the limitation initiative. The end of free movement, demanded by the SVP, would have dealt a hard blow to the 460,000 Swiss living in EU countries.

The share of the “Fifth Switzerland” who said no (78 per cent) was about 16 percentage points higher on average than for Switzerland as a whole (61.7 per cent), according to the results of twelve cantons, which count the Swiss Abroad votes separately (see chart). The other cantons cannot provide the same breakdown. Nonetheless, the twelve cantons displayed are highly representative as they account for over 70 per cent of Swiss Abroad in the electoral register: 133,000 out of 181,000 in total.

Opposition to the limitation initiative from Swiss Abroad registered in rural cantons exceeded the average by over 30 percentage points – in Uri and Appenzell Innerrhoden, for example. The latter is one of four cantons that actually supported the initiative, the other three being Schwyz, Glarus and Ticino.

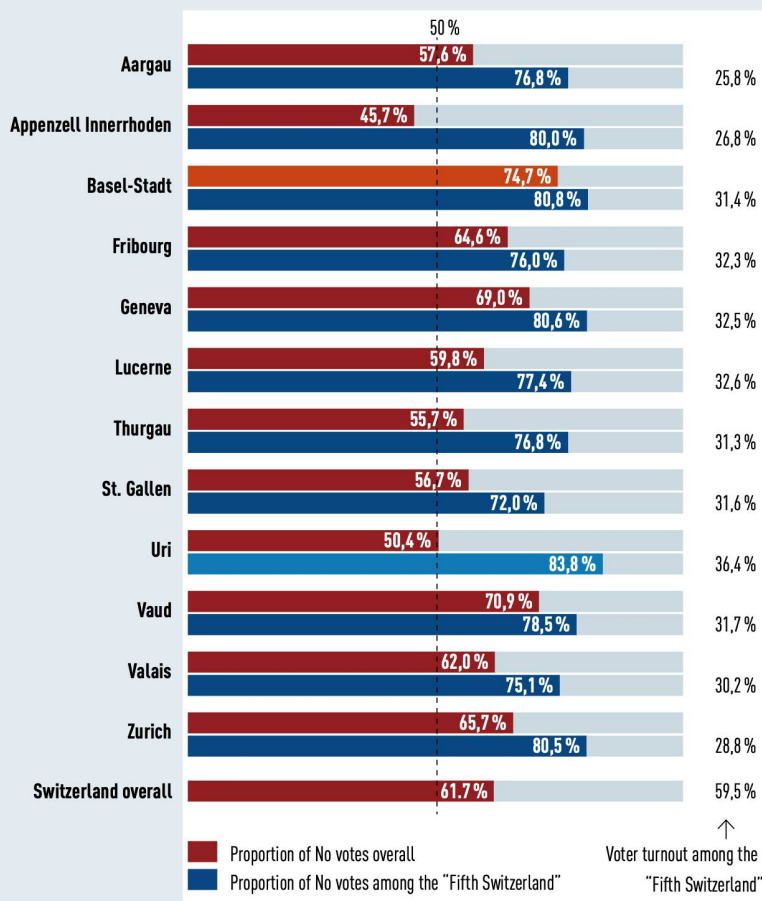
For Remo Gysin, President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), this emphatic statement from the “Fifth Switzerland” came as no surprise. “These results underline the importance of freedom of movement and international mobility,” he said, adding that freedom of movement was the mechanism that allowed Swiss to work and settle in any EU member state. International mobility was in the interests of all Swiss, regardless of whether they currently lived in Switzerland or abroad. Besides social and economic security, it was crucially important that all Swiss were treated the same as EU citizens at the workplace and in relation to taxes and social welfare. This includes the right to remain in an EU country after having worked there.

Many were unable to vote

Voter turnout in Switzerland on 27 September was a high 60 per cent, compared to a mere 30 per cent of the Swiss Abroad. Many frustrated voters contacted the OSA after polling day to express their disappointment at having received their official voting papers too late. Those living overseas were particularly affected. The OSA subsequently sent a message to all 26 cantons, calling on them to adhere to the statutory notice period and issue eligible voters living abroad with their official voting papers five weeks before each voting date. According to the OSA, only two cantons actually managed to do this for the 27 September vote.

Some 460,000 of the 770,900 Swiss expatriate population reside in EU member states. A quarter of all Swiss Abroad (199,800) live in France. The next largest expatriate communities live in Germany (92,200) and the USA (81,100).

THEODORA PETER



Only the above-listed cantons published the votes of the Swiss Abroad separately. The highest percentages are shown in red in each category.