Download PDF: 31.01.2026

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Anti-Terror Act:

Under the Federal Act on Police Counterterrorism Measures, the courts are permitted to place people aged 15 or over under house arrest. The police may also take action to restrict the movements of children aged 12 or over. A number of party youth wings across the political spectrum are opposed to the legislation, calling it a "brazen attack on the rule of law".

Covid-19 Act:

The legal framework for emergency measures by the Federal Council to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic is already in force and will apply until the end of 2021. However, the Friends of the Constitution have called a referendum to repeal the Covid-19 Act, saying that the legislation is unnecessary, unethical and dangerous. Activists fear that the Covid-19 Act will set a precedent for further "government diktats".   TP

According to the group, the CO₂ Act is "costly and ineffectual". Taxpayers, business and industry should not be forced to pick up the tab again, it says. But the powerful business federation economiesuisse is in favour of the CO₂ Act. It has drawn up its own climate master plan for the Swiss economy to show that innovation and efficient technology are key in helping businesses to be "part of the solution". Many companies hope that investment in renewable energy will boost their order books. The federal government expects investments of up to 1,400 billion Swiss francs over the next 30 years.

Criticism from the green lobby

However, the CO₂ Act has attracted criticism from climate campaigners in French-speaking Switzerland who say that measures to cut greenhouse gases do not go anywhere near far enough. In their view, the legislation even perpetuates the "environmentally destructive and inequitable structures" that already exist. But

the group was only able to collect 7,000 signatures for a referendum opposing the CO₂ Act. This was due to a lack of support from the national climate strike movement, which is reluctant to jeopardise the CO₂ Act's "baby steps" but continues to advocate net-zero emissions by 2030 – 20 years in advance of the Federal Council's own deadline.

According to Sommaruga, Switzerland will lose further precious time in the race against climate change if voters reject the CO₂ Act. The government would then have to take even more drastic action in future to meet the climate goals agreed in Paris.

Switzerland in figures

The Matterhorn continues to grow – but is not getting any higher

1.5

The Matterhorn is currently 4,478 m high and is growing around 1.5 cm each year. Its summit would already be 12,000 m above sea level by now, were it not for the elements continually eroding the iconic peak by – you've guessed it – some 1.5 cm each year.

62 000 000 000 000

But why is the Matterhorn growing in the first place? Mainly because the thick ice sheet that used to cover the Alps melted 18,000 years ago. With this 62-billion-tonne ice cap now gone, the entire mountain range is lighter as the earth's crust rebounds. That is why the Alps are growing fastest in places where the ice cap was at its thickest.

6

On the list of the most attractive business locations, Switzerland has not quite scaled the summit. In a new study by the Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) in Mannheim, Switzerland fell in the rankings to sixth out of the 21 industrial nations surveyed – after occupying second place a decade ago. Areas such as regulation density were rated as our Achilles heel.

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But a nation's business-friendly credentials are not the sole factor on which quality of life depends. Take another study – the Human Freedom Index jointly published by the Cato Institute (USA) and the Fraser Institute (CAN), which ranks Switzerland second out of 162 countries. New Zealand is the only country rated higher. Syria is at the bottom of the list. The study also shows that there is indeed a link between personal freedom and economic prosperity.

0

Talking of prosperity – around a quarter of all Swiss households have zero wealth. Around half of all households have assets worth up to 50,000 Swiss francs. The super-rich help to feed the "wealthy Switzerland" narrative: 0.38 per cent of all households own assets worth 10 million francs or more. Added together, this accounts for around 30 per cent of Switzerland's total wealth. The Covid-19 pandemic has only accentuated the gap between rich and poor.

FIGURES COMPILED BY MARC LETTAU