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judges to be appointed by drawing lots, and not through election by parliament. Judges would have greater independence by no longer being bound to any party. A specialist committee appointed by the Federal Council would only scrutinise the professional suitability of candidates. Through this change in the system, Gasser hopes to prevent the courts from “slowly but surely becoming party political instruments”. He says the method of drawing lots was common back in Ancient Greece as a means of counteracting bribery and influence.

Policy-makers are sceptical of Gasser’s proposal. Both the Federal Council and parliament are unanimous in recommending that the popular initiative be rejected, full stop. Leaving the appointment of judges to chance would weaken the democratic legitimacy of the courts and erode public confidence in the decisions they make, argue opponents. The current system is far from perfect, admits the chairman of the parliamentary judicial committee, FDP member of the Council of States Andrea Caroni (canton of Aargau). But the “institutional immune system”, as he calls it, has always helped to avert possible manipulation. Caroni puts forward the Donzallaz case as a recent example.

Those at the centre of the debate – the judges – also reject the idea of drawing lots, although the Swiss Judges’ Association (SJA) believes that the situation could nevertheless be improved. For example, by being elected just once, judges could be spared the party political pressure associated with re-election. This already happens in the canton of Fribourg, where judges and prosecutors are elected for an indefinite period but can still be dismissed on serious grounds. Abolishing party subscription fees would also “boost judicial independence”, says the SJA. However, the Federal Council and parliament refuse to consider any form of counterproposal. Voters will now have the last word.

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Switzerland in figures

Daddy time

78

Swiss fathers enjoy devoting lots of time to their children – if you believe what most of them say. And we want to believe them. However, 78 per cent of fathers with children aged three or younger work full-time in Switzerland. In practice, only two per cent devote maximum time to childcare as the bona fide house husband.

97

It is easier for partners to share childcare duties when both receive the same salary for the same amount of work. According to the University of St Gallen, women receive equal pay at 97 per cent of Swiss companies. However, the university only surveyed companies with 100 or more employees – and these businesses were allowed to prepare the relevant salary data themselves.

1512

Hence, we should possibly think twice before dismissing the statistics provided by the Federal Office for Gender Equality. These paint a different picture: the average full-time wage in Switzerland is 7,968 francs for men but 6,456 francs for women. Most of this 1,512-franc difference is “inexplicable” – in other words, due to discrimination.

25

Not many people know this, but orders for photo books were up by as much as 25 per cent in 2020 (depending on which photo book company you ask). We all had plenty of time to reminisce during last year’s lockdown. The same companies now say that orders have plummeted. This is because wedding and holiday photos were a rarity in 2020.

13

With a total of 13 medals, Switzerland ended the Tokyo Olympics in 24th position on the table. To put a much better spin on this: Switzerland would be ranked 15th if its athletes’ performances were judged in relation to population size. That is one medal for every 660,000 Swiss.