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The new e-voting trials have gone well

Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau piloted a new e-voting system on 18 June 2023. All three cantons were satisfied with the results. Swiss Abroad in particular took advantage of these digital trials.

EVELINE RUTZ

The “Fifth Switzerland” wants to vote online. This is attested to by the first trial run of the new e-voting system. On 18 June 2023, Swiss Abroad were able to vote digitally across three cantons. After grinding to a halt almost four years ago, e-voting was up and running – and very popular – again. “People are delighted to be using the digital voting channel again,” says Barbara Schüpbach-Guggenbühl, chancellor of the canton of Basel-Stadt. Around 53 per cent of the expatriate electorate taking part in the Basel-Stadt cantonal votes used e-voting. The proportion was 54 per cent in St Gallen and 56 per cent in Thurgau.

Initial reaction is positive

Everyone concerned is happy with how things went. Voters navigated the system well, according to Benedikt van Spyk, chancellor of the can-

ton of St Gallen. “We hardly received any support queries,” he says, adding that feedback from Swiss Abroad was positive. It was the same story in Thurgau. “We are very satisfied with how e-voting went,” says Thurgau Chancellor Paul Roth. The three cantons, the Federal Chancellery, and Swiss Post, which developed the new system, will analyse the trial run in detail and make adjustments where necessary. For example, Benedikt van Spyk has indicated that the login procedure will be simplified: “The login in its current form is a relatively big hurdle.”

No hacker attacks, no attempted fraud

The new system made a “successful debut”, according to Swiss Post, which monitored the pilots and assisted cantonal officials on site. No irregularities were recorded, says Michael Egger, who coordinates e-voting

at Swiss Post. “All votes submitted electronically were valid. Ballot secrecy was maintained at all times, and the results were counted correctly.” There were no hacker attacks of the type that have affected a number of Swiss companies, the Federal Chancellery and other authorities since the beginning of June. “IT security is never static but an ongoing process,” Egger points out. The pilots “went well”, and he is “confident” that e-voting will also be used in the federal elections this autumn. This is pending a decision by the cantons.

Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau want to continue offering e-voting and have received an initial licence from the Federal Council to do so until May 2025. They have requested a separate licence for the National Council elections of 22 October 2023; the authorisation process is currently ongoing. No other cantons will be offering e-voting by October. It is too late to do so, says the Federal Chancellery – for logistical and other reasons.



Barbara Schüpbach-Guggenbühl at a media conference on the eve of the trials – the chancellor of the canton of Basel-Stadt is positive about the e-voting system’s performance.
Photo: Keystone

OSA: “Big success”

According to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), the 18 June trials were a “big success”, demonstrating that e-voting caters for a need within the “Fifth Switzerland”. E-voting was available to 25,494 Swiss Abroad in the three participating cantons. It was used by 3,616 expats. Some 85.3 per cent of all online votes came from outside Switzerland. Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Director Ariane Rustichelli: “The new e-voting system has passed the test.”

Demo version of the e-voting system:
demo.evoting.ch

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