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Cover photo: yodeller Dayana Pfammatter.
Photo: Alain Amherd

The cost of living on an island of prosperity



More and more families in Switzerland are struggling to make ends meet.

Surely that's a misprint. We are talking about families who live in Switzerland, one of the world's richest countries, right? How can they be struggling? They should try living somewhere less prosperous.

We can react dismissively, but the simple truth is that money is too tight to mention for many families around the country. So let me spell it out again. Despite impressively high salaries and high employment levels, more and more families in Switzerland are struggling to make ends meet. And many such households are supposed to be comfortably ensconced in the middle-income bracket. What has gone wrong?

I can offer one hypothesis off the top of my head: Switzerland has very high standards in many areas of life. The prices of goods and services reflect this, to put it mildly. Unfortunately, we often have no other choice but to dig deep into our pockets. This particularly applies to tenants, for whom astronomically high rents have become a fact of life. Obviously, Swiss standards extend to housing. Bargains are few and far between.

It is a similar story with healthcare. The quality of Swiss medicine is second to none, but we pay for this through eye-watering health insurance premiums. Rents and healthcare premiums are the biggest monthly expenses for many families. Our lead article on page 4 tells you about all the other little and not-so-little factors that are fuelling a very Swiss cost-of-living crisis.

Dayana Pfammatter provides us with our feel-good story. The yodeller pictured on our front cover is the first person in Switzerland to have completed a master's degree at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts with yodelling as the main subject (see page 10). When yodelling became an academic subject at Lucerne, there were fears it would set up an overly polished aesthetic. But Pfammatter has allayed any concerns with her love of traditional, natural arrangements.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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