

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 51 (2024)  
**Heft:** 6: Cooling towers, heated debate : nuclear is back on the agenda

## Inhaltsverzeichnis

### Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 17.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

**4 Focus**

Switzerland's nuclear debate reignites

**10 Profile**

Martina Schmid knows how to make a cow's life more pleasant

**12 Nature and the environment**

Man-made islands are restoring the Reuss delta to its former glory



Photo: seeschuetting.ch

**14 Culture**

Inheritance – blessing or curse? A new Swiss documentary searches for answers

**18 Report**

How budding astronauts are training on the Gotthard massif

**22 Society**

Suicide pod forces Switzerland to revisit the issue of assisted dying

Itching to fly – Swiss air travel is back to pre-pandemic levels

**26 Politics**

Opposition to a digital-only Switzerland comes from a surprising source

Nature protection initiative: Farmers torpedo biodiversity proposal

**30 Literature**

The heart-rending poems of Gertrud Pfander, who died aged 24

**32 Notes from the Federal Palace**

The “Rütli of the Fifth Switzerland” is in Brunnen

**35 SwissCommunity news**

Cover photo: Cooling tower at the Leibstadt nuclear power plant (canton of Aargau). Photo: Keystone

# Direct democracy



I suspect plenty of people living in Switzerland like to have a good grumble about their home country now and again, whereas they will often defend everything about Switzerland whenever they are on holiday abroad. Swiss expatriates probably also recognise this phenomenon. Yet, anyone who by definition has two homes – one in which they live, and another one to which they feel permanently attached – will tend to appreciate the benefits of both.

These thoughts have come to mind because I have been editing this edition of the magazine elsewhere for a change: not in Berne but far away in the stormy southern hemisphere springtime. As a temporary Swiss Abroad, you could say. One of the features of my time away has been the conversations I have had about what it means to be Swiss.

For starters, what is direct democracy? Let me give a careful answer: it is when voters, i.e. the people, not only elect parliament but also give their verdict on specific issues every few months. Every popular vote is a reality check for parliament and government, revealing the thoughts, hopes, fears and wishes of the electorate. What a wonderful concept.

But then the conversation turns to the topic of nuclear energy. Seven years ago, voters decided that Switzerland would not be building any new nuclear power stations, but despite that Energy Minister Albert Rösti now wants to construct new plants. This is a thorny issue. From the point of view of Swiss energy security, such an about-turn makes sense to some extent, if you discount the unresolved question of nuclear waste. From the point of view of democracy, however, circumventing the will of the people seems an audacious move. At least that is how it appears to those visiting far away places who are trying to explain the magic of 'direct democracy'.

But we can breathe a sigh of relief. Regardless of how far parliament and government want to plough ahead with new reactors, it is still the people who will ultimately decide. And maybe more cantons will have introduced e-voting by then, thereby allowing as many Swiss Abroad as possible to have their say on this crucial matter. Without further ado, our lead article in this new edition of “Swiss Review” delves into the nuclear debate that has divided opinion in Switzerland for over half a century.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

