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Swiss News

Labour in Switzerland

Almost 200 million hours of overtime worked

Swiss workers log an average of 47 hours of overtime annually – almost 200 million in total, and the equivalent of 105,000 full-time positions, according to data released by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

Between 2003 and 2013, the number of extra hours worked increased by 14%, from 174 million to 198 million, according to the office's publication "Job Market Indicators 2014".

The greatest amount of overtime was logged by workers in banking and insurance – 83 hours per year and full-time position – and the least (23 hours) by employees with jobs in public administration.

Although the overtime indicates an imbalance in the labour market, it should not be assumed that a massive reduction in overtime would automatically lead to a reduction in unemployment, the Statistical Office said. Supply and demand are often out of synch with each other.

In terms of number of hours worked, the Swiss can also be described as a nation of hard workers: averaging 41.7 hours

per week in 2013, they ranked third in Europe, behind workers in Iceland (44.2 hours per week) and Britain (42.4 hours). Switzerland (82.1%) and Iceland (82.8%) also registered the highest proportions of employed persons in the European population.

United Nations Human Development Report:

Life satisfaction highest in Switzerland

Switzerland tops 187 countries in life satisfaction according to the 2014 Human Development Report, released by the United Nations Development Programme.

The United Nations Development Programme, published annually since 1990, ranks 187 countries based on measures such as health and longevity of their population, education and income, and personal security. Those measures are compiled into the agency's index of human development.

Norway is ranked at the top of the 2014 list overall, followed by Australia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United States. The five lowest-ranked countries are Sierra Leone, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo and, at the very bottom, Niger.

Global challenges:

Improvements are slowing due to natural disasters, misguided government policies and worsening inequality, the report said. Today, the 85 richest people in the world have as much wealth as the 3.5 billion poorest people. More than 2.2 billion people, or 15% of the world's population, live near or in poverty, according to the UNDP.

Threats such as financial crises, fluctuations in food prices, and violent conflict significantly impede progress, and governments must act together to lift more people out of poverty and to reduce inequality, the report says.

The Human Development Report is intended to inform and influence policy makers, said the director of the Human Development Report Office, Khalid Malik. Governments watch the rankings carefully, he said, and "when they don't do well they put a lot of pressure on us to change the rankings".

The 2014 Human Development Report comes at a critical time, said the UNDP, as attention turns to the creation of a new development agenda following the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Source: SwissInfo (21 August 2014)

Results of May 18th 2014 ballot on four federal issues

On Sunday, 18 May 2014, Swiss voters massively rejected a minimum wage (which would have been the world's highest). They also narrowly turned down new Swedish fighter planes for the Swiss Air Force, but agreed, by a wide margin and in a very controversial referendum, to amend the Constitution to impose a lifetime ban on convicted paedophiles. They also voted, even more overwhelmingly, to provide constitutional support to improve work and remuneration for family doctors.

The results were as follows -

Nationwide minimum wage:

Yes: 23.7% No: 76.3%

Gripen fighter jets:

Yes: 46.6% No: 53.4%

Ban on convicted paedophiles:

Yes: 63.5% No: 36.5%

Boost for family doctors:

Yes: 88.0% No: 12.0%

Turnout: 55.5%

A limited number of voters, notably the Swiss Abroad, were able to cast their vote online as part of an ongoing trial

with e-voting. About 16.6% of them made use of it.

Vote on further protection of Lavaux (Vaud), World Heritage Site

The following news is of interest to those who have been following our articles on the Swiss UNESCO World Heritage sites.

On a local level, the Canton of Vaud rejected a bid by environmental crusader Franz Weber to further protect the historic Lavaux vineyard area between Lausanne and Vevey on Lake Geneva, which is already a UNESCO Heritage Site.

68% of citizens who cast ballots in the referendum favoured a more moderate counter-project proposed by the cantonal government that also aims to guard against harmful development in the region. The cantonal government argued that Weber went too far with his proposal, which would have protected traditional buildings, while severely limiting construction in residential zones.

The canton said Weber's proposal would have made it virtually impossible to erect new buildings for economic activity, including wineries and hotels, as well as public facilities such as old age homes, schools, day care centres and cultural spaces. Weber, 86, a former journalist, successfully pushed through earlier initiatives in 1977 and 2005 to protect the region, known for its quaint villages and steep terraced vineyard slopes overlooking Lake Geneva.

In his latest "Save Lavaux" campaign, backed by the environmental groups Pro Natura and WWF, he said more restrictions were needed to prevent real estate speculation from ruining Lavaux. But opponents, including wine growers, all the major political parties and the municipalities in the Lavaux region of 14,000 people, agreed with the government that this time Weber was going too far.

By Simon Penny

Sources: www.thelocal.ch <http://genevalunch.com>