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Swiss Immigration

Vote to end free Swiss-EU migration gets enough signatures

Organizers of a vote to limit immigration into Switzerland from EU and EFTA nations, had until 18 July 2019 to collect 100,000 valid signatures. Almost one year ahead of the deadline, the Swiss People's Party announced that they had collected 125,000 signatures. Surprised by how quickly the signatures were collected, Swiss People's Party leader Albert Rösti told the newspaper *Blick* that people were motivated by employment concerns, especially in cross-border regions like Geneva, Vaud, Basel-City and Ticino.

The new initiative to limit immigration is less ambiguous than the one put to a vote on 9 February 2014. Instead of requiring the government to limit immigration, this one will ask voters whether or not they want to keep the agreement between the EU and Switzerland on free movement of people. The EU has said repeatedly that the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the bloc are an all-or-nothing package. If a majority of Swiss voters vote to end the agreement on free movement of people the whole deal, including trade, might unravel.

Rösti does not think the latest initiative puts Switzerland's package of bilateral agreements at risk. He says that all of the other agreements in the package are in the EU's interest and solutions could be found.

That might be true in theory, but in practice such a solution continues to elude the UK and Brussels. Speaking to Swiss broadcaster RTS in January 2018, Roger Nordmann, president of the Socialist Party, said that a possible merit of this initiative is that it is focused on ending bilateral agreements, a sort of Swiss Brexit. He thinks this will bring clarity and doesn't think Switzerland's population will want to find itself in the same situation as the UK.

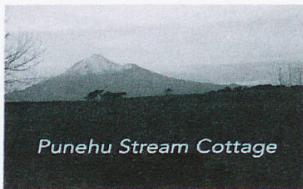
04/10/2019 BY LE NEWSupdate

Swiss parliament rejects initiative to limit immigration

Switzerland's parliament voted against an initiative put forward by the Swiss People's Party (UDC/SVP) to limit immigration into Switzerland, according to RTS. The idea was rejected by 123 votes to 63. The UDC was the only party to support it. If a majority of Swiss voters support the initiative the government would have one year to negotiate an end to free movement of people with the EU.

Justice Minister Karin Keller-Sutter said the initiative could trigger a Swiss Brexit by ending Switzerland's bilateral agreements with Brussels, something that could have a serious economic impact. The UDC warned that Switzerland's population could rise from 8.5 to 10 million if there is no change.

In 2014, a narrow majority of Swiss voters (50.3%) accepted a plan to allow the government to control immigration into Switzerland from the EU. This eventually resulted in a compromise that gives Swiss residents priority over foreign ones when applying for jobs.



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