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Autor: Engel, Barbara
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Candidates from abroad

More candidates from abroad are standing at these elections than ever before. Some parties, such as the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Social Democratic Party (SP), have separate international lists in several cantons, while other parties are including candidates from abroad on their cantonal lists. Below we profile two female and two male candidates from abroad as a reflection of the wide spectrum of candidates.



Marcel Lewandowski, aged 61, candidate for the BDP in Schwyz, lives in Sao Paulo, Brazil. He is a lawyer and a businessman.

"My father emigrated from Switzerland and opened a bicycle factory in Brazil. So, I've always lived in Brazil, but my family has always maintained contact with Switzerland.

We had nannies from Switzerland – I've got two brothers and a sister – and we've kept our grandfather's house in Steinen, in the canton of Schwyz. I've always regarded Switzerland as home just as much as Brazil. I could easily imagine spending most of my time in Switzerland in the future. But I would also remain closely attached to Brazil as I have three children, a daughter and two sons, living there.

I'm entering politics here now because of my cousin. He made me aware that Swiss citizens abroad could stand for parliament. I looked at the parties and discovered that my ideas were very close to those of the BDP. I am not yet sure which issues I will focus on in particular. I still have to discuss that in greater depth with my party. For this reason I don't want to express a political position on issues publicly yet. However, I have a lot of experience in mediation and I work for two charitable foundations in Brazil. I have taken on two employees for the election campaign who are advising me – a campaign manager and a politics student. If I were to be elected, I would have to reorganise my entire life. I would rent an apartment in Berne and spend half of the year there. My wife is Brazilian but she was educated in Switzerland at a boarding school in Montreux. She would therefore

be happy to move to Switzerland. Among my children I would easily be able to find a successor for my business affairs in Brazil."



Helen Freiermuth, aged 53, candidate for the FDP in Zurich, has resided in Yantai, China, since 2010 and lived in various other countries previously. She is a primary school teacher and has a business studies diploma.

"I was politically active in the canton of Zurich in the 1990s, in school administration in Bassersdorf and on the audit committee of Freienstein-Teufen. I didn't actively seek out my first candidature for the National Council four years ago; I was approached by the party and won a surprisingly high number of votes. I have since been involved with FDP International, and my current candidature is simply a logical step. I am now working intensively on the election campaign. I am dealing with issues on my website (www.helen-freiermuth.ch), I am organising an e-mail campaign and I will spend a few weeks in Switzerland on two separate occasions before the elections to take part in election events and the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. I've also visited Switzerland frequently in recent years, perhaps four or five times a year.

If I were to be elected, attending sessions in Berne would not present a problem as both my daughters are grown up. I am only able to get involved in politics because I have the full support of my husband. I am not allowed to work in China; I am just a "travelling spouse", which is the official term in China. If I were elected to the

All candidates online

The list of all candidates resident abroad will be published and constantly updated on the website of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) as the deadline for registering as a candidate only expires a few weeks before the elections in some cantons. www.aso.ch → politik

Candidates who sit on the Council of the Swiss Abroad

The following are standing for election to the National Council:

Antonio Hodgers, Greens, canton of Geneva
Hans Kaufmann, SVP, canton of Zurich
Peter Simon Kaul, SVP, canton of Zurich

Christa Markwalder, FDP, canton of Berne
John McGough, SVP, canton of Zurich
Roman Rauper, SVP, canton of Zurich
André Reymond, SVP, canton of Geneva
Audrey Ruchet Bach, SP, canton of Geneva
Rolf B. Schudel, SVP, canton of Basel-Stadt
Carlo Sommaruga, SP, canton of Geneva
Reinhard Süess, SP, canton of Zurich

The following person is standing for election to the Council of States:

Filippo Lombardi, CVP, canton of Ticino

The names of all members of the "Swiss abroad" parliamentary group can also be found at www.aso.ch → politik

VOTING ELECTRONICALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

Swiss citizens abroad who are registered on the electoral roll of a commune in the cantons of Aargau, Basel-Stadt, Grisons and St. Gallen can vote electronically at the elections on 23 October 2011. The Federal Council has approved applications from the four cantons to conduct an e-election trial. Around 21,500 Swiss abroad will be able to vote electronically. Citizens in Switzerland do not yet have this opportunity. Federal Chancellor Corina Casanova explained that the state chancellery sees e-voting as a key project and will extend it as quickly as possible if the tests are successful.

National Council, I would, of course, attempt to raise the issues of the Swiss abroad in parliament. I would primarily focus on working towards objectives rather than opposing others. I sometimes get the impression that we Swiss abroad are treated as second-class citizens by Switzerland. I often find dealing with the authorities difficult. I also believe that insufficient use is made of the potential of the Swiss abroad. My perspective from China is that Switzerland is wrapped up in itself and does not fully appreciate how important Asia has become."



Hans Peter Bieri, aged 46, candidate for the SVP in Solothurn, has lived in Bangkok, Thailand, since 2008 and previously resided in other countries. He is an administrative secretary at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

"I've always held an interest in politics, which is why I co-founded SVP International in 1992. However, apart from that, I have not previously been politically active. When the party asked me whether I would like to stand for the National Council this year, I said yes. It didn't take me long to make my mind up. I don't believe that the Swiss abroad are really represented in parliament in Berne. Some politicians support the issues of the Swiss abroad but representation from abroad would clearly have greater weight. The key issues for me are the introduction of e-voting, the reintroduction of voluntary Old Age and Survivors' Insurance (AHV) for all Swiss abroad and a constituency for the Swiss abroad, almost like a canton. This would also give them representation in the Council of States. I did not ask my employers whether they approved of my candidacy. I believe that, as a federal government employee, I am also entitled to exercise my civic duties. However, some issues are taboo for me. As an FDFA employee, I cannot, for example, publicly discuss foreign policy or department business. I am not concerned about that because foreign policy is not one of my issues. Immigration is the most urgent issue facing Switzerland, but that is not foreign policy, so I can get involved there. I am appalled that people were kept in the dark about the consequences of the free movement of persons. We must

continue to negotiate here – not renegotiate or terminate the agreement. If I were elected to the National Council, I would probably have to take a long unpaid holiday as I would have to give up my position abroad. But it is unlikely to come to that as I have little genuine hope of being elected."



Franziska Bieri, aged 34, candidate for the SP in Zurich, has lived in Sofia, Bulgaria, since 2010 and previously spent over ten years in the USA.

"I've been a member of SP International for years and was asked whether I would like to stand for the National Council. I was interested in politics at grammar school in Biel, and politics was also a big part of my life while a student – I studied sociology and political science at Georgia State University in Atlanta. I'm currently living in Bulgaria because of my husband. He is an economist and comes from Sofia. We met when studying in the USA. As a lecturer and researcher, I now focus primarily on the issues of globalisation and the role of non-governmental organisations and international movements. I am familiar with Switzerland's political problems as I spend at least a month in my homeland every year but I am, of course, not as au fait with the details as Swiss politicians. I have had a lively exchange with party colleagues in recent months. This has given me lots of new insights. The inside and outside perspectives are two completely different things. I will spend August in Switzerland to take part in election events, podium presentations and discussions. I am particularly looking forward to dialogue with other Swiss abroad. If I were elected, I would have to reorganise my life a little. During sessions, I could leave my seven-year-old daughter with my family in Switzerland. My husband is fully behind me. My key issues in politics are, of course, related to my experiences and background. I can definitely make an important contribution in terms of foreign policy and in the areas of globalisation, security and justice. I see the increasing gap between rich and poor as a major political challenge, both globally and in Switzerland."

SMARTVOTE – AN AID FOR VOTERS ON THE INTERNET

Smartvote is a scientific online electoral aid for elections in Switzerland, which can be used at communal, cantonal and national level. As it was for the 2007 elections, Smartvote is also a "Swiss Review" partner this year.

Smartvote aims to:

- improve transparency prior to elections and enable voters to make their decisions in a new targeted way
- increase people's interest in politics
- highlight the potential of e-democracy and e-voting

The political profiles of the candidates are recorded and saved in a database based on a large number of questions on specific issues and viewpoints. Voters can complete the same questionnaire online and find candidates who, or parties which, most closely represent their political views and values.

A "smartspider" is created based on the answers. This is a graphical presentation of political views that looks like a spider's web.

Smartvote, developed in collaboration with the University of Berne, was used for the first time at the National Council and Council of States elections in 2003. Vimentis is offering

a similar electoral aid for the 2011 elections. A comparison of both may prove interesting as the choice of issues and the style of the questionnaire will have an impact on the result.

Both Smartvote and Vimentis are submitting their questions to the political parties to allow them to express their opinion before the system goes live online.

www.smartvote.ch

www.vimentis.ch -> wahlen