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KEY ELECTION INFORMATION

It will all be over by noon on 23 October 2011. The ballot boxes for the election of the National Council and Council of States will close. Around 75,000 people will be on duty to ensure the results are recorded and communicated properly. 3,089 candidates stood for election to the National Council at the last national elections in 2007. That figure is set to be exceeded this time. The Federal Chancellery also anticipates more parties entering the election, which may result in a transformation of the party landscape.

The electorate – the key players

According to the federal constitution, the Swiss people are the nation's sovereign power, in other words the highest political authority. This includes all men and women of voting age with Swiss citizenship, which amounts to just under 5.1 million citizens.

The Swiss abroad

Swiss citizens abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation (embassy or consulate) and entered on an electoral roll have been able to exercise their political rights at federal level from abroad since 1 July 1992. Swiss citizens abroad can choose to be entered on the electoral roll in their commune of origin or at a previous place of residence in Switzerland. They can vote in National Council elections (active electoral right) and also stand for election to the National Council themselves (passive electoral right). The legal basis is provided by the Federal Act on the Political Rights of Swiss Abroad.

By contrast, the Swiss abroad can only take part in Council of States elections if the cantonal law provides for a voting right for Swiss abroad at cantonal level. The following cantons grant the Swiss abroad the right to vote at cantonal level: Zurich (only for Council of States elections), Berne, Schwyz, Fribourg, Solothurn, Basel-Landschaft, Grisons, Ticino, Neuchâtel, Geneva and Jura.

Election of the National Council and Council of States for the next four years

The national parliament will be elected on 23 October 2011. This is the state's legislative authority, which has two chambers: the National Council representing Switzerland's entire population and the Council of States representing the 26 cantons. The National Council has 200 members and the Council of States 46. Together they form the United Federal Assembly.

The cantons are the constituencies at the National Council elections. Based on their size, the National Council seats (2011 the same as 2007 and 2003) are distributed as follows:

ZH	34	LU	10	TG	6	SH	2	AI	1
BE	26	TI	8	BS	5	JU	2	GL	1
VD	18	SO	7	GR	5	AR	1		
AG	15	BL	7	NE	5	UR	1		
SG	12	VS	7	SZ	4	OW	1		
GE	11	FR	7	ZG	3	NW	1		

National Council elections are based on a system of proportional representation, which means the seats are distributed in relation to the votes won. The cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Glarus, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Uri use a majority voting system because only one seat is allocated to each of these cantons.

Each canton sends two representatives to the Council of States irrespective of the size of its population, with the exception of the six half-cantons which only have one member each. The majority voting system applies in almost all cantons for the Council of States elections, which means that the person who wins the most votes is elected. The cantons of Jura and Neuchâtel are exceptions.

Exercising the vote

Swiss citizens abroad, who are registered to exercise voting and electoral rights with the competent Swiss representation, will be provided by the electoral commune with the electoral documentation in the requested official language prior to the election. This includes:

- the ballot paper
- the Federal Chancellery's voting instructions and, if applicable, cantonal voting instructions
- depending on cantonal legislation, one or two envelopes from the electoral commune to ensure ballot secrecy and
- a separate voter identification card if the delivery envelope is not valid as voter identification.

Voting and electoral rights can be exercised in person or by post or even electronically in those cantons that already operate e-voting (see page 24).

Spoilt for choice

Voters have plenty of options available to them. There are more than a dozen different electoral lists to choose from in some cantons. In addition, there are also list or sub-list combinations. Maintaining a clear overview and making the right choice is not straightforward. It is therefore helpful to ask yourself a few questions before completing your ballot paper to avoid being overwhelmed by the mass of information:

- What is my view on the state, society and economy?
- Is there a party that represents this view?
- Do I want to rely on one party's recommendation and simply select a party list?
- Which people would best represent my concerns in parliament?
- Do I want a particular person to be elected to parliament? How can I increase his/her chances of election?

The websites of the parties and candidates provide information on agendas and visions. There are also electoral ratings by associations and interest groups as well as online electoral aids, such as

smartvote.ch and vimentis.ch (see page 25). You can also research the voting patterns and votes of current National Council members on the Swiss parliament's website.

1

Liste Nr. 02 Partei B
 Liste N° Parti
 Lista no. Partido
 Glista nr. Partida

~~0201 Stephan Stellvertreter~~

0202 Marianne Muster

0203 Berta Beispiel

0204 Ernestine Exemple

0205 Patrizia Platzhalter

0206 Enrico Eempio

2 0104 Pierre Personne
 0207 Neidhard Nemo

3 0208 Amalie Alias
 0209 Norbert Niemand

4

6 0201 Stephan Stellvertreter

0202 Marianne Muster

0203 Berta Beispiel

7 0104 Pierre Personne

8 0204 Ernestine Exemple

8 0204 Ernestine Exemple

0205 Patrizia Platzhalter

0208 Amalie Alias

9

Liste Nr. 02 5 Partei B 5
 Liste N° Parti
 Lista no. Partido
 Glista nr. Partida

From theory to practice

A pre-printed or blank ballot paper can be used to cast your vote.

Procedure with a pre-printed ballot paper of a party or group:

Names can be crossed out (1) and replaced with other candidates from any party (2, 3) (= *splitting the vote*). Names can also be duplicated (3) (= *accumulation*). At the end (4), the list must not contain more names than

there are seats available to the canton. Corrections must be made by hand (2, 3) and ideally in block letters.

Procedure with a blank ballot paper:

Enter a party name and the corresponding list number at the top (5). Lines left blank will then count for this party. If no party name is entered, blank lines and therefore valuable votes (9) will be lost. The ballot paper must contain at least one valid name

(6). To avoid errors, always include first names and candidate numbers (7). The chances of a candidate being elected are increased if the name is entered on the list twice (8) (= *accumulation*). Please note that simplifications, such as inverted commas or "ditto", are invalid. Only persons who appear on a list for the canton concerned can be elected.

Electronic voting – a third option for voting in referenda and elections

In a democracy, the people must have confidence in the authorities to hold elections and referenda in a proper and legally impeccable way. This confidence exists in Switzerland, and the postal vote was introduced on this basis in 1994. This new, more convenient method quickly

established itself and also had a slight positive impact on turnout.

Electronic voting (e-voting) now provides a third way to vote and constitutes a tool for 21st-century society. After a pilot phase, the Federal Council and parliament approved the gradual introduction of electronic voting in 2006/2007. Swiss citizens abroad eligible to vote were identified as the group that would benefit most and were treated as a priority. The Federal Chancellery has set



itself the target of enabling the majority of Swiss citizens abroad to take part in federal elections electronically by 2015.

The Swiss abroad eligible to vote: the primary target group

Electronic voting provides benefits that are particularly important for Swiss citizens abroad eligible to vote. It avoids delays, for example, that may arise with postal voting.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) welcomes the introduction of electronic voting. For the time being, electronic voting is only available to Swiss abroad who reside in an EU state, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Northern Cyprus, San Marino, the Vatican City or one of the 45 states that have signed the Wassenaar Arrangement. This covers around 90% of the Swiss abroad registered to vote. (The Wassenaar Arrangement governs data encryption required for the transmission of data in electronic voting.)

Registered Swiss citizens abroad eligible to vote from the cantons of Basel-Stadt, St. Gallen, Grisons and Aargau will be able to cast their votes using the Internet in the forthcoming election.

PUBLICATIONS

The Swiss Confederation – a brief guide 2011

This richly illustrated brochure, which is published annually, provides a comprehensive but easy-to-understand insight into Swiss politics and its most powerful bodies, while also explaining the structure and duties of our state.

An electronic version and order form can be found at:

www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch



Parliamentary elections 2011:

An interactive introduction (in German)

<http://www.parlamentswahlen-2011.ch/>

<http://www.ch.ch> (Votes/Elections)

Advertisement



ELECTORAL STUDY AMONG THE SWISS ABROAD:

The Swiss Foundation for Research in Social Sciences (FORS) has been carrying out electoral studies since 1995. The project receives funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation.

For the Federal Assembly elections this year, the Swiss abroad will also be involved for the first time in the study. A representative survey will be conducted online by FORS among eligible registered voters, who will be contacted by e-mail. Participation is voluntary. Further details on this study can be found on the website: www.selects.ch.

Important

Please do not forget to make sure your representation has your correct address, telephone numbers and e-mail address. In countries exposed to risk (natural disasters or political instability), we also recommend that you notify the embassy/consulate of your mobile telephone number.

You can also register for delivery of "Swiss Review" (electronic or printed) and information updates from your representation at www.swissabroad.ch.

POPULAR INITIATIVES:

The following popular initiatives have been launched since the last edition (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Federal popular initiative "Stopp der Überbevölkerung - zur Sicherung der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen" (Stop overpopulation to safeguard the natural foundations of life) (03.11.2012)
- "Familien stärken! Steuerfreie Kinder- und Ausbildungszulagen" (Strengthen families! Tax-free child and educational allowances) (03.11.2012)
- "Für Ehe und Familie – gegen die Heiratsstrafe" (For marriage and family – against the tax penalty for married couples) (03.11.2012)
- "Für den geordneten Ausstieg aus der Atomenergie" (For the organised withdrawal from nuclear power) (17.11.2012)
- "Für die Veröffentlichung der Politiker-Einkünfte" (For the publication of politicians' incomes) (08.12.2012)
- "Energie- statt Mehrwertsteuer" (Energy tax instead of VAT) (15.12.2012)
- "Gegen Masseneinwanderung" (Against mass immigration) (26.1.2013)

The complete list can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website: www.bk.admin.ch/aktuell/abstimmung

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