

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 40 (2013)
Heft: 4

Rubrik: Notes from parliament

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Electronic voting on track

All eligible Swiss voters abroad are to be able to vote electronically in referenda and elections in the future, even if they do not reside in an EU or Wassenaar country. The Federal Council is lifting the existing restriction, according to its third report on electronic voting adopted in mid June.

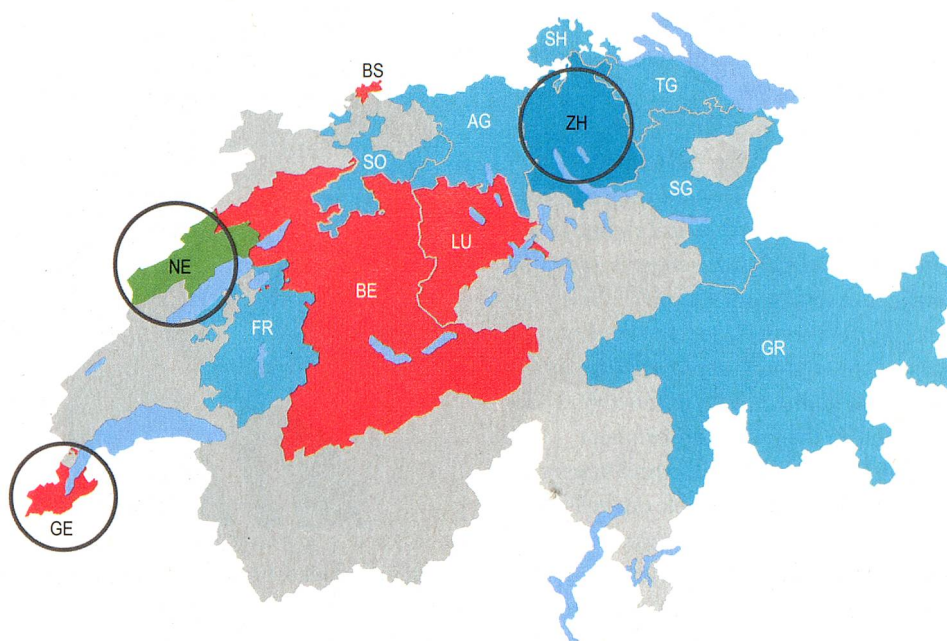
Swiss abroad residing in an EU state or a country that has signed the Wassenaar Agreement enabling the encrypted transmission of electronic data, were permitted to take part in the previous electronic voting trials. This covered 90% of the Swiss abroad. The other roughly 10% of Swiss abroad eligible to vote had no access to electronic voting even if the canton on whose electoral roll they were entered provided this opportunity.

The Federal Council has now weighed up the benefits and drawbacks and has decided to waive the Wassenaar restriction from 1 January 2014. Eligible voters residing in countries where the use of encryption technologies is not permitted will be informed of the possible consequences of voting online. The cantons will notify eligible Swiss voters abroad and explain the issue and any potential consequences (e.g. information sheet with the voting documents and/or on their website). It will then be at the discretion of the person concerned whether to vote electronically or not.

The Wassenaar restriction came in for constant criticism from eligible Swiss voters abroad and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). Postal delivery of the voting material is often poor, particularly in those countries that have not signed the agreement. Voting was therefore made virtually impossible for the Swiss abroad in certain countries.

Second trial phase also successful

The Federal Council's assessment of the second trial phase of the project (2006 to 2012) was just as positive as the first. Electronic voting has proven itself as a third, supplementary channel for voting and has received widespread acceptance among those eligible to vote. Electronic voting was extended to new cantons in the last trial



The three electronic voting systems and the cantons taking part in the project

phase and eligible Swiss voters abroad were treated as a priority target group.

The systems developed at the beginning of the year 2000 by the cantons of Zurich, Neuchâtel and Geneva have been available to other cantons since 2009 thanks to inter-cantonal agreements. Berne, Lucerne and Basel-Stadt have opted for the Geneva system. Fribourg, Solothurn, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Grisons, Aargau and Thurgau are deploying a version of Zurich's system. Uri, Obwalden and Valais are planning to conduct trials from 2013. These three cantons have chosen the Geneva system. The canton of Vaud has drawn up relevant legislation and intends to implement its first trials from 2014. Zurich also plans to resume trials with electronic voting from 2014. A clear majority of 18 cantons has therefore decided in favour of introducing electronic voting. It is no longer a question of whether but when those eligible will be able to cast their vote via the Internet.

The cantons primarily focused on eligible Swiss voters abroad in the 2006 to 2012 trial phase. By including eligible voters among the Swiss abroad in other cantons, valuable experience was obtained with a manageable target group that stands to benefit greatly from electronic voting in light of the frequent problems with postal voting. Some cantons also allowed some of their eligible voters residing in Switzerland to participate in the trials.

On average, around 150,000 eligible voters per ballot had the option to use electronic voting and up to 60% of voters made use of the system. This high turnout via the Internet proves that the new channel meets a genuine requirement, especially among our fellow citizens abroad, and enjoys a high degree of trust. This is not something that could have been taken for granted. When postal voting was introduced in 1992, it took several years before a comparably high level of acceptance was achieved.

Setting the course for the future

In the third report on electronic voting, the Federal Council has set the course for the future development of the project as part of its e-government strategy, i.e. the extension of electronic voting to all eligible voters, including those in Switzerland. The proven step-by-step approach based on the principle of "security over speed" will be continued. The cantons will only be able to increase the number of voters in Switzerland allowed to participate in the trials after new, more rigorous security requirements have been implemented.

The changes focus on the introduction of verifiability. This will enable checks to be carried out to verify whether the vote has been cast as intended and whether it has been submitted and counted correctly. This provides sufficient scope for the identification of systematic manipulation in

good time before referendum or election results are published while maintaining the secrecy of the ballot.

The Federal Council also wants to amend the legal bases for the implementation of electronic voting trials and the provisions in the ordinance on political rights. In addition the Federal Chancellery is issuing an ordinance setting out technical implementation provisions. Based on the new legal bases, the systems deployed will in the future be audited by an external body accredited by the federal government.

The Federal Council's third report on electronic voting is available on the Federal Chancellery's website and was published in the Federal Gazette in mid July:

www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Vote électronique > Berichte und Studien

Information on the Wassenaar Agreement can be found at www.wassenaar.org

Changes at the Consular Directorate

**Jean-François Lichtenstern –
from Berne to Los Angeles**



For the past few years I have had a close relationship with the Swiss abroad. The congresses in Bordeaux and Lugano were bathed in sunshine, serving for me today as an illustration of the warmth radiated by the Swiss abroad. This radiance also extends to the preliminary draft of the Swiss Abroad Act, which I was involved in creating. I bid farewell today to our compatriots abroad, whom I served with great enthusiasm and who represent the vanguard of Switzerland's presence abroad. Many thanks to you all!

**Peter Zimmerli –
from Singapore to Berne**



I succeeded Jean-François Lichtenstern as the Delegate for Relations with the Swiss Abroad at the end of July. I am 56 years of age and grew up in the canton of Aargau. In addition to a spell in the Economic Affairs Section at headquarters, I have worked for the FDFA in Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Germany, Italy and Singapore since 1985. I am delighted to now serve as an intermediary between you and federal government. Together with my team, I will continue and build on the outstanding work of my predecessor and look forward to working closely with you.

**Andreas Maager –
from Berne to Atlanta**



After 25 years abroad with the FDFA, I returned to Berne in 2009 to take over as head of the Consular Protection Section. My involvement with the creation of the Consular Directorate, which officially commenced its activities in May 2011, began one year later. The FDFA placed me in charge of Swiss Citizen Services compris-

ing the Consular Protection Section, Citizen Services and Support for Representations, the helpline and the Swiss Emigration Service. My career journey continues in September when I will take up my new position in Atlanta, USA, where I will be head of the Swiss consulate general.

**Bruno Ryff –
from Los Angeles to Berne**



After being deployed in Europe, Asia, North and South America, I will take up a new position in my home town where I will be able to contribute my wealth of experience abroad. Together with an experienced team, I look forward to providing Swiss citizens abroad with comprehensive and efficient services and support tailored to individual requirements as far as possible.

Important notice

Inform your embassy or consulate general of your email address and mobile telephone number and/or any changes.

Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your representation, etc.).

The latest issue of "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent to all households of Swiss abroad who are registered with an embassy or consulate general either electronically (via email and as an app for the iPad and Android Tablet PCs) or in a printed format free of charge.



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www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

itineris

Online registration for Swiss citizens
 travelling abroad

www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris

Publications

50 Swiss faces in the Council of Europe



50 Gesichter der
 Schweiz im Europarat
 Schweizerinnen und Schweizer berichten
 von ihrem Engagement



ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

A referendum will be held on the following proposals on 22 September 2013:

- Popular initiative of 5 January 2012 "Yes to the abolition of compulsory military service" (BBl 2013 2471);
- Federal law of 28 September 2012 on combating communicable human diseases (Epidemics Act, EpG; BBl 2012 8157);
- Amendment of 14 December 2012 to the federal law on employment in trade and industry (Employment Act, ArG; BBl 2012 9655)

More information can be found on page 14.

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlet, committees, party information, e-voting, etc.) can be found at www.ch.ch/en/votes/

The final referendum date in 2013 will be 24 November.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press, the following new federal popular initiatives had been launched (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- "Freie Fahrt statt Mega-Staus" (Free-flowing traffic instead of congestion) (28.11.2014)
- "Strassengelder gehören der Strasse" (Road traffic charges belong to the road) (28.11.2014)
- "Ja zu vernünftigen Tempolimiten" (Yes to reasonable speed limits) (28.11.2014)
- "Ja zum Schutz der Privatsphäre" (Yes to protection of privacy) (04.12.2014)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found at www.bk.admin.ch under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

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