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Electronic voting: Greater security thanks to verifiability

“Security over speed” is the approach being pursued by the Federal Council with electronic voting.

With this in mind, the Federal Council has amended the legal basis for electronic voting and stipulated more precise security requirements for the systems in line with technical developments. This follows on from the third report on electronic voting in 2013 in which the government set out its strategy for gradual expansion and defined the necessary conditions.

Only once the new security requirements have been implemented will the cantons gradually be able to increase, upon application, the number of voters permitted to use e-voting (currently all Swiss Abroad and 30 % of the cantonal electorate). A key element of the new security requirements is *verifiability*. This means it must be possible to check whether a vote has been correctly transmitted, registered and counted. This will enable systematic manipulation to be identified in good time and with sufficiently high probability, namely before the publication of an election or referendum result, while safeguarding the secrecy of the ballot.

Verifiability will be introduced in two stages. *Individual verifiability* will enable voters themselves to check that their vote has been transmitted as they intended, using individual *verification or check codes*. Eligible voters will receive the applicable code lists with the voter identification card. There will be one code per list designation and per candidate for elections, and one code per possible answer for referenda. After casting the vote but before definitively depositing it into the electronic ballot box, a code will be sent back to voters for every candidate voted for or answer submitted (yes, no, blank) which they can compare with the code on their check list. If the codes match, this will indicate to voters that the vote has been transmitted as they intended, in other words without manipulation. They can then definitively deposit the vote into the

electronic ballot box. Individual verifiability will be deployed by all e-voting cantons for the first time at the federal referendum on 8 March 2015. The introduction of individual verifiability will give the cantons the opportunity to apply to the Federal Council for an increase in the limit from 30 % to 50 % of the cantonal electorate.

Universal verifiability is a check to ensure that the vote has been correctly registered and counted in the electronic ballot box. This check will be carried out not by the voters themselves but by validators (trustworthy third parties, such as the Electoral Commission, election observers, volunteers or interested parties) using mathematical means of verification.

If a system is both individually and universally verifiable, this is referred to as *complete verifiability*. Implementation in the three Swiss electronic voting systems is scheduled for 2016. The cantons will then be able to request that the Federal Council abolish the cantonal limit meaning they can provide electronic voting to all their eligible voters.

In addition to the introduction of verifiability, the cantons will also have the systems audited by an entity authorised by the Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS).

Zurich and Glarus (re-)introduce electronic voting

The canton of Zurich was one of the three pilot cantons in the electronic voting project but it ended the trials in 2011. On 1 January 2014, the canton of Zurich joined the Electronic Voting Consortium. The canton of Glarus followed suit on 1 July 2014. Both cantons are intending to give their Swiss citizens abroad who are eligible to vote the chance to cast their votes electronically for the first time in March 2015.

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Electronic voting at the 2015 National Council elections

Electronic election was successfully deployed in the four cantons of Basel-Stadt, St. Gallen, Grisons and Aargau at the 2011 National Council elections. 22,000 eligible Swiss voters abroad had the opportunity to vote electronically. This option is to be made available to even more eligible Swiss voters abroad at the next National Council elections. All cantons involved in the electronic voting project have made a declaration to the Federal Chancellery that they will offer electronic voting at the National Council elections on 18 October 2015.

The vast majority of eligible Swiss voters abroad will be able to take part in elections and referenda electronically

With the introduction of e-voting in Zurich and Glarus, from March 2015 fourteen cantons – Berne, Lucerne, Zurich, Glarus, Fribourg, Solothurn, Basel-Stadt, Schaffhausen, St. Gallen, Grisons, Aargau, Thurgau, Neuchâtel and Geneva – will provide their compatriots abroad with the opportunity to vote electronically. So, for the first time, a large majority of the approx. 135,000 Swiss Abroad registered on an electoral roll will be able to use e-voting. In Neuchâtel and Geneva, some of the electorate living in the canton will also be able to cast their vote electronically.

Council of States elections for the Swiss Abroad

Eligible Swiss voters abroad from the canton of Basel-Stadt will also be able to take part in the Council of States elections for the first time on 18 October 2015. The cantonal parliament approved a corresponding amendment to the cantonal constitution and law in November 2013. This means that Swiss Abroad are now entitled to vote in Council of States elections in twelve cantons – Basel-Land, Basel-Stadt, Berne, Fribourg, Geneva, Grisons, Jura, Neuchâtel, Schwyz, Solothurn, Ticino (only for voters whose home canton is Ticino) and Zurich.

FEDERAL CHANCELLERY, NADJA OBRESCHKOW,
HEAD OF THE ELECTRONIC VOTING CANTONS AND OPERATIONS SUB-PROJECT

Canton of Zurich: New central electoral roll for the Swiss Abroad

From autumn 2014, the city of Zurich will administer a central electoral roll for the Swiss Abroad on behalf of the canton. As of the vote on 30 November 2014, all Swiss citizens entered on the electoral roll



Kanton Zürich

in the canton of Zurich who reside abroad will thus receive their voting documents from the city of Zurich. The city will also count the votes. The election and referendum results of Swiss living abroad will therefore no longer be added to the results of the Zurich communes but instead shown as a separate constituency. The results of the "Swiss Abroad" constituency will be available from 12 noon (CET) on voting Sundays at www.wahlen.zh.ch

Unchanged point of contact for the Swiss Abroad

The point of contact for registration and de-registration as well as changes of address in the electoral roll will remain the Swiss representation where the Swiss Abroad are registered. General information on the opportunity to vote in the canton of Zurich at federal level and at Council of States elections is published at www.stadt-zuerich.ch/ausland-ch

Basis for e-voting trials

The new central electoral roll will enable e-voting ballots to be implemented efficiently. The canton of Zurich plans to give the Swiss Abroad entered in the electoral roll the opportunity to vote electronically as an alternative to the written vote from 8 March 2015. The previous e-voting system is currently being developed further in cooperation with a consortium of eight other cantons in order to meet federal government's latest security requirements and to improve user-friendliness.

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE CANTON OF ZURICH,
EDITH WIEDERKEHR, HEAD OF ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

Canton of Glarus: E-voting for the Swiss Abroad

The Cantonal Council in Glarus gave the green light for the introduction of electronic voting for eligible Swiss voters abroad in summer 2014. Glarus thus became the fourteenth canton to approve the introduction of e-voting. Preparations at the Cantonal Chancellery are in full swing. The objective is to enable the approx. 600 eligible voters in Glarus residing abroad to cast their vote via the Internet for the first time on 8 March 2015. They will receive a new voter identification card containing additional details. The opportunity to vote in person at the ballot box or to use the postal vote will continue to exist.



The system that will be used is the one originally developed by the canton of Zurich, which has since been deployed by nine cantons (Electronic Voting Consortium consisting of the cantons ZH, AG, SG, GR, SO, TG, SH, GL and FR) and is constantly being improved. The electoral roll for the Swiss Abroad will continue to be administered by the Glarus communes, which means there is no change in terms of registration for the Swiss Abroad.

The canton of Glarus also plans to enable the Swiss Abroad to vote electronically at the 2015 National Council elections. The Cantonal Council will decide on how to proceed after five trials. The long-term objective is the introduction of the new voting system for the entire electorate in Glarus.

CHANCELLERY OF THE CANTON OF GLARUS,
ANINA WEBER AND MICHAEL SCHÜEPP

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Publications

The brochure "Switzerland – EU: Free movement of persons. Salaries, immigration, AHV/IV... Questions and answers" has been updated. It provides information on the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons and answers questions on salaries, employment, business, immigration and social welfare institutions in relation to the free movement of persons.

The updated anthology of information sheets entitled "The Switzerland-EU Bilateral Agreements" has been published. It provides an overview of Swiss policy on Europe and explores the key bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU. The regularly updated information sheets can be found at www.eda.admin.ch/europa

The brochure and anthology can be ordered free of charge in German, French and Italian (art. no. 201.600.D, 201.600.F, 201.600.I and art. no. 201.337.d, 201.337.f, 201.337.i) from FOBL, Federal Publication Sales, CH-3003 Berne, www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch.

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Federal referenda

Three proposals will be put to the vote on 30 November 2014:

- Popular initiative of 19 October 2012 "Schluss mit den Steuerprivilegien für Millionäre (Abschaffung der Pauschalbesteuerung)" – (Stop the tax privileges for millionaires (abolition of flat-rate taxation));
- Popular initiative of 2 November 2012 "Stopp der Überbevölkerung – zur Sicherung der natürlichen Lebensgrundlagen" (Stop overpopulation – safeguard our natural environment);
- Popular initiative of 20 March 2013 "Rettet unser Schweizer Gold (Gold-Initiative)" – (Save our Swiss gold (gold initiative)).

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlet, committees, party statements, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at www.ch.ch/abstimmungen.

Referendum dates in 2015: 8 March, 14 June, 18 October (federal elections), 29 November.

Popular initiatives

No new federal popular initiatives had been launched by the time issue no. 5/2014 of "Swiss Review" went to press.

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

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