

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 44 (2017)
Heft: 5

Rubrik: Top pick : Polo Hofer

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Download PDF: 28.04.2025

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Polo Hofer



“Tscho zäme, es isch schön gsy!” (Bye, everyone, it’s been nice!) With these words, Polo Hofer bade us farewell in his official death notice. It was a fitting goodbye, regardless of whether Polo penned it or not. Despite all his passion and seriousness, this unconventional singer always took a laid-back attitude to life. Now he has fearlessly taken a step into the hereafter, whatever that may bring. “I’m not afraid of dying,” he said in one of his last interviews. “I’m curious to find out what’ll happen.”

Bernese-born Hofer started his career in the 60s as a singing drummer in a soul band. But his big breakthrough came in the following decade when he, his band Rumpelstilz and the classic song “Kiosk” introduced the world to dialect rock. He was the first to prove that you could break into the pop charts with Swiss-German texts. That may be taken for granted nowadays, but in the 70s it was a complete novelty.

Polo Hofer remained the undisputed authority on dialect rock for the rest of his life. He founded the Schmetterband, then Polo’s Schmetterding. His song “Alperose” became a timeless classic performed in dialect. In 2006, TV viewers voted it “the greatest Swiss hit of all time”.

It seemed Polo Hofer would always be around. But on 22 June, at the age of 72, the singer lost his long drawn-out battle with cancer. Switzerland mourned its national hero and was discomfited by the realisation that it must somehow get by without this pioneering spirit. That in itself will take some getting used to.

Yes, it really was nice. Tscho, Polo!

MARKO LEHTINEN

CHF 100 for payments abroad

UBS has decided to charge transaction fees of 100 francs from 1 October onwards for certain types of payment orders from Switzerland to accounts abroad. This will affect non-standardised orders submitted by post, email or telephone. UBS charges 60 francs for such payments domestically. Consumer protection organisations say the bank wants to use the fee hike to increase its revenues in order to offset currently low interest rates.

New exports record in the first six months

Swiss companies sold more abroad than ever between January and June of this year. Exports rose by 4.4 %. The pharmaceutical and chemical sector was the main factor driving exports to a new record high of 109.6 billion francs. According to the Federal Customs Administration, chemical and pharmaceutical products accounted for two thirds of the increase. Exports of medicines and active ingredients climbed 7 % to a new record high.

No priority for Swiss nationals in Neuchâtel

The Neuchâtel section of the SVP has withdrawn its Swiss-first initiative “Les nôtres avant les autres”. This proposal by the cantonal section of the SVP was based on the “Prima i nostri” campaign in Ticino. The initiative, which was launched in February, was withdrawn before the 21 August deadline for the collection of signatures. The cantonal section realised it was very unlikely that it would gather enough signatures by the deadline.

Happy retirement in Switzerland

Switzerland, Norway and Iceland are the countries offering the best quality of life worldwide for pensioners. These are the findings of the latest global retirement index drawn up by French bank Natixis. Switzerland has thus successfully defended its second place behind Norway. Eight of the top ten countries in the index are in western Europe. New Zealand, the best-placed non-European country, was ranked fifth behind Sweden.



Illustration Keystone/Peter Gut