

Switzerland in figures : beard business

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Beard business

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Trimmed beards for better security! From 1 November 2020, police officers guarding the Federal Palace are only allowed to have beards of up to 50 millimetres in length. Longer beards are a “security issue”, says the Federal Security Service. Facially hirsute policemen have since been transferred to other posts.

380

However, length is not the only thing that matters at the so-called International Alpine Beard Festival. Pius Sidler, reigning champion in the “Natural Alpine Beard” category, not only sports a 380-mm beard, he also cuts a very authentic and dignified figure. Anyone who wishes to put up a challenge will have to wait until the next festival on 3 October 2021 in Seewis (Grisons).

1750

Incidentally, a flowing beard made by hand in Switzerland from real buffalo hair costs up to 1,750 Swiss francs and is a product beloved of St Nicholas lookalikes across the country. Switzerland’s many dedicated St Nicholas associations make tens of thousands of visits to families every year, but they had a hard time of it in 2020. Demand for their services fell amid the pandemic. At least they had plenty of time to care for their beards instead.

46

However, healthcare workers are anything but idle at the moment. “Clapping for carers” is all well and good, but no other profession is currently haemorrhaging as many people as healthcare. Around 46 per cent of all qualified personnel change careers, often at a young age. The main reason that leavers give is that they are chronically overworked due to staff shortages – a situation exacerbated every time one of their colleagues calls it a day.

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In these turbulent times, it’s the little things that count. Take the Swiss-invented REX peeler. Dating back to 1947, it is the epitome of frugality, sleek design, and timelessness. Zena Swiss has been producing and selling a million of these patented kitchen utensils every year since 1969. If you want to know how useful this humble peeler is, ask Betty Bossi (see page 14).

FIGURES COMPILED BY MARC LETTAU

Readers give “Swiss Review” good marks – and have a clear idea of what they want

A very large proportion of “Swiss Review” readers rate our magazine as “good” or even “very good”. Many of them also have clear ideas as to how we could improve the publication. These are the results of our reader survey.

MARC LETTAU

How would readers describe “Swiss Review”? We are a trustworthy, informative magazine that provides unbiased reporting on relevant issues in a clear and comprehensible manner. This is the overriding consensus among those who took part in our reader survey in summer 2020. The Research Center for the Public Sphere and Society (FÖG) – the University of Zurich’s independent body specialised in media research – conducted the survey. According to social scientist and survey coordinator Jörg Schneider, one specific quality stands out in the results: “A very high percentage of readers think that ‘Swiss Review’ is a trustworthy publication”.

The verdict from our highly diverse, multilingual, worldwide readership was positive overall, with 42 per cent giving the magazine top marks (“very good”) and 38 per cent scoring us as “good”. A further 17 per cent are more or less satisfied, while under 3 per cent marked us as poor or very poor.

But this is just a rough snapshot. Marks varied – albeit marginally for the most part – depending on gender, age, and country of domicile. For example, the under-25s and the over-65s share a slightly more positive view of our magazine compared to age groups in between. And we consistently received slightly better marks from women than from men. Geographical distance also played a role, with people living in places like South America or Australia more inclined than EU expatriates – our main readership community – to score us higher.

According to our readers, “Swiss Review” also has weaknesses. Around 10 per cent believe that its visual appearance can be improved. This opinion came more from online readers than from readers of the print edition. “Swiss Review” is politically biased, according to 12 per cent of readers, half of whom accuse us of being too government-friendly and too afraid to speak our mind. The other half accuse us of exactly the opposite, saying that we are too critical of Switzerland, and that our position verges on “socialist”. According to Schneider, this relatively small contingent – and the views they express – confirm, if anything, that our magazine has, in his words, a “good command of controversial political issues”.