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Autor: Lettau, Marc
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Swiss Abroad aiming for the Federal Palace

MARC LETTAU

It is an exceedingly high hurdle to overcome, but this has not deterred another group of candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” from standing for election to the National Council. One of the difficulties is that there is no dedicated electoral constituency for the “Fifth Switzerland”. Swiss Abroad simply vote in the canton in which they most recently lived. Those who wish to stand for election must also do so in “their” canton. They must rely on a cantonal party to add them to an election list. Switzerland’s former ambassador to Germany, Tim Guldemann, is to date the only Swiss Abroad who has managed to reach the Federal Palace. He was elected from the SP Zurich list in 2015.

A tricky question of strategy

It has not always been easy for the parties to strike the right balance in this regard. Sometimes they have lots of expatriate candidates, like the SP and SVP four years ago. Sometimes they have very few Swiss Abroad standing for election. The SP had 30 candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland” in 2019. It now has just one Swiss Abroad hoping to win the voters’ trust: Pascal Cuttat (Nairobi, Kenya).

By the time of going to press, “Swiss Review” had received notification of the following candidates for the National Council:

SVP

GENEVA: Grégory Leutert, Hungary; Marc Van Oost, Luxembourg. LUCERNE: Inge Schütz, president of SVP International, Belpberg/Stockholm; Nicolas Szita, London. SCHAFFHAUSEN: John McGough, Hungary; Björn Stahel, Norway.

SP

BERNE: Pascal Cuttat, international crisis manager, Kenya, SP men’s list for Berne.

FDP

There are no Swiss Abroad standing for the FDP. However, the party has a list of domestic candidates who intend to represent the interests of the “Fifth Switzerland”. This list will soon be

available on the FDP International website (under “Wahlen”/“Élections”): fdp-international.com/wahlen.

Centre

The Centre had not supplied any names by the time of our editorial deadline but was intending to have expatriate candidates standing in St Gallen, Thurgau and Ticino.

Greens

The party was in the process of drawing up expatriate lists in a number of cantons but could not supply any names by the time of our editorial deadline.

Green Liberals

BASEL-STADT: Wanja Kaufmann, Sweden; Thomas Willhelmi, Germany; Andrea Frey, Italy; Thomas Häni, Germany. GENEVA: Franz Muheim, UK; Antoine Belaieff, Canada; Bastien Debiève, Spain; Dominique Caillat, Germany. VALAIS: Valérie Biermann, Switzerland/Canada.

Candidates from the OSA committees

The leading committees of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) – the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) and the “Fifth Switzerland” parliamentary group – also have members who are standing for the National Council and Council of States. According to OSA President Filippo Lombardi, these candidates are important: “They all represent and bring the interests of the Swiss Abroad to bear in parliament, while ensuring that the views of those living abroad are incorporated in the policies of their respective parties.”

OSA Executive Board

Carlo Sommaruga, Council of States (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Laurent Wehrli, National Council (FDP, Vaud, standing for re-election); Franz Muheim, UK, National Council (GLP, Geneva).

Parliamentary group

Leading members: Martina Bircher, National Council (SVP, Aargau, standing for re-election); Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter, National Council (Centre, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Roland Fischer, National Council (GLP, Lucerne, standing for re-election); Nicolas Walder, National Council (Greens, Geneva, standing for re-election).

Recommendations from umbrella organisations (example of Israel):

Regional expatriate umbrella organisations can also make voting recommendations. Swiss Community Israel (SCI), for example, approved a list of the following candidates at its extraordinary general meeting:

National Council

Sarah Wyss, CSA member (SP, Basel-Stadt, standing for re-election); Eric Nussbaumer (SP, Basel-Landschaft, standing for re-election); Andri Silberschmidt (FDP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Claudia Friedl (SP, St Gallen, standing for re-election); Marianne Binder-Keller (Centre, Aargau, standing for re-election); Sonja Rueff Frenkel (FDP, Zurich); Fabian Molina (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election); Laura Riget (SP, Ticino).

Council of States

Carlo Sommaruga (SP, Geneva, standing for re-election); Daniel Jositsch (SP, Zurich, standing for re-election).

Explaining its recommendations, SCI said that the candidates in question had “specifically looked after the interests of the Swiss Abroad”.

SCI organising its own courier service

Will the votes of the Swiss Abroad arrive in Switzerland on time? This question, one frequently asked in places outside the EU, has also been preoccupying Swiss voters in Israel, who have taken matters into their own hands. According to its representative Erich Bloch, SCI is going to organise its own courier “because of the importance of these elections”. A Swiss expatriate will bring the sealed ballot envelopes to Zurich’s main post office in person. Bloch: “There is no other option, because the Israeli postal service is so unreliable.”

Our online edition has a continually updated list of candidates: revue.link/candidates

