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Cover picture:
The red carpet will be rolled out for the traditional New Year’s reception for
the diplomatic corps in January, trade unionists and supporters of the left-wing
parties will celebrate Labour Day under red flags on 1st of May, and a large
variety of groups will organise demonstrations to voice their concerns and
demands in the public arena throughout the year. The Bundesplatz and the
Federal Palace have been Switzerland’s political centre for more than a century.

Content
Information services of the Federal Chancellery, the Departments,
Parliamentary Services and Federal Courts
Jeanmaire & Michel AG

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35th edition, 2013
Dear Reader

In no other country is the government put to the test as often as in Switzerland. Voters decide on political issues at the ballot box three to four times a year when they decide on proposals from the Federal Council and parliament, as well as on initiatives and referendums. In almost three-quarters of all votes, the people side with the Federal Council, thereby regularly confirming the Federal Council’s policies. This trust is essential, especially in a political system such as ours where the people have the final say. It provides us with a basis to tackle the major challenges of the future with confidence; whether it is Switzerland’s economy or its position as a financial centre, or the relationship with Switzerland’s main trading partner, the EU. The risks and opportunities related to migration also need to be addressed. Following the decision to phase out nuclear power, major challenges also await in terms of energy policy. The same holds true for our large-scale infrastructure. These examples give an idea of the scope of these challenges.

The Federal Council’s successful track record lies in the fact that the government always takes account of Switzerland’s federalist structure, including around 2500 communes, 26 cantons, four language regions, cities and mountainous regions. The Federal Council and parliament make allowance for these factors. Before the Federal Council takes a decision, it listens to all interested parties in a consultation process and tries to take into account as many legitimate interests as possible.

The Federal Council and parliament have agreed on a four-year legislature plan for the current legislature period, lasting from 2011 to 2015. The plan sets out specific and, for the first time, measurable objectives for all policy areas. An important goal is for Switzerland to maintain its competitiveness, in economic terms, but also in education and research. Since the beginning of the year these three areas have been brought together in one department, the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER, formerly the Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA. Education, research and innovation are fundamental to our society and to economic performance. The new department reflects this reality.

‘The Swiss Confederation – a brief guide’ provides a wealth of information about our political system, our government, parliament, the federal administration and the federal courts. It also describes the structure of the state and federalism. The texts in this brochure are the product of close cooperation between the Federal Chancellery and experts from the Parliamentary Services, the departments and the Federal Supreme Court. The photos were taken by Julia Brütsch and portray some of the people who are at work on Switzerland’s behalf.

I hope you enjoy reading this brochure!

Corina Casanova
Federal Chancellor
The Swiss government

The Federal Council

ORGANISATION OF THE FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION OR

Where the 38 000-strong federal staff work

Federal Chancellery FCh

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Federal Department of Finance FDF

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

FEDERAL SUPREME COURT AND THE FEDERAL COURTS OF FIRST INSTANCE

The Judiciary

You can find up-to-date and detailed information about the Swiss authorities at www.admin.ch. This site links to the Federal Council, parliament, federal administration and Federal Supreme Court websites.
‘I want to do my utmost for our citizens.’
Mr Maurer, how are you enjoying the office of president?

I like being able to represent Switzerland. I'm less comfortable with taking centre stage. What interests me in this office is not personal attention or glamour, but the work that I can do for my country.

What will the priorities be in your presidential year? What are your signature themes?

Everything must be done that can benefit Switzerland. I want to strengthen the cohesion of the Federal Council as an entity. That can only happen by consensus. Consensus, however, should not exclude a clear decision-making process. Sometimes it is also necessary to force decisions through referendums. I want to be there for the people and take their concerns seriously. They are entitled to that.

Furthermore, international steadfastness is important, so that the interests of Switzerland can be safeguarded confidently.

Where does Switzerland currently stand? And where should it be a year from now?

Compared with other countries Switzerland’s economic situation is outstanding. Unfortunately there are also people who are envious. Therefore, we have to consistently defend Switzerland’s interests and again demand more respect in negotiations with other countries.

And what are the key issues? Finances, jobs, foreign relations, security.

World economic crisis, armed conflicts, tougher, personified debates – as president the people expect answers, solutions and mediation from you. How do you intend to give people in our country hope?

I don’t think the Swiss people expect me to give them hope. The Swiss are very realistic when it comes to assessing Switzerland’s ‘power’. We Swiss don’t solve the world’s problems. The people of Switzerland are pragmatic and know this.

The Swiss want to work and be able to put some money aside; they want security and don’t appreciate being patronised by the state. Wherever possible I want to do my utmost for the security and freedom of our citizens.
What role will you play internationally as president?

Switzerland’s international role should not be exaggerated. Switzerland is a small country and plays a modest international role.

I see my task in safeguarding Switzerland’s interests. It cannot be that when it comes to give and take, our country is always the one to give.

The presidential year is bound to involve a heavier workload for you. Will you have time for your family and an opportunity to relax?

It is certainly true that the workload increases and that there is even less time for other things. But it is only for a year, so it’s manageable.

I try to spend as much of my spare time as possible out in the open, as that’s where I’m best able to unwind.

How do you keep fit? Do you exercise regularly?

I am an endurance sportsman. After foot and hip operations, I can only cycle and do cross-country skiing. I try to cycle to work as often as possible. That way I’m able to do some of the exercise that is very important for my well-being and to achieve a sense of balance.

Will you be attending the Engadin ski marathon? Where will you train for it if you can find the time?

The timing of the Engadin marathon doesn’t fit into my schedule very well. The Wasa race, which I always take part in, takes place the week before. After these 90 kilometres, my fitness is not up to participating in another marathon a week later. In the winter, I regularly train in the evening after work – actually at night on the beautiful ski trail in Kandersteg. Conditions on the illuminated trail are perfect and there is always snow – and in the evening the atmosphere is simply magnificent!

Will you come to the National Wrestling Festival in Burgdorf? How many wrestling festivals do you attend each year?

The National Wrestling Festival in Burgdorf is already in my agenda. I also intend to go along to other smaller wrestling festivals. Wrestling has become an absolutely top-level sport. The atmosphere at wrestling festivals is unlike any other sports event. Here I feel a deep link to the traditions we build on. The mood is down-to-earth and regularly gives me ‘goose bumps’. The competition is open and fair and the wrestlers are uncompromising. The beautiful locations where the events are held, the public and the folklore also enhance the tremendous experience.

‘I want to strengthen the cohesion of the Federal Council’

‘I am an endurance sportsman’
Will you also be present at the Alpine World Cup races in Adelboden and Wengen?

I won’t be able to go to Adelboden this year, but I will certainly be going to Wengen. I will also visit the ski championships in Schladming.

As sports minister, to what extent are you able to keep track of the performance of Swiss athletes?

As sports minister I attend many major sports events. But attending disabled athletes’, youth or fringe sports events is equally important to me. Many major sports events (e.g. Alpine ski world championships) can only be held because of the contribution made by the armed forces in terms of infrastructure and in preparing the pistes. When I attend these events, I also try to visit the troops.

As I get to know more and more athletes personally, I follow sporting developments closely and with interest. I share in their successes and failures. When I read the newspaper, I usually turn to the sports section first. Unfortunately I have to observe that athletes and officials increasingly experience pressure from the media.

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The interview was conducted by Swiss wrestling champion Killian Wenger

Swiss wrestling champion Killian Wenger completed Elite Sport Recruit School 3/12, which lasted from the end of October 2012 until mid-February 2013, along with 30 other athletes in the disciplines of football, canoeing, artistic gymnastics, athletics, mountain biking, rowing, shooting and Alpine skiing. Elite sport in the armed forces focuses on developing sporting prowess. Service time is scheduled accordingly and enables recruit school attendance up to the age of 25. A maximum of 80 athletes are selected for the elite sport recruit school every year. The entire recruit school relies on the infrastructure of the Federal Office of Sport FOSPO in Magglingen.
The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

7,954,622 inhabitants
of which 1,815,994 are foreign nationals

Household expenditure
- Household expenditure
  - Food and alcohol-free beverages
  - Entertainment, relaxation, and culture
  - Transportation and communications
  - Housing (including energy)
  - Taxes and charges
  - Social insurance contributions

Foreign nationals (by country of origin)

Language regions
- Main language spoken by the majority (multiple responses possible)
  - French 22.8%
  - German 65.6%
  - Italian 8.4%
  - Romansh 0.6%
  - Other 18.7%

Religion
- Roman Catholic 38.4%
- Protestant 28.9%
- Muslim 5.8%
- Other religious communities 8.8%
- None 21.1%
- No details 2.8%

Gainfully employed by sector
- Agriculture and forestry
- Industry and commerce
- Services

Income (net monthly; CHF)
- >8000.– 19.5%
- 7001–8000.– 8.3%
- 6001–7000.– 12.9%
- 5001–6000.– 20.9%
- 4001–5000.– 25.7%
- 3001–4000.– 12.6%
- <3000.– 2.3%

Age structure (five-year classes, in thousands)

Birthrate: 1.52 children per woman

Employment rate: 62.8%
Finances

Federal revenue 2011

- 

Federal expenditure 2011

- Other expenditure 9.6%
- Social welfare 33.6%
- Foreign relations 5.2%
- Education and fundamental research 10.4%
- Agriculture and food supply 5.6%
- National defence 7.3%
- Transport 12.9%

Developments in revenue (CHF million)

- 

Developments in expenditure (CHF million)

- 

Developments in debt (CHF million)

- 

The Swiss Confederation a brief guide
How long has there been a Switzerland?

According to traditional lore, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden renew their alliance to defend peace in their territories at the beginning of August 1291. In the course of the following centuries further towns and rural areas join this ‘Confederation’ or are conquered or ‘acquired’ by it. This frequently involves violent conflict and internal strife.

The members of the Confederation defend their growing power and independence for two hundred years against a variety of opponents. Following the Swabian War in 1499 against Habsburg Austria and the Swabian League, they can largely conduct their affairs independently of the Holy Roman Empire.

When the Reformation spreads first to Zurich in 1525 with Huldrych Zwingli, then to other areas and finally to Geneva in 1541 under Calvin, the country becomes divided along religious lines. Catholic and Protestant areas increasingly grow apart and go to war against each other time and again up until the early 18th century.

In 1648 the Peace of Westphalia formally recognises Switzerland’s independence from the Holy Roman Empire.

‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’, the cry of the French Revolution of 1789 spreads to Switzerland leading to unrest in several areas.

A French army conquers Switzerland in 1798. The old Confederation collapses, making way for the creation of the Helvetic Republic, which had a unitary centralist constitution imposed by the French. In 1803 Napoleon Bonaparte dictates the Act of Mediation to Switzerland. Six new cantons with equal rights are formed from former subject territories and ‘affiliated regions’.

After France’s defeat by the monarchist great European powers, the old Confederation is ‘restored’ in 1815; the centralist government loses some authority to the cantons, where in some cases the old elites once again assume power.

After 1830, during the period known as the ‘Regeneration’, about half of the cantons adopt liberal constitutions which guarantee their citizens economic and political freedoms. This leads to disagreement between liberal and conservative cantons as to how the Confederation should be shaped.

These tensions lead to the creation of a special alliance (‘Sonderbund’) among the conservative catholic cantons, culminating in the Sonderbund War in 1847. After a brief military campaign by federal troops, the seven cantons of the special alliance surrender.

In 1848 the majority of cantons accept the federal constitution and the modern federal state is founded. Numerous areas which were previously the responsibility of the cantons, such as military service and customs, postal services and coinage, are centralised and unified. Switzerland becomes a single judicial and economic area.

For many, the general franchise introduced for men in 1848 does not go far enough; they campaign for direct democratic rights and in 1874 achieve the introduction of the right to referendum in the revised Federal Constitution and in 1891 the introduction of the popular initiative.

Towards the turn of the century the various political movements organise themselves as parties. The Social Democratic Party (SP) is founded in 1888, the Radical Free Democratic Party (FDP) in 1894 and the Catholic-Conservative People’s Party, with the opening of the Strasbourg-Basel line in 1844, the first railway came to our country four years before the federal state was founded. Three years later, the first train to run entirely on Swiss territory travelled between Zurich and Baden; known as the ‘Spanisch-Brötli’ (‘Spanish pastry’) train, it made four trips daily in both directions. According to popular legend, the train was named after a speciality of the town of Baden which was brought to the gentlefolk of Zurich by the new means of transport.
Switzerland is spared from involvement in the First World War (1914–1918), but the difficult social conditions in many sections of society as a result of the war lead to a general strike in 1918. The strikers are unsuccessful in pushing through many of their demands, such as the 48-hour working week and the introduction of old-age insurance. The following year, however, the National Council is elected by proportional representation for the first time and the working class is now fairly represented. This brings the dominance of the Radical Free Democratic Party in parliament to an end.

In 1920 Switzerland accedes to the League of Nations founded the previous year, on condition that it will not be required to participate in any military campaigns.

With the election of Rudolf Minger to the Federal Council in 1929 the Farmers’, Trade and Citizens’ Party founded in 1917 (renamed the Swiss People’s Party SVP in 1971) is represented in government for the first time.

The global economic crisis of 1929 leads to increased unemployment and to the devaluation of the Swiss franc in 1936.

The agreement of 1937 in the machine and metalworking industry to ensure industrial peace, the recognition of Romansh as the fourth national language in 1938, the development of the Alps from 1940 onwards into Switzerland’s military stronghold, and ultimately the first Social Democratic member of the Federal Council in 1943 contribute to Swiss cohesion in difficult times. Switzerland is able to avoid involvement in the Second World War (1939–1945).

Although it had acceded to the League of Nations a quarter of a century earlier, Switzerland does not initially join the United Nations when it is created in 1945 on the grounds of neutrality. However, it does join the UN’s subsidiary organisations, many of which are headquartered in Geneva.

The federal Old Age and Survivors’ Insurance (AHV) is introduced in 1947.

With the election of a second Social Democrat to the Federal Council in 1959, the composition of the government is for the first time largely proportional to the larger parties’ share of the popular vote.

After an unsuccessful initial attempt in 1959, the electorate and the cantons grant women the right to vote and participate in elections at federal level in 1971. In a number of cantons, women have already enjoyed equal political rights for quite some time.

Following a series of popular votes, firstly in the canton of Bern and then in particular in its French-speaking districts, as well as ultimately at federal level, the canton of Jura is created in 1970 becoming the country’s 26th canton.

In 1984, Elisabeth Kopp (FDP) is elected to the Federal Council, the woman first in government in Switzerland’s history.

In 1988, voters reject the popular initiative to disband the armed forces.

In 1992 voters reject membership of the European Economic Area (EEA).

In 1999 the people and the cantons approve the totally revised Federal Constitution, which enters into force in 2000.

Switzerland becomes a full member of the United Nations in 2002. In the same year, the first bilateral agreements with the European Union enter into force. A series of agreements in other areas ensures the continuation of the bilateral path.

In 2003, for the first time since 1872, a member of the Federal Council is not re-elected. CVP Federal Councillor Ruth Metzler has to relinquish her seat to the SVP representative Christoph Blocher.

Four years later, in 2007, Christoph Blocher experiences a similar turn of events when the Federal Assembly elects his party colleague Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf to the Federal Council. She and her cantonal party of Graubünden are subsequently expelled from the national SVP in 2008, and she joins the newly founded Conservative Democratic Party (BDP).

Following the resignation of Federal Councillors Moritz Leuenberger (SP) and Hans-Rudolf Merz (FDP) in 2010, the Federal Assembly elects Simonetta Sommaruga and Johann N. Schneider-Ammann as members of the federal government. For the first time in Swiss history there are more women than men in the Federal Council.

On 14 December 2011 the Social Democrat, Alain Berset, is elected to take the seat of his party colleague, Micheline Calmy-Rey, in the Federal Council.
A UNIQUE POLITICAL SYSTEM OR
Swiss democracy
Anyone who is unhappy with a new law can call for a referendum, and anyone wanting to amend the Constitution can launch a popular initiative – in both cases a specific number of signatures have to be collected (more information on p. 17).

Popular initiatives are often backed by specific interest groups, such as political parties, unions or associations, which seek to achieve something for the benefit of their members and supporters.

The initiative for an unconditional basic income, for which these two initiative committee members are seeking to drum up support from their fellow citizens, has a broader focus: it aims to benefit everyone and, according to the initiative text, provide the entire population with a decent standard of living. If the initiative comes about by October 2013, and if it is approved by a majority of the people and the cantons in the federal vote, the level and financing of this basic income would be set out in a law.

And anyone unhappy with that new law can call for another referendum and collect the required signatures.
Switzerland is a nation established by the will of the People and composed of several ethnic groups with a variety of languages and religions. It has been a federal state since 1848. There are about two dozen federal states worldwide; Switzerland is the second oldest after the United States of America and is organised in three political levels: the communes, the cantons and the Confederation.

2408 communes Communes are the smallest political units in Switzerland. There are currently 2408 communes, but their number is in decline as smaller communes are tending to merge together in order to carry out their tasks more efficiently. Roughly one fifth of the communes have their own parliament, especially the communes that are towns or cities. Four fifths of the communes, however, still make direct democratic decisions at the communal assembly, where all inhabitants who are entitled to vote may participate. In other words, the People are not represented by councillors, but make decisions themselves and elect the communal council (executive).

In addition to the tasks that are allocated to them by the Confederation and their canton, such as managing the registry of residents or organising civil defence, the communes also have their own responsibilities, including those relating to schools, social services, energy supplies, road construction, local planning, taxes, etc. The communes regulate these matters to a large extent independently.

The communes’ level of autonomy is determined by the individual cantons, and can therefore vary considerably from place to place.

26 cantons The next largest political units are the states, which are known as cantons. They are the states that originally united in 1848 to form the Confederation, each relinquishing part of their sovereignty to the Confederation. Jura is an exception. It is the only canton that was created in the 20th century. On 1 January 1979, it separated from Bern to become a canton in its own right.

Under the Federal Constitution, all cantons have equal rights, and in comparison with the situation in other countries, they have a high degree of independence. Health care, education and culture are among the policy areas where they enjoy a large degree of latitude.

Each canton has its own constitution, and its own parliament, government and courts.

The size of the parliament varies between 58 and 180 members, who are all elected by the people, in most cantons by a system of proportional representation.

The 5- or 7-member governments are also all elected by the people; in 24 cantons by a simple majority system, while in Zug and Ticino the cantonal council is elected by proportional representation.

Direct democracy in the form of a People’s Assembly still exists only in Appenzell Innerrhoden and Glarus. In all the other cantons, the People vote exclusively at the ballot box.

The small commune of Kyburg with a population of 500 souls bordering on the south of Winterthur is dominated by its castle, which was originally built around a thousand years ago. Thanks to their extensive estates and seigneurial rights, the counts of Kyburg were among the most important aristocratic dynasties between the Rhine and the Alps. The lineage died out in 1263, and the Habsburgs, who inherited their estate, sold it to the City of Zurich in 1424 due to lack of money. The City of Zurich incorporated the estate into its territory and made the castle the seat of Zurich’s provincial governor until 1798.

Thurgau’s coat of arms is a reminder of the former importance of the Kyburg dynasty. It depicts the golden lions rampant of the counts, although on a background of white and green rather than black. Today’s Thurgau was ruled under joint sovereignty from 1460 to 1798, as a subject territory conquered and jointly governed by the Swiss Confederates. It was Napoleon who granted the canton equal status in 1803, along with other variously dependent territories of Switzerland, such as Vaud and St. Gallen. These regions also display in their coats of arms the colour green for freedom, a colour otherwise scorned until the French Revolution.
The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

SWISS DEMOCRACY

Who elects who?

In Switzerland, the People are the supreme political authority

Under the Federal Constitution, the People are the supreme political authority. The People comprises all adult men and women who hold Swiss citizenship, some 5.16 million citizens, and corresponds to almost two thirds of the resident population. People under the age of 18 and foreign nationals have no political rights at federal level.

The People elect …

... the members of parliament: the legislature

The Swiss parliament, which is the legislative branch of the state, has two chambers: The National Council represents the Swiss population as a whole, and the Council of States represents the 26 cantons; together, they constitute the United Federal Assembly. > pages 22–39

Parliament elects …

... the government: the executive

The Swiss government comprises the seven members of the Federal Council as well as the Federal Chancellor, who are each elected by the United Federal Assembly for a four-year term of office. > pages 40–75

... the Supreme Court: the judiciary

The supreme judicial authorities are the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne and in Lucerne, together with its three courts of first instance: the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court, both in St. Gallen. > pages 76–81

... the Attorney General

The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) is responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal offences that are directed against or substantially affect the interests of the Swiss Confederation. Examples of offences which come under federal jurisdiction are espionage, crimes involving explosives or radioactive material and abuse of office by federal employees. The OAG is also responsible for cases involving organised crime and terrorism, money laundering and corruption, as well as white-collar crime with international implications.

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Switzerland is virtually the only country in the world where the electorate has such extensive decision-making powers. The longstanding democratic tradition, but also the comparatively small size of the population and the country, as well as a high literacy rate and broad range of media services are crucial to the proper functioning of this particular system of government. Swiss nationals have the following political rights at federal level:

**Elections** or accumulating votes, vote-splitting and deleting names Every four years, the People elect the 200 members of the National Council. All Swiss citizens over the age of 18 may take part in elections, both actively and passively. In other words, they may cast their votes and stand for election themselves. Federal civil servants are required to choose between their profession and elected office should they be elected.

In the cantons with more than one seat in the National Council, eligible voters have a number of options to nominate their favourite candidates:

They may indicate the names of their preferred candidates in a blank list.

They may use a preprinted list of candidates provided by a specific party, with or without making any changes to the list.

The lists may be modified in three different ways, which may be combined:

Firstly, names can be deleted from the list. Secondly, votes can be split, which means that votes are cast for members of different parties; in other words, a voter can take a name from one list and enter it on another list.

Thirdly, candidates may be accumulated, in other words, they can be entered twice on a list. Parties themselves may also list candidates twice (but no more than twice), thus accumulating votes in advance to enhance their election prospects.

The elections to the Council of States are not regulated at federal level, but all the cantons have settled for popular elections, so that all 246 federal members of parliament are elected directly by Swiss citizens.

**Voting** or if you feel strongly about something Those who are entitled to take part in parliamentary elections may also cast their vote in popular ballots, i.e. all Swiss citizens who have turned 18 and are not incapacitated on grounds of mental illness or debility.

Eligible voters are generally called on four times a year to vote on federal proposals. On average these votes involve three to four proposals that may be adopted or rejected; although in exceptional cases, there may be more than twice that many. Votes are held on people’s initiatives and referendums:

The mandatory referendum applies to all amendments to the Constitution and proposals for membership of specific international organisations. This means that a popular vote must be held. The acceptance of such proposals needs what is known as the double majority – the proposal must be accepted firstly by the popular majority, i.e. the majority of the valid votes cast in the whole country, and secondly by the cantonal majority, i.e. voters must accept the proposal in a majority of the cantons.

New laws and amendments to existing laws and similar parliamentary decisions, along with certain international treaties, are only put to the vote if required by an optional referendum. A popular majority is sufficient for such a proposal to be accepted.

Voter turnout in National Council elections since 1919

Voter turnout has fallen significantly since the first National Council elections using the system of proportional representation were held in 1919. The two main reasons for the comparatively low voter turnout in Switzerland are firstly that voters have frequent opportunities to express their views at the ballot box, not only in elections, but also in votes at communal, cantonal and federal levels. Secondly, elections are not that decisive in this country because power-sharing understandings between the main parties preclude any change of government. Since the introduction of postal voting in 1994, there has been a slight increase in voter participation.

Voter turnout in federal votes since 1971

Voter turnout in recent years has averaged slightly over 40 per cent. Some proposals have drawn far more voters to the polling stations, such as the People’s Initiative for Switzerland without an Army (1989), which brought a 69% turnout, and membership of the European Economic Area EEA (1992), which saw 78% of the electorate vote. Because Swiss citizens regularly have the opportunity to take part in decision making on political matters and other important issues, votes are more important in Switzerland than elections. Parliament in Switzerland has less influence than parliaments in countries that do not have direct democratic instruments.
Popular initiatives or making law the Swiss way

Citizens may request that the People decide on an amendment they want to make to the Constitution. At federal level, unlike at cantonal level, it is impossible to request a new law or a amendment to the law.

For such an initiative to come about, the signatures of 100,000 voters who support the proposal must be collected within 18 months.

A popular initiative may be formulated as a general proposal or – much more often – be presented as a precisely formulated text whose wording can no longer be altered by parliament or the government.

The authorities sometimes respond to an initiative with a direct counter-proposal (generally less far-reaching) in the hope that a majority of the People and cantons will support that instead. Since 1987, the possibility of a double ‘yes’ vote has existed in ballots on popular initiatives: voters may approve both the initiative and the counter-proposal. A deciding question determines which of the two texts will enter into force if both secure a popular majority and a majority of the cantons.

Popular initiatives do not originate from parliament or government, but from the People. They are regarded as the driving force behind direct democracy.

Referendums or voicing disagreement

The People are entitled to have their say on parliamentary decisions.

Federal legislation, decisions of parliament and certain international treaties are subject to an optional referendum: in this case, a popular ballot is held if 50,000 citizens so request. The signatures must be collected within 100 days of publication of the new legislation. The referendum is similar to a veto and has the effect of delaying and safeguarding the political process by blocking amendments adopted by parliament or the government or delaying their effect – the referendum is therefore often described as a brake applied by the People.

Referendums also contribute to political agreement because they prompt parliament to include as many interested parties as possible in the debate on new laws or legislative amendments and thereby allow a compromise to be reached that is supported by a majority, and which is unlikely to fall victim to an optional referendum later on.

Petition

Everyone is entitled to address written requests, suggestions and complaints to the authorities – not just those eligible to vote.

The authorities in turn are required to take due note of such petitions, and although there is no law to say a response must be given, in practice every petition is considered and does receive a reply. The petition may relate to any activity of the state.
WHAT POLITICAL INTERESTS ARE REPRESENTED BY WHOM OR

The four strongest political parties...

Political parties are groupings of like-minded people that have their own philosophies of life – in other words, particular views on political, social and economic issues, etc. They act as a link between the public and state institutions and are essential in a functioning democracy. The party landscape in Switzerland is as varied as the country itself. Normally the four strongest parties constitute the government. However, due to the split within the SVP following the election of Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf in 2008, the largest party in parliament currently has only one member in the Federal Council. All eleven parties give a brief portrait of themselves on the following pages.

SVP Swiss People’s Party

The Swiss People’s Party emerged in 1971 from the Farmers, Trade and Citizens Party. It is the largest party in Switzerland with a 26.6% share of the vote and represents 648 675 voters.

The SVP is committed to an independent and neutral Switzerland and is firmly against Switzerland creeping towards membership of the EU. The debt and financial crisis in Europe shows just how important a streamlined state with healthy finances, low taxes and a high degree of legal certainty is if Switzerland is to remain a strong business location with safe jobs. Migration into our country can no longer be managed independently. In various branches of the economy Swiss workers are being pushed aside by immigrants from the EU and other countries. The burden on our social system is greater as a result. In addition, crime by foreigners and asylum abuse are now commonplace. The SVP calls for improved public safety through the deportation of convicted foreign nationals and the tightening of the Criminal Code.

With this clear policy based on conservative values the SVP wants to safeguard our country’s prosperity, jobs and future.

While parliament re-elected SVP Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer at the Federal Council elections of 14 December 2011, it did not respect the SVP’s justified claim to two seats in the government and thereby installed a centre-left coalition. It was a missed opportunity to establish long term political stability.

SP Swiss Social Democratic Party

Our constitution states that “the strength of a people is measured by the well-being of its weakest members”. The SP stands by this. We are committed to a society in which individuals are free to shape their lives, but in which a social net is in place to catch those at risk of falling.

The SP wants the economy to work for the people and not vice versa. It is not only management that contributes to a company’s success. We are convinced that we would be better served if people considered others and not just themselves.

Switzerland has a solid social net and good public infrastructure. The SP has made a large contribution in that respect. Without the SP there would be no old age pension, no maternity insurance and no votes for women. But that is not enough.

We are convinced that Switzerland can be a fairer, more innovative and progressive society. Environmental pollution and climate change threaten our world and our country. If we make a decisive move towards renewable energies we can protect our environment and create sustainable and innovative jobs. If we place emphasis on education and integration we can provide strong prospects and prevent unemployment. If we invest in cooperative housing construction, we can help avoid speculation and provide affordable homes. In short, the SP pursues policies for the good of all, not just the few.
The Swiss Confederation: a brief guide

**SWISS DEMOCRACY**

**FDP**

**FDP. The Liberals**

- **Party President:** National Councillor Philipp Müller
- **Founded in:** 1894; merged in 2009
- **120,000 members**
- **www.fdp.ch**

FDP. The Liberals stands for freedom and personal responsibility. Citizens should be able to shape their own lives. The state should provide a secure framework for citizens, outstanding schools and modern infrastructure. The liberal movement is represented in the Federal Council by Didier Burkhalter and Johann Schneider-Ammann.

**We want:**

- **Secure jobs.** Our competitiveness is jeopardised by the high value of the Swiss franc. The FDP believes Switzerland needs to shape up to ensure its appeal as a business location and enable Switzerland to lower production costs, ideally without cutting wages. Measures include a flat rate of VAT, new free trade agreements with Asia and Latin America and defence of the bilateral path with the EU. Support for the free movement of persons must be secured through a tougher but fairer migration policy, better infrastructure, education and the encouragement of women and older people to participate in the labour market.

- **Sound social services.** Mountains of debt have already been accumulated due to invalidity and unemployment insurance. The old age pension fund awaits a similar fate in the not too distant future. We must put a stop to this! Reforms are needed across all social institutions and pension funds so that future pensions can be safeguarded.

- **Less red tape.** Absurd red tape and a flood of regulations restrict our freedom and cost SMEs billions each year. Personal initiative and entrepreneurship are constrained. Our party wants simple rules and swift procedures.

**CVP**

**Christian Democratic People’s Party**

- **Party President:** National Councillor Christophe Darbellay
- **Founded in:** 1912
- **www.cvp.ch**

The CVP focuses on families and middle income groups. As a business-oriented party with a liberal-social outlook it seeks a balance between individuals and society, personal responsibility and solidarity. Its approach to coexistence is based on a Christian view of humanity and society. The party is committed to the internal and external security of the country. The CVP is represented in the Federal Council by Doris Leuthard, who holds the important environment, transport, energy and communications portfolio.

**Main themes:**

- **Families:** These form the backbone of our society and therefore need a strong framework, which includes a good work-life balance, low taxes and strong purchasing power.

- **Economy:** New, secure jobs and prosperity are generated through innovation. In order to promote the Swiss financial centre and the country’s appeal as a location for business, the CVP strives for attractive levels of taxation, outstanding infrastructure and education.

- **Social security:** The CVP believes that the sustainable financing and preservation of social institutions is the greatest challenge in the coming years. This can only be accomplished through targeted reforms and by avoiding unrealistic expansion or cutbacks.

- **Environment policy:** The CVP has long been committed to preserving the planet and pursuing a sustainable climate and environment policy. Ecological and economic interests must be reconciled.
...as well as the seven other political parties in parliament

**The Greens Swiss Green Party**
- Co-Presidents: Adèle Thévenaz Goumaz and Regula Ryss
- 7,500 members
- Founded in 1983
- www.gruene.ch

The Greens are the fifth largest party in parliament. The party has sections in 25 of the 26 cantons. The Greens hold seats in the executives of ten cantons and numerous cities and communes. They are committed to sustainable development, which includes environmental protection, social justice, global peace and rights of citizens. The Greens strive to find long-term solutions and focus on quality and diversity. Their goals for the 2011–2015 legislative period are a rapid and climate-friendly phasing out of hazardous nuclear power and a green economy. The Greens submitted popular initiatives on both goals in autumn 2012. The Green parliamentary group will also continue to campaign for affordable public transport, for fair wages and against new fighter jets.

**BDP Conservative Democratic Party**
- National Councillor: Martin Landolt
- 6,900 members
- Founded in 2008
- www.bdp.info

The BDP was among the winners of the federal elections of October 2011, immediately securing a 5.4 per cent share of the vote. It is a modern, conservative party that takes account of social change and environmental challenges, without jettisoning all basic conservative values. The BDP wants a responsible economic policy, forward-looking spatial planning and a credible security policy. The focus is on solutions. The BDP is the youngest Federal Council party and is represented in the national government by Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.

**EVP Swiss Evangelical People’s Party**
- Party President: Heiner Studer
- 4,600 members
- Founded in 1919
- www.evpev.ch

The EVP is a dependable political force, which has been committed to a Switzerland worth living in since 1919. Based on Christian values such as responsibility, justice and perseverance, the EVP’s practical and solution-oriented policies for the benefit of all people are in the middle of the political spectrum. The party has about 40 representatives in the cantonal parliaments. The EVP wants to support families, preserve God’s creation, reduce debt and secure social services. It calls for an economy that deals fairly with resources and manpower, solidarity with disadvantaged people and protection of human life.

**glp Swiss Green Liberal Party**
- Party President: National Councillor Martin Bäumle
- 3,800 members
- Founded in 2007
- www.grunliberale.ch

A well-preserved environment is the very basis of our existence. We want to preserve a thriving world free of contaminated land so that future generations can also enjoy life. This includes healthy state finances and social institutions. The state should not accumulate debt but instead concentrate on its core activities. Sensible conditions allow the market to function effectively. Personal initiative, entrepreneurship, a sense of responsibility and solidarity are the cornerstones of a liberal society and should be encouraged, as should a high quality education system.
The Swiss Confederation: a brief guide

**SWISS DEMOCRACY**

CSP Obwalden

**Christian Social Party Obwalden**

- **Party President:** Walter Wyrsch
- **Members:** 250
- **Founded:** 1956
- **Website:** www.csp-ow.ch

The CSP Obwalden is only active at cantonal level. It has no affiliations at the national level and has been represented in the cantonal government since it was founded. The party is represented in most communal councils in Obwalden and the mayor of Sarnen is also a member of the CSP. With 8 seats, the CSP Obwalden forms its own parliamentary group in the cantonal parliament. It is represented in all cantonal courts. Its policies are in line with the principles of Christian social ethics and it places importance on a strong economy, genuine solidarity with the weakest in society and the conservation of the environment.

Lega

**Lega dei Ticinesi**

- **Party President:** Giuliano Bignasca
- **Members:** 1500
- **Founded:** 1991
- **Website:** www.legaticinesi.ch

- **Independence:** economic and political globalisation is weakening Switzerland. Switzerland can however hold its own in a fragmented Europe if it safeguards its independence and its freedom.

- **Public services:** the federal government must maintain its public services and ensure equal conditions for all people throughout the country. Privatisations should be avoided whenever possible.

- **Mobility:** Ticino needs better connections to the rest of the country. The Gotthard route is stretched to capacity. Natural hazards and structural problems are jeopardising unrestricted use of this route.

MCR

**Citizen’s Movement of French-speaking Switzerland**

- **Party President:** Eric Stauffer
- **Members:** 1500
- **Founded:** 2005
- **Website:** www.mouvement-citoyens-romand.ch

We are neither right-wing nor left-wing, but are instead committed to social policies, a strong economy and exemplary public safety.

We are in favour of a single medical insurance fund and seek a review of the bilateral agreements with the EU. We are against European competition and the wave of cross-border commuters from neighbouring EU countries and seek to defend the national workforce.

We want an independent, sovereign Switzerland. It is for that reason that we founded the Citizen’s Movement of French-speaking Switzerland and the umbrella organisation, the Federation of Citizen’s Movements of the Alpine Region.
THE LEGISLATURE: NATIONAL COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF STATES OR

The Swiss parliament
Latin inscription above the left stairway leading to the domed hall in the Parliament Building is there to remind members of parliament that their overriding duty is to act in the public interest.

Have all the representatives ever read and actually understood these golden words? And do they always take them to heart during the debates and when making decisions in the chambers? Even if every representative could honestly answer yes to the above questions, representatives do not always need to agree with each other. Depending on political beliefs, opinions on what is in the best public interest differ greatly.

Young people who watch live transmissions of the parliamentary votes in their civic education classes can see this for themselves as all debates in the Federal Assembly are open to the public. This is not the only reason the people’s representatives are advised to keep the public interest in mind when they legislate, but also because in Switzerland, the People are the supreme political authority, and it is therefore the People who always have the last word.
Switzerland has a bicameral parliament: the Federal Chambers, which together constitute the United Federal Assembly. The National Council represents the overall population and the Council of States, the member states of the Confederation, i.e. the cantons. This system reflects the two principles on which the structure of the state is founded: the democratic principle, according to which every vote carries the same weight and the federalist principle, by which all cantons are treated equally. Both chambers are elected directly by the People: the National Council according to standard federal rules, the Council of States according to regulations which vary from canton to canton. In both instances, it is the cantons that are the electoral constituencies.
The Legislative Branch

Proportional representation or majority vote

Seats in the National Council are allocated according to the system of proportional representation. It is called this because seats are allocated in proportion to the share of votes cast.

In National Council elections, the votes for each party are counted first, as they determine the number of seats that are allocated to a party. Then the candidates with the most votes within the parties are elected.

Of course an election by proportional representation only works if there is more than one seat to be allocated. In cantons with only one seat on the National Council there is a majority vote (first-past-the-post): the person with the most votes is elected.

With the exception of the cantons of Jura and Neuchâtel, elections to the Council of States are also held according to the first-past-the-post system. This procedure naturally favours large parties or leading figures with a high public profile. Minority parties go away empty-handed.

The cantons are represented in the Council of States

The small chamber has 46 seats. Irrespective of its population, each canton sends two representatives to the Council, with the exception of the six former half-cantons, which only have one deputy each.

The Council of States members represent their cantons but are not bound by any instructions from them, whether from the cantonal governments or parliaments.
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OR

Representing Switzerland’s 8m inhabitants

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MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATES OR

Representing the 26 cantons

Why some cantons only have one seat in the Council of States

Six cantons which once formed three entities and then subsequently divided used to be considered half-cantons.

These are Obwalden and Nidwalden, which divided well before the founding of the Swiss Confederation in 1291, Appenzell, which divided in 1597 on religious grounds into catholic Innerhoden and protestant Ausserrhoden, and Basel, which suffered a violent split in 1833: the rebellious Basel-Landschaft broke away from the once dominant Basel-Stadt.

This is why these cantons only have one seat in the Council of States and only half a cantonal vote in votes on amendments to the Swiss Constitution.

| ZH | Verena Diener Lenz | GLP | 1949 | 2007 |
| ZH | Felix Gutzwiller | GLP | 1948 | 2007 |
| BE | Werner Lugniohli | CVP | 1958 | 2007 |
| BE | Hans Stöckli | CVP | 1952 | 2011 |
| LU | Konrad Graber | CVP | 1958 | 2007 |
| LU | Georges Theiler | FDP | 1949 | 2011 |
| UR | Isidore Baulmann | CVP | 1955 | 2011 |
| UR | Markus Stadler | GLP | 1948 | 2010 |
| SZ | Peter Fohn | CVP | 1952 | 2011 |
| SZ | Alex Koprech | GLP | 1957 | 2003 |
| GV | Hans Hess | CVP | 1945 | 1998 |
| NW | Paul Niederberger | CVP | 1948 | 2007 |
| AI | Hans Allther | FDP | 1950 | 2004 |
| AI | Ivo Bischalberger | CVP | 1958 | 2007 |
| SG | Karin Keller-Sutter | FDP | 1963 | 2011 |
| SG | Paul Rechsteiner | FDP | 1952 | 2011 |
| TI | Stefan Engler | CVP | 1969 | 2011 |
| TI | Urs Schaller | FDP | 1970 | 2012 |
| SO | Christian Lavrat | SP | 1970 | 2012 |
| SO | Urs Eder | CVP | 1969 | 2011 |
| AG | Pirmin Bischof | CVP | 1999 | 2011 |
| AG | Roberto Zanetti | SP | 1954 | 2010 |
| BS | Anita Fetz | SP | 1957 | 2003 |
| BL | Claude Janiak | SP | 1948 | 2007 |
| SH | Hannes Germain | SVP | 1996 | 2002 |
| SH | Thomas Minder | SVP | 1990 | 2011 |
| FR | Roland Eberle | CVP | 1953 | 2011 |
| GR | Pascale Bruderer Wyss | SVP | 1970 | 2011 |
| VS | Stefan Egeri-Zclis | SVP | 1956 | 2007 |
| TI | Fable Abate | FDP | 1966 | 2011 |
| TI | Filippo Lombardi | CVP | 1956 | 1999 |

The captions below the names refer to (from left to right) political party membership, the year of birth and the year of election to the Council.
Other rules apply to Swiss people living abroad

Swiss citizens living abroad have the option of registering in Switzerland on the electoral roll — either in their home commune or in their former commune of residence. This gives them the right to vote and take part in elections at federal level and even to be elected to the National Council.

However, their eligibility to vote in elections to the Council of States depends on where they are registered as rules vary from canton to canton.

Swiss living abroad only have full political rights in ten cantons where they can take part in National Council and Council of States elections and can also have their say on federal and cantonal matters. These cantons are Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, Graubünden, Jura, Schwyz, Solothurn, Ticino, Basel-Landschaft and Neuchâtel: in the last two cantons they are even allowed a say in communal affairs.

You can find out who said what in the National Council and Council of States in the Official Bulletin - www.parlament.ch
Number of ballot papers distributed: 246

The two councils sit jointly in the National Council Chamber to elect the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellor and the judges of the Federal Supreme Court and to decide on pardons and conflicts of jurisdiction. The members of the Council of States take their seats at the back of the Chamber.
The members of the National Council and the Council of States each have a series of more or less effective instruments to assert their opinion or to pass on that of their electors. They can propose legislative amendments, ask the Federal Council critical questions or assign it work to do.

**Frequency and duration of parliamentary sessions**

The National Council and the Council of States usually meet for an ordinary three-week session in spring, summer, autumn and winter. Committee meetings are held between sessions.

**Part-time politicians**

The 246 members of the National Council and the Council of States devote an average of 60–75 per cent of their working hours to their parliamentary duties. Generally, they also have another job. Representatives take on public tasks and mandates on a part-time basis. The representatives’ double workload regularly gives rise to calls for a full-time parliament.

On the other hand, some say that part-time members of parliament are closer to the People and that their professional knowledge is a valuable contribution to political debates.

**The main tasks**

**Legislation:** The National Council and the Council of States constitute the legislature, which is the legislative power in Switzerland. The two chambers, together referred to as the Federal Assembly, debate all constitutional amendments before they are put to the popular vote. In addition, they prepare, amend or repeal federal acts, draw up federal decrees and approve international treaties. (See also ‘How new laws come about’ on pages 38/39)

**Elections:** The two parliamentary chambers sit together as the United Federal Assembly in order to elect the members of the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellor and the judges to the federal courts. Each year during the winter session, it elects the President and Vice President of the Swiss Confederation from among the seven members of the Federal Council.

In the event of a military threat to the country, the United Federal Assembly also appoints a general as commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

**Control:** The Federal Assembly is responsible for the overall supervision of the federal administration; it decides, among other things, on the federal government’s budget – the level of revenues and expenditure.

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**Sessions 2013**

- Spring session: 4 – 22 March
- Special session (NC): 15 – 17 April
- Summer session: 3 – 21 June
- Autumn session: 9 – 27 September
- Winter session: 25 November – 13 December

(4 December: Election of the President and Vice President of the Swiss Confederation)
THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Instruments

By making a proposal, members can make amendments to pending issues under discussion.

Parliamentary initiatives enable a member to submit a draft bill for an act or to propose in general terms that such a text be drafted. All legislative work takes place in a committee. Parliamentary initiatives are subject to a preliminary examination.

A motion obliges the Federal Council to submit a specific draft bill or decree or to take appropriate measures. A motion requires the approval of both chambers.

A postulate is a form of request requiring the Federal Council to examine and report on whether an act or decree needs to be drafted or if other measures need to be taken.

A postulate can also require the Federal Council to present a report on another issue. A postulate is binding once it is approved by one of the two chambers.

An interpellation enables members of the Federal Assembly to request information on important events or matters relating to foreign or domestic policy affecting the Confederation. A debate can be requested on the response given by the Federal Council.

An ordinary question, in the same way as an interpellation, enables members to request information on important events or matters relating to foreign or domestic policy affecting the Confederation. However, contrary to interpellations, ordinary questions are not put before the Federal Council, but are answered in writing by the Federal Council.

Question time is a procedure used only by the National Council to deal with current issues. During question time, members of the Federal Council appear before the National Council to respond to questions from Council members. Question time, which lasts no longer than 90 minutes, takes place at the beginning of the second and third weeks of sessions.

48th legislature period: an average of 1562 requests at each session

Over the course of the 48th legislature period between 2007 and 2011, the members of the National Council and the Council of States submitted a total of 7812 parliamentary requests:

- 481 parliamentary initiatives
- 1952 motions
- 683 postulates
- 1882 interpellations
- 575 ordinary questions and
- 2239 written questions as part of question time in the National Council.

49th legislature period: 1857 requests during the first session

Over the course of the 49th legislature period (since December 2011) 1857 requests have been submitted so far:

- 123 parliamentary initiatives
- 405 motions
- 208 postulates
- 529 interpellations
- 122 ordinary questions and
- 478 written questions as part of question time in the National Council.
**COMMITTEES AND DELEGATIONS OR**

**Laying the groundwork**

Committees are responsible for preparing items of business and formulating recommendations for their respective Council. They work closely with the Federal Council. In accordance with the Parliament Act, the committees should also monitor social and political developments in their fields of expertise and make proposals as to how new challenges could be tackled and problems solved.

**Who does what and where**

Both chambers each have eleven standing committees: two supervisory committees and nine legislative committees respectively.

Their composition depends on the strength of the parliamentary groups. National languages and national regions are, as far as possible, taken into due consideration. A National Council committee has 25 members and a Council of States committee has 13. Thus, a member of the National Council sits on one or two committees and a member of the Council of States on three or four.

The term of office for committee members is four years with the option of being re-elected. The term of office for committee chairpersons is limited to two years.

**Work and importance of committees**

In contrast to National Council and Council of States sessions, committee meetings are not public. The in camera consultations usually foster an open discussion between members, making it easier to find mutual solutions. The committees then brief the media after their meetings.

Members whose motions have not been carried in the committee can subsequently submit minority proposals at the plenary session.

The councils tend to accept their own committees’ proposals; the most important principles to be followed are therefore set out in the advisory committees.

On average the committees meet for three to four days every quarter. Here the National Council Security Policy Committee (SPC) is at work, joined by Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga.
The Finance Committees monitor the federal government’s spending, review the federal government’s budget and public accounts, and examine proposals for future spending. They are divided into sub-committees that scrutinise the finances of the seven departments. The Finance Delegation, made up of three National Council representatives and three Council of States representatives, continually monitors and supervises the federal government’s finances. The NRLA Supervisory Delegation carries out overall parliamentary supervision of the construction of the New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA).

The Control Committees exercise overall parliamentary supervision. Their tasks include carrying out inspections and visiting agencies. The control committees are divided into sub-committees. In addition, each committee selects three members from its group to form the Control Delegation, whose task it is to scrutinise activities relating to national security and the intelligence services.

The nine legislative committees are concerned with legislation in their specific fields.

### Legislative committees

**Foreign Affairs Committees**: international relations, neutrality, humanitarian aid, human rights, foreign economic policy, European integration, World Bank, IMF.

**Science, Education and Culture Committees**: science, education, genetic engineering, languages, culture, sport, family, youth and equality issues.

**Social Security and Health Committees**: social insurance, health matters, drugs, food, sickness and accident prevention, health and safety in the workplace.

**Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy Committees**: environment protection, national heritage, spatial planning, water supply and regulation, energy, forestry, hunting and fishing.

**Security Policy Committees**: military defence, civil defence, national economic supply, peace and security policy, civilian service, war materiel exports.

**Transport and Telecommunications Committees**: transport and traffic, postal services and telecommunications, media.

**Economic Affairs and Taxation Committees**: national economy, labour, social partnership, prices, consumer protection, private insurance, export risk guarantees, taxation, agriculture.

**Political Institutions Committees**: federal authorities, relations between the Confederation and the cantons, political rights, citizenship, foreign nationals, asylum, relations between the Church and the state.

**Legal Affairs Committees**: civil code, code of obligations, intellectual property, fair trading, data protection, criminal law, military criminal law, parliamentary immunity, amnesty.

### Other committees

The Pardons and Jurisdiction Committee receives applications for pardons concerning sentences handed down by the Federal Criminal Court or a federal administrative authority, as well as for military criminal cases taken to the Federal Court.

The Judiciary Committee is responsible for the preparation of the election and the removal from office of members of the federal courts.

Applications to repeal immunity for Council members and for government officials elected by the Federal Assembly are dealt with by the Immunity Committee (IK-N) in the National Council and by the Legal Affairs Committee in the Council of States.

The Drafting Committee revises the wording of legislation in the three official languages and decides on their final version.

The Legislature Plan Committees are special committees that examine the draft of the Federal Council on the legislature plan for their Councils.

### Delegations

Delegations are mainly called on to cultivate relations with other states; otherwise, they represent the Federal Assembly in international parliamentary assemblies such as the Council of Europe, La Francophonie, the OSCE or NATO.

For current and detailed information on the committees and delegations go to: [www.parlament.ch > Bodies and council members](http://www.parlament.ch)
PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS OR

Taking a common stance

Parliamentary groups comprise members of the same party or parties sharing similar political sympathies. They play an important role in opinion-forming processes, discussing important council business and agreeing on a line that can be followed by council members in the council and in their dealings with the media and the public. At least five members from the same council are needed to form a parliamentary group. In the National Council, belonging to a parliamentary group is a prerequisite for membership of a committee.

This is why parties with fewer than five members are keen to join a group. But they are also courted because the more members a parliamentary group has, the more committees it can sit on and the greater its influence on council business.

Politically speaking, the Federal Assembly is not divided into parties, but into parliamentary groups. All but one member of parliament currently belong to a parliamentary group.

Money paid for a job done
Parliamentary groups are paid a fixed allowance of CHF 144,500 a year, and each of their members receives the additional sum of CHF 26,800. Members of parliament with no affiliation to a parliamentary group do not receive any of this money and are not entitled to sit on a parliamentary committee or have their say in most debates.
The service centre for the Federal Assembly

The Parliamentary Services support the Federal Assembly in the fulfilment of its tasks. They provide a comprehensive service to assist Council members in carrying out detailed and creative legislative work. They plan and organise parliamentary sessions and committee meetings, handle secretarial business and prepare reports, minutes and transcripts, and translations, obtain and archive documents and advise and provide technical assistance to Council members in matters related to parliamentary procedure. Parliament’s backoffice employs 300 staff who share 212 full-time positions under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

General Secretariat
The General Secretariat is responsible for planning the sessions and any related business, and for organisational and procedural matters.

The Central Secretariat is parliament’s general service office. It makes the basic preparations for parliamentary work, manages addresses and compiles lists.

The Information Service maintains contacts with the media and with the general public. It also supports and advises council members, the parliamentary bodies and the heads of service on information and media-related matters.

The Public Relations Service produces communication material on parliament and organises events and guided tours of the Parliament Building. Together with the Federal Chancellery, it also runs the “Political Forum of the Confederation” in the Käfigturm.

The Internet Service maintains the parliament website and offers information on a daily basis on the workings of parliament and its various bodies. During parliamentary sessions, it broadcasts the debates.

The Legal Service provides advice and information on questions of parliamentary law.

Scientific Services
The activities of committees are an important part of parliamentary work. The volume and complexity of business is continuously increasing, which is why each matter is assigned to one of the committees. The committee secretariats form the Committees Service. It plans the committees’ work, and provides them with technical, organisational and administrative assistance, and advises them in particular on procedural and jurisdictional questions.

The spoken word is often no sooner said than forgotten. Every parliament therefore also needs a transcription service. The transcription service used by the Official Bulletin is one of the most modern in the world: the statements of Council members are recorded and relayed for publication on www.parlament.ch almost in real time.

The Documentation Centre is able to provide the information members of parliament need to prepare material for Council decisions or debates.

External Relations and Information
The External Relations Service is the secretariat of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Delegations. It also organises foreign trips for members of parliament and visits to Switzerland by delegations from foreign parliaments, and is responsible for questions of protocol.

The Language Service provides translations for parliament and the Parliamentary Services. The Interpreting Service ensures simultaneous translation of the statements made by members of parliament into the three official languages (German, French and Italian). The Italian Secretariat prepares documents relating to all fields and ensures their publication.

Resources, Security and Logistics
The Personnel Service implements personnel policies and is the contact for training and organisational development.

The Finance and Travel Service is responsible for the preparation and the administration of the budget, accounting and controlling. It arranges for the allowances to be paid to members of parliament and organises their trips.

The Security and Infrastructure Service ensures compliance with security measures, plans and coordinates the use of the building and maintains the rooms and the technical infrastructure in the Parliament Building.

The IT and New Technologies team is responsible for operating and maintaining the entire IT infrastructure used by the Parliamentary Services and the parliamentary groups’ secretariats. It provides all members with personal IT equipment.

The Operations and Usher Service is responsible for the infrastructure of the federal chambers, committees and parliamentary groups. The ushers are available to the chambers at all times during meetings. They also accompany Council Presidents to public events.

The Project and Integration Management Unit is responsible for tasks in the areas of infrastructure, security, IT, document management and e-parl. The e-parl project aims to make all documents necessary for the operations of the councils fully available on the Internet.
The revision of the CO₂ Act

Bringing in new legislation is a complex and at times protracted business. The process takes at least twelve months, but it has been known to take as long as twelve years or more. However, the number of new acts has significantly increased in recent years. On average, every week sees a new act come into force or an existing act amended.

The 1999 CO₂ Act required a reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2010 of 10% compared with 1990 levels. It also required the Federal Council to present timely proposals to the Federal Assembly for reduction targets for the period after 2010. The Federal Council fulfilled its mandate. The following steps had to be taken before the revision of the CO₂ Act:


The first step is when someone thinks there is a need for a new piece of legislation or for an existing act to be amended. This can be an individual member of the electorate, interest groups, members of parliament, or sections of the administration, cantons or the Federal Council.

In this case it is the Federal Council that instructs the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC in February 2008 to prepare a draft revision of the CO₂ Act by mid-2008. The Federal Office for the Environment FOEN, which is part of DETEC, is responsible for this task.

At the same time, a committee submits the popular initiative “for a healthy climate” — with 115,689 valid signatures to the Federal Chancellery.


The Federal Council commissions DETEC to conduct consultation proceedings on the draft revision of the CO₂ Act. The draft revision provides for two alternatives: the first places emphasis on emissions reduction measures on the domestic front, and the second focuses on compensating domestic emissions by purchasing certificates abroad.

During the consultation proceedings, the cantons, federal courts, political parties, business federations and other organisations are all able to submit their comments on the draft and propose amendments.

At the same time, the Federal Council rejects the healthy climate popular initiative, because it could prove to be too rigid both in view of international climate policy developments and in terms of the limitation of domestic emissions reduction measures.

The Federal Council therefore intends to submit the revised CO₂ Act to the Federal Assembly as an indirect counter-proposal to the popular initiative.


The FOEN compiles the roughly 200 responses received to the consultation into a report. Responses are overwhelmingly in favour of the first alternative, whereby emissions reduction is achieved mainly through measures taken at home; the second alternative receives hardly any support.

The FOEN drafts a dispatch on Swiss climate policy after 2012. On the one hand, the dispatch lays out the healthy climate popular initiative and recommends that it be rejected; on the other, it outlines the draft developed as an indirect counter-proposal to the popular initiative.


The Federal Council approves the dispatch on Swiss climate policy after 2012, together with the draft revision of the CO₂ Act and the federal decision on the rejection of the recommended popular initiative. The Presiding Colleges of the National Council and the Council of States notify the National Council of the item of business, as this will be the first of the two chambers to address it.


The Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy Committee of the National Council (ESPEC-N) conducts the preliminary examination of the modification of the CO₂ Act and the popular initiative and consults the ‘Climate Initiative’ committee, as well as other interested parties.

The National Council deliberates on the amendment of the act in spring and summer session 2010 and decides to discuss the popular initiative at a later date.

Unlike the Federal Council, it intends to achieve a reduction in emissions through domestic measures alone and decides on a goal of a 20% reduction. At the same time, it incorporates an option in the draft act, allowing the Federal Council to increase the reduction goal up to 40% if necessary.

On 1 June 2010, the National Council adopts the draft revised version of the CO₂ Act as an indirect counter-proposal to the healthy climate popular initiative and decides to extend the deadline for addressing the popular initiative by a year.
The waste incineration facility at Warmbächliweg in Bern was built in 1954 and shut down at the end of 2012.

The new Forsthaus energy generation facility incinerates twice as much waste per year, namely 110,000 tonnes, but emits 57,000 tonnes less CO₂.

The Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy Committee of the Council of States (ESPEC–S) accepts the Federal Council’s proposal for the most part. Contrary to the National Council’s decision, it favours a reduction goal of 20% through the partial purchase of foreign certificates.

The Council of States considers the proposal for a total revision of the act and holds a detailed consultation where each article of the draft is discussed separately. It accepts the proposals of its advisory committee for the most part and adopts the draft amendment on 8 March 2011. Since this version does not correspond with the National Council’s version on all points, the chambers proceed to the resolution of differences.

During the resolution of differences, the item of business is again submitted first of all to the National Council, which at this point focuses only on the provisions still under debate. The item of business is then sent to the Council of States, which, as second chamber, addresses the remaining differences before it is sent back to the National Council.

After the third discussion of each individual article, the National Council adopts the amendments proposed by the Council of States. In the final vote on 23 December 2011, both chambers adopt the draft of the total revision of the CO₂ Act.

The proposal is published in the Federal Gazette, thereby launching the 100-day referendum period, which lasts until 13 April 2012.

Due to the delays caused by the resolution of differences, the National Council and Council of States approve an additional extension of a year to address the healthy climate popular initiative.

The two chambers finally adopt the draft proposal for the federal decree on the popular initiative. The Federal Assembly declares the validity of the popular initiative and recommends that the people and the cantons reject the initiative.

The committee withdraws the healthy climate initiative on condition that no referendum is held against the total revision of the CO₂ Act.

The referendum period for the revised CO₂ Act expires without having been used. The healthy climate initiative is therefore withdrawn. The revised CO₂ Act takes effect from 1 January 2013.

The waste incineration facility at Warmbächliweg in Bern was built in 1954 and shut down at the end of 2012. The new Forsthaus energy generation facility incinerates twice as much waste per year, namely 110,000 tonnes, but emits 57,000 tonnes less CO₂.
THE EXECUTIVE: FEDERAL COUNCIL AND DEPARTMENTS OR

The Swiss government
Clearly in a cheerful mood, the members of the national government pose for their official group portrait in front of their meeting room in the lobby of the west wing of the Federal Palace.

Although Switzerland finds itself at the start of 2013 to be in ‘good shape’ on the whole compared with its European neighbours, it still faces a host of domestic and foreign policy challenges – more so than in the past.

Despite their different backgrounds, political and social views, the seven members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor appear to be keen to tackle the various problems and find good solutions. They all see their work as a joint responsibility, and each and every one of them wants only what is best for Switzerland.

Whether they are male or female, French-speakers or German-speakers, left-wing or right-wing, the current members of the Federal Council can draw on their 435 years of cumulated life experience to work towards securing a good future for our country.
The Federal Council

The Swiss government comprises the seven members of the Federal Council, who are elected individually by the United Federal Assembly for a four-year term of office. The president is elected for one year only and is regarded when in office as prima inter pares, or first among equals. He chairs the sessions of the Federal Council and undertakes special ceremonial duties. The Federal Chancellor acts as the government’s chief of staff.

The composition of the Federal Council according to political party since 1848

The diagram shows the representation of the political parties in the Federal Council since 1848 from the forty years in which its members all came from the Radical Free Democratic Party to the current composition.
The colour-coded organisational units are mostly independent, which is why information on their staff, revenue and expenditure is not included in the respective department figures.
THE EXECUTIVE

Federal Department of Finance FDF
Head of Department: Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf
Staff: 8300
Revenue: 63 931 000 000.–
Expenditure: 16 539 000 000.–

General Secretariat GS-FDF
State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF
Federal Finance Administration FFA
Federal Office of Personnel FOPER
Federal Tax Administration FTA
Federal Customs Administration FCA
Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication FOITT
Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL
Federal IT Steering Unit FITSU
Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA
Swiss Federal Audit Office SFAO
Swiss Alcohol Board SAB
Federal Pension Fund PUBLICA

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER
Head of Department: Johann N. Schneider-Ammann
Staff: 2100
Revenue: 351 000 000.–
Expenditure: 11 635 000 000.–

General Secretariat GS-EAER
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI
Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG
Swiss Federal Office for Agriculture FONES
Federal Housing Office FHO
Federal Office of Transport FOT
Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA
Federal Office of National Economic Supply FONES
Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFoE
Federal Roads Office FEDRO

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC
Head of Department: Doris Leuthard
Staff: 2000
Revenue: 274 000 000.–
Expenditure: 10 088 000 000.–

General Secretariat GS-DETEC
Federal Office of Transport FOT
Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA
Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFoE
Federal Roads Office FEDRO
Federal Office for the Environment FOEN
Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE

Federal Chancellery FCh
Head of Department: Corina Casanova
Staff: 200
Revenue: 1 000 000.–
Expenditure: 68 000 000.–

Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner

THE EXECUTIVE

Staff: no of full-time positions as at 31.12.2012, rounded figures
Revenue/expenditure: 2013 estimate, rounded figures

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Role of the Federal Council As the highest executive authority of the country, the Federal Council is primarily responsible for the activities of the government. It must continuously
- assess the situation arising from developments in the state and society and from events at home and abroad;
- define the fundamental goals of state action and determine the resources needed to attain them;
- plan and co-ordinate government policy and ensure its implementation;
- represent the Swiss Confederation at home and abroad.

Furthermore, the Federal Council must regularly and systematically scrutinise the workings of the federal administration in order to ensure its efficiency and the legality and practicality of its activities. The Federal Council also takes part in the legislative procedure by
- leading the preliminary proceedings of legislation;
- submitting federal acts and decrees to the Federal Assembly;
- enacting ordinances in so far as the Federal Constitution or federal law empowers it to do so.

Finally, the Federal Council drafts the budget and the state accounts. The Federal Council generally meets for one ordinary session each week and takes decisions on some 2000 to 2500 matters each year. In addition to extraordinary sessions, which are convened at short notice as and when the need arises, a number of special meetings are also held each year, which are dedicated to the consideration of especially complex and important issues.

The sessions of the Federal Council are chaired by the President of the Swiss Confederation, or in his absence, by the Vice President. They can last between three and six hours.

The departments and the Federal Chancellery prepare the agenda, but it is the Federal Council that takes the decisions as a collegial body. Each member of the Federal Council has one vote. The Federal Chancellor is entitled to propose motions and speak, but has no vote.

Collegiality
The Federal Constitution stipulates that “the Federal Council takes decisions as a collegial body.” Each federal councillor has equal rights as a member of the collegial body. The President of the Swiss Confederation chairs the sessions, but has no more rights than the other members. Decisions are made together. As a rule, the Federal Council avoids putting matters to a vote, as it is normally clear from the discussion what the majority view is. Once a decision is made, members of the Federal Council must remain unanimous when presenting it to the public, even if it is contrary to their personal view or to the position of their party.

Consensus
Switzerland’s culture of consensus corresponds to the belief that decisions are only lasting if they are supported not only by the majority, but also by the minority. Important decisions should be made by consensus, which is why the various parties and language regions are included at government level. The seven members of the Federal Council belong to five different parties and hail from cantons in the German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland. A woman was elected to the Federal Council for the first time in 1984. Today there are four men and three women.

From one-party to multi-party government
Switzerland has not always had a multi-party government. After the founding of the federal state in 1848, the Federal Council consisted entirely of members of the Free Democratic Party for 43 years. The first Catholic-Conservative (today’s CVP) member joined the government in 1891, followed by a second in 1919. In 1929, the Federal Assembly elected a member of the Farmers’, Trades’ and Citizens Party (today’s SVP) to the Federal Council. In 1943, during the Second World War, the Social Democratic Party was also brought into the government. In 1959, the four parties agreed to form a government with two Free Democrats, two Christian Democrats, two Social Democrats and one member of the Swiss People’s Party (also known as the ‘magic formula’ 2:2:2:1). This constellation remained unchanged for 44 years. Then, in the 2003 Federal Council elections, the SVP won a seat from the CVP. In 2008, however, the two SVP representatives Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Samuel Schmid shifted their allegiance to the newly created BDP (Conservative Democratic Party). Since Samuel Schmid stepped down in 2009, the SVP has again had one seat in the Federal Council, held by Ueli Maurer. Since then, the formula has been: 2:2:1:1 (2 SP, 2 FDP, 1 CVP, 1 BDP, 1 SVP).
The Federal Chancellery is headed by Federal Chancellor Corina Casanova, who is elected by parliament in the same way as the members of the Federal Council. She has a say in government affairs and can make proposals on matters relating to her field of business. The Federal Chancellor is supported in her work by vice chancellors André Simonazzi and Thomas Helbling, and about 250 employees.

Coordination and monitoring of democratic rights
The Swiss people are called to vote on important political issues three or four times a year. They elect a new parliament every four years. It is the job of the Federal Chancellery to ensure that the electoral process runs smoothly. The Chancellery makes sure that the cantons and communes organise the vote properly. And if parties, organisations, political groups or individuals have a political concern, i.e. they would like something in Switzerland to be changed, the Federal Chancellery is the right place to turn to. Here they receive advice as to the best way to proceed, or what they need to pay attention to when submitting an initiative or launching a referendum.

Vote électronique: a joint project
For now, most Swiss people have only two ways of casting their vote: they can either send it by post or drop it in the ballot box in their commune. In future, people will also be able to vote electronically. The Federal Chancellery is working closely with the cantons to implement the ‘Vote électronique’ project. ‘Security before speed’ is the motto of this complex and long-term project. Following a series of successful pilot projects in three cantons, half of the cantons have been participating in e-voting trials since 2010. An average of around 150,000 voters can now vote electronically at every vote or election.

Planning for the Federal Council
The Federal Council deals with between 2000 and 2500 items of government business every year, which are brought together in a four-year legislature plan which serves as a basis for defining the annual objectives. In its annual report, the Federal Council reports to parliament on whether it has achieved its objectives.

The planning process is conducted by the Federal Chancellery together with the departments. The Federal Chancellery also coordinates long-term planning. The challenges facing Switzerland in the years to come are outlined in the Outlook 2025 report.

Overseeing items of business from draft stage to decision
Federal Council meetings normally take place in the Federal Council Chamber in the west wing of the Federal Palace every Wednesday (Fridays when parliament is in session), starting at nine o’clock sharp. They generally last between three and six hours. Before an item of business reaches the Federal Councillors, it goes through a series of stages which are overseen by the Federal Chancellery. When a draft proposal submitted by a department has gone through the office consultation procedure, the head of department responsible signs the final proposal. His or her fellow Federal Councillors are then given the opportunity to submit their views on it in a joint reporting procedure. Not until this procedure is complete and the Federal Chancellery has ensured that the item of business is formally and legally correct can it be put on the agenda for a Federal Council meeting.

Communication of Federal Council decisions
Immediately after a Federal Council meeting, Vice Chancellor André Simonazzi informs parliament and the public of the most important decisions taken during the session. He comments on the decisions together with a member of the Federal Council or an expert on the subject. The press conference can be followed live at www.tv.admin.ch.

Vice Chancellor Thomas Helbling in turn ensures that all seven departments are informed in detail and in writing about the Federal Council decisions. The Federal Council decisions and reports are published in the Federal Gazette in the three official languages. The new or amended acts and ordinances are published weekly in the Official Compilation of Federal Legislation. The Classified Compilation of Federal Legislation is continuously updated. It provides a complete overview of current law, and is an essential tool for both lawyers and many private individuals.
**The Executive**

**Texts in German, French and Italian**
A multilingual country such as Switzerland requires that all its laws and important parliamentary, government and administrative texts be available in the three official languages. The Central Language Services at the Federal Chancellery ensure that laws, ordinances and treaties are formulated as clearly as possible in German, French and Italian. Many federal government and administrative texts are also translated into Romansh and English. The Language Services of the Federal Chancellery are active both nationally and internationally. In 2013/2014, they will chair the Conference of Translation Services of European States (COTSOES) for the second time. Thirty-six government translation, terminology and interpretation services from 17 different European countries are members of COTSOES, which promotes the exchange of information and cooperation among member services.

**Publications on federal votes and elections**
Three or four weeks before a popular vote is held, the five million eligible voters receive a pamphlet setting out the proposals submitted to the popular vote in a concise and easily understandable manner. A working group led by the Federal Council Spokesperson prepares this information in conjunction with the relevant department. The Federal Council discusses and approves the information. The pamphlet is very much appreciated with about 70 per cent of voters using it as a source of information. When elections to the National Council are held every four years, the Federal Chancellery publishes a brochure explaining the voting procedure and aspects of the Swiss political system.


**Käfigturm: a forum for political ideas**
In their efforts to make the world of politics accessible to as many citizens as possible, the Federal Chancellery and Parliamentary Services run a political forum in the Käfigturm (prison tower) in Bern. Here political issues are presented in a refreshing way for visitors, school classes, tourists and passers-by. Thematic exhibitions are staged along with talks, podium discussions and films. A large selection of information leaflets is available. Political parties and other organisations can hold meetings and small-scale events in the political forum. (www.kaefigturm.ch; www.facebook.com/KaefigturmForum).

**Cross-unit cooperation and automatic archiving**
All employees of the Federal Chancellery work with an electronic records and process management system, which facilitates cross-unit cooperation and automatically archiving important documents. The system also allows recurring procedures to be initiated and executed according to predefined processes.

Under the leadership of Hans-Rudolf Wenger, the Internal Services ensure that the wheels of the Federal Chancellery keep on turning smoothly. The primary tasks of Internal Services include human resources, finance and accounting, logistics, electronic records and process management, information technology, usher service, events management at the von Wattenwyl Haus and the Lohn country residence, and the authentication of signatures for foreign authorities.

**Ensuring transparency and protecting privacy**
Everyone has the basic right to decide whether and how their personal data are used. The Data Protection Act is designed to protect this right. It sets out the conditions under which private persons, state authorities and companies may process our data. The Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner FDPI� ensures that the law is respected and provides advice on issues relating to data protection and the freedom of access to information, for which he is also responsible. Based on the principle that state affairs should be made public, citizens can view federal administration documents simply by applying to do so. If the office concerned refuses the applicant access, the FDPI� can be called upon to mediate.
This could turn out to be a real-life situation: travelling in a foreign country you are ambushed by armed masked men, you are tied up and bundled off to an unknown location. What is the best way to react in this situation?

This vital question is one that members of the Swiss Expert Pool for Civil Peace-building may have to ask themselves when they find themselves caught between warring parties in the world’s crisis regions.

Civilian and police experts deployed by the FDFA on international assignments to promote peace and human rights need to be prepared for this and many other unexpected situations. A two-week training course, which also includes a day of practical exercises, offers them the chance to do so.

How do you remain calm and collected when forced to fend for yourself with no prospect of outside help? How do you cope with the enormous stress? What can you do to ensure that you and other members of the group emerge from such a dangerous situation unscathed?

Claudia Rizzo is an experienced trainer of prospective experts. From a distance, she observes the realistically staged exercises and the reactions of the course participants. At the end of the day, she discusses the experiences with the group and explains what can help to defuse such extreme situations and what to avoid at all costs to improve the chances of getting out unharmed.

Each year around 200 experts are deployed on peacebuilding missions in over 40 countries, both under the auspices of international organisations and as part of Swiss bilateral programmes. They assist in building up state structures, help conduct and monitor elections, or support dialogue and peace talks. In doing so, they help to stabilise conditions in crisis areas and to improve the security of the population.

Claudia Rizzo works in the Expert Pool for Civil Peacebuilding of the Human Security Division of the Directorate of Political Affairs, and is one of around 5400 federal employees at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA.
The FDFA safeguards Swiss interests abroad, and implements the foreign policy adopted by the Federal Council. For the current policy period, which runs to 2015, the Federal Council has decided to place particular emphasis on fostering and expanding relations with neighbouring countries and the European Union as a whole. At the same time, Switzerland intends to step up its efforts to promote stability in Europe and the rest of the world, to strengthen and diversify its strategic partnerships, and to place special focus on emerging economies and multilateral commitments.

Further priorities include developing contacts and ties with Swiss people outside Switzerland. The FDFA wants to use modern technologies to continue improving its services to Swiss nationals who live or travel abroad.

General Secretariat GS-FDFA

The General Secretariat functions as a unit, supporting the day-to-day work of the head of department. It coordinates business for parliament and the Federal Council and is responsible for FDFA communications and information. The General Secretariat is also responsible for financial monitoring and supervising management of diplomatic and consular activities at Switzerland's representations abroad. Promoting equal opportunities within the FDFA is another important part of its remit.

Reporting directly to the General Secretariat is Presence Switzerland, which is responsible for promoting knowledge and general perceptions about Switzerland internationally. This work includes coordinating the Swiss presence at world fairs, such as Expo 2015 in Milan, and at the Olympic Games. Presence Switzerland invites foreign delegations to visit Switzerland, and also runs the www.swissworld.org portal.

The Historical Service (HS) of the FDFA is also part of the GS. The HS records among other things the historical aspects of Swiss foreign policy.

State Secretariat

The State Secretariat plays a leading role in developing and planning foreign policy for submission to the Head of Department. The responsibilities of the State Secretary, who may represent the Head of Department both within the government and externally, include cultivation, coordination, and ongoing development of Switzerland’s bilateral relations with other states, cooperation with international organisations such as the United Nations, and Swiss policies on security, peace and disarmament. He is supported in this role by the Directorate of Political Affairs, which he heads as its director.

Directorate of Political Affairs DPD

Evaluating global challenges, developing foreign policy strategies and identifying emerging tensions and trouble-spots, the Directorate of Political Affairs is where all of the information comes together that allows Switzerland to safeguard its interests abroad. The Directorate of Political Affairs, headed by the State Secretary, handles day-to-day foreign policy business and is the body to which all representations abroad report.

Five geographical divisions are responsible for bilateral relations with the states in their individual regions and for coordination with the federal administration. A further division implements policy within the United Nations and other international organisations and is responsible for Switzerland’s policy as the host country to such organisations.

The Human Security division is concerned with civilian peace building and strengthening human rights. It focuses on the security of the individual and protecting people against political violence, war, and acts of arbitrary brutality. The Sectoral Foreign Policies division ensures that Switzerland maintains coherent positions in the policy areas of finance and the economy, the environment, transport, energy, health and education, and science and space exploration. The Security Policy division is concerned with international security, arms controls, and disarmament.

Switzerland’s representations abroad

Switzerland is represented with around 170 representations abroad (embassies, consulates general, cooperation offices and missions at international organisations). They safeguard diplomatic interests, offer consular services, and are active in international cooperation. Many representations also host other bodies such as Swiss Business Hubs, swissnex, Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia.
**Directorate of European Affairs (DEA)**

**Director:** Henri Gétaz

The Directorate of European Affairs DEA is the Swiss government’s centre of expertise for all issues relating to European integration. The DEA tracks the political and economic aspects of European integration, coordinates Switzerland’s policy on Europe, and provides pertinent information. It prepares decisions and leads negotiations with the EU in collaboration with the specialist offices. At the same time, it observes and analyses developments in the EU and in European law as well as their consequences for Switzerland.

**Directorate of International Law (DIL)**

**Director:** Valentin Zellweger

The Directorate of International Law safeguards the rights and interests of Switzerland that derive from international law. It ensures that Switzerland fulfils its obligations under international treaties and conventions and is pro-active around the world in promoting respect for and continued evolution of international law. In practical terms, this means negotiating, concluding and implementing international treaties. The Directorate’s remit also involves handling assets held by political dictators, the legal aspects of Swiss neutrality, human rights issues and the Geneva Conventions to protect victims of war. The DIL is also responsible for relations with the Principality of Liechtenstein.

The Swiss Maritime Navigation Office, which is the regulatory authority governing maritime shipping under the Swiss flag, is attached to the DIL, because it deals primarily with relations under international law.

**Consular Directorate (CD)**

**Director:** Gerhard Brügger

As a central point of contact, the Consular Directorate ensures the optimum level of public service for Swiss nationals abroad. Its chief purpose is to enable representations abroad to provide consular services reliably and efficiently – for example, with mobile stations to assemble data for biometric passports.

The FDFA helpline (+41 (0)800 24 7 365) handles enquiries round the clock. When Swiss nationals abroad find themselves in difficulty and need help, Swiss Citizen Services within the CD will coordinate between the representations abroad, the relevant organisations and authorities and family members in Switzerland.

At the same time, the CD is also responsible for relations with Swiss nationals living abroad long term. It provides information on all questions relating to emigration and living abroad on its www.swissemigration.ch website.

**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**

**Director:** Martin Dahinden

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation implements the Federal Council’s foreign policy strategy in the areas of humanitarian aid, development cooperation and cooperation with Eastern Europe, as well as in regional and global cooperation. The SDC supports victims of crisis or conflict and the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit SHA provides emergency and reconstruction aid following natural disasters and violent conflicts. Working alongside the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, the SDC also administers what is known as the “enlargement contribution” to new EU member states.

The SDC is a driving force behind sustainable growth in regions suffering great poverty or conflict. It supports rural development, state and administrative reforms, and programmes and projects which improve people’s access to education and healthcare or foster employment and income. Through its cooperation with Eastern Europe, the SDC supports political and economic reform in line with the mandate awarded to it by the Federal Council and parliament.

Multilaterally, the SDC is a member of international organisations, funds and networks which advance technical cooperation and financial aid for developing countries. Playing its part in global programmes, the SDC supports selected innovations and projects relating to climate change, water, food security, migration and health.

The SDC provides regular updates on its work, as well as on deployments to emergency situations and disaster areas. It does so on its website, in a newsletter and in its “One World” magazine, which is available in French, German and Italian (www.sdc.admin.ch/publications).

**Directorate of Corporate Resources (DCR)**

**Director:** Helene Audigier Artho

The Directorate of Corporate Resources manages the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs’ human, financial, logistical, IT and other resources as a centre of expertise and as a service provider. It is responsible for the security of representations and staff. At the same time, it ensures that Switzerland’s network of representations abroad can be run efficiently, providing all the resources needed for smooth operation locally, and for communication and coordination with the Head Office in Bern.

The Department’s Legal Service also forms part of the DCR, as does the Swiss Government Travel Centre, which is responsible for organising international business travel for the whole of the federal administration.
Rebis is not under any stress. She is calmly standing at the feeding gate while her carer, Tanja Kutzer, fits a belt with sensors around her chest. Among other things, the sensors measure Rebis’s pulse rate and show her heart is beating regularly.

The device attached to Rebis’s hind leg provides information about her activity. It records Rebis’s movement patterns – when and how often she stands, walks or lies down, and also measures the humidity and temperature in the stable.

The stable is part of the Agroscope research station located at Tänikon in Thurgau. At this particular Federal Veterinary Office centre for animal-friendly husbandry, Tanja Kutzer and her colleagues carry out research to find out what Rebis and all the other one and a half million head of cattle in Switzerland need for their welfare. Their work includes assessing and improving existing stable-building systems and developing animal-friendly forms of husbandry.

They therefore contribute to the good reputation Switzerland enjoys for agricultural products. The population is concerned about animal protection. It wants to be sure that the needs of pigs and ruminants (cattle, sheep and goats) on farms are taken care of, and that the milk in stores comes from ‘happy cows’.

Rebis’ age (she’s over ten years old, which is well above average for a dairy cow) shows that she is doing well.

Tanja Kutzer is an agricultural engineer working for the Federal Veterinary Office in the centre for animal-friendly husbandry of the Agroscope research centre in Reckenholz-Tänikon and is one of around 2500 federal employees at the Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA.
The Federal Secretariat is responsible for planning, co-ordination and controlling, as it acts as a hub between the federal offices and the head of the department and provides consultancy services for the entire department. Its legal service supervises charitable national and international foundations. The Federal Commission against Racism, the Service for Combating Racism and the Bureau for the Equality of People with Disabilities are affiliated to the General Secretariat.

**Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE)**

**Director:** Sylvie Bannier

The FOGE is responsible for gender equality and equal opportunities at federal level. It is particularly active in the areas of equality before the law, equal pay for paid work, equal opportunities in the field of unpaid work and in the fight against domestic violence. It supports advice centres, initiatives and projects to promote equal opportunities. The Secretariat of the Federal Commission for Women’s Issues is affiliated to this office.

**Swiss Federal Archives (SFA)**

**Director:** Christian Pilts

The SFA evaluates, safeguards, catalogues and raises public awareness of Confederation documents with archival value. The full inventory extends over 50 kilometres and 13 terabytes and includes original documents such as the Federal Constitution, deeds, photos, films, recordings and databases.

In a democratic constitutional state, the archiving of such records is essential for continuity and transparency and it enables citizens to exercise democratic control over government and administrative activities and provides a basis for research.

**Federal Office of Culture (FOC)**

**Director:** Jean-Frédéric Jauslin

The FOC formulates the federal government’s cultural policy. It promotes cultural life in all its diversity and creates the conditions to ensure that it can continue to flourish. It promotes artistic creation and supports cultural organisations and Switzerland’s various linguistic and cultural communities. It ensures the preservation of historic buildings and monuments, areas of local character and archaeological sites. The FOC is the contact point for queries regarding looted art and the transfer of cultural goods. The FOC manages a number of valuable collections, including the federal art collection.

**Swiss Meteorological Institute (MeteoSwiss)**

**Director:** Pascal Strupler

As the national weather and climate service, MeteoSwiss provides weather and climate information, thus making a significant contribution to society, politics, economics and science. The surface observations system, weather radars, satellites, radio sounding and other instruments monitor the weather. In addition to monitoring the weather, to producing weather forecasts, and to warning the authorities and the public in the event of severe weather, MeteoSwiss also analyses climate data, which produces evidence of climate change and extreme weather events and which serves as a basis for developing climate scenarios.

**Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)**

**Director:** Andreas Kellerhals

The FOPH and the cantons are jointly responsible for public health and for developing a national health policy. This includes the upkeep and development of health and accident insurance. The FOPH draws up legal requirements for consumer protection (in particular for foodstuffs, chemicals, medicines, cosmetic products and commodities) and ensures that these laws are observed. It is responsible for monitoring contagious diseases and for protecting the population against radiation.

The FOPH is responsible for national programmes to reduce addiction (e.g. to tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs) and to promote healthy living. It is also responsible for the national HIV/AIDS programme. It regulates academic and postgraduate training for medical professionals and awards federal diplomas in these areas. The office is also in charge of legislation for and the monitoring of biological security, research on humans and transplantation medicine. The FOPH represents Switzerland’s interests in the field of health in international organisations and towards other countries.
Federal Veterinary Office FVO

The FVO is the specialist service for animal welfare. It is committed to safeguarding the health of animals and humans, since healthy animals ensure food safety. The FVO is responsible for animal protection, epizootic disease control and safety in the primary production of food of animal origin. It prepares the national legislation in the areas of animal protection and animal health, and supports the consistent implementation of the law in the cantons. It also supervises cross-border trade of live animals, animal products and food of animal origin, and provides an important contribution to the protection and preservation of animal and plant species and their habitats in its capacity as enforcement authority of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

In addition, the FVO conducts applied research and supports research projects in the areas of its activities. The Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI) is affiliated to the FVO. The IVI is the control centre for vaccines and sera for animals and the Swiss reference laboratory for the diagnosis, monitoring and control of highly infec
tion animal diseases.

Federal Statistical Office FSO

Statistics help to create transparency in relation to social and political issues. The FSO therefore publishes information on the situation and trends in Switzerland in many different areas of life. It provides the quantitative information needed to understand the present and to plan for the future. The Statistical Yearbook, Pocket Statistics and, most importantly, the new internet portal provide an overview of the available information and give links to more detailed statistics. The FSO ensures that the services it provides are scientific, topical, user-friendly and comply with data protection regulations.

Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO

Switzerland has an effective and solid social insurance system, which is an important element in upholding social peace. This needs to be maintained in the future, even under difficult economic conditions. The FSIO ensures that the elements of the social insurance system within its remit are properly administered and adapted in line with new challenges; these are Old Age and Survivors’ Insurance (AHV), Invalidity Insurance (IV), supplementary benefits, occupational pension funds, compensation for loss of earnings for people doing military service and women on maternity leave, and family allowances. In addition, it is responsible at federal level for dealing with issues relating to family, children, youth and old-age, generational relationships and for general socio-political issues. The FSIO oversees the work of the implementing bodies and is responsible for regularly adapting legislation to changing social realities. In some areas, such as start-up funding for child day-care services, it is itself the implementing body.

Swiss National Museum SNM

Three museums – the National Museum in Zurich, the Château de Prangins and the Forum of Swiss History in Schwyz – as well as the collections centre in Affoltern am Albis – are united under the umbrella of the Swiss National Museum (SNM). The permanent exhibitions at the museums present Swiss cultural history from its beginnings to the present, and give an insight into Swiss identity and the rich tapestry of our country’s history and culture.

Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Pro Helvetia is a public foundation supporting projects of national interest which encourage cultural exchange in Switzerland, promote Swiss artistic activity abroad and help to make the arts more accessible to the public. Pro Helvetia complements support for the arts at cantonal and local level. It makes funding decisions independently.
How does a Swiss border guard know what a passport from a South American country looks like? And how can a cantonal policewoman determine whether the foreign identity document she is checking is authentic?

When in doubt they can consult Elisa Gianinazzi’s work. Here she is entering relevant samples into a fedpol database that can be accessed around the clock.

She collects and analyses official documents from around the world at the Coordination Unit for Identity and Legitimation Documents in Bern. The ultraviolet light reveals the special security features. She is taking photographs and providing descriptions of examples of current passports (clockwise from the upper left-hand corner) from Bolivia, South Africa, New Zealand and Kosovo for the database.

If counterfeiting passports used to be relatively easy, it is virtually impossible nowadays. New sophisticated production techniques mean that biometric passports, which have been in circulation internationally for a number of years now, are equipped with elements that are almost impossible to counterfeit. In addition to standard machine-readable strips, extremely thin transparent film and special types of paper are used to secure the document along with an electronic microchip that stores biometric data such as facial images and fingerprints.

This data cannot be modified or copied without going unnoticed. Fingerprints are protected by special security features. Domestic or foreign authorities need authorisation simply to read the data. The Federal Council grants this authorisation only to countries whose data protection levels are equivalent to those of Switzerland.

These sophisticated technical measures have led to a significant decline in the number of forged travel documents in Switzerland. Nevertheless, on average ten attempts to pass off such documents are still uncovered at border controls and checks within the country every day.

Elisa Gianinazzi is a forensic specialist in the Coordination Unit for Identity and Legitimation Documents (Kila) at the Federal Office of Police (fedpol) and is one of around 3000 federal employees at the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP)
Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP

General Secretariat GS-FDJP

Matthias Ramsauer Secretary-General
Christian Baumann Head of ISC

The General Secretariat supports and advises the head of department in her daily work and ensures that the different sections of the department cooperate smoothly. It coordinates business for parliament and the Federal Council; it informs the public via the media or internet of the FDJP's activities and manages human resources and finances for the whole department.

The Information Technology Service Centre ISC-FJPD is also part of the FDJP. It develops and manages IT applications, such as search systems or the register of criminal records, for the justice, police and migration authorities throughout Switzerland. Post and telecommunications services and police informatics also come under the administration of the ISC-FJPD.

Federal Office of Justice FOJ

Michael Leupold Director

The Federal Office of Justice drafts legislation on civil law, criminal law, debt collection and bankruptcy law, international private law and public and administrative law. The office also advises the other agencies of the federal administration on all legislative matters. It is responsible for keeping the register of convictions, the supervision of the commercial register, the register of births, marriages and deaths, the land registry, debt collection and bankruptcy and the execution of sentences and measures. It provides building subsidies for the costs incurred by the cantons for establishments required in the penal system. Operational cost subsidies for youth welfare residential units also help to ensure the quality of the educational work.

The Federal Office of Justice represents Switzerland at international level at the Strasbourg human rights bodies and in many other organisations and is the central authority dealing with international child abductions and adoptions. The Office collaborates with foreign authorities in the spheres of legal assistance and extraditions.

Federal Office of Police Fedpol

Jean-Luc Yez Director

Fedpol employees carry out tasks in a range of areas to protect the population and the Swiss constitutional state. On behalf of the Office of the Attorney General, they investigate several hundred cases of serious crimes a year at federal level. These crimes include terrorism, organised crime and money laundering. Fedpol also supports the cantonal prosecuting authorities in various fields, such as the fight against human trafficking and smuggling or internet child pornography.

Fedpol also ensures the protection of federal authorities and buildings and of persons and buildings requiring protection under international law. Fedpol is also responsible for Swiss passports and ID cards and acts as an intermediary between producers, issuing authorities and Swiss nationals. Fedpol provides central police services throughout Switzerland for national and international partners, such as database operations to search for persons or property and to identify persons and leads. To strengthen the fight against cross-border crime, fedpol also concludes police agreements with individual countries.

Federal Office for Migration FOM

Christian Baumann Director

www.fom.admin.ch

What requirements have to be met for an Indian computer scientist to work in a Swiss company, for a Croatian student to study at the ETH or for an Afghan asylum seeker’s asylum application to be approved? The Federal Office for Migration (FOM) knows the answers. It is responsible for the regulation and administration of residence permits throughout Switzerland for foreign nationals who are interested in working, studying or living in Switzerland. FOM employees decide who receives protection in Switzerland from persecution, according to the legal provisions. The FOM works with the cantons to organise the accommodation of asylum seekers and the return of persons not eligible for protection in Switzerland to their country of origin. The Federal Office for Migration plays a significant role in the development of a legal basis for asylum, immigration, civil rights and immigration. The FOM also coordinates federal, cantonal and communal integration efforts and is responsible for naturalisation at federal level.

Federal Gaming Board FGB

Jean-Mario Jordan Director

www.fedpol.admin.ch

www.fom.admin.ch

www젠 önüne일운/jbm.admin.ch

The FGB is the supervisory authority for casinos in Switzerland. It ensures that casinos offer all their patrons a fair and enjoyable game. It also ensures that casinos fulfil their duty of care and comply with legal provisions to fight money laundering and to prevent compulsive gambling. In addition, the FGB checks whether the profit of specific games is determined predominantly by chance or by the skill of the player. It also investigates illegal gambling in Switzerland. The FGB levies the gaming tax on the casinos’ gross gaming revenue and channels most of the tax into the Old Age and Survivors compensation fund.
Swiss Institute for Comparative Law SICL

‘Other countries, other customs’ is a German saying which is particularly pertinent in Switzerland, a small nation with a wide network of relations with foreign countries. ‘Other customs’, i.e. foreign law, can be of relevance in mixed nationality families or economic relations. But how does one find out about a certain law in Kazakhstan or a judicial decision in Mongolia? The Swiss Institute for Comparative Law SICL provides information on foreign legal systems to courts, authorities and lawyers. The SICL provides reference models and sources of inspiration for the legislative process to ensure that Switzerland can benefit from experience gained in other countries.

Federal Arbitration Commission for the Exploitation of Copyrights and Related Rights

President: Laura Hanzlikler Schneider
Director: Jean-Pierre Bastellini

Anyone who copies, sends or reproduces music outside of the private sphere must pay a royalty to the author. This obligation also applies to literary or audiovisual works. Compensation is not only paid to the artists, but also to anyone who exhibits or sells such work to the public. All these types of compensation are agreed between the Swiss collecting companies and the associations of users concerned and set forth in tariffs. The task of the Arbitration Commission is to examine and approve these tariffs.

National Commission for the Prevention of Torture NCPT

President: Walter Laimgruber

In 2009 Switzerland ratified the UN’s Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, thereby explicitly committing itself to international efforts to combat torture. The task of the National Commission for the Prevention of Torture (NCPT) is to implement this optional protocol in Switzerland. By making regular visits to and checks of Swiss prisons and other penal institutions, the Commission contributes to the prevention of torture and other abuse. The NCPT is made up of experts from the fields of medicine, law and the criminal justice system.

Federal Commission on Migration FCM

President: Walter Laimgruber

As an extra-parliamentary commission, the FCM advises the Federal Council and the federal administration on migration issues, draws up advisory opinions and recommendations and publishes reports. The Commission is made up of 30 members, around half of whom have personal experience of migration.

Federal Audit Oversight Authority FAOA

Director: Frank Schneider

The FAOA ensures that auditing services in Switzerland are conducted correctly. To this end, the Oversight Authority operates a licensing office and maintains a public register with the names of natural persons and legal entities that provide auditing services required by law. In addition, the Oversight Authority supervises auditing companies which provide auditing services for public companies. It cooperates closely with other official oversight authorities, stock exchanges, law enforcement agencies, civil courts and supreme audit institutions abroad.

Federal Institute of Intellectual Property IIP

Director: Roland Grossenbacher

Creative minds can register their inventions and creations with the Institute to protect them from being copied: new technical inventions can be patented, names can be trademarked and shapes or forms protected. The IIP provides information online and over the phone for all those interested and gives support for patent research. The Institute also advises the federal authorities on matters relating to intellectual property and represents Switzerland in this field abroad and in international organisations.

Federal Institute of Metrology METAS

Director: Christian Bock

Swiss products and services are characterised by accuracy, quality and reliability. This requires precise and accurate measurements and testing. METAS is at the forefront of measurement accuracy; it is the place “where Switzerland is at its most accurate.” Through its work and the services it provides, METAS ensures that Switzerland is able to measure and test as accurately as required by business, research and administration. METAS is also preparing the legal framework for metrology and together with the cantons supervises the use of measuring instruments on the market as well as those which are used for public safety and for monitoring the environment.
Lieutenant Colonel Lukas Gieringer is just flying over Affoltern am Albis in his EC635 on course for the Reuss passing over the Isenberg. In reality, he is not flying at an altitude of around 60 metres above the Knonauer Amt, but is in a hall at Emmen military airbase in one of the Air Force’s two helicopter flight simulators.

These flight simulators are mounted on hydraulic legs which reproduce almost 1:1 all the movements and vibrations of a helicopter in flight. The views from the cockpit are computer generated landscapes in which features such as roads, houses and trees are realistically accurate. The sophisticated technology gives trainees a realistic experience of flying.

The flight simulators are used primarily for training purposes as well as for annual basic and continuing training programmes for Swiss professional and militia pilots. Pilots interested in type conversion training to fly a ‘Cougar’ are required to have more than 300 hours of flying experience in other helicopters.

Lukas Gieringer gets pilots to complete all procedures several times, particularly those they would otherwise not be able to carry out in flight due for safety reasons, and trains them to deal with all manner of potential malfunction situations. Their main tasks involve practising all variations of cockpit operations and above all mastering instrument flying.

The specially engineered system can simulate almost all situations realistically, which is why the Air Force counts flight-simulator hours as regular flying hours.

These virtual dry runs on the ground are far less expensive and also help to limit noise pollution and the environmental impact of flying, not just in the Säuliamt but throughout the country.
Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

General Secretariat GS-DDPS

The head of the DDPS has a very wide range of responsibilities and is supported in his daily work by the General Secretariat, a team of specialists from very varied fields that also plans for the medium and long term. The GS manages, coordinates and monitors the use of department funds in the areas of personnel, finances, legal affairs, IT, spatial planning and environment. It is also responsible for security policy strategy, communication, the Am Guisanplatz Library, translation services, the DDPS Damage Compensation Centre and Information Security and Facility Protection ISPP.

Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General

The Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General AFAG ensures that the military courts can fulfil their task independently of armed forces command and of the administration. The Armed Forces Attorney General is the head of the military justice system and highest military prosecutor. He instigates and monitors criminal proceedings in the military courts and fulfils all other procedural obligations and duties assigned to him by the legislature.

Defence

The second D in DDPS stands for Defence, the backbone of the Swiss armed forces in planning, leadership and management. Defence is the largest sector in the department and is headed by the Chief of the Armed Forces, who holds the rank of lieutenant general (three-star general). The Defence sector consists of the Armed Forces Planning Staff and the Armed Forces Joint Staff, the Land Forces and the Air Force, the Armed Forces College, the Armed Forces Logistics Organisation and the Armed Forces Command Support Organisation.

The Armed Forces Joint Staff is responsible for implementing political guidelines and directives on a military strategy level. It is also in charge of development, planning, resource allocation and steering in the armed forces, and ensures the required level of readiness of the forces and operations, whether for the security for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, peace support in the Balkans (e.g. by Swisscoy in Kosovo) or disaster relief for avalanches, flooding or forest fires in Switzerland or abroad.

The Commanders of the Land Forces and the Air Force, also lieutenant generals, bear overall responsibility for training the Land Forces and the Air Force and for preparing ground and air units for action.

The militia officers and professional soldiers are educated and trained at the Armed Forces College. The Logistics Organisation ensures the supply and return of arms, equipment and food, maintenance and infrastructure, medical services and the transport troops. The Command Support Organisation provides all necessary electronic support services.

Civil Protection

The P in DDPS stands for civil protection. Civil protection is an integrated system to provide crisis management, protection, rescue and assistance. In the event of disasters and emergencies it ensures the cooperation of the five partner organisations: the police and fire services, the health service, technical operations and civil defence. A joint management body is responsible for coordinating and managing operations.
Responsibility for civil protection lies mainly with the cantons. The federal government, in particular the Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP takes care of the general planning and coordination of protection against nuclear, biological and chemical threats, early warning and alerting systems and other emergency procedures, training and protective infrastructure. The federal government is responsible in particular for issuing instructions in the event of increased radioactivity, emergencies relating to dams, epidemics and livestock epidemics and armed conflict.

Within the FOCP there are two services with special tasks. The National Emergency Operations Centre in Zurich is responsible for warning and alerting the authorities and emergency services. The Spiez Laboratory is Switzerland’s institute for NBC protection. Its services are often called on by the UN and other international organisations.

**Sport**

The S in DDPS stands for Sport. The Federal Office of Sport FOSPO promotes sports and physical activity for the whole population. Its activities focus on the positive effects of sport and movement: health, education, performance and the economy. FOSPO devises and develops national sports policy and implements the resulting tasks. FOSPO’s most important programme is Youth+Sport, in which around 550,000 young people take part each year in 75 different disciplines. The Swiss Federal Institute of Sports in Magglingen, Bern is one of the most important training facilities in Swiss sport. Its core competencies include teaching, research and development as well as services in the fields of sport and sport science.

In Magglingen and Tenero (Ticino) FOSPO runs state-of-the-art education, training and course centres which are open to universities, associations, clubs and schools.

**Armasuisse**

Armasuisse is the DDPS competence centre for procurement, technology, real estate and geodata. It ensures that the armed forces and civil protection are supplied with the systems, vehicles, equipment and properties that they require. Armasuisse is one of two federal government procurement centres. There is scarcely a household in Switzerland that doesn’t have some Armasuisse product, such as the high quality products produced by the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo) or the personal equipment of a member of the Swiss Armed Forces.

Armasuisse comprises the areas of business development and controlling, resources and support, the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo) and the following areas of competence: command and reconnaissance systems (e.g. procurement of simulators), land systems (e.g. procurement of armoured vehicles), air systems (e.g. procurement of aircraft for the federal government), purchasing and cooperation, science and technology and real estate (managing in the region of 24,000 properties and 24,000 hectares of land belonging to the DDPS).

As armasuisse is responsible for arms and equipment during their entire life cycle, it is also responsible for their liquidation.

**Federal Intelligence Service**

The Federal Intelligence Service FIS has the legal mandate to conduct a global evaluation of the threat to Switzerland, thus contributing directly to the protection of the country with its operative and preventative services. To this end it obtains, analyses and evaluates intelligence before passing on its findings and assessments with the aim of providing a situation analysis suitable for decision-makers at all levels. Particular emphasis is placed on the early recognition of threats and dangers, but also on identifying opportunities for Swiss interests. The FIS deals with topics such as terrorism, proliferation, violent extremism and illicit intelligence gathering, but also with regional security developments, including their military aspects. The Service is supported by a broad network of domestic and foreign partners. It is supervised by various bodies of the administration and by parliament.
This abbreviation, which means that value added tax is included in the total amount, is to be found like this or similarly on every till receipt, every receipt and every invoice in Switzerland.

Whoever sells bread rolls or provides beds to guests or writes texts such as this one has to charge their customers VAT. At the bakery, this currently amounts to 2.5%, in hotels it is 3.8% and in the case of the writer, it is 8%. It is due on practically all goods and services.

A considerable sum of money is amassed in this way. Around a third of all federal receipts come from VAT, i.e. approximately CHF 22 billion annually. That is around CHF 60 million each day.

By carrying out corresponding controls, the specialist Sonja Stettler sees to it that everybody, be it a one-man company or a large corporation, correctly accounts for and pays their taxes.

This is particularly important in the case of a so-called self-assessment tax because not everybody who is subject to it is acquainted with the regulations and some, mainly in young companies, are unsure as to what exactly they have to do. External auditing thereby serves to provide information for taxpayers and to ensure that they are treated equally.

In this company, Sonja Stettler discovers impeccable bookkeeping. However, sifting through the records and comparing the entries in the accounts is time-consuming, which is why she restricts herself to a detailed examination over a representative period of time, as a rule one year.

After all, she and her colleagues can check only some of the approximately 330,000 entities subject to VAT: some 9,000 per annum, which is less than 3%.
The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

General Secretariat GS-FDF

The General Secretariat functions in a similar way to a control centre of the Swiss Federal Railways. Just like trains, business documents, draft legislation, press releases and many other documents which are drawn up by experts in the General Secretariat or in the federal offices must be at the right place at the right time. The General Secretariat plans, coordinates and checks all PDF items of business and supports the Head of Department in carrying out her tasks. The employees make legal enquiries, put together dossiers, provide information to the public, translate and publish documents and also train interns. Just like the trains of the Swiss Federal Railways, the required documents are ready promptly and will arrive at their destination in good time.

State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF

International financial and tax matters have recently gained in importance and Switzerland has also been affected by this. In order to address the resulting challenges more efficiently, the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF was established in 2010. The SIF defends Switzerland’s interests in international financial, monetary and tax matters and represents the country – alongside the Swiss National Bank – in influential bodies such as the Financial Stability Board and the International Monetary Fund. The SIF draws up the national regulatory framework to ensure that Switzerland can be a secure, competitive and globally recognised financial centre and location for business. It leads negotiations on tax issues between Switzerland and the EU or other major partners. The SIF is also actively engaged in global efforts to fight money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

Federal Secretariat of Finance FDF

Attached to the FFA are the Central Compensation Office CCO and Swissmint, the federal mint. The CCO is the executive body of the Confederation which deals with old age and invalidity insurance (AHV, IV) and compensation for loss of earnings. Swissmint produces the country’s coinage.

Federal Office of Personnel FOPER

Around 38,000 people work in the federal administration, which offers interesting and innovative working conditions. As a modern and attractive employer, the federal administration also contributes to the country’s strong standing in the international competition among locations for work. FOPER’s policies ensure that the federal administration remains an attractive employer and continues to attract and retain the best people for the job.

Federal Tax Administration FTA

Without tax receipts there would not be enough money to finance old age pensions, transport, education, research and many other public activities. The FTA raises a major part of the Confederation’s receipts and so ensures that the Confederation can fulfil its public duties. It ensures that VAT, direct federal tax, withholding tax and other duties are levied properly and efficiently. At an international level, the FTA represents Switzerland on technical tax issues in conjunction with the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF and is responsible for providing administrative assistance in tax matters. The FTA prepares legislative amendments in the field of domestic tax law and contributes to the healthy functioning and development of a modern tax system.

Federal Customs Administration FCA

Switzerland generates every second franc abroad. The FCA has the task of operating what will soon be the only customs border in western and central Europe in such a way that import and export businesses and regular travellers notice as little as possible. Swiss businesses should be able to operate on markets without being disadvantaged in terms of their competitors. The FCA also levies a series of consumption taxes such as mineral oil tax and tobacco duty.

The Border Guard is the uniformed and armed section of the FCA and is the largest national civilian security organisation. Besides carrying out customs services and customs-related policing activities, its duties include tracing persons, vehicles and stolen property, fighting drug smuggling and document fraud and carrying out duties in the migration sector.
Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication FOITT

People expect to have electronic access to the administration’s services in all areas, whether it is to order a new passport or file tax returns. The FOITT plays a major role in providing a link between the Confederation and the public, whether in terms of access to information and services via the Internet, or linking checkpoints at airports and borders with administrative units in Bern. It provides the federal offices with modern, uniform workplace systems and efficient access to the central information repositories and applications.

Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL

Why are most of the offices in the federal administration filled with the same light grey furniture? That is because federal employees are not allowed to simply order their desks and chairs from any furniture manufacturer that takes their fancy. A thousand desks, ten pallets of ballpoint pens, tonnes of printer paper – standardised items purchased in bulk are less expensive than individual purchases. Quotes must be sought and the best offer wins the contract. This is one of the responsibilities of the FOBL, which also builds, maintains and manages the federal government’s properties, whether it’s the Federal Palace, administrative buildings, museums, castles or embassies around the world.

Federal IT Steering Unit FITSU

Little happens nowadays without the help of IT, and this is also the case in the federal administration. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are employed to make administrative activities as cost effective and secure as possible. This is a key objective in the Federal Council’s IT strategy. The Federal IT Steering Unit FITSU is responsible for seeing that the strategy is applied. FITSU issues guidelines for the administrative units and centrally manages certain standard ICT and IT services required by many federal administration staff and offices in the same or similar form and quality. FITSU also coordinates the work between the Confederation, cantons and communes in the field of e-government.

Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA

Switzerland is one of the world’s leading financial markets. The financial sector is therefore extremely important for the country’s economy. Supervision of the core areas of the financial sector (banks, insurance companies, stock exchange, etc.) is undertaken by FINMA. It has to adapt its activities to changes in the financial markets and the ever-increasing complexity of the task at hand in order to be able to make its contribution to protecting financial market clients and trust in the integrity and competitiveness of Switzerland’s financial centre.

Swiss Federal Audit Office SFAO

As the Confederation’s supreme audit institution, the SFAO has the right to request information from all federal employees about their work. It endeavours to identify deficiencies and weaknesses and improves the performance of federal activities by convincing staff of its expert recommendations.

Swiss Alcohol Board SAB

The SAB was set up in 1887 to implement alcohol policy and apply related legislation. It regulates the market for alcohol by means of taxes, controls and restrictions on trading and advertising. Alcosuisse, the SAB’s profit centre, supplies ethanol to the Swiss economy. As part of the total revision of the Alcohol Act, the ethanol market is to be liberalised and the taxation and monitoring system will be revised. The aim is to create a coherent alcohol policy under which uniform provisions would exist for the trade in all alcoholic drinks, particularly taking into account the protection of minors.

Federal Pension Fund PUBLICA

57,000 active insured persons, 45,000 pensioners and total assets of CHF 33 billion: these are three impressive sets of figures which oblige PUBLICA to take due care. As one of the leading Swiss pension funds, PUBLICA has been relatively successful in withstanding the difficult conditions on the investment markets in recent years, and at the end of 2011 had a positive coverage ratio of 103.1%. PUBLICA is an autonomously organised collective fund which currently has 20 affiliated pension schemes. The supreme management and strategy body is the PUBLICA Pension Fund Commission. (Further information: www.publica.ch)
Winter will return for sure

That is why it is important to check that the storage tanks here in Oberbipp do in fact contain as much heating oil as declared by the importers. In Switzerland liquid fuel and heating oil importers are required to maintain compulsory stocks as a proportion of the amount imported. These stocks ensure continued supply even in the event of a crisis – come what may.

Stefan Menzi of the Federal Office for National Economic Supply, which is responsible for supervising all compulsory stocks, accompanies Pascal Kräuchi and Nico Hartmann, who check the content of each of the thirteen tanks using measuring tape and a thermometer.

The amount of heating oil is calculated according to the temperature and fill level measured down to the last millimetre. The largest of the 24-metre-high tanks holds 24 million litres, and all thirteen tanks together hold almost ten times as much.

Compulsory stocks are not only held for oil products such as petrol, diesel, heating oil and kerosene, but also for other essentials such as food and medicine.

Switzerland’s stockpiling system helps to tide over supply crises and shortages caused by incidents of all kinds, such as technical disturbances, political tensions in the source countries or terrorist attacks. This can disrupt imports of vital goods for a time and rapidly lead to shortages of commodities and countless other products.

Switzerland’s security of supply does of course come at a cost, albeit a modest one; less than half a centime on the price of a litre of petrol, for example.

Stefan Menzi is deputy head of the Compulsory Stocks section at the Federal Office for National Economic Supply and is one of around 2500 federal employees at the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER.
Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAGER

General Secretariat GS-EAER

Monika Rühl
Secretary-General

The General Secretariat is the staff and coordination office of the department and supports and advises the head of department in his daily work. Its brief also involves planning, coordinating and monitoring the department’s activities and it is responsible for overseeing the results and assessing the effects of its decisions. The General Secretariat provides human resources, finance and logistics, accounting and translation services for the whole department, as well as IT services through its IT Service Centre.

For administrative purposes the Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau FCAB and the Central Office for Civilian Service ZIVI report to the General Secretariat. The FCAB is the federal government’s central office for economic policy-related concerns on the part of consumers. It is also responsible for ensuring the declaration of origin of wood and wood products and together with SECO runs a product safety information and reporting office.

In Switzerland, young men who object to doing military service on grounds of conscience may perform civilian service instead. ZIVI, which has regional centres in six locations throughout Switzerland, ensures that there are enough civilian service positions available and prepares those performing civilian service for deployment at its training centre.

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch
Director

SECO is responsible for all core issues concerning economic policy, and deals with a broad range of issues including economic forecasts, the labour market and world trade. SECO’s aim is to promote sustainable economic growth by creating a favourable economic framework.

Employers and employees should be able to benefit from growth-oriented policies, the removal of trade barriers and a reduction in Switzerland’s excessively high prices. On the domestic front, SECO acts as an interface between business, social partners and government. It supports the regionally and structurally balanced development of the economy and ensures the protection of employees. With its labour market policy it contributes to preventing and tackling unemployment and consequently to upholding social peace. SECO also helps to ensure access to all markets for Swiss goods and services and investment. In terms of foreign economic policy, it is active in the formulation of efficient, fair and transparent rules for the world economy.

The Swiss Accreditation Service SAS is affiliated to SECO and is responsible for the appraisal and accreditation of public and private inspection and conformity assessment bodies (laboratories, inspection and accreditation agencies) in accordance with international standards.

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

Mauro Dell’Ambrogio
State Secretary

Education, research and innovation are essential for the economic and social development of our country. SERI focuses on these three areas. It is responsible for national and international questions relating to vocational education and training, general education, universities, research, innovation and aerospace. Important education dossiers include preparing and recognising the legal basis in the area of vocational and professional education and training, which SERI prepares together with the cantons and the business community, recognising the cantonal baccalaureate and organising the Swiss baccalaureate examination. SERI’s key tasks also include the promotion of universities and universities of applied sciences as well as preparing and assessing implementation of the federal government’s performance mandate in the ETH Domain. SERI invests in the quality of Switzerland as a location for expertise and know-how with resources for the Swiss National Science Foundation, academies, non-university research institutions, Switzerland’s memberships in international research organisations and cooperation in international scientific programmes.

Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

Bernard Lehmann
Director

Switzerland has 1 051 866 hectares of farmland, 1 590 899 head of cattle in its pastures and 164 067 people employed in the agricultural sector. Each year, the federal government provides agriculture with financial support of around CHF 3.7 billion. The FOAG works to ensure that the country’s farmers produce high quality foodstuffs in a way that is both sustainable and market oriented. Its aim is to have a multifunctional farming system that contributes to meeting the food needs of the population, maintaining the basic necessities of life, as well as the settlement of rural areas. A socially acceptable balance must be sought between developments in domestic policy and the need to respond to changing external factors. The FOAG deals with the development of rural areas and promotes agricultural research at its Agroscope research stations.

Federal Office for National Economic Supply FONES

Gisèle Gippe-Musy
Delegated

Switzerland sources virtually 100 per cent of its raw materials, 80 per cent of its energy, 40 per cent of its food, and a large proportion of essential therapeutic products from abroad. All kinds of incidents, from technical disruptions to political tensions in the source countries, can interrupt the flow of vital goods
to Switzerland. In its capacity as centre of expertise in matters regarding security of supply, the FONES, in close collaboration with the private sector, ensures that short-term supply shortages do not result in significant disruption for the population and economy. It ensures, for example, that in the event of transport problems sufficient cargo space is available or that the lights stay on even if there is a shortage of power.

**Federal Housing Office (FHO)**

Housing is a basic need, but houses and apartments are also important economic assets. Each year around CHF 29 billion is invested in housing construction. Living costs are the greatest items of expenditure for households. Tenants pay some CHF 32 billion a year in rent and around CHF 19 billion is paid by home owners to creditors by way of mortgage interest payments.

The FHO works closely with property developers to ensure that there is an adequate supply of affordable housing and that changing needs are taken into account. The FHO also seeks to reconcile the interests of landlords and tenants in the area of tenancy law.

**Office of the Price Supervisor**

People used to worry about the cost of a cup of coffee. Now it tends to be doctors’ or hospital bills, water rates, rubbish disposal and postal charges, radio and television licence fees or the cost of public transport. The Office of the Price Supervisor protects consumers from excessive pricing. It monitors price trends and blocks or eliminates improper price increases that have not resulted from free competition.

**Competition Commission (COMCO)**

Consumer goods in Switzerland are frequently more expensive than abroad, businesses often put pressure on their suppliers and there are regular mergers between companies. COMCO monitors such activities, prohibits illegal cartels and intervenes in cases where free competition is restricted. Its stated aim is to ensure unrestricted market access for businesses in Switzerland and open borders with foreign countries.

**Federal Institutes of Technology Group (ETH Domain)**

The ETH Domain consists of the two Federal Institutes of Technology, ETH Zurich and EPFL (Lausanne), and four further research institutes, the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), the Swiss Federal Laboratory for Materials Testing and Research (Empa) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag). The ETH Domain achieves academic results at the highest level with its combined staff of around 19,000, over 25,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students and about 750 professors. The ETH Board is the strategic management and supervisory body of the ETH Domain. It supervises development plans, carries out control activities and ensures good coordination with its partners. It also draws up estimates and accounts for the ETH Domain’s budget and coordinates the management and maintenance of its real estate. It is an electoral authority and represents the ETH Domain in dealings with the authorities of the Confederation.

**Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET)**

SFIVET is the centre of expertise for basic and continuing training of VET/PET professionals and it trains VET/PET specialists in its Masters Programme in vocational and professional education and training (VET/PET). The Research and Development Division deals with current VET/PET issues and guarantees the transfer of knowledge into practice. SFIVET monitors and implements new education ordinances and is part of a close-knit network with external partners.

**Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI)**

The CTI promotes joint research projects between the private sector and universities, the creation and development of knowledge-based firms, as well as knowledge and technology transfer through networks and platforms.

The Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) is an independent executive commission consisting of around 65 members and some 65 start-up coaches and a secretariat which employs around 24 people.
River revitalisation

The Bünz River was redirected into a concrete channel built in a straight line through the countryside. It suffered the same fate as many other waters in central Switzerland, which were straightjacketed by levees in order to gain land and protect people from floods.

The situation changed abruptly here near Möriken in May 1999 when record flood levels caused the Bünz to create a new wider bed within hours. Fields and meadows were turned into wetlands with large gravel surfaces. Various plants took root, and previously rare and disappearing fish once again found a habitat in the free-flowing water.

Susanne Haertel-Borer of the Federal Office for the Environment is excited about the new biodiversity and the diverse structure of the Bünz. She monitors the restoration of various waters and participates in the enforcement of the Water Protection Act of 2011, which requires the cantons to restore rivers, streams and lakeshore. The federal government provides funding for these tasks.

Now we know that the best protection against flooding is not straightjacketing waterways, but reaching a compromise between the needs of nature and the needs of people.
General Secretariat GS-DETEC

The overlapping nature of many items of business requires extensive coordination with DETEC offices and other departments. The GS takes on this task as the staff office for the department. The GS-DETEC also prepares items of business for the Federal Council, supports political planning, acts as an intermediary between DETEC and parliament and ensures coherent external communication. It is also primarily responsible for the resources required within the department. In addition, it also acts as owner of Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom and Skyguide and supervises the implementation of the strategic aims set out by the Federal Council.

The Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television, the Communications Commission (ComCom), the Swiss Accident Investigation Board SAIB, the Regulation Authority in the postal market (PostReg), the Federal Electricity Commission (ElCom), the Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate, the Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations, the Federal Pipelines Inspectorate and the Railways Arbitration Commission are all affiliated to the GS-DETEC for administrative purposes.

Federal Office of Transport FOT

The Swiss are a nation of train travellers. No-one travels by train more frequently, and in terms of distance travelled the Swiss are world champions. Switzerland also leads in Europe in terms of the railway's share of the freight transport market. This is the result of Switzerland's coherent transport policy, which focuses on the continuing development of the rail network. At present, the Gotthard base tunnel is currently under construction. At a length of 57 kilometres it will be the longest rail tunnel in the world and is expected to enter into operation in 2016.

The gradual expansion and financing of rail infrastructure is coordinated by the Federal Office of Transport FOT. It carries out the tasks set by the Federal Council and parliament, monitors compliance in terms of cost and deadlines and issues the necessary authorisations.

The FOT is also responsible for safety supervision in public transport. It issues the regulations required for safe construction and operation. In addition, it carries out random checks to ensure that public transport companies are fulfilling their responsibility with regard to safety. The aim is to maintain the high level of safety or raise it further still, if this can be achieved at reasonable cost.

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA

‘Safety first’ is the FOCA’s overriding principle. The FOCA uses a system of certifications and inspections to guarantee the implementation of high safety standards in Swiss aviation when measured against a European cross-section. In order to further improve air safety, the FOCA applies a system of non-punitive reporting. This principle allows pilots, air traffic controllers, mechanics and ground crews to report errors and accidents without being prosecuted. This approach places greater emphasis on learning from incidents that compromise safety than on penalising those at fault. In addition, the FOCA seeks to strengthen safety culture in Swiss aviation through new instruments such as the introduction of safety management systems in companies.

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE

The Federal Council’s energy policy is oriented towards improving energy efficiency, promoting renewable energy sources, particularly hydropower, rapidly expanding the electricity grid, and on increasing energy research and international cooperation. The SFOE has the task of putting these energy policy principles into practice and draws up suitable frameworks and measures to achieve this, such as regulations on the energy consumption of household appliances, consumer electronics, light bulbs and electric motors. The aim is to ensure that our country will still have sufficient, safe, affordable and environmentally friendly energy supplies in the future.

Federal Roads Office FEDRO

The traffic on Swiss roads should flow smoothly. FEDRO is mandated by the Federal Council and parliament to solve the following problems: which sections of the national road network need to be extended? Which stretches need to be resurfaced? Which tunnels need to be brought in line with the latest safety standards?

FEDRO implements the ‘Via sicura’ road safety programme adopted by parliament. The aim of the programme is to continue to reduce the number of people killed or injured in road accidents. Therefore only well-trained drivers with safe, efficient vehicles should be driving on safe roads. As such FEDRO sets the requirements that drivers of 40-tonne trucks need to fulfill to ensure they transport their cargo safely, or it adapts technical requirements affecting e-bikes, in order to promote this form of mobility.
Federal Office of Communications OFCOM

Martin Dumermuth

Every day we read the paper, pick up the phone, send e-mails, surf online, listen to the radio and watch TV. In order to be able to use all these services, there has to be a stable and powerful communications infrastructure in place. OFCOM has the task of enabling, licensing and supervising all this.

With the growing communications needs of the 21st century, there is a need for ever more powerful infrastructure. In order to ensure that everyone in Switzerland can benefit, OFCOM oversees all important steps at the political level. In addition it is laying the foundations of a modern infrastructure.

OFCOM also allocates frequencies for radio and television stations. It ensures that the individual radio and TV stations do not infringe the conditions of their licence, e.g. on surreptitious advertising, and distributes the revenues from licence fees fairly among all regions in Switzerland. Likewise, OFCOM pays subsidies to lower the costs for mailing newspapers and magazines.

Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE

Maria Lezzi

Globalisation marches on. The EU countries have become a strong economic area. That presents Switzerland with great challenges. It has to position itself and play on its strengths – with efficient urban and economic centres, a dense network of lively and attractive towns, a varied and well-preserved countryside as well sustainable farmland.

Thanks to modern transport infrastructure, journey times between Switzerland’s towns, tourist and rural centres have shrunk in recent years. That has had a positive impact on Switzerland’s network of towns and rural areas. On the other hand, the flipside is that the need for housing has grown and valuable natural landscapes and productive land has been lost. Settlements and transport are not yet optimally attuned. Spatial planning in Switzerland is therefore not as sustainable as demanded by the Federal Constitution and the Spatial Planning Act. This is why the Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE supports and encourages projects that steer the spatial development of our country towards more sustainable paths. An example of this is the close partnership with the cantons, cities and communes to draw up the Swiss spatial plan, which is a forward-looking scope of action and policy guidelines for the future spatial development of Switzerland. ARE is also significantly involved in monitoring and coordinating the update of the Spatial Planning Act.

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

Bruno Oberer

We all want to live healthy safe lives. We also want to be able to enjoy the beautiful countryside and mountains. We naturally also expect a sound economy allowing us to lead comfortable lives.

But what does all that have to do with environment policy? A great deal. Habitats and ecosystems are not only pleasing because of their diversity and their exceptional flora and fauna, but they also provide further benefits, such as filtering water, pollinating crop plants and regulating the climate. Furthermore, they provide us with food, raw materials and other goods. One of the core tasks of the FOEN is the long term preservation of this diversity of life or biodiversity. By helping to safeguard the sustainable use of water, soils and the air, it contributes to a healthy economy, especially in an Alpine country like Switzerland where nature itself can also be a threat. Flooding, rock slides or avalanches make that blatantly clear. The FOEN helps to ensure that the cantons, communities and residents are prepared for these things – be it in the shape of maps indicating the areas where natural hazards are most likely to be expected, of forests to protect roads and housing, or of restored watercourses to protect against flooding.

Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI

Renate Wanner

The Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of nuclear installations in Switzerland. It is an independent public body and reports directly to the Federal Council. ENSI took over from the Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate HSK, which used to be part of the Federal Office of Energy. The overriding aim of the federal government’s supervisory activities in the field of nuclear energy is to protect the population and environment from harm resulting from radioactivity. ENSI therefore supervises Switzerland’s five nuclear power stations, the interim storage sites for radioactive waste and the nuclear research units at the Paul Scherrer Institute, Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and the University of Basel. This involves ensuring that operators comply with regulations, facilities are in a safe condition and operated according to regulations and there is sufficient protection against radioactivity. ENSI is also responsible for the safe transport of radioactive material and research into the storage of radioactive waste in deep geological repositories.
THE FEDERAL COURTS OR

The Judiciary
Looking up at the domes of the court rooms at the new seat of the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona brings to mind Viennese architect Adolf Loos’ famous pamphlet ‘Ornament and Crime’.

The crimes of which the defendants appearing in this court are accused are serious. Criminal offences falling within the jurisdiction of the Confederation include economic crime in an international context, money laundering and corruption, financing of terrorism and explosives offences.

In contrast, the elaborate ornamentation of the court room ceiling appears feather-light and luminous, and is reminiscent of a leafy canopy under which court sessions were held in bygone ages. The ornate elements with filigree patterns cast in a special concrete are not only decorative, but are also specially designed to provide optimal acoustics.

After all, the statements by the prosecution and the defence and the judge’s decision need to be heard and understood by all those present.
The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court in Switzerland and is therefore the highest judicial authority of the Confederation in civil, criminal, administrative and constitutional matters. It ensures the uniform application of federal law in Switzerland’s 26 cantons. The Federal Supreme Court is independent and subject only to the law. It is the administrative supervisory authority of the three federal courts of first instance: the Federal Criminal Court, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court. Through its decisions, the Federal Supreme Court contributes to the development of the law and to the adaptation of the law to changed circumstances.

Highest court of appeal in the federal state
The Federal Supreme Court is the final instance for disputes between citizens, cantons, citizens and government or the Confederation and the cantons. In this capacity, it basically covers all areas of law: civil and criminal law, debt collection and bankruptcy law, and constitutional and administrative law, including social insurance law. The Federal Supreme Court is also responsible in particular for protecting citizens’ constitutional rights.

Court proceedings of first instance are hardly ever held in Lausanne or Lucerne, seats of the Federal Supreme Court. They are generally the responsibility of the district courts, which have different names depending on the canton, and of the authorities of administrative justice in the cantons. In addition to courts of first instance, the cantons are required to provide (higher) courts of second instance to handle civil and criminal cases. In public law, the cantonal administrative and social insurance courts serve as the lower instances of the Federal Supreme Court. With a few exceptions, other judicial authorities are also given access to the Federal Supreme Court at federal level.

Focus on legal interpretation
The activities of the Federal Supreme Court differ from those of the cantonal courts and the federal courts of first instance. The Federal Supreme Court judges do not re-establish the facts of the case, which they may only correct if the facts established by a court of lower instance are blatantly wrong or if the facts are based on a violation of the law.

The judges limit their examination strictly to issues relating to the law. The Federal Supreme Court ensures that federal law is uniformly applied and that the limits set by federal law for creating legislation, application of the law and the administration of justice are not overstepped. Through its decisions, the Federal Supreme Court contributes to the development of the law and to the adaptation of the law to changed circumstances.

Four legal remedies lead to the Federal Supreme Court
Litigants essentially have four legal remedies to bring an appeal to the Federal Supreme Court: three single appeals (appeals in civil matters, in criminal matters and, in matters of public law) and subsidiary constitutional appeals. The three single appeals may be used to file all complaints concerning misapplication of the law and violation of constitutional rights. This simplifies the legal process for those seeking justice.

If no ordinary appeal is admissible, decisions of the cantonal courts may be challenged by filing a subsidiary constitutional appeal. This remedy may only be used to file complaints concerning the violation of constitutional rights.

Decision reached by three judges, sometimes five
The divisions of the Federal Supreme Court generally take their decisions as a panel of three judges. The panel is increased to five judges if fundamental legal questions arise or at the request of one of the judges.

In the vast majority of cases, the decision is circulated for approval before being delivered. This requires that all the participating judges approve of the draft decision. The decision is deliberated in public if the participating judges cannot reach an agreement, if the president of a division orders this or if a judge requires this. In this case, the judges consult and vote in the presence of the parties and the public.

Federal Criminal Court, Federal Administrative Court and Federal Patent Court
After the implementation of the "Justice reform", which was approved by a large majority of Swiss voters in 2000, three courts of lower instance of the Federal Supreme Court were created to deal with criminal law and administrative law: the Federal Criminal Court (2004), the Federal Administrative Court (2007) and the Federal Patent Court (2012). Some of the decisions of these federal courts of first instance can be taken to the Federal Supreme Court. All three courts are subject to the administrative supervision of the Federal Supreme Court.

The European context
The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) has been in force since 1953. It protects basic human rights at European level. Switzerland has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1963, and must therefore guarantee the protection of human rights under this Convention. After a decision by the Federal Supreme Court, a party may, under certain conditions, bring its case before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to be examined for violations of the Convention on Human Rights.
Presidency of the Federal Supreme Court

The Federal Assembly appoints the President and Vice President of the Federal Supreme Court from among its judges. The appointment is for two years, and can be renewed once. The President is head of the whole court and is also the public face of the court. His deputy is the Vice President or, if the latter is unable to fulfil this duty, the longest-serving judge. If two judges have served for the same period of time, the older judge fulfils this duty.

The 38 federal court judges...

...and the 19 part-time judges carry out their duties in one of the seven divisions of the court in Lausanne or Lucerne. The United Federal Assembly appoints federal court judges according to linguistic, regional and party-political criteria; the judges serve a term of office of six years. They are supported by 127 court clerks, who participate in an advisory capacity in the instruction of the case and the decision.

First Public Law Division

Jean Fonjalaz  
President  
SP

Andreas Zünd  
President  
SP

First Civil Law Division

Kathrin Klett  
President  
SP

Second Civil Law Division

Nicolas von Werdt  
President  
SVP

First Social Law Division

Susanne Leuzinger  
President  
SP

Second Social Law Division

Yves Kerann  
President  
SP

The General Secretariat

The GS serves as the staff office for the court and the governing bodies. The Secretary-General participates in the meetings of the governing bodies in an advisory capacity. He also heads the court’s scientific and administrative services.
The Federal Supreme Court affords an opportunity for legal redress, ensures the uniform application of federal law and develops the law in accordance with changes in society. It is not proactive, but acts in response to complaints. As a rule, an appeal can only be made to the Supreme Court if a ruling has been made by a cantonal court of final instance or the Federal Criminal, Administrative or Patent Court. The Federal Supreme Court is the court of final instance for almost all areas of law:

**Public cases**
The Federal Supreme Court hears appeals in matters of public law. These include political rights (the right to vote, popular elections and votes), basic rights (personal freedom, equality before the law etc.) and tax law. The two public law divisions rule on cases in these areas.

**Civil cases**
The Federal Supreme Court also rules on appeals relating to civil matters. These include civil law (e.g. family law), the code of obligations (e.g. purchase contract law) and commercial law. In disputes relating to assets, the value of the claim must amount to at least CHF 30,000 and CHF 15,000 in cases relating to employment or tenancy law. The two civil law divisions rule on disputes in these areas of law.

**Criminal cases**
The Federal Supreme Court hears appeals against cantonal decisions in criminal cases or against decisions of the Federal Criminal Court.

**Social law**
The Federal Supreme Court, in particular the two social law divisions, deals with appeals in public matters against decisions of the cantonal insurance courts.

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**The Federal Criminal Court** is the general criminal court of the Confederation, and has its seat in Bellinzona. It operates independently, but is subject to the administrative supervision of the Federal Supreme Court and the supervisory control of the Federal Assembly, which appoints the court's judges. There are currently eighteen judges and their term of office lasts six years. Around 40 members of staff assist them in their work.

Since 1 January 2012 the court has been composed of one criminal chamber and one appeals chamber. Some of the Federal Criminal Court’s decisions are final, but an appeal can be brought to the Supreme Court against the vast majority of its decisions.

**Criminal Chamber**
The Criminal Chamber is the court of first instance for offences that come under federal jurisdiction. These are mainly felonies and misdemeanours against federal interests, explosives offences and cases of white-collar crime, organised crime, corruption and money laundering offences that do not fall within cantonal jurisdiction or which have an international element. In addition, the Court has jurisdiction over offences under the Federal Acts on Civil Aviation, Nuclear Energy and Pipelines.

**Appeals Chamber**
The Appeals Chamber hears appeals against rulings and procedural measures of the Office of the Attorney General, the Federal Criminal Police and in matters relating to administrative criminal law. It also deals with cases concerning conflicts of jurisdiction between cantonal and federal prosecution authorities. The Appeals Chamber also rules on matters relating to international mutual assistance in criminal matters. It hears appeals against decisions relating to the extradition of persons facing prosecution or a sentence abroad, as well as appeals against decisions concerning other forms of mutual assistance relating to foreign criminal proceedings and sentences to be served abroad.

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Federal Supreme Court
1000 Lausanne 14
022 318 91 11
www.bger.ch
www.edgemeoessischgerichte.ch

Federal Criminal Court
PO Box 2720, 6501 Bellinzona
091 822 62 62
www.bger.ch
www.edgemeoessischgerichte.ch
The Federal Administrative Court was set up in 2007 and has its seat in Bern and Zollikofen. Since 2012, it has been taking its decisions in a new building in St. Gallen.

The main task of the Federal Administrative Court is to rule on public law disputes that fall within the jurisdiction of the federal Administration. These include appeals against decisions by federal or, in certain exceptional cases, cantonal courts, but also suits concerning federal administrative law in the first instance.

The Federal Administrative Court acts in such cases either as a court of lower instance for the Federal Supreme Court or as the final or only instance; in roughly half the cases it deals with, its decision is final.

The Federal Administrative Court is independent in its activities but is subject to the administrative supervision of the Federal Supreme Court and the supervisory control of the Federal Assembly. The latter appoints the Federal Administrative Court judges for a six-year term of office.

Organisation

About 75 judges and 320 further staff are employed at the Federal Administrative Court.

The court is organised into five divisions each with two chambers and a General Secretariat.

The divisions are responsible for dealing with appeals and litigation proceedings. Each division deals with cases in a particular legal field.

- **Division I** is responsible for appeal proceedings in various areas including environment, transport, energy and taxes.
- **Division II** focuses on proceedings relating to education, competition and the economy.
- **Division III** deals mainly with proceedings in the field of immigration, social security and health.
- **Divisions IV and V** deal exclusively with asylum law, in particular in relation to questions of refugee status and deportation orders.

In most of these fields, an appeal can be made to the Federal Supreme Court against a decision by the Federal Administrative Court. In only a few areas, in particular appeals relating to asylum law, are the decisions of the Federal Administrative Court final.

The Federal Administrative Court publishes material decisions on the Internet.

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The Federal Patent Court, as the Confederation's court of first instance in patent-related matters, has since January 2012 heard civil disputes concerning patents instead of the cantonal courts, which have been responsible to date. It is exclusively responsible for validity and infringement disputes. Other civil suits in connection with patents can also be brought before the Federal Patent Court, such as suits regarding licence agreements or the right to a patent.

The Federal Patent Court renders its decisions as a lower court of the Federal Supreme Court. It is also subject to the Supreme Court's administrative supervision and the supreme supervision of the Federal Assembly.

The Court has its seat in St. Gallen. The judges of the Federal Patent Court are elected by the Federal Assembly for a term of office of six years. Alongside two full-time judges there are also 36 part-time judges, 25 of whom have technical training and 11 of whom have legal training. They all have proven experience in the field of patent law.

Individual cases are heard by a panel of three, five or seven judges. Each panel is made up of lawyers and technical experts. The composition of the panels depends on the technical criteria.

Preliminary measures are decided by the President sitting as a single judge. If technical questions arise in the course of proceedings, the President can call up two judges specialised in technical matters.

At the Federal Patent Court English may be used for submissions and at hearings instead of an official language if both parties give their consent. The Court’s decisions, however, are issued in an official language.

The Federal Patent Court seeks to ensure that cases are processed swiftly and cost-effectively. With the expertise of its judges, most cases should be able to proceed without having to call on the opinions of external experts, which are costly and time consuming.

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Federal Administrative Court
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058 705 26 26
www.bvger.ch
www eidgenoessischesgericht.ch

Federal Patent Court
Postfach, 9000 St. Gallen
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