



THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY

THE FEDERAL COUNCIL'S STAFF OFFICE



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Chancellery FCh



DEAR READER,

The Federal Chancellery's core task is to support the government. As the Federal Council's staff office, it assists and advises the President of the Swiss Confederation and the members of the Federal Council. It consults, organises and communicates. It also publishes the decisions of the Federal Council and drafts its explanatory statements on popular votes. At the same time, it has responsibilities in relation to political rights. Working with the cantons, it organises federal elections and votes, thus carrying out an important task on behalf of all Swiss citizens.

This brochure tells you more about the daily routine of the Federal Chancellery's 250 or so employees.

Walter Thurnherr
Federal Chancellor



Before each meeting of the Federal Council, the ushers lay out all the necessary documents.

2,500 ITEMS OF BUSINESS EACH YEAR

Every week, the seven members of the Federal Council convene for their regular meeting, at which they reach their key decisions. They deal with around 2,500 items of business each year on average. The Federal Chancellery works with the president to prepare these meetings. It is also responsible for running the meetings and for the follow-up work. For example, it draws up the agenda, coordinates the joint reporting procedure* and formalises the decisions taken by the Federal Council in legally binding decrees.

* In the joint reporting procedure, a department provides its written opinion on an item of business from another department.

Printed legislative texts can be consulted in the Parliamentary Library in the west wing of the Federal Palace.

ONLINE BEFORE PRINTING

All acts, ordinances and decrees in Switzerland are published as quickly as possible. The Federal Chancellery is responsible for publishing all legislative texts in the Federal Gazette and the Official Compilation. All publications are accessible online, and electronic publications take priority over the printed version. Few pages on the Federal Administration website are consulted as often as the federal law portal. Every day, thousands of people, lawyers especially, make use of this aid provided by the Federal Chancellery.

www.bundesrecht.admin.ch





Switzerland and its future in focus: the Federal Chancellery considers the prospects and opportunities for the country.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

What will Switzerland be like in 2030? What challenges does the country face? The Federal Chancellery examines these questions on behalf of the Federal Council. It monitors national and international trends and identifies where there is need for political action. This forms the basis for the four-year legislature plan, which in turn determines the Federal Council's annual objectives. The government's annual report then confirms whether these objectives have been achieved. To ensure that they are properly prepared for unforeseeable events, the Federal Chancellery advises the members of the various federal crisis units on how to respond appropriately in emergency situations.

MULTILINGUAL FINISHING TOUCHES

The language specialists in the Federal Chancellery ensure that every law is legally identical in each language. Whether French, Italian or German, each official language version of any of Switzerland's legislative texts is regarded as the original. Translations of many acts, ordinances and international treaties are also available in Romansh and English. The work of the language services and terminologists in the Federal Chancellery is a complex task, especially when it comes to legal texts. It is not simply a case of translating words from one language into another, but of making the content of a text understandable in the other language.



A terminologist at work: she compiles and manages the special language of government and politics.



After Federal Council meetings, information is provided on the decisions taken, for example at press conferences in the Federal Palace Media Centre.

INFORMATION ON ALL CHANNELS

It is a constitutional duty of the Federal Council and the Administration to inform the public about the decisions that the government has taken. For this reason, a representative of the government is normally available to answer questions after each Federal Council meeting. The press conference is chaired by the Federal Council spokesperson. The Federal Chancellery organises a live broadcast and provides information through a range of channels. These include the admin.ch website, the citizens' portal, ch.ch, the Federal Council spokesperson's Twitter account and the Federal Council's YouTube channel. Ahead of national votes, the Federal Chancellery is also responsible for drafting the explanatory guide on the issues being decided.

**www.admin.ch – www.ch.ch
www.twitter.com/BR_Sprecher
[www.youtube.com «Der Schweizerische Bundesrat»](https://www.youtube.com/«Der_Schweizerische_Bundesrat»)**

CONTINUITY FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Meeting foreign heads of state is one of the Swiss president's tasks. He or she represents Swiss interests at the highest levels of government. The Presidential Services Unit in the Federal Chancellery supports the president and his or her department in fulfilling these tasks. It advises them on questions of diplomacy and public relations. In Switzerland, the president changes each year. The Presidential Services Unit ensures continuity and efficiency, and each Swiss president can count on its experience, expertise and contacts from previous presidencies.



The Presidential Services Unit supports the Swiss president, for example at state receptions.



At the end of the period allowed for collecting signatures, the committee submits the list of certified signatures to the Federal Chancellery.

CONTACT POINT FOR POLITICAL RIGHTS

In Switzerland, the electorate has a far greater say in the political process and a greater opportunity to contribute to shaping political decisions than almost anywhere else in the world. The Federal Chancellery organises all the federal votes and the National Council elections. Anyone who wants to launch a popular initiative or call for an optional referendum has to work with the Federal Chancellery, which carries out a formal preliminary examination of federal popular initiatives, advises the initiative committees and checks that deadlines are met. Once an initiative has been launched or a referendum has been requested, it is the Federal Chancellery that determines whether the requirements have been met and a vote can actually be held.

NEW WAYS OF VOTING

Nowadays, most Swiss citizens vote by post. In some cantons though, they already have the opportunity to vote online. For the Swiss Abroad especially, this form of voting is highly convenient. Working with the cantons, the Federal Chancellery is making steady progress with the 'Vote électronique' e-voting project.

The Federal Chancellery ensures that there is no conflict between cantonal legislation and voters' popular rights under federal law. New cantonal provisions require approval from the Federal Chancellery before they become valid.



By post or online? Electronic voting is on the increase.



The Federal Council receives its guests at the Lohn country residence, with the Federal Chancellery handling event management.

A HUB FOR RESOURCES

Human resources, finance and accounting, electronic business administration, logistics and IT are all the responsibility of the Internal Services Sector. It also deals with administration and event management at the Von Wattenwyl House and the Lohn country residence. Other important tasks carried out by the Internal Services include security clearance procedures to assess senior federal officials and legalisation procedures to confirm the authenticity of signatures to foreign authorities.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

The Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) has two tasks. Firstly, he monitors compliance with the Data Protection Act, intervening in cases where the privacy of ordinary citizens is breached and advising the public on data protection issues. Secondly, he ensures that the principle of freedom of information is upheld, thus guaranteeing access to official documents from the Federal Administration. If a public authority refuses access, the aggrieved party can request the FDPIC to mediate. The FDPIC is independent, but affiliated to the Federal Chancellery for administrative purposes.



The FDPIC keeps an eye on cameras and so protects the privacy of ordinary citizens.

THE OLDEST FEDERAL INSTITUTION

Established in 1803, the Federal Chancellery is the oldest federal institution of all and considerably older than the Swiss federal state itself. It can thank Napoleon Bonaparte for its existence, for it was he who demanded a permanent chancellery in the Act of Mediation. The federal chancellor at that time was responsible for managing the agenda, correspondence and decrees of the Tagsatzung, the parliament of the day, and had to move his office and archive each year to the canton that was hosting the parliament. When the federal state was founded in 1848, the Chancellery became the administrative office of the Federal Council and Parliament and was given a permanent base in Bern. Since the administrative reforms of the 1960s, Parliament has had its own administrative services office. And the Federal Chancellery has become the staff office of the Swiss government – the modern nerve centre that it is today.



In 1857, the Federal Chancellor moved his office to the west wing of the Federal Palace. At the time, he even had a private apartment there.

Organisation of the Federal Chancellery

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr

Political Rights Section

Communication and Strategy Sector, Vice Chancellor André Simonazzi

Communications Section

Communication Support Section

Strategic Management Support

Presidential Services Unit

Federal Council Sector, Vice Chancellor Jörg De Bernardi

Federal Council Affairs Section

Legal Affairs Section

Official Publications Centre

Central Language Services, German Section

Central Language Services, French Section

Central Language Services, Italian Division

Central Language Services, Terminology Section

Internal Services Sector, Hans-Rudolf Wenger

FCh Personnel Security Screening Unit

Personnel and Resources Section

IT Service Centre

Business Administration and Logistics Section

Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner, Adrian Lobsiger

(Administrative affiliation)

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The Federal Chancellery on the internet:
www.bk.admin.ch oder www.ch.ch