Dear reader,

I am pleased to see that you are reading “The Swiss Confederation – a brief guide: 2008” and that you are so clearly interested in the workings of our government. The attractively illustrated booklet, which is published each year, gives you a broad but clear picture of Switzerland’s political institutions and executive authorities.

Following last year’s elections of a new federal parliament (on 21 October) and of the seven-member Federal Council (national government) and a new Federal Chancellor (on 12 December), Swiss politics is now entering a new phase: we are currently in the first year of the 2008–2011 legislative period. This four-year period is parliament’s and the government’s term of office and determines the timetable for elections and legislation, and the strategic and planning activities of the Federal Council naturally follow this cycle.

The national government is focusing on five areas in the current legislative period: strengthening Switzerland as a business location, guaranteeing security, improving social cohesion, making sustainable use of resources and networking internationally.

Despite these important goals, the main event this year is “non-political”, the European Football Championship Euro 2008, which Austria and Switzerland are jointly organising. Along with many other institutions, the Swiss government will be making its own contribution to the success of the third largest sporting event in the world.

The principles of fairness and respect in our dealings with one another hold as true in politics as they do in sport. In this spirit, I would like to wish you a rewarding year and I hope you enjoy reading the booklet.

Corina Casanova
Federal Chancellor
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Situations vacant incl. internships and apprenticeships
Mr Couchezpin, this is the second time, after 2003, that you have been President of the Swiss Confederation. What will you do differently this time?

Several things. Since then the political order and environment have changed. And I have grown older - and wiser.

How does that manifest itself?

You are less tense. The first time you wonder if everything will turn out alright. The second time it's much simpler: you know what can and can't be done. And you're aware of the mistakes you made last time and how to do better this time.

What will you do better this time? Can you give me an example?

In 2003, I held a fairly tight rein on the organisation and chairing of the Federal Council sessions. Since then, I have learnt that you need to be a little more easy-going (laughs). But within reason, of course, because I don't want chaos either!

What do you mean by easy-going?

Last time I asked Federal Council members to put forward well defined proposals as the basis for a discussion. But I noticed that it did no harm to allow them more leeway. That way they can think things through more during the sessions even if it means finishing a little later. In my opinion, there have been too many votes within the Federal Council over the last few years. You don't always need to put something to the vote in order to make good decisions.

What is your main objective as head of government?

For me it is vital that there is a good atmosphere within the Federal Council - so that the members of government can work well together. It should be possible to express differing opinions openly without voices being raised unduly. The interests of the collegium depend on openness, and in the end it leads to good decision-making in the best interests of the country.

Following the election of Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf to the Federal Council in December 2007, there are now for the first time three women in the government. Have many things changed? Is it very different now?

Not really. Women are as different from one another as men are (laughs). But it is an opportunity for any collegium that a woman with as many years of experience of government as Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf has is part of it.

What are your goals outside the Federal Council?

I will repeat what I said in 2003. I am referring to what former British Prime Minister Edward Heath replied when someone asked what the challenges of his office were: "Events, friends, events."

It is indeed events that to a large extent determine the diary of the President of the Swiss Confederation. That's how it's always been. You can plan ahead as much as you like, but you can be sure that in the end things will turn out differently from how you imagined. This year may bring happy events, or it may bring tragic ones such as natural disasters. I remember that, during my first year as President, war broke out in Iraq. But there are some major events that can be planned in advance and Euro 2008 is one of them. The 2008 European Football Championship is a great opportunity for Switzerland, and it also gives us the opportunity to meet the heads of government of those countries taking part in the competition.

The political climate in Switzerland has become a lot more acrimonious over the last few years. Have you decided to do anything to put this right?

The President has an important role to carry out in this regard. In my New Year speech, I mentioned the story of the Kappel soup. In 1529, during one of the religious wars between Zurich and Central Switzerland, the soldiers from the two camps made their peace with one another, unbeknownst to their commanders, over a meal of bread and milk soup. I think it must have been a fondue (laughs). Be that as it may, the commanders of the two sides were then more or less obliged to find so-
In 2008 you have a series of foreign trips planned in your role as president. What do you hope to achieve?

This year I am planning trips to Egypt, the USA, China, South East Asia, Turkey and Russia. Trips are important. I do not share the criticism made in certain quarters on this subject. You have to go out and meet people and get to know them in order to understand and feel how they think and act. Only that way can you become familiar with the ways of the world and tailor your political action accordingly – through international negotiations or with an eye to planning environmental policy, for example.

Your trips are mainly to countries with a strong economy. Why?

We have nothing against developing countries but everyone knows that the important decisions are taken in certain countries.

How important are relations with countries in the European Union?

Sixty per cent of our exports go to EU countries. Eighty per cent of our imports come from the EU. Several tens of thousands of EU workers cross the border every day to work in Switzerland. Whole sectors depend on these foreign nationals. It is therefore extremely important for us to maintain close and friendly relations with the European Union. We can never be close enough to the EU. This is why it is customary for the President of the Swiss Confederation to visit the countries holding the EU presidency. In 2008, these are Slovenia and France. The President also visits the countries whose turn it will be to hold the presidency the following year, and in 2009 this will be the Czech Republic and Sweden.

What is the reason for these trips?

We have to know exactly what is happening in the member states of the European Union, added to which, contacts are also important so that these states can realise how important it is for them that Switzerland is in good shape.

You said that Switzerland can never be close enough to the EU. Wouldn’t the next logical step, therefore, be to become a member of the European Union?

No. For the time being I cannot see any other way forward than with bilateral agreements.

In your capacity as President, you are remaining at the helm of the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA), which is a very large department. Will you be able to manage these two mandates?

It will be easier for me this year than in 2003. Then, it was my first time as President of the Swiss Confederation and, in addition, at the beginning of the year I had taken over the reins of a new department, having come from the Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA). It was a very difficult situation for me which I slightly underestimated. Important dossiers, most of which were new to me, such as the Health Insurance Act (HIA), were then in the last stages of parliamentary discussion. It was sometimes very difficult to carry out both roles, President of the Swiss Confederation and Head of Department, simultaneously. This time round it is much easier. I know how the presidency of the Swiss Confederation works and I am familiar with every aspect of the areas that my department is responsible for.

There have been too many votes within the Federal Council over the last few years

It is not up to the government to say what constitutes good art
What are the objectives for your department in 2008?

My main concern will be to push ahead with health insurance reforms. Then there will be the debate on the 11th revision of the Old Age and Survivors' Insurance. Invalidity Insurance (II) funding is another major concern, as is the Swiss University Landscape Act, to name but one other project.

You are also the minister of culture. It's a well known fact that you are particularly interested in cultural affairs and that you are very active in this area.

Yes, that's true! This is why I have put forward new legislation on this subject: the new Museums Act and the new Culture Promotion Act. There now seems to be mutual trust between the people involved in cultural affairs and the (federal) administration, and between them and me. Artists know that I have a real interest in culture and that I am open-minded and ready to hear what they have to say.

Does this mutual trust lead to better art?

I hope so. But it is not up to the government or one of its representatives to say what is and what is not good art. Our mission is to create the best conditions possible so that artists can develop their full potential and express themselves freely.

But are you yourself satisfied with the achievements of the Swiss arts scene?

Yes, I am. And I am constantly aware of the fact that art is more important than you would think. Take, for example, the design sector. Switzerland is one of the most innovative countries in this area. The drawback is that Switzerland is a very small market. Even our most successful artists never achieve prices for their work that are as high as those paid for artists working in larger markets. As it happens, this is no bad thing because it means that masterpieces are still affordable even for smaller pockets.

Do you yourself buy Swiss art?

Yes, but that is a private matter.

You are also minister of religion. An area in which you are particularly active is the peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims. Is this also a priority area for the President of the Swiss Confederation?

It is a perennial issue and will remain so. It is important that members of religious communities other than the traditional ones to have a sense of being respected. This is what I shall be showing when I address a message of support and good will to Muslims at the beginning of Ramadan.
Finances

Federal revenue 2006

- Indirect taxes 90.2%
- VAT 34.5%
- Direct taxes 33.0%
- Transport levies 2.5%
- Tobacco tax 3.3%
- Stamp duty 0.3%
- Import duty 1.3%
- Mineral oil tax 9.1%
- Other fiscal revenues 1.8%
- Other revenues 7.6%
- Withholding tax 7.2%

Federal expenditure 2006

- Social welfare 26.7%
- Transport 14.8%
- National defence 8.4%
- Agriculture and food supply 7.1%
- Education and fundamental research 8.6%
- Foreign relations 4.9%
- Interest on debt and the share of the cantons 21.3%
- Other expenditure 8.5%

Developments in revenue (CHF million)

Developments in expenditure (CHF million)

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A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OR

How long has there been a Switzerland?

1291 Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden – according to tradition on 1 August on the Rüti meadow – renew their alliance to defend their property and rights against foreign attacks.

Additional urban and rural areas join or are conquered by this “Confederation” in the course of the following decades and centuries.

The Swiss defend their loose federation’s growing power and freedom for two hundred years against a variety of opponents until they obtain true independence from the German empire after the Swabian War in 1499.

The abolition of mass and the introduction of communion in Zurich by Zwingli in 1525 lead to the religious division of Switzerland into Catholic and Protestant regions that live separately and time and again go to war with one another.

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”: the tenets of the French Revolution of 1789 spread to Switzerland, leading to disturbances in several areas.

A French army under Napoleon Bonaparte conquers Switzerland in 1798. The old Confederation collapses and makes way for the Helvetic Republic, with a single centralist constitution dictated by the French.

In 1803 the former subject territories emerge as new cantons with equal rights.

After France’s defeat by the monarchistic European superpowers, the Confederation is again “restored” in 1815. It again becomes a loose federation of states and its cantons are again governed by the aristocracy just as before the downfall of 1798.

During the period known as the “regeneration” after 1830, the pressures of economic development cause around half of the cantons to adopt liberal constitutions that guarantee their citizens economic and political freedom. This leads to conflicts between liberal and conservative cantons.

Tensions between the liberal Protestant and the Catholic cantons lead to the civil war in 1847 (the “Sonderbundskrieg”). After a brief military campaign with federal troops, the Catholics, who had founded a separatist federation, surrender.

1848 The modern Swiss federal state is founded in 1848. Its constitution centralises and harmonises numerous areas which were previously the responsibility of the cantons, such as military service, customs, and postal services and coinage. This leads to the creation of a cohesive territory ripe for economic development.

The general right to vote and to participate in elections, but for men only, is introduced in 1848, but is ultimately regarded by many as insufficient. Swiss citizens campaign for direct democratic rights, introducing the right to call for a referendum in the revised Federal Constitution of 1874, and the popular initiative in 1891.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the various political movements organise themselves as parties. The Social Democratic Party is founded in 1888, the Free Radical Party and the Catholic-Conservative People’s Party, which is today’s CVP in 1894.

Switzerland is spared from the First World War from 1914 to 1918, but the difficult social conditions in many sections of the population caused by 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. In that same year, however, the National Council is elected by proportional representation for the first time and now includes workers representatives. This brings the dominance of the Free Radical Party to an end.

In 1920 Switzerland accedes to the League of Nations founded the previous year, on condition that it strictly preserves its neutrality and that it is not required to participate in any military campaigns.

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

The agreement in the machine and metalworking industry of 1937 to ensure industrial peace, the recognition of Romansh as the fourth national language in 1938, the development of the Alps in 1940 into the Swiss military redoubt, and ultimately the first Social Democratic member of the Federal Council in 1943 contributed to Swiss cohesion in difficult times. This also allows Switzerland to remain neutral in the Second World War from 1939 to 1945.

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

Although it had acceded to the League of Nations a quarter of a century earlier, Switzerland does not initially accede to the United Nations (UN) when it is created in 1948 on the grounds of its neutrality.
In 1959 with the election of a second Social Democrat to the Federal Council, the composition of the government is for the first time largely proportional to the parties’ shares of the popular vote. This is the origin of what is known as the “magic formula”, which ensures a fair representation of the most important political parties in the Federal Council.

After an unsuccessful attempt in 1959, the people and the cantons grant women the right to vote and to participate in elections at federal level in 1971, by 621,403 “yes” to 325,596 “no” votes. In a number of cantons, women have already had equal political rights for quite some time.

Following a series of popular votes, in Canton Bern and in particular in the Bernese French-speaking districts as well as ultimately at federal level, Canton Jura is created in 1978. It separates from Bern, and becomes the 26th state of Switzerland.

In 1984, Switzerland elects a woman to the Federal Council for the first time in its history by appointing Elisabeth Kopp (FDP).

In 1989, voters reject the popular initiative to eliminate the armed forces.

In 1992, voters reject membership of the European Economic Area.

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

After being involved in many UN sub-organisations, in some cases for several decades, and as the result of a popular initiative, 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.

In December 2003, for the first time since 1854 and 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, Christoph Blocher experiences a similar turn of events during the 2007 winter session when the United Federal Assembly elects his party colleague Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf to the Federal Council.
A UNIQUE POLITICAL SYSTEM OR

Swiss democracy
There is no other place in the world where voters are called to express their political will as often as they are in Switzerland. As a general rule, federal votes on several different issues are held four times a year. In addition, numerous cantonal and communal issues are put to the vote. These decisions are made by the Swiss people and not by their elected representatives. This is what is known as direct democracy. The community spirit of voting day is, however, gradually fading into the past. Meeting fellow voters at the polling station has become less likely since it is possible to vote by mail, and will become even more of an exception with the introduction of e-voting.
Switzerland is a nation of consensus, composed of several ethnic groups with a variety of languages and religions. It has been a federal state since 1848. There are 23 federal states worldwide; Switzerland is the second oldest after the United States of America. Switzerland is a federal state and is organised in three political levels: the communes, the cantons and the Confederation.

2715 communes  Communes are the smallest political units in Switzerland. There are currently 2715 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 parliament.

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. Canton Jura is an exception. It is the only canton that was created in the 20th century. On 1 January 1979, it separated from Canton 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 6-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 at the ballot box only.

The Ticino mountain village of Corippo in the Verzasca valley, which is subject to a preservation order, is Switzerland’s smallest commune, with 17 residents. In the mid-19th century, this village still had a population of more than 300, but now it no longer has any children. The second youngest person in the village is the 45-year-old mayor, Claudio Scettrini. Every three weeks, he calls the two members of the communal council to a meeting in the former schoolhouse, and a communal assembly is held twice a year, where the 14 eligible voters almost always all turn up.

“The Republic and Canton of Jura” is the official name given to the youngest member state of the Confederation. The region that makes up this canton has been part of the Confederation since 1815. Serious cultural tensions between the Catholic French-speaking population and the Protestant German-speaking majority in canton Bern led to a series of popular votes resulting in the separation. On 1 January 1979, Jura gained its independence by becoming the 26th canton of Switzerland.
1 Confederation is the name given to the Swiss state. CH is the abbreviation of Switzerland’s official Latin name “Confoederatio Helvetica”. Confœderatio means “confederation” and Helvetica refers to the Helvetii, an ancient Celtic people who settled in the region of present-day Switzerland roughly 2000 years ago.

Switzerland has evolved over the course of more than seven hundred years from the alliance of the original three cantons, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, to today’s federal state that unites the various interests of the individual cantons with the collective interests of the country. The Confederation has responsibilities in those areas where it is granted powers by the Constitution – for example in foreign and security policy, in customs and financial matters, in enacting legislation that applies throughout the country and in defence. Tasks that are not expressly designated federal matters are the responsibility of the next highest political unit, i.e. the cantons.

The separation of powers

In Switzerland, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary are separate in terms of their personnel, but for functional purposes are only divided. This means that no one may belong to more than one of the three federal authorities (parliament, the government and the Supreme Court) at the same time; however, for practical purposes, each of the three authorities also carries out duties that, strictly speaking, fall within the competence of another power.

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 4.9 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 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.

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.

Parliament also elects the Supreme Court:
the judiciary

The supreme judicial authorities are the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne and in Lucerne, together with its two courts of first instance: the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona and the Federal Administrative Court in Bern.
DIRECT DEMOCRACY AT FEDERAL LEVEL OR

One People, many rights

Switzerland is virtually the only country in the world where the people have 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 sophisticated media services are crucial to the operation of this particular system of government. Swiss nationals have the following political rights at federal level:

**Elections** or accumulating votes, vote splitting and crossing out votes  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 appoint 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 changed in three different ways, which may be combined:

Firstly, names can be struck off 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 may also specify 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 mental 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.

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**Voter turnout in National Council elections since 1919**

Voter turnout has significantly decreased 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 65% 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 to 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 new amendment.

For such an initiative to be accepted, 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 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.

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

Referendums or Voicing disagreement The People are entitled to pronounce on parliamentary decisions after the event.

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.

Popular initiatives adopted and rejected since 1971

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Proportion Adopted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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Of a total of 109 popular initiatives that were voted on the past 30-40 years, only eight saw a large turnout at the ballot box – i.e. not even one out of ten. The vast majority of initiatives achieved less than 50% votes in favour and were rejected. Most of these initiatives are not, however, entirely ineffective. The concerns they address often give rise to broad debate and are eventually translated, at least partially, into new laws.

Optional referendums since 1971

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 1971, referendum committees have been successful on 88 occasions. They have forced popular ballots on federal acts and decrees approved by parliament that they did not agree with, and have won the day 28 times at the ballot box, which amounts to an almost one in three level of success.

The chart shows the percentage in favour at each of the different votes: less than 50% implies that the disputed legislation was rejected.
Political parties are groupings of like-minded people that have their own philosophies of life – in other words, a particular view of the State, society and the economy, etc. They act as a link between the people and the institutions of the state and are essential for the functioning of a democracy. The landscape of political parties in Switzerland is as varied as that of the country. A dozen groups are represented in parliament. All twelve parties provide a brief self-portrait on the following pages, beginning with the four strongest parties that together constitute the government.

**SVP**

**Swiss People’s Party**

- **President:** National Councillor Beat Rüegsegger (until April)
- **Members:** 85,000 members
- **Foundation:** Founded in 1912

With 29% of the seats in parliament, the Swiss People’s Party is Switzerland’s strongest party. It is represented in the Federal Council by Federal Councillors Samuel Schmid and Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf. When Christoph Blocher was not re-elected to the Federal Council, the SVP declared itself to be an opposition party, excluding both SVP Federal Council members from its parliamentary group.

The party was formed in 1971 from the union of the Swiss Farmers, Trade and Citizen’s Party (BGP) and the Democratic Parties of the Cantons of Glarus and Graubünden.

(Text: Federal Chancellery. The SVP did not provide its own party description before the copy deadline.)

**SP**

**Swiss Social Democratic Party**

- **President:** National Councillor Hans-Jürg Fehr (until April)
- **Members:** 33,000 members
- **Foundation:** Founded in 1888

The SP places its emphasis on social, and environmental issues and greater openness in Switzerland. With Micheline Calmy-Rey and Moritz Leuenberger, the SP has two credible representatives in the Federal Council. The SP also plays an essential part in shaping government policy in the largest cities. The SP promotes social security, the fair distribution of wealth and equality of opportunity, issues that concern the majority of the population who do not earn huge salaries. The fight for values such as freedom, justice and solidarity is an ongoing task. Switzerland’s social achievements, which we are justly proud of, can be attributed in large part to the SP’s work. These achievements include the Old Age and Survivors’ Insurance (AHV), maternity insurance, child allowances and the Registered Partnership Act.

**The SP focuses on three main areas:**

- **Social policy:** The SP Switzerland champions a secure AHV, flexible retirement age affordable for all, equal education opportunities for everyone, 50,000 available spaces in crèches and equal opportunities.
- **Openness:** We champion an active foreign policy and a Switzerland showing solidarity that is committed to development aid, to peace and to human rights, and to EU membership.
- **Environmental policy:** The SP aims to optimise the public transport network, to improve energy efficiency and to promote renewable energy sources as a basis for the Switzerland of the future. It opposes nuclear power stations.
People have the freedom to seek their own happiness and therefore to organise their lives as they see fit. The FDP stands for freedom for the individual. The FDP’s policies incorporate the fundamental liberal values, namely freedom, open-mindedness and personal responsibility. However, every individual is also responsible for society as a whole. Society must be fair and provide everyone with the same opportunities. It should be shaped by equal opportunity so that everyone can achieve their full potential.

The FDP’s project for the future of Switzerland focuses on:
- Intelligence in Switzerland: knowledge is our raw material. Our country needs to rank among the leading academic, research and cultural centres of the world.
- Growth in Switzerland: growth is the guarantee of our future. It is the product of everyone’s efforts and of good basic economic conditions.
- Fairness in Switzerland: fairness means equal opportunities. We live in a country that provides attractive and fair basic conditions and an efficient social security system.
- Openness in Switzerland: Switzerland is a tolerant, modern and open country that maintains constructive relations with Europe and with the rest of the world.
- With Pascal Couchepin and Hans-Rudolf Merz the FDP has two Federal Councillors who make a difference in Switzerland.

The CVP champions a liberal and social Switzerland. The CVP’s policy aims to create a balance between individuals and society and between personal responsibility and solidarity. Its approach to coexistence is based on a Christian view of mankind and society. Minister of Economic Affairs Doris Leuthard champions these values in the Federal Council.

The CVP is the business-friendly, socially responsible and independent power at the centre of the political arena. The CVP’s policies create jobs, guarantee financial support to our most important social institutions and improve the basic conditions for families. Thanks to a pragmatic climate and environment policy, the CVP is working towards a sustainable means of subsistence.

The CVP focuses on three main areas:
- The CVP promotes Switzerland as a business location with innovative strengths, attractive tax incentives, excellent infrastructure and a high standard of education. This policy ensures jobs and prosperity.
- The CVP promotes family values: families need improved conditions in which to bring up and care for their children, above all, to achieve a better work-life balance.
- The CVP safeguards the social security system: funding social institutions is the main challenge for the next 20 years. This can only be accomplished through targeted reforms and by avoiding unrealistic expansion or cutbacks.
...as well as the eight other political parties in parliament

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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>National Councillors</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GPS</strong></td>
<td>2 (f) and 10 (m)</td>
<td>6000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss Green Party</td>
<td>National Councillor: Ruth Geen</td>
<td>Founded in 1983</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Party President:</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLP</td>
<td>1 (f) and 2 (m)</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td>Swiss Green Liberal Party</td>
<td>National Councillor: Martin Bämie</td>
<td>Founded in 2004</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Party President:</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPS</td>
<td>2 (f) and 2 (m)</td>
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<td>Party President:</td>
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<td>EVP</td>
<td>2 (m)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swiss Evangelical People’s Party</td>
<td>National Councillor: Heini Aeschbach</td>
<td>Founded in 1903</td>
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<td>Party President:</td>
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The Swiss Green Party is the largest party that does not have a seat in the Federal Council. With the exception of canton Obwalden, every canton has a green party. Since 2003, there has been a young Green Party, whose members have been actively involved in fighting for the environment, equal opportunities and fair globalisation using a great deal of imagination.

Our primary concerns for this legislative period are more effective climate protection (including above all the introduction of a CO₂ tax on fuel), the reorganisation of the economy along more environmental lines, the strengthening of social institutions and an active policy of peace without armaments cooperation.

Finance: the state should operate as an effective service company focused on core tasks. It should not be burdened by debt, but should rely on the personal responsibility of all individuals.

Social issues: it is important first of all to encourage personal contributions, a sense of responsibility and solidarity. Support measures should be targeted and incentive-based, and yet respect human dignity.

The Swiss Liberal Party represents an all-embracing set of views embodied in timeless values, originating in particular from the Age of Enlightenment. It champions personal freedom, consideration for fellow human beings, respect for different identities, responsibility, creativity and personal initiative. The LPS defends and exemplifies these values as they have proven to be the only means to economic and social progress. The LPS is a centre-right party and plays an important role in government and parliament in the cantons of Basel-Stadt, Geneva, Neuchatel and Vaud. It is also a presence in political life in the cantons of Bern, Fribourg, Valais and Zurich.

Stronger families: the EVP aims to relieve the financial burden on families and where necessary to support families. For this purpose, the EVP promotes child benefits that would replace all other payments and deductions and be financed by taxes.

A fair economy: in other words, debt reduction, fair minimum and maximum wages, a simple tax system without loopholes and fair trade.

A healthy environment: the EVP wants to quickly reduce Switzerland’s dependence on non-renewable energy sources. It therefore promotes the introduction of ecological tax reforms and a CO₂ charge on transport fuel.
The diagrams are based on the votes in the legislative period 2003–2007 and show the positions of the different members and their voting behaviour.

**CSP**

**Christian Social Party**

- **Party President:** Monika Bickel-Süss
- **Members:** 1500
- **Founded:** 1997
- **Website:** www.csp-goi.ch

Energy policy: The CSP is against the construction of new nuclear power stations. Alternative energies and energy conservation need to be promoted. The CSP aims for a 2000 Watt society.

Social policy: state pensions must be guaranteed. Pensioners need to be sure that their pensions are secure. Additional funds are necessary in the medium term for this purpose. We must take advantage of the current healthy economic situation to restructure invalidity insurance (IV) and unemployment insurance. Both insurances need to be reorganised in order to cope with future crises. Value-added tax must be increased to provide the revenues to clear 4V debts.

**EDU**

**Federal Democratic Union**

- **Party President:** Hans Moser
- **Members:** 2500
- **Founded:** 1975
- **Website:** www.edu-schweiz.ch

True values and clear words! The EDU seeks sustainable solutions and in its commitment to God Almighty, it promotes a free and constitutional Switzerland. The EDU does not follow the zeitgeist or the mainstream, but adheres to fundamental values, the word of God and the creation of the world and of mankind according to the Bible. The EDU encourages people to assume responsibility for their actions. The focal points of our policy include protection of human life at every stage of its existence as well as the environment and the private sphere, traditional marriage and family values, education and the job market in Switzerland, balanced finances and debt reduction.

**Lega**

**Ticino League**

- **Party President:** Gianluca Biglino
- **Members:** 1500
- **Founded:** 1991
- **Website:** www.lega.ticino.ch

Independence: economic and political globalisation is weakening Switzerland. Switzerland can however gain a footing in a fragmented Europe if it safeguards its independence and its freedom.

Public services: the federal government must conserve its public services and ensure the same 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 has reached its limits. Natural hazards and structural problems are jeopardising unrestricted use of this route.

**PdA**

**Worker’s Party**

- **Party President:** Nelly Buntschuh
- **Members:** 2000
- **Founded:** 1944
- **Website:** www.pda.ch

The PdA intends to work with all forces who oppose capitalism to free humankind from exploitation and oppression. It supports all people and movements that believe that a better world is possible and that are working towards achieving that goal. The PdA’s commitment knows no frontiers, because its fight against injustice is worldwide.

PdA activists are present at all levels of Swiss politics, and share a common goal, which is to make proposals to create a solidarity-based society, to promote personal development for all people and to protect the environment – in short, to create a genuinely socialist society.
THE LEGISLATURE: NATIONAL COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF STATES OR

The Swiss parliament
The elegant sweeping lobby or “Mandelhalle” outside the National Council chamber is regarded as the federal authorities’ ballroom: this is where, for example, the New Year receptions are held by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

However, during the Federal Assembly sessions, members of parliament use it as their semi-public meeting room and open-plan office; they exchange views, reach agreements among themselves, listen to various interest groups and are always ready to talk to and field questions from the media.
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 people are represented in the National Council
The large chamber has 200 seats. The number of deputies from a canton depends on its population as recorded in the last census: for every 37 800 inhabitants or so, there is one member on the National Council. However, because the Federal Constitution guarantees one seat per canton, Appenzell Innerrhoden, which has only around 15 000 inhabitants, also sends a people’s representative to the Federal Palace. Similarly, the neighbouring canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden and the cantons of Obwalden and Nidwalden, Uri and Glarus only send one National Council member each, whereas the highly populated canton of Zurich currently has 34 seats.
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.

Proportional representation or majority vote (first past the post)

Seats are allocated in the National Council according to the system of proportional representation. It is called this because the 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 a party is allocated. 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 canton Jura, elections to the Council of States are also held in all cantons according to the first-past-the-post system. This procedure naturally favours large parties or leading figures with a high public profile. Minorities go away empty-handed.
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OR
Representing Switzerland’s 7.5m inhabitants

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<td>Ilse Bosch</td>
<td>Christoph von Rotz</td>
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<td>Yuri Bertelotti</td>
<td>Ona Bruslé</td>
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<td>Hans Fehr</td>
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<td>Hans Ulrich</td>
<td>Peter Hohl</td>
<td>Peter Malina</td>
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The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

18.3.2008 14:51 Uhr
The captions below the names refer to (from left to right) political party affiliation, year of birth, year of election at the Council and the committees (see pp 34–35) on which the council member sits.
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATES

Representing the 26 cantons

Why some cantons only have one seat on 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.

The captions below the names refer to (from left to right) political party affiliation, year of birth, year of election to the Council and the committees (see pp 34–35) on which the council member sits.
Other rules apply to Swiss people living abroad

Swiss citizens living abroad have the option of being registered 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, depending on where they are registered, Swiss people living abroad may or may not be able to take part in elections to the Council of States, depending on what their cantonal law provides.

Swiss people 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 to have a say in the affairs of the commune.

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

The two Councils meet 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 WORK OF PARLIAMENT OR

What “our people in Bern” are doing

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% of their working hours to their parliamentary duties. Generally, they also have another job. This arrangement where representatives take on public tasks and mandates on a part-time basis is known in Switzerland as the militia system. 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.

Sessions in 2006

Spring session: 3 – 20 March
Summer session: 26 May – 13 June
Autumn session: 15 September – 3 October
Winter session: 1 – 19 December (10 December: election of the President of the Confederation and the Vice-President of the Federal Council)
Special session of the Council of States: 28 April

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 are made” on pages 36/37)

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 of the Swiss Confederation and the Vice-President of the Federal Council 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. It also examines and approves the federal accounts.
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.

In addition to Council members, committees and parliamentary groups can also submit parliamentary initiatives and interventions. They can be signed by one or more Council members.

Between 0 and 120 parliamentary requests per person

In the last four years, members of the National Council and the Council of States submitted a total of 5748 parliamentary requests, broken down into:

- 352 parliamentary initiatives
- 1340 motions
- 624 postulates
- 1517 interpellations
- 709 simple enquiries and
- 1206 written questions as part of question time in the National Council.

This amounts to an average of 20 requests per member, although some achieve several times this number. One member submitted over 120 interventions, while other members have submitted only one or none at all after eight years in parliament.
COMMITTEES AND DELEGATIONS OR

Tackling items of business

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 twelve standing committees: two supervisory committees and ten legislative committees.

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 who have been unable to voice their concerns in the committee can subsequently submit minority proposals at the plenary session.

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

Supervisory committees and delegations
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. They fulfil their tasks by carrying out inspections and visiting agencies, commissioning the Parliamentary Administration Control to carry out evaluations, reviewing the reports on Federal Council business, the business of the federal courts and the annual reports of other bodies given tasks by the Confederation (Swiss Federal Banking Commission, the Federal Institutes of Technology, etc.). They deal with supervision requests submitted by third parties and follow up implementation of recommendations and other parliamentary interventions addressed to the Federal Council. The control committees are divided into sub-committees. In addition, each committee selects three members from its group to form the Control Delegation (GPDel) whose task it is to scrutinise activities relating to state protection and the intelligence services.

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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Finance Committee (FC)</th>
<th>Council of States</th>
<th>National Council</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Control Committee (CC)</td>
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The numbers on the coloured circles in the table denote the corresponding members of the National Council and the Council of States (see pp. 26–28); the first two persons listed are the chairperson and deputy respectively, and the remaining committee members classified by party affiliation; *vacant.

The committees meet on average for three to four days every quarter.
### Legislative committees

The ten legislative committees are responsible for legislation in their particular fields, for example:

- **Foreign Affairs Committee**: international relations, neutrality, humanitarian aid, human rights, foreign economic / trade policy, European integration, World Bank, IMF
- **Science, Education and Culture Committee**: science, education, genetic engineering, languages, culture, sport, family issues, youth issues, women’s issues
- **Social Security and Health Committee**: social insurance, health matters, drugs, food, sickness and accident prevention, health and safety
- **Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy Committee**: environment protection, national heritage, spatial planning, water supply and regulation, energy, forestry, hunting and fishing.
- **Defence Committee**: military defence, civil defence, national economic supply, peace and security policy, civilian service, war material export
- **Transport and Telecommunications Committee**: transport and traffic, postal services and telecommunications, media
- **Economic Affairs and Taxation Committee**: national economy, labour, social partnership, prices, consumer protection, private insurance, export risk guarantee, taxation, agriculture.
- **Political Institutions Committee**: federal authorities, relations between the Confederation and the cantons, political rights, citizenship, foreign nationals, asylum, relations between the Church and the State
- **Legal Affairs Committee**: civil code, code of obligations, intellectual property, fair trading, data protection, criminal law, military criminal law, parliamentary/immunity, amnesty
- **Committee for Public Buildings**: civilian public buildings at home and abroad

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<td>Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC)</td>
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<td>Committee for Science, Education and Culture (CSEC)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Committee for Social Security and Health (CSSH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Committee for the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy (CESPE)</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Council of States" /></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Defence Committee (DefC)</td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Council of States" /></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Committee for Transportation and Telecommunications (CTT)</td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Council of States" /></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (CEAT)</td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Council of States" /></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Political Institutions Committee (PIC)</td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Council of States" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Committee for Legal Affairs (CLA)</td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Council of States" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Committee for Public Buildings (CPB)</td>
<td><img src="image19" alt="Council of States" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other committees

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

The **Committee on Pardons and Conflicts of Jurisdiction** examines requests for pardons submitted to the Federal Assembly and rules on conflicts of jurisdiction between the highest federal authorities. It also has the power to grant pardons.

The **Rehabilitation Committee** quashes convictions against persons who helped refugees to flee persecution during the period of National Socialism.

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

### Delegations

Delegations are mainly called on to cultivate relations with other states; otherwise, they represent the Federal Assembly at international parliamentary assemblies relating, for example, to the Council of Europe, Francophonie, the OSCE or NATO.
Parliamentary groups comprise members of the same party or parties sharing the same 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 impact on Council business.

Politically speaking, the Federal Assembly is not divided into parties but into parliamentary groups. With one exception, all members of parliament at present belong to a parliamentary group:

Money paid for a job done
Parliamentary groups are paid a fixed allowance of CHF 92,000 a year, and each of their members receives the additional sum of CHF 17,000. 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 butterfly effect
In the National Council, small changes can have far-reaching effects. For example, following the elections in autumn 2007, the only Swiss Workers’ Party member elected to the National Council decided to leave the Social Democratic Group and join the Green Group with the result that the Green Party now has three instead of two members of parliament on each committee and the Social Democratic Party now has five instead of six members: this all adds up to make a difference of eleven seats.

Because the Christian Democratic People’s Party has also joined up with the Evangelical People’s Party and the Green Liberal Party to form a parliamentary group, the Swiss People’s Party and the Radical Free Democratic Party seats on the committees fell to eleven each.

The reason for these major shifts is the proportional representation system that governs the allocation of seats in the National Council.

The choice of a few people or even one party representative to belong to a particular parliamentary group can have a major impact on the composition of the committees.
The service centre for the Federal Assembly

Parliamentary Services support the Federal Assembly in the fulfilment of its tasks. They provide a comprehensive service to assist members of parliament 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 293 staff who share 197 full-time positions under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

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, in particular with accredited journalists, 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 word “parliament” is derived from the Latin parlare, to speak. However, it is often a case of 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).

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 the 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 Way to the Enactment of New Legislation or

### Regaining control of Invalidity Insurance

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. Below are the steps that were needed to reach the fifth revision of the Federal Act on Invalidity Insurance (IV):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.11.2002</td>
<td>NC-CSSH, CS-CSSH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Federal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>FSIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24.9.2004</td>
<td>Federal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>FSIO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.6.2005</td>
<td>Federal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/6.9.2005</td>
<td>NC-CSSH</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.3.2006</td>
<td>National Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The First Step

The first step is taken when someone thinks it is necessary for there to be a new act or for an existing act to be amended. This may be a member of the public or an interest group, members of parliament or sections of the administration, cantons or the Federal Council.

### The Case in Question

The case in question involved two parliamentary bodies: The National Council Committee for Social Security and Health NC-CSSH, and The Council of States Committee for Social Security and Health CS-CSSH. Both submitted motions during the consultation procedure for the fourth IV revision: one at the end of 2002, and the other at the beginning of 2003. They called for a limit to be placed on the increase in the invalidity ratio, i.e. for the number of people drawing a pension as a percentage of the population as a whole, to be restricted.

If this ratio continued to increase, the Federal Council would have to examine the effectiveness of the measures of the fourth IV revision and take additional measures.

### The Federal Council

The Federal Council instructed the Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO to draw up a draft bill in consultation with the other offices concerned.

### The National Council Committee for Social Security and Health NC-CSSH

The National Council Committee for Social Security and Health NC-CSSH met to hear a number of experts on 5 and 6 September 2005. It then unanimously decided to proceed with the fifth IV revision.

### The National Council

The National Council discussed the fifth IV revision in the spring session in 2006. There was general consensus that the Act needed revising but there was some debate about the question of funding. The Council therefore decided to rule on this matter at a later date. Only minor amendments were made to the Federal Council’s draft. After a 14-hour consultation procedure over three days, the National Council accepted the revision on 22 March.
The Council of States Committee for Social Security and Health CS-SSH sat on 24 and 25 April. After hearing various groups, it also unanimously decided to consider the proposal and examine it in detail.

The Council of States discussed the fifth IV revision on 22 June 2006. It also recognised the need for revision with certain reservations regarding funding. The Council of States did not differ from the National Council on the main points but added two new provisions: employers should work with the IV office to seek solutions. And the insurance should make a contribution to employers who continue to employ staff who are eligible for invalidity benefits (Article 14a para. 5).

Conversely, the Council of States rejected two provisions approved by the National Council: capital aid and the adjustment of pensions paid out abroad to bring them in line with their purchasing power.

The next stage was the process of ironing out differences: the National Council stood firm on the capital aid rejected by the Council of States and rejected the new Article 14a para. 5.

The Council of States then discussed the remaining differences. It attempted to accommodate the National Council’s position by changing the wording of Article 14 para. 5 and limiting the duration of support, and it re-included capital aid in the draft bill.

Finally the National Council followed the decisions of the Council of States. As there were no longer any differences after fewer than three consultations, there was no need for a conciliation conference between the two chambers.

The fifth IV revision was passed on 6 October 2006 in the National Council with 118 Yes votes to 63 No votes and 3 abstentions. The Council of States also approved the revision with 35 votes for to seven votes against and two abstentions.

As the Invalidity Insurance Act is only an act and does not involve an amendment of the constitution, the people do not automatically have to vote on it.

However, those opposing the revision managed, within a period of 100 days, to collect enough signatures against the amendment of the act, so a referendum had to be held.

A popular vote was held on 17 June 2007. The proposal was adopted with a 59.1% “yes” vote.

The Federal Council decided on 29 September 2007 that the fifth IV revision would take effect at the beginning of the following year.

As of 1 January 2008 the amended Federal Act on Invalidity Insurance came into force.
THE EXECUTIVE: FEDERAL COUNCIL AND DEPARTMENTS OR

The Swiss government
In most parts of the world, those in government make it a point of being close to the people: shaking hands, kissing babies and patting dogs. Almost without exception you can see staged walkabouts—just like this picture of our entire Executive Branch.

But with one major difference: the members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor can still continue to mingle with the crowds without a care in the world and with no special security measures or bodyguards, and these crowds are not even handpicked or vetted. Long may it continue!
The Federal Council

The Swiss government comprises the seven members of the Federal Council, who are each elected 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 primus inter pares, or first among equals. He or she chairs the sessions of the Federal Council and undertakes special ceremonial duties. The Federal Chancellor acts as the government's chief of staff.
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 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. It takes administrative action only in exceptional cases.

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 the 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 or her absence, by the Vice-President. They can last between one and ten 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.

The composition of the Federal Council in terms of political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1848</th>
<th>1892</th>
<th>1916</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1959</th>
<th>2004</th>
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</table>

The diagram shows the representation of the political parties in the Federal Council since 1848: from more than seventy years in which its members all came from the Radical Party to the current composition of the federal government in accordance with the magic formula.

Collegiality
According to Article 177 of the Federal Constitution, the Federal Council is a collegial body, in which each member has the same rights and responsibilities.

The national government convenes every Wednesday morning for ordinary meetings where members express their views on the matters at hand and pass resolutions. 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. Decisions are reached behind closed doors and must be presented in public unanimously, using the arguments that won the day in the discussions. In other words, members who do not share the opinion of the majority must nonetheless endorse the decisions of the Council as a whole.

Concordance
Comes from the Latin term “cordialitas”, which means unanimity or the popular expression “one heart and soul”.

Unlike the consideration for the various regions of Switzerland, concordance is not stipulated in the constitution, but has developed over many years through Switzerland’s highly developed mechanisms for the protection of minorities.

Concordance, does not, however, imply that everyone in Parliament and in the government is (or should be) in complete agreement, but rather that all opinions are represented and carry a weight that accords closely with the level of support that they enjoy among the electorate.

In elections to the Federal Council, it regularly happens that although a party’s right to a seat is undisputed, a member of that party with more appeal to the parliamentary majority is elected instead of the candidate nominated by the party itself.

The magic formula
Is the phrase used to describe the way in which the Federal Council has been constituted since 1959 when the seats allocated to parties represented in the national government first corresponded roughly to their share of the vote: the SP (26.3%), the FDP (23.7%) and the CVP (23.3%) each had two seats on the Federal Council, while the SVP (11.6%) had one.

This situation continued unaltered for 44 years. However, the National Council elections of 19 October 2003 saw the SVP win 26.9% of the vote, thereby making it the strongest party in parliament. The CVP gained only 14% of the vote and was the weakest party. At the elections to the Federal Council on 10 December, parliament chose to elect two representatives from the SVP and only one from the CVP.
Where the 36 000-strong federal staff work
The Federal Chancellery

For the Swiss Confederation, 2008 means the beginning of a new legislative period. As in almost all other states, a legislative period, i.e. an election and legislation cycle and therefore the term of office of the Federal Assembly, lasts four years. Consequently, the strategic and planning work of the Federal Council also follows this cycle.

This is particularly important for the Federal Chancellery as staff office for the Federal Council. On the one hand, together with the seven departments, it helps to draw up the four-year plan and, on the other hand, it creates the general conditions for the most efficient implementation of the annual goals contained in the plan. This, in turn, has a direct impact on the activities of the National Council and Council of States.

Federal Council Sector

The Federal Council begins its weekly session at 9 am every Wednesday in the west wing of the Federal Palace. In the week prior to the session, the Section for Federal Council Affairs works to ensure that everything is ready to enable the Federal Council to make decisions on dozens of matters during the three- or four-hour sessions. This sometimes involves hundreds of files being passed between the departments and the offices. As the Federal Council gathers the views of its members through a consultation process before taking decisions, the compilation and evaluation of these files is particularly important. The Federal Council is then in a position to debate any remaining differences of opinion.

The Legal Section has an important control and advisory function in the legislative process and advises the departments and offices. The Section also screens all motions put to the Federal Council for their legal and formal accuracy. Federal acts and ordinances only enter into force following their official publication. It is the task of the Official Publications Centre to ensure that the Federal Gazette, the Official Compilation, the Classified Compilation and the Journal of Administrative Practice are published swiftly and accurately in three languages. These publications contain the drafts that parliament debates in the course of its legislative work, and applicable law by which citizens and the authorities are required to act and on which the courts base their decisions. For lawyers and for many private individuals these are indispensable, as is evident from the some 500 000 online queries made each day.

The Central Language Services (German, French, Italian and Terminology sections) ensure, together with the Federal Office of Justice, that federal legislation and all other official publications are produced in a style of language that is accessible to the public. Through their own translations and the revision of those carried out by the offices, they contribute to ensuring that government communications reach all language communities at the same time and in the same manner. In a sense the language services are the guardians of the federal state's multilingualism. Demand for English translations of important government texts is also on the rise. The English Language Service strives to ensure the quality of texts produced in English and translates selected legislative texts.

One very important tool for communication and translation activities is the Termdat terminology database, a comprehensive electronic dictionary created with the cooperation of the language services of the European Commission and which contains specialist vocabulary and abbreviations from the fields of law and administration and countless other fields.

Federal Chancellor Sector

The next legislative period begins in autumn 2008, and the Planning and Strategy Section prepares, together with the departments, the dispatch on legislative planning which contains a draft of the most important aims and measures of federal government policy for the period 2007–2011. The basis for this dispatch is provided in the report, published in mid 2007, of the Forward Planning Staff and entitled ‘Challenges 2007–2011’, which analyses trends and their significance for federal policy on behalf of the Federal Council. Responsibility for the coordination of the Forward Planning Staff rests with the Planning and Strategy Section. It also advises the secretariat of the Conference of Secretaries-General, the highest coordination body in the Federal Administration.

The Political Rights Section ensures that the rights that Switzerland values so highly can be exercised smoothly. It advises initiative and referendum committees, verifies petition lists, formally examines popular initiatives, organises federal votes and elections to the National Council and monitors pilot e-voting schemes.

Providing support for coordination and management activities may not sound spectacular. However, such activities are just as important for the smooth running of the Federal Chancellery as making provisions in the event of a crisis or disaster. The Staff Office ensures that the Federal Council is in a position to fulfil its duties even under difficult circumstances. The Staff Office is also responsible for dealing with correspondence from the public and for making sure that each matter receives the appropriate attention.
Switzerland often has to deal with and respond to a variety of crises. Such events can also present the Federal Administration with significant challenges. That is why it is important that members of the management teams in the offices, department and the Federal Chancellery make sure they are prepared. Leading and responding under difficult circumstances and time constraints is something that can be learnt.

The task of conducting training at high or strategic level falls to the Strategic Leadership Training (SLT) unit. Training consists of workshops or information events and exercises.

The primary tasks of Internal Services include human resources, finance and accounting, information technology, events management at the von Wattenwyl Haus and the Lohn country residence and the authentication of signatures for foreign authorities.

Information and Communications Sector

Information and Communication is a vital leadership tool for the Federal Council. Headed by the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Council spokesman, the Federal Chancellery ensures, together with the relevant head of department and their staffs, that parliament, the media and the public are continually provided with transparent information following the meetings of the Federal Council. This is achieved through press conferences that can also be viewed live online at www.admin.ch/ch/d/conferenza/index.html and through press releases which can be subscribed to at www.news.admin.ch or downloaded from www.admin.ch. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor and his team are responsible for producing the Federal Council’s explanatory pamphlet in the run-up to federal popular votes.

The e-Government Section also belongs to the Information and Communication Section. It operates the Federal Administration’s internet portal www.admin.ch and, on behalf of the Confederation and cantons, the Swiss portal www.ch.ch. It also performs certain management and coordination tasks in the area of e-Government.

The main focus of the Political Forum of the Confederation is the hosting of exhibitions with political and/or social content and the related discussion rounds and other events. In addition to media conferences there is a regular series of lectures in the Käfigturm on topical or historically important subjects. Details can be found at www.kaefturm.admin.ch.

The Federal Parliamentary and Central Library is an academic library open to members of parliament and the federal administration. It is linked electronically to other documentation centres and libraries in the administration through the Alexandria system.

The Communication Support Section advises the Federal Administration on conceptional and strategic communication matters.

Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner

The Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC) seeks to safeguard individual privacy. He monitors data processing activities by federal agencies or by private individuals and organisations. He can conduct investigations and, in the event of a violation, can recommend that data processing methods be changed or discontinued. In addition, he provides advice to private individuals, federal agencies and the cantons. The office of the FDPIC also acts as a centre of expertise and conciliation board on matters concerning the principle of freedom of information applicable in the Federal Administration since 1 July 2006. It advises the federal offices and departments on how to apply the new law which facilitates access to official documents, and conducts mediation proceedings in the event of conflict between those applying for access to information and the offices concerned.
Always prepared

When and wherever a hurricane rages, the earth trembles violently, a volcano erupts or a disaster of any kind occurs, Markus S. Hischier – the man in the shirt and tie in our picture – is one of the first to know.

He is also one of the first to react: as head of the Material, Deployment Technology and Transport section of the FDFA Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, he can be reached 24 hours a day and 365 days a year to organise aid at a moment’s notice.

This means that he discusses what and how much is needed with Bernhard Aeschlimann – the man on the right in the picture and head of the materials base of the Swiss Corps for Humanitarian Aid.

Here in Wabern over three and a half thousand different articles are stored to meet the emergency requirements of ten thousand people. The items range from wool blankets and headache tablets, water purification devices and satellite telephones to emergency accommodation and even body bags.

In the space of a few hours, everything needed in disaster areas can be dispatched from here, provided that the funds are available to transfer the aid, the Rescue Chain helpers and if necessary their 24 dogs.

Markus S. Hischier also takes care of transport: within hours he can charter planes and sometimes even ships – for example to evacuate Swiss nationals rapidly from crisis areas.

Markus Hischier and Bernhard Aeschlimann are two of 3,660 federal employees in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. Few people are aware of the work they do but it benefits many if not all of us.
The FDFA is responsible for safeguarding Switzerland’s interests abroad and for shaping and coordinating Swiss foreign policy. Its activities are based on the following five foreign policy goals:

- peaceful coexistence of nations
- respect for human rights and promotion of democracy
- safeguarding Swiss economic interests abroad
- alleviation of need and poverty in the world
- preservation of natural resources.

### General Secretariat

![Image of General Secretariat](image)

As the FDFA’s staff office, the General Secretariat supports the foreign minister in the management of the department. It plans and coordinates all departmental activities. It is also responsible for

- public relations
- supervising the embassies and consulates and of the financial management at the central office
- coordinating the department’s information and communications technology
- implementing equal opportunities policy within the FDFA
- implementing the Act on Freedom of Information within the Federal Administration.

### State Secretariat

![Image of State Secretariat](image)

The State Secretary is second in command in the department – after the Head of Department – and is the first person to whom the Federal Council turns to discuss matters of foreign policy. He heads the Directorate of Political Affairs and is responsible for the development and strategic planning of foreign policy and for reporting to the political authorities. The State Secretary deputises for the Head of Department when necessary, for example at meetings of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the National Council and the Council of States. He is also responsible for maintaining regular contacts with his counterparts abroad and in Bern. Important dossiers include cooperation with the UN, the further development of Switzerland’s relations with the EU as well as security and peace policy.

The Integration Office, which is a joint office of the FDFA and the FDEA, reports to the State Secretariat. The Integration Office coordinates relations with the European Union and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

### Directorate of Political Affairs

![Image of Directorate of Political Affairs](image)

The Directorate of Political Affairs is the central office for collecting and processing all the information needed to safeguard Swiss foreign interests. It identifies the potential areas of crisis and tension, assesses Switzerland’s options, and develops foreign policy strategies. The Directorate of Political Affairs is the office within the Department where Switzerland’s foreign policy is formulated and to which all Switzerland’s missions abroad report. The Directorate has four geographical and five thematic divisions:

- **Political Affairs Division I** (Europe, Council of Europe, OSCE, cross-border cooperation)
- **Political Affairs Division II / The Americas**
- **Political Affairs Division II / Africa and the Middle East**
- **Political Affairs Division II / Asia-Pacific**
- **Political Affairs Division III** (United Nations, Swiss activities in international organisations, host-state policy, Francophonie)
- **Political Affairs Division IV** (Peace policy and human security, human rights policy, humanitarian policy and migration, Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peace Building)
- **Political Affairs Division V** (financial and economic issues; environment, transport, energy and science; cultural affairs)
- **Political Affairs Division VI** (service for the Swiss Abroad and policy on the Swiss Abroad, consular protection, travel information and crisis management)

The **Secretariat of Political Affairs** (analyses, documentation and planning; international security policy)

**Presence Switzerland**, which reports to the Directorate of Political Affairs, promotes empathy for and interest in Switzerland by highlighting its diversity and attractive aspects.

### Directorate of International Law

![Image of Directorate of International Law](image)

International law governs the peaceful coexistence of States. A foreign policy that adheres to international rules is credible and predictable. International law is an important guideline of Swiss foreign policy.

As the “legal conscience” of the FDFA and the Swiss government’s central office for international law, the Directorate of International Law makes sure that Switzerland meets its international legal obligations both abroad and at home. It is involved in the negotiation, conclusion and implementation of agreements based on international law. It is also responsible for ensuring that Swiss legal claims vis-à-vis foreign states and entities are enforced.
The Directorate of International Law deals with a wide range of topics, including neutrality, human rights and international humanitarian law, the legal aspects of cross-border cooperation, and the issue of dealing with the proceeds of corruption.

The SDC carries out one-off actions, supports programmes led by multilateral organisations and participates in both Swiss and international aid programmes.

**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**

Switzerland contributes to the alleviation of hardship and poverty in the world, to respect for human rights, and to the promotion of democracy and the peaceful coexistence of nations, as stated in the Swiss constitution.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) implements this mission. The SDC’s activities are divided into three specific areas:

- bilateral and multilateral development cooperation
- humanitarian aid (including actions by the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit)
- cooperation with Eastern Europe.

The aim of development cooperation is to combat poverty by helping people to help themselves. In particular, the SDC promotes economic and national self-sufficiency, works to improve conditions of production, assists in dealing with environmental problems and helps to ensure better access to education and healthcare for the most underprivileged sections of society.

The mission of the *Confederation’s agency for humanitarian aid* is to save lives and alleviate suffering. During armed conflicts and following natural disasters, it provides help through the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit and supports humanitarian partner organisations.

**Cooperation with Eastern Europe** assists the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) make the transition to democracy and market economics.

While humanitarian aid is sent to those places where it is most needed, bilateral development assistance is currently focused on 17 priority countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cooperation with Eastern Europe centres on ten countries in South-Eastern Europe and the CIS. At the multilateral level, the SDC works with UN agencies, the World Bank and regional development banks.

The SDC’s specialist units are grouped in the Thematic and Technical Resources Department. They focus mainly on:

- conflict prevention
- good governance
- social development
- employment and income
- natural resources and environment.

**Directorate for Management DM**

The Directorate for Management has three main tasks:

- It is responsible for providing, managing and controlling resources (personnel, finance, logistics, IT, licences, etc.) and makes sure they are used effectively to achieve the department’s goals.
- It manages the network of diplomatic and consular representations in line with the needs of Switzerland’s foreign policy and of Swiss citizens abroad. It takes measures to ensure the security of these representations and their staff members, and is responsible for the communication channels and coordination between the Swiss representations abroad and the head office in Bern.
- It endeavours to achieve efficient and customer-friendly consular services. It creates the conditions for results-oriented management in the Swiss representations abroad and supports them in fulfilling their objectives.

In addition, legislation, the application of law and legal advice for the department (with the exception of questions of international law) are included in the DM’s remit. The Swiss Government Travel Centre, which organises the official international travel arrangements for the whole of the federal administration, is also part of this directorate.

**Swiss Diplomatic and Consular Missions Abroad**

Roughly 150 missions represent Swiss interests vis-à-vis other states and international organisations and provide services to Swiss nationals and businesses abroad. The network includes embassies, general consulates, and consulates, as well as missions to multilateral bodies and SDC cooperation offices.
Five new Swiss lady ambassadors

They are called Paule (picture below left), Intimacy (the largest) and even Apple blossom Apfelblust. All of them are well past their prime (not one of them is on the right side of forty) and notwithstanding they are all about to represent our country and its works of art abroad.

However before they set out on their journey to a Swiss embassy to grace reception halls and meeting rooms, they have to be very meticulously inspected by Monika Dannerger: the curator of the federal art collection records the condition of each painting in a very detailed checkout procedure before she releases all five of them to go in the diplomatic bag.

The pictures are part of a growing collection now numbering over 20,000 works. For more than a century, the Swiss government has regularly been buying works by Swiss artists. Supplemented by gifts from private individuals, this collection has become a treasure trove of Swiss artistic creativity.

A small part of the collection is waiting in storage for a diplomat or new chief of staff to discover it, but the far larger part is already hanging and on display: in our 300 embassies and consulates all over the world and in federal office management suites and Federal Council offices.

Monika Dannerger is one of 2,257 federal employees in the Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA. Few people are aware of the work she does but it benefits many if not all of us.
The General Secretariat is responsible for planning, co-ordination and controlling, and coordinates the decision-making process between the federal offices and the Head of Department. It provides consultancy services for the entire department. Its Legal Service is also responsible for supervising charitable foundations. The Federal Commission against Racism, the Service for Combating Racism and the Office for the Equality of People with Disabilities are also affiliated to the General Secretariat.

The Swiss National Library’s task is to collect, preserve, catalogue and make available all printed and electronic publications relating to Switzerland. In addition, the NL also houses a series of special collections, the most important being the Swiss Literary Archive and the Graphic Collection. The Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchâtel is also part of the Swiss National Library.

The Swiss Federal Archives evaluate, safeguard, catalogue and raise public awareness of the Confederation’s documents. It would take an 11.4 terabyte bookshelf over 50 kilometres long to hold the entire inventory, which includes original documents such as the Swiss 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.

The main focus for the years ahead will be to support the Federal Administration’s services by ensuring their smooth transition to e-Government.

Summer 2007: bad storms and heavy rainfalls swept across Switzerland, leaving in their wake flooding and landslides, claiming people’s lives and destroying roads, buildings and sections of rail. This was not an isolated case: Switzerland regularly experiences such storms. On the bright side, if you regularly listen to weather forecasts, you can take precautions and protect yourself and your property.

MeteoSwiss issues weather forecasts round the clock and warnings in the event of bad weather conditions. It gives speedy and detailed information on the dangers to disaster protection units, the media and general public. MeteoSwiss also operates telemetry ground stations, rainfall radars and various remote sensing instruments at over 700 locations. Complex weather models use this data to calculate forecasts up to ten days in advance. MeteoSwiss offers businesses and private individuals special tailor-made forecasts.
The stated aim of the FOPH is to promote and maintain the health of all people living in Switzerland. It seeks to increase awareness of health-related matters so that people can take responsibility for their own health. It also aims at a general improvement in people’s health through disease prevention and health protection campaigns and by curing illnesses and alleviating suffering caused by disease and accidents. The FOPH tackles issues such as epidemiology and infectious diseases, substance abuse and drug prevention, food safety, noise and radiation protection, assessment and monitoring of chemicals and toxic products, stem cell research and bioterrorism, and health and accident insurance.

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, as set out in the guidelines.

The Confederation spends around one quarter of the national budget on social welfare. In previous years this amounted to between CHF 13bn and CHF 14bn. The FSIO ensures the reliability of this social insurance system within its areas of responsibility: old age and survivors’ insurance (AHV), invalidity insurance (IV), supplementary benefits, occupational pension funds, compensation for loss of earnings for people on national service and women on maternity leave, and family allowances in the agricultural sector. There are new solutions in AHV which take account of the ageing population and the falling birth rate. The IV revision should help to improve the financial budget for invalidity insurance by increasing the number of people with disabilities remaining at work, and thus reducing expenditure.

The protection of humans and animals requires that all therapeutic products are officially monitored. Swissmedic ensures that only high-quality, safe and effective medicines are made available. Full-scale testing of therapeutic products makes it possible to identify new risks at an early stage and ensure the swift implementation of the appropriate safety measures.
Three minutes and you know for sure: that’s the one!

Or not, as the case may be! In no time at all, experts at the Federal Office of Police (fedpol) can establish whether a fingerprint belongs to someone known to the police or whether, on the contrary, a perfect match can be ruled out: all thanks to AFIS.

AFIS stands for Automated Fingerprint Identification System, a system that has been used in Switzerland for nearly a quarter of a century.

The forensic process, which will reveal offenders and exonerate innocent parties, is based on the fact that each person is unique at least as regards the papillary lines on their hands and fingers. This is something that has been known since the end of the 19th century and used to good effect in police work.

What fedpol expert, Guido Balmer, can see here on the screen is just a digitalised fingerprint; he cannot see who it belongs to and what investigation it is connected with. This information is stored separately for reasons of data protection. However, if a search brings up a match with a fingerprint already recorded, it is possible to establish the person in question and to have access to the details of the case.

Fedpol experts conduct on average 300 person identifications per day using AFIS, and data records now total around 750,000 blocks.

Guido Balmer is one of the 2397 employees in the Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP. Few people are aware the work he and his colleagues perform using AFIS but it benefits many if not all of us.
Like traffic lights at a very busy junction, the General Secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the various parts of the FDJP work together as a team: it coordinates business for parliament and the Federal Council; it informs the public via the media or internet of the Department’s activities; and it manages personnel and finances for the whole department. The Information Technology Service Centre (ISC) is a special unit which develops and manages security-related IT applications in the areas of justice, police and migration, such as search systems or criminal records. It is also responsible for monitoring post and telecommunications.

**Federal Office of Justice (FOJ)**

Michael Leupold 206

Hans and Peter have been partners for five years. They have founded a life partnership with mutual rights and obligations by having their partnership registered at the Civil Registry Office. The Partnership Act, which came into force in 2007, improves the legal position of same-sex couples in areas such as succession, social insurance and occupational pensions without, however, putting the registered partnership on the same footing as marriage. This is just one of the many acts that the FOJ has been drawing up in the area of public, private and criminal law. The office also supervises all other legislation projects within the Federal Administration and issues expert opinions. Internationally, the FOJ represents Switzerland at the European Court of Justice for human rights and works alongside foreign authorities in the area of mutual assistance.

**Federal Office of Police (Fedpol)**

Jean-Luc Yez 832

Shortly after the official ceremony on 1 August 2007 a bomb exploded on the Rüti. What does this incident mean for the Federal Office of Police?

Fedpol is responsible for law enforcement. After this incident, therefore, the Federal Criminal Police (FCP) carried out an investigation to find the perpetrator. In addition to crimes involving explosives, the FCP is also responsible for the prosecution of serious offences such as those linked to organised crime.

Fedpol is also responsible for the protection of internationally protected persons. On 1 August the Federal Security Service ensured that the President of the Swiss Confederation Micheline Calmy-Rey was given the required protection both during and after the ceremony on the Rüti.

The Service for Analysis and Prevention promptly identifies threats, for instance due to terrorism, espionage or violent extremism. It had therefore analysed and appraised the situation before 1 August and had notified the cantons of any possible dangers.

**Federal Office for Migration (FOM)**

The Federal Office is responsible for all foreign nationals as well as asylum seekers and refugees. At the end of 2006, there were 1554527 people in possession of a residence permit or a permanent residence permit and 44869 asylum seekers or provisionally admitted persons. This accounts for around 1.6m people, half of whom are workers on which the economy depends.

The FOM ruled in 2006 on 46700 naturalisation applications cases and over 11100 asylum applications. It has issued some 158800 labour market authorisations and over 584700 visas. The integration of foreign nationals is important; the basic rules for living together must be accepted. The integration report published in 2006 shows that for the most part integration works well although there is always room for improvement. In cooperation with several departments and offices, 45 integration measures were devised, the most important of which relate to language, employment and education.

**Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (BA)**

As the Confederation’s prosecuting authority, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland, which is part of the FDJP, is responsible for investigating and prosecuting offences against the Confederation or that seriously affect its best interests.

Offences which come under federal jurisdiction are, for example, espionage, abuse of office by federal employees, and crimes involving explosives or radioactive material. As the federal investigation and prosecuting authority, the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland also deals with cases of organised crime and terrorism, money laundering and bribery and corruption, and white collar crime with major international or intercantonal implications.

Other tasks are the implementation of mutual assistance applications by foreign prosecuting authorities and the promotion of cross-border cooperation in fighting crime.
Swiss goods and services are known for their high quality, precision and reliability. In order to reach this standard, our economy needs to be in a position to measure, test and assess the properties of its goods and services to the requisite degree of precision.

When assessing the precision of a product, calculating electrical energy or keeping within the prescribed limits in the environment, the economy and society only function if the right measurements are made correctly.

The Federal Office of Metrology carries out Switzerland’s reference measuring, ensures it is internationally recognised and passes on the measuring data with the required precision to research institutes, business and the general public. It is able to calibrate the most precise measuring instruments, thereby ensuring that Switzerland is able to measure and test to the requisite degree.

**Federal Office of Metrology** Metas

Director: Christian Beck
Staff: 112
Revenue: 7,000,000.–
Expenditure: 7,000,000.–

This independent institute advises international organisations, courts of law, law firms, authorities, companies and individuals in Switzerland and abroad on points of law on all national legal systems. It also provides Swiss law-makers with reference models and sources of inspiration for drawing up and revising laws and international treaties.

The institute library has 300,000 reference works in over 60 languages for academics everywhere.

The SICL holds several events each year on topical subjects of comparative law and regularly publishes its own research work.

**Swiss Institute for Comparative Law** SICL

Director: Eleanor Cashin Blaize
Staff: 30
Revenue: 7,000,000.–
Expenditure: 7,000,000.–

Is the Swiss coat of arms on army knives merely decorative or is it a brand name? Are cosmetics “Swiss made” if, despite being developed in Switzerland, they are produced abroad? And what is the Swiss cross doing on Chinese pans? In a word: How much Swiss input does a product have to have for it to be branded as a Swiss product? The Institute is concerned with the legal aspects of this very topical and hot subject. All these questions relate to nothing less than Switzerland’s positioning as a business location and the reputation of Swiss designations of origin.

The Institute, commonly known as the patent office, protects not only (ground-breaking) inventions: for example, it also registers the design for a piece of furniture or the trade mark for a new drink and searches for existing inventions so that innovative companies have greater legal leverage if someone wants to copy their intellectual property.

**Federal Institute of Intellectual Property** IIP

Director: Roland Grossenbacher
Staff: 208
Revenue: 44,033,000.–
Expenditure: 43,077,000.–

Play poker like James Bond? You can do just that in one of the 19 Swiss casinos that are supervised by the FGB. Of course there is no guarantee that you will win but you can be sure of having a fair and enjoyable game. It is one of the FGB’s central concerns that gambling remains fun. It therefore ensures that casinos act professionally and implement the measures prescribed to prevent compulsive gambling. This ensures that the windfall that casinos pass on in the form of taxes does not entail human suffering and high social costs. In addition, the FGB prosecutes unlawful gaming outside casinos.

**Federal Gaming Board** FGB
Tracking the changes

If you are travelling in unknown terrain, whether in a professional or private capacity, you need a good map to find your way around (assuming, of course, that you know how to read one!). A good map must essentially be three things: clear, precise and up to date.

The fact that our national maps are and will continue to be precisely that is due to systems operator Hanspeter Gautschi from the flying service of Swisstopo, as the Swiss national topography office has been called for the past few years.

Hanspeter Gautschi regularly takes vertical view photographs of every square metre of Switzerland, weather permitting, i.e. when it is clear and there are no patches of fog or snow blocking the view of highways and byways.

His eagle eye doesn’t miss a thing. If a lane is being straightened or a field built on, if a glacier is shrinking or forest advancing, if pastures are turning into scrubland and ponds sitting up, if a garden centre is invading allotments and a new shopping mall sprouts up, he is there ready to record every change in the landscape with his precision camera.

The data is used to update all national maps and then keep them up to date; but it is also like pieces in the mosaic of another of Swisstopo’s most popular products: Swissimage, an aerial view of Switzerland, both detailed and lifelike.

Hanspeter Gautschi is one of 13,230 federal employees in the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS. Few people know much about the job he is doing but his work benefits many if not all of us.
Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

General Secretariat

Markus Seiler
Secretary-General
Staff: 305
Expenditure: 2 000 000.–

The Head of the DDPS has a very wide range of responsibilities and is supported in his daily work by the General Secretariat, which is a team of specialists from very varied fields that also plans for the middle and long term. The GS manages, coordinates and monitors the use of Department funds in the areas of personnel, finances, legal issues and the environment. It is also responsible for communication and the DDPS Damage Compensation Centre.

For administrative purposes, the following are also affiliated to the GS:

- The Directorate for Security Policy DSP, which is responsible for security policy strategy, coordinates the department’s international contacts, provides security policy support of armed forces operations in Switzerland and abroad, and armed forces planning and defence procurement, and deals with arms control and disarmament policy.

- The Strategic Intelligence Service SIS, which procures and analyses - mainly for the national government - political, economic, military and techno-scientific intelligence from abroad on developments that either pose a risk or offer an opportunity for Switzerland.

- The Staff Security Committee of the Federal Council – Staff SecCom. The Staff of the SecCom is comprised of three federal councillors (defence minister, justice minister and foreign minister) whose business is first examined by the Security Steering Group. Both committees are supported by the Staff of the SecCom by means of regular situation assessments and assistance in crisis management at federal level.

The General Secretariat also looks after the three world-famous Geneva Centres: the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces.

Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General

www.pa.admin.ch

Brigadier Dieter Weber
Military Attorney General
Staff and budget: included in figures for the General Secretariat

The Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General AFAG ensures that the military justice system can fulfil its task independently of armed forces command and of the administration. The Armed Forces Attorney General is the highest military prosecutor. He supervises the proper conduct of criminal proceedings and is also responsible for pursuing suspected war criminals, under the Geneva Convention, regardless of their nationality and the location of the crimes they commit.

Defence

www.armee.ch

Chief of the Armed Forces: Roland Graf
Lieutenant General Roland Graf Ref 9908
Revenue: 357 000 000.–
Expenditure: 108 000 000.–

The second D in the abbreviation DDPS stands for defence. Defence is the largest division in the department and is led by the Chief of the Armed Forces who holds the rank of a 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 Planning Staff has to look ahead and plan for tomorrow’s armed forces and the arms they require. The Federal Council then submits these requirements to parliament for approval in the annual armaments programmes. The Armed Forces Joint Staff is in charge of planning and ensures the required level of readiness of the forces and operations, whether for the security for the World Economic Forum WEF in Davos, peace support in the Balkans (e.g. by means of 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 militiamen and women are being educated and trained at the Armed Forces College. Logistics involves maintenance, medical services, transport, infrastructure and the supply and return of arms, equipment and food. The command and control support organisation provides all necessary electronic support services.
Civil protection

The P in the abbreviation DDPS stands for civil protection. Civil protection is an integrated system to provide crisis management, protection, rescue and assistance. It is designed to ensure coordination and cooperation between 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 in the event of disasters and emergencies.

Responsibility for civil protection lies mainly with the cantons. The federal government, in particular the Federal Office for Civil Protection takes care of the general planning and coordination of NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical threats) protection, training and infrastructure. The federal government is responsible particularly for instructions in the event of increased radioactivity, emergencies relating to dams, epidemics and livestock epidemics and armed conflict. The National Emergency Operations Centre in Zurich is responsible for alerting the population in an emergency situation. The Spiez Laboratory is Switzerland’s specialist institute for protection from nuclear, biological and chemical threats and hazards. Its services are often required by the UN.

Armasuisse

Armasuisse is the procurement, technology and real estate centre of the DDPS. 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. The Chief of Defence Procurement heads armasuisse.

There is scarcely a household in Switzerland that doesn’t have some armasuisse product such as a map or an atlas. These high quality products are produced by the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo). swisstopo is also responsible for the official ordnance survey.

The Federal Office for Command and Control, Telematics and Training Systems is the competence centre for advanced command and control and intelligence systems (C4ISTAR), simulations and training centres. The Federal Office for Weapons Systems, Vehicles and Material is responsible for the procurement management of all airborne and ground systems, ammunition and vehicles, and military equipment and clothing.

The real estate sector manages in the region of 26000 properties and 26000 hectares of land belonging to the DDPS, the largest landowner in Switzerland. As a research and technology hub, the science and technology sector puts its knowledge to good use with a modern-day equipped armed forces and military development planning. As armasuisse is responsible for arms and equipment during their entire life cycle, it is also responsible for their liquidation.

Sport

The S in the abbreviation DDPS stands for Sport. The Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO) promotes sports and physical activities for the whole population. Its activities focus on the positive effects of sport and physical activity: health, education, performance and society. The FOSPO devises and develops national sports policy and implements the resulting tasks. The Swiss Federal Institute of Sports in Magglingen is responsible for training, and research and development. It also runs the national sports promotion programme Youth + Sport in which around 80000 young sportspeople in 60 different disciplines take part each year.

In Magglingen, above Biel, and in Tenero near Locarno, the FOSPO runs state-of-the-art education, training and course centres for use by universities, associations, clubs and schools.

The “Public sector Uefa Euro 2008” project organisation, also affiliated to the FOSPO, coordinates the work of the federal government, cantons and communes in running the 2008 European Football Championship.
Mission accomplished. After fifteen years of countless meetings, reports, conferences, reams of paper and columns of figures, everything is finally on the table: the new system of financial equalisation and allocation of tasks between the Confederation and the cantons – in short, the NFE – cleared all hurdles and came into force on 1 January 2008.

The man at the centre and head of the NFE project, Gérard Wettstein, can finally switch off the lights in the Leuchtersaal of the Bernerhof on time. He can congratulate himself, as well as Susanna Gradent, Michelle Nefeler and Antonio Iadarola on the success of one of the most important reforms in Switzerland.

The NFE project, which has been negotiated and prepared here at the headquarters of the Federal Department of Finance and in the offices of all cantonal governments over the past few years is, in fact the most important reorganisation of Swiss federalism.

The NFE aims to abolish the huge disparities in the financial circumstances of the individual cantons. It caters for a more efficient use of financial resources and it now regulates the responsibilities of the Confederation and the cantons.

This is one example among many: until now, the cantons were responsible for the construction, operation and maintenance of the national roads on their territory. Financing, however, was provided mainly by the Confederation, amounting to an average of 87 per cent for construction and maintenance and over two-thirds for operation. In the future, the Confederation will bear all costs; however, in return, it will be the sole principal and owner of national roads.

Gérard Wettstein and his colleagues seen in this picture are four of 9175 federal employees of the Federal Department of Finance FDF. Few people are aware of the work they do but it benefits many if not all of us.
On a Tuesday evening in the Bernerhof, all the lights are still on and the offices are buzzing with activity. The departments are submitting the last comments on the items of business for the next morning’s Federal Council meeting. In the General Secretariat (GS), the finishing touches are being made to the FDF’s proposals.

The GS plans the items of business and supports Federal Councillor Hans-Rudolf Merz. The general public is informed through the department’s communications. Improvisation would be out of place here, due to the different language versions alone: all information regarding Federal Council affairs is provided simultaneously in German, French and Italian. The Federal Strategy Unit for Information Technology is also affiliated to the GS. It draws up the principles for the further development of information technology in the federal administration and coordinates electronic data protection throughout the federal administration.

The FDF is the custodian of the federal coffers. The old rule “not to spend more than you earn” also applies here. In 2001, voters instructed the Federal Council and parliament not to run up any further debt. The debt brake therefore requires spending not to increase more quickly than revenues. The FFA has to comply with this requirement when it draws up the budget for the coming year. The FFA also draws up a financial plan for the three years following the budget to give political actors sufficient time to make the appropriate changes. The financial plan lists all the agreed and expected expenditures. This allows sufficient time to decide whether projects need to be halted or if new sources of revenues need to be tapped.

Through its transparent accounts, the FFA ensures that parliament and the Swiss people can check how their tax money is being used and whether their decisions are being implemented.

Switzerland’s success hinges first and foremost on people: entrepreneurs, and inventors; people with a pioneering spirit, who are courageous, hard-working, and enjoy their work; and men and women with a commitment to quality, as well as finesse, a desire to succeed and a competitive spirit. These people are willing to make sacrifices; they have goals, respect for the task at hand and patience when dealing with others. By providing these human resources in a free environment to maximise their potential, Switzerland is able to make progress. This applies to society and business, and equally to the state, which requires strong and confident civil servants to ensure a strong yet streamlined state. FOPER creates the conditions to allow the federal government to attract and retain the best possible staff.

Why does the server at the fast-food counter ask you if you would like your hamburger to eat in or take away? It’s not just to know whether or not to put the food in a bag. The tax on your hamburger to go is lower (2.4%) than if you eat it in the restaurant (7.6%). That does seem a bit complicated, but there are other issues and problems, too. That is why the FFA has been commissioned to prepare a complete revision of the VAT Act. And, this is only one of its numerous tasks. Overall, it is the FFA that is responsible for collecting the bulk of federal revenues.

More than 10,000 trucks, 330,000 cars and 660,000 travellers enter Switzerland on a daily basis. The FCA strives to ensure that entry into Switzerland is as smooth as possible. The free movement of persons and goods is vital for our country, which is located at the heart of Europe. In order to enable swift customs clearance, without throwing the door wide open to smuggling and breaches of the law, the FCA continuously works towards ensuring that border controls are adapted to the level of risk. A large number of irregularities can be detected using targeted spot checks.

The FCA also deals with more than a third of federal revenues, by collecting excise duty on oil, tobacco and vehicles, as well as through the mileage-related heavy vehicle charge.
Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication FOITT

Since 2007, the FOITT can issue qualified digital signatures by means of certificates. Users transferring digital data can now guarantee data integrity and signature ID. The FOITT is thereby paving the way for the data transfer of tomorrow. It provides services for the Federal Administration, cantons, communities and other organisations.

Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL

Why are most of the offices in the Federal Administration filled with the same light grey furniture? It is because federal employees are not allowed to simply purchase their desks and chairs from any furniture manufacturer that takes their fancy. Offices would have more of a personal touch, but this would be costly. Standardised items purchased in bulk are less expensive than individual purchases. Large numbers of quotes have to be requested – thousands of desks, ten pallets of ballpoint pens, tonnes of printer paper – and the contract is awarded to the best value bid. This is one of the responsibilities of the FOBL, which also maintains and manages the federal government’s properties.

Federal Office of Private Insurance FOPI

The insurance agent who makes the house call is nice enough, but can the customer signing a contract check whether the insurance company is solvent? Not just anyone can make this assessment, but the FOPI can. It is responsible for supervising private insurance companies, and issuing corporate and product licences. Information on which company has which licence is available on the Internet.

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 from a critical distance. It achieves improvements in the performance of federal activities by convincing staff of its expert recommendations. The SFAO relies on dialogue with auditees because it knows that its recommendations are more likely to be accepted voluntarily.

Swiss Alcohol Board SAB

The SAB regulates the alcohol market by means of taxes, controls and restrictions on advertising. Alcosuisse, the SAB’s profit centre is responsible for trade in ethanol (high grade alcohol). Mixing ethanol with fuels is becoming more and more important. It allows carbon dioxide emissions in Switzerland to be reduced by 600,000 tonnes a year. There are already around 150 petrol stations that sell petrol with a 5% ethanol content. An additional 15 petrol stations are expected to sell petrol with an ethanol content of 85%.

Federal Pension Fund Publica

Employers and staff associations have had to concentrate on dealing with the occupational pension plans. Misconceptions in terms of high yields and consequently promises that could not be fulfilled forced various pension schemes to implement austerity measures. The defined benefit plan, which is still widely used, is expected to be replaced by a contribution-based plan for reasons relating to the ageing population. This means that pensions are no longer based on the last salary, but are exclusively based on the capital saved. In addition, retirement age needs to become more flexible to take into account new lifestyles. The federal government is changing its pension plan to a contribution-based pension plan as part of the complete revision of the Publica Act.
When the ship comes in ...

... bringing tulips from Amsterdam, wheat from Canada or fishmeal from Peru

Many of Switzerland’s imports come to us via the Rhine ports. And, conversely, a large part of our exports leave from there for destinations all over the world: watches and pharmaceutical products, machine-tools and tooth implants and a host of other top products made in Switzerland.

Beat Leingruber, the man standing on the tip of the arrow, has his part to play in ensuring that this cross-border goods traffic proceeds through the correct channels and that everything runs without a hitch.

A specialist in the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, he drafts free trade agreements with overseas countries. Ideally speaking, these contracts should benefit all parties on both sides equally, thereby creating a win-win situation.

This is no mean feat by anyone’s standards: export industries want their products to have free access to the global market; importers want to avoid import duties or other expensive taxes; and domestic producers basically want the best possible protection from cheap foreign competition.

Reconciling all interests as well as possible is a balancing act that SECO trade experts perform day in day out.

Beat Leingruber is one of 2214 federal employees in the Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA. Only few people are aware of his work but it benefits many if not all of us.
Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat, the department's staff and coordination office, supports and advises the Head of Department in her daily work. Its brief also involves planning, coordinating and monitoring the department's activities and monitoring the results and assessing the effects of its decisions.

The General Secretariat provides human resources, finances and logistics, accounting and translation services for the whole department, as well as IT services.

The Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau and the Central Office for Civilian Service are also affiliated to the General Secretariat. Swiss consumers have access to over 22 million different products and services. The Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau takes account of the interests of consumers and of the economy as a whole. In order to publicise consumer concerns, it also promotes access to objective information.

Last year, almost two thousand Swiss men were approved for civilian service. These men were able to demonstrate credibly that they would be unable to perform military service for reasons of conscience. The Central Office for Civilian Service is responsible for processing these applications and the subsequent hearings at its seven regional centres throughout the country. It is also responsible for the recognition of the institutions in which the service is to be performed and provides advice to both the individuals and the institutions concerned.

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs Seco

Seco’s stated aim is to promote sustainable economic growth by creating an appropriate regulatory and economic framework.

Employers and employees should be able to benefit from growth-oriented policies, the removal of trade barriers, and the reduction of Switzerland’s relatively 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. Through its labour market policy it contributes to the prevention and tackling of 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 trade policy, it is active in formulating efficient, fair and transparent rules for the world economy. Switzerland’s relations to the European Union and to the European Free Trade Association are coordinated by the Integration Office, a joint office of the FDEA and the FDEA. Seco also contributes to the sustainable development and integration of southern and eastern countries into the world economy and to the reduction of social and economic disparities in the enlarged EU.

The Swiss Accreditation Service SAS which is now affiliated to Seco is responsible for the accreditation of public and private inspection and conformity assessment bodies in accordance with internationally recognised standards.

Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology OPET

Education, research and innovation are essential for the economic, societal and social development of our country. Together with the cantons and the professional associations, the OPET aims to ensure a high-level vocational training. It coordinates universities of applied sciences that not only train management executives but is involved in applied research and development. The Innovation Promotion Agency acts as a bridge between science and society. It supports research projects, the transfer of knowledge and technology between universities and businesses and the recruitment of people with innovative ideas for new companies. In these ways the OPET plays its part by training well qualified workers and making Switzerland an attractive location in which to do business.

Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

Switzerland has 1 065 118 hectares of farmland, 1 560 000 head of cattle in its pastures and 188 024 people employed in the agricultural sector. Each year, the federal government provides agriculture with financial support of around CHF 3.4 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 towards meeting the food needs of the population and maintaining the basic necessities of life as well as towards the settlement of rural areas. It must also seek a socially acceptable balance 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.
A tourist carrying 200 kilos of monkey meat is stopped at Geneva airport and another tourist tries to illegally import souvenirs made of tortoise shell. There has been another outbreak of avian influenza among wild birds and the poultry farmers fear it will affect their livelihood - BSE, on the other hand, has already successfully been brought under control and there are now only isolated cases. Animal rights activists are calling for stricter laws governing livestock farming and farmers respond with economic arguments. The popular press is calling for “effective measures against fighting dogs” – many dog owners complain that they are being harassed by “dog haters” even though they are not out of order.

All these situations have one thing in common: they are all delicate issues that the Federal Veterinary Office has to deal with: animal health, animal protection, species protection checks at border points. International cooperation in these areas is dealt with on a daily basis by the office’s employees. Many of these subjects are emotive issues and that is how it should be since a federal office is there for people with thoughts and feelings about these matters.

Switzerland buys virtually 100 per cent of its raw materials, 80 per cent of its energy, around one third of all its food, and a large proportion of essential therapeutic products from abroad. In cooperation with the private sector, FONES ensures that people in Switzerland have adequate supplies of vital commodities in a crisis situation.
Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Is everything under control? Yes, everything’s fine!

A typical scene at a Swiss airport ... Painstakingly, Roland Steiner inspects the Airbus A340 to ensure that everything is in working order. Are all the engines in perfect condition? Are the compressor blades undamaged? Are there any leaks anywhere? Is there enough tread on the tyres? What about the emergency exits? Are they clear and well lit? Are all the regulation fire extinguishers in place? Are the oxygen masks accessible and the safety belts all working properly?

While this is going on, his colleague is monitoring the pilots’ preparations for the flight. Is the navigation documentation up to date? Have the fuel reserves been correctly calculated? And is everything as it should be in the cockpit?

Experts at the Federal Office of Civil Aviation make nearly two hundred inspections like this each year on foreign aircraft at Swiss airports. These ramp inspections, as they are called, are used to check at random a list of fifty or so safety and security linked points.

The inspections can take anything between 15 and 45 minutes depending on the size of the aircraft. Anomalies are picked up in more than one third of cases. Sometimes it is just a simple straightforward stamp that is missing on a document. But it sometimes happens that the inspectors come across faults that have to be rectified before the aircraft can continue on its journey.

But here this is not the case. “Everything is under control,” declares Roland Steiner. “Yes, everything is OK here, too”, replies his colleague.

Roland Steiner is one of the 1895 employees of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC. Few know about the service he provides but it benefits many if not all of us.
DET EC’s federal offices are located in Ittigen and Biel. The
office directors meet at the General Secretariat (GS) in Bern sev-
eral times a year as it is not uncommon for several offices to have
an interest in ongoing business at the same time. The meeting pro-
vides an opportunity to discuss these issues at the highest level.

The GS serves as the staff office for the Head of Department.
It plans and coordinates all departmental activities including
public relations. In addition, it also exercises the role of owner
with regard to Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom and Skyguide and su-
 pervises the implementation of the strategic aims set out by the
Federal Council.

The Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Tele-
vision, the Public Transport Accident Investigation Office, the
Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau, and the postal services
regulation authority (PostReg) are all affiliated to DETEC.

The Swiss population has decided to transfer transalp-
ine heavy goods traffic from road to rail in a series of popular
votes. Switzerland has achieved an important objective in this
direction with the opening of the Lötschberg base tunnel in mid
June 2007. This tunnel and the Gotthard base tunnel, which is
still under construction, make up the New Rail Link through the
Alps (NRLA), and the NRLA is the cornerstone of traffic transfer
policy.

The Federal Office of Transport (FOT), which is in charge of
public transport, coordinates this massive project. Switzerland
has a comprehensive and reliable transport network ranging
from intercity trains to trams, cable cars and paddle steamers.
The FOT makes sure that the network continues to be modern-
ised and is operated safely.

The next developments that are in progress include reducing
travel times between Geneva and St. Gallen by half an hour by
2030. Public transport timetables will be further improved with
more trains. In 2008, new construction work will begin on im-
portant agglomeration projects including the Zurich through station,
the transboundary urban rail system in Geneva and the new Sta-
bio-Arcisate railway line connecting Lugano to Milan Malpensa
airport.

The FOT has made the principle of “Safety first” its
main focus. The FOCA specialists collect and evaluate data on
incidents related to Swiss aviation, and suggest measures to pre-
vent these incidents from reoccurring in the future.

The principle of notification without penalty has been in force
in Swiss aviation since 2007 with the aim of increasing air safe-
ty. 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. It also ensures that the FOCA is better and more com-
prehensively informed about aviation incidents, and allows the
FOCA to take appropriate action before it is too late.

The Federal Council intends to base its future energy policy on
the following four pillars: improvement of energy efficiency, pro-
motion of renewable energy sources, the replacement of existing
and the construction of new large-scale power stations as well as
increased international cooperation.

The SFOE’s Energy Perspectives 2035 serves as the basis for
the new orientation of Swiss energy policy. The report uses sce-
narios to show that regulations on the supply of energy, heating
fuels and vehicle fuels needs to be updated and that the aim of
reducing the CO₂ output can only be achieved using effective
measures. To ensure a sustainable supply of energy, Switzerland
is banking on voluntary agreements on objectives with the pri-
ivate sector, financial incentives and statutory provisions for ap-
pliances, motor vehicles, new buildings and building renovations
as well as measures to encourage greater use of environmentally
friendly energy sources.

This will add to the successes of the SwissEnergy programme,
which has led to a significant increase in energy efficiency and in
the percentage of renewable energies used since 2001.

The Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate (HSK) inspects and
evaluates nuclear safety and radiation protection at Switzerland’s
nuclear power plants. The HSK, which had been affiliated to the
SFOE, will now become legally independent.
To ensure the flow of traffic on Swiss roads FEDRO has to solve the following problems: which national road sections need to be extended? Which road sections need to be reconstructed? Which tunnel needs to be brought in line with the latest safety standards? What is the most effective way of using available funds?

In addition, to ensure safety on Swiss roads, FEDRO is actively involved in the federal action programme for increased road safety, *Via sicura*. The aim of the programme is to significantly reduce the number of people killed or injured in road accidents.

Finally, to ensure the intelligent coordination of increased volumes of traffic using the road network, FEDRO is setting up a traffic management system. In the near future, authorities will be able to modify the flow of traffic on the national road network from the planned management centre and ensure efficient and sustainable use of the limited road network.

**Federal Office for the Environment FOEN**  
[www.umwelt-schweiz.ch](http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch)

**Director:** Bruno Oberli  
**Staff:** 361  
**Expenditure:** 27 000 000.–

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.

What does all that have to do with environmental policy? A great deal, in particular in an Alpine country such as Switzerland where nature itself can become a threat, for example in the dramatic form of flooding, rock slides or avalanches. The FOEN helps to ensure that the cantons, communes and residents are prepared for these things – be it in the form of forests that protect roads and urban areas, or maps indicating likely natural hazards.

Health also has a lot to do with our environment: it is easier to breathe when there is no fine particle dust or ozone in the air. People who are not bothered by noise have a better quality of life. Varied landscapes are not only beautiful, they are also important for tourism. The Federal Office for the Environment therefore also contributes to a healthy economy because it helps ensure the long-term use of landscapes, water, soil, air and forests.

**Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE**  
[www.are.admin.ch](http://www.are.admin.ch)

**Director:** Pierre-Alain Rumley  
**Staff:** 108  
**Revenue:** 16 000 000.–

The Swiss landscape is under pressure. Every second a square metre of soil is built on. This is due on the one hand to the fact that people are becoming increasingly mobile, which creates the need for more space to build roads and railway lines. On the other hand, there is an increasing demand for housing, not least due to the annual increase of the Swiss population, which amounts to the size of a medium-sized town. With every new construction site in the countryside, more recreation space is lost. And the Federal Constitution stipulates that the land should be used more economically.

ARE ensures compliance with this standard. The Swiss spatial plan, scheduled to begin in 2008, will provide a new basis for the coordinated spatial planning policy. ARE also deals with sustainable development by working towards the harmonisation of environmental, economic and social interests. In addition, ARE participates in the development of transport policy, primarily focusing on urban areas that are particularly affected by transport and urban sprawl. Finally, ARE is examining the extent to which market-based instruments such as road pricing or an Alpine transit exchange (auction of transit rights for trucks) could contribute towards solving our transport problems.
THE FEDERAL COURTS OR

The Judiciary
One dog is black, one is white, and one is black and white; these three Staffordshire terriers are perceived as differently as the colouring of their coats. Some see them as dogs trained to be aggressive and a danger to everyone everywhere, and think they should quite simply be banned. Others like to see them as sweet little dogs, well trained and obedient, who “just want to play” and aren’t a threat to anyone. And a third group take a more rounded view and can see both sides of the picture.

Indeed, time and again ways of seeing things are so different and differences of opinion so broad and irreconcilable that people even resort to taking the matter before the Supreme Court—as the case described on the next page shows.
The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court in Switzerland. It is the embodiment of the judiciary at federal level, and one of the three state authorities, the others being parliament, the legislature, and the Federal Council, the executive. Through its legal precedent, the Federal Supreme Court contributes to the development of the law and to its adaptation to changing circumstances. Its decisions may be referred to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The Federal Supreme Court must provide legal redress, ensure the uniform application of federal law, and develop the law in keeping with changes in the ways people live their lives. And it has jurisdiction in Switzerland as the court of final instance in almost every legal field:

Public law
The Federal Supreme Court hears appeals against cantonal decisions in matters of public law and legislation as well as violations of political rights (the right to vote, popular elections and votes). The two public law divisions rule on cases in these areas.

Civil cases
The Federal Supreme Court hears appeals against cantonal court judgements in civil matters (private law, contract law, commercial law, intellectual property, etc.). In disputes relating to property, the value of the claim must amount to at least CHF 30 000, or to CHF 15 000 in employment and tenancy cases. The two civil law divisions rule on disputes in these legal fields.

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

Social law
The Federal Supreme Court, in particular the two divisions for social law, deal with appeals in public matters against judgements of the cantonal insurance courts.

Subsidiary constitutional appeal
If the foregoing appeals are not admissible, action can be taken against violations of constitutional rights by means of a subsidiary constitutional appeal.
How an appeal against a law on attack dogs was dealt with

In 2007, the Federal Supreme Court held that a new law enacted in Geneva against attack dogs was valid. The Geneva government in 2006 issued provisional regulations on the breeding, ownership and keeping of potentially dangerous dogs. Under this law, the purchase of an attack dog, as well as walking three or more such dogs at any one time was made subject to authorisation.

As the Canton of Geneva does not have a constitutional court, the owner of two Rottweilers was required to file an appeal against the regulations directly with the Federal Supreme Court.

Because of the subject matter, the case was heard by the Second Public Law Division, which presided over the exchange of submissions: the Geneva government was allowed to respond to the arguments of the dog owner and vice-versa.

In total, there were four exchanges of submissions: the appeal of the dog owner against the regulations, the response from the government in justification of its regulations, the rejoinder from the dog owner against this justification and finally a further response from the government.

One of the judges then produced a report, which is basically a proposal as to how he might decide. In this case, he took the view that the Geneva Regulations did not infringe the rule that federal law takes precedence. He regarded the aim of the Animal Protection Act as the protection of animals and not of human beings, with the result that cantonal measures to provide protection against dangerous dogs were permitted.

The President of the Division, along with three other judges, read the report and all the case files. As they were all in agreement with the proposal, they reached their decision via an exchange of correspondence. If any judge had dissented, they would then have held a hearing in which the judges would have deliberated the case in public.

A clerk of court edited the text of the judgement and inserted the written comments on the report. Lastly, the judgement was sent to the parties, i.e. the dog owner and the Geneva government, and was then published online. As this was a decision of fundamental importance, it was also included in the Official Compendium of Judgements of the Federal Supreme Court.

The 38 judges and the 31 part-time judges carry out their duties in one of the seven divisions of the court in Lausanne or in Lucerne.

The United Federal Assembly appoints federal court judges according to linguistic, regional and party-political criteria; they serve a term of office of six years. They are assisted in their work by a staff that is 250 strong.
The Federal Courts of first instance

The Federal Administrative Court is the latest of the federal courts. It began its duties in 2007 and has its seat in Bern. In 2010, it is planned to move the court to a permanent location in St. Gallen.

The main task of the Federal Administrative Court is to sit in judgement on public law disputes that fall within the jurisdiction of the Federal Administration. These primarily involve appeals against decisions taken by federal or, in certain exceptional cases, cantonal courts. However, the Federal Administrative Court is also a court of first instance for actions based on federal administrative law.

In certain cases, decisions of the Federal Administrative Court may be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court. In more than half of its cases, however, it issues the final judgement as the court of last instance or of sole instance.

Organisation

The Federal Administrative Court employs 72 judges and a further 260 members of staff.

The court is organised in five divisions, with each having two chambers, and a General Secretariat.

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

• The First Division is responsible for appeal proceedings in areas including the environment, transport, energy and taxes.
• The Second Division focuses on proceedings relating to education, competition and the economy.
• The Third Division deals mainly with proceedings in the field of immigration, social security and health.
• The Fourth and Fifth Divisions operate exclusively in the field of asylum law, in particular in relation to questions of refugee status and deportation orders.

In most of these fields, the judgements of the Federal Administrative Court can be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court; in a few areas, and in particular in relation to asylum matters, the decisions of the Federal Administrative Court are final.

The Federal Criminal Court is the general criminal court of the Confederation, and has its seat in Bellinzona. It sits in judgement as a preliminary instance of the Federal Supreme Court.

It 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, which appoints the judges of the Federal Criminal Court, of whom there are currently fifteen. They have a basic term of office of six years. Around 30 members of staff assist them in their work.

In accordance with its duties, the Court is organised into one criminal chamber and two appeals chambers.

Criminal Chamber

The Criminal Chamber is the court of first instance for offences that are subject to federal jurisdiction: felonies and misdemeanours against federal interests, explosives offences and cases of white-collar crime, serious organised crime offences 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.

First and Second Appeals Chambers

The First Appeals Chamber hears appeals against official acts and/or omissions by the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland or the Federal Examining Magistrates. In addition, it rules on coercive measures in federal criminal proceedings and on extensions of periods on remand, and deals with conflicts of jurisdiction between cantonal prosecution authorities or between the prosecution authorities of the Confederation and those in the cantons. The President of the Appeals Chamber is responsible for approving telephone surveillance operations and covert investigations.

The Second Appeals Chamber deals with matters relating to international mutual assistance in criminal matters, i.e. appeals relating to the extradition of persons who face prosecution or who have been convicted, mutual assistance in foreign criminal proceedings as well as execution of penalties based on foreign convictions.

Decisions of the First and Second Appeals Chambers may be challenged in the Federal Supreme Court. The decisions of all three chambers are normally published on the Court’s website.
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