The Swiss Confederation
a brief guide
2010
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**Cover picture:**

Built between 1894 and 1902, a hundred years later it underwent a thorough renovation so that it could shine in its former glory: the Parliament Building in Bern, usually referred to as the Federal Palace.
Dear reader,

Last year was severely impacted by the financial crisis, and this crisis will continue to leave its mark in 2010. Recovery on the employment front is therefore likely to be slow and cost-cutting programmes will continue to be in effect in many places. I nonetheless believe that we can look to the future with confidence.

One issue that did the rounds in Bern last year, and which will no doubt sooner or later give rise to debate elsewhere, is language. The linguistic composition of the Federal Council was the subject of intense debate during the Federal Council elections in September 2009. Didier Burkhalter of Neuchâtel won the seat vacated by Pascal Couchepin from the French-speaking part of Valais. The linguistic composition of the Federal Council with five representatives from the German-speaking part of Switzerland and two from the French-speaking part has consequently remained unchanged. However, the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland has not been represented in the Federal Council for over a decade.

Why is it so important for the various language regions to be appropriately represented in the federal government? Because it is a matter no less than our country’s cohesion, it is about living together and not just alongside one another; in short, it is about our identity. For it is the will to continue on our chosen path together, in spite of linguistic and cultural differences, that is the defining feature of Switzerland. That is why we have to hold on to our country’s multilingualism.

But solidarity is not only needed with our linguistic minorities, it has to be applied in all situations. It should not be the case that those less privileged feel forgotten by those better off, that the needs of peripheral regions be ignored, that the younger generation doesn’t care about the older generation or that senior citizens don’t take the concerns of young people seriously. Solidarity is particularly important in economically difficult times. Personal responsibility is of course crucial, but it is only united that we are strong. It is therefore essential that we stand together and jointly search for solutions to achieve our objectives.

That applies not only to politics, but also to sport. We are therefore rooting for our national team in the forthcoming World Cup in the knowledge that optimal teamwork is the key to success.

I hope you enjoy reading this brochure, which provides an insight into Switzerland’s political workings and the federal authorities.

Corina Casanova
Federal Chancellor
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The Swiss Confederation a brief guide online

The site provides additional material in the form of documents, charts, photos and videos and you can even test your civic knowledge using our interactive quiz. Why not try it out at http://www.ch.ch/ebuku.
For Switzerland **2010** is set to be dominated by canton Aargau – given that both the presidents of the National Council and of the Swiss Confederation hail from there. What does canton Aargau have to offer Switzerland?

Clearly a high quality of life, otherwise people from Zurich wouldn't choose to live in Aargau in such great numbers! But Aargau has a great deal more to offer: art, culture and cuisine. The Kunsthaus in Aarau is home to one of the largest collections of contemporary Swiss art. We also have a thriving cultural scene and culinary specialties, not to mention the varied countryside with castles, the hills of the Jura and wetlands. The people of Aargau are discreet, and unassuming, but are good for a surprise, and they also possess a healthy dose of independence and self-confidence. The people of Aargau have realised that they can look their fellow Swiss in the eye. And many projects are under way to create a strong region in north western Switzerland.

**2010 is also a year for women**, with Pascale Bruderer and Erika Forster as presidents of the National Council and the Council of States, and you as President of the Swiss Confederation. That's something to talk about...

I'm delighted to be part of this trio. It's an historic event, which hopefully will soon become thoroughly normal. The number of women in leadership positions is on the rise and I'm very glad. It's a reward for the hard work of a great many pioneering women.

The government has faced a lot of criticism recently. Has collaboration in the Federal Council deteriorated, have the problems become more complex, or are we witnessing a trend towards an intellectual fast-food society where one scandal is followed by the next?

The government generally works well and efficiently – during highs and lows. That has always been the case. But today with the Internet and globalisation, we live in an interconnected and diverse world and therefore have to deal with complex political issues and processes. That's where our system can occasionally find itself somewhat overstretched. That's why we are also considering the question of governmental reform. The pace of events has also picked up and the media are clearly torn between factual reporting and entertainment, between informing and succumbing to tabloid journalism. Quality journalism of course has its price.

The Federal Council has complex issues to resolve. It has to maintain Switzerland's international position and then ensure that the population has employment and a good standard of living. How do you intend to chair the cabinet so that these high expectations can be fulfilled?

In particular I would like to make sure that there is an open atmosphere for discussion in the Federal Council meetings. Strengthening the collegial nature of the Federal Council and how it is perceived by the public is important to me, as is good cooperation with parliament and the cantons. The Federal Council is expected to tackle the big challenges. But that's only possible if everyone works together across all departments, and if we allow ourselves the time to deal with complex issues. That strengthens confidence in the Federal Council as an institution and strengthens the confidence of the Federal Council itself.

The global economic crisis, armed conflicts, harsher, personalised debates – as president, the population expects you to intervene, provide answers and solutions. How do you expect to convey optimism to the people in our country under such circumstances?

By taking people's concerns seriously. We need to develop sensible and transparent solutions to the major challenges ahead and reassure people by communicating coherently, openly and honestly. Our country has a great history and a unique form of democracy – both of which are values worth protecting. It is important to position Switzerland correctly in the context of global competition and this will be a significant task in 2010.
Competition around the world is becoming more intense. Switzerland is under pressure as a location for research, finance, work and business. How can we assert our position as a small country?

We are already asserting ourselves very well. We are the most competitive location in the world, we are the most innovative country in Europe and the cities of Zurich, Bern and Geneva rank among the top ten in terms of quality of life. The entire European market can be accessed easily from Switzerland. This is a great advantage especially in terms of research and development. Switzerland is an ideal location for company headquarters. We offer the highest standards of education, infrastructure, services and quality of life. Despite the global economic crisis we still have a functioning job market. “Small but select” is the motto that holds true for Switzerland.

The world is changing rapidly. Are our slow, bottom-up, decision-making channels and federalist structures reaching their limits? Federalism and the cohesion of the Confederation and the cantons are what hold Switzerland together. The people’s vote at the ballot box is what counts. On the other hand, we really do need to rethink certain structures. Is it necessary to have building regulations and education systems that vary from commune to commune, from canton to canton? Does each legislative process have to go through the mills of the various consultation procedures? Sometimes, I wish things were able to proceed more speedily.

Legal, social and financial policy stability is likely to be one of the key factors of success. How do you rate our chances in this respect?

We have the best possible starting position. As a country with four national languages, we have learned to accept minorities. Our excellent record on integration has not been altered by the decision on the minaret initiative. We have put in place a legal and socio-political basis which makes Switzerland attractive to people of various backgrounds and to researchers and entrepreneurs alike.

The people’s vote is what counts

The major challenges of the coming decade include climate change, the scarcity of resources and the increase in population. Wouldn’t you say that Switzerland is unlikely to play a leading role in these matters?

On the contrary! Switzerland has a very strong base in the field of Cleantech. We have been collecting glass and treating our waste water for decades. Many things we have internalised. We possess technologies that now have to be developed further in the interest of sustainability. Without pursuing an industrial policy as such, we attribute great importance to the field of Cleantech and are supporting the sector accordingly. We have increased funding for the Innovation Promotion Agency (CTI), for example. There are initiatives by the Federal Institutes of Technology and OSEC, Business Network Switzerland. It is now up to businesses to make use of these opportunities.

The fact that we are not part of any larger coalitions will also constitute a challenge. Are we increasingly being criticised for standing alone and being successful?

I often encounter a great deal of sympathy for Switzerland when I’m abroad. In actual fact, however, the interest of
larger players, among which I count the EU, is limited. If we want to make our voice heard here, we need to become even more active and raise our profile by putting forward our own suggestions on international issues. We are respected in Europe, but whether we can count on preferential treatment of our wishes in the medium term is a different matter. In my opinion, the Federal Council needs to give greater and more regular attention to foreign policy issues.

Is joining the EU the answer to this dilemma?

For the moment, I don't think so. Our experiences with the bilateral agreements have been good, as much for our citizens as for our export businesses. But that path is getting increasingly time-consuming and difficult. The EU is currently pursuing cross-border harmonisation across many areas of life and the economy. I, on the other hand, am in favour of greater competition, also among EU members.

Can Switzerland, which was recognised in the past for its good offices, still make itself heard?

I am convinced that we will continue to play a vital role in conflict situations. We are rightly regarded as an independent partner. Our neutrality, our rule of law, our humanitarian commitment and our openness are hallmarks, but they have suffered. It is important, therefore, to uphold these values.

As Swiss president you will often be required to travel abroad; at the same time, the Swiss people expect a high profile at home. How do you intend to bridge this gap?

I can't split myself in two, but I will do the one without giving up the other. I will always chair the sessions of the Federal Council, as is expected of the President of the Swiss Confederation. On the other hand, I intend to make use of the opportunity offered by the presidency to open doors and, where necessary, reduce obstacles.

The presidential year will place high demands on you. Which people, which structures can you fall back on for support?

There are 2500 people working in my department. And I can assure you that they are extremely dedicated. The level of professionalism and attention to detail in the work carried out by the administration is quite remarkable. I can therefore rely on an experienced team. In addition, I will also be able to rely on the support of other departments and the Federal Chancellery to a greater extent during my presidential year.

Do you turn to chocolate to give you a morale boost in hectic times? Or do you take to your bike?

One doesn't exclude the other! But to be honest, there won't be much time for bike tours. So this year I'm probably more likely to turn to chocolate for that energy boost in hectic times. The fact that I'm supporting a well-respected branch of Swiss industry along the way is a welcome side-effect.
Finances

Federal revenue 2008

- VAT 32.1%
- Direct federal tax 27.4%
- Other fiscal revenues 1.2%
- Other revenues 6.6%
- Withholding tax 10.1%
- Import duty 1.4%
- Mineral oil tax 8.2%
- Other fiscal revenues 1.2%
- Tobacco tax 3.4%
- Stamp duty 4.7%
- Transport taxes 2.3%

Federal expenditure 2008

- Other expenditure 8.6%
- Social welfare 30.8%
- National defence 8.8%
- Agriculture and food supply 6.3%
- Education and fundamental research 9.4%
- Foreign relations 4.2%

Developments in revenue (CHF million)

10 000 20 000 30 000 40 000 50 000 60 000


Developments in debt (CHF million)

30 000 60 000 90 000 120 000


The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

9
A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OR

How long has there been a Switzerland?

1291 According to tradition, Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden renew their alliance to defend their property and rights against foreign attack on the Rütli meadow on 1 August.

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 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.

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.

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.

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 formally recognised Switzerland’s independence.

“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.

1874 The old Constitution of the Helvetic Republic, with a single centralist constitution dictated by the French, is finally annulled.

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 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.

She and the Graubünden cantonal party to which she belongs are subsequently excluded from the national SVP in 2008. She joins the newly-formed BDP. It is the first time that such a small grouping has been represented in government.

Pascal Couchepin, who stepped down from the Federal Council in 2009, was succeeded by his party colleague from Neuchâtel, Didier Burkhalter.

The United Nations, founded in 1945, is the successor organisation to the League of Nations of which Switzerland had been a member since 1920; the globe in front of the Geneva headquarters of the UN is dedicated to its initiator, President Woodrow Wilson.
A UNIQUE POLITICAL SYSTEM OR

Swiss democracy
It’s better to start young: The “school fieldtrip to Bern” project provided five secondary school classes from various parts of the country the opportunity to experience civic education firsthand during a week of the session in parliament.

To prepare for the experience, students dealt with a number of topics beforehand in their classes such as the federal structure of Switzerland, political rights and the workings of direct democracy and drafted their own popular initiatives.

The one hundred or so students then proceeded to develop their proposals — from collecting signatures to holding debates in three national languages in the National Council chamber. They stepped into the shoes of a party representative or committee member during a four-hour meeting presenting arguments and debating their concerns.

During the session, some students tried their hand as journalists, interviewed a number of National Councillors and produced a daily web newspaper.
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.

2596 communes Communes are the smallest political units in Switzerland. There are currently 2596 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 exclusively at the ballot box.
Swiss democracy

1 Confederation is the name given to the Swiss state. CH is the abbreviation of Switzerland’s official Latin name “Confoederatio Helvetica”. Confoederatio 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 are only divided in terms of their function. This means that no-one may belong to more than one of the three federal authorities (parliament, government and the Supreme Court) at the same time; however, for practical purposes, each of the three authorities also carries out duties which, 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.
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.
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.

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

Of a total of 118 popular initiatives that were voted on over the past 30–40 years, only ten 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

Since 1971, referendum committees have been successful on 93 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 29 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.
WHAT POLITICAL INTERESTS ARE REPRESENTED BY WHOM OR

The four strongest political parties...

Political parties are groupings of like-minded people that have their own philosophies of life – in other words, particular views on political, social and economic issues, etc. They act as a link between the people and the institutions of the state and are essential for the functioning of a democracy. The party landscape in Switzerland is as varied as the country. Normally speaking the four strongest parties together constitute the government. However, because a grouping broke away from the SVP (Swiss People’s Party) in 2008 to form the Conservative Democratic Party BDP and Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, who was elected to the Federal Council as an SVP member, joined the new party, the strongest party is currently underrepresented in the Federal Council. All twelve parties provide a brief self-portrait on the following pages.

SVP
Swiss People’s Party

- Party President: Toni Brunner
- Founded in 1917
- www.svp.ch
- The party was formed in 1971 from the union of the Swiss Farmers, Trade and Citizen’s Party (BGB) and the Democratic Parties of the Cantons of Glarus and Graubünden and, with a 29% share of the vote, is Switzerland’s strongest party. The SVP result in the parliamentary elections in 2007 was the best that any single party has ever achieved.
- With the election of Ueli Maurer to the Federal Council on 10 December 2008, the SVP once again became part of the national government. However, given its support among the electorate, the party is underrepresented with only one Federal Councillor.
- Our election promise – a “contract with the people”
  - The SVP is firmly committed to the concerns of its voters. The party stands for an independent, neutral Switzerland, a streamlined state, low taxes, a strong location for business with secure jobs and effective prevention of crime and of abuse of asylum and the social security system. The main points of the SVP’s agenda for the current legislature were set out at a party conference in its “Contract with the people”:
    • We do not wish to join the European Union
    • We want to deport criminal foreign nationals
    • We want to lower taxes for all
  - With this clear policy based on conservative values, the SVP wants to ensure prosperity for our country, jobs and a secure future in a free society.

SP
Swiss Social Democratic Party

- Party President: Christian Levrat
- Founded in 1888
- www.spschweiz.ch
- The SP promotes social security and the fair distribution of wealth. All children deserve the same opportunities and prospects. Purchasing power for employees, families and people with low and middle incomes must be increased. The SP is a force that wants bring Switzerland forward and shape its future together with its representatives in government and a large number of committed people throughout Switzerland.
- The SP focuses on three main areas:
  • Social justice – security and prospects for the future. The SP advocates secure pensions. Anyone who is unable to make ends meet due to a turn of fate deserves support. For that reason, the SP is therefore committed to the provision of adequate unemployment and invalidity benefits. We firmly believe in creating equal opportunities for all through all day school provision, the promotion of early learning, apprenticeships and grants as well as places measures to achieve a good work-life balance.
  • Purchasing power – higher wages, lower prices. The SP is committed to an increase in purchasing power. Our mission is to have sufficient wages, pensions and child allowances to ensure a decent living coupled with affordable health insurance and lower rents.
  • Energy supplies – promoting renewable energies. CO2 emissions have to be reduced by 30% by 2020. There is enormous potential for innovations and sustainable technologies which could create thousands of new jobs. The SP will oppose plans for new nuclear power stations.
Swiss democracy

In 2009 the Radical Free Democratic Party FDP Switzerland and the Swiss Liberal Party joined forces to become the FDP. The Liberals, thereby creating the youngest party in Switzerland with the longest tradition. FDP. The Liberals stands for freedom of choice and achievement in an open society of opportunity. All individuals should be able to shape their lives through personal initiative, personal responsibility, freedom and competition. The State provides the appropriate framework in the form of excellent educational institutions and infrastructure.

We want:

• more and better jobs. Instead of stimulus packages, we call for reforms to create 200,000 jobs by 2015: Europe’s lowest rate of VAT of 5.5%, tax deductions for childcare (CHF 24,000 per year), individual taxation and a radical simplification of taxes.

• national cohesion and solid social services. Lessons must be learnt from the deficits of the invalidity insurance fund. There is urgent need for the 6th revision of invalidity insurance, unemployment insurance should also be corrected without greatly increasing the cost of labour, the 11th revision of Old Age and Survivors’ insurance should ensure its long-term safeguarding.

• a streamlined, open state. Today’s debt is tomorrow’s taxes. The debt brake should be extended to the social insurances. The State should focus on its core activities, such as education and security. Those should be its strengths.

The CVP focuses on four main areas:

• It promotes Switzerland as a business location and financial centre with attractive levels of tax, excellent infrastructure and a high standard of education. We create and safeguard jobs and prosperity through Innovation.

• It strengthens families as a basis for our community. We are committed to creating better general conditions such as balance between working and family life, lower taxes and greater purchasing power for all families.

• It ensures the long-term safeguarding of the social security system: We consider its sustainable financing as the main challenge for the next 20 years. This can only be accomplished through targeted reforms and by avoiding unrealistic expansion or cutbacks.

• It pursues a sustainable climate and environmental policy. We are committed to preserving a habitable environment for future generations.
...as well as the eight other political parties in parliament

**GPS**

**Swiss Green Party**

- Party President: 6500 members

The Swiss Green Party is the largest party that does not have a seat in the Federal Council. It is represented in almost every canton. Green Parties are represented in the governments of seven cantons and over 20 towns. The GPS is committed to preserving the environment, to a sustainable economy, social justice and international solidarity. Our goals for this legislature are: efficient climate protection and the abandonment of the use of nuclear power, the reorganisation of the economy along more environmental lines, the strengthening of social institutions and an active peace policy.

**GLP**

**Swiss Green Liberal Party**

- Party President: 2000 members

A well-preserved environment is the very basis for our existence. We want to leave a thriving world behind without contaminated land so that future generations can also enjoy life. This includes healthy state finances and social institutions. The State should not accumulate debt and concentrate on its core activities. Sensible conditions allow the market to function effectively. Personal initiative, entrepreneurship, a sense of responsibility and solidarity are the cornerstones of a liberal society and should be supported, as should a high quality education system.

**BDP**

**Conservative Democratic Party**


Founded on 1 November 2008, the BDP is the youngest Federal Council party. By March 2009, it had already gained enough members to achieve parliamentary group status in the Federal Assembly. The BDP advocates conservative policies where any subject can be discussed freely, where there is no personality cult and seeks an un-blinkered, solution-oriented approach. The BDP supports the bilateral path with the EU, a credible security policy and an economic policy compatible with environmental considerations. The party is represented in the Federal Council by Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.

**EVP**

**Swiss Evangelical People’s Party**

- Party President: 4800 members

*Better support for families:* the EVP aims to relieve the financial burden on families and where necessary to support them. The EVP therefore favours a child allowance that would replace all other payments or 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 intends to quickly reduce Switzerland’s dependence on non-renewable energy sources. It therefore promotes the introduction of environmentally-friendly tax reforms and a CO2 charge on fuels.
The graph is based on the 1194 votes in the second year of the 2007–2011 legislative period and shows the position, i.e. voting behaviour of individual members of parliament.

**CSP**

**Christian Social Party**

Party President: Monika Bloch Süss

1 National Councillor (f)

1500 members

Founded in 1997

www.csp-gos.ch

Our policy is primarily aimed at safe and dignified lives for everyone. Our work focuses on sustainable activities for a well preserved environment, good educational opportunities, secure jobs and pensions. We feel ourselves responsible, along with others, for what happens at home and in the world at large. Our party is synonymous with solidarity and tolerance.

In a nutshell, this means: promotion of a sustainable energy policy (for example, no new nuclear power stations), a socially responsible economy, good schools and traineeships, jobs for all, solid social institutions and an active peace policy.

**EDU**

**Federal Democratic Union**

Party President: Hans Moser

2800 members

Founded in 1975

www.edu-schweiz.ch

True values and plain talking! The EDU seeks sustainable solutions and in its commitment to God, 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 labour market in Switzerland, balanced finances and debt reduction.

**Lega**

**Ticino League**

Party President: Giuliano Bignasca

1 National Councillor (m)

1500 members

Founded in 1991

www.legaticinesi.ch

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

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

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

**PdA**

**Workers’ Party**

Party President: Nelly Buntschu

1 National Councillor (m)

2000 members

Founded in 1944

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 two chambers of the Federal Assembly are not divided into parties but into parliamentary groups (see page 36). The SVP, which is the largest parliamentary group with its 70 members, meets in the most spacious conference room of the Federal Palace. This conference room is located on the top floor, directly above the chamber of the Council of States.

Membership of a parliamentary group is important. It is a prerequisite for membership of a committee. Members are paid an annual allowance from the federal budget and they are entitled to take the floor in parliamentary proceedings, while those who do not belong to a parliamentary group are not entitled to have their say in most debates.

Parliamentary groups make it possible for their members to harmonise to the greatest extent possible their views on political matters and specifically on Council business, such as elections and votes, and to agree on a line that they can follow in parliament and in their dealings with the media and the public.
The election of members of parliament or

The two ways into parliament

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.
Proportional representation or majority vote

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.

The cantons are represented in the Council of States

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

The Council of States members represent their cantons but are not bound by any instructions from them, whether from the cantonal governments or parliaments.
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OR
Representing Switzerland’s 7.5m inhabitants
## Members of the Council of States or 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.

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### Members of the Council of States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Vote Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verena Diener</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix Gutzwiller</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1, 4, 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pankraz Frei</td>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1, 10, 11</td>
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<td>Thierry Jenny</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Altherr</td>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1, 5, 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivo Bischofberger</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3, 4, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene David</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>3, 5, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erika Forster-Vannini</td>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5, 6, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christoffel Brändli</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>Theo Maissen</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1995</td>
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<td>Christophe Egerszegi-Obrist</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2007</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximilian Heimann</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2, 3, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hermann Bürgi</td>
<td>CVP</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>Philipp Stähelin</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1, 5, 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filippo Lombardi</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2, 6, 8, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Marty</td>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3, 9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luc Recordon</td>
<td>CVP</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3, 7, 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Géraldine Savary</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4, 8, 11</td>
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<td>Jean-Benoit Fourrier</td>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1, 3, 7</td>
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<td>René Imoberdort</td>
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<td>1950</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2, 6, 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didier Berberat</td>
<td>NW</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Cramer</td>
<td>GL</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2, 8, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liliane Pasquier</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 at www.parlament.ch.
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.
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 60–75 per cent 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.

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 38/39)

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

Sessions in 2010

Spring session: 1 – 19 March
Summer session: 31 May – 18 June
Autumn session: 13 September – 1 October
Winter session: 29 November – 17 December
(8 December: election of the President of the Confederation and the Vice-President of the Federal Council)
Special session: 3 – 7 May
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.

Midway through the 48th legislative period

Since the beginning of the 48th legislative period (winter session 2007) the members of the National Council and the Council of States have submitted a total of 3478 parliamentary requests up to and including the autumn session 2009.

- 217 parliamentary initiatives
- 937 motions
- 283 postulates
- 747 interpellations
- 327 simple enquiries and
- 967 written questions as part of question time in the National Council.
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.

* Because a new method for calculating the allocation of committee seats has been in place since 2009, a transitional system is being used until the end of the 2007–2011 legislative period under which ten additional committee seats are available in order to prevent underrepresentation.

The committees meet on average for three to four days every quarter. Here the National Council Committee for the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy is at work.
### Supervisory committees and delegations

1. **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).

2. **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 (GPDe) whose task it is to scrutinise activities relating to state protection and the intelligence services.

The committees are numbered in order to make it easier to identify which assembly members sit on which committee (pages 26–28).

### Legislative committees

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

4. **Science, Education and Culture Committees**: science, education, genetic engineering, languages, culture, sport, family issues, youth issues, women’s issues

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

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

7. **Defence Committees**: military defence, civil defence, national economic supply, peace and security policy, civilian service, war material export

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

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

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

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

12. **Committee for Public Buildings**: civilian public buildings at home and abroad

The ten legislative committees are concerned with legislation in their specific fields. The Committee for Public Buildings exists in the National Council, but not in the Council of States.

### 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 of which there are currently six.

Money paid for a job done
Parliamentary groups are paid a fixed allowance of CHF 112 000 a year, and each of their members receives the additional sum of CHF 20 800. Members of parliament with no affiliation to a parliamentary group do not receive any of this money and are not entitled to sit on a parliamentary committee or have their say in most debates.
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.

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.

The 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

The revision of the Narcotics Act

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

With the amendment of the Federal Act of 3 October 1951 on Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, the concept that has been in place for the last twenty years to address the problem of drugs was given a proper legal footing. Here are the steps that led to this revision.

1. **Who:** FDHA | **When:** 1994
   - The first step is when someone thinks there is a need for a new piece of legislation or for an existing act to be amended. This can be an individual member of the electorate or interest groups, members of parliament, or sections of the administration, cantons or the Federal Council. In this case, it is the Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA. It establishes an expert committee and issues it with the task of preparing a draft revision of the Narcotics Act of 3 October 1951 by the end of 1995.

2. **Who:** Various | **When:** 1996
   - In its decision of 19 April 1996, the Federal Council empowers the FDHA to conduct consultation proceedings on the report of the expert committee. The report supports the legal anchoring of heroin prescription and the decriminalisation of its consumption; a shift away from the proscription of narcotics or a legalisation of cannabis is rejected.

A majority of responses from the consultation proceedings is favourable towards the recommendations of the expert committee although the recommendation to decriminalise the consumption of all narcotic substances is the most controversial.

3. **Who:** Federal Council NC-CSSH | **When:** 1999
   - As the decriminalisation of consumption is controversial, the Federal Council draft of 1 September 1999 contains two variants: variant 1 proposes the decriminalisation of all narcotic substances, and variant 2 the decriminalisation of cannabis alone.

The National Council Committee for Social Security and Health submits a further three variants on the decriminalisation of the consumption of all narcotic substances and minor dealing in cannabis to the two put forward by the Federal Council.

4. **Who:** Various | **When:** 19
   - There are consequently five variants for consideration in the consultation. The cantons, the federal courts, political parties, business federations and other interest organisations are all able to submit their comments and propose amendments. The clear preference in the responses to the consultation is for variant 1.

5. **Who:** FOPH | **When:** 2000
   - The Federal Office of Public Health FOPH compiles the responses to the consultation in a report and drafts a dispatch on the revision of the act.

6. **Who:** Federal Council | **When:** 9.3.2001

   - Following an initial rejection in 2003, the National Council once again decides not to enter into debate on the draft of the Federal Council. The revision of the Narcotics Act fails primarily due to the controversial stance on cannabis.

8. **Who:** NC-CSSH | **When:** 4.5.2006
   - In 2005, the NC-CSSH considers three parliamentary initiatives and a petition on the revision of the Narcotics Act which are submitted shortly after the failure of the last revision in the National Council.

It postpones a decision on the matter and decides instead to prepare its own committee initiative. On 4 May 2006, it adopts its report on this as well as on the draft to amend the Narcotics Act, thus allowing the elements of the failed revision capable of securing a majority to be implemented swiftly.

9. **Who:** Federal Council | **When:** 29.9.2006
   - On 29 September 2006, the Federal Council publishes its position on the committee draft. It welcomes the proposal in principle, but requests that heroin be removed from the list of prohibited substances as the revised Narcotics Act envisages a heroin-based, medical treatment.

It submits the text with its requests for otherwise minor changes to parliament.
In its debate of 3 November 2006, the NC-CSSH votes by a majority of 15 votes to 8 with one abstention, not to follow the Federal Council’s request to remove heroin from the list of prohibited substances.

In the winter session of 2006, the National Council tables the partial revision of the Narcotics Act and decides to enter into debate on the proposal. It follows the decision of the NC-CSSH and is also against the removal of heroin from the list of prohibited substances. It largely adopts the proposal of its CSSH and adopts it by 108 votes to 65.

On 15 and 16 October 2007, the Council of States Committee for Social Security and Health CS-CSSH hears representatives of its sister committee and votes in favour of the Federal Council proposal and thus for the removal of heroin from the list of prohibited substances. The article on the aim of the law proves contentious; the law should not only prevent unauthorised consumption, but also and primarily regulate the provision of pain relievers and their authorised use.

All other proposals that deviate from decision of the first council are concerns questions of editing. The CS-CSSH unanimously endorses entering into debate on the proposal.

The Council of States fully agrees with the CS-CSSH and votes unanimously in favour of adopting the bill.

As differences remain between the two chambers regarding the aim and purpose of the law and the question of how heroin should remain prohibited, yet be medically prescribed, the matter moves to the resolution of differences procedure.

The National Council agrees to the extended article of purpose put forward by the Council of States, which states in first place the preventive approach and the encouragement of abstinence and in second place, the need to ensure the availability of narcotic substances for medical and scientific purposes. This does not entail a material change. In addition, the National Council comes up with a concept which retains the prohibition of heroin, yet allows for exceptions.

The Council of states follows the resolution of the National Council.

On 20 March 2008 the partial revision of the Narcotics Act is put to the final vote in the National Council and is passed by 114 votes in favour to 68 against. The Council of States passes the revision unanimously. As the Narcotics Act is only an act of law and does not involve an amendment to the constitution, it does not automatically come before the people.

Those opposing the revision, however, managed to gather enough signatures against the amendment of the act within the 100-day period, thereby forcing a referendum.

A popular vote was therefore held on 30 November 2008. The proposal was defeated with 68.1% voting in favour.

On 20 May 2009, the Federal Council decided to put the new provisions on heroin-based treatment into force with effect from 1 January 2010. The remainder of the changes to the Narcotics Act are to be introduced at a later date as they require significant amendments to be made at ordinance level.

The picture shows so-called “party drugs”: 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA for short and better known as ecstasy, as well as mCPP or meta-Chlorphenylpiperazin.
THE EXECUTIVE: FEDERAL COUNCIL AND DEPARTMENTS OR

The Swiss government
The seven-member Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor are stepping optimistically into 2010 – with the firm intention of doing all they can to make it a better year than the last twelve months of the "Noughties". Switzerland faces greater and more complex challenges than in many a previous year, both at home and in terms of its relations with many countries around the world. And a host of challenging tasks await all of the government departments.
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.
The Executive

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.

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 “concordia”, 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.

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 balance remained unchanged for 44 years. The 2003 National Council elections saw the SVP gain the largest share of the vote, thereby earning them a second seat in government which they took from the CVP. However, in 2008 both SVP members of government shifted allegiance to the newly-founded BDP. Since the beginning of the year, the SVP has once again had a representative on the Federal Council in the shape of Ueli Maurer, whose seat was vacated by Samuel Schmid.
Where the 36,000-strong federal staff work

The colour coded organisational units are mostly independent, which is why information on their staff revenue and expenditure is not included in the respective department figures.
THE EXECUTIVE

The Swiss Confederation a brief guide

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As the staff office of the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellery ensures the smooth running of all Federal Council business. Before an item of business is actually tabled, it passes through a variety of stages. The Federal Chancellery plays the role of coordinator and acts as a hub to the rest of the Federal Administration and parliament. The Federal Chancellery is headed by the Federal Chancellor. She can propose motions to the Federal Council and represents Federal Chancellery business in parliament. The Federal Chancellery is also responsible for informing the public of the decisions taken by the Federal Council in a timely and transparent manner via the media.

In collaboration with the cantons, the Federal Chancellery is working intensively on the further development of e-Government, in other words electronic communication between the state and citizens. One of the most important aspects of this is e-Voting. Several cantons have already launched pilot projects.

A further important goal of the Federal Chancellery is to upgrade the system used to electronically enter official publications in the Federal Gazette and in the compilations of legislation. In the medium term all of the Federal Administration's transactions should be processed electronically and harmonised.

The Planning and Strategy Section is responsible for the Federal Council’s political planning and accountability instruments, which include legislature planning, annual objectives, and the activity report. The section is responsible for coordinating the Federal Administration’s Forward Planning Staff and checking the most important Federal Council business for consistency with the current and planned overall policy. It also acts as a secretariat to the Conference of Secretaries-General, the highest coordination body in the Federal Administration.

The Political Rights Section ensures that the political rights that are typical to Switzerland can be exercised smoothly. It advises initiative and referendum committees, formally conducts a preliminary examination of popular initiatives, verifies petition lists, organises federal votes and elections to the National Council and monitors pilot e-Voting schemes.

The Federal Crisis Management Training (cMT) unit of the Federal Administration trains senior staff from offices, departments and the Federal Chancellery to manage crises and disasters, and conducts exercises. Supra-departmental cooperation plays an increasingly important role.

The Records and Process Management Section is responsible for mail service, for the distribution of information regarding Federal Council business and consultation procedures among the federal offices, and for the archiving of the Federal Chancellery’s documents.

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.

Federal Council Sector: Ensuring the smooth running of Federal Council meetings

The Federal Council begins its weekly session at 9 am every Wednesday in the west wing of the Federal Palace. The Section for Federal Council Affairs works together with the departments to prepare the items of business for approval by the Federal Council. It prepares an agenda, gathers the views on items of business awaiting resolution from all departments through a consultation process and submits them to the Federal Council. The protocol of decisions and individual decisions are executed after the Federal Council meeting.

The Legal Section has a control and advisory function in the legislative process and advises the departments and offices on their legislation projects. The Section screens all motions put to the Federal Council for their legal and formal accuracy. In addition, it is responsible for specific legal fields, such as administrative organisation law, consultative procedure law and official publications law.

Federal acts and ordinances must be published in the official publishing bodies to enter into force. It is the task of the Official Publications Centre to ensure that the Federal Gazette and both compilations of legislation are published swiftly and simultaneously in the three official languages (German, French and Italian). The Federal Gazette contains draft bills and decrees that parliament debates in the course of its legislative work, explanatory dispatches and Federal Council reports, referendum proposals and notices from the federal authorities. The Official Compilation of Federal Legislation (AS) is published on a weekly basis and contains the new and amended acts and ordinances. The Official Compilation of Federal Legislation (SR) is continuously updated and provides a complete overview of applicable law. The compilations of legislation are indispensable for legal practitioners, but also for many private individuals, as is evident from the some 500,000 online queries made each day.
The Central Language Services 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 help to ensure that government communications reach all language communities at the same time and in the same manner. The language services also ensure that important government texts are published in Romansh and in English. They maintain the Termdat terminology database, which is a multilingual electronic dictionary covering a wide range of legal, administrative and other specialised fields. It is a valuable tool for communication, editing and translation. In carrying out all these activities, the language services act as the guardians of our country’s multilingualism.

Information and Communications Sector: Coordinating information from the administration

Information and communication are key leadership tools for the Federal Council. Headed by the Vice-Chancellor and Federal Council spokesman, the Information and Communications Sector ensures, together with the relevant heads 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 takes the form of press conferences that can also be viewed in real time 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, it operates a media centre across the road from the Federal Palace.

The Vice-Chancellor and his team (together with the specialists from the departments and federal offices and with the support of the language services) are responsible for the explanatory notes issued by the Federal Council on popular votes at federal level.

The e-Government Section hosts the Federal Administration’s internet portal www.admin.ch and, on behalf of the Confederation and the cantons, the Swiss portal www.ch.ch. It also performs certain management and coordination tasks in the area of e-Government and is involved at the forefront of the development and implementation of the Federal Administration’s 2010 Internet Strategy.

The Communication Support Section advises the Federal Administration on strategic and conceptual communication matters. At the same time, it also produces a wide range of print and web products (sometimes with the help of external specialists) for the departments, federal offices and the Federal Chancellery. The best known of these products is the brochure you are reading.

The Käfigturm, the Political Forum of the Confederation, primarily hosts exhibitions with political content and related discussions. In addition to media conferences, the Käfigturm organises a regular series of lectures on topical or historical subjects. Details can be found at www.kaefigturm.admin.ch.

Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner: Creating transparency and protecting privacy

The Commissioner monitors data processing activities by federal agencies or by private individuals and organisations. In the event of a violation, he can recommend that data processing methods be changed or discontinued. In addition, he provides advice to private individuals, federal agencies and the cantons. He advises the federal offices and departments on how to apply the principle of freedom of information, 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.
The Basilea is again ready to set sail from Setúbal in Portugal and head for Port Gentil in Gabon, Lukas Roth’s work is done. The inspector from the Swiss Maritime Navigation Office has carefully checked over the multipurpose vessel from the engine room to the bridge: Are all the hatches closed? Are the engines and equipment in perfect working order? Is safety on board assured? Are the labour regulations for the crew respected? Are all the papers in order? – The answer to all these questions is yes, there is nothing major to report.

The Basilea is one of 35 cargo ships currently sailing the high seas under the Swiss flag. The ships have a total loading capacity of a million tonnes. That may only constitute about a thousandth of world tonnage, but it means Switzerland has the largest fleet of any landlocked country.

“Our” maritime fleet was established in 1941 during the Second World War and was intended to help safeguard the country’s economic supply; and that remains the case today. Although the ships are owned by private shipping companies, in times of conflict or crisis the Swiss government can requisition the fleet to guarantee access to essential goods.

Nowadays Swiss are few and far between on board. The loneliness of life at sea, the hard work and poor pay make the job of seaman unattractive. Ships’ crews today tend to consist of eastern Europeans and Asians.

Lukas Roth is one of around 3900 federal employees at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA.
The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 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:
- safeguard the independence and welfare of Switzerland
- alleviate hardship and poverty in the world
- respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy
- peaceful coexistence of peoples
- conservation of natural resources

**General Secretariat**

- Secretary-General: Roberto Balzaretti
- Staff: 79
- Revenue: 17,671,700.–

The General Secretariat supports the head of department in her daily work. In particular:
- it coordinates business for parliament and the Federal Council
- informs the public about the activities of the department
- ensures the achievement of equal opportunities within the FDFA
- assesses the effectiveness of internal steering and controlling systems across all areas of the department’s activities.

Presence Switzerland and the Cultural Foreign Policy Centre also report to the General Secretariat.

**State Secretariat**

- State Secretary: Michael Ambühl
- Staff: 230
- Revenue: 294,300,300.–

The State Secretariat plays a leading role in the development and planning of foreign policy on behalf of the head of department. In developing foreign policy strategies and concepts, the State Secretariat is supported by the Directorate of Political Affairs, which is headed by the State Secretary. The State Secretary represents the head of department both at home and abroad. His duties also involve maintaining Switzerland’s bilateral relations with other countries. His most important dossiers include cooperation with the UN, the development of relations with the EU and security and peace policy which also involves policy on disarmament. The Diplomatic Protocol service and the Integration Office, a joint office of the FDFA and the FDEA, are also attached to the State Secretariat. The Integration Office is the federal government’s specialist service for matters concerning European integration and it coordinates relations with the European Union.

**Directorate of Political Affairs**

- Head: Michael Ambühl, State Secretary and Director of Political Affairs
- Staff and budget: included in figures

Assessing global challenges, developing foreign policy strategies, identifying hotspots and areas of tension: the Directorate of Political Affairs is where all the information flows that allow Switzerland’s foreign interests to be defended. The Directorate of Political Affairs coordinates everyday foreign policy business and is the office 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)
- Political Affairs Division VI (service for the Swiss Abroad and policy on the Swiss Abroad, consular protection, travel advice and crisis management)
- Secretariat of Political Affairs (international security policy, arms control and disarmament, conference service, historical service, documentation)

**Directorate of Public International Law (DPIL)**

- Director: Paul Seger
- Staff: 43
- Revenue: 5,888,100.–

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 Public International Law ensures that Switzerland meets its international legal obligations both abroad and at home. It is involved in negotiating, concluding and implementing agreements based on international law and is committed to the promotion of and compliance with international law. It is also responsible for ensuring that Swiss legal claims vis-à-vis foreign states are enforced.
The DPIL deals with a wide range of topics, including neutrality, human rights and international humanitarian law, the legal aspects of cross-border cooperation, dealing with the issue of proceeds of corruption, and shipping on the Rhine and other inland waterways.

The DPIL also coordinates foreign policy measures for combating terrorism and is responsible for relations with the Principality of Liechtenstein.

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 and the natural foundations for life, as stated in the Swiss constitution.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) implements this mission. Its activities are divided into four specific areas:
- Regional cooperation
- Global cooperation
- Cooperation with eastern Europe, new EU member states
- Humanitarian aid

Regional cooperation undertakes development programmes in 17 partner countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. It is responsible for cooperation with the regional finance institutions.

Global cooperation supports the activities of the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, other global funds and networks. It contribute to resolving global problems through three global programmes (climate change, food security and migration).

Cooperation with eastern Europe comprises Switzerland’s assistance to transition countries in the West Balkans and the Community of Independent States of the former Soviet Union (CIS) and its enlargement contribution to the new EU countries.

Humanitarian aid saves lives and alleviates suffering. During armed conflicts and in the aftermath of natural disasters, the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit provides help and supports partner organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the World Food Programme. In addition to relief aid it provides reconstruction assistance and is involved in the area of disaster protection and prevention.

The work of the SDC focuses on ten topics: health, education, water, rule of law and democracy, migration, agriculture and rural development, business and employment, environment, conflict prevention and transformation, and economic integration.

Directorate for Resources

The Directorate for Resources is the Department’s service centre for all matters concerning resources and has three main tasks:
- It is responsible for managing and controlling resources (human resources, finance, logistics, IT, etc.) and ensures they are used effectively to achieve the department’s goals.
- It manages the network of diplomatic and consular representations abroad. It takes measures to ensure the security of these representations and their staff, and is responsible for the communication channels and coordination between the Swiss representations abroad and the head office in Bern.
- It ensures efficient and customer-friendly consular services and creates the conditions for results-oriented management in the Swiss representations abroad.

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 DCM’s remit. The Swiss Government Travel Centre, which organises the official international travel arrangements for the entire federal administration, is also part of this directorate.

Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad

Some 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.
All of Switzerland’s cantons, districts and communes on 139 x 88 centimetres: the annually updated overview of the institutional structure of Switzerland is just one of the 5000 or so maps produced by the Federal Statistical Office that Thomas Schulz and the Thematic Cartography Unit have to offer.

2010 marks the 150th anniversary of federal statistics. The Federal Statistical Office has been producing cartographic products for almost as long as part of its role to provide public information. Whether in the form of printed publications or online – the products are sought after by universities, public administrations and banks, but also by many members of the public.

It is not surprising that the maps are so popular. The colourful maps tell you what you want to know at first glance. They show, for example, where the average age has risen particularly sharply since the last census; whether there was once again a divide along the "Röstigraben" in voting patterns at the last referendum, where unemployment is at its highest; where the incidence of road deaths is above average or where the most non-Ladin speakers use Romansh on an everyday basis, etc.

Almost all areas of life in Switzerland for which statistical data can be gathered are also presented in map form. To mark the anniversary and the pending census, 2010 will see the publication of a new Statistical Atlas of Switzerland, which makes the statistical information even more easily accessible and interactive in electronic form.

Thomas Schulz is one of around 2600 federal employees in the Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA.
Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat is responsible for planning, coordination and controlling, acts as a hub between the federal offices and the head of Department and provides consultancy services for the entire department. Its legal service supervises charitable national and international foundations. The Federal Commission against Racism, the Service for Combating Racism and the Bureau for the Equality of People with Disabilities are affiliated to the General Secretariat.

Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE

Equal rights in the workplace and at home are the office’s main concern. The FOGE now provides financial assistance to promote company projects to improve in-house equal opportunities and, together with social partners, plays an active role in implementing equal pay for women and men. The Secretariat of the Federal Commission for Women’s Issues is also affiliated to this office.

Federal Office of Culture FOC

The FOC formulates the federal government’s cultural policy. It promotes cultural life in all its diversity and creates the conditions to ensure that it can continue to flourish. It supports creative work in the fields of film, the visual arts and design. Its tasks also include supporting and promoting the interests of the country’s various linguistic and cultural communities. It supports umbrella organisations that represent cultural interests. It ensures the preservation of historic buildings and monuments, areas of local character and archaeological sites. The FOC is the contact point for queries regarding looted art and the transfer of cultural goods. The FOC manages valuable collections, including the federal art collection, and is responsible for supervising Swiss National Library and the National Museums.

Swiss National Library NL

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.

Swiss Federal Archives SFA

The SFA evaluates, safeguards, catalogues and raises public awareness of archive-worthy Confederation documents. It would take 12 terabytes and over 50 kilometres of shelving 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 and is the basis for research.

The main focus is currently to support the Federal Administration. In accordance with a Federal Council Decree, the SFA supports the Federal Administration by ensuring its transition to e-Government.

Swiss Meteorological Institute MeteoSwiss

As the national weather and climate service, MeteoSwiss provides services for the public and business. It observes the atmosphere over Switzerland, produces weather forecasts, warns the authorities and the public in the event of severe weather and analyses climate data. The regional centres in Zurich, Geneva and Locarno, the centre for meteorological measurement computer models calculate meteorological developments in the alpine region. National and international research projects contribute to a better understanding of weather and climate in the alpine area.

Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

The overriding aim of the FOPH is to promote and maintain the good 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 pro-
tection, assessment and monitoring of chemicals and toxic products, stem cell research and bioterrorism, and health and accident insurance.

**Federal Statistical Office FSO**

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

**Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO**

Switzerland has an effective and solid social insurance system, which is an important element in upholding social peace, and therefore needs to be maintained in the future and under difficult economic conditions. The FSIO ensures the reliability of this social insurance system within its areas of responsibility and adjusts it to the new challenges: 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. In addition, it is responsible at federal level for dealing with issues relating to family, children, youth and old-age, generational relationships and for general socio-political issues. The FSIO oversees the work of the executive bodies and is responsible for the regular adjustment of legislation to the changing social reality. To a certain extent it is itself the authority responsible for the consolidation of Old Age and Survivors’ Insurance (amendment of the 11th revision, preliminary work on the 12th revision) and on the plan to restructure the finances for family allowances.

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**State Secretariat for Education and Research SER**

The SER is responsible for drafting and implementing federal policy in the areas of further and university education, research and space affairs. The most important education dos-siers are the Swiss school-leaving certificate, the promotion of cantonal universities and preparation for and assessment of the implementation of the federal performance mandate in relation to the Federal Institutes of Technology ETH. The SER invests in the quality of Switzerland as a research location with resources for the Swiss National Science Foundation, academics, non-university research institutes, Switzerland’s memberships in international research organisations and cooperation in international scientific programmes.

**Federal Institutes of Technology Group ETH**

The Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne as well as four research institutes: the Paul Scherrer Institute, WSL (the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research), Empa (Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research) and Eawag (Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology) achieve academic results at the highest level with roughly the 17 000-strong staff and nearly 21 000 students and post-graduate students as well as a 600-strong professoriate.

These institutions are grouped together under the ETH Group, which the ETH Board strategically manages in its capacity as supervisory body. The ETH Board approves and supervises the development plans, controlling and ensures coordination. It draws up estimates and accounts for the ETH Group’s budget and coordinates the management and maintenance of its real estate.

**Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products Swissmedic**

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.
Anyone seeking asylum in Switzerland has to face these and dozens of other questions such as this young man from Yemen:

Where have you and your wife left your home country? Were you persecuted there because of your ethnic group, religion or nationality? Or due to your political beliefs? Or because you belong to a particular social group? Or did you have reasonable grounds to fear such persecution? These are all criteria set out in the UN Convention relating to the status of refugees entitling a person the right to protection in a country other than his own.

At the Vallorbe reception centre, Sarah Meylan from the Federal Office for Migration questions asylum seekers with the help of an interpreter and in the presence of an aid organisation representative; at the same time, all of the statements are taken down by a clerk. At the end of the interview the transcript is translated into the asylum seeker’s language and signed by all those present.

In 2008, 16,606 people applied for asylum; just before 2000, that figure was three times higher. That makes Switzerland one of the most popular asylum destinations in Europe for refugees from around the world as a proportion of its population.

It is not clear whether they have a realistic idea of what awaits them in their potential host country. A country where the population also asks: Are those who come to Switzerland willing to adapt to our customs and way of life, and familiarise themselves and abide by our rules? There is no shortage of questions.
Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP)

General Secretariat
www.ejpd.admin.ch

- Jörg Gasser, Director
- Christian Baumann, Head of ISG

The Federal Office of Justice represents Switzerland at international level, such as in the European Schengen area. They are also responsible for organising the protection of hundreds of foreign nationals who must be protected according to international law, of local government officers and of federal buildings. They see to all the necessary steps involved in issuing passports or also issue entry bans.

Fedpol provides services to national and international partners, such as database operations to search for persons or property and to identify persons and traces. Finally, Fedpol also formulates the necessary agreements for international police cooperation, as in the case of linking Switzerland to the European Schengen area.

Federal Office of Justice (FOJ)
www.bj.admin.ch

- Michael Leupold, Director

The Federal Office of Justice prepares decrees related to the main areas of law, including the civil code, criminal code, debt collection and bankruptcy law, international private law, as well as public and administrative law. The office also advises other agencies of the Federal Administration on all legislative matters. It is responsible for the supervision of the commercial register, the register of births, marriages and deaths, the land registry, debt collection and bankruptcy and the enforcement of sentencing and criminal records. It provides building subsidies for the costs incurred by the cantons for construction work in connection with the implementation of criminal penalties and measures. Operational costs subsidies for youth welfare services premises also help to ensure the quality of the educational work.

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

Federal Office of Police (Fedpol)
www.fedpol.admin.ch

- Jean-Luc Yez, Director

Fedpol employees carry out tasks in various areas to protect the population and the Swiss constitutional state. For example, they investigate several hundred cases a year, in which the Confederation is responsible for prosecution. Terrorism, organised crime and money laundering are a top priority. Fedpol also supports the cantonal police in numerous procedures, such as the fight against internet child pornography.

Like traffic lights at a 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 human resources and finances for the whole department. The Information Technology Service Centre is a specialist unit which develops and manages security-critical IT applications in the areas of justice, police and migration, such as search systems or the register of criminal records. It is also responsible for monitoring post and telecommunications.

Federal Office for Migration (FOM)
www.bfm.admin.ch

- Alard du Bois-Reymond, Director

The Federal Office for Migration determines the conditions under which people may enter, live and work in Switzerland, and it decides who receives protection from persecution. At the end of 2008, there were 1 638 949 people in our country in possession of a residence permit or a permanent residence permit and 40 794 people had the status of asylum seekers or provisionally admitted persons. Switzerland has been a country of immigration for around a hundred years and foreign workers have become an important factor in our economy.

The FOM’s core tasks also include the planning and implementation of measures for the peaceful coexistence of the national and foreign population. The FOM coordinates the integration policy of the federal government, the cantons and the communes. Particular consideration is given to the areas of language learning, education and work, where the idea is to encourage but also insist on progress. The Swiss Emigration section of the FOM supports Swiss seeking to emigrate in the form of free advice and information.

Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAS)
www.ba.admin.ch

- Erwin Beyeler, Director

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 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.

**Federal Office of Metrology METAS**

Director: Christian Bock
Staff: 120
Revenue: 8 630 100.–
Expenditure: 34 923 100.–

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 production, 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 Institute of Intellectual Property IIP**

Director: Roland Grossenbacher
Staff: 210
Revenue: 38 129 000.–
Expenditure: 48 506 000.–

Is the coat of arms on Swiss 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 short: How much Swiss input does a product have to have for it to be branded as Swiss? The Institute of Intellectual Property has prepared a legislative revision intended to create greater clarity with regard to the use of the designation Swiss and of the Swiss cross on goods and services.

The IIP is responsible for all matters concerning the protection of intellectual property. Creative minds can register their inventions and creations with the Institute to protect them from being copied: new technical inventions can be patented, catchy names can be trademarked and original shapes or forms can be protected.

**Swiss Institute for Comparative Law SICL**

Director: Christina Schmid
Staff: 34
Expenditure: 7 871 200.–

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 360,000 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.

**Federal Gaming Board FGB**

Director: Jean-Marie Jordan
Staff: 32
Revenue: 5 391 200.–
Expenditure: 9 422 300.–

The Federal Gaming Board supervises the 19 casinos in Switzerland. It ensures that casinos offer their patrons a fair and enjoyable game. Its main task is to ensure compliance with legal provisions to fight money laundering and compulsive gambling.

The Board also has the task of levying gaming tax on casinos, the revenues from which mainly flow into the Old Age and Survivors compensation fund so that at some point they benefit the whole population. The FGB also has the task of determining the legal status of a game if there is doubt regarding its nature. In such cases it has to determine whether the game concerned is one of luck or skill. In Switzerland only casinos are entitled to offer games of chance. The FGB is also responsible for addressing unlawful gaming.
London calling

Hopefully, when London calls the youth of the world to the 30th Olympic Games in 2012, a fair number of graduates from the recruit school for elite athletes will be among them. That is the declared goal of each of the 18 week training courses: namely to enable particularly talented and hard working athletes to compete successfully at Olympic and world championship level.

Warrant Officer Urs Walther shares credit for the fact that this goal is achieved year after year. At the Federal Office of Sport training centre in Magglingen he plans and monitors the daily sport and military training routines, while the various trainers put the athletes through their paces in their respective disciplines to make them as competitive as possible personal coaching that other young professionals could only dream of.

Those performing their military service in Magglingen are of course professionals; the longstanding rule established by the reviver of the Olympic idea, Pierre de Coubertin, that only amateurs be allowed to compete at the Games, was officially dropped in the 1990s. And few people nowadays really believe that it is the taking part, not the winning that counts: today podium places and results are more important than ever.

The Swiss team brought back six medals from Beijing in 2008 and a dozen Olympic diplomas. Will they manage to bring back a few more from London in two years’ time thanks in part to Urs Walther?

Urs Walther is one of around 12,500 federal employees at the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS.
General Secretariat

Brigitte Hindlebscher 488
Expenditure: 4 960 000.–

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

For administrative purposes, the Security Committee of the Federal Council (Staff SecCom) is affiliated to the GS. The Security Committee comprises 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-renowned 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

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

Lieutenant General André Blattmann
Expenditure: 5 355 566 700.–

The second D in DDPS stands for Defence. This sector is the planning, führende und verwaltende backbone of the Swiss Armed Forces. Defence makes up the largest sector in the department and is headed by the Chief of the Armed Forces who holds the rank of lieutenant general (three-star general). The Defence group consists of the headquarters with the Armed Forces Staff and the Joint Staff, the Land Forces and Air Force, the Armed Forces College, the Armed Forces Logistics Organisation and the Command Support Organisation.

The Armed Forces Staff is responsible for implementing political directives and instructions at military strategy level. It also ensures the development, planning, resource allocation and steering of the Armed Forces. The Joint Staff is in charge of planning and ensures the required level of readiness of the forces and operations, whether in terms of security for the WEF Annual Meeting in Davos, peace support in the Balkans (e.g. through Swisscoy in Kosovo) or disaster relief following 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

Willi Scholl 284
Expenditure: 137 271 800.–

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

Within the FOCP there are two services with special tasks: the National Emergency Operations Centre in Zurich is responsible for warning and alerting the authorities and emergency services. The Spiez Laboratory is Switzerland’s specialist institute for protection from nuclear, biological and chemical threats and hazards. Its services are often required by the UN and other international organisations.

Sport
www.baspo.ch

Matthias Remund 275

15 897 000.–

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

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

Armasuisse
www.armasuisse.ch

Jakob Baumann 926

923 382 371.–

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

Armasuisse is undergoing a restructuring phase and will work more closely with its client, the armed forces. Armasuisse will in future comprise the Corporate Management Staff, the Federal Office of Topography (swisstopo), the Central Services and the following areas of competence: Advanced command and control and reconnaissance systems (e.g. procurement of simulators), Land systems (e.g. procurement of armoured vehicles), Air systems (e.g. procurement of aircraft for the Confederation), Purchasing and cooperation, Science and technology, and Real estate (manages in the region of 26 000 properties and 26 000 hectares of land belonging to the DDPS).

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

The Federal Intelligence Service FIS has the legal mandate to conduct a global evaluation of the threat to Switzerland. To that end it procures information not accessible to the public, analyses it and passes on its findings and assessments with the aim of providing a situation analysis suitable for decision-makers of all levels. Particular emphasis is placed on the early recognition of threats and dangers, but also on identifying opportunities for Swiss interests. The FIS deals with topics such as terrorism, proliferation, violent extremism and illicit intelligence gathering, but also with regional security developments, including their military aspects. The Service is supported by a broad network of domestic and foreign partners. It is supervised by various bodies of the administration and by parliament.
Monica Bilfinger works as an art historian at the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics. Her many and varied tasks include maintaining furniture and furnishings from buildings belonging to the Confederation. This includes, for example, both the two Federal Council residences—the Beatrice von Wattenwyl House in Bern’s old town and Lohn Manor in Kehrsatz—but also embassy buildings abroad.

At the central warehouse, Monica Bilfinger carries out an inventory of the diverse range of furniture dating from various periods and checks whether they are being properly stored. Not all pieces are so attractive or valuable that they would fetch a high price at auction. However, because each piece is closely associated with the history of the building to which it originally belonged, all are valuable and worth preserving.

Naturally, Monica Bilfinger spends only a small amount of her time in the warehouse. Given her extensive knowledge of architecture and art history, her time is mostly spent advising those responsible for carrying out work on buildings owned by the Confederation subject to strict heritage rules. By far the most demanding recent project was the total renovation of the Parliament Building, which lasted two and a half years.

In addition, Monica Bilfinger works hard to raise awareness of the cultural monuments in her care by producing guides on Swiss art and history.
Federal Department of Finance FDF

General Secretariat
Secretary-General: Elisabeth Meyerhans Sarasin 111 Revenue: 123 711 600.–

On a Tuesday evening in the Bernerhof, all the lights are burning and the offices are a hive of activity. The departments are submitting their final comments on the items of business concerning the FDF for the next morning's Federal Council meeting. In the General Secretariat, the finishing touches are being made to the proposals.

The GS plans the FDF 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; 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 cooperation between the federal government, the cantons and the communes in the field of e-Government.

Federal Finance Administration FFA
Director: Peter Siepenhaller 203 excl. Swissmint (25) and the Central Compensation Office (60)
Staff: 3 099 155 987.–
Revenue: 6 321 000 262.–

The FFA is the custodian of the federal coffers. The old rule "not to spend more than you earn" applies here more than elsewhere. In 2001, voters instructed the Federal Council and parliament not to run up any further debt. The debt brake therefore requires that expenditure not rise more rapidly than revenue over the economic cycle. 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 following years to give political actors sufficient time to decide whether projects need to be halted or if new sources of revenue need to be sought.

Through its transparent accounts, the FFA ensures that parliament and the people can see how their tax money is being spent and whether their decisions are being implemented. In addition, the FFA also oversees the legal framework of the Swiss financial centre and represents the country's interests with regard to international financial and monetary issues, as well as in the area of fighting money laundering and terrorist financing.

Federal Office of Personnel FOPER
Staff: 103 Revenue: 9 077 606.–

FOPER is responsible for the personnel policy for the federal administration. It ensures that the federal administration remains a competitive employer through attractive remuneration conditions and a transparent remuneration system. It also contributes to the country's strong standing in international competition among locations for work.

Federal Tax Administration FTA
Director: Urs Ursprung 977 Revenue: 5 740 494 000.–

The FTA is responsible for collecting a major part of the Confederation's revenues and makes an important contribution to the financing of public activities. It ensures the efficient levying of VAT, direct federal tax, withholding tax and other duties. On the international level, the FTA seeks to negotiate the most beneficial double taxation agreements, which are of great importance for the economy and which set out rules on administrative assistance in tax matters. The FTA prepares legislative amendments in the field of tax law and implements the formal harmonisation of direct taxes by the Confederation, the cantons and the communes.

The FTA www.estv.admin.ch

Federal Customs Administration FCA
Director: Rudolf Dienrich 4001 Revenue: 1 360 893 100.–

The FCA is responsible for collecting the Confederation's customs duties and represents Switzerland in international exhibitions as a financial centre and regulates the country's interests with regard to international trade in goods and services. It also represents the country's interests with regard to international trade in services. The FCA also promotes Switzerland as a financial centre and represents the country's interests with regard to international trade in goods and services. The FCA also promotes Switzerland as a financial centre and represents the country's interests with regard to international trade in services.

The FCA raises a major part of the Confederation's revenues and makes an important contribution to the financing of public activities. It ensures the efficient levying of VAT, direct federal tax, withholding tax and other duties. On the international level, the FTA seeks to negotiate the most beneficial double taxation agreements, which are of great importance for the economy and which set out rules on administrative assistance in tax matters. The FTA prepares legislative amendments in the field of tax law and implements the formal harmonisation of direct taxes by the Confederation, the cantons and the communes.

The FCA www.estr.admin.ch

A country owes its success first and foremost to individuals and this also applies in the federal administration. As a large employer with well-qualified and motivated staff it has to stand out through its expertise and know-how, but also through its creativity and breadth of vision. Around 36 000 work within the federal administration which offers innovative working conditions often in unique positions.

As a modern and attractive employer, the federal administration also contributes to the country's strong standing in international competition among locations for work. In order for that to remain the case, FOPER continuously adapts its human resources policy to ensure that the federal administration can continue to attract and retain the best people for the job. In order that it can achieve this in the long term, the FOPER is following the latest developments in the field of human resources and orienting its personnel policy accordingly. The FOPER is ensuring that the federal administration remains a competitive employer by applying innovative ideas, high quality further personal development opportunities and a transparent remuneration system.
The times when the federal administration was able to function without computers and telecommunications are long gone. Websites, legislation online, customs declarations, tax forms – everything is done electronically. The FOITT is the central service provider in the administration for efficient, modern, secure, user and public-friendly services. The FOITT supports processes in the administration and makes sure telecommunications function between all federal offices at home and abroad. It installs standard workplace systems and also offers modern, specialised IT-supported applications.

Why are most of the offices in the Federal Administration filled with the same furniture? That’s because federal employees are not allowed to simply order their desks and chairs from any furniture manufacturer that takes their fancy. Standardised items purchased in bulk are less expensive than individual purchases. Quotes always have to be sought – a thousand 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, whether it’s the Federal Palace, the various administrative buildings, museums, castles or embassies around the world.

Switzerland has one of the world’s leading financial markets. The financial sector is therefore extremely important for the country’s economy. In view of the dynamic developments in the financial markets and the ever increasing complexity of financial market supervision there was a need to improve the institutional structure of the existing supervisory authorities. Since the beginning of 2009, supervision of the core areas of the financial sector (banks, insurance companies, stock exchange etc.) has been undertaken by a single body, the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority Finma. It was created through the merger of the Swiss Federal Banking Commission (SFBC), the Federal Office of Private Insurance (FOPI) and the Anti-Money Laundering Control Authority.

The SAB regulates the market for alcohol by means of taxes, controls and restrictions on trading and advertising. Alcosuisse, the SAB’s profit centre is responsible for trade in ethanol (high grade alcohol).

As part of the total revision of the Alcohol Act, the questions of a liberalisation of the ethanol market by lifting the federal monopoly and the possible privatisation of Alcosuisse will be examined. In addition, the lifting of the monopoly on the production of spirits is being prepared, taking into account the proven provisions on prevention and the future needs of the spirits market.

The staff at Publica look after the affairs of around 55 000 active insured persons and 46 000 pensioners. Every month an average of CHF 160 million is paid out in the form of pensions and other payments. The saved assets of around CHF 30 billion have to be carefully invested over the course of the year. That means reconciling the need to generate a mandatory minimum return and protecting the capital that has been entrusted. The foundation of every healthy pension fund is therefore the consistent implementation of a serious long term investment strategy and a realistic basis for calculating pensions. In order to meet this requirement Publica completed the switch to a contributory plan in 2008 setting itself up as a collective institution with a total of 19 different pension schemes. Publica’s new equal bodies have set the focus in 2010 on the consolidation of the collective institution and the raising of the working capital ratio. Whether the latter can be achieved is also dependent on the situation on the financial markets.
That’s roughly the size of India’s population: 1.2 billion, and that figure is expected to rise by a further 500 million by 2050. The world’s most populous country after China is an interesting economic partner for Switzerland (and it will become even more interesting in future) as for its partner countries in the European Free Trade Association EFTA.

Ambassador Marie Gabrielle Ineichen Fleisch is spokesperson for the EFTA delegation, which is seeking a comprehensive free trade agreement with India for the four member states – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland – particularly in the areas of goods, services, investment and intellectual property. It often takes a series of negotiation rounds, often spanning several years, until such an agreement is ready to be signed.

In order to achieve a win-win situation for all concerned it takes stamina, diplomatic finesse and a great deal of experience; those are aptitudes that the head of the World Trade Division of the Foreign Economic Affairs Directorate at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs has in abundance.

During negotiations with representatives of the most diverse countries, Ambassador Ineichen Fleisch is also able to display her flair for languages: in addition to our three official languages German, French and Italian, she is fluent in English, and also speaks Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

And as nothing opens doors to other cultures quite like languages, the polyglot ambassador is welcomed around the globe and is a successful negotiator.

Marie Gabrielle Ineichen Fleisch is one of around 2400 federal employees in the Federal Department of Economic Affairs (FDEA)
Federal Department of Economic Affairs FDEA

General Secretariat

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

For administrative purposes, 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.

In 2009, admission to civilian service was considerably simplified with the introduction of what is known as proof by demonstration. A pool of recognised institutions in which service is performed provides over 6500 places to the 18000 or so individuals in service. The Central Office for Civilian Service and the seven regional centres process the applications, assist the individuals and recognise new institutions.

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

SECO is the Swiss Confederation’s central office for all core issues of economic policy. Its 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 barriers to trade, and the reduction of Switzerland’s relatively high prices. On the domestic front, SECO acts as a point of contact 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 economic policy, it is active in the formulation of 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 FDFA and the FDEA. SECO also contributes to the sustainable development and integration of countries from the South and East 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. The OPET deals with all three areas: It is the federal government’s competence centre for vocational and professional education and training, Universities of Applied Sciences and innovation promotion. In this way, the OPET plays its part by training well qualified workers and making Switzerland an attractive location in which to do business. Together with the cantons and the professional associations, the OPET aims to ensure a high-level of vocational training. It coordinates the universities of applied sciences, which not only train future managers, but are also involved in applied research and development. The Innovation Promotion Agency CTI 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.

Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

Switzerland has 1 060 278 hectares of farmland, 1 560 000 head of cattle in its pastures and 172 991 people employed in the agricultural sector. Each year, the federal government provides agriculture with financial support of around CHF 3.6 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 ape meat is stopped at the airport and another tries to illegally import souvenirs made of tortoise shell. Bluetongue has spread to Switzerland and has triggered the need for a vaccination campaign for cattle, sheep and goats. Animal rights activists are calling for stricter laws governing livestock farming while farmers are opposed. The tabloid press calls for “effective measures against fighting dogs” – many dog owners complain that they are being harassed by “dog haters” even though they behave properly.

All these situations have one thing in common: they are all difficult issues covered by the FVO: animal health, animal protection, food safety, species protection checks at border points and international cooperation in all these areas are dealt with by FVO employees on a daily basis. Many of these are emotive issues and that is how it should be as a federal office is there for people with thoughts and feelings.

Federal Veterinary Office FVO

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Is it rising or falling?

The lake at the lower Grindelwald glacier first formed in the summer of 2005 and has grown year by year, but it has also emptied a number of times — often without warning. Such dramatic changes in water level are rarely observed elsewhere.

Reason enough then for Hugo Raetzo from the Federal Office for the Environment to regularly monitor the level of the lake and analyse the data gathered from the measuring instruments together with the cantonal and communal authorities.

Hugo Raetzo works in a kind of oversized natural laboratory where the effects of climate change can be studied at first hand: in the Alps especially, conditions in many places are altering more drastically and at a rate far greater than scientists have ever seen before.

The glacier has already been receding for a hundred and fifty years. Consequently, the ice is no longer able to support the valley walls. This in turn repeatedly leads to rock falls. Because the fallen debris conserves the ice below and the glacier continues to recede, a basin has formed at the end of the valley with no aboveground drainage. Melt water and rain gather and could cause the lake to grow by up to 100 million cubic metres over the next five to ten years if nothing is done.

But last year something was done: an underground spillway tunnel was dug out. Today, it ensures that there is a regular discharge of water thereby eliminating the risk of a sudden and catastrophic flood in the Lütschinen valley down to the plateau between the lakes of Thun and Brienz.

Hugo Raetzo is one of around 2100 federal employees at the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC.
Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

General Secretariat

Hans Worder

DETEC’s federal offices are located in Ittigen and Biel. The office directors meet at the General Secretariat (GS) in Bern several times a year as it is not uncommon for several offices to have an interest in ongoing business at the same time. The meeting provides 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. In addition, it also exercises the role of owner with regard to Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom and Skyguide and supervises the implementation of the strategic aims set out by the Federal Council.

The Independent Complaints Authority for Radio and Television, the Investigation Bureau for Railway, Funicular and Boat Accidents, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau, and the postal services regulation authority (PostReg) are all affiliated to DETEC.

Federal Office of Transport FOT

Max Friedli (until 31.5.2000) 255

In a series of popular votes the Swiss population has repeatedly approved measures to transfer transalpine heavy goods traffic from road to rail. Switzerland completed the first stage of this process with the opening in 2007 of the Lötschberg base tunnel. The tunnel is now fully operational. Together with the Gotthard and Generi base tunnels, which are still under construction, it forms part of the New Rail Link through the Alps NRLA. It is the cornerstone of the traffic transfer policy.

The huge NRLA project is coordinated by the Federal Office of Transport. It carries out the tasks determined by the Federal Council and parliament, monitors compliance in terms with cost and deadlines and issues the necessary authorisations.

The FOT is the federal office for public transport. Switzerland has a comprehensive and reliable transport network ranging from intercity trains to trams, buses, cable cars and paddle steamers. The FOT makes sure that the network continues to be modernised and is operated safely.

Plans to expand the network are in preparation. Journey times between Geneva and St. Gallen should be reduced by half an hour by 2030. Public transport timetables will be further improved with additional services. Targeted line extensions and more railway hubs will result in even better connections for many public transport users.

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA

Peter Mülller 201

“Safety first” is the FOCA’s overriding principle. The FOCA uses a system of certifications and inspections to guarantee the implementation of high-level safety standards measured against a European cross-section. In order to further improve air safety, Switzerland operates a system of non-punitive reporting. This principle allows pilots, air traffic controllers, mechanics and ground crews to report errors and accidents without being prosecuted by the FOCA. This approach places greater emphasis on learning from incidents that compromise safety than on penalising those at fault. The FOCA is performing pioneering work with its system of non-punitive reporting: only a few countries in Europe operate this type of system.

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE

Walter Steinhöwel 156

The Federal Council’s energy policy is based on the following four pillars: improvement of energy efficiency, promotion of renewable energy sources, the replacement of existing large-scale power stations as well as increased international cooperation. The SFOE has the task of putting these energy policy principles into practice for which it prepares suitable frameworks and measures. The aim is to ensure that our country will still have sufficient, safe and environmentally-friendly energy supplies in the future. Some of the necessary measures are set out in action plans on energy efficiency and renewable energies, such as the regulations on the energy consumption of household appliances, consumer electronics, light bulbs and electric motors.

Federal Roads Office FEDRO

Rudolf Disterle 405

The traffic on Swiss roads should flow. FEDRO is mandated by the Federal Council and parliament to solve the following problems: which national road sections need to be extended? Which road sections need to be resurfaced? Which tunnels need to be brought in line with the latest safety standards? How can the available funds be used most effectively?

Swiss roads should also be safe. FEDRO is actively involved in the federal action programme to improve road safety, Viaggio sicuro. The aim of the programme is to significantly reduce the number of people killed or injured in road accidents. Only well-trained drivers with safe, environmentally-friendly vehicles should be under way on safe roads. This is why FEDRO sets the requirements that drivers of 40-tonne trucks need to fulfil to ensure they transport their cargo safely and in an environmentally-friendly way. FEDRO also modifies technical requirements affecting car design to reduce the risk of injury to pedestrians or cyclists.

The increasing volume of traffic on the roads also has to be guided intelligently. FEDRO operates a traffic management system, which is run from a control centre in Emmen. The system allows the authorities to modify the flow of traffic on the national road network and ensure efficient and sustainable use of the limited road network.
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thermore, they provide us with food, raw materials and other clean the water, fertilise crop plants or regulate the climate. Fur -

In addition OFCOM also allocates frequencies for radio and television stations. It ensures that the individual radio and TV stations do not infringe the conditions of their licence, e.g. on surreptitious advertising, and shares revenues from licence fees fairly between the regions.

Every day we listen to the radio, pick up the phone, send e-mails, surf online and watch TV. In order to be able to use all these services, there has to be a stable and powerful communications infrastructure in place. OFCOM has the task of enabling, licensing and supervising all this. With the growing communications needs of the 21st century there is a need for infrastructure with ever greater capacity. In order to ensure that everyone in Switzerland can benefit, OFCOM follows all the important steps at the political level. At present, the question being ex-

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 com-

But what does all that have to do with environment policy? A great deal, especially in an Alpine country like Switzerland where nature itself can be a threat. Flooding, rock slides or avalanches make that blatantly clear. The FOEN helps to en-

Habitats and ecosystems also provide further benefits. They clean the water, fertilise crop plants or regulate the climate. Fur-
thermore, they provide us with food, raw materials and other goods. One of the core tasks of the FOEN is to preserve the long
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guard the sustainable use of water, soils and the air, it contributes to a healthy economy. Ultimately, environmental policy is also about what concerns us most, our health. 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.

Globalisation marches on. Europe is coming together. That presents Switzerland with great challenges. It has to position itself and play on its strengths – with efficient urban and economic centres, a dense network of lively and attractive towns as well as varied and well-preserved countryside and farmland.

Thanks to modern transport infrastructure, journey times between Switzerland’s towns, tourist and rural centres have shrunk in recent years. That has had a positive impact on Swit-
zerland’s network of towns and rural areas. At the same time, the need for housing grows and valuable recreation and produc-
tive land is lost. Settlements and transport are not yet optimally attuned. Spatial planning in Switzerland is therefore not quite as sustainable as demanded by the Federal Constitution and the Spatial Planning Act. The ARE weighs up these many demands on scarce land re-
sources. The “Swiss spatial plan” provides a reference for spatial planning, which is currently being drawn up together with the cantons and communes. The partial revision of the Spatial Plan-
ing Act or the agglomeration programme also contribute to sustainable spatial development.

Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI
Since 1 January 2009 the Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate (ENSI) has been responsible for ensuring the safe operation of nuclear installations in Switzerland. The ENSI is an independent public body and reports directly to the Federal Council. The ENSI took over from the Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate (HSK) which was part of the Federal Office of Energy. The HSK’s staff and responsibilities were also transferred. The overriding aim of the federal government’s supervisory ac-
tivities in the field of nuclear energy is to protect the population and the environment from harm resulting from radioactivity. The ENSI therefore supervises Switzerland’s five nuclear power stations, the interim storage sites for radioactive waste and the nuclear research units at the Paul Scherrer Institute, the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and the University of Basel. That means ensuring that operators comply with regulations and that facilities are operated safely and that radiological pro-
tection is maintained. The ENSI also has the task of protecting nuclear facilities against sabotage and terrorism. Applications for alterations to existing nuclear facilities as well as applica-
tions for the construction of new nuclear facilities are assessed by the ENSI with safety in mind. It is also responsible for the safe transport of radioactive material and geo-scientific inves-
tigations on the deep geological disposal of radioactive waste.
THE FEDERAL COURTS OR

The Judiciary
As far as living arrangements are concerned, Switzerland is often referred to as a “nation of tenants”. Indeed there are few other European countries in which home ownership is as uncommon as it is between Lake Constance, Lake Geneva and Lake Lugano. Around two-thirds of Swiss households live in rented accommodation, and in larger towns and cities that figure even exceeds ninety per cent.

As is the case with all social relations here in Switzerland, relations between landlords and tenants are also largely formalised, in this case through mutual agreements and generally valid legislation. However, given that every law can be interpreted in different ways and that jurisprudence is not an exact science, tenancy disputes, both major and minor, can arise. And occasionally the views as to what is right and what is wrong are so far removed from each other, and the differences of opinion so great, that they pass through all instances up to the Supreme Court – as the case described on the next page shows.
The Federal Supreme Court as the highest court in Switzerland and the federal courts of first instance embody, at the federal level, the judiciary, one of the three state powers, the others being parliament, the legislature, and the Federal Council, the executive. Through their legal decisions, these courts contribute to the development of the law and to its adaptation to changing circumstances. The decisions of the Federal Supreme Court and the final rulings of the Federal Criminal and Administrative Courts 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.
The 38 judges and the 19 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.

Notice served due to subletting without landlord’s approval

In principle the Code of Obligations (OR) allows an apartment to be sublet in full or in part with the approval of the landlord. The rental agreement can place restrictions on this possibility or even prohibit it. In this case the Federal Supreme Court had to adjudicate on such a restriction.

Since 1998 a married couple had been renting an 8-room apartment in Geneva for 4220 francs a month. A provision in their rental agreement permitted the subletting of the apartment for three months over the summer; furthermore, the landlord had to be notified about the length and conditions of any sublet.

Disregarding this clause the couple sometimes also rented the apartment outside this period for 12 000 francs a month, often without notifying the landlord. The landlord repeatedly requested the couple to notify him of the subletting.

In February 2002 he terminated the rental agreement early for the end of March based on article 257f, para. 3 of the Code of Obligations. The tenant objected but without success – firstly before the rental tribunal (decision of January 2007), then before the appeals chamber for rent and tenancy matters of canton Geneva (decision of November 2007). Lastly they submitted an appeal to the Federal Supreme Court. The Court rejected the appeal in March 2008 and therefore confirmed the cantonal decision.

In this case the Federal Supreme Court upheld the conditions for a premature termination of the rental agreement: any tenant who sublets a rental property without the approval of the landlord risks the premature dissolution of their rental agreement; particularly if they fail to respond to a written request and the landlord could reject the sublet for reasons set out in the Code of Obligations. When the tenant refuses to reveal the conditions of the sublet, these conditions are abusive in comparison to those of the main rental agreement or if significant disadvantages arise for the landlord from the sublet. (BGE 134 III 300)
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 17. They have a basic term of office of six years. Around 38 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 First 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.

The Federal Administrative Court is the latest of the federal courts. It began its duties in 2007 and has its seat in Bern. In 2012, 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 73 judges and a further 300 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 Supreme Court publishes reports of its decisions online.
Information services of the Federal Chancellery, the Departments and Parliamentary Services;
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