

# THE SWISS CONFEDERATION A BRIEF GUIDE

# 2019



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Chancellery FCh



**Get the app!**



**CH info**





### Dear Reader

‘We have become accustomed to elections, but we should not take them for granted.’

A perpetual calendar determines that elections to the 200 seats of the National Council are held on the second-to-last Sunday of the third-to-last month of the final year of the four-year legislature. Elections to the Council of States take place in 25 of 26 cantons on the same date. This will again be the case on 20 October 2019 – a good reason to study in more detail the pages on Parliament in this brief guide to the Swiss Confederation.

We have become accustomed to these elections, but we should not take them for granted. A hundred years ago, there was not a single country in the world in which every citizen of a certain minimum age could participate in free and fair elections. And even today, there are many countries in which people are prevented from exercising their democratic rights, or where the right to vote does not actually count for much: people may go to the polls, but there is not much to vote for.

In Switzerland, the right to vote, which was extended to women in 1971 and to 18- and 19-year-olds in 1991, has been surprisingly stable over the last hundred years, since the introduction of proportional representation in 1919. That’s quite an achievement. And this autumn, anyone who wants change or seeks to keep the status quo has the opportunity to vote for like-minded candidates or remove from the list of candidates those who are not to their taste.

Unfortunately, many people do not perceive this right as a duty: in 2015, voter turnout was below 50 per cent. ‘The Swiss Confederation – a brief guide’ is not a guide to voting, but rather a basis for better understanding what happens in Bern in the four years between parliamentary elections. It explains the workings of Parliament, as well as those of the government (Federal Council) and the courts, whose members are elected by Parliament, and provides an overview of the entire Federal Administration. So it is recommended reading for everyone.

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr

FACTS  
SWITZERLAND

6

FOUNDATIONS  
DIRECT DEMOCRACY

14



President Ueli Maurer  
on the digital future \_\_\_\_\_ 6

Population \_\_\_\_\_ 8

Federal finances \_\_\_\_\_ 9

The history of Switzerland \_\_\_\_\_ 10

Federalism \_\_\_\_\_ 12

Separation of powers \_\_\_\_\_ 16

Elections and votes \_\_\_\_\_ 18

Parties from left to right \_\_\_\_\_ 20

Political parties in brief \_\_\_\_\_ 22



**THE SWISS CONFEDERATION  
– A BRIEF GUIDE** is also  
available as an app

iOS / Android

**CH info**

**Master program THE SWISS CONFEDERATION  
– A BRIEF GUIDE**

Teaching material in English, German and French:  
[www.hep-verlag.ch/der-bund-kurz-erklaert](http://www.hep-verlag.ch/der-bund-kurz-erklaert)

THE LEGISLATURE  
**PARLIAMENT**

24

THE EXECUTIVE  
**THE GOVERNMENT**

40

THE JUDICIARY  
**THE COURTS**

76



National Council and Council of States \_\_\_\_\_ 26

Parliament in figures \_\_\_\_\_ 27

How Parliament is organised \_\_\_\_ 28

Parliamentary mechanisms \_\_\_\_ 31

Semi-professional parliament \_\_\_\_ 32

Networking with the world \_\_\_\_ 33

The parliamentary services \_\_\_\_ 34

100 years of proportional representation \_\_\_\_\_ 35

How new laws come about \_\_\_\_ 36

The Parliament Building \_\_\_\_\_ 38

The Federal Council \_\_\_\_\_ 42

Federal Administration \_\_\_\_\_ 44

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA \_\_\_\_\_ 46

Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA \_\_\_\_\_ 50

Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP \_\_\_\_\_ 54

Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS \_\_\_\_\_ 58

Federal Department of Finance FDF \_\_\_\_\_ 62

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER \_\_\_\_\_ 66

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC \_\_\_\_\_ 70

Federal Chancellery FCh \_\_\_\_\_ 74

The judiciary \_\_\_\_\_ 78

The Federal Supreme Court and the federal courts of first instance \_\_\_\_\_ 80

## President Ueli Maurer on the digital future

# MASTERING THE FUTURE WITH PROVEN VALUES

The world is turning ever faster driven by technological progress. This also poses major challenges for the small country of Switzerland. We can master these challenges if the state and society set great store by the values that

have already made us strong in the past. It would be wrong of us to stand in awe of this development: rather we must perceive and use this challenge as an opportunity.



Blockchain, cryptocurrencies, digital transformation, cyber risks: a few years ago, these terms did not exist in any dictionary. Not a day goes by today without us coming across these word creations in the media. Resourceful minds have already developed business models that make economic use of these achievements or help manage their risks. Parts of the population, however, are only beginning to come to terms with these technologies. They still treat them with great respect in some cases. There are also people who fear changes in the world of work as a result of automation. The state itself is called upon, for example, to create innovation-friendly framework conditions for the financial centre.

### **Leaner administrative processes**

I also had to face up to the digital change. For one thing, because it simply cannot be stopped. But also because the Federal Department of Finance (FDF), which I am head of, is concerned with information technology in the broadest sense on two levels: on the one hand in the strategic area, on the other hand – as a service provider for all employees of the Federal Administration – with regard to hardware, software and communication infrastructure. Two offices in my department are also working on creating practical benefits from digitalisation. The Federal Tax Administration has just made the leap into the digital age with the FISCAL IT project. FISCAL IT ensures more efficient

administrative procedures and, in particular, will make it much easier for the public to communicate with the tax authorities. An actual transformation – also based on IT innovations – is currently under way at the Federal Customs Administration. Here too, the aim is to streamline administrative procedures and simplify contact with the authorities at border crossings – in other words, no more paperwork and hardly any waiting times.

As an ordinary mobile phone user, I initially wondered where digitalisation would take us. I too, probably like many of my fellow citizens, was a bit suspicious at first. Today, I am convinced that we should see this development as an opportunity and make the most of this potential. At the beginning of this gentle change of opinion, I took a look back: I first realised that Switzerland had already undergone many changes and that it has mostly turned such processes into a success story, as our prosperity, our economic strength, the functioning of our welfare state and our good reputation in the world show.

#### **With curiosity and composure**

The guarantors of this success will help us to master the upheavals caused by digitalisation. If we return to our roots, to what has made us strong so far, we can very well survive in the virtual world. These are traditional values for which I chose a wooden cow, a toy and a classic souvenir from Switzerland for genera-

tions, as a symbol in my New Year's address. Among the typically Swiss achievements I count direct democracy, federalism, scepticism towards the powerful – whether they are trying to influence us abroad or play their part domestically. Added to this are the individual strengths of the inhabitants of Switzerland, such as diligence and punctuality, modesty, curiosity and innovative spirit.

---

‘Digital change  
can also  
become a  
success story.’

---

Such values were the basis for the fact that we are doing so well today. Together with the excellent level of education and training in our country, they will help us to master digital change. The digital change, for which I symbolically chose a smartphone in my New Year's address, can also become a success story. Of course, this also requires a form of positive basic attitude, in which we are prepared to recognise and take advantage of the great new opportunities and possibilities. And it needs the willingness to face this change – with curiosity and the necessary composure. Provided that this is the case, I am convinced

that we will not only be able to put these upheavals behind us without creating losers or other collateral damage, but that they will also propel us forward, be it in our private and professional lives, in business or in research.

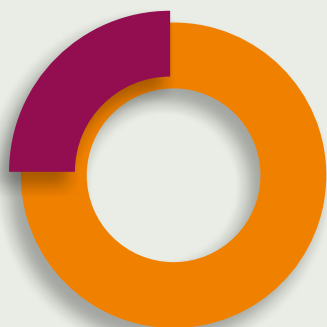


For information on the presidency and the president's activities go to [www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) > Federal Presidency

## Switzerland in figures

# POPULATION

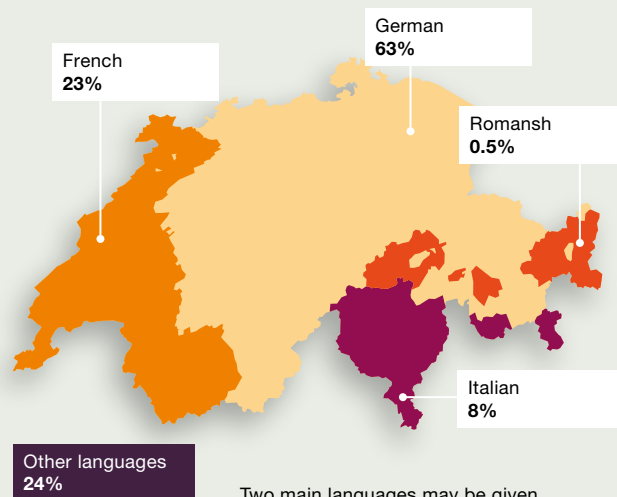
### 8.5 million people



- 8 484 130 inhabitants
- of which 2 126 392 do not have a Swiss passport

There are approximately 8.5 million people living in Switzerland, 25 per cent of whom are foreign nationals. More than half of the inhabitants who do not have a Swiss passport were either born in Switzerland or have been living here for at least ten years. The majority of foreign nationals come from an EU or EFTA country, predominantly from Italy (15%), Germany (14%) and Portugal (13%). 17 per cent come from non-European states.

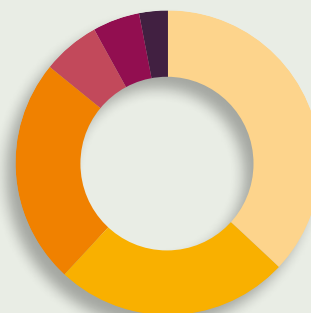
### 4 national languages



Switzerland is a multilingual country. There are four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. 63 per cent of the population primarily speak (Swiss-)German, 23 per cent French, 8 per cent Italian and 0.5 per cent Romansh. English, Portuguese, Albanian (3 to 5 per cent of the population) and various other languages are also spoken in Switzerland. Many people state that they have two main languages.

### Christian majority

68 per cent of people living in Switzerland claim affiliation to the Christian faith. Catholics are the majority in 14 cantons; Protestants are the majority in 3. In the remaining cantons, there is no clear majority. 24 per cent of citizens are not members of any religion – this number has been on the rise for several years.



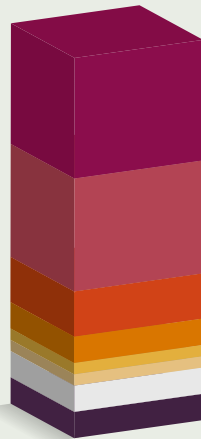
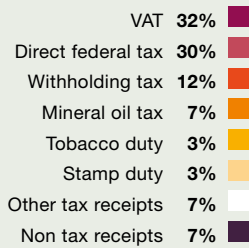
- 37% Roman Catholic
- 25% Protestant Reformed
- 24% No religious affiliation
- 6% Other Christian denominations
- 5% Islamic denominations
- 3% Other/not specified

All figures are rounded. For more information about the population: [www.statistics.admin.ch](http://www.statistics.admin.ch)

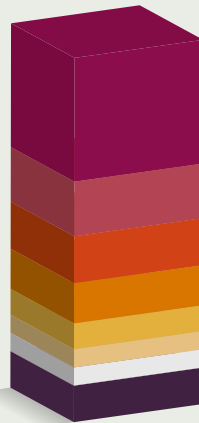


# FEDERAL FINANCES

## Receipts of CHF 71.09 billion (2017)



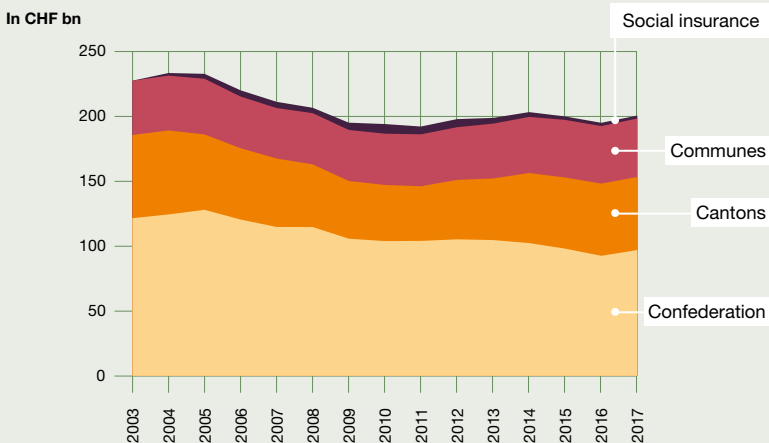
## Expenditure of CHF 68.29 billion (2017)



Direct federal tax and VAT are the Confederation's main sources of receipts, and currently bring in a total of CHF 44 billion. Direct federal tax is raised on private individuals' income (progressively, maximum 11.5%), and on business profit (8.5%). VAT is 7.7% on most goods and services. The Federal Constitution sets out which taxes the Confederation is permitted to raise.

One third of federal expenditure, CHF 23 billion, goes on social welfare. Half of this amount is spent on old-age insurance (OASI), and one fifth on invalidity insurance (II). Other major areas of expenditure are health insurance (premium reductions), migration and OASI supplementary benefits. Social welfare is one of the fastest growing areas of federal expenditure.

## Debt brake



The Constitution requires the Confederation to balance its expenditure and receipts on a lasting basis. It is required to run a surplus when the economy is strong, and may spend more than it collects in receipts when the economy is weak. This 'debt brake' was applied for the first time in 2003. Since 2005 it has been possible to reduce the federal debt of CHF 130 billion by more than CHF 30 billion. By international standards, Switzerland is doing very well, with the total government debt ratio amounting to almost 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

## From an alliance of states to a federal state

# THE HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND

Switzerland developed over the centuries from a collection of different alliances to a confederation of states and finally to the federal state we know today. Its national borders and neutrality were established and recognised internationally

in 1815. Its political system dates back to the Federal Constitution of 1848. Since then the powers of the federal government, political rights and political diversity have increased significantly.

1291 | Old Confederation

### ALLIANCES

Shifting alliances between cities and outlying areas served to maintain internal political order and external independence. In 1291 the original forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden entered into the first documented alliance. The term 'Eitgenoze' [Confederate] first appeared in 1315. In the following centuries, the Confederation continued to grow through alliances and territorial conquests.

1803–1814 | Mediation

### LOOSE FOREIGN CONTROL

After civil wars broke out between federalists and supporters of the Helvetic Republic, Napoleon ordered a constitution based on the Act of Mediation, which restored some autonomy to the cantons and set most of the cantonal borders.

1847–1848 | Sonderbund War

### LIBERALS AGAINST CONSERVATIVES

Diverging views on how the Confederation would be organised led to a civil war between liberal and Catholic conservative cantons. It was a war from which liberal forces emerged victorious.

1200

1800

1850

1798–1802 | Helvetic Republic

### UNITARY STATE UNDER FOREIGN CONTROL

Following the French invasion in 1798, the Confederation was transformed into the Helvetic Republic: a unitary state ruled from Paris.

1815 | Federal Treaty

### NEUTRALITY AND ALLIANCE OF STATES

With the defeat of Napoleon, the great European powers recognised Swiss neutrality and set Switzerland's borders as they are today. The Federal Treaty of 1815 brought together the various federal alliances into a single confederation of states with responsibility for security policy.

1848 | Federal Constitution

### DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL STATE

The Federal Constitution provided most citizens (men) with various rights and freedoms, including the right to vote and be elected (for women from 1971). The bicameral system, based on the American model, was introduced at federal level with the National Council and Council of States electing the Federal Council. Some powers were centralised. Switzerland developed into a unitary judicial and economic area.

1874, 1891 | Expanded democracy

### INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM

The revised Federal Constitution transferred more tasks to the federal government and broadened democratic rights at federal level. The referendum was introduced in 1874 and the popular initiative in 1891. In 1891, Parliament elected the first Catholic Conservative (CVP today) to the government. For the first time since 1848, the Federal Council was no longer made up solely of Liberals.

1919, 1929 | Proportional representation

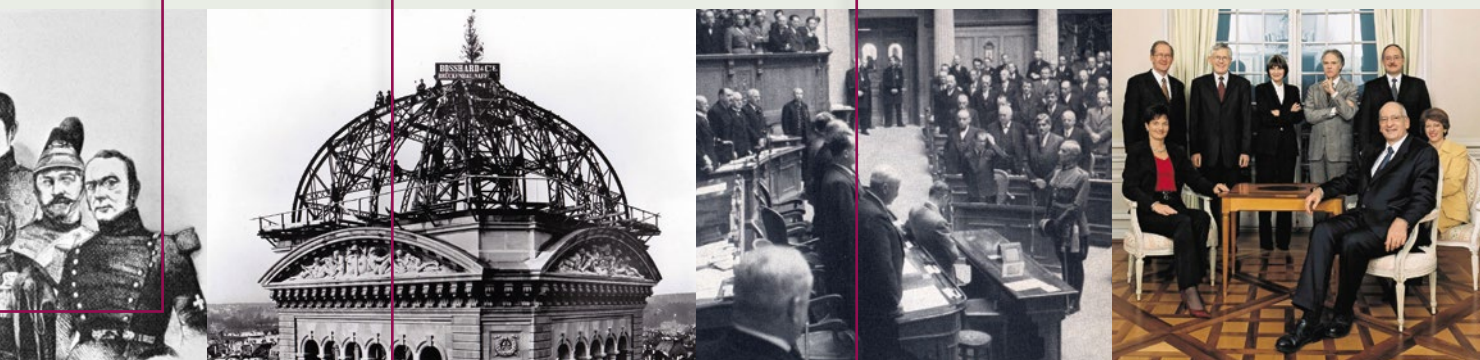
### TOWARDS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

In 1919, the National Council was elected on a proportional basis and a second Catholic Conservative entered the Federal Council. A member of the Farmers', Trades' and Citizens' Party (SVP today) entered the Federal Council in 1929.

1959–2003 | Magic Formula

### BRINGING DIVERSITY TO THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

The government was formed from representatives of the parties with the most votes: 2 FDP, 2 CVP, 2 SP, 1 SVP. This 'magic formula' remained in place until 2003. Since then the composition of the Federal Council has varied.



1900

1950

2000



1914–1918 | First World War, general strike  
**SOCIALIST IDEAS**

Poverty and unemployment during the First World War and socialist ideas from the Russian Revolution culminated in a general strike in 1918.

1939–1945 | Second World War  
**INCLUSION OF THE LEFT**

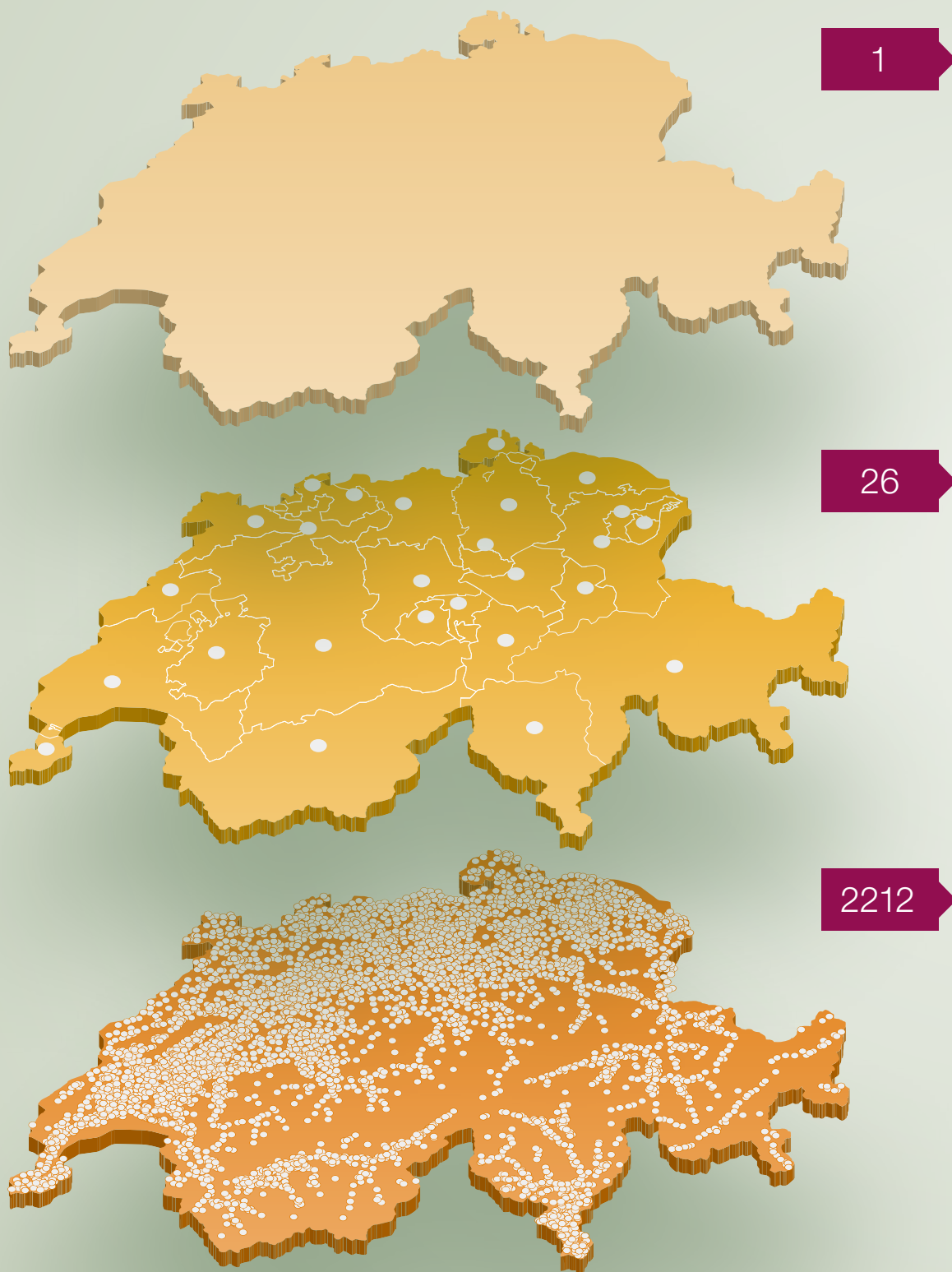
Under the perceived external threat, political forces from right to left closed ranks. In 1943, during the Second World War, Parliament elected a Social Democrat to the Federal Council.

2000 | Third Federal Constitution  
**CONTINUITY AND OPENNESS**

The totally revised Federal Constitution emphasised the partnership between the Confederation and the cantons, and regulated the division of tasks. In 2000, Swiss voters approved the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union. Two years later they voted in favour of joining the United Nations.

## Confederation, cantons and communes

# FEDERALISM



Switzerland is a federal state: state power is shared between the federal government, the cantons and the communes. The cantons and communes have broad scope in carrying out their responsibilities. Federalism makes

it possible for Switzerland to exist as one entity – in spite of four linguistic cultures and varying regional characteristics.

## Confederation

Switzerland, which is also referred to as the Swiss Confederation, has been a federal state since 1848. The Federal Constitution defines the Confederation's tasks and responsibilities. These include Switzerland's relations with the outside world, defence, the national road network, and nuclear energy. Switzerland's Parliament, the Federal Assembly, is made up of the National Council and the Council of States; the government comprises seven federal councilors, and the Federal Supreme Court is responsible for national jurisprudence. The Confederation is financed among other means through direct federal tax.

- 11 per cent of all Swiss citizens live outside Switzerland (the 'Swiss Abroad').
- 85 per cent of the domestic population lives in urban areas.
- Proceeds from direct federal taxation account for approximately 30 per cent of the Confederation's total revenues.

## Cantons

The Confederation is made up of 26 cantons, which are also known as 'states'. Each canton has its own parliament, government, courts and constitution. The cantonal constitutions may not contradict the Federal Constitution. The cantons implement the requirements of the Confederation, but structure their activities in accordance with their particular needs. They have broad scope in deciding how to meet their responsibilities, for example in the areas of education and healthcare, cultural affairs and police matters. The individual cantons levy a cantonal tax.

- Gross domestic product per capita in the canton of Basel-Stadt is more than three times higher than in the canton of Uri.
- In the national fiscal equalisation plan, the Confederation and 7 cantons are net contributors and 19 cantons are net beneficiaries.
- People's assemblies (Landsgemeinden) are still held in the cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Glarus.

## Communes

The 26 cantons are divided into communes. Each canton determines itself the division of responsibilities between it and the communes. The responsibilities of the communes include local planning, running the schools, social welfare and the fire service. Larger communes and cities have their own parliaments, and organise their own referendums. In smaller communes, decisions are made by the citizens at communal assemblies. Each commune levies a communal tax.

- The smallest commune (Corippo, TI) has a population of 14, the largest approximately 400 000 (City of Zurich).
- An average of approximately 30 communes merge every year, thereby reducing the total number of communes.
- In four out of five communes, eligible voters decide on political issues at communal assemblies.

Foundations

# DIRECT DEMOCRACY

DEMOCRACY



Election Sunday: While the political parties and the media are busy making projections, in the communes they are busy counting the votes.

Separation of powers \_\_\_\_\_ 16

Elections and votes \_\_\_\_\_ 18

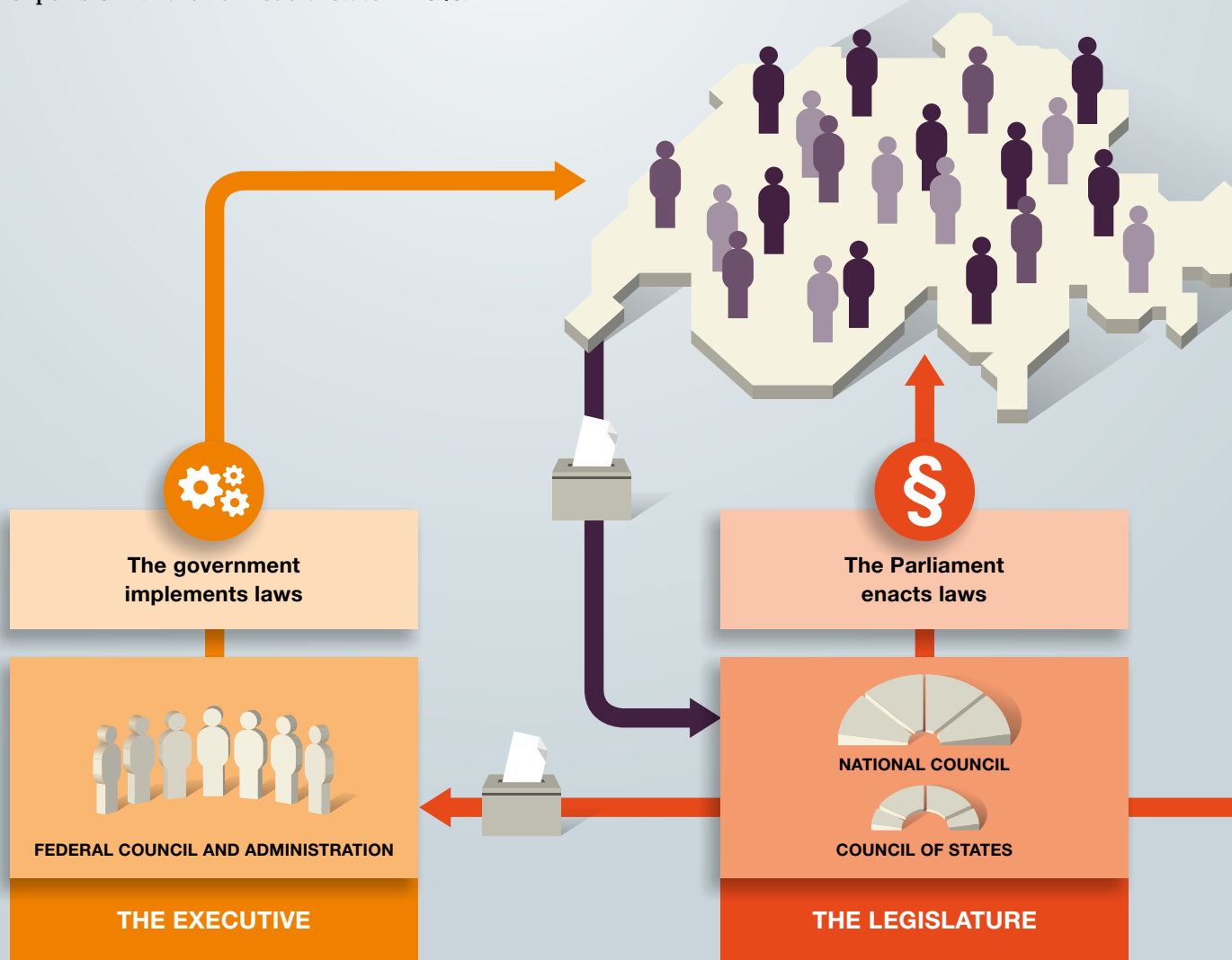
Parties \_\_\_\_\_ 20



## A fundamental principle of democracy

# SEPARATION OF POWERS

The separation of powers prevents a concentration of power in individual people or institutions and helps to stop any abuse of power. Power is divided between the three branches of state, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. No single person can belong to more than one of the three branches of state at any one time. Switzerland introduced the separation of powers with the new federal state in 1848.



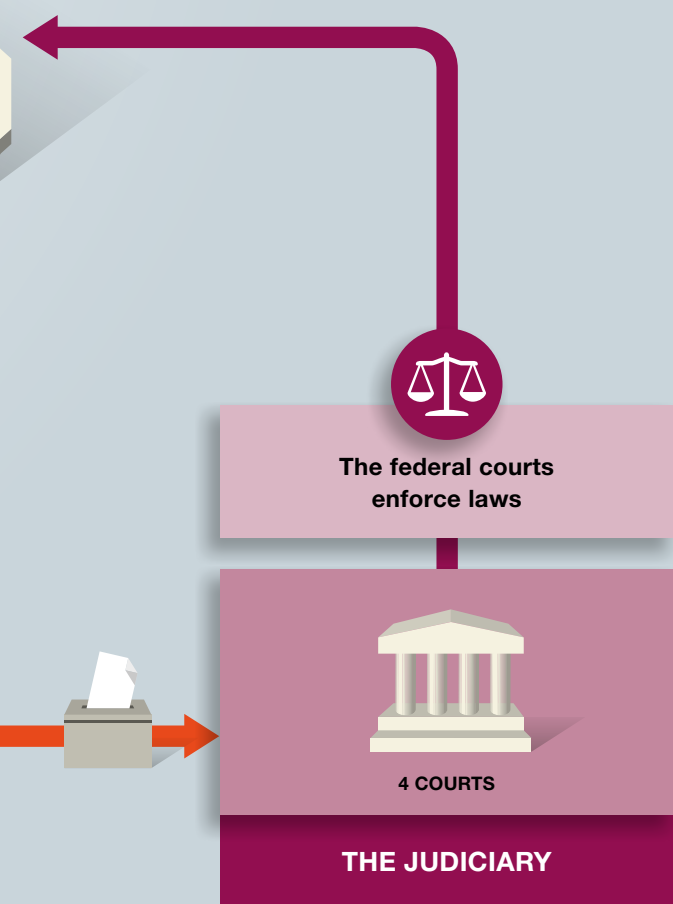
### Implementing laws

The Federal Council is the Swiss government. It deals with the ongoing task of governing the country and implements the laws and other decisions adopted by parliament. Each of the seven members of the Federal Council is head of one of the seven federal departments, which together with the Federal Chancellery make up the Federal Administration.

### Passing laws

Parliament comprises the National Council and the Council of States. The two councils have equal powers; together they form the United Federal Assembly. Parliament enacts legislation and monitors the activities of the Federal Council and the Federal Supreme Court.





### Interpreting laws

The Federal Supreme Court is Switzerland's highest court. Its task is to ensure the uniform application of the law and to uphold the rights of ordinary people. As the highest court of appeal, it also rules on disputes between individuals and the state or between the Confederation and the cantons.

### Who elects whom?

In Switzerland, around 5.4 million men and women can vote in federal elections. Young people under the age of 18 and foreign nationals do not have the right to vote at federal level.

Swiss voters elect the Parliament (the legislature). This makes the electorate Switzerland's supreme political body. The National Council represents the entire population, while the Council of States represents the 26 cantons. Federal elections are held every four years.

Parliament elects the members of various bodies:

- **the executive:** the seven members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor. Their term of office is four years and they may be re-elected. (p. 42)
- **the judiciary:** the President of the Federal Supreme Court and the judges of the Federal Supreme Court and the three federal courts of first instance. (p. 80)
- **the Attorney General of Switzerland:** The Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland investigates and prosecutes federal offences, such as those involving explosives and espionage, as well as offences committed by federal employees in the course of their duties.

[www.bundesanwaltschaft.ch](http://www.bundesanwaltschaft.ch)

### Who checks whom?

Parliament supervises the Federal Council and the Federal Administration, the federal courts and the Office of the Attorney General. The members of parliament are elected, and may be held to account, by the People.



Information platform democracy  
[www.ch.ch/democracy](http://www.ch.ch/democracy)

## Political rights

# ELECTIONS AND VOTES

In Switzerland, the people have more say in how the country is run than in almost any other country in the world. All Swiss citizens who are 18 or over have the right to vote at national level. In addition to the parliamentary elections, which are held every four years, the electorate can express its views up to four times a year in popular votes on specific political issues. In most cases, there are several proposals to be voted on at each ballot.

### The Constitution and laws

A vote must be held on any amendment to the Constitution (mandatory referendum). Amendments to the Constitution require the consent of a majority of the People and of the cantons (double majority). On the other hand, a vote is only held on a revised or new law if a referendum is demanded. The new law is accepted if a majority of the electorate vote in favour of it (simple majority).

### Federal votes and elections 2019

In 2019, federal ballots will be held on the following Sundays:

10 February, 19 May and 24 November.

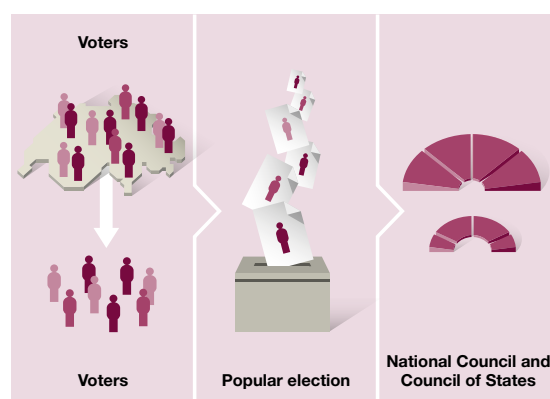
The Federal Council decides at least four months in advance which proposals will be voted on.

Federal elections are held every four years. The next elections take place on 20 October 2019.



Informations on the federal elections 2019:  
[www.ch.ch/en/elections2019](http://www.ch.ch/en/elections2019)

## ELECTORAL RIGHTS



### Electing and being elected

Anyone who is eligible to vote is not only entitled to vote in the elections to Parliament, but can also stand as a candidate in the elections. Swiss citizens living abroad are also eligible to vote in elections to the National Council and, in some cantons, the Council of States.

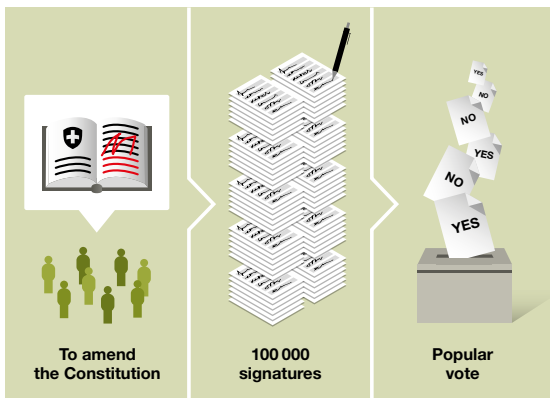
### National Council and Council of States

The 200 members of the National Council and the 46 members of the Council of States are elected directly by the people. Elections are held every four years by secret ballot. The only exception is the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden, where the People's Assembly (Landsgemeinde) still chooses its representative in the Council of States by a show of hands.

- Turnout in the 2015 federal elections was 48%.
- In 2015, 1308 women and 2480 men stood for election to the National Council.
- At federal level, women have had the right to vote since 1971.

# DIRECT DEMOCRATIC INSTRUMENTS

## POPULAR INITIATIVE



### Changing the Constitution

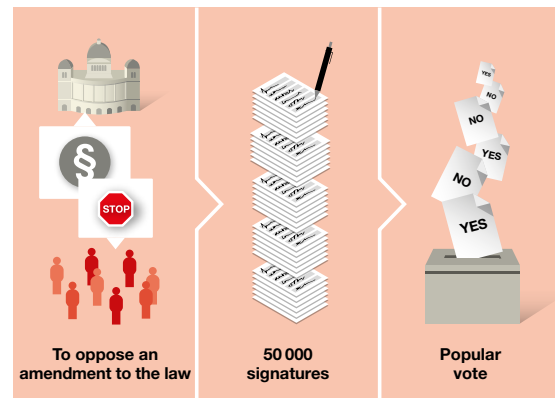
Citizens can launch a popular initiative to demand a change to the Constitution – but not to any other form of law. Any Swiss citizen who is eligible to vote can sign a popular initiative, and a group of at least seven citizens (the initiative committee) can launch their own popular initiative.

#### 100,000 signatures

Before a vote is held on a popular initiative, the initiative committee must collect 100,000 valid signatures in favour of the proposal within a period of 18 months. The Federal Council and Parliament will recommend whether the proposal should be accepted or rejected. For the proposal to be accepted, a majority of both the People and the cantons is needed (a double majority). If it is accepted, new legislation or an amendment to existing legislation is normally required to implement the new constitutional provision.

- Popular initiatives were introduced at federal level in 1891.
- 215 popular initiatives have been voted on since then. Only 22 have been accepted.
- As of 31.12.2018, 12 initiatives were at the signature-gathering stage, 11 were pending before the Federal Council or Parliament, and one was ready to be put to the vote.

## OPTIONAL REFERENDUM



### Putting a stop to a new law

Parliament passes new legislation and amendments to existing legislation. Citizens can respond by calling for a referendum on new laws and against certain international treaties. The right to request a referendum is an important element in Swiss direct democracy.

#### 50,000 signatures

Swiss citizens who are eligible to vote can sign a request for a referendum. For a referendum to be held, it must be demanded by eight cantons (referendum requested by the cantons) or 50,000 valid signatures must be collected within 100 days. The new law comes into force if a majority of those voting say yes (a simple majority). If the majority vote no, the current law continues to apply.

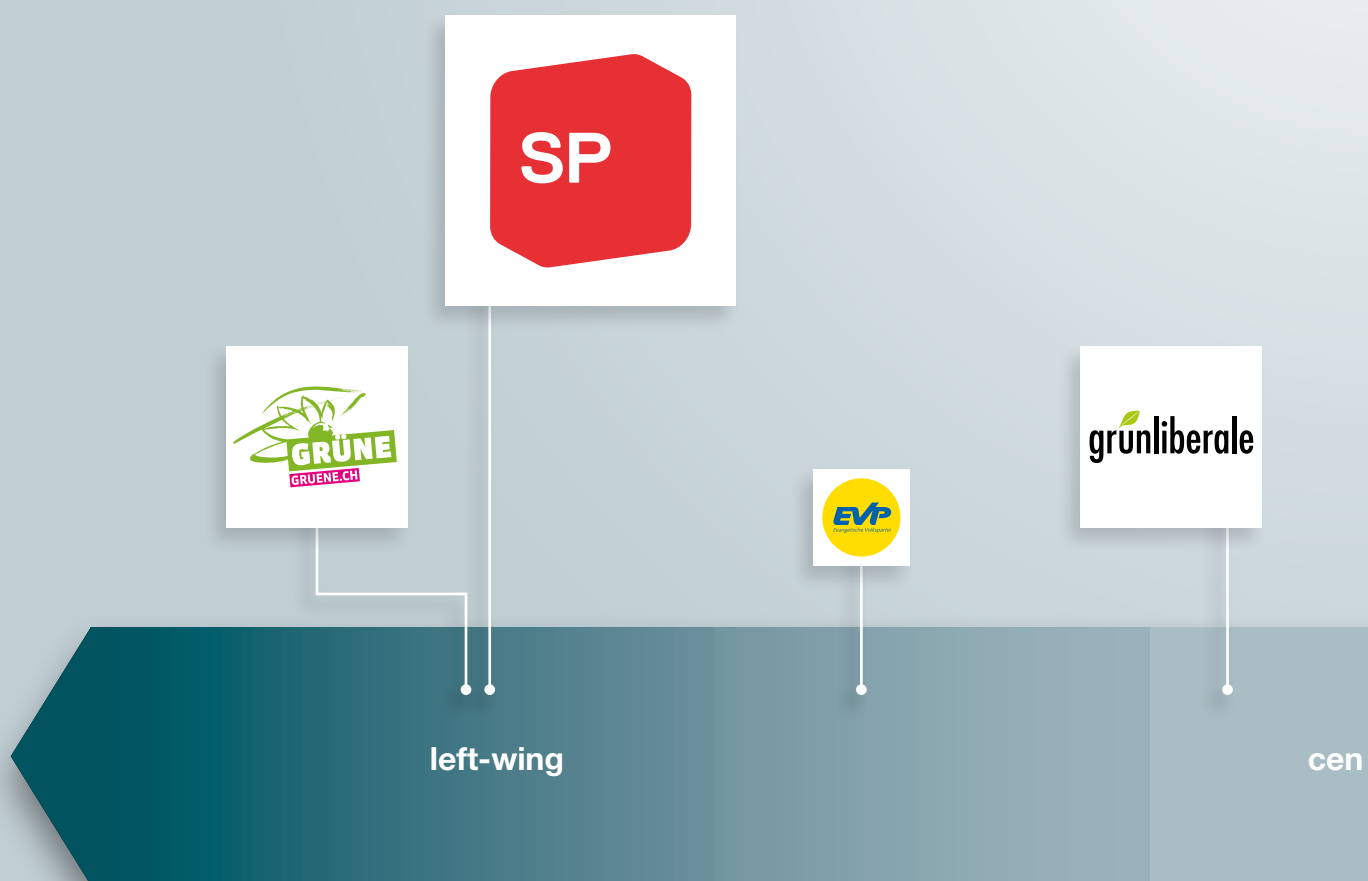
- The referendum was introduced in 1874.
- Since then, 187 optional referendums have been held; 80 of the proposals were rejected by voters.
- As of 31.12.2018, the referendum period was running for 24 federal acts and decrees. Signatures were being gathered for a vote on three of the proposals.

## The link between the people and the state

# PARTIES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Political parties are indispensable if democracies are to work. They help to form political opinion, nominate candidates for public office and launch initiatives and referendums. Parties differ from one another in terms of their views of the role of the state, society and the economy.

Whereas left-wing parties tend to advocate a highly developed social state, right-of-centre parties advocate a liberal economic policy and personal responsibility. Certain political issues are neither distinctly left- nor right-wing, i.e. environmental protection, the question of how open Switzerland should be towards the EU and interna-



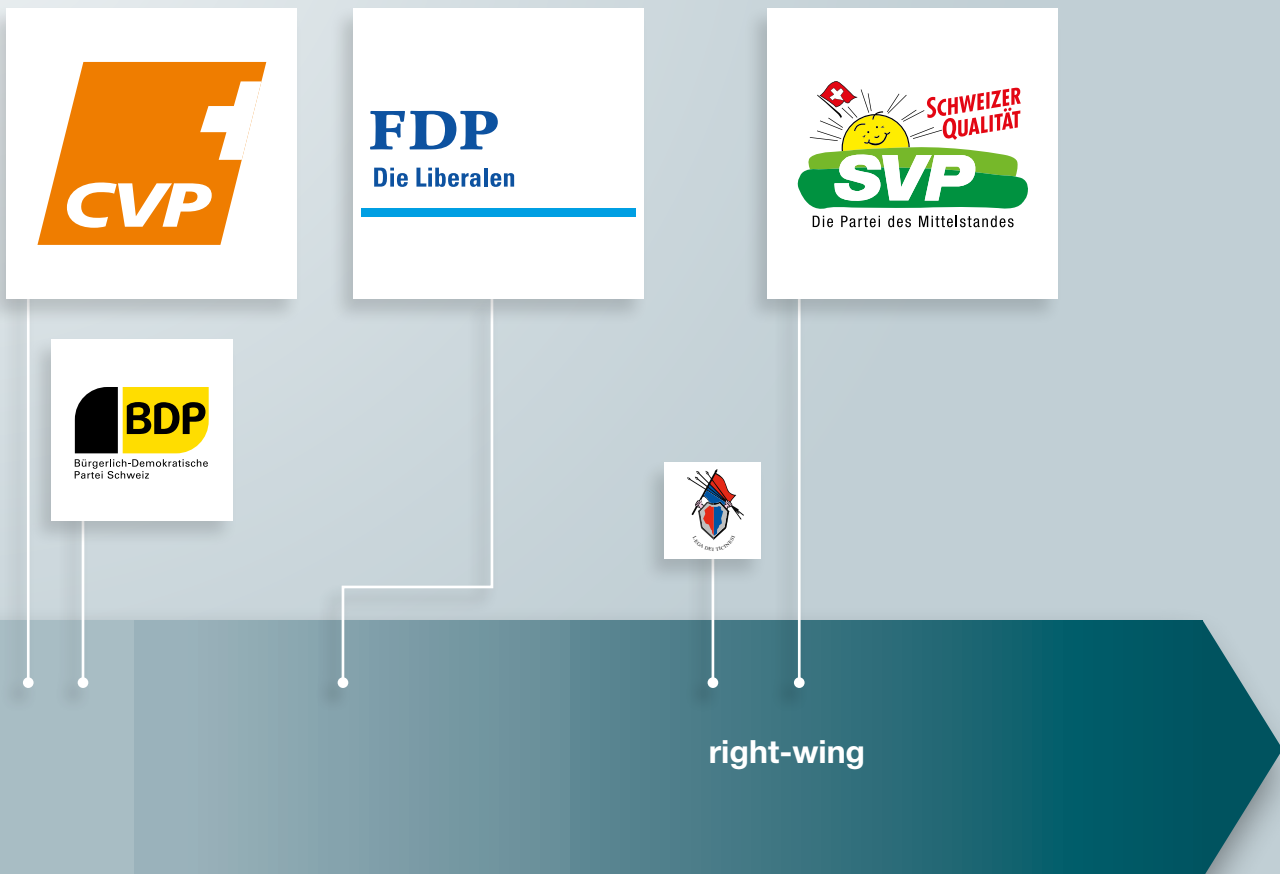
### What does 'left-wing' mean?

- A strong social state that levels social disparities
- Emphasis on employees' interests
- Price controls, public services
- More peace policy, less military

tional organisations, and issues regarding liberal values (e.g. same-sex partnerships). Depending on the issue, centre parties will cooperate with either left- or right-wing parties.

Switzerland's political landscape comprises many different parties, of which none holds a majority at federal level.

There are four parties that each make up ten per cent or more of seats in the National Council (SVP: 29%, SP: 19%, FDP: 16%, CVP: 12%). Most parties are represented in all language regions. However, a party's stance on individual issues can vary significantly depending on the language region and canton.



### What does 'right-wing' mean?

- Freedom and personal responsibility; the state intervenes only where absolutely necessary
- Emphasis on employers' interests
- Free enterprise, economic incentives
- A strong national defence


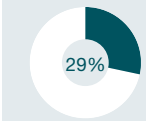




## The twelve political parties at federal level

# POLITICAL PARTIES IN BRIEF

In the current legislature period 2015–2019, twelve political parties are represented in the National Council. Six of those are also represented in the Council of States, four in the Federal Council. Brief outlines of the political parties represented at federal level are presented here. The order reflects the number of seats they hold in the Federal Assembly.


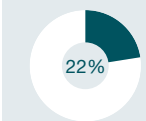






### SVP Swiss People's Party



 Party President <b>Albert Rösti</b> <a href="http://www.svp.ch">www.svp.ch</a>		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1971 (BGB 1917)
		5 	64  13  51	2 	


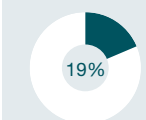






### SP Swiss Social Democratic Party



 Party President <b>Christian Levrat</b> <a href="http://www.sp.ch">www.sp.ch</a>		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1888
		12  4  8	43  24  19	2  1  1	


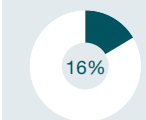





### FDP FDP.The Liberals



 Party President <b>Petra Gösli</b> <a href="http://www.fdp.ch">www.fdp.ch</a>		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1894 (merged in 2009)
		13  1  12	33  7  26	2  1  1	


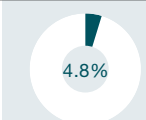



### CVP Christian Democratic People's Party



 Party President <b>Gerhard Pfister</b> <a href="http://www.cvp.ch">www.cvp.ch</a>		Council of States	National Council	Federal Council	Founded in 1912
		13  2  11	27  7  20	1 	






### The Greens Swiss Green Party



 Party President <b>Regula Rytz</b> <a href="http://www.gruene.ch">www.gruene.ch</a>		Council of States	National Council		Founded in 1983
		1 	11  7  4		


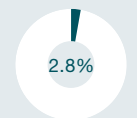




## BDP Conservative Democratic Party

 <p>Party President <b>Martin Landolt</b> <a href="http://www.bdp.info">www.bdp.info</a></p>	 <p>3.3%</p>	<p>Council of States <b>1</b> </p>	<p>National Council <b>7</b>  1  6</p>	<p>Founded in <b>2008</b></p>
--	---	---	--	-----------------------------------





## glp Swiss Green Liberal Party



 <p>Party President <b>Jürg Grossen</b> <a href="http://www.grunliberale.ch">www.grunliberale.ch</a></p>	 <p>2.8%</p>		<p>National Council <b>7</b>  3  4</p>	<p>Founded in <b>2007</b></p>
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------




## EVP Swiss Evangelical People's Party



 <p>Party President <b>Marianne Streiff-Feller</b> <a href="http://www.evpev.ch">www.evpev.ch</a></p>	 <p>0.8%</p>		<p>National Council <b>2</b>  1  1</p>	<p>Founded in <b>1919</b></p>
---	---	--	--	-----------------------------------

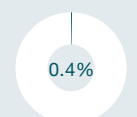
## LdT Lega dei Ticinesi



 <p><a href="http://www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch">www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch</a></p>	 <p>0.8%</p>		<p>National Council <b>2</b>  1  1</p>	<p>Founded in <b>1991</b></p>
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------

## CSP OW Christian Social Party Obwalden



 <p>Party President <b>Sepp Stalder</b> <a href="http://www.csp-ow.ch">www.csp-ow.ch</a></p>	 <p>0.4%</p>		<p>National Council <b>1</b> </p>	<p>Founded in <b>1956</b></p>
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------

## MCG Citizen's Movement of Geneva



 <p>Party President <b>Ana Roch</b> <a href="http://www.mcge.ch">www.mcge.ch</a></p>	 <p>0.4%</p>		<p>National Council <b>1</b> </p>	<p>Founded in <b>2005</b></p>
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------

## PdA Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz



 <p>Party President <b>Gavriel Pinson</b> <a href="http://www.pda.ch">www.pda.ch</a></p>	 <p>0.4%</p>		<p>National Council <b>1</b> </p>	<p>Founded in <b>1944</b></p>
--	---	--	--	-----------------------------------



Share of seats in the Federal Assembly  
(National Council and Council of States), rounded

The legislature

# PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENT





National Council and Council of States _____	26	Networking with the world _____	33
Parliament in Figures _____	27	The Parliamentary Services _____	34
How Parliament is organised _____	28	100 years of proportional representation _____	35
Parliamentary mechanisms _____	31	How new laws come about _____	36
Semi-professional parliament _____	32	The Parliament Building _____	38



A guided tour of the '100 Years of Proportional Representation' exhibition in the Parliament Building. The exhibition runs until 20 October 2019.

## Two chambers – one parliament

# NATIONAL COUNCIL AND COUNCIL OF STATES

### Representing the People and the cantons

Switzerland's Parliament or legislature consists of two chambers, which although they have equal powers are very different in their own way: the people's representatives sit in the National Council, the large chamber, and the representatives of the cantons sit in the Council of States, the small chamber. When sitting together in joint session, they constitute the United Federal Assembly. The 246 members of Parliament represent the interests of the different language communities, political parties, world views and regions in Switzerland.

The **200 members of the National Council** represent the roughly 8 million people living in Switzerland – each member of the National Council represents around 42,000 people. The largest delegation, which is from the canton of Zurich, has 35 members. As the Constitution states that every canton is entitled to at least one seat in the National Council, even Appenzell Innerrhoden, which only has a population of 16,000, sends a people's representative to Bern.

The **46 members of the Council of States** represent the cantons, whereby each canton has two representatives, although here too there is an exception: as former half-cantons, the cantons of Obwalden, Nidwalden, Basel-Stadt, Basel-Landschaft, Appenzell Ausserrhoden and Appenzell Innerrhoden each have only one representative. The members of the Council of States are directly elected.

The National Council and the Council of States generally sit separately, but they also handle certain items of business in joint session as the United Federal Assembly, for instance when electing the members of the Federal Council and federal court judges. As such, the Federal Assembly is the highest authority in the Swiss Confederation, subject to the rights of the people and the cantons. This is an aspect peculiar to Switzerland: in contrast to other countries, Parliament elects the government and the federal judiciary. Parliament's decisions are not subject to review by any court.

### United Federal Assembly

The United Federal Assembly sits in the National Council chamber. While the members of the National Council sit in their usual seats, the members of the Council of States take up seats allocated to their respective cantons around the back wall of the chamber. The sessions are chaired by the President of the National Council, which is why he or she is often referred to as the highest ranking person in the country.

### Bicameral system

Not all countries have a bicameral parliamentary system; many have only one chamber. Where there are two chambers, generally the larger chamber – which normally represents the people – has more to say than the smaller chamber – which often represents the regions. In Switzerland the situation is different: each chamber has the same powers, and they deal with the same business in the same way. This even applies to budgetary issues. The chambers take turns to be the first to debate bills, and the two chambers must agree on all points for the bill to pass. The individual members of the Council of States and the National Council also have the same rights: they can all submit draft laws or other requests to the Federal Council.

However, because of differences in their political composition, the two chambers often do not reach the same decision. Here the size of the chamber also plays a role: the 46 members of the Council of States can speak spontaneously on any matter, whereas the 200 members of the National Council have to comply with complex rules on who speaks when, which is not conducive to spontaneous speeches. As a result it is easier to influence a vote with persuasive arguments in the Council of States than it is in the National Council.

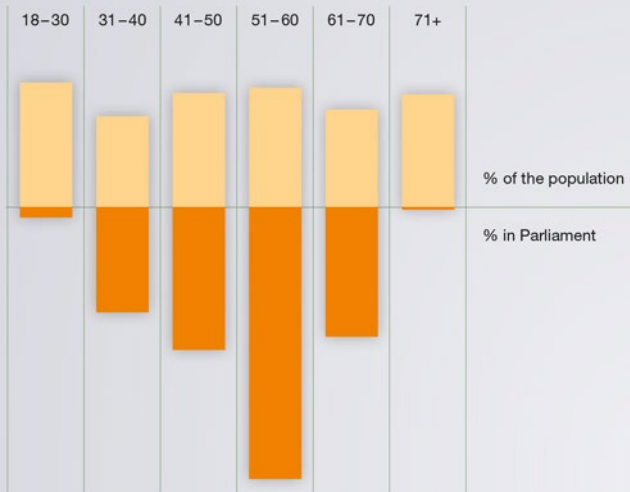
It often takes some time before a new law is agreed on exactly the same terms in both chambers. Yet once it has been agreed and has overcome the hurdle of a potential referendum, the new law will also have a certain permanence.

For more information about Parliament: [www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch)

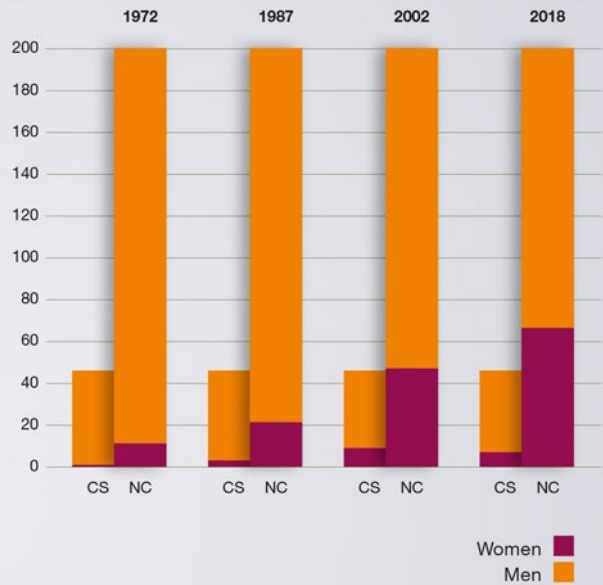
## At a glance

# PARLIAMENT IN FIGURES

### Age groups in the Swiss population and in Parliament

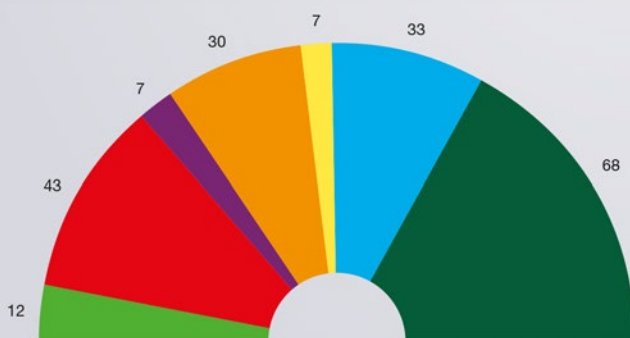


### Women and men in Parliament

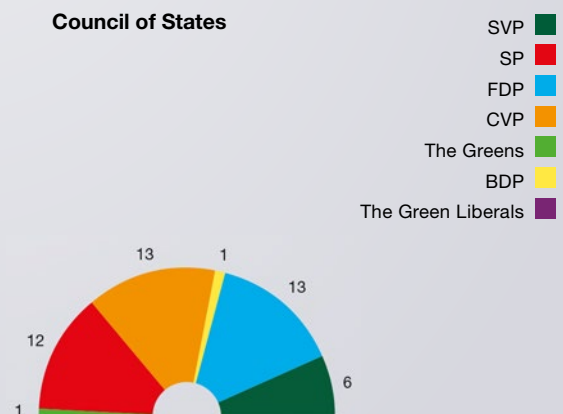


### Strength of parliamentary groups

#### National Council



#### Council of States



Video 'Tell me about Parliament':  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > About Parliament >  
 How does the Swiss Parliament work? > Video

## Elected – what now?

# HOW PARLIAMENT IS ORGANISED

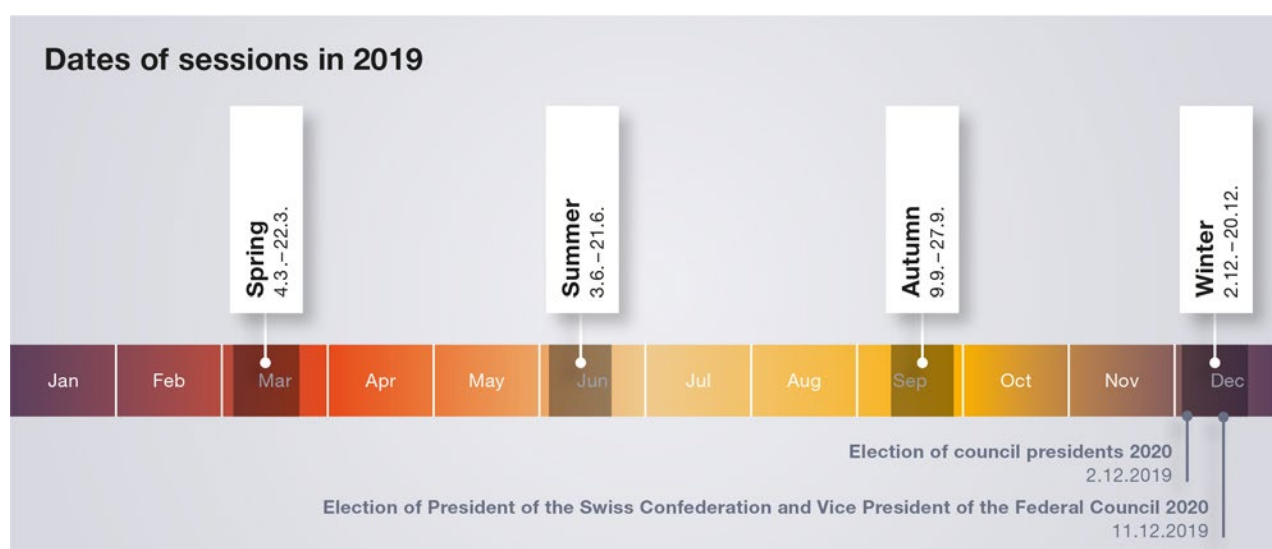
## Parliamentary bodies

Any large group needs rules in order to function properly, and the same is true of the National Council and Council of States: each council member is allocated a seat in the chamber, with members of the same party usually grouped together. At the first session of the new legislature period, each chamber elects a **president** and the members of the **Council Office**. The president chairs the council meetings. He or she is supported by the council secretariat.

The members of a party or parties with similar views form **parliamentary groups**. At least five members from one council are needed to form a parliamentary group. In the National Council, only members of a parliamentary group have the right to express their views on an item of business. Furthermore, membership of a parliamentary group is also a prerequisite to be granted a seat on a committee. It is therefore only really possible for members to play an active role if they belong to a parliamentary group. That is why parties with fewer than five council members are keen to join a group. They are also courted, because the more members a parliamentary group has, the more seats they are entitled to on committees and the greater influence they have on council business.

Given the volume of business they have to deal with, often on technical issues, it is difficult for council members to reach an informed opinion. Before an item of business comes before the council, it is therefore discussed within the parliamentary groups with the aim of agreeing on a common position which can be supported by the members of the group in the chamber and before the media and general public. However, when the matter is voted on in the chamber, members are not instructed how to vote. Council members may not vote on the instruction of another person; their vote may therefore deviate from the position of their parliamentary group or canton.

The **committees** provide an opportunity for matters to be discussed in greater detail, to clarify specific issues, hear experts from the administration or from the interest groups concerned, and address questions to federal councillors. They also serve as a testing ground to see whether a majority can be found for certain positions or ideas across party lines.



## Competences

The main role of Parliament is to enact legislation. The spectrum is wide, ranging from the Swiss abroad to civilian service, environmental protection to motorway building, war material to peace promotion.

However, Parliament is also responsible for:

- releasing funding (budget) and approving the state accounts;
- overseeing the Federal Council, the Federal Administration and the federal courts;
- electing the members of the Federal Council and the federal courts and the Federal Chancellor;
- concluding international agreements for which the Federal Council is not responsible and
- fostering relations with foreign parliaments.

## Alliances

No parliamentary group is strong enough on its own to secure the passage of a bill; to do this, it needs to form alliances. When contentious bills are debated, Parliament normally divides into two camps: one conservative and the other left-leaning. Ultimately the political centre decides whether the bill passes, depending on which side it favours. From time to time though, an ‘unholy’ alliance may be formed: the left wing – the SP and the Greens – will join with the right-wing SVP to bring fundamental changes to a bill or even to vote it down entirely, often for quite different reasons.



Interview with Marina Carobbio Guscetti,  
President of the National Council:  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > BLOG



Interview with Jean-René Fournier,  
President of the Council of States:  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > BLOG

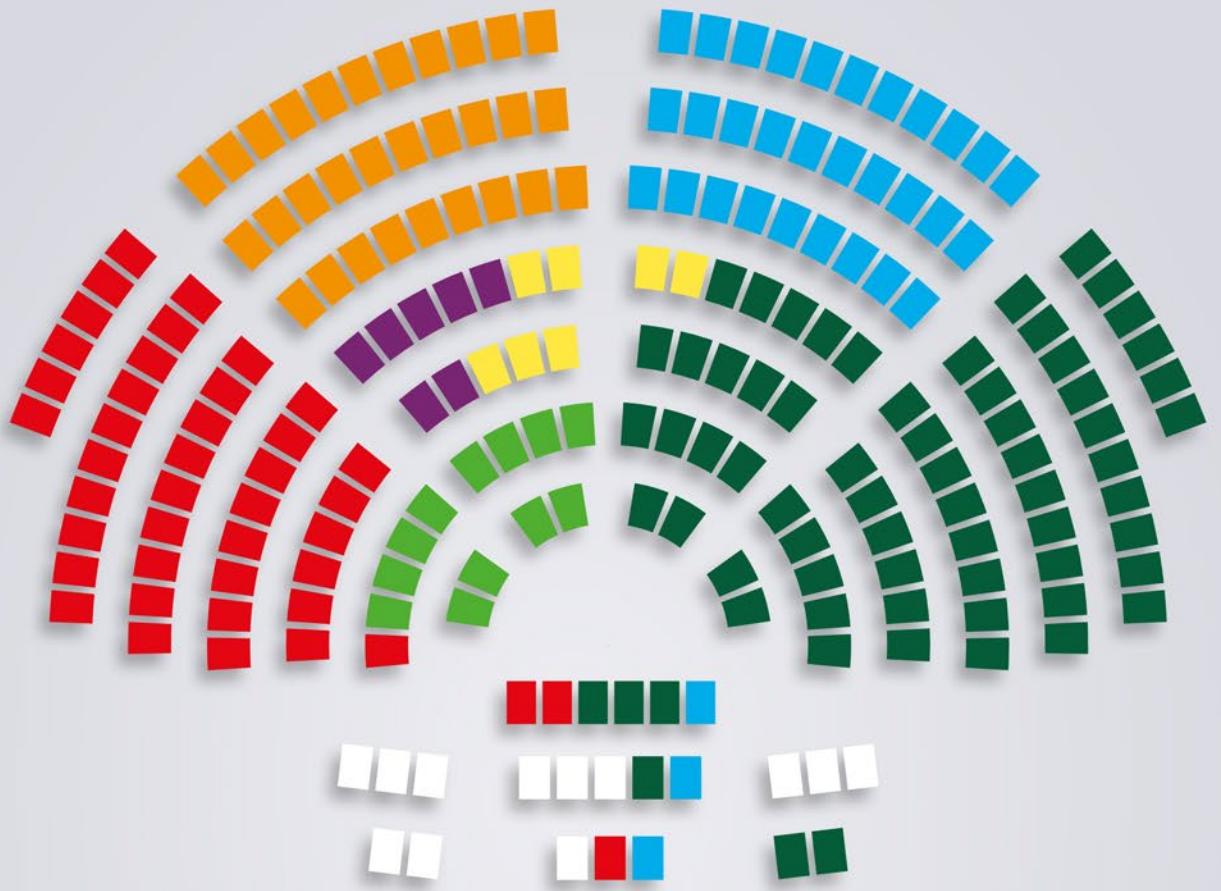
Chamber of the National Council



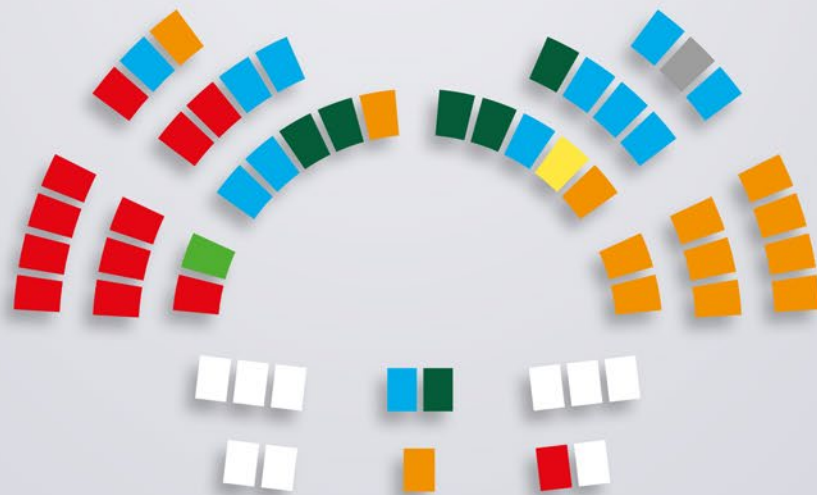
Chamber of the Council of States



# ALLOCATION OF SEATS NATIONAL COUNCIL



Who sits where? Interactive diagram on [www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > Organs > Groups in the chamber



# ALLOCATION OF SEATS COUNCIL OF STATES

Parliamentary groups	
<span style="color: green;">■</span> SVP	<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> The Greens
<span style="color: red;">■</span> SP	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> BDP
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> FDP	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> GLP
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> CVP	<span style="color: gray;">■</span> vacant

## Raising issues and making new laws

# PARLIAMENTARY MECHANISMS

### Parliamentary instruments

Any member of the National Council or the Council of States can submit a procedural request to introduce a new law, add a new provision to the Constitution, or have an existing law amended. They can also request the Federal Council or the Administration to provide a report or information.

In response to every procedural request, the Federal Council and the Administration have to conduct enquiries and issue an opinion before the matter can be discussed and decided on, first in the relevant committee and then in the council concerned.

Majority support is required to follow up on procedural requests: in the preliminary consultation committees, or in either or both councils. As procedural requests generally relate to politically controversial matters, however, there is no guarantee that a majority can be secured.

Enthusiastic use is made of parliamentary instruments: in 1996 each council member filed an average of 3.9 procedural requests. By 2009, the high water mark (so far), this number had risen to 9.4. It then fell a little to 8 procedural requests per year and member in 2011. A new peak was reached in 2018 when 2352 procedural requests were submitted (9.6 per council member).

Council members can use a **parliamentary initiative** to propose that Parliament itself enact a law – either by formulating the idea or even drafting the law itself. Using a **motion**, council members can prompt the Federal Council into drafting legislation. A **postulate** is used to ask the Federal Council to examine whether a new law or decree should be drafted or measures taken, while an **interpellation** is a request to the Federal Council for information on federal government matters.

### Committees

Many people may be surprised to find the chambers of the National Council and Council of States half empty. By the time any proposal is debated in the councils, most of the parliamentary work has already been done, and many preliminary decisions have been taken. This takes place in the committees, which is where initial discussions are held on most items of business.

There are nine specialist committees, whose main task is to make a preliminary examination of legislative proposals. They are each responsible for a specific topic, such as transport, legal affairs, foreign affairs and social policy. In addition, there are the finance committees and the control committees, which oversee the federal finances and the activities of the Federal Council and the Administration.

In specific cases, a parliamentary investigation committee can investigate certain procedures and areas.

In contrast to sessions of the National Council and Council of States, committee sessions are not open to the public: holding meetings in camera is thought to facilitate a more open discussion among members. However, after meetings, the committees inform the media of the outcome.

National Council committees comprise 25 members each, while those in the Council of States have 13 members. Their composition depends on the relative strengths of the parliamentary groups.

The committees in detail:

[www.parliament](http://www.parliament.ch) > Committees

# SEMI-PROFESSIONAL PARLIAMENT

## A part-time parliament

Switzerland's Parliament is a semi-professional body: its members dedicate a great deal of time to their parliamentary work, but most continue to pursue other professional activities. Due to the high workload – and the increasingly complex range of subject matter – voices can occasionally be heard questioning the present system and calling for a professional parliament. The counter argument is that part-time politicians are more grounded, accessible to the people and able to make a valuable contribution to debates due to their professional experience and expertise.

The members of the Federal Assembly spend a lot of time in Bern. In addition to their attendance during the sessions, council members also have to come to Bern for committee meetings. Members of the National Council sit on one to two committees, while their colleagues in the Council of States sit on three to four committees. This means that National Council members are in Bern for an additional 30 to 50 days a year, and those in the Council of States are in the capital for an extra 40 to 70 days a year.

## Professional diversity

Although around 18 per cent of National Council members and 40 per cent of those in the Council of States are full-time politicians, most continue to pursue other professional activities, ranging from medicine or law to the trades, business to professional associations. Farmers, bankers and communal politicians can also be found among the parliamentarians in Bern.

## Regular income

The council members' remuneration is regulated in law:

- An annual salary of CHF 26,000 is awarded for preparing for parliamentary work.
- There is a daily allowance of CHF 440 for attending council sessions and committee and parliamentary group meetings. Council members who head a committee receive double this amount. Members are paid CHF 220 for producing a report for a committee in their council.
- There is an annual allowance of CHF 33,000 for staff and material expenses.
- In addition, there are allowance for food, travel and accommodation.
- Council presidents and vice presidents receive an additional allowance.

In addition to this income and expenses, council members receive contributions to their pension fund. They pay tax on their salary and social insurance contributions are deducted from this; allowances and expenses are tax- and deduction-free, however.

[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > income and expenses



## Parliamentary Foreign Policy

# NETWORKING WITH THE WORLD

Although it is the Federal Council that represents Switzerland on foreign policy matters, negotiating and ratifying international agreements, it must still ensure that the Federal Assembly has its say on foreign policy and gives its approval to those agreements.

Recent decades have witnessed an intensification in international cooperation on economic affairs, which has resulted in a corresponding increase in international agreements. As these agreements normally have repercussions for domestic law, this trend has been accompanied by a desire on the part of Parliament, as the legislature, to become involved in the negotiation process at an early stage. Since the turn of the millennium, there has been far greater cooperation over foreign policy between the executive and the legislature.

The Federal Council thus now consults the foreign policy committees on a wide range of issues. At the same time, the Federal Assembly participates in international parliamentary associations and cultivates relations with other parliaments. Through parliamentary foreign policy, members of parliament, office holders (council presidents and vice presidents) and parliamentary bodies (committees, standing and ad hoc delegations) can gain foreign policy experience and first-hand access to information. Parliamentary foreign policy also allows members of parliament to shape and influence political work in interparliamentary organisations, to represent Swiss interests at international parliamentary meetings, to establish a channel of communication complementary to that at government level and to expand the network of parliamentary contacts.



Visit by a delegation from the Russian Parliament.



Flags fly outside the Parliament Building for a visit from high-ranking EU officials.

## The hub of Parliament

# THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

**The Parliamentary Services support council members in fulfilling their duties. In terms of the separation of powers, they are answerable to Parliament and operate independently of the Federal Council and the Federal Administration.**

The start of a new term of office for a newly elected member of the Federal Assembly is comparable with starting a new job: the new member has a host of questions, is inundated with information, is expected to hit the ground running, but first has to become acquainted with how Parliament works. The Parliamentary Services provide advice and assistance to the new members of parliament. At the start of a new legislature period, the Parliamentary Services with its 296 staff (218 full-time equivalents) have a great deal to do.

### Diverse range of services

When Parliament is in session, all the various units of the Parliamentary Services are kept busy, in public and behind the scenes. For example, debates are transcribed and published in the Official Bulletin while the session is still in progress, so that individual statements and the results of the votes can be read online at [www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) within an hour.

Things are slightly calmer in between sessions, but even then there are often committee meetings. The preparations for these are usually made by the relevant committee secretariats with practical support provided by the team of ushers. Members are given all the necessary documentation so they can familiarise themselves with the varied subject matter, such as reports from federal offices, articles from the press or specialist literature and the minutes of earlier meetings. Council members can also request personalised documentation packs and advice to gain a more in-depth understanding of an issue.

The Parliamentary Services also draft press releases, arrange press conferences, and organise visits by Swiss delegations abroad and by foreign delegations to Bern.

### Information online and in all official languages

A team of IT staff and web-specialists is responsible for running and maintaining the entire IT infrastructure for the Parliamentary Services and the secretariats of the parliamentary groups. The Parliament website also has to be kept up to date so that the public can find out about parliamentary business, council members and events. Debates are streamed live online during the sessions. Council members speak before Parliament and in the committees in their own language. During sessions in the National Council, interpreters provide simultaneous translation of statements in the three official languages, German, French and Italian. Most documents are also translated.

The public can follow what their representatives are doing not only through the media and online, but also in person from the gallery. Council members receive individual visitors or groups at the Parliament Building and visitors can also find out more about the building and proceedings by taking a guided tour.

A large number of people from different walks of life pass through the doors of the Federal Palace: parliamentarians, representatives of different interest groups and the media, civil servants and visitors. For an open building such as this, a certain number of security measures and staff have to be in place. The Federal Palace also has to be maintained and kept clean. The activities that take centre stage would not be possible without all the work done behind the scenes: things would soon grind to a halt if the wastepaper baskets were never emptied, if the heating did not work in winter or if there was nowhere to get a coffee ...



### Parliamentary Services

Secretary General: **Philippe Schwab**  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch)

## Exhibition in the Parliament Building

# 100 YEARS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

2018 marked the centenary of the introduction of proportional representation in the national parliament. On 13 October 1918, the People and the cantons passed the third National Council initiative on proportional representation by a clear majority, with 66.8 per cent voting in favour. The decision to introduce proportional representation was momentous for Switzerland's political system. Henceforth political forces would be represented in Parliament according to the share of the vote they received. The significance of the new electoral system was demonstrated in the National Council elections in October 1919. The Radicals lost 39 seats, the Social Democrats almost doubled their number of seats from 19 to 41, and the Farmers', Traders' and Citizens' Group leapt to 25 seats. The elections in 1919 also made history because of the high turnout: over 80 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballot, a record that still stands to this day.

The Parliamentary Services have organised an exhibition on '100 Years of Proportional Representation' to commemorate this important change in the electoral system. Themed pillars have been set up at various locations in the Parliament Building, recounting the events in the period

between the initiative launch and the first elections under the new proportional representation system. These turbulent times also saw the end of the First World War and the National Strike. The exhibition highlights the close interaction of social, economic and political developments.

The next elections to the National Council will be held on 20 October 2019. The exhibition explains the voting process to visitors and provides an insight into the parliamentary debate on the current electoral system.

The exhibition will run until Sunday, 20 October 2019.



Exhibition '100 Years of Proportional Representation'  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > 100 Years of Proportional Representation

The exhibition comprises 15 display columns.



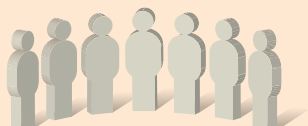
Original voting ballot from 13 October 1918.



## From idea to decision

# HOW NEW LAWS COME ABOUT

### FEDERAL COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATION



#### Postulate, consultations, dispatch to Parliament

In February 2009, the Transport and Telecommunications Committee of the National Council (TTC-N) submitted a **postulate** to the Federal Council, requesting it to draft a report in which various alternatives to the current method of levying radio and television reception fees would be proposed and evaluated. This request had been prompted by increasing problems with levying fees for radio and television connections. After the Federal Council submitted its report, the TTC-N requested the Federal Council to prepare a proposal on a new system for levying reception fees.

The **Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)**, the federal department concerned, then drafted an amendment to the law and conducted a consultation process from 9 May to 29 August 2012. On 29 May 2013, the Federal Council approved the **dispatch on the revision of the Federal Act on Radio and Television**.

#### Preliminary examination, proposal (TTC)

The Presiding Colleges of the National Council and the Council of States assigned the item of business to the National Council as the first chamber to debate the issue. The **TTC-N** carried out the preliminary examination and invited interest groups to a hearing, which voted 16 to 6 in favour of considering the draft law. In the detailed discussion the committee broadly accepted the Federal Council's proposal. In particular on 21 October 2013, it rejected by 14 votes to 10 the possibility for households not in possession of a radio or TV to opt out. In the overall vote the proposal was accepted by 14 votes to 7 with 3 abstentions.

Committee

#### First consultation

The **National Council** dealt with the item on 12 March 2014 in a debate that lasted almost seven hours. The question as to whether households without reception capability could be exempted from the fee provoked a broad discussion. As a compromise, the council voted in favour of a TTC-N minority proposal, according to which households without reception capability could be exempted for a further five years after the new fee was introduced. The question of whether companies would have to pay a fee of any kind in the future remained disputed. The National Council rejected by a very narrow margin of 93 votes to 92 a proposal that demanded that fees be completely abolished for businesses.

#### Resolution of differences

In the **resolution of differences** the item of business was then presented again first to the TTC-N, which focused exclusively on the controversial provisions. By 14 votes to 9, it instructed the National Council to stick to the five-year opt-out possibility for households. On four further points, however, the TTC-N swung over to the line of the Council of States.

Committee

#### Preliminary examination, proposal (TTC)

At its meeting on 1 April 2014, the **TTC of the Council of States** called unanimously for the draft law to be examined. Concerning the five-year opt-out inserted in the draft law by the National Council, the committee instructed that the provision be deleted by 12 votes to 1, thus accepting the Federal Council's draft. In the overall vote the proposal was accepted by 10 votes to 1 with 1 abstention.

Committee

#### First consultation

On 19 June 2014, the **Council of States** voted unanimously in favour of examining the proposal. In the course of a four-hour debate, the majority of the council followed the National Council's decision, but added some changes, whereupon the Council of States followed its advisory committee without opposition and rejected the proposed exceptions to the obligation to pay fees for households. In addition, the Council of States demanded greater scope for private broadcasters to share in fee revenues. It accepted, by 28 votes to 14, a minority proposal of the committee and set the share of the total revenues from radio and TV fees at 4 to 6 per cent.

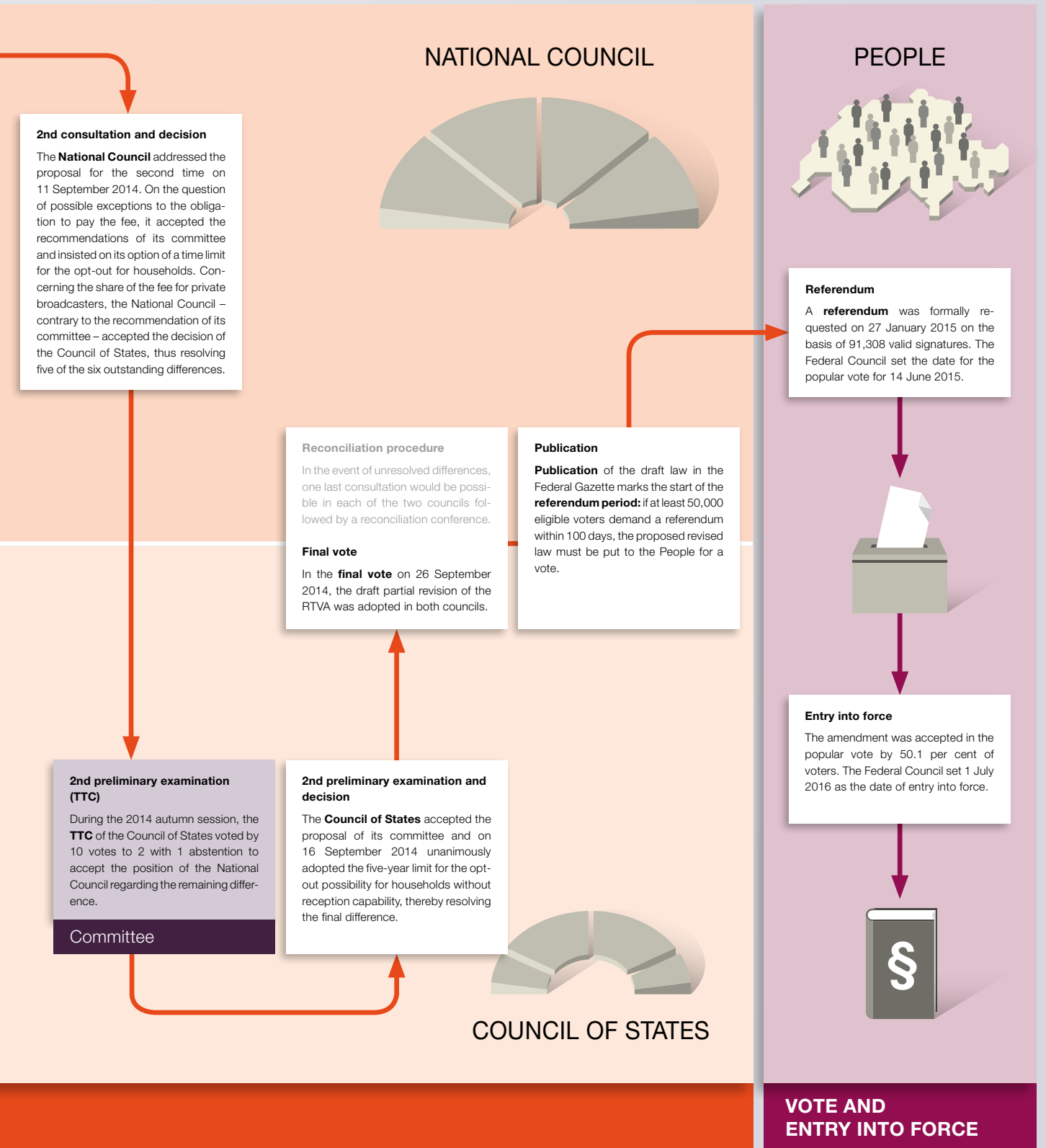
INITIAL PHASE

PARLIAMENTARY PHASE

Introducing new legislation is a complex and at times protracted business. The process takes at least twelve months, and has been known to take as long as ten years or more.

The following example shows the partial revision of the **Federal Act on Radio and Television (RTVA)**.

The process began in 2009 and ended with the law's entry into force on 1 July 2016.



## An open house

# THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING

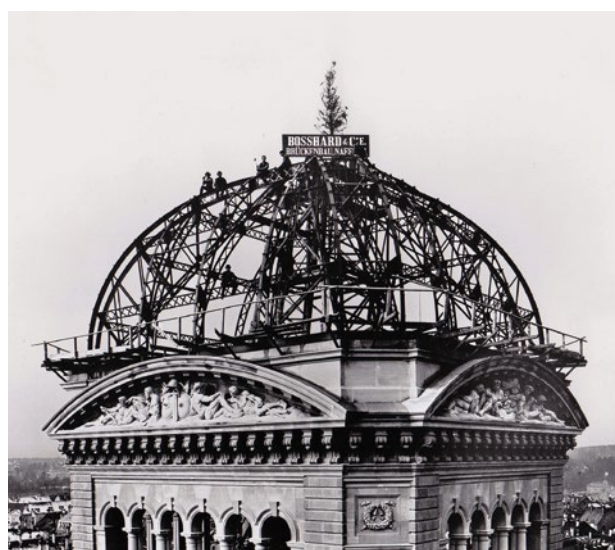
### Construction in stages

The Federal Palace, the seat of the Swiss parliament and government, is regarded as one of the most historically important buildings in Switzerland. It comprises three elements which are linked by raised covered walkways: the West Wing, the Parliament Building and the East Wing. In contrast to most other countries with a bicameral system, both chambers are housed under the same roof.

On 28 November 1848, the Federal Assembly, in a first round of voting, chose Bern to be the capital city and therefore the seat of the federal authorities. As there were no suitable existing buildings in Bern to house the government, Parliament and the Federal Administration, provisional solutions at first had to be found. The Erlacherhof on Junkerngasse was made available to the Federal Council, the National Council met in the 'Casino' music hall, built in 1821, and occasionally in Bern's city hall, while the Council of States met in the town hall 'zum Äusseren Stand' on Zeughausgasse. The Federal Supreme Court and the various branches of the Administration took up residence in various buildings in the old town.

In February 1849, the city authorities were commissioned with the task of finding an appropriate location for a central building with sufficient space to house both chambers of Parliament, rooms for the Federal Council, 96 offices and an apartment for the Federal Chancellor. The site chosen by the Federal Council from a number of proposals was that of the town's timber works next to the casino. On 8 April 1850, the city council launched a tender for designs for the 'Bundes-Rathaus' on the southern side of the old town on the edge of the escarpment above the River Aare.

Work on the construction of what is now the West Wing began in 1852 and was to house both chambers of parliament. The official inauguration took place a little over five years later on 5 June 1857. It was later joined by the mirror image East Wing in 1884.



Dome under construction in 1900, inauguration of the new Federal Palace on 1 April 1902

The central Parliament Building, built according to plans drawn up by architect Hans Wilhelm Auer between 1894 and 1902, completed the interconnected three-part complex that we see today.

The Parliament Building is a monumental work in the neo-renaissance style with porticos and a prominent dome. The rich artistry and construction materials from all regions of the country underline the character of the building as a national monument and as a 'Federal palace'.

The architect's intention in designing the Parliament Building was to replicate, figuratively, the whole of Switzerland. He drew up a plan of pictures and symbolic images covering three broad themes: the nation's history based on founding myths, the constitutional foundations and general virtues of the state, and Switzerland's cultural, political, geographic and economic diversity.

## Who goes in and out of the Federal Palace

Even in an age of chat rooms, Skype and social media, there is still a need for a place where members of parliament can gather to hold meetings and discussions, as well as have informal chats.

The Federal Palace is above all the nation's meeting place: in addition to the parliamentary sessions held in the two largest chambers, around 2000 meetings a year are held in the many other conference rooms. The Parliament Building also has an important ceremonial and not least a social function: given its architecture it lends itself as a stage for the nation's political proceedings. Council sessions are public and attract a great deal of public interest. Politicians meet with groups of visitors from their home cantons, and foreign delegations are received in the richly decorated rooms. The lobby and restaurant provide a setting for more informal discussions, and there are also places where council members can sit down to work.

### Media

Wherever there are political goings-on, the media are never far behind. For a number of years now there has been a large, modern media centre on Bundesgasse, but camera teams can still be found in the Federal Palace itself most days, looking for politicians to interview.

### Lobbyists

Lobbyists representing the interests of associations, businesses or other organisations in Parliament also come and go: each member of parliament is entitled to name two people who may enter the Parliament Building as guests.



Parliamentary lobby: meeting place for last-minute consultations



The domed hall: a place of great symbolism

The executive

# THE GOVERNMENT



GOVERNMENT



The Federal Council	42
Federal Administration	44
Departments	46
Federal Chancellery	74



The seven members of the Federal Council and the Federal Chancellor are elected by Parliament. The next election takes place on 11 December 2019.

## A governing college

# THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

**Ueli Maurer**



**President of the Swiss Confederation**  
Head of the Federal Department of Finance  
Member of the Federal Council since 2009

**Party affiliation:**

**SVP**

**Simonetta Sommaruga**



**Vice President of the Federal Council**  
Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications  
Member of the Federal Council since 2010

**Party affiliation:**

**SP**

**Alain Berset**



Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs  
Member of the Federal Council since 2012

**Party affiliation:**

**SP**

**Guy Parmelin**



Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research  
Member of the Federal Council since 2016

**Party affiliation:**

**SVP**

**Ignazio Cassis**



Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
Member of the Federal Council since 1 November 2017

**Party affiliation:**

**FDP**

**Viola Amherd**



Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport  
Member of the Federal Council since 1 January 2019

**Party affiliation:**

**CVP**

**Karin Keller-Sutter**



Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police  
Member of the Federal Council since 1 January 2019

**Party affiliation:**

**FDP**

**Walter Thurnherr**



Federal Chancellor since 2016

**Party affiliation:**

**CVP**

## Seven equal members

The Federal Council is Switzerland's government. Its members are elected by Parliament for a four-year term of office. If a member of the Federal Council steps down during the term of office, Parliament elects a new member. The next election of all members of the Federal Council takes place on 11 December 2019.

There is a new president each year. The President of the Swiss Confederation in 2019 is Ueli Maurer. He is equal to the other members, but chairs cabinet meetings and represents the government abroad. The Federal Chancellor is the Federal Council's chief of staff. He is also elected by Parliament.

## Government and head of the administration

The Federal Council has the task of governing the country. Each member of the Federal Council heads a government department.

The Federal Council holds a meeting every week. Particularly complex matters are addressed at special meetings. It takes decisions on more than 2000 items of business every year. The seven departments and the Federal Chancellery help to prepare the meetings.

The Federal Council sets strategies and goals and then draws up the relevant draft legislation. The views of broad sections of the population and industry are gathered in a consultation process. The Federal Council then submits the proposal to Parliament, which debates and reaches a decision on it.

The Federal Council manages the Confederation's finances through the budget and the state accounts. The final decisions on these matters also rest with Parliament.

## Consensus and collegiality

As in Parliament, a concentration of power is avoided in the government; the members of the Federal Council are currently drawn from four political parties. Four members come from the German-speaking part of the country, two from the French-speaking part and one from the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland.

The Federal Council takes decisions as a collegial body: the members seek consensus to win majority support for their policies. They are also expected to defend the position of the Federal Council, even if it is contrary to their personal view or that of their party (principle of collegiality).

In contrast to systems in other countries, there is no clear distinction between government and opposition.

## From a one-party to a four-party government

- 1848 The Federal Council was composed of seven members of the Free Democratic Party (today FDP. The Liberals). The party governed alone for 43 years.
- 1891 The first member of the Catholic Conservatives (today CVP) joined the government; the second joined in 1919.
- 1929 The United Federal Assembly elected a member of the Farmers', Trades' and Citizens' Party (today SVP) to the Federal Council.
- 1943 The first Social Democrat (SP) entered the government; the second followed in 1951.
- 1959 The four strongest parties agreed to form a government by applying the 'magic formula': 2 FDP, 2 CVP, 2 SP, 1 SVP. The formula remained unchanged for 44 years.
- 2003 During the Federal Council elections, the SVP won a seat at the expense of the CVP.
- 2008 The two representatives of the SVP joined the newly founded Conservative Democratic Party (BDP).
- 2009 A member of the SVP was elected in place of a retiring BDP representative. The constellation was now 2 FDP, 2 SP, 1 SVP, 1 BDP, 1 CVP.
- 2015 The BDP representative stepped down. The United Federal Assembly elected an SVP representative in her place. The Federal Council members now represent four different parties: 2 FDP, 2 SP, 2 SVP, 1 CVP.



Film "The Federal Council – A Brief Guide"  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) > "Der Schweizerische Bundesrat"

## Organisation

# FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION





The organisations with a white background are largely independent.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

FDFA

GOVERNMENT





Ambassadors accredited to Switzerland are invited to an annual New Year's reception at the Federal Palace.



The Head of the FDFA is Ignazio Cassis. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 1 November 2017.

### Switzerland in the world, the world in Switzerland

The sun never sets on the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The FDFA has 170 embassies and consulates worldwide. FDFA staff represent Switzerland's interests and values abroad, help maintain political and economic relations and provide assistance for Swiss nationals in the host country. Some 145 countries have diplomatic representations in Bern and Geneva.

---

## Successful foreign policy begins at home.

---

To mark Switzerland's ties with all countries and maintain good relations, the President of the Swiss Confederation and the head of the FDFA hold an annual New Year's reception at the Federal Palace in Bern for the diplomatic corps. At the FDFA, domestic and foreign policy are closely inter-related and Switzerland's political culture is a key benchmark for its foreign policy strategy.

### Maintaining good relations with neighbouring countries

As a nation with an export-led economy, Switzerland depends on good and stable relations around the world and is continuously expanding and strengthening its network of relationships. Switzerland's first priority are its relations with its immediate neighbours and the European Union (EU). Switzerland earns one in every three francs through trade with the EU; 1.5 million jobs depend on Swiss exports to the EU; 430,000 Swiss nationals live in the EU; and about

1.4 million EU citizens live in Switzerland. Switzerland shares the fundamental democratic principles of its European partner countries, and has close political, economic and cultural ties with them.

### Promoting peace and development

Switzerland works for peace, human rights, sustainable development and a world without poverty. It also helps create conditions that promote prosperity. In order to achieve these objectives, Parliament approved CHF 11 billion for international cooperation activities during the 2017–20 period. Switzerland has established four priorities: to promote peace in war-torn regions, provide vital humanitarian aid for people in need, be committed in fragile countries with weak state institutions, and help to reduce global risks. Among these risks is global warming, a phenomenon that leads to drought and water shortages, which cause famine and disease and compel people to migrate.

## Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

The FDFA formulates and coordinates foreign policy on behalf of the Federal Council, safeguards Switzerland's interests, and promotes its values abroad. It acts on the basis of the rule of law, universality and neutrality and in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility. It operates a network of about 170 representations and 204 honorary representations.

Expenses 2017	<b>CHF 3.06 billion</b>
---------------	-------------------------

Staff (full-time positions) 2017	<b>5588</b>
----------------------------------	-------------

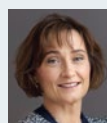
[www.fdfa.admin.ch](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-FDFA

Secretary General: **Markus Seiler**  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch)

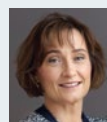
The General Secretariat (GS) is the driving force behind the department's operations and its strategic orientation. The Secretary General supports and advises the head of the FDFA and coordinates Federal Council and parliamentary business. The GS is also responsible for promoting equal opportunities at the FDFA and for contract administration. It coordinates the FDFA's risk management and provides internal and external communication. The GS also includes Internal Audit, Presence Switzerland and the History Unit.



### State Secretariat

State Secretary: **Pascale Baeriswyl**

The State Secretariat assists the head of department in developing and planning foreign policy. The State Secretary is responsible for Switzerland's relations with other countries and the international organisations, as well as for policy on security, peace, human rights and humanitarian policy. The StS also includes Protocol, which is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Confederation's rules on protocol, and the Crisis Management Centre, which publishes advice on travelling in foreign countries ([www.fdfa.admin.ch/reisehinweise](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/reisehinweise)) and coordinates measures to protect Swiss nationals who find themselves in situations of conflict or social unrest, or who experience accidents, natural disasters, attacks or are kidnapped while abroad.



### Directorate of Political Affairs PD

Director: **State Secretary Pascale Baeriswyl**

The Directorate of Political Affairs observes and analyses the world political situation and is responsible for safeguarding Switzerland's interests abroad. The nine political affairs divisions and the representations abroad all report to the State Secretary.

The geographical divisions are responsible for Switzerland's bilateral relations with other countries; the United Nations and International Organisations Division is responsible for Switzerland's policy in these organisations; the Human Security Division determines Switzerland's activities in the fields of civilian peacebuilding, human rights, and foreign policy on migration and humanitarian policy; the Sectoral Foreign Policies Division coordinates foreign policy with regard to economic issues, finance, education, science, transport, space, sustainability, environmental issues, energy and health.





### Directorate of European Affairs DEA

Director: **State Secretary Roberto Balzaretti**  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch/dea](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/dea)

The Directorate of European Affairs is the Swiss government's centre of expertise for all issues relating to Europe. It leads the negotiations with the EU in collaboration with the relevant specialised offices, coordinates Swiss policy on Europe, prepares decisions for the Federal Council, observes developments in the EU and European law, and analyses them and their consequences for Switzerland. In addition, the DEA is responsible for keeping the public informed about Switzerland's policy on Europe and European integration in general.

---



### Directorate for Resources DR

Director: **Tania Dussey-Cavassini**

The Directorate for Resources manages and ensures the efficient use of the FDFA's human, financial and IT resources. As the department's centre of expertise for all matters relating to resources, the DR provides logistical services to both the FDFA's head office in Bern and to Switzerland's worldwide network of representations, which it maintains and runs. The Swiss Government Travel Centre, which is the centre of expertise for business travel matters for the entire Federal Administration, is part of the DR.

---



### Directorate of International Law DIL

Director: **Corinne Ciceron Bühler**

The Directorate of International Law safeguards Switzerland's rights and interests that derive from international law. It participates in the conclusion of international treaties and deals with the legal aspects of Swiss neutrality, human rights and the Geneva Conventions. The Swiss Maritime Navigation Office is part of the DIL.

---



### Consular Directorate CD

Director: **Johannes Matyassy**

As the central point of contact for Swiss nationals abroad, the Consular Directorate, together with the representations abroad, ensures the provision of efficient and friendly consular services worldwide. Within the Federal Administration it is the central coordination point for matters concerning Swiss citizens abroad. The CD coordinates the support the Confederation provides Swiss citizens abroad who need assistance. The FDFA Helpline (+41 800 24 7 365) is available 24/7, 365 days a year to answer enquiries. The CD also organises the issuance of visas together with the representations abroad.

---



### Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Director: **Manuel Sager**  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch/sdc](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/sdc)

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is responsible for the overall coordination of the Confederation's international development cooperation, cooperation with the countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS, and humanitarian assistance. It is active in the fight against poverty in the countries of the Global South and East, supports victims of crises and conflicts and, together with the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, provides emergency and reconstruction aid following natural disasters and armed conflicts.

---

Federal Department of Home Affairs

# FDHA



WED 10 OCT  
07:13

LT

UTC



GOVERNMENT



MeteoSwiss provides the Swiss authorities and public with round-the-clock weather forecasts. Here are just a few of the 360 employees, working at the weather centre at Zurich airport.



The head of the FDHA is Alain Berset. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2012.

The Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) deals with a wide range of matters that directly affect people in Switzerland in their daily lives, e.g. health, pensions and culture. Society faces huge challenges in these areas.

#### **A well-functioning health system**

Switzerland has a well-functioning, high-quality health system. However, this system faces many challenges: rising costs due to advances in medicine and the ageing population, a growing number of patients suffering from chronic illnesses, and a lack of transparency. The government will work to improve the quality of the health system and to keep costs at a manageable level, with people's well-being at the centre of the equation.

---

## Urgent reform is required to secure the future of the state pension system.

---

#### **Securing pensions**

As people live longer and the baby boomers (the generation born in the 1950s and 1960s) reach retirement age, the state pension system is beginning to creak at the seams. There is no longer a balance between the contributions being paid in and the amount being drawn. Reform is urgently needed to guarantee the long-term funding of the system and preserve current pension levels. New proposals are currently being drawn up. ▶

### Enabling cultural participation

Culture and cultural activities are also facing major upheavals brought about by globalisation, digitalisation and greater individualisation in society. In this context, cultural policy aims to encourage participation in cultural activities, strengthen social cohesion in our linguistically and culturally diverse society and foster creativity and innovation.

## Federal Department of Home Affairs FDHA

The FDHA is at the heart of everyday life in Switzerland. The FDHA is responsible for old age and survivors' insurance and the second pillar of the social insurance system, health, accident and invalidity insurance, drug and food safety, and animal health. Cultural affairs, family policy, equal opportunities for men and women and for people with disabilities, the fight against racism, statistics and even weather forecasting are further areas that fall under the FDHA's remit.

Expenses 2017	<b>CHF 17.56 billion</b>
---------------	--------------------------

Staff (full-time positions) 2017	<b>2414</b>
----------------------------------	-------------

[www.edi.admin.ch](http://www.edi.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-FDHA

Secretary General: **Lukas Bruhin**  
[www.edi.admin.ch](http://www.edi.admin.ch)

As the hub between the head of department and the federal offices, the General Secretariat carries out planning, coordination, advisory and control functions. The Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations, the secretariat of the Federal Commission against Racism, the Service for Combating Racism and the Bureau for the Equality of People with Disabilities are also part of the General Secretariat.



### Federal Office for Gender Equality FOGE

Director: **Sylvie Durrer**  
[www.ebg.admin.ch](http://www.ebg.admin.ch)

The FOGE is responsible for ensuring both de jure and de facto gender equality in Switzerland. It is particularly active in the areas of equal pay, work-life balance, and in the prevention of and fight against domestic violence. The FOGE provides funding towards projects that promote gender equality. The secretariat of the Federal Commission for Women's Issues is affiliated to this office.



### Federal Office of Culture FOC

Director: **Isabelle Chassot**  
[www.bak.admin.ch](http://www.bak.admin.ch)

The FOC formulates the federal government's cultural policy. It supports artistic activities and cultural organisations, ensures the preservation of Switzerland's cultural heritage, historic property, monuments and archaeological sites, and promotes Switzerland's different linguistic and cultural communities. The FOC is the contact point for enquiries regarding looted art and the transfer of cultural property, and it manages a number of museums as well as the Confederation's art collection. The Swiss National Library, which includes the Swiss Literature Archive, the Swiss National Sound Archives in Lugano and the Dürrenmatt Centre in Neuchâtel, is also part of the FOC.



### Swiss Federal Archives SFA

Interim director: **Philippe Künzler**  
[www.bar.admin.ch](http://www.bar.admin.ch)

The SFA stores documents belonging to the Confederation and makes them available to readers. The Archive contains original historical documents such as the Federal Constitution, all editions of the newsreel 'Filmwochenschau', and the minutes of Federal Council meetings. Documents can be consulted online or in the SFA reading room.



### Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology MeteoSwiss

Director: **Peter Binder**  
[www.meteoswiss.admin.ch](http://www.meteoswiss.admin.ch)

As the national weather and climate service, MeteoSwiss is responsible for providing weather and climate information. Surface observation systems, weather radars, satellites, radio sounding and other instruments monitor the weather. MeteoSwiss warns the authorities and the public about approaching severe weather conditions and supplies basic data about climate change.



### Federal Office of Public Health FOPH

Director: **Pascal Strupler**  
[www.foph.admin.ch](http://www.foph.admin.ch)

The FOPH and the cantons are jointly responsible for public health and for developing a national health policy. This includes the upkeep and development of social health and accident insurance and its supervision. The FOPH carries out prevention campaigns and runs programmes to promote healthy living. It works on behalf of the Federal Council and with partners to implement the Health 2020 strategy in order to adapt the Swiss healthcare system optimally to future challenges.



### Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO

Director: **Hans Wyss**  
[www.fsvo.admin.ch](http://www.fsvo.admin.ch)

The FSVO is responsible for food safety, nutrition, animal health and animal welfare, and supports the implementation in the cantons. It supervises imports of animals and animal products, and acts as the enforcement authority for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The FSVO is in charge of protecting the Swiss population from foodstuffs and utility articles which could pose risks to health or mislead consumers. The Institute of Virology and Immunology (IVI) is affiliated to the FSVO.



### Federal Statistical Office FSO

Director: **Georges-Simon Ulrich**  
[www.statistics.admin.ch](http://www.statistics.admin.ch)

The FSO is the federal office responsible for public statistics. It compiles statistical information on the current position and trends in demographics, the economy, society, education, research, land use and the environment. The information helps to shape public opinion and is used as an instrument for planning and control in key policy areas.



### Federal Social Insurance Office FSIO

Director: **Jürg Brechbühl**  
[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch)

The FSIO ensures the smooth functioning of the social security system, constantly adapting it to the new challenges which arise. It is responsible for old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI), invalidity insurance, supplementary benefits, occupational benefits (pension funds), loss of earnings compensation for military and civilian service personnel, maternity payments and family allowances. It is also responsible at federal level for family, children's, youth and old age issues, generational relations and general socio-political issues.



### Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products Swissmedic

Director: **Raimund Bruhin**  
[www.swissmedic.ch](http://www.swissmedic.ch)

Swissmedic is the national authorisation and supervisory authority for drugs and medical products. The agency ensures that only high-quality, safe and effective medical products are available in Switzerland, thus making an important contribution to the protection of human and animal health.



### Swiss National Museum SNM

Director: **Andreas Spillmann**  
[www.nationalmuseum.ch](http://www.nationalmuseum.ch)

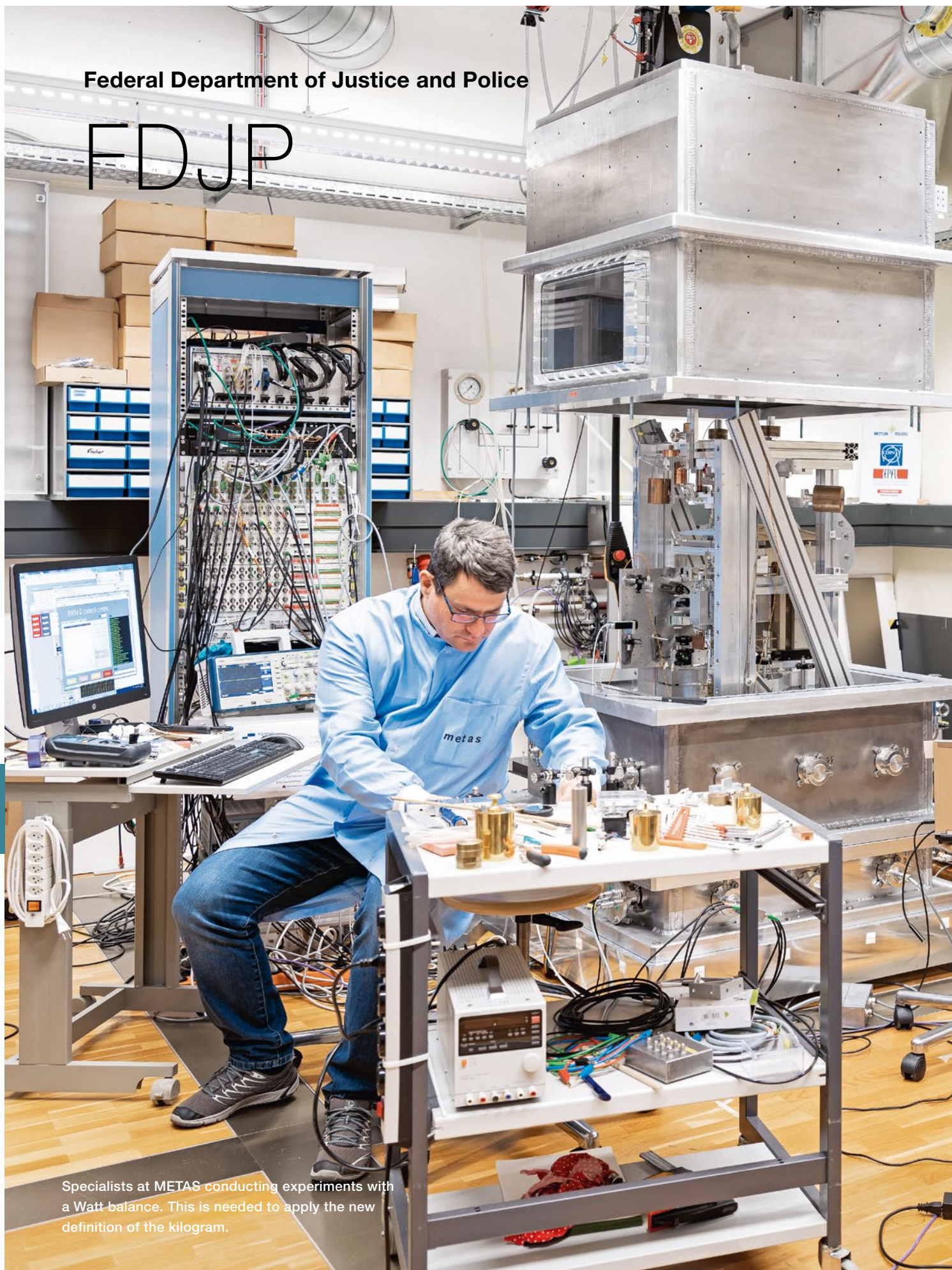
Three museums – the National Museum in Zurich, the Château de Prangins and the Forum of Swiss History in Schwyz, as well as the collections centre in Affoltern am Albis – are united under the umbrella of the Swiss National Museum (SNM). With more than 850,000 items, the SNM has the largest collection of culturally historic items and craftwork in Switzerland.



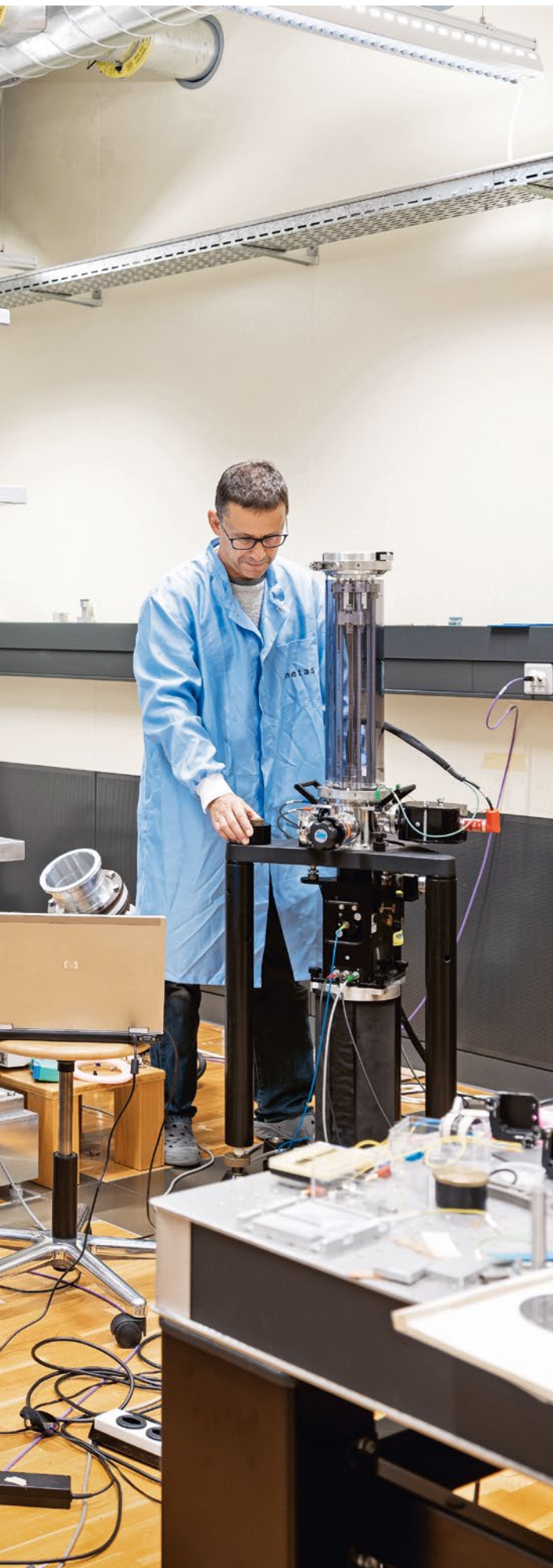
### Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Director: **Philippe Bischof**  
[www.prohelvetia.ch](http://www.prohelvetia.ch)

Pro Helvetia supports artistic creativity in Switzerland, promotes Swiss culture in Switzerland and abroad, encourages an international exchange between cultures and is committed to educating the public on cultural matters. As a public foundation, it assists the cantons and communes in promoting culture.



Specialists at METAS conducting experiments with a Watt balance. This is needed to apply the new definition of the kilogram.



The head of the FDJP is Karin Keller-Sutter. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 1 January 2019.

### **Speeding up asylum procedures, improving integration**

In June 2016, Swiss voters approved legislation that will speed up the asylum process. To ensure that asylum applications are processed quickly and fairly, everyone involved in the procedure will now work under one roof. Asylum seekers will now be able to find out more quickly whether they can stay in Switzerland or whether they have to leave. From 2019, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) will conduct asylum procedures throughout Switzerland according to this new system.

The Confederation and the cantons have also approved a joint integration agenda, so that refugees and persons who have been temporarily admitted to Switzerland can integrate into society more quickly. The cantons will expand their integration programmes, while the federal government is providing more funding.

---

METAS ensures that we can make precise and reliable measurements.

---

### **New measures against violent crime**

A further priority for the FDJP is combating violent crime, with plans to introduce tougher sentences for violent and sexual offences. Convicted stalkers will be monitored electronically in order to enforce contact prohibition and exclusion orders. The Confederation also supports cantonal measures to protect minorities that are particularly at risk, ►

as well as projects to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism.

### Changes in the system of units

The current international system of units, used when any measurement is made, is currently being adapted to take account of scientific and technological advances. The most significant change, a priority for the Federal Institute of Metrology (METAS), is the new definition of the kilogram. In future, the kilogram will no longer be defined by the international prototype kilogram in Paris, but by natural constants.

### Stepping into the digital age

In 2019 the new Gambling Act came into force, following its approval by a clear majority of Swiss voters in June 2018. The new act permits online gambling and thus marks an essential step into the digital age. The FDJP is overseeing work on another new federal act on electronic identification services. This legislation will allow people to surf the internet securely with complete control over their own data.

## Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP

The remit of the FDJP covers a wide range of matters. It deals with socio-political issues such as the coexistence of Swiss and foreign nationals, asylum issues or the fight against crime. Other areas of responsibility include the civil register and gambling supervision.

Expenses 2017 **CHF 2.67 billion**

Staff (full-time positions) 2017 **2556**

[www.ejpd.admin.ch](http://www.ejpd.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-FDJP

Secretary General: **vacant**  
[www.ejpd.admin.ch](http://www.ejpd.admin.ch)

The General Secretariat supports and advises the head of department in her daily work, ensures that the different sections of the department cooperate smoothly and manages human resources and finances. It also includes the IT Service Centre (ISC-FDJP), which develops and maintains IT applications for justice, police and migration authorities in Switzerland. The Post and Telecommunications Surveillance Service (PTSS) is also affiliated to the ISC-FDJP. It monitors postal and telecommunications services on the instructions of the law enforcement authorities. You can find out more about the PTSS at: [www.li.admin.ch](http://www.li.admin.ch)



### State Secretariat for Migration SEM

State Secretary: **Mario Gattiker**  
[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch)

SEM decides the conditions under which a person can enter Switzerland and live and work in the country. It also decides who is granted protection from persecution. In conjunction with the cantons, it organises accommodation for asylum seekers and the repatriation of those who do not need Switzerland's protection. SEM also coordinates integration efforts and is responsible for naturalisation at federal level. It is involved in international efforts to control migration flows.



### Federal Office of Justice FOJ

Director: **Martin Dumermuth**  
[www.bj.admin.ch](http://www.bj.admin.ch)

The FOJ drafts legislation on enactments for civil, criminal, constitutional and administrative law. In addition, it advises the Federal Administration in all legislative matters and is responsible for oversight in several areas. The FOJ manages the register of criminal convictions and cooperates with foreign authorities in mutual assistance matters. At international level, it represents Switzerland in the Strasbourg human rights bodies and several other organisations. The FOJ also decides on the compensation paid to victims of compulsory social measures.



### Federal Office of Police fedpol

Director: **Nicoletta della Valle**  
[www.fedpol.admin.ch](http://www.fedpol.admin.ch)

fedpol directs Switzerland's national and international police cooperation activities and conducts federal investigations into serious crimes. It protects individuals and institutions for which the Confederation is responsible and runs national information systems and centres of expertise. Key areas of activity include fighting terrorism, combating organised crime and exposing money laundering. In its role as the federal police force, the office cooperates closely with its partners in Switzerland, in Europe and beyond.





### Federal Institute of Intellectual Property IIP

Director: **Catherine Chammartin**  
[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch)

The IIP is the national competence centre for all questions regarding trademarks, patents, and indications of source, design protection or copyright. The IIP drafts legislation and represents Switzerland in this field abroad and in international organisations. Individuals and companies can protect their inventions and creations against counterfeit by registering them with the IIP.



### Federal Institute of Metrology METAS

Director: **Philippe Richard**  
[www.metas.ch](http://www.metas.ch)

The services offered by METAS ensure that measuring and testing can be performed in Switzerland to the degree of accuracy required by industry, research and administration. Furthermore, METAS ensures that measurements taken to safeguard the public and the environment are correct and comply with the law.



### Swiss Institute for Comparative Law SICL

Director: **Christina Schmid**  
[www.sicl.ch](http://www.sicl.ch)

The SICL is an autonomous federal agency. Its main task is to provide objective information and opinions on foreign and international law to courts, administrative bodies, attorneys, notaries and private citizens. The Institute also carries out comparative law research on selected aspects of foreign and international law.



### Federal Audit Oversight Authority FAOA

Director: **Frank Schneider**  
[www.rab-asr.ch](http://www.rab-asr.ch)

The FAOA is responsible for issuing licences to individuals and companies for the provision of statutory auditing services, and for supervising auditors that provide auditing services to public companies. The FAOA's activities contribute to the reliability of financial reporting.



### Federal Gaming Board FGB

Director: **Jean-Marie Jordan**  
[www.esbk.admin.ch](http://www.esbk.admin.ch)

The FGB oversees the 21 casinos in Switzerland and ensures that the games they offer are safe and transparent. The FGB also ensures that casinos fulfil their duty to prevent compulsive gambling, investigates illegal gambling activities in Switzerland and levies the gaming tax.



### Federal Commission on Migration FCM

President: **Walter Leimgruber**  
[www.ekm.admin.ch](http://www.ekm.admin.ch)

The FCM is an extra-parliamentary commission. It advises the Federal Council and the Federal Administration on migration issues, promotes social cohesion by supporting projects and publishes studies and recommendations regarding migration policy.



### Federal Arbitration Commission for the Exploitation of Copyrights and Related Rights FACO

President: **Armin Knecht**  
[www.eschk.admin.ch](http://www.eschk.admin.ch)

Authors receive royalties on their musical, literary and audiovisual works according to certain rates, when these are transmitted, publically performed or published. The Arbitration Commission examines and approves these rates.



### National Commission for the Prevention of Torture NCPT

President: **Alberto Achermann**  
[www.nkvf.admin.ch](http://www.nkvf.admin.ch)

The NCPT checks compliance with minimum guarantees under its statutory control mandate and regularly visits all detention centres in Switzerland, ensuring that torture and inhuman or degrading treatment are prevented.



### Independent Expert Commission on Administrative Detention IEC

President: **Markus Notter**  
[www.uek-administrative-versorgungen.ch](http://www.uek-administrative-versorgungen.ch)

The commission was established by the Federal Council at the end of 2014 to methodically review the administrative detentions that took place in Switzerland before 1981. It investigates the history of these detentions including their links to other compulsory social measures and forced removals of children from their homes.

# DDPS



The armed forces' daily job is to protect the population – just as it does here at the air traffic control centre in Dübendorf.

GOVERNMENT



The head of the DDPS is Viola Amherd. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 1 January 2019.

### **Adapting to threats**

Security is a requirement for political stability, a well-functioning society and for a thriving economy. The agencies charged with ensuring Switzerland's security need to adapt to ever-changing threats, for instance terrorism, cyberattacks or pandemics. Adapting to new threats is also the aim of the 'Armed Forces Development' project – the implementation of which will continue through 2019. With this reform, the armed forces' operational readiness will increase and training will improve.

---

The armed forces and security authorities need to adapt to new threats.

---

### **Indispensable airspace protection**

The armed forces must be provided with the resources needed to protect and defend Switzerland's people and its national territory – including its airspace. Switzerland's F/A-18 fighter aircraft will reach the end of their service life in 2030 – air defence resources will thus have to be renewed beforehand. Following several important decisions made by the Federal Council, the DDPS will continue to work towards the renewal of airspace protection resources in 2019.

### **Protection against cyber threats**

One of the priorities of the DDPS is to strengthen its defensive measures against cyber threats. The armed forces must

be able to protect their own systems against cyberattacks, develop skills to actively fight cyberattacks, and if necessary support civilian authorities, for instance in the protection of critical infrastructure. In addition, the armed forces are ramping up training for conscript soldiers to become cyber specialists. The DDPS is also working on improving these skills within the Federal Intelligence Service.

### Modernising civil protection

In 2019, efforts to develop and modernise civil protection will be continued, for example with the revision of the Civil Protection and Civil Defence Act and with continued preparations for the development of a crisis-proof communication network. Another major challenge is the planned unbundling of RUAG Holding AG, the technology and armament corporation, the sole shareholder of which is the Swiss Confederation. A new holding company will be formed to bring together all divisions that perform services for the armed forces and separate them from the other business areas, which operate in the international field.

## Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Responsibility for Switzerland's security lies with the DDPS. The Swiss Armed Forces defend the country and its people, support the civilian authorities, and promote peace in international forums, while the Federal Office for Civil Protection helps to protect against disasters. The DDPS also provides the Armed Forces and third parties with systems, vehicles, materials and buildings, ensures the Confederation's civilian intelligence service, promotes sport and its values, and carries out modern topographical surveys.

Expenses 2017 **CHF 7 billion**

Staff (full-time positions) 2017 **11 957**

[www.vbs.admin.ch](http://www.vbs.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-DDPS

Secretary General: **Toni Eder**  
[www.gs-vbs.admin.ch](http://www.gs-vbs.admin.ch)

The General Secretariat supports the head of the DDPS in his capacity as a member of the Federal Council and in managing the department. It implements the strategic objectives of the Federal Council and head of department, drafts the corresponding policy guidelines, and coordinates their implementation by the DDPS groups and offices. The General Secretariat manages, coordinates and monitors the use of the department's budget, and is also responsible for the DDPS Damage Compensation Centre, the department's integral security, and its cyber defence strategy. Assigned to the General Secretariat for administrative purposes are the Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General, the independent supervisory authority that monitors the Federal Intelligence Service and the Swiss Security Network Delegate's Office.



### Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General

Armed Forces Attorney General: **Stefan Flachsmann**  
[www.oa.admin.ch](http://www.oa.admin.ch)

The Office of the Armed Forces Attorney General ensures that the military criminal justice authorities can fulfil their task independently of Armed Forces command and of the Administration. It initiates and monitors criminal proceedings in the military justice system, and fulfils all other procedural obligations and duties assigned to it by the legislature.



### Federal Intelligence Service FIS

Director: **Jean-Philippe Gaudin**  
[www.fis.admin.ch](http://www.fis.admin.ch)

The Federal Intelligence Service FIS combats terrorism, violent extremism, espionage, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and cyberattacks on critical infrastructure. It monitors strategic developments, evaluates the threat situation in support of the political decision-makers, and issues alerts in the event of impending crises or unusual changes. The service is supervised by various bodies of the Administration and by Parliament.



## Defence sector

Chief of the Armed Forces:  
**Lieutenant General Philippe Rebord**  
[www.army.ch](http://www.army.ch)

The Defence sector is headed by the chief of the Swiss Armed Forces, who holds the rank of lieutenant general. The Armed Forces Staff is responsible for the development, planning, resource allocation and steering in the Armed Forces. Operations Command plans and ensures the required level of readiness of the forces and operations for a wide range of missions including security for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, peace promotion or disaster relief in the case of avalanches, flooding or forest fires in Switzerland or abroad. The head of Joint Training Command bears overall responsibility for training the Land Forces and the Air Force. Joint Training Command is also responsible for training conscript officers and professional soldiers. Support Command is responsible for logistics and command support. The Logistics Organisation ensures the supply and return of weapons, equipment and food, maintenance and infrastructure, medical services and the transport troops. The Command Support Organisation provides all the necessary electronic support services.



## Federal Office for Defence Procurement **armasuisse**

Chief of Defence Procurement: **Martin Sonderegger**  
[www.armasuisse.ch](http://www.armasuisse.ch)

armasuisse is the DDPS competence centre for procurement, technology and real estate. It ensures that the Armed Forces and third parties are supplied with the systems, land vehicles, aeroplanes and helicopters, equipment and buildings they require. It manages approximately 8,000 properties, sites and 24,000 hectares of land belonging to the DDPS. As armasuisse is responsible for weapons, equipment and real estate during their entire life cycle, it is also responsible for their liquidation at the end of their useful life.



## Federal Office of Topography **swisstopo**

Director: **Fridolin Wicki**  
[www.swisstopo.ch](http://www.swisstopo.ch)

Geospatial information in the form of maps, images and data, above or below the surface of the Earth, are a key element in the infrastructure of any country. Transparent and sensible decisions, not only on political and social issues but also in our own private lives, are inconceivable without a sound awareness of our surroundings. The Federal Office of Topography swisstopo ensures that our landscape and what is beneath it are reliably and sustainably documented. It coordinates the provision of geoinformation at federal level and with the cantons, oversees the official cadastral survey, runs the Institute for Military Geography and operates the federal geoportal with the map viewer [map.geo.admin.ch](http://map.geo.admin.ch).



## Federal Office for Civil Protection **FOCP**

Director: **Benno Bühlmann**  
[www.civilprotection.ch](http://www.civilprotection.ch)

In the event of disasters and emergencies, the Office ensures cooperation with the five partner organisations: the police, fire and health services, technical operations and civil defence. Responsibility for civil protection lies mainly with the cantons. The FOCP takes care of the general planning and coordination of protection in the areas of early warning and alert systems, training and protective infrastructure. The National Emergency Operations Centre and the Spiez Laboratory are also part of the Office. In the event of incidents involving elevated levels of radioactivity, the National Emergency Operations Centre warns the general public and, if necessary, orders implementation of protection measures. The Spiez Laboratory is Switzerland's institute for nuclear, biological and chemical protection. Its services are increasingly in international demand.



## Federal Office of Sport **FOSPO**

Director: **Matthias Remund**  
[www.baspo.ch](http://www.baspo.ch)

The Federal Office of Sport promotes sport and physical activity for all. It manages the Confederation's most important sport-promotion programme, Youth+Sport, and the Swiss Federal Institute of Sports Magglingen (Bern), a renowned education, training and research facility. The sports centres in Magglingen and Tenero (Ticino) provide state-of-the-art education and training facilities for clubs, schools and associations.

# FDF



GOVERNMENT



Easier contact with the authorities thanks to digitalisation: goods can be cleared through customs directly via mobile phone with the 'QuickZoll' app, for example.



The Head of the FDF is Ueli Maurer. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2009. In 2019, he is President of the Swiss Confederation.

### Exploiting the opportunities offered by digitalisation

The FDF, as a true digitalisation department, is exploiting the opportunities offered by digitalisation. Administrative processes and relations with the population and businesses can be simplified considerably with digitalisation. The Federal Customs Administration (FCA) is consistently being brought into the digital age with the DaziT transformation programme, for example. The aim is for all border formalities to be completed irrespective of the time and place. Businesses, the general public and the administration should benefit from major simplifications thanks to continuously digitalised processes. The 'QuickZoll' app, which enables imported goods to be cleared through customs directly via mobile phone, is already in operation.

---

Digitalisation helps to simplify relations between the state and the population.

---

### Modernising the tax system

The Swiss tax system is not set in stone forever. Instead, it must be adapted from time to time to new circumstances and changed requirements. There is an urgent need to reform company taxes, an area where Switzerland is increasingly feeling the effects of international competition. Parliament is currently dealing with the elimination of the penalty for married couples: the unequal treatment of married

two-income couples relative to cohabiting couples in the same economic situation can thus be remedied. Stamp duty and withholding tax reforms will benefit Switzerland as a business location and secure jobs in the long term.

### Opening the doors for the financial sector abroad

Switzerland has one of the best, most secure and most competitive financial centres in the world. In order for this to be perceived accordingly also in the global market, the FDF strives to provide the necessary information, coordinate the activities of those involved and open the doors for the financial sector with regard to international business. Under the heading 'focus on the financial centre', the strengths of Switzerland as a financial centre are to be emphasised and the interests of our country actively safeguarded.

## Federal Department of Finance FDF

The FDF collects taxes and duties, and checks the movement of persons and goods at the border. It also provides services for the entire Federal Administration, ranging from IT to human resources and infrastructure support. The FDF fine-tunes its tax and fiscal policies to ensure the efficiency of the Confederation and Switzerland as a business location.

Expenses 2017	<b>CHF 16.93 billion</b>
---------------	--------------------------

Staff (full-time positions) 2017	<b>8669</b>
----------------------------------	-------------

[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-FDF

Secretary General: **Rahel von Kaenel**  
[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch)

The General Secretariat acts as the intermediary between the head of department and the federal offices, and between the cantons, journalists and communication officers. It plans and coordinates the department's items of business for Parliament and the Federal Council. It provides information to the public about all Federal Council and FDF business.



### State Secretariat for International Finance SIF

State Secretary: **Daniela Stoffel** (from 1.3.2019)  
[www.sif.admin.ch](http://www.sif.admin.ch)

SIF represents Switzerland's interests in financial, monetary and tax matters in partner countries and in international bodies. It is committed to maintaining good framework conditions to ensure that Switzerland can be a secure, competitive and globally recognised financial centre and location for business. SIF is also responsible for implementing the Federal Council's financial market policy.



### Federal Finance Administration FFA

Director: **Serge Gaillard**  
[www.efv.admin.ch](http://www.efv.admin.ch)

The FFA is the guardian of the public purse and ensures that the federal government can meet its payment obligations. It prepares the federal government's budget, finance plan and financial statements. The debt brake, a critical look at the departments' financial conduct and consideration of the economic situation are the bedrock for a sound fiscal policy.



### Federal Office of Personnel FOPER

Director: **Barbara Schaerer**  
[www.epa.admin.ch](http://www.epa.admin.ch)

As an employer, the federal government is facing stiff competition from other companies. FOPER is responsible for the federal government's personnel and pension policy. FOPER ensures that the Federal Administration remains a competitive employer.



### Federal Tax Administration FTA

Director: **Adrian Hug**  
[www.estv.admin.ch](http://www.estv.admin.ch)

The FTA raises a major part of the Confederation's receipts and so ensures that the Confederation can perform its public duties. It therefore collects VAT, direct federal tax, withholding tax, stamp duty and military service exemption tax. The FTA also provides international administrative assistance in tax matters.





### Federal Customs Administration FCA

Director: **Christian Bock**  
[www.customs.admin.ch](http://www.customs.admin.ch)

The FCA makes sure the cross-border movement of goods and persons is as smooth as possible. Custom officers are responsible for overseeing the movement of goods. The Border Guard is the uniformed and armed section of the FCA. It handles security, customs and migration tasks. The FCA also collects VAT, mineral oil tax and tobacco duty. At the beginning of 2018, the Swiss Alcohol Board was incorporated into the Federal Customs Administration FCA, where it now oversees the implementation of alcohol legislation as the Alcohol and Tobacco Division.



### Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunications FOITT

Director: **Giovanni Conti**  
[www.bit.admin.ch](http://www.bit.admin.ch)

As the federal competence centre for IT, the FOITT provides support for business processes in the Federal Administration and ensures the proper functioning of telecommunications between all federal offices in Switzerland and abroad. The FOITT plays a key role in providing an electronic link between the Confederation and the public.



### Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL

Director: **Pierre Broje**  
[www.bbl.admin.ch](http://www.bbl.admin.ch)

The FOBL builds, maintains and manages the federal government's civilian properties, which include the Federal Palace, administrative buildings and the Swiss embassies around the world. As the central procurement office, it buys IT resources, office equipment and publications for the entire Federal Administration.



### Federal IT Steering Unit FITSU

Delegate: **Peter Fischer**  
[www.fitsu.admin.ch](http://www.fitsu.admin.ch)

The FITSU is responsible for implementing the information and communication technologies strategy in the Federal Administration. It also works with the Confederation, cantons and communes to coordinate the implementation of the e-Government Strategy Switzerland and manages the Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance (MELANI).



### Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA

Director: **Mark Branson**  
[www.finma.ch](http://www.finma.ch)

FINMA provides the effective, competent and independent oversight which is necessary for the supervision of the financial sector. It is committed to protecting creditors, investors and insured persons, and monitors the financial markets' ability to function. FINMA supervises banks, insurance companies, stock exchanges and funds requiring authorisation.



### Swiss Federal Audit Office SFAO

Director: **Michel Huissoud**  
[www.efk.admin.ch](http://www.efk.admin.ch)

The SFAO is the Confederation's supreme audit institution. It is an independent institution and audits the financial conduct of the Federal Administration, the courts and the numerous semi-state organisations. It inspects the Confederation's state financial statements annually. It aims to ensure that tax revenue is used economically and effectively.



### Federal Pension Fund PUBLICA

Director: **Dieter Stohler**  
[www.publica.ch](http://www.publica.ch)

As a non-profit collective occupational pension fund, PUBLICA manages assets totalling around CHF 38 billion. With 64,000 insured persons and 42,000 pension recipients, PUBLICA is one of the largest pension funds in Switzerland.

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,  
Education and Research

EAER

GOVERNMENT

Cows milked by robots: Digitalisation can simplify a range of tasks for farmers. The technology also supplies a wealth of data on animal health, for example.



The head of the EAER is Guy Parmelin. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2016.

### Changing face of farming

The digital transformation does not stop at agriculture. On the contrary, in some respects it has reached farming earlier than certain other sectors of the economy. Applications for direct payments, for example, are now submitted via the internet, and the Animal Tracing Database is also largely operated online. Now, however, it is no longer just a question of digital data collection, but also of networking this data and ultimately of managing farms successfully. Drones help to spot fawns in fields, record the condition of the soil and plants or detect and combat weeds. In future, sensors will be able to monitor the health of entire herds. All this does not mean that farmers have less work to do than before, but many things can be organised more flexibly and done on the move.

---

Modern technologies  
are changing the  
world of work and  
everyday life.

---

### Impact of digitalisation reaches day-to-day life

For some in Switzerland, digitalisation is still a rather abstract concept. Yet it is increasingly having an impact on our everyday lives: for example, digitalisation allows us to work on the go, it improves vehicle safety thanks to networked sensors, and it helps us to make medical advances by evaluating vast quantities of data. But digitalisation also

presents us with great challenges. It is having a big impact on many job profiles and is leading to the creation of new ones. The federal government, the cantons and industry are working together to define and implement these new job profiles. This will not only create new jobs, but also ensure that workers are trained in the skills that are sought on the labour market.

### Eye on further free trade agreements

Training skilled workers is vital for our economy and boosts the innovative capacity and competitiveness of our businesses. Competitiveness is particularly important for export-oriented companies. They also need to be able to access foreign markets with as few barriers and as little discrimination as possible.

Free trade agreements are key instruments in achieving that goal. In concluding 40 such agreements with 30 countries – as well as with the EU and EFTA – Switzerland has already achieved a great deal. Nevertheless, the Federal Council aims to conclude further such agreements with more of Switzerland’s important trade partners – numerous negotiations are ongoing.

## Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER

The EAER shapes the conditions for ensuring job creation, growth and prosperity in Switzerland. The department is also responsible for policy on education and research. With this remit alone almost everyone living in Switzerland is directly affected by the work of the EAER, but other important aspects of everyday life play an important role too, such as agriculture and the food we eat, housing and the roof over our heads, and provision with essential supplies in the event of a crisis.

Expenses 2017 **CHF 12.36 billion**

Staff (full-time positions) 2017 **2153**

[www.wbf.admin.ch](http://www.wbf.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-EAER

Secretary General: **Nathalie Goumaz**  
[www.wbf.admin.ch](http://www.wbf.admin.ch)

The General Secretariat is the staff and coordination office of the head of department. It manages the department’s needs in terms of human and financial resources, prepares parliamentary and Federal Council business and is responsible for keeping the general public informed about the EAER’s activities. The Federal Consumer Affairs Bureau FCAB reports to the General Secretariat for administrative matters. Among other things the FCAB is responsible for granting financial assistance to consumer organisations, ensuring the declaration of origin of wood and wood products, and together with SECO runs a product safety information and reporting office.



### State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

State Secretary: **Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch**  
[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch)

SECO deals with the key issues concerning economic policy. It aims to promote sustainable economic growth, high employment and fair working conditions. To achieve this it creates the necessary regulatory, economic and foreign economic policy conditions. The range of issues that SECO deals with includes labour market policy, employee protection, the dismantling of trade barriers, access to foreign markets, and economic development and cooperation.



### State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI

State Secretary: **Martina Hirayama**  
[www.seri.admin.ch](http://www.seri.admin.ch)

Education, research and innovation (ERI) are of fundamental importance for Switzerland, whose success depends on the generation, dissemination and exploitation of expertise and knowledge. SERI is mandated to strengthen and further develop the quality of the ERI system in collaboration with the cantons, business, higher education institutions and bodies active in promoting research and innovation.



### Federal Office for Agriculture FOAG

Director: **Bernard Lehmann**  
[www.foag.admin.ch](http://www.foag.admin.ch)

Switzerland is shaped to a large extent by its agriculture. To ensure that this remains so, the FOAG seeks to ensure a thriving agricultural and food sector capable of achieving market success through its high-quality products, sustainable production methods and the measures it implements to preserve resources. The FOAG is committed to establishing conditions conducive to promoting entrepreneurial capacity in agriculture. The research institute, Agroscope, provides the scientific basis to achieve this.



### Federal Office for National Economic Supply FONES

Delegate: **Werner Meier**  
[www.fones.admin.ch](http://www.fones.admin.ch)

In its capacity as a centre of expertise in matters regarding security of supply, the FONES, in close cooperation with the private sector, partner authorities and the cantons, ensures that serious short-term supply shortages of important goods and services do not result in significant disruption for the Swiss population and economy.



### Federal Office for Housing FOH

Director: **Ernst Hauri**  
[www.bwo.admin.ch](http://www.bwo.admin.ch)

Housing is a basic need and an important economic asset. The FOH promotes a housing market that is attractive for investors and supplies enough residential space in all price categories. The FOH provides targeted financial support for the construction of non-profit residential buildings. It seeks to reconcile the interests of landlords and tenants in tenancy legislation.



### Federal Office for Civilian Service CIVI

Director: **Christoph Hartmann**  
[www.zivi.admin.ch](http://www.zivi.admin.ch)

The Federal Office for Civilian Service (CIVI) is responsible for all aspects of civilian service. It decides which persons may perform civilian service and ensures that they fulfil their duty of service. It also recognises, monitors and supervises the host operations. CIVI has five regional centres, in Aarau, Rütli, Thun, Lausanne and Rivera. It has a central office in Thun and operates the civilian service training centre in Schwarzsee/FR. Civilian service is a compulsory service for young men who object to doing military service on grounds of conscience; it provides services to the community where resources are scarce and assumes civilian responsibilities in security policy.



### Office of the Price Supervisor

Price Supervisor: **Stefan Meierhans**  
[www.preisueberwacher.admin.ch](http://www.preisueberwacher.admin.ch)

The price supervisor intervenes in situations where prices increase excessively owing to a lack of free market competition. The price supervisor is primarily active in the health and infrastructure sectors.



### Competition Commission COMCO

Director: **Patrik Ducrey**  
[www.weko.admin.ch](http://www.weko.admin.ch)

COMCO's task is to ensure open markets. It intervenes in cases of cartel formation, abuse of market power, mergers that threaten open markets, and state obstacles to competition. In its capacity as 'advocate of competition' it provides information and advice to companies and government authorities.



### Federal Institutes of Technology Group ETH Domain

President of the ETH Board: **Fritz Schiesser**  
[www.ethrat.ch](http://www.ethrat.ch)

The ETH Domain consists of the two federal institutes of technology, ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne, and the four research institutes, the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI), the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), the Swiss Federal Laboratory for Materials Testing and Research (Empa) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag). The ETH Board is the strategic management and supervisory body of the ETH Domain. It supervises development plans, carries out control activities and ensures good coordination among its partners.



### Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training SFIVET

Director a.i.: **Jean-Pierre Perdrizat**  
[www.sfivet.swiss](http://www.sfivet.swiss)

SFIVET is Switzerland's expert organisation for vocational education and training. It offers basic and continuing training to VET professionals, conducts VET research, contributes to the development of occupations and supports international cooperation in vocational and professional education and training. It has regional campuses in Zollikofen near Bern (main campus), Lausanne and Lugano, as well as off-campus space in Olten and Zurich.



### Swiss Innovation Agency Innosuisse

Director: **Annalise Eggimann**  
[www.innosuisse.ch](http://www.innosuisse.ch)

Innosuisse funds innovation projects run jointly by companies and higher education institutions, helps start-ups to launch their business ideas and promotes the transfer of knowledge and technology between academia and industry.

Federal Department of the Environment, Transport,  
Energy and Communications

# DETEC



Digitalisation is changing the face of transport. Self-driving vehicles, like this autonomous shuttle bus in Fribourg, make transport safer and more efficient.



The head of DETEC is Simonetta Sommaruga. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2010.

On the one hand: handling data, facing cyber risks and the fear of losing one's job; on the other: a higher quality of life, simpler processes and new ways of doing business. Digitalisation poses a challenge for us at all levels. The Federal Council wants the country to grasp the opportunities presented by these developments. Its Digital Switzerland strategy aims to support the economy and society in the transition from the analogue to the digital age. DETEC ensures that innovations flow into the development of modern transport routes and services, communication networks and power grids.

---

## The Federal Council sees digitalisation as a great opportunity.

---

### **Door-to-door connections – via app**

Take mobility, for example: automated vehicles could make road traffic more efficient, smoother and safer – benefiting motorists and the economy and improving air quality. Intelligent logistics systems and drones can improve utilisation rates in freight transport. In public transport, shared taxis and car-sharing schemes can complement current services. Digital services mean that the different means of transport can be linked: via an app we will be able to book and pay for individually tailored door-to-door connections, regardless of whether we are travelling by public transport, taxi or rental bike. DETEC wants to tap this potential – for example by authorising pilot tests for driverless buses. ▶

Or take energy: thanks to digitalisation, in future all parts of the energy system will be linked – from electricity meters in households to the turbines in a power station. This means a building's heating and cooling requirements can be reduced, and efficiency increased, thereby saving money and protecting the environment. Furthermore, with smart technologies we can optimally integrate renewable energies, which form an increasingly important share of the energy mix, into the existing power grid.

### Better infrastructure required for growing volumes of data

For these developments to be possible, we require fast internet, high-bandwidth broadband and the introduction of the next 5G generation of mobile communications. The amount of data we transmit over the mobile network doubles each year. DETEC is already preparing the technical infrastructure – at the same time protecting humans, animals and the environment.

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

DETEC is Switzerland's 'ministry of infrastructure'. Roads, railways, power lines: all the things that hold our country together fall within DETEC's remit. The department is also responsible for Switzerland's soil, water, air, flora, fauna and the countryside. These natural resources are the bases of life, but are under pressure due to human activity. Maintaining these resources is one of DETEC's principal responsibilities.

Expenses 2017	<b>CHF 10.69 billion</b>
---------------	--------------------------

Staff (full-time positions) 2017	<b>2240</b>
----------------------------------	-------------

[www.uvek.admin.ch](http://www.uvek.admin.ch)



### General Secretariat GS-DETEC

Secretary General: **Matthias Ramsauer**  
[www.uvek.admin.ch](http://www.uvek.admin.ch)

The overlapping nature of many items of business requires extensive coordination with DETEC's specialised offices and other departments. The General Secretariat takes on this task. It prepares items of business for the Federal Council, supports political planning, acts as an intermediary between DETEC and Parliament and is responsible for the department's external communication. In addition, it also acts as owner of Swiss Post, SBB, Swisscom and Skyguide and supervises the implementation of the strategic aims set out by the Federal Council.



### Federal Office of Transport FOT

Director: **Peter Füglistaler**  
[www.fot.admin.ch](http://www.fot.admin.ch)

The Federal Office of Transport FOT manages the progressive expansion and financing of rail infrastructure. It carries out the tasks set by the Federal Council and Parliament, monitors compliance in terms of cost and deadlines, and is also responsible for safety supervision in public transport.



### Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA

Director: **Christian Hegner**  
[www.foca.admin.ch](http://www.foca.admin.ch)

The FOCA ensures the high safety standards in Swiss civil aviation, which are primarily based on internationally agreed standards. In addition to its supervisory activity, it is responsible for the preparation and implementation of decision-making on civil aviation policy. The office is actively involved in international aviation organisations to ensure that Switzerland's interests are taken into account.



### Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE

Director: **Benoît Revaz**  
[www.sfoe.admin.ch](http://www.sfoe.admin.ch)

The Federal Council's energy policy is oriented towards improving energy efficiency, promoting renewable energy sources, particularly hydropower, developing the electricity grid, and increasing energy research and international cooperation. It puts these energy policy principles into practice and draws up, for example, regulations on the energy consumption of household appliances, consumer electronics, light bulbs and electric motors. The aim is to ensure that Switzerland will still have sufficient, safe, affordable and environmentally friendly energy supplies in the future.





### **Federal Roads Office** FEDRO

Director: **Jürg Röthlisberger**  
[www.astra.admin.ch](http://www.astra.admin.ch)

FEDRO is mandated by the Federal Council and Parliament to take responsibility for expanding and maintaining the national road network. In addition, it is also responsible for the implementation of the 'Via sicura' road safety programme, the aim of which is to further reduce the number of people killed or injured in road accidents. Only well-trained drivers with safe vehicles should be driving on safe roads.



### **Federal Office of Communications** BAKOM

Director: **Philipp Metzger**  
[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)

Making calls, sending emails or text messages, surfing on the internet – all this requires a powerful communications infrastructure. OFCOM helps to ensure that this is the case throughout Switzerland. It distributes the revenues from television and radio licence fees to the regional broadcasters and to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, and ensures that print media benefit from reduced postage rates. It also oversees the provision of payment services by Swiss Post.



### **Federal Office for the Environment** FOEN

Director: **Marc Chardonens**  
[www.foen.admin.ch](http://www.foen.admin.ch)

Natural resources such as water, soil and air are under pressure because they are frequently being overexploited. Switzerland's environmental policy aims to ensure that the country's natural resources remain intact for future generations. One of the FOEN's key tasks is to conserve ecosystems with their flora and fauna as the basis of life. The FOEN also concerns itself with the causes of climate change and its consequences. It supports cantons and communes to prepare for flooding, rockslides and avalanches by keeping protective forests intact or by renaturalising rivers to protect roads and residential areas.



### **Federal Office for Spatial Development** ARE

Director: **Maria Lezzi**  
[www.aren.admin.ch](http://www.aren.admin.ch)

Coping with a growing population, increasing mobility and greater demand for living space – as well as protecting the countryside: these are the parameters within which ARE operates. To protect land that is becoming ever more scarce, it promotes and oversees legislation on residential development. ARE contributes to improving coordination between transport infrastructure and urban development. The spatial concept drawn up jointly by the Confederation, the cantons, cities and communes under ARE's lead sets out the guidelines for future spatial development.



### **Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate** ENSI

Director: **Hans Wanner**  
[www.ensi.ch](http://www.ensi.ch)

The Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate ENSI is responsible for ensuring the safe operation of nuclear installations in Switzerland. ENSI therefore supervises Switzerland's five nuclear power stations, the interim storage sites for radioactive waste and the nuclear research units at the Paul Scherrer Institute, Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne and the University of Basel.

## Federal Chancellery

# FCh



The Federal Chancellor and the two vice chancellors are always present at Federal Council meetings.



The Federal Chancellery is headed by Walter Thurnherr. He has been the Federal Chancellor since 2016.

### Staff office of the Federal Council

The Federal Chancellery was established in 1803 and as such is the oldest federal institution. It serves as a hub between the federal government, the Administration, Parliament and the People.

The Federal Chancellor is elected by Parliament for four years in the same way as the members of the Federal Council. As the Federal Council's chief of staff, he ensures the proper functioning of the government. Together with the two vice chancellors, he attends the meetings of the Federal Council. The Federal Chancellor can submit proposals on all Federal Council business, but has no voting rights.

## Federal Chancellery FCh

The Federal Chancellery is the staff office of the Federal Council. It prepares the meetings of the Federal Council and informs Parliament and the public of the decisions taken. It verifies the legality of initiatives and referendums and makes sure that national elections and votes are conducted properly. It publishes official texts in several languages.

---

Expenses 2017	<b>CHF 73 million</b>
---------------	-----------------------

---

Staff (full-time positions) 2017	<b>202</b>
----------------------------------	------------

---

[www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch)



## Planning for the Federal Council

The policy of the Federal Council is incorporated into a planning process. The Federal Chancellery prepares the planning instruments in close cooperation with the departments to produce a four-year legislature plan, which serves as a basis for the annual objectives. In its annual report, the Federal Council reports on whether it has achieved those objectives.

## Preparing Federal Council meetings

The Federal Council generally meets once a week. The Federal Chancellery manages the agenda. Before the Federal Council considers the items of business, the departments and federal offices can submit their views and make proposals. The Federal Chancellery coordinates this joint reporting procedure and reviews the items of business from a formal and legal point of view.

## Communicating Federal Council decisions



After every Federal Council meeting, the Federal Council Spokesperson, **Vice Chancellor André Simonazzi**, goes before the press to announce the Federal Council's decisions. He is often accompanied by one or more members of the Federal Council and experts from the Federal Administration, who are available to answer questions from journalists.

[www.admin.ch/tv](http://www.admin.ch/tv) (media conferences)

[www.admin.ch/en-news](http://www.admin.ch/en-news) (press releases)



Following the meetings of the Federal Council, the Federal Chancellery also informs all seven departments about the decisions taken. Responsibility for that task falls to **Vice Chancellor Jörg De Bernardi** (to be replaced by Viktor Rossi from 1 May 2019). The Federal Chancellery publishes the Federal Council decisions and reports in the Federal Gazette in the three official languages. It publishes new or amended acts and ordinances in the Official Compilation of Federal Legislation.

[www.admin.ch/federalallw](http://www.admin.ch/federalallw)

## Publishing information through a range of channels

Before a popular vote is held, the country's nearly five million eligible voters receive a pamphlet about the proposals submitted to a popular vote. The Federal Chancellery works with the departments to prepare the pamphlet. Before the federal elections, the Federal Chancellery distributes a guide on how to go about voting. The Federal Chancellery provides information about the activities and characteristics of the federal government and the federal authorities in publications such as 'The Swiss Confederation, a brief guide' and on two websites.

[www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) (Government and administration)

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) (Confederation and cantons)

[www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) > «Der Schweizerische Bundesrat»

[www.twitter.com/BR\\_Sprecher](https://www.twitter.com/BR_Sprecher) (Federal Council

Spokesperson)

## Translating into several languages

The official languages of Switzerland are German, French and Italian. The texts of acts, ordinances and treaties, as well as voting and election material must be made available in at least these three languages, a task for which the Federal Chancellery Language Services are responsible. They also provide translations in Romansh and English when required.

## Overseeing democratic rights

Swiss citizens are called on to vote three to four times a year in national referendums and popular initiatives, and every four years to elect a new parliament. The Federal Chancellery ensures that the electoral process runs smoothly. It provides the necessary information on the proper procedures to anyone interested in launching a popular initiative or a referendum. It also checks to make sure that requests for popular initiatives and referendums meet the formal requirements.

## Managing the 'Vote électronique' project

Currently, the majority of the Swiss electorate vote by post. Some cantons also offer the possibility of voting electronically. The Federal Chancellery is developing the 'Vote électronique' project in conjunction with the cantons, bringing the exercise of political rights into the digital age. The aim is to establish e-voting throughout the country as a third option for casting one's ballot.

## Supporting the President of the Swiss Confederation

During their year as Swiss president, federal councillors have additional tasks. The Presidential Services Unit of the Federal Chancellery assists with communications and diplomatic affairs.

## Managing the Federal Council's residences

The Federal Council has two residences in which it receives its guests from Switzerland and abroad, the von Wattenwyl House and the Landsitz Lohn. In the von Wattenwyl House it also regularly holds discussions with the political parties in government; these are known as the 'von Wattenwyl talks'.



## Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner FDPIC

Commissioner: **Adrian Lobsiger**

[www.edoeb.admin.ch](http://www.edoeb.admin.ch)

The Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner monitors compliance with the Data Protection Act to protect the privacy of citizens, and advises citizens in matters relating to data protection. The FDPIC also ensures implementation of the principle of freedom of information, which affords access to the official documents of the Federal Administration. If an authority denies a person access to such information, the FDPIC can be called upon to mediate.

The judiciary

# THE COURTS



The court registrars carry out a wide range of administrative tasks for the seven divisions of the Federal Supreme Court. Details of court decisions must often be clarified before the final version is sent to the parties concerned.

The judiciary \_\_\_\_\_ 78

The Federal Supreme Court  
and the federal courts of first instance \_\_\_\_\_ 80



## The third state power

# THE JUDICIARY



### Interview with Ulrich Meyer, President of the Federal Supreme Court

#### Mr Meyer, are the Federal Supreme Court's decisions always just?

The Federal Supreme Court cannot adjudicate based simply on the individual judges' personal views of how justice should be done. The court is bound by the applicable law. So, can a lawful judgment be unjust? Theoretically it can't be. Nevertheless, the proposed solution would certainly have to be reconsidered if one's sense of justice were to be troubled. Personally, I have never had to go against my own sense of justice, not even in cases in which I was in the minority.

#### What constitutes a good Supreme Court judge?

The first requirement is a love for the law, that is to say a sense of joy in our profession. Of course, a Supreme Court judge must also have an excellent legal mind as well as experience. Furthermore, a judge should be willing to listen and to consider other points of view, and

also be prepared to question his or her own position.

#### What happens if Supreme Court judges do not agree on the solution to a case?

Then a public hearing is held: the judges concerned meet in the courtroom and discuss the various proposals. At the end, a decision is taken in the presence of the public. There is no secrecy in hearings. This reflects the democratic principle of transparency, which is characteristic of Switzerland, even in Supreme Court decision-making.

#### How does the Federal Supreme Court deal with criticism of its judgments?

Very serenely. Judgments are the subject of public debate. It is in the nature of things that Federal Supreme Court decisions please some people, and displease others. You have to be able to deal with this.

#### Has the work of Supreme Court judges changed over time?

Judicial activity, as such, has not changed: reading, deliberating and writing are the means and forms of judicial decision-making. Having said that, IT has greatly influenced the way we actually do our work. Today, we do most of our legal work at the computer.

---

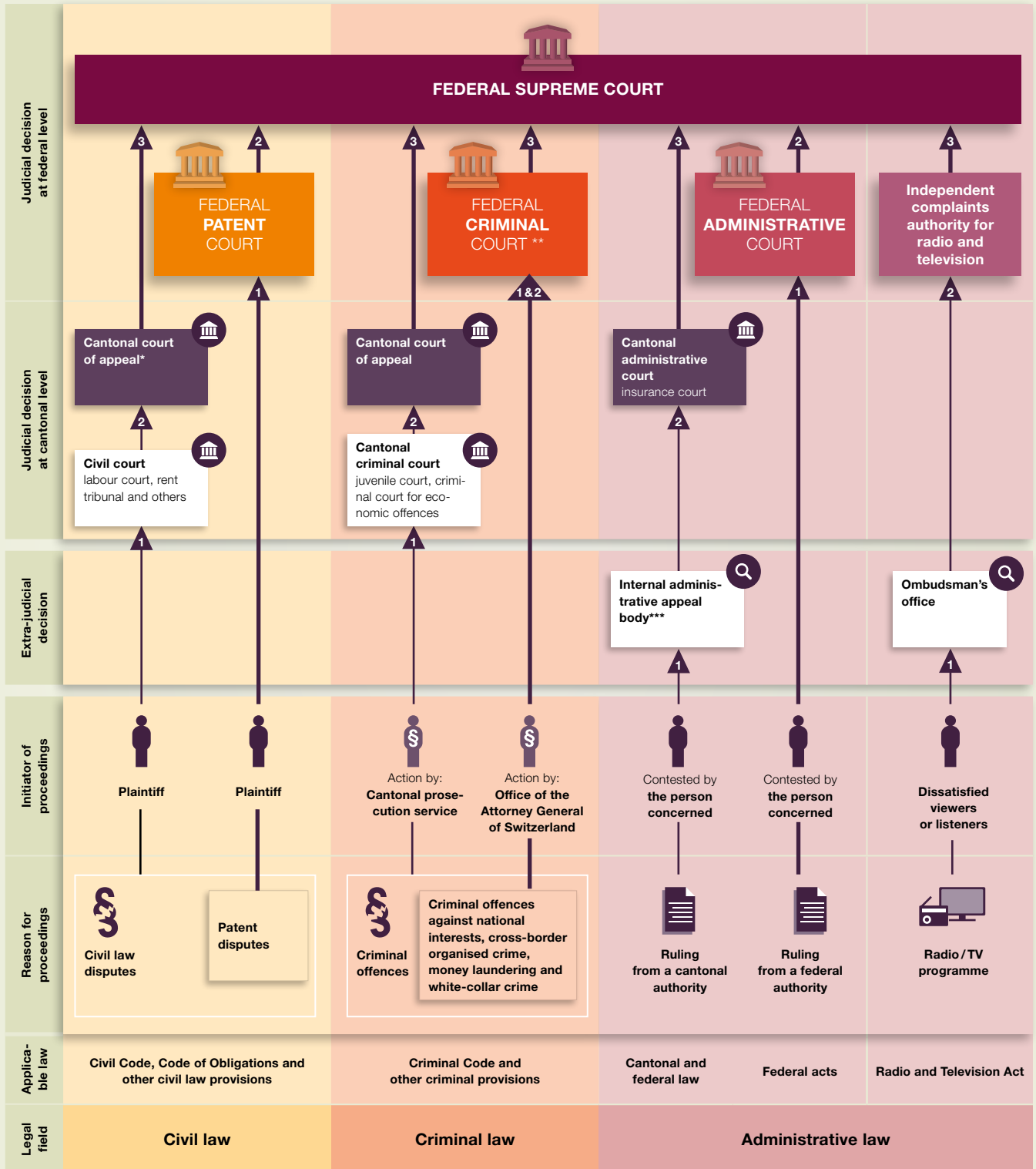
'It is in the nature of things that Federal Supreme Court decisions please some people and displease others.'

---

#### Can I also send an appeal to the Federal Supreme Court by email?

It's not possible to just send a normal email or fax. However, electronic transmission is possible, provided that the appeal bears a recognised electronic signature and is filed within the prescribed deadline via a delivery platform that is accepted by the Federal Supreme Court. In collaboration with the cantons, the Federal Supreme Court is working intensively on implementing the electronic transmission of legal documents throughout Switzerland.

# STANDARD PROCEDURES IN THE SWISS LEGAL SYSTEM



\* In the cantons of Zurich, Bern, St. Gallen and Aargau there is also a commercial court, which is the only cantonal court dealing with commercial disputes.  
 \*\* The Criminal Chamber of the Federal Criminal Court rules in the first instance, its Higher Appeals Chamber in the second instance. The Lower Appeals Chamber of the Federal Criminal Court also deals with cases relating to orders issued by the federal prosecution authorities, administrative law cases, cases on mutual assistance in criminal matters and on conflicts of jurisdiction.  
 \*\*\* Depending on the canton/subject matter, the cantonal administrative court may have direct jurisdiction.

- 1 First Instance
- 2 Second Instance
- 3 Third Instance

## The courts at federal level

# THE FEDERAL SUPREME COURT AND THE FEDERAL COURTS OF FIRST INSTANCE

### The Federal Supreme Court



President:  
**Ulrich Meyer**



Vice-President:  
**Martha Niquille**

**The Federal Supreme Court is the highest judicial authority in Switzerland. It rules in the final instance on all appeals against decisions of the highest cantonal courts, the Federal Criminal Court, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court. The court ensures that Swiss federal law is correctly applied in individual cases and that the rights of citizens enshrined in the constitution are protected.**

As the court of final instance, the Federal Supreme Court rules on cases from almost all areas of law. When an appeal is filed, it examines whether the law was correctly applied in the contested decision and thus ensures the uniform application of federal law throughout the country. Its decisions contribute to the development of the law and to its adaptation to new circumstances. The other courts and the administrative authorities use the decisions of the Federal Supreme Court as a reference and adopt their principles. Procedures before the Federal Supreme Court take place in writing. There are no court hearings with plaintiffs and defendants giving testimony and lawyers pleading their cases. The Federal Supreme Court bases its decisions on facts as they are established by the lower instances and described in the records of the previous proceedings. If the Federal Supreme Court concludes that a lower court has decided incorrectly, it overturns the contested decision and if necessary sends it back to the previous instance for a new decision. In addition to its work as the highest judicial authority, the Federal Supreme Court exercises administrative supervision over the Federal Criminal Court, the Federal Administrative Court and the Federal Patent Court.

The Federal Supreme Court is based in Lausanne and is divided into seven divisions, each with responsibility for

decisions in their specific area of law: two public law divisions, two civil law divisions, one criminal law division and two social law divisions. The latter two are based in Lucerne. The General Secretariat is responsible for the court's administrative duties.

The 38 Federal Supreme Court judges are elected by the United Federal Assembly (National Council and Council of States) on the recommendation of the parliamentary Judiciary Committee. The recommendations are based on considerations of professional experience, language, region and political party affiliation. Federal Supreme Court judges are elected for a six-year term of office with no restriction on how many times they may be re-elected. There is, however, an upper age limit of 68. The United Federal Assembly appoints one of the serving judges as president and one as vice-president of the Federal Supreme Court. In addition, there are 19 Federal Supreme Court substitute judges and a further 280 positions for court clerks and other court employees.

---

Seat: Lausanne  
[www.bger.ch](http://www.bger.ch)  
[www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch](http://www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch)



## The Federal Criminal Court



President:  
Tito Ponti

The Federal Criminal Court hears criminal cases which, due to their subject matter or importance, are subject to federal jurisdiction. In addition, the Court rules on appeals against decisions made by federal prosecution authorities, in mutual assistance cases and in disputes over jurisdiction.

Most criminal cases are decided in the first instance by cantonal courts. By law, only certain categories of offences fall under federal jurisdiction and are decided by the Federal Criminal Court. These include offences against federal interests, explosives offences, international cases of white-collar crime, cases relating to organised crime, corruption and money laundering, and offences related to civil aviation or war material. In response to appeals, the Federal Criminal Court also reviews orders made by federal prosecution authorities, and decisions made under administrative criminal law and in cases of mutual assistance in criminal matters. In addition, it rules on conflicts of jurisdiction involving prosecution authorities. Most decisions can be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court.

The court comprises a Criminal Chamber and a Lower Appeals Chamber. From January 1st, 2019, it also has a Higher Appeals Chamber. The judges are appointed by the Federal Assembly for a term of office of six years.

The Federal Criminal Court has been in existence since 2004 and is based in Bellinzona. The Court is comprised of 19 ordinary judges and 10 deputy judges. They are assisted by approximately 50 employees.

---

Seat: Bellinzona  
[www.bstger.ch](http://www.bstger.ch)  
[www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch](http://www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch)

## The Federal Administrative Court



President:  
Marianne Rytter

The Federal Administrative Court handles complaints against decisions made by authorities of the Federal Administration. Each year, Switzerland's largest federal court rules in around 7,500 cases relating to a very broad range of areas.

The Federal Administrative Court handles a very broad range of areas including the environment, transport, energy, taxation, education, economics, competition, social insurance, health, naturalisation as well as legislation on foreign nationals and asylum seekers. The issues are often far-reaching from a social standpoint. Examples include decisions of principle in asylum-related cases or in major transport and infrastructure projects. In certain areas, the Federal Administrative Court may also examine complaints against decisions made by cantonal authorities. Generally speaking, the judgments of the Federal Administrative Court may be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court. In certain areas (e.g. asylum), the Federal Administrative Court is the court of last instance.

The Federal Administrative Court is composed of six divisions, each responsible for a specific area of legislation. The judges of the Federal Administrative Court are elected by the United Federal Assembly for a six-year term.

Created back in 2007, the Federal Administrative Court has been based in St. Gallen. Each year, the court rules in around 7,500 cases. With around 77 judges and 357 court staff, the Federal Administrative Court is Switzerland's largest federal court.

---

Seat: St. Gallen  
[www.bvger.ch](http://www.bvger.ch)  
[www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch](http://www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch)

## The Federal Patent Court



President:  
Mark Schweizer

The Federal Patent Court handles patent disputes, mainly patent infringement cases and nullity actions. The involvement of judges with technical expertise enables cases to be processed swiftly and cost-effectively.

Technical inventions, which often come at considerable expense, are afforded valuable legal protection in the form of patents. In a dispute, the Federal Patent Court decides whether a patent for a technical innovation is legally valid and whether granted patent rights are infringed by a product or process. The Federal Patent Court may also handle other patent-related claims, such as cases where there is dispute over who holds a given patent, or how a patent may be used within the framework of a licence. Decisions of the Federal Patent Court may be appealed to the Federal Supreme Court.

The judges of the Federal Patent Court are elected by the Federal Assembly for a six-year term. The involvement of judges with technical expertise enables cases submitted to the Federal Patent Court to be processed swiftly and cost-effectively since there is no need for external technical expert opinions, which tend to be costly and time-consuming. A high percentage of cases are settled by compromise between the parties to the dispute.

Created in January 2012, the Federal Patent Court is based in St. Gallen. A particular feature of the Federal Patent Court is that English may be used for submissions and at hearings instead of a national language of Switzerland (German, French, Italian or Romansh) if both parties in the dispute give their consent.

---

Seat: St. Gallen  
[www.bpatger.ch](http://www.bpatger.ch)  
[www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch](http://www.eidgenoessischegerichte.ch)

**Publisher**

Federal Chancellery, Communication Support  
Federal Palace West Wing, 3003 Bern  
info@bk.admin.ch

**Content**

Information services of the Federal Chancellery, the departments,  
the Parliamentary Services and the federal courts

**Translation**

Language services of the Federal Chancellery, the departments,  
the Parliamentary Services and the federal courts

**Layout**

Federal Chancellery, Communication Support  
moxi ltd., Biel (creative concept and infographics)  
Atelier Bundi, Boll (cover concept)

**Photos**

Martin Mägli (cover)

Stéphane Schmutz STEMUTZ (p. 6, 24/25, 35, 46/47, 50/51, 54/55, 62/63, 66/67, 70/71,  
76/77, 78)

Béatrice Devènes (p. 29, 33, 39)

Mediamatics apprentice at the FOITT/FDF (pp. 40/41, 42)

Thomas Hodel (p. 14/15)

Rolf Dammer (p. 58/59)

Rolf Weiss (p. 3)

Keystone: Pascale Baeriswyl (p. 48), Corinne Cicéron Bühler (p. 49), Daniela Stoffel (p. 64)

Photos p. 10/11:

1st row (from left to right): Rütlichschwur by Charles L'Eplattenier: DDPS; State seal 1815:  
Federal Chancellery; Sonderbund War 1847: Illustrierte Geschichte der Schweiz, Zürich  
1961; Parliament Building dome 1901: Parliamentary Services; General Guisan 1939:  
DDPS; Federal Council 2003. Federal Chancellery

2nd row (from left to right): Albert Anker, Länderkinder 1876: Musée d'art et d'histoire,  
Neuchâtel; Federal Treaty 1815: Die Schweiz und ihre Geschichte. Lehrmittelverlag des  
Kantons Zürich, 1998; Federal Constitution 1848: Schweizer Geschichtsbuch 2, Berlin  
2010; Troops parading through Bern (First World War): Swiss Federal Archives; Parliament  
Building: Parliamentary Services

**Editorial deadline**

31 December 2018

**Print run**

Total	200000
• German	120000
• French	45000
• Italian	18000
• Romansh	2000
• English	15000

**Distribution**

This publication can be obtained free of charge from the  
Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics FOBL,  
Publication Distribution, 3003 Bern  
www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch  
Art. No. 104.617.e

41<sup>th</sup> edition, February 2019



[www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch)

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch)

[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch)

