

# THE SWISS CONFEDERATION A BRIEF GUIDE

# 2018



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
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Swiss Confederation

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## Cover

The glacier blue water of the Fedacla river meets the turquoise of Lake Silvaplana. The river continually washes fresh debris into the Fex delta: banks of gravel and mud form and then submerge. The photo was taken by a drone from a height of 90 metres.



“Direct democracy means much more than occasionally consulting the public.”

### Dear Reader

Of all the texts, reports and dispatches that are published by the federal authorities – and there are an awful lot of them – ‘The Swiss Confederation – A Brief Guide’ – is probably the most frequently requested. Two hundred thousand copies of the 2018 edition have been printed, even though the guide has also been available on the ‘CH info’ app since 2016. The overview it gives of our political system, government, the administrative authorities, our parliament and the courts is not ‘just’ teaching material for schools. The interest shown in the guide is also an expression of the close relationship between society and politics.

In a sense, each voting citizen in Switzerland is a politician, and politically active, just to different degrees. Every three months we are called to the ballot box to make political decisions; we follow the debates or take part in them. Someone launches an initiative, someone else a referendum, and others write letters to newspapers, tweet or speak up at their communal assembly.

Direct democracy means much more than occasionally consulting the public. It is an embrace, relatively confusing, sometimes time-consuming, delicately balanced, permanently rotating and constantly changing mechanism, whose purpose is to include in the decision-making process all those who must live with the consequences of the decision. It is of immense value, but only functions when everyone who wants to be a part of it has an idea of how it functions.

This guide contributes to that understanding. The fact that so many people order and, hopefully, read it is indeed a good sign.

*Walter Thurnherr*

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr

INTERVIEW AND FACTS  
SWITZERLAND

6

FOUNDATIONS  
DIRECT DEMOCRACY

14



|   |    |
|---|----|
| An interview with President<br>Alain Berset ..... | 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 |



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**CH info**

**Master program THE SWISS CONFEDERATION  
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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

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

The large and small chambers \_\_\_\_ 30

Parliamentary mechanisms \_\_\_\_ 32

Semi-professional parliament \_\_\_\_ 33

The Parliamentary Services \_\_\_\_ 34

My viewpoint \_\_\_\_\_ 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

## Meeting with President Alain Berset

# THE PRESIDENT AND THE FILM DIRECTOR

Swiss film director Ursula Meier was somewhat surprised when Alain Berset suggested she take on the role of interviewer. Nevertheless, she was curious and keen to take part in the question-and-answer session. The

meeting took place at the Federal Office of Culture in Bern, where a lively discussion about the state of our society, culture and film quickly developed.



**There have always been close links between art and politics. Politicians like to use art to raise their profile. But it's rare for politicians to let themselves be put on the spot by an artist. What prompted you to pick an artist as your interviewer?**

Over the years I've become increasingly aware of the huge part that culture – in the broadest sense of the word – plays in our country. We have a complex linguistic, regional and social mix, and it's often culture that unites us and creates national cohesion. That's why I wanted to talk about Switzerland and the world with a Swiss artist.

**Our society is increasingly dominated by images. Why is greater emphasis not placed on image analysis in the classroom?**

It's not just schools that have this educational task, but society as a whole. In a direct democracy such as ours, the

public has to be in a position to understand and interpret information as well as possible. We are used to seeing information presented well and in a variety of forms. The challenge is to maintain a critical approach. A good education is vital, particularly in terms of digital media. Today, citizens have to be able to understand a wide variety of messages whether they appear on social networks or in background articles.

**The late German artist Joseph Beuys once described art as food that people need in order to live. What are you doing to ensure that art isn't just seen as a cultural 'pleasure', an added extra for the privileged classes, but as a way of shaping our identity and relations with the world?**

In my work I try to show that art is necessary to our lives. I do my best to improve active and passive involvement in

cultural life – by acknowledging the valuable role played by creative artists and all those involved in the cultural scene, and by showing appreciation for all the work done by clubs and associations.

I see art as the most innovative element of culture, but culture provides access to art. It is an incentive to explore further. When debates arise about the dichotomy between culture and art, the intention is usually to justify cutbacks on the funding culture relies on in order to flourish. I try to ensure that an artistic elite isn't played off against a broader public which identifies with traditional popular culture. The dichotomy is totally outdated.

“The challenge is to maintain a critical approach to images and information.”

**I was born in 1971, the year the vote was held on women's voting rights at federal level. According to a World Economic Forum report on gender equality, Switzerland has fallen from 11th to 21st place, while the Nordic countries remain uncontested leaders at the top of the rankings. How do you explain that?**

Women's involvement in political and economic life remains a major issue. We have taken a host of measures to bring about change, but admittedly some other countries are making more rapid progress in this area than we are. That's why we have dropped down in certain rankings. In the long term, gender equality can only be achieved in Switzerland if women are actively encouraged to play a greater role, if work-life bal-

ance is improved, and naturally if equal pay is encouraged. The forthcoming popular initiative on paternity leave will generate further debate, which shows that the topic is of interest to the public.

**When my film *Home* was screened in the US – the story of a family living by the side of a motorway cut off from the rest of the world – film critics there asked me if the film was a metaphor for Europe's place in the world. And when the film was screened in Europe I was asked if it was a metaphor for Switzerland's place in Europe.**

That's not how I interpreted your film at all. For me the isolation depicted in *Home* is a metaphor for the period of uncertainty that we have been experiencing for a number of years now. Switzerland's isolation is a myth. In reality Switzerland is one of the most open countries in the world. It's often been involved in the great social movements down the ages, like the Reformation, for example. It is a world leader in multilateralism, especially given the importance of International Geneva, and with the Gotthard tunnel it provides a key transport route through Europe.

**Contemporary art often makes political statements on subjects such as power, money, relationships, images, language, the body, reality and others. Why does politics not show greater interest in these innovative works, which examine other forms of coexistence?**

On the contrary, I think that there is a great deal of contact between art and politics, although it's not an institutionalised relationship. Connections often come about unconsciously. There are also times when the two sides don't understand one another, when tensions exist, which can lead to interesting debates about politics and society.

**Do you have to be a good actor to be a politician?**

No, not necessarily. As a politician you can only take on a single role. So it's better to be true to yourself. Certain moments in a person's political career

can sometimes be a bit staged. When I was 16 I was in a small student film, and I have to admit I wasn't particularly talented.

Ursula Meier is an internationally renowned film maker. The film *Home*, starring Isabelle Huppert, was selected for the Cannes film festival and received numerous awards. In 2012 *L'enfant d'en haut*, starring Léa Seydoux and Kacey Mottet Klein, won a Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival. Just like *Home* in 2010, the film won three Swiss film awards, including Best Film, and it was Switzerland's entry for that year's Oscars. Ursula Meier will finish work on her new film, *Journal de ma tête*, starring Fanny Ardant and Kacey Mottet Klein, early this year.

SWITZERLAND



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

| Category | Percentage |
|----------|------------|
| Orange   | 75%        |
| Purple   | 25%        |

There are approximately 8.4 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%). 15 per cent come from non-European states.

French  
23%

German  
63%

Romansh  
0.5%

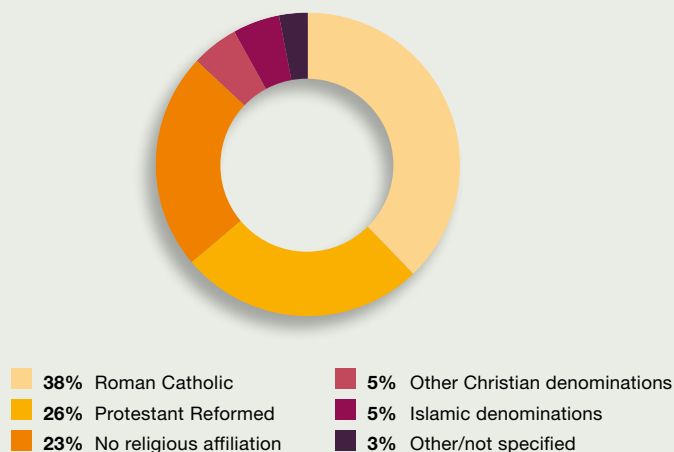
Italian  
8%

Other languages  
23%

Two main languages may be given

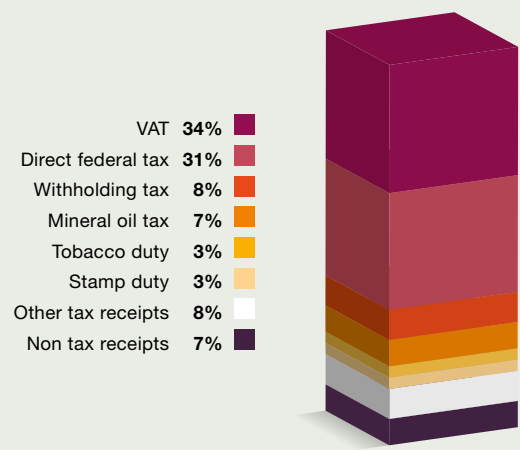
Switzerland is a multilingual country. There are four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. 63 per cent of the population primarily speak (Swiss-)German, 23 per cent French, 8 per cent Italian and 0.5 per cent Romansh. English, Portuguese, Albanian (3 to 5 per cent of the population)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

Christians make up 70 per cent of people living in Switzerland. Catholics are the majority in 14 cantons; Protestants are the majority in 3. In the remaining cantons, there is no clear majority. Regardless of whether they are Christian, Muslim or Jewish, religion does not play a central role in the everyday lives of most people. 23 per cent of people are not members of any religion – this number has been on the rise for several years.



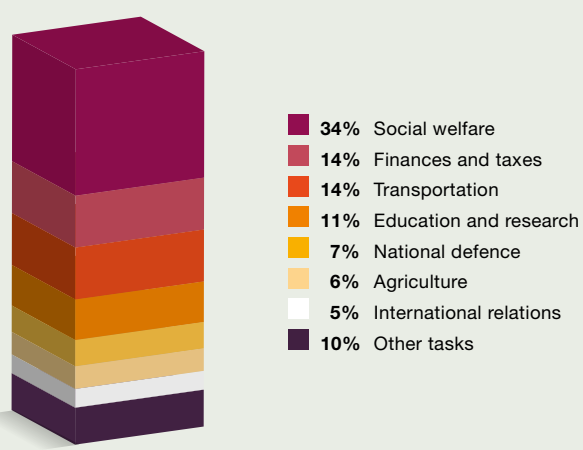
# FEDERAL FINANCES

Receipts of CHF 67.01 billion (2016)



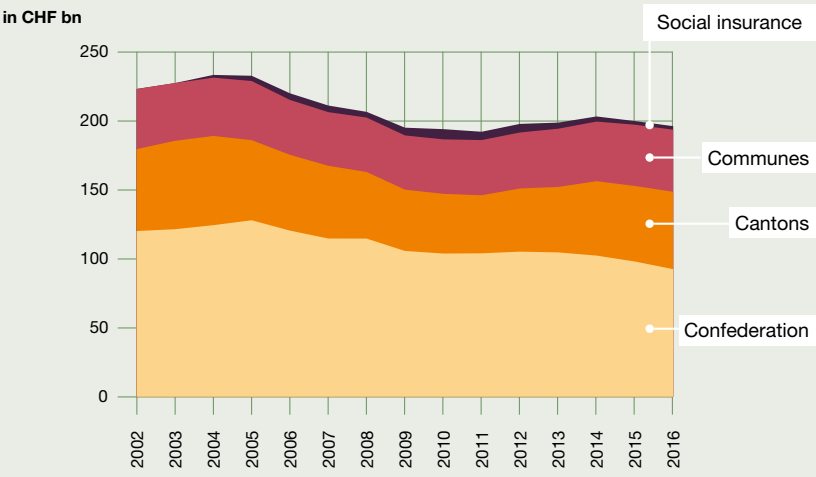
Direct federal tax and VAT are the Confederation’s main sources of receipts, and currently bring in a total of CHF 44 billion. Direct federal tax is raised on private individuals’ income (progressively, maximum 11.5%), and on business profit (8.5%). VAT is 7.7% on most goods and services. The Federal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

Expenditure of CHF 66.26 billion (2016)



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.

## Reducing debt



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).

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

## 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 'Eitgenozze' [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

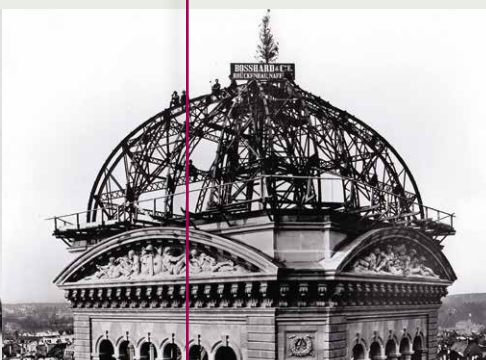
## TOWARDS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY

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 DIVER- SITY 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.

# 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.

- 10 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 31 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, seven 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 13, 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



In the run-up to each popular vote over 5 million brochures explaining the individual proposals are printed and sent out by post.

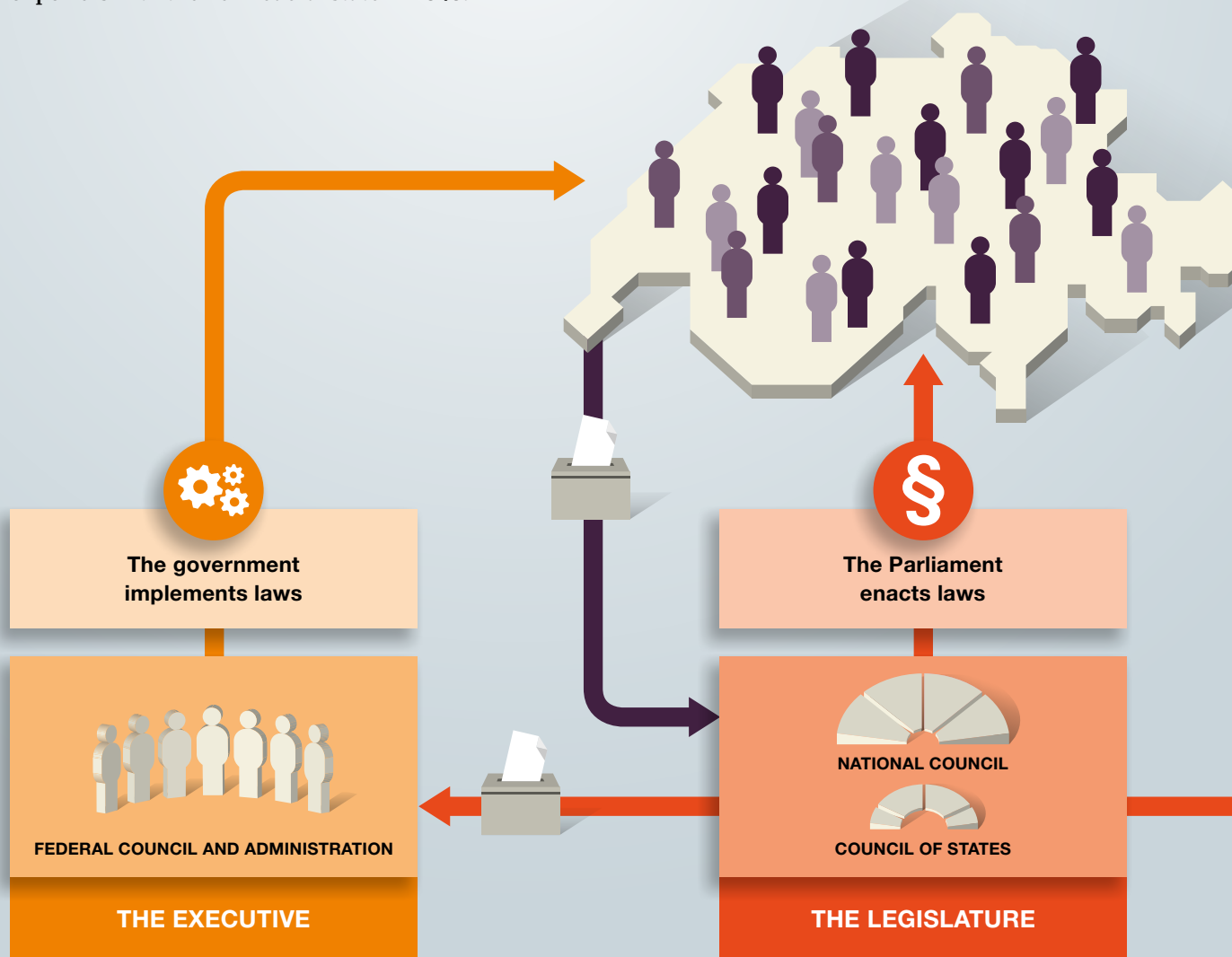
|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Separation of powers | 16 |
| Elections and votes  | 18 |
| Parties              | 20 |



## 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.

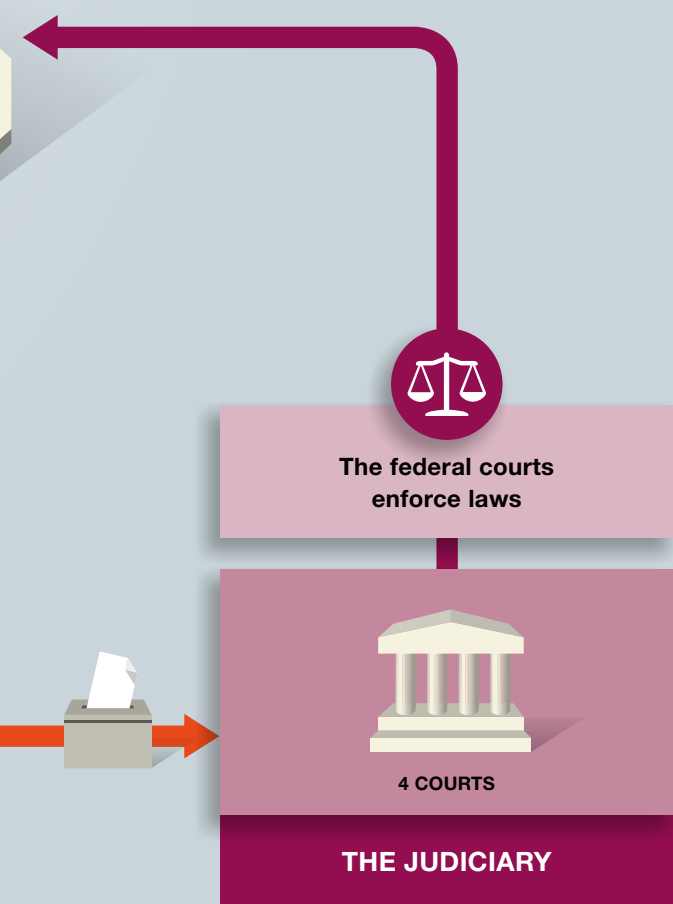


### Implementing laws

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 5.3 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.

## 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).

### Polling calendar 2018

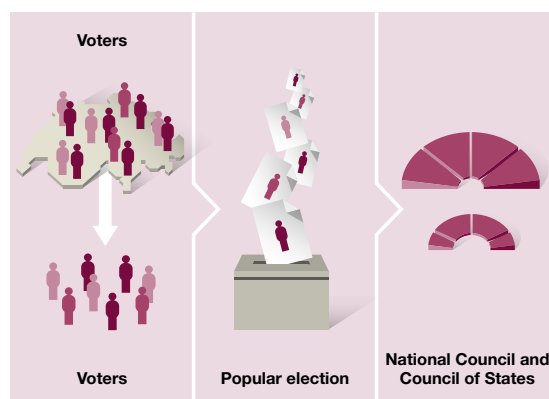
The Federal Council decides at least four months in advance which proposals will be voted on. The dates on which the ballots will be held are known long before then: currently all the dates have been fixed from now until 2036.

In 2018, federal ballots will be held on the following Sundays: 4 March, 10 June, 23 September and 25 November.



Videos about the proposals being voted on:  
[www.admin.ch/videos](http://www.admin.ch/videos)

## 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.

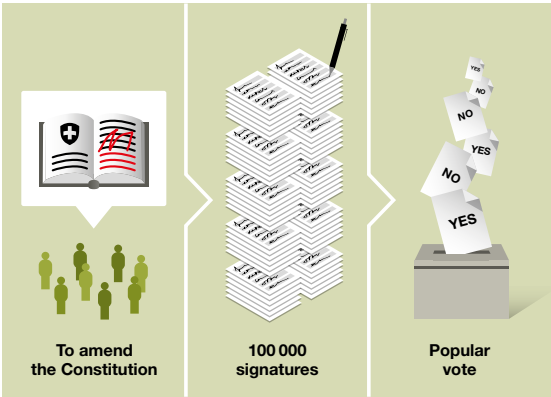
### National Council and Council of States

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

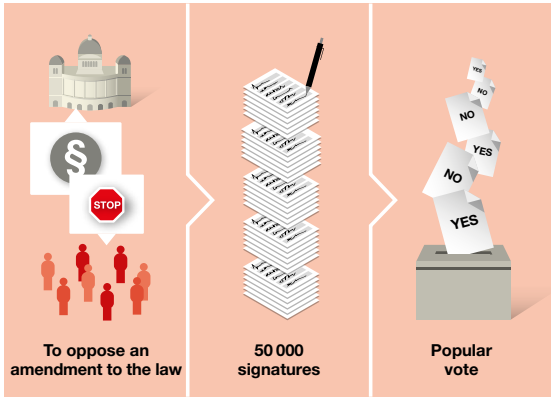
Citizens can launch a popular initiative to demand a change to the Constitution – but not to any other form of law. Any Swiss citizen who is eligible to vote can sign a popular initiative, and a group of at least seven citizens (the initiative committee) can launch their own popular initiative.

### 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.
- 209 popular initiatives have been voted on since then. Only 22 have been accepted.
- As of 31.12.2017, 10 initiatives were at the signature-gathering stage, 14 were pending before the Federal Council or Parliament, and two were 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.

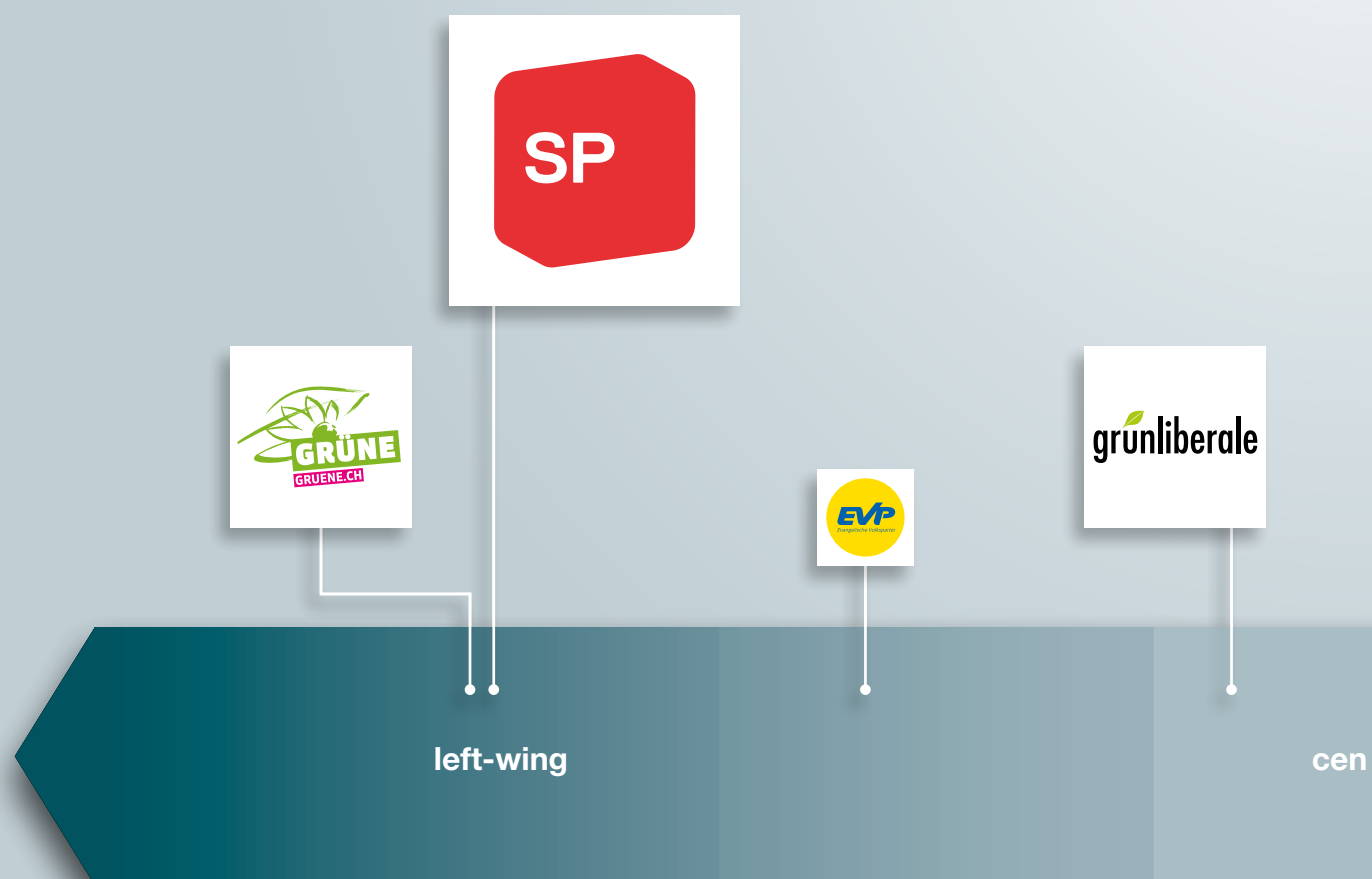
- The referendum was introduced in 1874.
- Since then, 185 optional referendums have been held, 80 of which were unsuccessful.
- As of 31.12.2017, the referendum period was running for 14 federal acts and decrees. Signatures were being gathered for a vote on one of the proposals.

## 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-



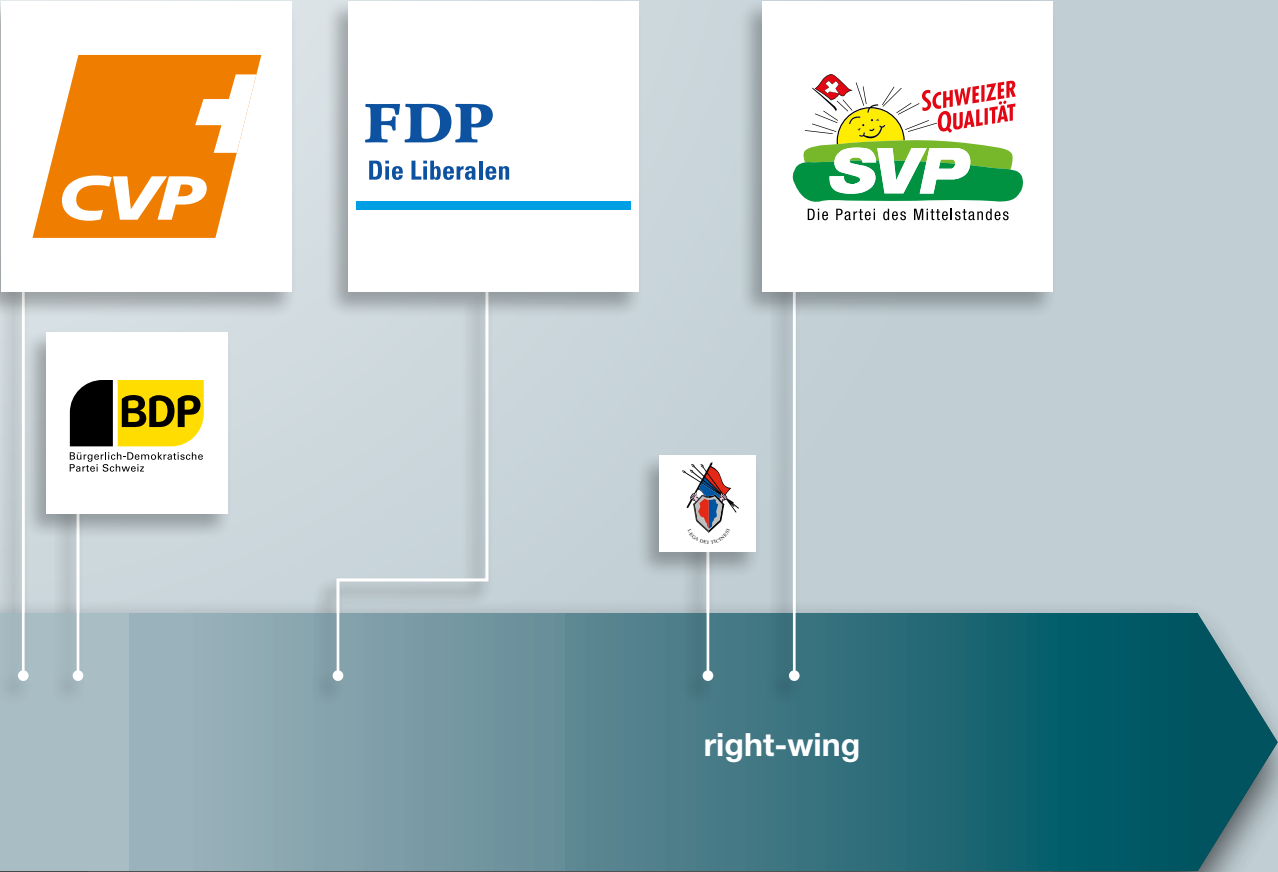
### What does 'left-wing' mean?

- 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


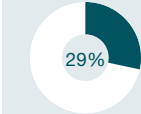




The twelve political parties at federal level

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.


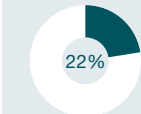






SVP Swiss People's Party



|   |   |  |   |  |                                      |
|---|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
|  <div>Party President<br/><b>Albert Rösti</b><br/><a href="http://www.svp.ch">www.svp.ch</a></div> |  | Council of States<br><b>5</b><br> | National Council<br><b>65</b><br> 13  52 | Federal Council<br><b>2</b><br> | Founded in<br><b>1971 (BGB 1917)</b> |
|---|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|


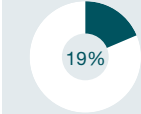





SP Swiss Social Democratic Party



|   |   |   |   |  |                           |
|---|---|---|---|--|---------------------------|
|  <div>Party President<br/><b>Christian Levrat</b><br/><a href="http://www.sp.ch">www.sp.ch</a></div> |  | Council of States<br><b>12</b><br> 4  8 | National Council<br><b>43</b><br> 25  18 | Federal Council<br><b>2</b><br> 1  1 | Founded in<br><b>1888</b> |
|---|---|---|---|--|---------------------------|


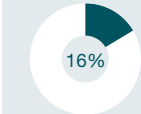





FDP FDP.The Liberals



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


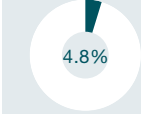



CVP Christian Democratic People's Party



|  |   |  |  |  |                           |
|--|---|--|--|--|---------------------------|
|  <div>Party President<br/><b>Gerhard Pfister</b><br/><a href="http://www.cvp.ch">www.cvp.ch</a></div> |  | Council of States<br><b>13</b><br> 2  11 | National Council<br><b>27</b><br> 9  18 | Federal Council<br><b>1</b><br> | Founded in<br><b>1912</b> |
|--|---|--|--|--|---------------------------|


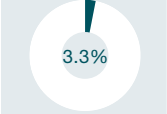



The Greens Swiss Green Party



|  |   |  |   |  |                           |
|--|---|--|---|--|---------------------------|
|  <div>Party President<br/><b>Regula Rytz</b><br/><a href="http://www.gruene.ch">www.gruene.ch</a></div> |  | Council of States<br><b>1</b><br> | National Council<br><b>11</b><br> 5  6 |  | Founded in<br><b>1983</b> |
|--|---|--|---|--|---------------------------|





BDP Conservative Democratic Party



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

glp Swiss Green Liberal Party



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

EVP Swiss Evangelical People's Party



|   |   |  |   |                           |
|---|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|  <div>Party President<br/><b>Marianne Streiff-Feller</b><br/><a href="http://www.evppev.ch">www.evppev.ch</a></div> |  |  | National Council<br><b>2</b><br> 1  1 | Founded in<br><b>1919</b> |
|---|---|--|---|---------------------------|

LdT Lega dei Ticinesi



|  |   |  |   |                           |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|  <div>Coordinator<br/><b>Attilio Bignasca</b><br/><a href="http://www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch">www.lega-dei-ticinesi.ch</a></div> |  |  | National Council<br><b>2</b><br> 1  1 | Founded in<br><b>1991</b> |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|

CSP OW Christian Social Party Obwalden



|  |   |  |   |                           |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|
|   <div>Co-Presidents<br/><b>Sepp Stalder</b><br/><b>Christian Schäli</b><br/><a href="http://www.csp-ow.ch">www.csp-ow.ch</a></div> |  |  | National Council<br><b>1</b><br> | Founded in<br><b>1956</b> |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------------|

MCG Citizen's Movement of Geneva



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

PdA Partei der Arbeit der Schweiz



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



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

The legislature

# PARLIAMENT



|  |    |                            |    |
|--|----|----------------------------|----|
| National Council and Council of States | 26 | The Parliamentary Services | 34 |
| How Parliament is organised            | 28 | My viewpoint               | 35 |
| The large and small chambers           | 30 | How new laws come about    | 36 |
| Parliamentary mechanisms               | 32 | The Parliament Building    | 38 |
| Semi-professional parliament           | 33 |                            |    |



The newly renovated Federal Council room is always the focal point of Federal Council elections. This is also where the ballot papers were counted when Ignazio Cassis was elected to the Federal Council.

## 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 40,000 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.



Interview with Dominique de Buman, President of the National Council:  
[www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch) (in French) > BLOG

Interview with Karin Keller-Sutter, President of the Council of States:  
[www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch) (in German) > BLOG



Chamber of the National Council



### The two ways to Parliament

National Council elections take place in autumn every four years under harmonised national rules and, in most cantons, under a system of proportional representation. Each canton forms a constituency and receives at least one seat. Elections to the Council of States are held according to cantonal law, and are held under a majority or first-past-the-post system except in the cantons of Jura and Neuchâtel. They are held at the same time as the National Council elections in all cantons except Appenzell Innerrhoden, which elects its representative at a later date. There is therefore no full election for the Council of States and consequently no legislature period.

There are significant differences between the two chambers in terms of the party political make-up, due in part to the electoral system: in the National Council the SVP is currently by far the strongest party with 65 members, followed by the SP with 43, the FDP-Liberals with 33 and the CVP with 27 representatives. However, in the Council of States the CVP and the FDP have 13 seats each, the SP 12, and the SVP 5.

### Majority system and proportional representation

Under proportional representation, seats are allocated according to the number of votes received by the parties and then to the best-placed candidates in those parties. This system enables even small parties to enter Parliament.

Under the majority system (first-past-the-post), the person elected is the one with the most votes. This method tends to favour large parties and well-known candidates.

In the Council of States, the fact that the vote of each canton carries the same weight regardless of its size and population creates a certain equilibrium between large and small cantons.

### Fresh elections every four years

Following the elections at the end of a legislature period around 30 per cent of seats go to new members. In the course of a legislature period around 10 per cent of council members step down and are replaced. The next general elections will be held in 2019.



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

Chamber of the Council of States



Elected – what now?

HOW PARLIAMENT IS ORGANISED

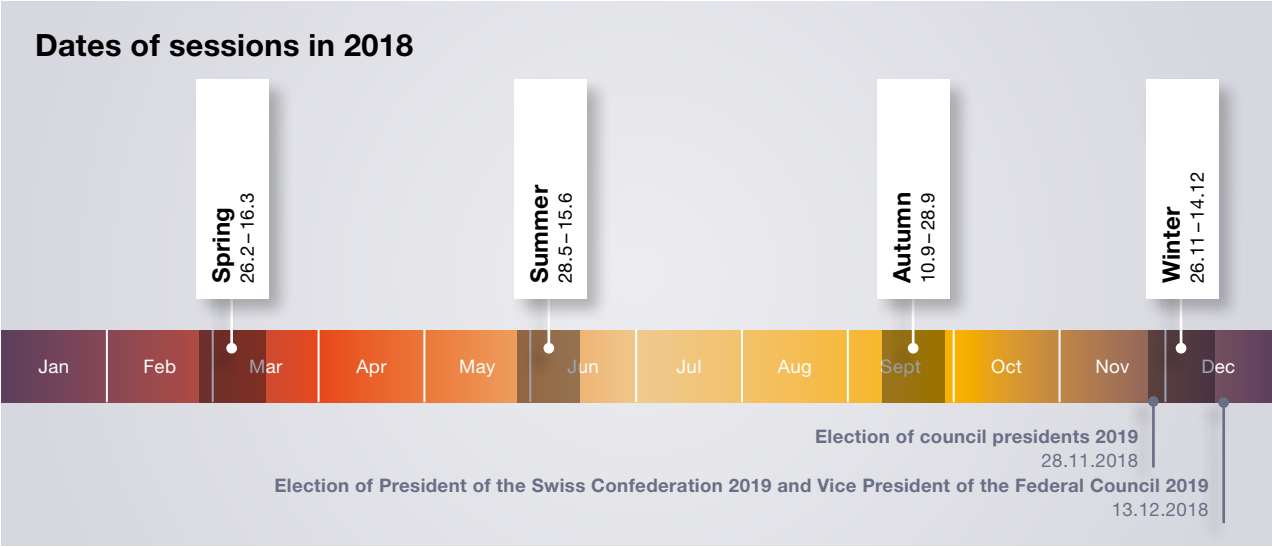
Parliamentary bodies

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.

Discussion on the fringes of the debate



## Training for the top job

Presiding over the chamber is a demanding job. In addition, the term of office is limited to one year. Given that a first and second vice president is also elected, there is effectively a two-year training period in which the future office holder has time to learn the ropes. So despite the frequent rotations, a large degree of continuity is maintained.

## Women in Parliament

Women in Switzerland have only had the right to vote and be elected since 1971. Their share of seats in Parliament has risen from 5 per cent in 1971 to 30 per cent today. In comparison, on average 23 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women; that figure is around 40 per cent in the Scandinavian countries. The country with the highest share of women in parliament is Ruanda at over 56 per cent.

## Is Parliament getting younger?

Around twenty years ago, most council members were between 40 and 60 years old; in the 1920s, a fifth of representatives were under 40. Today, there is a relatively even spread of age groups. Currently the youngest member is 29 and the oldest is 75.

## Two equals

# THE LARGE AND SMALL CHAMBERS

The two-chamber system creates a balance between the large and small cantons and gives more power to the various linguistic regions. A two-chamber system is not always the norm – in many countries, parliament has only one chamber. Where there are two chambers, generally speaking the larger chamber, which in most cases represents the electorate, has a greater say than the smaller chamber, which often represents the regions. In Switzerland, the situation is different: both chambers have **the same powers** and deal with the same business in the same way. This also applies to budgetary matters. The two councils take turns to debate items of business first. Both councils must reach reconcilable decisions if the decisions are to be valid. Even the individual members of the Council of States and the National Council have the same rights: any member can submit a draft law or mandate to the Federal Council. Two chambers with **completely equal rights** are also found in the United States Congress, where the Senate and House of Representatives have identical powers. In Europe on the other hand, Switzerland is the only country that has this system. Even the cantons have only one chamber of parliament.

Draft laws are debated up to three times by each council so that identical decisions can ultimately be reached. Sometimes this can be difficult, but in most cases it can be achieved because each council is ready to make compromises and adjustments, even though neither chamber operates in quite the same way. Due to **differences in their political composition**, they often do not reach the same result when they vote. In addition, the Council of States is more representative of the cantons than the National Council. The size of the chambers also has an influence: the 46 members of the Council of States can speak out at any

time on any matter, whereas complex rules apply on when the 200 members of the National Council are allowed to speak, which makes spontaneous speeches rare. For this reason, it is easier to influence the result of a vote in the Council of States by presenting strong arguments than in the National Council.

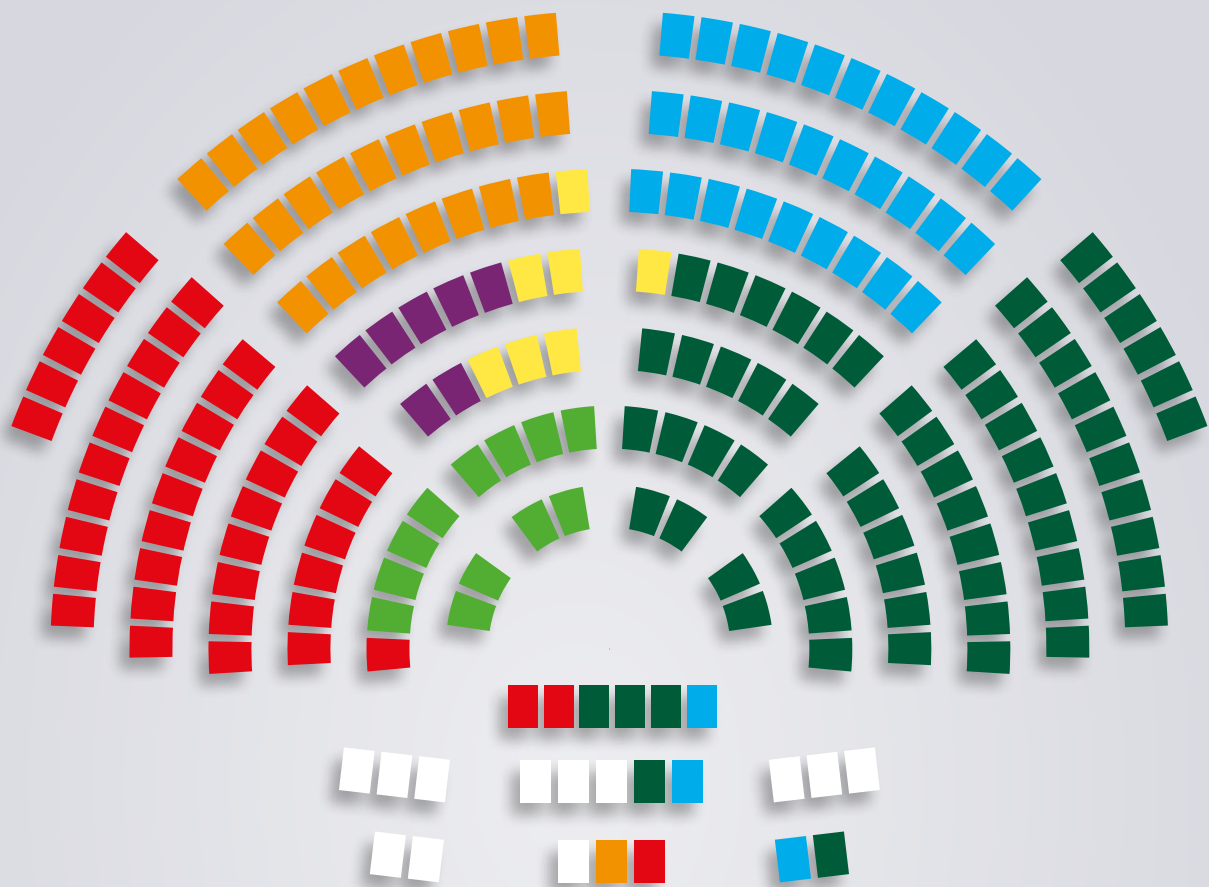
It often takes quite some time before both chambers agree on identical wording for a new law. But when the decision has finally been taken and the hurdle of a potential referendum has been overcome, the new law has proper substance. The predictability and **stability of political decisions** is a key factor in Switzerland's success and prosperity.

## Alliances

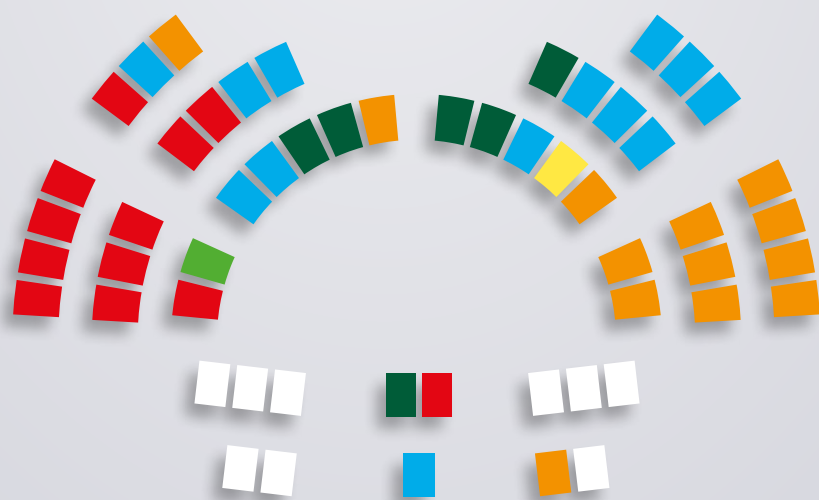
No parliamentary group can get an item of business through Parliament alone; to achieve this they need to form alliances with other groups. In most cases where controversial issues are concerned, Parliament tends to divide into a conservative and a left-leaning camp. Ultimately, whether a proposal is accepted or rejected is decided by the political centre, depending on which camp it joins. Occasionally, an 'unholy alliance' emerges from the debate, i. e. one where the left (the SP and the Greens) and the right (SVP) coalesce to push through fundamental changes to a proposal or to overturn one – sometimes for completely opposing reasons.

Parliamentary members A–Z and by canton:  
[www.parliament.ch](http://www.parliament.ch) > Organs

# ALLOCATION OF SEATS NATIONAL COUNCIL



# ALLOCATION OF SEATS COUNCIL OF STATES



| Parliamentary groups                       |   |
|--|---|
| <span style="color: #006400;">■</span> SVP | <span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span> The Greens |
| <span style="color: #FF0000;">■</span> SP  | <span style="color: #FFFF00;">■</span> BDP        |
| <span style="color: #00B0F0;">■</span> FDP | <span style="color: #800080;">■</span> GLP        |
| <span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> CVP |   |

## 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 1995 each council member filed an average of 3.9 procedural requests every year. 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. In 2017, a total of 2090 procedural requests were dealt with (8.5 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 to provide information on significant domestic or international events.

### 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 is the committees' job, as they conduct initial discussions on all 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

## The hub of Parliament

# THE PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

**From IT support to preparing and following up on committee meetings – the Parliamentary Services support council members in fulfilling their duties. In terms of the separation of powers it is answerable to Parliament and operates 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 deputy has a host of questions, is inundated with information, expected to hit the ground running, but first has to become acquainted with how Parliament works. At the start of a new legislature period, the Parliamentary Services with its 309 staff (217 full-time equivalents) has a great deal to do.

When Parliament is in session, all the various units of the Parliamentary Services are kept busy: from the front desk to the desks of the council presidents, from council members' workstations to the restaurant, from the smallest to the largest meeting rooms – behind the scenes and in full public view.

The debates are written up while the session is still in progress and published in the Official Bulletin, so that individual statements and the results of the votes can be read online at [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch) around an hour later.

### Diverse range of services

Things are slightly calmer in between sessions, but even then there are often committee meetings. These are usually prepared by the relevant committee secretariats with practical support provided by the team of ushers. In order to prepare for the committee meetings, members are provided with 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 request personalised documentation packs and advice for more in-depth information, or to help prepare for visits at home or abroad.

The work of the Parliamentary Services also includes drafting press releases, arranging press conferences, organising visits by Swiss delegations abroad and receiving foreign delegations in Bern. Here too the Parliamentary Services assist council members in word and deed.

### Information online and in all official languages

Council members can find most of the information they need on the intranet. Each council member receives a laptop if they wish, or at least the necessary codes to log in to Parliament's IT network. 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. During the sessions debates are streamed live online.

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 Parliament Building: 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. It also has to be looked after. The activities that take centre stage would not be possible without all the work done behind the scenes: work would soon grind to a halt if the wastepaper baskets were never emptied, if there was no heating in winter or if there was nowhere to get a coffee...



### Parliamentary Services

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

A fun approach to the work of Parliament

MY VIEWPOINT


What can Switzerland do to guarantee its energy supply into the future? Should the country be rethinking its policy on drugs? What measures are needed to ensure younger generations will also receive an old age pension from the state? These are some of the issues that young people can debate in the game ‘Mein Standpunkt’ – My Viewpoint – created by the Parliamentary Services.

The game begins in the classroom. The students take on the role of parliamentarians and form committees in which they draw up possible solutions to current political issues. They research, discuss and formulate an attention-grabbing proposal, which they then submit to the Parliamentary Services.

After this intensive preparatory phase, the class then migrates to the Parliamentary Building, where it is given a guided tour of the domed hall and the council chambers. The highlight is without doubt the visit to the National Council chamber. Here the youth committees present their proposals and try to convince their schoolmates of their arguments in the ensuing debate.

Like the council president in the ‘real’ parliament, a game master ensures speakers keep to their allotted time. Once all questions have been answered and counter-arguments have been put forward, a vote is held. It then becomes clear which proposals have a chance of finding favour with a majority in the class!

After the game, the decisions are published on the [www.juniorparl.ch](http://www.juniorparl.ch) website, where they may attract the attention of the right parliamentarians. Who knows, perhaps the policy proposals of the future will have their origins in the classroom?



Platform for the Swiss parliament's activities for young people  
[www.juniorparl.ch](http://www.juniorparl.ch) > Play the “My point of view” game (available in German, French and Italian)

Class 2f from the baccalaureate school in Oberwil (BL) holding a debate in the National Council chamber.



## 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

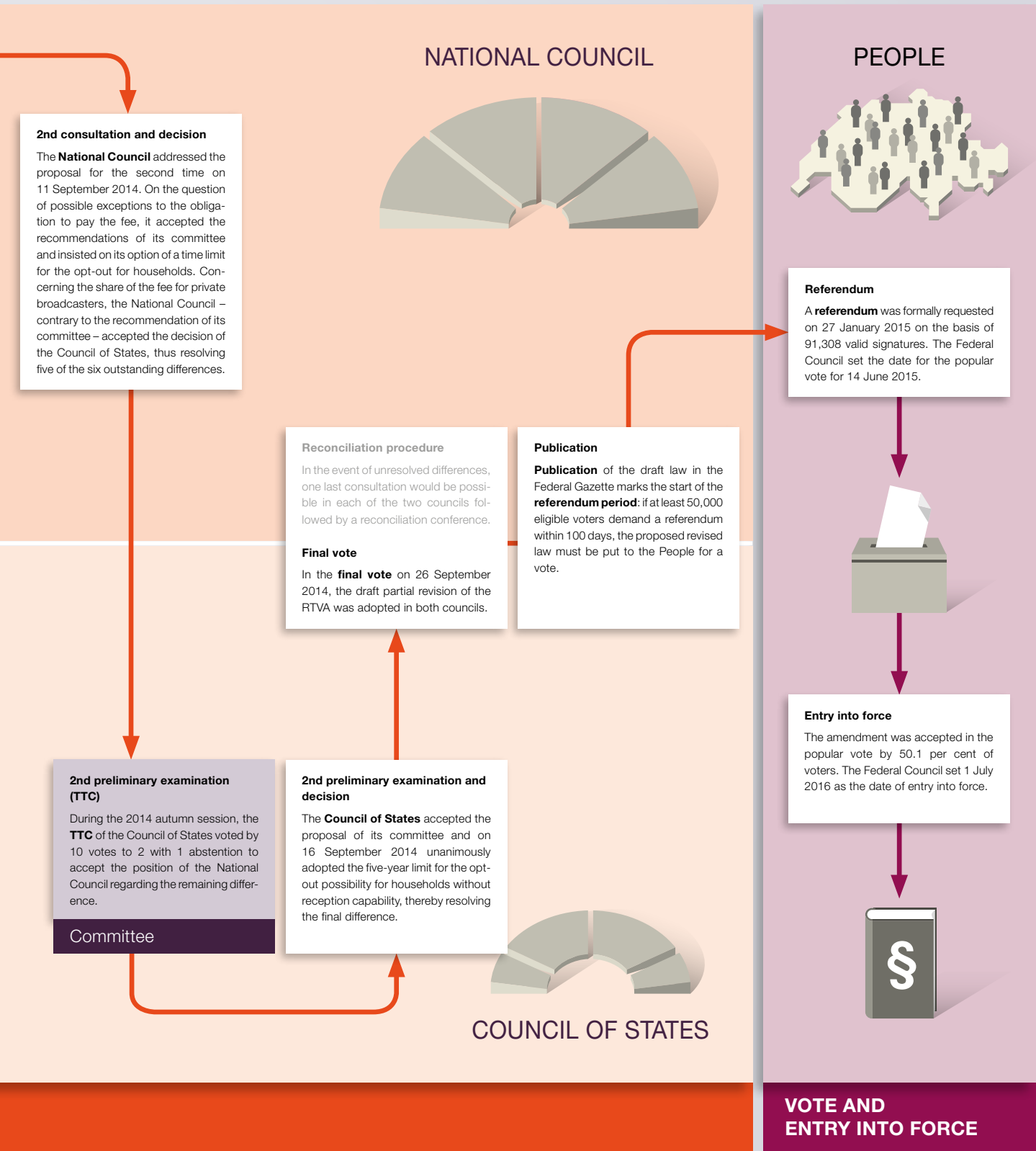
On 19 June 2014, the **Council of States** voted unanimously in favour of examining the proposal. In the course of a four-hour debate, the majority of the council followed the National Council's decision, but added some changes, whereupon the Council of States followed its advisory committee without 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

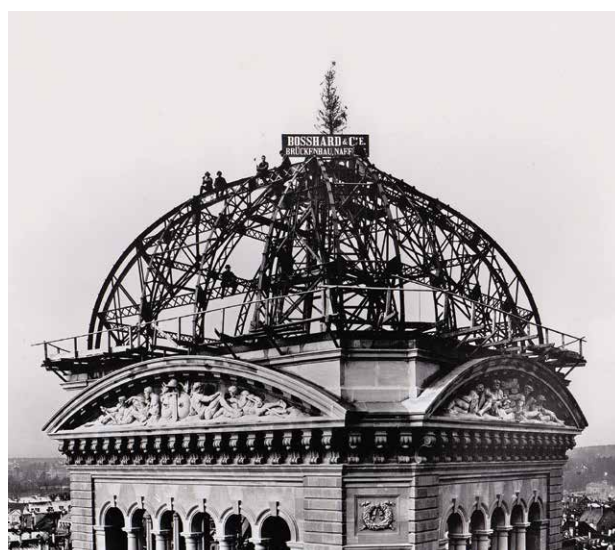
### Construction in stages

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

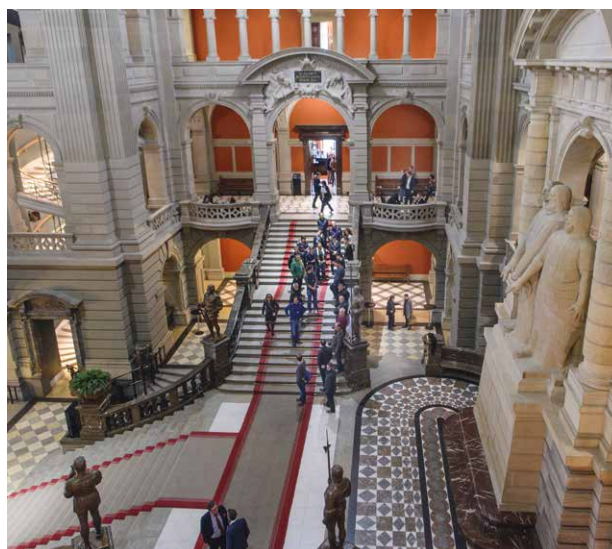
Wherever there are political goings-on, the media are never far behind. For a number of years now there has been a large, modern media centre on Bundesgasse, but camera teams can still be found in the Federal Palace itself most days, looking for politicians to interview.

### 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 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.

## A governing college

# THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

**Alain Berset**



**President of the Swiss Confederation**  
Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs  
Federal Councillor since 2012

**Party affiliation:**

**SP**

**Ueli Maurer**



**Vice President of the Federal Council**  
Head of the Federal Department of Finance  
Federal Councillor since 2009

**Party affiliation:**

**SVP**

**Doris Leuthard**



Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications  
Federal Councillor since 2006

**Party affiliation:**

**CVP**

**Simonetta Sommaruga**



Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police  
Federal Councillor since 2010

**Party affiliation:**

**SP**

**Johann N. Schneider-Ammann**



Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research  
Federal Councillor since 2010

**Party affiliation:**

**FDP**

**Guy Parmelin**



Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport  
Federal Councillor since 2016

**Party affiliation:**

**SVP**

**Ignazio Cassis**



Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
Federal Councillor since 1 November 2017

**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. In 2015 the United Federal Assembly (joint session of the National Council and Council of States) elected five men and two women to the Federal Council. As Didier Burkhalter stepped down in the autumn of 2017, the Assembly elected Ignazio Cassis as his successor.

Alain Berset is President of the Swiss Confederation in 2018. He is equal to the other members, but chairs cabinet meetings and represents the government. The Federal Chancellor is the Federal Council's chief of staff. He too is 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.

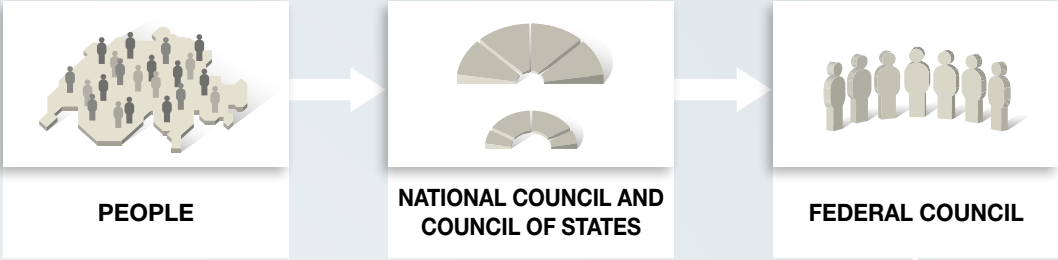


Film "The Federal Council – A Brief Guide"  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) > "Der Schweizerische Bundesrat"

Organisation

FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION





|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>FDF</b><br>Federal Department of Finance<br><br><b>Ueli Maurer</b><br>Head of Department | <b>EAER</b><br>Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research<br><br><b>Johann N. Schneider-Ammann</b><br>Head of Department | <b>DETEC</b><br>Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications<br><br><b>Doris Leuthard</b><br>Head of Department | <b>FCh</b><br>Federal Chancellery<br><br><b>Walter Thurnherr</b><br>Federal Chancellor |
| <b>General Secretariat</b><br>GS-FDF  | <b>General Secretariat</b><br>GS-EAER  | <b>General Secretariat</b><br>GS-DETEC   | <b>Office of the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner</b> FDPIC        |
| <b>State Secretariat for International Financial Matters</b> SIF                            | <b>State Secretariat for Economic Affairs</b> SECO   | <b>Federal Office of Transport</b> FOT   |  |
| <b>Federal Finance Administration</b> FFA   | <b>State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation</b> SERI   | <b>Federal Office of Civil Aviation</b> FOCA   |  |
| <b>Federal Office of Personnel</b> FOPER  | <b>Federal Office for Agriculture</b> FOAG   | <b>Swiss Federal Office of Energy</b> SFOE   |  |
| <b>Federal Tax Administration</b> FTA   | <b>Federal Office for National Economic Supply</b> FONES   | <b>Federal Roads Office</b> FEDRO  |  |
| <b>Federal Customs Administration</b> FCA   | <b>Federal Office for Housing</b> FOH  | <b>Federal Office of Communications</b> OFCOM  |  |
| <b>Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunications</b> FOITT       | <b>Office of the Price Supervisor</b>  | <b>Federal Office for the Environment</b> FOEN   |  |
| <b>Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics</b> FOBL                                      | <b>Competition Commission</b> COMCO  | <b>Federal Office for Spatial Development</b> ARE  |  |
| <b>Federal IT Steering Unit</b> FITSU   | <b>Federal Institutes of Technology Group</b> ETH Domain   | <b>Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate</b> ENSI  |  |
| <b>Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority</b> FINMA                                   | <b>Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training</b> SFIVET  |  |  |
| <b>Swiss Federal Audit Office</b> SFAO  | <b>Swiss Innovation Agency</b> Innosuisse  |  |  |
| <b>Federal Pension Fund</b> PUBLICA   |  |  |  |

The organisations with a white background are largely independent.





Switzerland is helping refugees in Jordan to rebuild their lives.



The head of the Department of Foreign Affairs is Ignazio Cassis. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 1 November 2017. Parliament elected him as the successor to Didier Burkhalter, who stood down.

**Providing greater security, peace, and prospects**

We live in times of great uncertainty, with numerous crises. There is tension between East and West, there is animosity between and within states, and there are violent conflicts, as in Syria. The effects of instability and people’s lack of prospects are also being felt in Europe, in the form of refugee flows and terrorist attacks.

Providing greater security, peace and prospects for people locally.

Diplomacy and the humanitarian system are under huge pressure, and this is also true of Switzerland. Switzerland mediates in conflicts and provides victims with water, food, medicines and shelter. Around 130 million people rely on this essential aid, and 65 million people – of whom half are children and young adults – have been forced to leave their homes. Switzerland wants to protect such young people in particular, and give them prospects for the future in the place they come from. It therefore invests in vocational training and in schools for displaced persons, for example in Jordan and Lebanon, and supports job programmes for refugees. With these and other measures, Switzerland helps to combat the causes of terrorism, because people who have prospects are less likely to be drawn in by terrorist groups.

Close ties to neighbours and the EU

Switzerland shares the core democratic values of its European partner countries, and shares close political, economic and cultural ties with them. Fostering and building on these relations with our direct neighbours and with the European Union (EU) is a key element in Swiss foreign policy.

Good relations with our global partners

Switzerland is an export-oriented country, and therefore relies on good and stable relations with other countries. Its global network of embassies and consulates gives it a presence throughout the world and enables it to maintain ties even with those countries that dominate global politics and the global economy, to represent its interests and values worldwide, and to contribute to solving global problems.

GOVERNMENT

### 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 2016                    | CHF 3 billion |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | 5327          |

[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 coordinates parliamentary and Federal Council business; it is responsible for promoting equal opportunities, for gender issues and women's rights at the FDFA; for coordination of the internal control system and risk management in the Department; and for auditing, internal and external communications, overseeing the management of the representations abroad, and promoting equal opportunities. Presence Switzerland and the FDFA History Unit are also part of the General Secretariat.



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 and environmental issues, transport, energy, health, education and science; and the Security Policy Division develops policy on international security.



**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: **Jacques Pitteloud**

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: **vacant**

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: **Jürg Burri**

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.



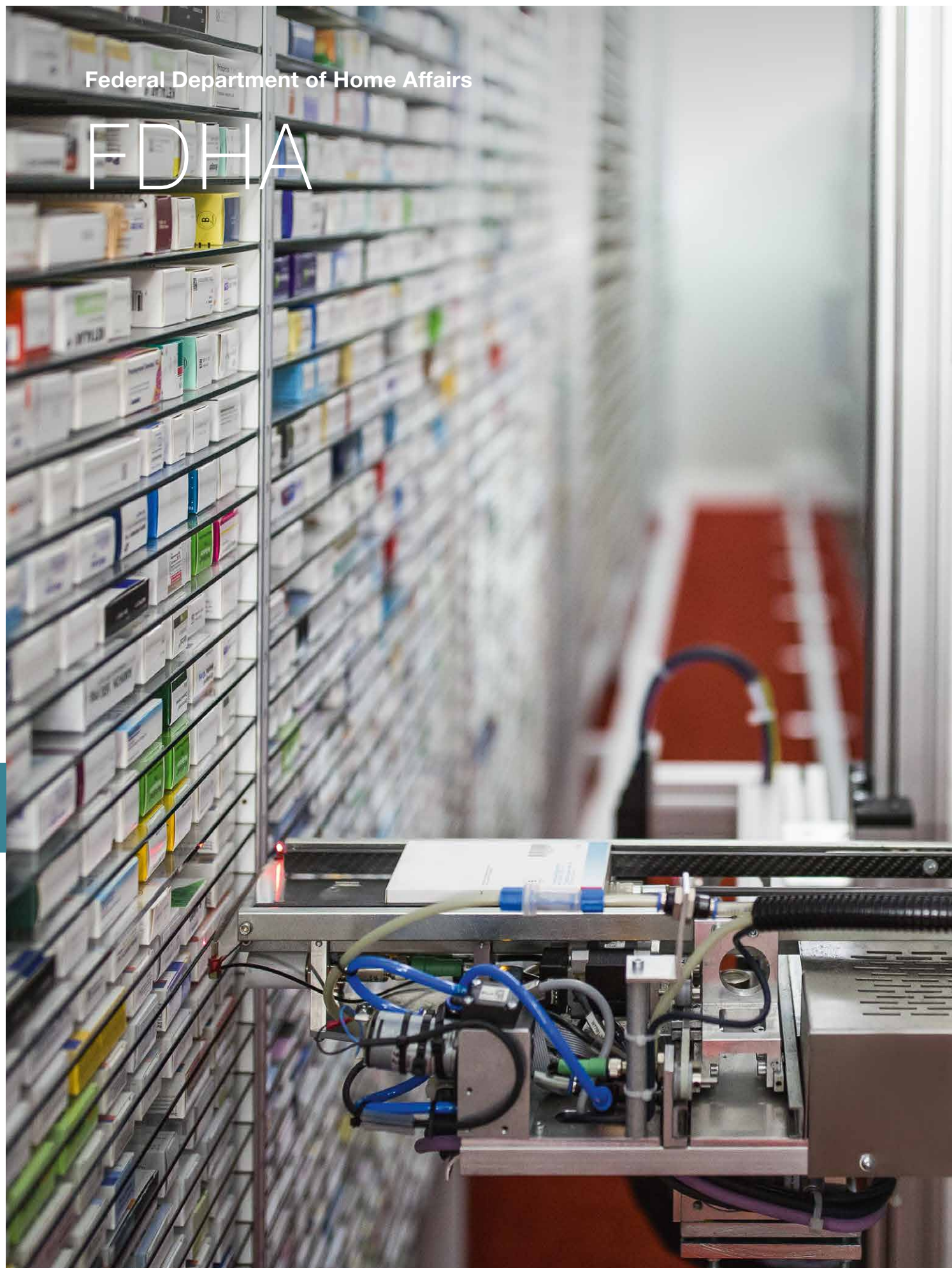
**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation** SDC

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





The FDHA ensures that only high-quality, safe and effective medication is allowed on the market.



The head of the FDHA is Alain Berset. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2012. In 2018 he is the President of the Swiss Confederation.

The Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) deals with many everyday issues affecting people in Switzerland, such as healthcare, retirement provision and cultural matters. Swiss society is facing major challenges in these areas.

**Improving quality of care**

The number of chronically ill people is steadily increasing, however, the health system still puts a strong focus on acute care. The health system needs to be adapted to take account of demographic trends. Transparency and controllability are also to be improved. In responding to this situation, the Federal Council has adopted the ‘Health 2020’ strategy, with the aim of improving the quality of care, keeping costs under control and guaranteeing adequate access to health-care for all. People and their well-being are the top priority in this strategy.

The aim is to provide good and affordable care.

**Securing financial stability for pensions**

The state pension system, OASI, is no longer able to finance itself. In the coming years expenditure will increasingly outweigh receipts, as the baby-boomers, born in the 1950s and 1960s, reach retirement age. What is more, people are living longer and so drawing a pension for longer. In the past two decades, several attempts to reform the old age

pension system have failed; work is now being done to come up with a new proposal.

Enabling cultural participation

Culture and cultural life are facing radical changes in the form of globalisation, digitalisation and individualisation. In this context the Federal Council dispatch on culture sets three priorities for the period to 2020, with the aim of raising the active and passive participation of as many people as possible in cultural life, strengthening social cohesion in Switzerland’s linguistic and culturally diverse society, and promoting 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 2016                    | CHF 17.19 billion |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | 2284              |

[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 preventing and dealing with domestic violence. 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.meteoschweiz.admin.ch](http://www.meteoschweiz.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 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 is responsible for old age and survivors' insurance, invalidity insurance, supplementary benefits, occupational pension funds, compensation for loss of earnings for people on military or civilian service and women on maternity leave, and family allowances. In addition, it is also concerned with issues relating to family, children, youth and old-age, generational relationships and general socio-political issues.



**Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products** Swissmedic

Director: **Jürg H. Schnetzer**  
[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 840,000 items, the SNM has the largest collection of cultural 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 abroad, encourages an 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.





Over 100,000 people visit the Parliament Building each year and all come into contact with fedpol staff: they not only have the task of fighting terrorism, but are also responsible for security at federal government buildings.



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

**Improving integration**

In 2016, Parliament passed the new Foreign Nationals and Integration Act. The FDJP and the cantons are currently working on its implementation. Among other things, the new act is intended to ensure that asylum seekers are integrated into the labour market and can thus be independent. It will now be easier for asylum seekers to look for work and employers will have incentives to employ them. The implementation of the mass immigration initiative should also make it easier for more people already living in Switzerland to work here. Parliament has decided on a system under which the public employment services must be notified of any job vacancies in professions with above-average unemployment. This means jobseekers who live in Switzerland will have an advantage over those applying from abroad.

The fight  
against terrorism  
is a key area.

**Ensuring security**

Another key area of the FDJP’s work is the fight against terrorism. The work focuses on three main areas, which run in parallel. Firstly, a number of laws are being tightened up to ensure a more effective law enforcement process. Secondly, the police are to be given instruments to deal preventively with ‘dangerous persons’ and those with whom they associate. Thirdly, these two legislative projects are

complemented by a National Action Plan, which contains measures and recommendations for action for the early detection and prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism in all areas of society.

Achieving gender equality

Two bills on equal opportunities for men and women for which the FDJP is responsible will soon be debated in Parliament. The first of these proposes enforcing the constitutional right to equal pay for work of equal value. The second is a proposal to fully modernise corporate law to ensure that more women are represented on the boards and in the senior management of large companies listed on the stock market.

GOVERNMENT

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 2016

CHF 2.59 billion

Staff (full-time positions) 2016

2484

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



General Secretariat GS-FDJP

Secretary General: **Matthias Ramsauer**  
[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. Administratively, the Post and Telecommunications Surveillance Service (PTSS) is also part of the ISC-FDJP.

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.

56

The Swiss Confederation – a brief guide 2018 | The Government | FDJP



**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 main task of the SICL is to objectively allow courts, administrative bodies, attorneys, notaries and private citizens to access foreign and international law. In addition, the institute supports universities in comparative law issues and, to a limited extent, conducts research on comparative law.



**Federal Audit Oversight Authority FAOA**

Director: **Frank Schneider**  
[www.revisionsaufsichtsbehoerde.ch](http://www.revisionsaufsichtsbehoerde.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 tasked with Conducting a Scientific Review of Administrative Detention**

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.

Federal Department of Defence,  
Civil Protection and Sport

DDPS

GOVERNMENT

The armed forces and the civilian emergency services jointly ensure the security of the Swiss population.



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

**The Swiss Armed Forces operate for you and with you**

We all want to live in safety, with our families and friends, at work and in our leisure time. We all want future generations to continue to grow up in a safe country. Security is the cornerstone of the future of Switzerland and its inhabitants. It is an essential prerequisite for young people to be able to train and improve their skills. We need security for there to be investment in education and jobs. This security is guaranteed by the Swiss Security Network, in which civil authorities and the armed forces work closely together.

Security is a  
cornerstone of  
our future.

**Military service as added value**

Switzerland has a militia reserve force. Military service is compulsory for men and voluntary for women. The army offers its members numerous training opportunities which are also valuable in civilian life. All the skills acquired in service are useful in other study and training courses. For example, several universities already award credits for leadership training in the army. It is aimed to ensure that civilian and military training courses complement each other. The Swiss Armed Forces want to be attractive and integrate as well as possible into everyday life when citizens join the ranks of the armed forces.

Our army is undergoing modernisation. It must find answers to the challenges of globalisation and new threats, particularly terrorism and cyber attacks. The aim of the current reforms, which come into effect in 2018, is to increase the readiness of the army, improve training and equipment and strengthen its presence at a regional level. In making these changes, the DDPS is working to ensure that Switzerland can avert any current threats as effectively as possible and continue to prosper into the future.

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.

[www.vbs.admin.ch](http://www.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 independent supervisory authority that monitors the Federal Intelligence Service and the Swiss Security Network Delegate's Office.



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



The Federal Intelligence Service FIS combats terrorism, violent extremism, espionage, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and cyber attacks 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 9,500 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**

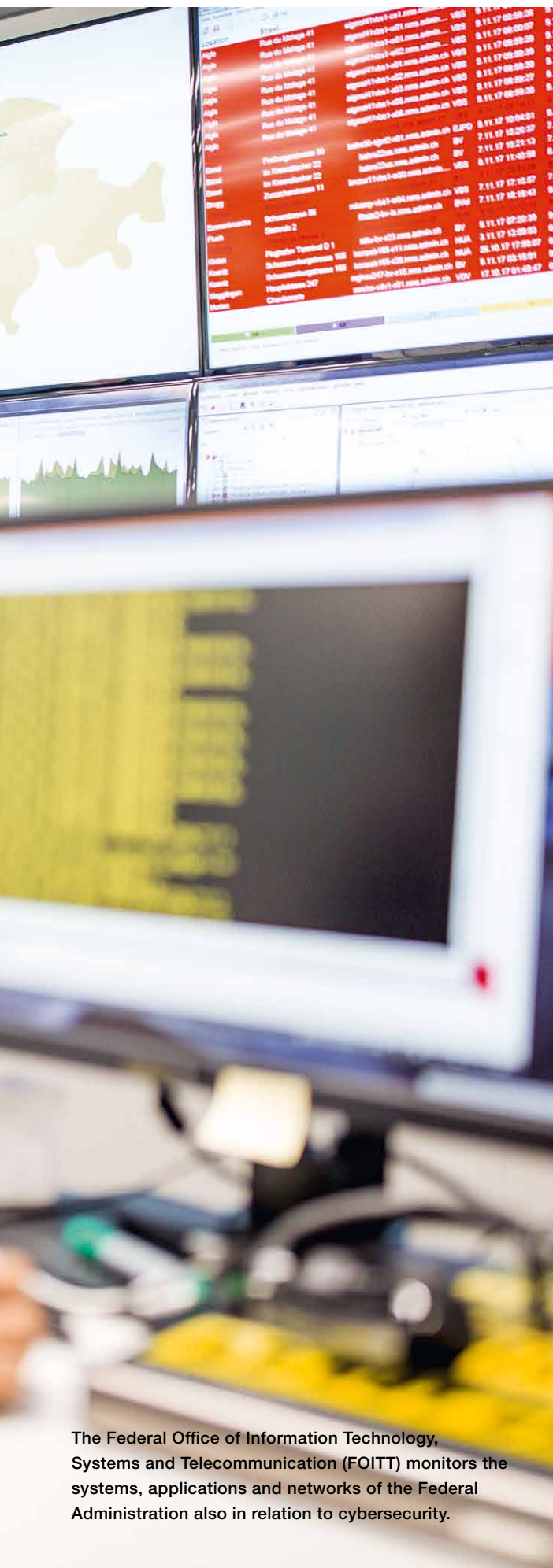
Director: **Matthias Remund**  
[www.baspo.ch](http://www.baspo.ch)

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.

Federal Department of Finance

FDF





The Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) monitors the systems, applications and networks of the Federal Administration also in relation to cybersecurity.



The head of the FDF is Ueli Maurer. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2009. He began as head of the DDPS before moving to the FDF in 2016.

**Protection against cyber attacks**

Cyber attacks on companies and state infrastructures are occurring increasingly often and are a global problem. The attackers include professional hacker groups, criminal gangs and state-backed hacking squads. Digital network attacks on infrastructures such as power supply and telecommunications can destabilise countries. The Confederation’s Reporting and Analysis Centre for Information Assurance (MELANI) tackles this issue and coordinates the national strategy to protect Switzerland from cyber risks.

Switzerland is becoming ever more resilient in the fight against cyber risks.

**Preventing tax evasion**

It should no longer be possible for anyone who has a bank account in two or more countries to evade paying their taxes. The global automatic exchange of information (AEOI) should ensure this. States which have together agreed to the AEOI, mutually exchange information on individuals’ bank accounts. The banks submit the data to their national tax authorities. They then inform the national tax authorities of the respective contracting state about the accountholder’s name, account balance, etc. The Federal Tax Administration will exchange the first account details with an initial 38 partner states in September 2018.

Ensuring a competitive tax burden

In Switzerland, the foreign profits of certain companies are taxed at a reduced rate. Tax proposal 17 (TP17) will abolish this unequal treatment. Equal treatment of domestic and foreign profits will mean compliance with international standards. In order to ensure that the tax bills of the companies concerned do not rise too steeply in future and to prevent them from relocating their headquarters abroad, new, internationally accepted tax policy measures are to be introduced.

Confederation can only levy taxes temporarily

Value added tax and direct federal tax are the Confederation's main source of receipts. They finance two thirds of the federal budget. According to the Federal Constitution, the Confederation can only levy these two taxes for a limited period of time. The current time limit runs out in 2020. The new financial regime 2021 (NFR 2021) will extend the limit until 2035. This requires a constitutional amendment which is subject to a mandatory referendum.

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 2016                    | CHF 16.99 billion |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | 8753              |

[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 Financial Matters SIF

State Secretary: **Jörg Gasser**  
[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 37 billion. With 63,000 insured persons and 43,000 pension recipients, PUBLICA is one of the largest pension funds in Switzerland.



Young entrepreneurs and digital nomads often work in co-working spaces where they can share infrastructure and form networks. That brings down costs and promotes creativity and innovation.



The head of the EAER is Johann N. Schneider-Ammann. He has been a member of the Federal Council since 2010.

### Exploiting opportunities presented by digitalisation

Digitalisation has impacted all sectors of the economy in recent years. New business models are just as much an issue on the labour market as structural change. The global success of young providers with digital networks is encouraging more and more people in business and research to test new approaches in all kinds of areas, from agriculture to tourism. The EAER wants to help create the best possible conditions for businesses to operate so that everyone can grasp the opportunities offered by the new digitalised environment. Our businesses and research institutes need to be bold enough to strike out on new paths and to take risks, in order to ensure prosperity going forward. Innovation is the name of the game in the digital world!

## Co-working spaces are an attractive environment for young companies.

### Adjusting to new ways of working

New companies – start-ups – are flexible, at home in the digital world and often have a global network. Unlike many other countries, in Switzerland new companies receive relatively little direct financial support from the state, apart from guarantees and funding opportunities offered by Innosuisse, the Swiss Innovation Agency (formerly the CTI). Instead, the Confederation and the cantons focus on

creating optimum conditions for businesses, such as paving the way for access to international markets and streamlining administrative processes, e.g. via the online portal for businesses [www.easygov.swiss](http://www.easygov.swiss). To keep costs low, many start-ups form clusters in incubators and technology parks. New businesses in the service sector may share co-working space, where they can benefit from each other's networks and exchange experiences and ideas. The workplace is also becoming more flexible in production companies. Increasingly, employers and employees need to cooperate to find ways of meeting each others' needs. A flexible labour market and a strong partnership between the social partners is needed to ensure competition and secure jobs into the future.

### Developing new training programmes

Training and continuing education have always been a major focus of attention at the EAER. Digitalisation means we now need to make rapid adjustments in this area in order to meet new requirements in the world of work. Together with the cantons and the professional organisations, the EAER is developing new training programmes and adapting existing ones to the changed requirements.

**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 2016                    | <b>CHF 11.88 billion</b> |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | <b>2138</b>              |

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



## General Secretariat GS-EAER

Secretary General: **Stefan Brupbacher**  
[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 and the Central Office for Civilian Service ZIVI report 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. For the last 20 years, ZIVI has been preparing Swiss men who for reasons of conscience choose not to perform military service for community-based service and arranges their placements. Around 1.5 million civilian service days are performed each year.



**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: **Mauro Dell'Ambrogio**  
[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.



### 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: **Rafael Corazza**  
[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: **Cornelia Oertle**  
[www.sfivet-switzerland.ch](http://www.sfivet-switzerland.ch)

SFIVET, which has offices in Lausanne, Lugano, Zollikofen und Zurich, is the federal centre of expertise for initial and continuing education training of VET trainers and for development and research in this field.



### 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

GOVERNMENT





Switzerland is particularly affected by the impact of climate change. Rising temperatures mean that the Rhone glacier is retreating. Covers are being used in an attempt to slow down the process.



The head of DETEC is Doris Leuthard. She has been a member of the Federal Council since 2006. She began as head of the FDEA (now EAER) before moving to DETEC in 2010.

Glaciers are melting, the permafrost is thawing. Rockfalls are occurring more frequently. Sea levels are rising. Dealing with the encroaching effects of climate change is one of the biggest challenges we face, in Switzerland and the world over. For this reason, the federal government is pursuing an ambitious climate policy, and this falls under DETEC's remit.

**Gradually replacing fossil fuels**

Switzerland aims to halve its 1990 level of greenhouse emissions, which result primarily from burning oil and gas, by 2030. This is to be achieved via domestic measures and by reducing emissions generated abroad. In 2018 Parliament will be debating the Federal Council's proposal for a revision of the CO<sub>2</sub> Act, which will set out the country's future climate policy. The new Energy Act, under which fossil fuels will be gradually replaced by renewables – hydro, solar, wind and biomass – also plays a large part in climate protection.

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## The federal government pursues an ambitious climate policy.

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**Actively shaping international climate policy**

Since climate change is caused by the activities of all countries, and does not recognise borders, Switzerland does not conduct its climate policy in isolation. In 2015 in Paris, the international community reached a global consensus on

climate to apply to all countries from 2020, aiming to restrict the rise in global temperatures to under two degrees Celsius. Switzerland played an active role in shaping this agreement and will work to ensure that it is implemented fully.

Protecting people and raising awareness

Some consequences of climate change, such as more frequent extreme weather events, can no longer be avoided. The Confederation is therefore drawing up measures to protect the public during events such as heatwaves and flooding. Action needs to be taken in agriculture and forest management, tourism and the transport system. At the same time, we want to raise people’s awareness of what they can do as individuals to help protect the climate, without having to tighten their belts. This includes being careful about how we use resources, buying locally-sourced foodstuffs from climate-friendly agricultural production, and using new technologies and digitalisation to reduce our impact on the climate.

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 2016                    | CHF 10.41 billion |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | 2258              |

www.uvek.admin.ch



General Secretariat GS-DETEC

Secretary General: **Toni Eder**  
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

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

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

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 extending and maintaining the national roads 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 over-exploited. 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.are.admin.ch](http://www.are.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.



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 2016                    | CHF 47 million |
| Staff (full-time positions) 2016 | 210            |

[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**. 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](http://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 judiciary ..... 78

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



Federal justices meet every two weeks for coffee. The occasion gives them an opportunity to discuss matters freely.

## The third state power

# THE JUDICIARY



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

#### Mr Meyer, how does one become a Federal Supreme Court judge?

There is no standard way. You can lay the professional groundwork by gaining a reputation as a highly competent lawyer, whether as a cantonal judge, a practising attorney or a legal academic. But whether you are actually appointed as a Federal Supreme Court judge depends on a lot of other factors: political affiliation, gender, canton of origin, language and other criteria are all taken into account when the Judiciary Committee selects the candidates that it will propose to the United Federal Assembly. The work of Federal Supreme Court judges is not political, but their appointments are – very much so. This is typical of the Swiss concept of the state, which requires all three branches of state to have democratic legitimacy – and that includes the Federal Supreme Court, as the highest court in the land.

#### Are all Supreme Court judgments equally important?

For those concerned, all judgments are equally important; all litigants have an equal right to a fair decision that conforms to the law. However, no more than 10 % of the 8,000 or so judgments that we hand down each year relate to fundamental matters of law. One example of a famous landmark decision is the Supreme Court judgment on whiplash injuries (BGE 136 V 279), which was widely discussed in public – and which even led to me appearing in a newspaper cartoon.

#### What sort of relationship does the Federal Supreme Court have with Parliament?

The Federal Supreme Court is the third power in the federal state. Parliament makes laws, and the Federal Supreme Court applies them. In doing so, the Federal Supreme Court normally has a certain degree of latitude in how it interprets the law,

which occasionally leads to it being accused of making politically motivated decisions. The best response to this came from Federal Supreme Court judge Jean Fonjallaz, the former President of the First Public Law Division, who said, “The Federal Supreme Court does not make political decisions, but its decisions can have a political effect.”

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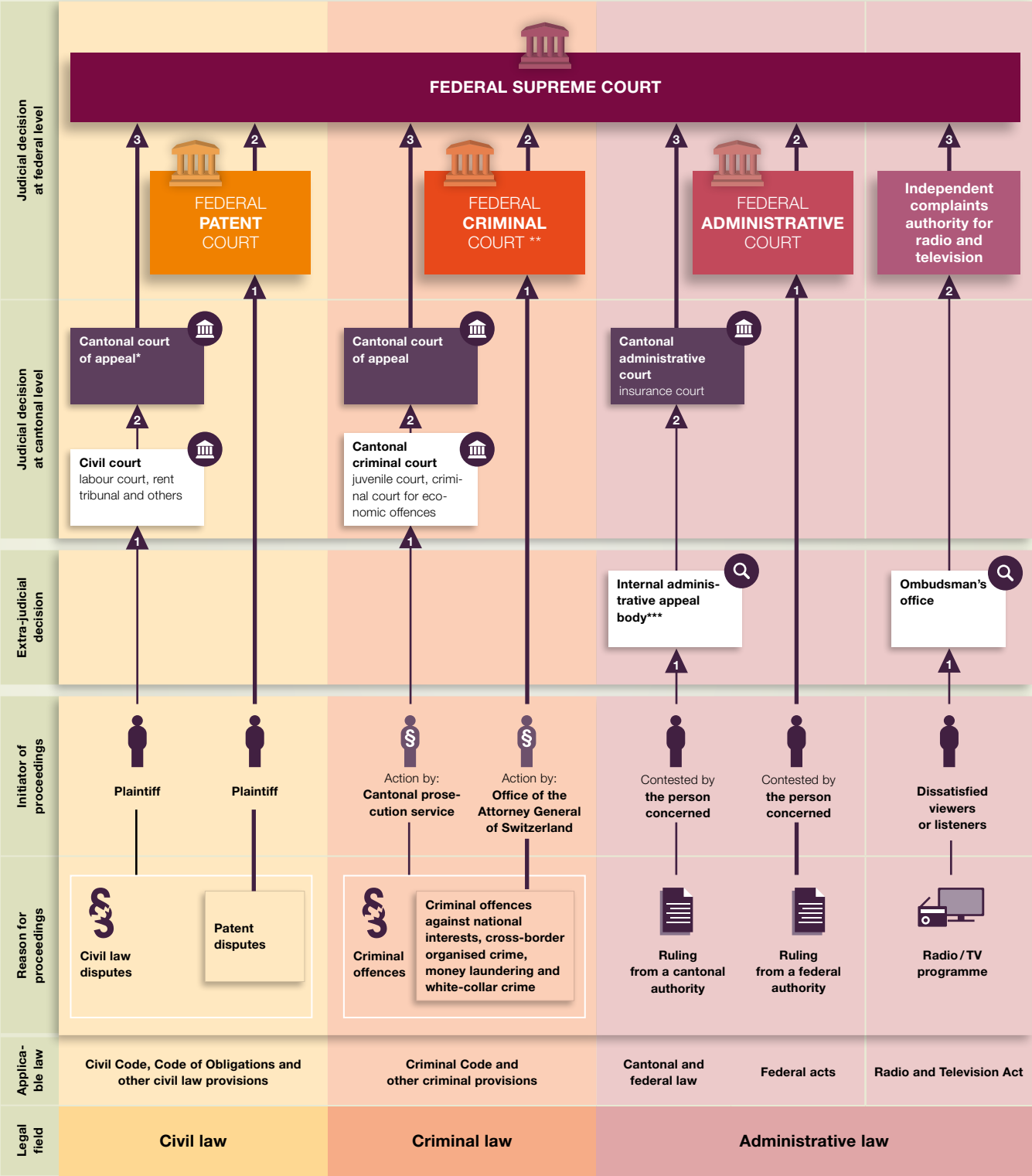
“The Federal Supreme Court does not make political decisions, but its decisions can have a political effect.”

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#### What kind of public presence does the Federal Supreme Court have?

The Federal Supreme Court’s main task is to decide cases. Its judgments are published on the Federal Supreme Court’s website ([www.bger.ch](http://www.bger.ch)) and public debate about these decisions, even if it is critical, leads them to being more readily accepted. It is very important in controversial ground-breaking cases that the hearings are held in public; these hearings are announced on the court’s website and anyone who is interested can come to the court to watch. Professional media relations work is essential in maintaining the Federal Supreme Court’s good reputation.

# 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 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 deputy Federal Supreme Court judges and a further 280 positions for court clerks and other court employees.

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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 an appeals chamber. The current 18 judges of the Federal Criminal Court 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 18 ordinary judges and three 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:  
Jean-Luc Baechler

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. Some of the issues may be controversial from both a social and political 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 347 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)

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

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