

SWITZERLAND

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Table 1. Election to the *Nationalrat* (Lower House)

		Votes		Change since 1987	Seats		Change since 1987
Date of elections:	20 October 1991		N ¹		%	N	
Total number of seats:	200						
Electorate:	4,510,784						
Total votes cast:	2,076,886 (46.0%)						
Valid votes cast:	2,044,109 (98.4%)						
No.	Party	N ¹	%	Change since 1987	N	%	Change since 1987
4	Radical Democrats/ Freisinnig Demokratische Partei (FDP)	429,082	21.0	-1.9	44	22.0	-7
5	Social Democrats ² / Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPS)	377,979	18.5	+0.1	41	20.5	0
1	Christian Democrats ³ / Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei (CVP)	372,000	18.2	-1.5	36	18.0	-6
6	Swiss People's Party/ Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP)	243,255	11.9	+0.9	25	12.5	0
19	Green Party ⁴ / Grüne Partei der Schweiz (GPS)	124,147	6.1	+1.2	14	7.0	+5
22	Swiss Motorists' Party Autopartei (AP)	103,580	5.1	+2.5	8	4.0	+6
14	Swiss Democrats ⁵ / Schweizer Demokraten (SD)	67,692	3.3	+0.8	5	2.5	+2
3	Liberal Party/ Liberale Partei der Schweiz (LPS)	62,072	3.0	+0.3	10	5.0	+1
12	Independents' Party ⁶ / Landesring der Unabhängigen (LdU)	56,640	2.8	-1.4	5	2.5	-3
8	Protestant People's Party/ Evangelische Volkspartei (EVP)	38,764	1.9	0.0	3	1.5	0
23	League of the Tessins ⁷ / Lega dei Ticinesi	29,076	1.4	+1.4	2	1.0	+2
20	Alternative Greens ⁸ / 'Die andere Schweiz' (DACH)	26,236	1.3	-1.1	1	0.5	-1

No.	Party	Votes		Change since 1987	Seats		Change since 1987
		N ¹	%		N	%	
24	Federal Democratic Union ⁹ Eidgenössisch-Demokratische Union (EDU)	20,396	1.0	+0.1	1	0.5	+1
9	Communist Party/ Partei der Arbeit (PdA)	15,872	0.8	0.0	2	1.0	+1
17	United Socialist Party ¹⁵ / Partito Socialista Unitario (PSU)	12,006	0.6	0.0	1	0.5	0
25	Christian-Social Party ¹¹ / Christlich-soziale Partei (CSP)	8,037	0.4	+0.1	1	0.5	+1
18	Progressive Organisations of Switzerland/ Progressive Organisationen (POCH)	3,923	0.2	-1.1	0	0	-2
16	Republican Movement/ Republikaner Others ¹²	1,967	0.1	-0.2	0	0	0
		47,953	2.4	-0.2	1	0.5	0

¹ Number of votes.

² PSU-votes and PSU-seat in Tessin are listed separately.

³ CSP-votes in Graubünden und Freiburg and CSP-seat in Freiburg are listed separately.

⁴ In 1987 the seats in Baselland and Aargau were not yet added to the GPS.

⁵ Formerly named *Nationale Aktion* (NA).

⁶ Seat and votes of the non-party number of the parliamentary group from Appenzell Ausserrhoden is not added to the LdU. They are counted under 'others'.

⁷ The *Lega dei Ticinesi* is a new right wing, populist party in the Tessin, founded at the beginning of this year. It already had an astonishing success in the last cantonal elections.

⁸ Formerly named *Grünes Bündnis Schweiz* (GBS).

⁹ The EDU is a small right wing party which only exists in the canton of Bern.

¹⁰ The PSU was born out of the Autonomous Socialist Party (PSA) and intends to unite the different socialist tendencies in the canton of Tessin.

¹¹ The CSP organizes the Christian-Social wing of the CVP. Some cantonal parties are members of the national CVP, others (i.e. in Freiburg and Jura) are independent.

¹² Includes the seat of a non-party (see Note 4).

Table 2. Elections to the *Ständerat* (Upper House)

Date of election: 20 October 1991 to 17 November 1991¹

Total number of seats: 46

Electorate etc: n.a.²

No.	Party	Seats		Change since 1987
		N	%	
4	Radical Democrats/Freisinnig Demokratische Partei (FDP)	18	39.1	+4
1	Christian Democrats/Christlichdemokratische	16	34.8	-3

No.	Party	Seats		Change since 1987
		N	%	
	Volkspartei (CVP)			
5	Social Democrats/Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPS)	3	6.5	-2
6	Swiss People's Party/Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP)	4	8.7	0
12	Independent's Party/Landesring der Unabhängigen (LdU)	1	2.2	0
3	Liberal Party/Liberale Partei der Schweiz (LPS)	3	6.5	0
23	League of the Tessins/Lega dei Ticinesi	1	2.2	+1

¹ Although in most cantons the elections take place on the same day as the elections to the *Nationalrat*, some of them are held earlier, or, if the seats are not contested, not at all. As the procedure follows the absolute majority rule, a second ballot is possible.

² No figures on the votes cast and the rate of participation are available. The Elections to the *Ständerat* are held according to cantonal rules. In some cantons (OW, NW, AI) the seats of the *Ständerat* are still elected in a local gathering.

Table 3. Cabinet composition on 1 January 1991

A. The party composition¹

Date of investiture: The Swiss cabinet does not face a formal investiture

No.	Party	Number and percentage of parliamentary seats	Number and percentage of cabinet posts
4	Radical Democrats/Freisinnig Demokratische Partei (FDP)	51 (22.9%)	2 (28.6%)
1	Christian Democrats/Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei (CVP)	42 (19.8%)	2 (28.6%)
5	Social Democrats/Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPS)	42 (18.4%)	2 (28.6%)
6	Swiss People's Party/Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP)	25 (11.0%)	1 (14.3%)

B. Cabinet members²

Home Affairs/Innere:
Flavio Cotti (1939 male, CVP)

Justice and Police/Justiz und Polizei:
Arnold Koller (1933 male, CVP)

Foreign Affairs/Auswärtiges:
René Felber (1933 male, SPS)

Transport and Energy/Verkehr und Energie:
Adolf Ogi (1942 male, SVP)

Finances/Finanzen:
Otto Stich (1927 male, SPS)

Army/Militär:
Kaspar Villiger (1941 male, FDP)

Economic Affairs/Volkswirtschaft:
Jean-Pascal Delamuraz (1936 male, FDP)

¹ The government in Switzerland consists of a board of seven members (*Bundesrat*). The President (*Bundespräsident*), who serves for only one year at the time, is chosen in

turns among these seven members and is nothing more than a first among equals. The seven members are elected by the National Assembly (*Bundesversammlung*, that is, the Lower and Upper House together). Since 1959 the four biggest parties (FDP, CVP, SPS and SVP – see below) have formed a coalition government. The number of seats held by each of these parties (2, 2, 2 and 1) has remained unchanged since then and is referred to as the magic formula (*Zauberformel*).

² Note that there is no Prime Minister as such in Switzerland, in that the seven members of the *Bundesrat* form the Swiss government on equal terms. The role of the chairman of the board changes from year to year. In 1991 Flavio Cotti was assigned as president and René Felber as vice-president. In 1992 René Felber takes the chair as president and Adolf Ogi is vice-president.

The 1991 election

Although the election campaign for parliament, both lower and upper houses (*National- and Ständerat*), turned out to be rather apathetic, there was no shortage of important political issues (see the discussion of issues in national politics, below), with the parties in government in particular being accused of not daring to propose concrete political programmes for fear of deterring potential voters.

The elections to the Nationalrat (Lower House). Only 46.0 percent of the electorate participated in these elections (see Table 1). This is slightly below the participation rate in the 1987 elections (46.5 percent), which at the time were regarded as very important due to the expected growth in green-left support. However, in 1991 the right to vote was given for the first time to citizens aged 18 years (instead of 20 years) and older, and since younger voters are known to be less interested in politics, and since the election campaign itself proved very slack, an even lower rate of participation could have been expected.

The most striking results of the elections were the continuing losses of the four parties in government, the Radical Democrats (*Freisinnig Demokratische Partei* – FDP), the Christian Democrats (*Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei* – CVP), the Social Democrats (*Sozialdemokratische Partei* – SP), and the Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei* – SVP). Together they lost a further 3 percent of the votes and their overall vote fell to below 70 percent. Although this is still a large portion of the voters, this downward trend is remarkable for Swiss standards and now adds up to a total loss of more than 10 percent since 1979.

The main losers among the government parties were the FDP and the CVP. The liberal FDP as the biggest and so-called classical government party was most badly hit by the repeated allegations of the government's inability to lead the country. The political scandals of recent years, such as the resignation of the first woman in the Federal Council due to violation of official secrets (the *Kopp-affaire*), and the 'file cards scandal' (see below) had left their mark, and increasing xenophobic tendencies in parts of the population led the party to lose votes to more right-wing groups. The Catholic

CVP, usually referred to as the party which sits in the middle of the political spectrum, suffered losses due to increasing secularization. Divided into a Christian-social and an economic wing, this party is experiencing particular difficulties in promoting a stringent political programme.

The erosion of support for the SP seems finally to have come to a standstill. This party has managed to get rid of its working class image and nowadays finds an important component of its support within social-liberal and intellectual circles. Moreover, the SP also took advantage of the decline of the left-wing, post-1968 parties. The SVP remains the only one of the four government parties which was able to improve its share of the vote, albeit only slightly. In the election campaign the SVP demanded a more repressive policy towards drug abusers and towards people seeking political asylum. Furthermore, the SVP's representative in the *Bundesrat*, Adolf Ogi, enjoys great personal popularity.

The real winner of the 1991 elections was the Swiss Motorists' Party (*Autopartei* – AP), which gained six new seats in the *Nationalrat*. This result was not wholly unexpected as the party had already competed successfully in several cantonal elections. The AP manages to win an important share of its votes from the more conservative elements of the right-wing parties in government. The party programme is rather heterogeneous and populist but is definitely on the right of the political spectrum, and includes the claim for an uninhibited degree of 'auto-mobility'. The success of another party, the *Lega dei Ticinesi* (Swiss-Italians' League – LT) in the Italian-speaking canton of Tessin, is due to much the same reasons. This party was founded at the beginning of 1991 and succeeded in uniting almost 25 percent of the local electorate with a clearly populist programme.

Another winner in 1991 was the moderate Green Party (*Grüne Partei der Schweiz* – GPS), which, with a gain of five seats, became the strongest party after the four government parties. Its success is partly due to a merger with former green-alternative groups, and even though it suffered losses for the first time in a number of cantons (Zürich, Vaud, Genève), it now seems well on the way to establish itself as an important political force.

Despite efforts by some parties to nominate women candidates, the proportion of women in the *Nationalrat* has increased only slightly, and now amounts to 17.5 percent of the total, as against 16 percent in 1987.

In Switzerland, elections hardly ever lead to political changes, and the 1991 elections did not substantially disturb the balance of power between the parties and the political blocs. Nevertheless, what is new is the beginning of a process of fragmentation within forces on the right of the political spectrum, a process comparable to that which occurred on the left in the aftermath of 1968. Now, however, with the consolidation of the SP and the establishment of the GPS, the fragmentation on the left seems to have come to an end.

The elections to the Ständerat (Upper House). The results of the elections to the *Ständerat* reveal a completely different pattern (see Table 2). The clear

winner here was the FDP, with four new seats, and which has now become the most important party in the Upper House to the detriment of the CVP. The SP relatively underrepresented with respect to its share of the vote, and its three seats were secured only on a second ballot. The fact that a party as large as the Social Democrats had to fear for its representation in the Upper House has encouraged strong arguments in favour of a reform of the political system. The differences between the contrasting strengths of the parties in the two chambers are due to the different formulae used to determine the composition of each. In the *Nationalrat*, the seats are allotted to the cantons according to the size of population. In the *Ständerat*, by contrast, each canton has two seats and the representatives are generally elected according to a majority formula, thus giving the small Catholic and conservative cantons in the heart of Switzerland a bigger share of the seats.

Results of national referendums and initiatives

Referendums and initiatives play an important role in Swiss politics, and are used at all political levels (*Bund, Kantone, Gemeinden*). At the national level, a ballot is held two to four times a year to enable the citizens to decide on important political issues. In 1991 four issues were put to the vote: a proposal to lower the voting age to 18 years; an initiative to promote public transport; a reorganisation of the system of federal finances; and the introduction of a system of civil enrolment for people who refuse to do their military service. The first two ballots were held on 3 March, the last two on 2 June.

Five pending parliamentary initiatives demanded the lowering of the voting age at national level to 18 years, in line with the already established practice in various cantons and communes. The parliamentary committee which was set up to deal with this issue decided to launch an initiative in order to accelerate the process, the intention being to introduce the lower voting age in the year commemorating the foundation of Switzerland (see below). The proposal was accepted with the support of 72.8 percent of all voters, with a majority in favour of the initiative in all of the cantons (participation rate: 31.1 percent).

The initiative to promote public transport, which had been launched by the small Independents' Party (*Landesring der Unabhängigen - LdU*), was rejected by 62.9 percent of the voters (participation rate: 30.8 percent). This initiative proposed that the promotion of public transport should be the task of the Federation and should be embodied in the constitution. During a transition period, public transport would be financed through additional taxes on petrol and fuel. The government rejected the initiative, arguing that the constitution already catered for the promotion of public transport and that the proposed financing was problematic.

The revision of the military penal law was accepted with 55.7 percent of the votes in favour (participation rate 33.3 percent). This proposal demanded

the introduction of a civil option for those people who refuse to do their military service for ethical or moral reasons. Two referendum committees opposed this revision, a left-wing committee which argued that the changes were not sufficiently far-reaching, and a right-wing committee which represented all those who in general are opposed to any form of alternative to compulsory military service.

The reorganisation of the system of federal finances was turned down not only by 54.3 percent of the voters (participation rate: 32.6 percent), but also by a majority of cantons. For the third time within a few years, this economic proposal demanded the replacement of a system that taxes goods according to turnover by a more modern system of value-added tax. In addition, it recommended the abolition of stamp duty and the *taxe occulte*, which aimed at improving the competitiveness of Swiss banks and the export-oriented sectors of the economy, a scheme which was opposed by the two strong interest associations of trade and industry (*Vorort* and *Gewerbeverband*). The more popular rejection of the proposal probably stemmed from fear of higher taxes.

Institutional changes

The referendum of 3 March reduced the voting age at national level to 18 years. Intended as a gift to the young people on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the foundation of Switzerland, this simply extended to the national level what had already existed in many cases at the cantonal and communal level.

The excessive workload of the members of parliament, due to their militia status, continues to be the subject of an ongoing debate, and this year it was decided to introduce a reform of the parliament. The system of standing committees in the main political areas is to be extended in order to secure continuity, to improve efficiency, and to achieve a greater degree of professionalism. Furthermore, the parliament is now to be much more concerned with foreign politics. Finally, the reimbursement of the members of parliament is to be augmented to 50,000 Swiss francs, and the daily allowances to 400 Swiss francs, which increases an MP's average reimbursement to about 90,000 Swiss francs. Each member of Parliament is to be allowed a credit of 40,000 Swiss francs for a personal assistant or a substitute at home, as well as 24,000 Swiss francs for infrastructural expenses. In response to these changes, a group of students announced a referendum and successfully collected the necessary numbers of signatures. Thus, in 1992 the citizens will have the opportunity of deciding for or against this reform.

On the 28 April 1991, a Swiss oddity came to an end. In the small canton of *Appenzell Innerhoden*, women were allowed to participate at the *Landsgemeinde* (a local gathering of citizens at which voting is performed by the raising of arms) for the first time, and can now exercise their political

rights at cantonal level. *Appenzell Innerhoden* was the last canton to grant women full political rights – rights they have already had since 1971 at national level.

Issues in national politics

In 1991 Switzerland commemorated the 700th anniversary of its foundation. In terms of traditional history, Switzerland marks its beginning in 1291, when three cantons in the inner part of the country formed an alliance against the rule of the house of Hapsburg. Although modern historians question both the date and the circumstances of the foundation – for them, Switzerland's existence can rather be dated to the foundation of the Federation of States (*Bundesstaat*) in 1848 – enormous efforts were made to celebrate this event, and throughout the year popular and cultural festivities took place all over the country.

Nevertheless, the *Kulturboykott* did cast a shadow on the festivities, with some quite well-known and culturally active people refusing to participate because of the 'file cards scandal' (*Fichen-Skandal*) and the authorities' reluctance to take remedial measures. In 1989 it became publicly known that an enormous number of mainly left-wing and progressive citizens had been kept under surveillance and that files had been kept on them, a revelation which outraged even some moderate and conservative politicians. There were no constitutional grounds for such a practice and nor was it conducted under any political control.

The most important political issue in 1991 was undoubtedly Switzerland's future position with respect to the European Community. A special emphasis was placed on the negotiations for the European Economic Area, and on the attempt to stop the impending wave of traffic across the Swiss Alps in the new united Europe. In the 'transit treaty' (*Transitabkommen*) with the EC, the number of cars and lorries allowed to cross the Alps was to be limited under the condition that Switzerland would provide sufficient transport facilities by rail (see 'NEAT' below). In this respect there are no more obstacles standing in the way of membership of the European Economic Area, and a referendum is scheduled for the end of 1992. In addition, the government announced that it intended to apply for membership in the European Community in the months to come.

The increasing number of people seeking political asylum in Switzerland, and the increase in xenophobic tendencies in the population and in attacks on shelters for refugees, have become a social and eventually also a political problem. For some, the government's position is too moderate and more repressive policies are demanded, including the mobilization of the army at the borders to prevent illegal immigration. Others refer to the humanitarian tradition of the country, stressing Switzerland's responsibility for the refu-

gees' reasons leaving their countries, and ask for a more open attitude based on the principles of integration and understanding.

Another important issue concern was the drug problem. The widely known open drug scene in Zurich, and similar problems in Bern and Basel, which contain a significant percentage of HIV-positive addicts, as well as the increase in criminal activities due to the acquisition of drugs, has led to a polarization of public opinion on the issue. Some favour a policy of more repressive intervention by the police as well as the introduction of coercive therapy for addicts, whereas others favour a controlled distribution of heroin as the only, and long overdue solution to this problem.

The economic situation in 1991 has proved particularly good, but towards the end of the year there was much discussion of the state of the public finances. For the first time since 1985 the government had presented a budget-deficit which amounted to a considerable 2,000 million Swiss francs, and an even bigger deficit is expected in the years to come. Moreover, the same financial problems are developing at the cantonal and communal level. At the same time, the rate of unemployment reached a record high since 1939, and at the end of the year, 1.9 percent of the labour force was reported to be receiving benefit. Even though the real rate of unemployment is somewhat higher, as there is a considerable hidden unemployment in Switzerland, the problem remains relatively small compared to that of other countries.

In an effort to stem the continuous increase in the costs of the health services, and to prevent further rises in the premiums for health insurances, the government proposed an urgent set of measures which was accepted by the parliament. Following these proposals, premiums for insurance, hospitals and doctors will not increase before June 1992.

Both houses of parliament finally decided that Switzerland should join the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Opposition to this decision came from two sides: for green and left-wing groups the IMF is partly responsible for the problems in the developing countries, whereas the nationalistic right could not accept the idea that more financial support was to be granted to Third World countries. Both groups announced a referendum and successfully collected the necessary numbers of signatures. The vote will take place in 1992.

The NEAT (*Neue Eisenbahn-Alpentransversale*) basically consists of two new railway-tunnels through the Alps. On one hand they are supposed to improve public transport nationally, and, on the other, they are intended to guarantee sufficient transit facilities on the North-South axis, and are therefore part of the negotiations with the European Community. Opposition against the project arose from fundamentalist green forces in the GPS, who are in general against any increase of mobility. But while they announced a referendum, they were nevertheless having difficulty in collecting the necessary number of signatures. It is not yet decided whether the issue will come to a vote. On a related issue, and in effort to improve the abysmal condition of the atmosphere during the summer months, the government undertook

the necessary steps to reduce speed limits to 100/70 km/h on special sections of the motorways during the critical months of July and August.

On 14 June 1991 – for the first time in Swiss history – a nationwide strike of women took place. The strike involved the participation of more than half a million women – not only women working in the public and social sectors but also women working in the private sector, and also housewives and mothers – who demanded the immediate introduction of equal rights for men and women. The strike was organized by the trade unions and various women's organisations.

Sources and further information

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