

Volume 28, Nos. 3/4 (December 1995)

ISSN 0304-4130

This issue completes Volume 28

CODEN EJPRDY



European Journal of Political Research

**POLITICAL DATA YEARBOOK 1995
(1 January 1994 – 1 January 1995)**

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**Kluwer Academic Publishers
Dordrecht/Boston/London**

SWITZERLAND

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Table 1. Cabinet composition on 1 January 1994

A. The party composition

Date of investiture: The Swiss cabinet has no formal investiture.

No.	Party	Number and percentage of parliamentary seats ¹ (<i>Nationalrat</i>)	Number and percentage of cabinet posts
4	Radical Democrats/Freisinnig Demokratische Partei (FDP)	44 (22.0%)	2 (28.6%)
1	Christian Democrats/Christlich- demokratische Volkspartei (CVP)	36 (18.0%)	2 (28.6%)
5	Social Democrats/ Sozialdemokratische Partei (SPS)	41 (20.5%)	2 (28.6%)
6	Swiss People's Party/ Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP)	25 (12.5%)	1 (14.3%)

B. Cabinet members on 1 January 1994²

Home Affairs/Inneres Ruth Dreifuss (1940 female, SPS)
Foreign Affairs/Auswärtiges Flavio Cotti (1939 male, CVP)
Finances/Finanzen Otto Stich (1927 male, SPS)
Economic Affairs/Volkswirtschaft Jean-Pascal Delamuraz (1936 male, FDP)
Justice and Police/Justiz und Polizei Arnold Koller (1933, male CVP)
Transport and Energy/Verkehr und Energie Adolf Ogi (1942, male SVP)
Army/Militär Kaspar Villiger (1941 male, FDP)

¹ Note that the distribution of parliamentary seats reported here differs from that in the *Political Data Yearbook* 1994. This is in fact the correct version and that reported earlier was incorrect.

² There is no Prime Minister in Switzerland, in that the seven members of the Bundesrat form the Swiss government on equal terms. The role of President or Chairman of the board changes from year to year. For 1994 Otto Stich was assigned President and Kaspar Villiger Vice-President. For 1995 Kaspar Villiger is President and Jean-Pascal Delamuraz of the Radical Democrats (FDP) is elected Vice-President.

Table 2. National referendums and initiatives 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1994

Total electorate on 4 December 1994: 4,602,535					
issues	YES (%)	NO (%)	valid votes	total votes	rate of participation
20 February 94					
Federal decision on continuing the motorway tax	68.5	31.5	1,839,486	1,863,398	40.8
Federal decision on continuing the heavy traffic tax	72.2	27.8	1,833,464	1,862,531	40.8
Federal decision on the introduction of a heavy traffic tax depending on consumption	67.1	32.9	1,819,541	1,861,208	40.8
Popular initiative 'to protect the Alpine region from transit traffic'	51.9	48.1	1,838,853	1,865,111	40.9
Modification of the Air traffic Law	61.1	38.9	1,771,559	1,856,045	40.7
12 June 94					
Federal decision on a new constitutional article to promote culture (rejected) FN*	51.0	49.0	2,077,213	2,131,789	46.6
Federal decision on revising the constitutional article on nationality law (easier naturalisation for young foreign residents) (rejected) FN*	52.8	47.2	2,108,615	2,137,944	46.8
Federal law making Swiss troops available for peacekeeping operations (blue helmets)	42.8	57.2	2,103,362	2,138,973	46.8
25 September 94					
Federal decision on abolishing the subsidy on the domestic cereal price out of custom duties	64.6	35.4	1,995,076	2,082,706	45.5

Modification of the Swiss Criminal Code and the Military Criminal Code (race discrimination)	54.6	45.4	2,072,637	2,100,739	45.9
4 December 1994					
Federal law on sickness insurance	51.8	48.2	1,971,535	2,014,475	43.8
Popular initiative 'for sound sickness insurance'	23.4	76.6	1,964,851	2,014,250	43.8
Federal law on compulsory measures in the legislation on foreign nationals	72.9	27.1	1,968,337	2,016,575	43.8

* The proposition was not supported by a majority of the cantons, necessary for constitutional changes, and was thus rejected.

Results of national referendums and initiatives

In 1994 a total of 13 issues were put to the vote (see Table 2). Although this number is slightly below the record number of 16 in the two preceding years, it is still considered to be very high even by Swiss standards. Five ballots took place on February 20, three on June 12, two on September 25, and three on December 4. The issues were as follows:

On February 20 five transport-related issues were to be decided. Against the will of Transport Minister Adolf Ogi and a majority of parliament, the voters approved with 51.9 per cent of the votes a popular initiative 'to protect the Alpine region from transit traffic' (Alpine initiative), which calls for all transalpine transit freight traffic to be forced from the road on to the railway by the year 2004. The initiative was launched by green and social democratic circles from the central Swiss mountainous regions. Parliament and the cabinet recommended rejection of this proposal, saying it was against free choice and far too extreme. As it is very rare in Switzerland for an initiative to be accepted, the Alpine initiative will go down in the books as a slap in the face for government and Parliament and a sign of growing distrust in the 'classe politique'. The greatest support for the initiative came from the canton of Uri, through which the Gotthard road and rail routes pass. The lowest support came from the French-speaking cantons which, being hardly affected and being much in favour of the Euro-compatibility of Swiss politics, all rejected the initiative. As the Alpine initiative infringes the transit agreement with the European Union, the government has been put in a rather awkward position in regard to bilateral talks with the EU.

On the same day voters approved the present flat-rate tax on trucks and

coaches (Federal decision on continuing the heavy traffic tax) with a majority of 72.2 per cent of the votes, and also a future tax on heavy vehicles which will be dependent on mileage and/or fuel consumption (Federal decision on the introduction of a heavy traffic tax depending on consumption) with 67.1 per cent of the votes. Both taxes are designed to make road hauliers pay for the true costs they incur in terms of road construction, road repairs, and air pollution. The 'vignette', a sticker mandatory for vehicles using motorways which was highly controversial when introduced ten years ago, gained a comfortable majority this time: 68.5 per cent voted in favour of the federal decision on continuing the motorway tax, including an increase in price from 30 to 40 francs. This shift in acceptance is partly due to fact that half of the revenue from the sticker comes from foreign motorists. Finally, 61.1 per cent of the voters accepted a modification of the Air Traffic Law. The law will now permit landing fees to be charged not only on the basis of the noise made by a plane, but also in relation to the air pollution it causes.

On June 12 the government was defeated on three items. The Federal law making Swiss troops available for peacekeeping operations (blue helmets) was rejected with a 57.2 per cent No vote. The law, which was considered by quite a few as a necessary contribution to solidarity with the rest of the world, had been approved by large majorities in both houses of parliament but there was opposition from right-wingers in the National Council together with some traditional left wing opponents of the army. The Ticino League successfully organised a referendum initiative. Only the French-speaking cantons and the big German-speaking cities Zurich, Berne and Lucerne voted slightly in favour of the blue helmets. The biggest vote against the blue helmets was in the Central Swiss cantons and in Ticino, the home of the right-wing Ticino League.

Although a narrow majority of 51.0 per cent of the voters would have accepted a Federal decision on a new constitutional article to promote culture, it was rejected lacking the support of a majority of cantons. This constitutional article, after an unsuccessful first attempt in 1986, tried to make the promotion of cultural life a task of the Federal government. It was thought that cultural activities would be able to withstand demands for budget cuts if they were anchored in the constitution. Those against the article argued that with the present financial situation the federal government is hardly able to give effective support to culture. Critics put also forward the argument that culture should not be a matter for the Federal government but for the cantons only.

It was particularly unfortunate that the Federal decision on revising the constitutional article on nationality law (easier naturalisation for young foreign residents) was rejected by the cantons in spite of being given a clear majority of 52.8 per cent by the voters. In theory about 140,000 young people who grew up and went to school in Switzerland should have been given the opportunity for easier naturalisation. Both houses of parliament

strongly approved the new draft this time, which did not go as far as a first unsuccessful attempt in 1983. The strong right-wing opposition feared that easier naturalisation would result in a further loss of national identity. Those in favour said that the law should be adjusted to the changed population structure of the country.

On September 25 Swiss voters agreed to the prohibition of racial discrimination and thus gave the green light to ratification of the UN Convention against Racism. Even the greatest optimists among those in favour of the articles did not expect a 54.6 per cent Yes vote for the Modification of the Swiss Criminal Code and the Military Criminal Code. The newly introduced provisions in both the civilian and the military criminal codes make anyone inciting racial, ethnic or religious hatred liable to punishment by a fine or imprisonment. The same applies to anyone injuring, whether verbally, in written, or in graphic form, the dignity of any person or group by reason of their racial origin, or anyone grossly minimising or seeking to exculpate genocide or other crimes against humanity. The referendum which made the vote necessary was organised by a right-wing committee in German-speaking Switzerland.

The abolition of price subsidies on bread cereals (Federal decision on abolishing the subsidy on the domestic cereal price out of custom duties) was accepted by almost two thirds (64.6 per cent) of voters and all cantons. This measure was part of the austerity package to reduce the federal budget deficit and should raise an additional Sfr. 25 million. For consumers it could have the effect of raising the price of bread by five centimes per kilo. Only the consumer organisations, the Party of Labour, the National Association of Independents and the Swiss Democrats had campaigned for a No vote.

The referendum of December 4 was on three subjects. Two of these concerned sickness insurance, while the third dealt with the introduction of compulsory measures in the legislation on foreign nationals. The Federal law on sickness insurance was approved by 51.8 per cent of voters. The revision of the law had three aims: to stop the present gaps in basic insurance benefits, to curb cost increases, and to re-establish solidarity amongst insured persons. All the improvements taken together will result in a single cost increase estimated at about 10 per cent. The referendum against this law was supported by four different committees. Some were in favour of total liberalisation and considered the law too restrictive, while others did not think that enough account was taken of alternative medicine. Some sickness funds felt they would be unfairly treated under the new system, and some cantonal authorities were against the subsidies to bring down premiums for persons on low incomes. Taking all these arguments into account it was hardly surprising that the law finally only found a small majority. For once there was no important breach between the language areas.

The Social Democrats' and trade unions' popular initiative 'for sound sickness insurance' did not get a majority in any canton and was clearly

rejected with a 76.6 per cent No vote. The initiative wanted to make insurance against medical and pharmaceutical cost compulsory for the whole population. The contributions were to be fixed according to the financial circumstances of insured persons. Government and parliament advised voters to say No.

Strongly influenced by the debate on the famous Zurich drug scene 'Letten', an overwhelming majority of 72.9 per cent of voters approved a Federal law on compulsory measures in the legislation on foreign nationals. The proposed law—sometimes referred to as the 'lex Letten'—intends to deal with foreign nationals who abuse the laws of asylum and residence. The new legislation especially aims at foreign drug dealers without any valid residence permit. The law was violently opposed by aid organisations, the political left and the trade unions, as well as by a substantial number of clergy and eminent lawyers. The compulsory measure met with approval even in Geneva, where the government, almost all parties, and many different organisations recommended a No vote for legal reasons.

Issues in national politics

The political agenda in Switzerland is strongly influenced by the referendums and initiatives put to the vote. A considerable part of the main issues in national politics has thus been presented above and is not discussed here again.

The position of Switzerland in Europe, after the rejection of membership of the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1992, remained one of the major concerns in Swiss politics. In 1993 the government pleaded in Brussels for the opening of bilateral negotiations. In 1994 these talks finally started covering Swiss participation in European research programmes, reciprocal access to labour markets, a partial liberalisation of the Swiss agricultural market, non-discriminatory conditions for public contracts and the mutual recognition of technical regulations and standards. The EU authorities had declared that all these issues had to be negotiated together and that a negative Swiss decision on one would negate them all.

The economic situation and the precarious state of the public finances continued to be an important concern in 1994. Although unemployment figures went down from 186,000 at the end of 1993 to 165,000 at the end of 1994 (4.5 per cent of the registered work force), the annual inflation rate dropped to 0.4 per cent, and for the first time since 1991 a positive economic growth was reported, the federal deficit nevertheless reached a record high of 7,000 million Swiss francs. Austerity measures and budget discussions will remain on the political agenda for the years to come.

A reform of the old-age pensions scheme (AHV) which had occupied the Swiss parliament for several years, was finally approved in the autumn of

1994. The reform improves the situation of women considerably as it takes into account the years they spent bringing up their children. However, the extra cost of this improvement is to be covered by a gradual rise in the retirement age for women from 62 to 64 years (the retirement age for men is 65 years). The second part of the revision provoked protests from the trade unions, the Social Democrats (SPS) and women's organisations, which collected the necessary 50,000 signatures to bring the issue to the vote in 1995.

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