

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: - (1973)
Heft: 3-4

Artikel: Political rights for Swiss abroad?
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-906366>

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French-speaking and 22 Italian-speaking Swiss, and 55 foreigners.

Swiss nationals living abroad can join the voluntary corps. Indeed it is hoped that they will do so. But the terms of their contracts will of course not be the same as in the homeland. Most needed will be those Swiss who have long resided in third-world countries or in disaster-prone European countries, and have a thorough knowledge and wide experience of local conditions. Such volunteers could be of inestimable value when participating in a relief mission taking place in their country of residence or a nearby area. Those interested in the voluntary corps should get into touch with the

Délégué du Conseil fédéral
aux missions de secours à l'étranger
Département politique fédéral
3003 Berne

Political Rights for Swiss Abroad?

As announced in the Press, the Federal Council examined on 25th June, 1973, the report dated 21st May, 1973, of the Commission set up to draft a bill on the political rights of Swiss nationals residing abroad. On the same date the Council invited the Federal Political Department to submit this report to the Cantonal Governments, the political parties represented in Parliament, the New Helvetic Society Commission for the Swiss Abroad and all other bodies concerned, and to ask for their views on the draft bill and implementing order concerning the political rights of the Swiss abroad. These consultations must be completed by 15th November, 1973.

The Commission has proposed that the Swiss Abroad be enabled to exercise full voting rights at federal level, including the right to sign initiative and referendum petitions. Should have the right to vote: any Swiss from abroad staying in Switzerland at the time of a federal election or when the electorate is being consulted on a federal issue. The Swiss from abroad could choose between voting either in their communes of origin or by postal vote from any other places in Switzerland. Were it decided to enable the Swiss abroad to vote from their countries of residence the consequence might be – in the opinion of the Commission – that the Confederation

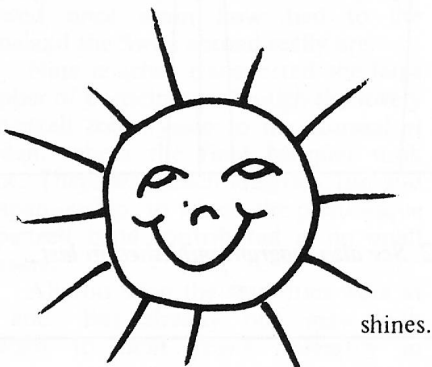
would then also have to grant foreigners living in Switzerland the possibility of exercising their political rights on Swiss territory.

On the conclusion of the current consultations the Federal Council will decide whether their outcome justifies the submission to Parliament of a bill and supporting message to Parliament. Should the parliamentary process be set in motion and the bill approved by both chambers, the new law would still be subject to the optional referendum. It could come into force without being first referred to the electorate only if no call came for a referendum. Thus many months will yet pass before there may be any question of Swiss from abroad exercising their political rights during stays in the home country.

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