

Official news

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Government objectives for 1999

Openness to the outside world – reforms within

The Federal Council has presented its objectives for 1999. Its policy is reflected in 30 objectives and 60 key parliamentary activities.

The accent for 1999 is on major projects aimed at improving Switzerland's international standing (bilateral agreements, preparations for entry to the EU and UNO, realignment of Swiss security policy) and, closer to home, on domestic reforms (old age pension scheme, energy policy, budget, completion of reforms to consolidate Switzerland's position as a centre of research and education, institutional

reforms) aimed directly or indirectly at improving Switzerland's readiness to tackle future challenges. In addition, special efforts will continue to be required to deal with the extraordinary situation in the migration policy area.

A printed copy of the 1999 objectives is available free of charge by inclusion of a self-addressed stick-on label to: Eidg. Drucksachen- und Materialzentrale (EDMZ), CH-3000 Berne. The 20-page document can also be ordered by e-mail (gesetze.verkauf@edmz.admin.ch) or downloaded from the Internet (www.admin.ch under "What's New?") ■

Federal Government 1999: Pascal Couchepin, Flavio Cotti, Adolf Ogi, Ruth Dreifuss (the President of the Swiss Confederation), Arnold Koller, François Couchepin (Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation), Kaspar Villiger, Moritz Leuenberger (from left). (Photo: Confederation)



Health insurance for returning Swiss nationals

Comprehensive basic insurance

The new health insurance law entitles Swiss nationals returning from abroad to take out a basic health insurance without disadvantage. The basic insurance offers comprehensive coverage.

The health insurance law which came into force on 1 January 1996 sets down provisions for a compulsory health insurance with free choice of insurance company. This means that insured persons can change their basic insurance at any time, irrespective of age and without provisos. The compulsory basic insurance provides for comprehensive coverage and is separate from the voluntary supplementary insurance for semi-

private/private treatment under the provisions of the insurance contract law.

Swiss returning from abroad

Under the terms of the new legislation, returning Swiss nationals can enter the basic insurance scheme at any time without disadvantage (irrespective of age and without provisos), and are free to select any health insurance company anywhere in Swit-

zerland (registration within three months of taking up residence or of birth in Switzerland ensures retroactive coverage!).

Compulsory insurance

The legislation defines the following categories of persons subject to or exempt from compulsory health insurance:

1. Compulsory insurance applies in principle to persons resident in Switzerland. With certain provisos, employees and their families who are sent abroad on assignments are obliged to keep up their health insurance for a limited period. Civil servants work-

ing outside Switzerland as well as persons and their families who find themselves abroad due to their involvement with another Swiss organisation or public-law institution (including teachers at Swiss schools) also remain subject to the compulsory insurance law.

2. "Border-crossers" i.e. persons working in Switzerland but resident in a neighbouring country (including in some cases members of their family) as well as persons with privileges under international law (e.g. diplomats) may apply for eligibility under Swiss insurance law.

3. Persons with no residence in Switzerland and not explicitly (as an exception to the rule of residence) subject to compulsory health insurance, or who have applied for but been refused eligibility,



are not liable to compulsory health insurance under the health insurance law.

4. Persons in Switzerland exclusively for the purposes of medical treatment or a rest cure do not meet the residence requirements and cannot be insured.

Residence abroad

Generally speaking, therefore, persons resident abroad are not subject to the compulsory health insurance law. However, health insurance companies are entitled (though not obliged) to continue insuring such persons. In the case of insured Swiss nationals abroad who were already receiving medical treatment prior to 1 January 1997, insurance companies are obliged to continue the

existing policy under the terms of the old legislation until completion of the treatment.

For further details, contact health insurance directly.
NYF

Initiatives in brief

For solidarity in the peace policy

The Group for a Switzerland without an Army (GSoA) is renewing its efforts. Almost ten years after its initiative for an army-free Switzerland was rejected, it has launched two popular referendum demands: 1. "Solidarity creates security: for a voluntary civil peace corps (ZFD)", and 2. "For a credible security policy and a Switzerland without an army".

The first initiative aims to promote a civil peace corps

OSEC Exhibition Information

The "1999 Swiss Trade Fairs" calendar is available from the Swiss Office for Trade Promotion OSEC, Stampfenbachstrasse 85, PO Box 492, CH-8035 Zurich.

The information is also available on the Internet (<http://www.osec.ch/swisstradefairs>).

(ZFD) as an instrument of an active peace policy. The aim of this voluntary civil peace corps would be to contribute to the diminishment of conflict in Switzerland and abroad.

The second popular initiative demands the removal of the army, with civil authorities taking over the civil services performed by the army. Under the terms of this initiative, the government would

support the transfer of jobs from the military to the civilian sector. The armed participation of Switzerland in international peace efforts outside Switzerland would not be constitutionally forbidden, according to the initiative, but it would also not be legally permitted. Should such participation be contemplated, the people would have to decide.

NYF

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

Health at a price within reach (health initiative)
(until 9 June 1999)
Swiss Socialist Party (SPS),
PO Box, CH-3001 Berne

Exemplary hospital wards
(until 9 June 1999)
Kunigunde Grätzer-Karner, PO
Box 144, CH-8042 Zurich

Six lanes for the A 1 between Zurich and Berne
(until 13 July 1999)
National Councillor Michael
E. Dreher, Ränkestrasse 2,
CH-8700 Küsnacht

Six lanes for the A 1 between Geneva and Lausanne
(until 13 July 1999)
National Councillor Michael
E. Dreher, Ränkestrasse 2,
CH-8700 Küsnacht

A second motorway tunnel for the Gotthard
(until 13 July 1999)
National Councillor Michael
E. Dreher, Ränkestrasse 2,
CH-8700 Küsnacht

For the suppression of the right of appeal of associations at federal level
(until 13 July 1999)
National Councillor Michael
E. Dreher, Ränkestrasse 2,
CH-8700 Küsnacht

For a credible security policy and a Switzerland without an army

(until 17 September 1999)
Group for a Switzerland without an army, Nico Lutz, PO
Box 6348, CH-3001 Berne

Solidarity creates security: for an optional civil service for peace (SPC)

(until 17 September 1999)
Group for a Switzerland without an army, Nico Lutz, PO
Box 6348, CH-3001 Berne

Moratorium Plus – to prolong the moratorium against the construction of nuclear power stations and limitation of the nuclear risk (Moratorium Plus)

(until 1 October 1999)
Association "Strom ohne Atom", Leo Scherer, PO Box
2322, CH-8031 Zurich

Away from nuclear power – for a turning point in the energy field and for the progressive dismantlement of nuclear power stations (Away from nuclear power)

(until 1 October 1999)
Association "Strom ohne Atom", Leo Scherer, PO Box
2322, CH-8031 Zurich

For a sufficient range of vocational training (apprenticeships' initiative)

(until 28 October 1999)
Sarah Müller, Postgasse 21,
CH-3001 Berne

For shorter working hours
(until 11 November 1999)
Swiss Trades Union Congress,
Monbijoustr. 61, CH-3007 Berne

For a capital gains tax
(until 11 November 1999)
Swiss Trades Union Congress,
Monbijoustr. 61, CH-3007 Berne

For freedom of expression and simultaneous lifting of the prohibition on race discrimination

(until 12 November 1999)
Kunigunde Grätzer-Karner,
PO Box 114, CH-8042 Zurich

The individual sovereignty of citizens (installation, as a supreme judicial body, of a Technical Commission of the Senate of a Swiss Academy for Technology, Vital Questions and Science)

(until 12 November 1999)
Kunigunde Grätzer-Karner,
PO Box 114, CH-8042 Zurich

For mother and child – for the protection of the unborn child and aid for his mother in distress

(until 2 December 1999)
Dominik Muggler, PO Box,
CH-4011 Basle

For a secure income in the event of illness (daily allowance initiative)

(until 16 December 1999)
Swiss Trades Union Congress,
PO Box 64, CH-3000 Berne 23

Equal rights for handicapped persons

(until 4 February 2000)
Konrad Stoker, ASKIO, Effingerstrasse 55, 3008 Berne

For Switzerland's adhesion to the United Nations (UN)

(until 3 March 2000)
Association for Switzerland's Adhesion to the United Nations (UN), PO Box 734, CH-4003, Basle

For the safe and wholesome provision of medication (Medication Initiative)

(until 15 March 2000)
Swiss Apothecaries Association, Max Brentano, Stationstr. 12, PO Box 193, CH-3097 Bern-Liebefeld

Lifelong internment for perpetrators of sexual or violent crimes who are judged to be highly dangerous and untreatable

(until 3 May 2000)
Self-help Group "Licht der Hoffnung", Anita Chaaban, PO Box, CH-9471 Buchs SG.