

Official news

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Year 2000 goals

The Federal Council has finalised its annual objectives. The salient points of the government's political agenda are presented in three chapters.

THE AIM of the Federal Council's programme for 2000 is to promote an open, forward-looking Switzerland, enhance its attractiveness as a place of work and education, and provide quality of life and development capability.

Our country stands at the threshold of a new century. The Swiss economy returned to

growth towards the end of the 1990s, following a lengthy, sustained period of recession. Unemployment is dropping and a further economic upswing is anticipated for the coming year.

Favourable start

The Federal Council is committed to leveraging this favourable starting point to the new legislative period, in order to effectively invest in the future. Accordingly the Federal Council's domestic policy for the year 2000 aims to strengthen Switzerland's attract-

iveness across the board, while foreign policy focuses on increasing the representation of Switzerland's interests on the international stage.

A printed copy of the Federal Council's objectives for 2000 can be ordered free of charge from the Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik, EDMZ, CH-3003 Berne. Please include a self-addressed adhesive label with your order. The 28-page document can also be ordered by e-mail (gesetze.verkauf@edmz.admin.ch), or downloaded from the internet: www.admin.ch.

NYF



Photo: Confederation

Federal Government 2000 (from left to the right):
 Moritz Leuenberger
 Joseph Deiss
 Ruth Dreifuss
 Ruth Metzler-Arnold
 Adolf Ogi, (the President of the Swiss Confederation)
 Pascal Couchepin
 Annemarie Huber-Hotz, (Chancellor of the Swiss Confederation)
 Kaspar Villiger

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

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

Against abuse of the right of asylum

(until 25 November 2000)

Swiss People's Party, Alike Panayides, Brückfeldstrasse 18, PO Box, CH-3000 Berne 26

For popular initiatives to be put to the vote within six months, excluding the Federal Council and parliament

(until 22 December 2000)

Flavio Maspoli, National Councillor, Medeag SA, CH-6648 Minusio

For redirecting surplus gold reserves to the AHV fund (gold initiative)

(until 10 February 2001)

Swiss People's Party, Peter Kneubühler, Brückfeldstrasse 18, PO Box, CH-3000 Berne 26.

Moratorium on taxes

(until 1 March 2001)

Liberal Democratic Party of Switzerland, Johannes Matyassy, PO Box 6136, CH-3001 Berne.

Avanti – for safe and efficient motorways

(until 11.07.2001)

Touring Club of Switzerland TCS
 Rudolf Zumbühl, chemin de Blandonnet 4, PO Box 820, CH-1214 Vernier GE



Referendums on popular initiatives

A multi-party initiative committee "against the delay in submitting referendums to the vote" has launched an initiative "for popular initiatives to be put to the vote within six months, excluding the Federal Council and parliament." The initiative calls for the following addition to the Federal Constitution:

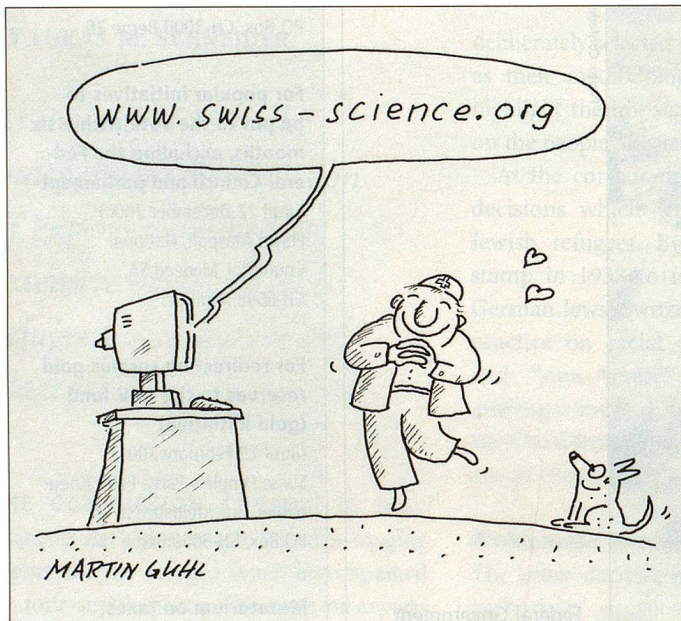
An initiative, in the form of a comprehensive draft, must be put to the vote within six

months of its submission. The Federal Chancellery must define the voting date immediately after determining the validity of the initiative. The text of the initiative should require no written position statement and no voting recommendation on the part of the Federal Council or parliament. Legal or official provisions which do not accord with the initiative must be regarded as rescinded.

In its statement dated 22 June 1999 the Federal Council drew attention to the following: "The implications of this initiative, which has been promoted using full-page newspaper advertisements, are enormous. If accepted, even initiatives which violate international law and human rights could be put to the vote. The initiative takes direct democracy to absurd lengths and casts doubt on the political cul-

ture of Switzerland. The Federal Council is not prepared to stand idly by and watch our democracy and its democratically legitimised institutions being challenged with flimsy arguments. We therefore call on the electorate to be wary of the initiators' high-profile advertising and consider very carefully the consequences of their signature." NYF

Pioneering Swiss internet portal



Since early March a new internet portal has been providing rapid access to information on education, science and technology in Switzerland.

www.swiss-science.org is the gateway to several thousand home pages for universities, institutes of technology, promotional organisations, companies,

foundations and cantonal authorities.

www.swiss-science.org is produced in conjunction with the Group for Science and Research (GWF), the Federal Office for Education and Science (BBW), the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (BBT), and Political Department V of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Broad range of topics

The aim of the portal is to provide a shared, clearly-structured platform for fast access to information from different sources. It is trilingual (German, French and English) and consists of various subject-specific information platforms. Dynamic focus is provided by a news ticker which continually publishes daily news reports. Other platforms are:

- Summary of the education and research system
- Curriculae of universities and federal institutes of technology
- Academic job clearing house/career centre
- "Vision" magazine archives
- List of several 1000 links

- Newsgroups and mailing lists for science and society
- Partners for venture capital
- SME marketplace
- Patents and technology transfer

An intelligent navigation system guides visitors through the various information platforms and shows the most direct route to the information they seek. Unlike search engines, which are based on key words and record a success rate of only 20%, the logical subject-based structure of the information platforms ensures a success rate of almost 100%. Eighteen platforms are scheduled for launching by the end of 2000, with new platforms continually being added. NYF

Ordinance on civil status – new fees

The Federal Council has amended the ordinance on civil status. The new provisions of the Civil Code on civil status and marriage have been in force since 1.1.2000, and registration fees formerly set by the cantons have now been standardised. For further information, contact the nearest Swiss representative.