

Mailbag

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Swiss multilingualism is on the rise



It pleases me to read that Switzerland is becoming more multilingual. Understanding and speaking other languages enhances one's quality of life. Every language you learn is like an extra room in the house, offering a different

angle and outlook on the world. I read material in German, English, Russian and French on a daily basis, thanks to the internet.

WALTER ZWEIFEL, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

You can talk about Switzerland and its four languages, but it's a shame that German isn't on the school curriculum from a young age in French-speaking Switzerland. I live in Norway, and my two children speak French with me and Finnish with their mother. Norwegian and English are taught from kindergarten.

JEAN-CLAUDE BURRI, NORWAY

I am extremely grateful about being able to switch easily between four languages – Italian, French, German and English! It has definitely widened my horizons. I don't understand Swiss-German (sorry!) and would prefer it if standard German were spoken more often on television and radio at least.

MARIA LUISA KUPKA, MUNICH, GERMANY

I have lived in Copenhagen for over 50 years, I am married to an Englishman, and we mainly speak English and Danish at home. But I have not forgotten my Bernese German. And French remains my second native tongue, which I still use at the Alliance Française in Copenhagen. We Swiss are very fortunate to be able to use all the languages we have.

MARGRITH MOODY-ZUMSTEIN, DENMARK

When people ask which Swiss language I talk, I always say the fifth language, English. So thanks for the validation! After 33 years in the U.S. I confuse myself with what is South African, British or American English. We all understand all the dialects.

ERIKA WHITE, USA

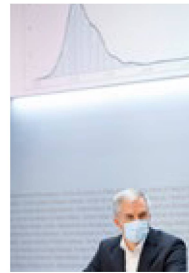
Learning a language means you can relate to the mentality and way of thinking of the people who speak it, and that is always good on a human level...

ELISABETH HOFFMANN, FRANCE

Many Swiss write in excellent German, but unfortunately few can articulate themselves fluently and correctly when they open their mouths. That's not good! We should talk in standard German to people with other languages – even if these people understand a bit of Swiss German. Should the Italian, French and Romansh speakers in German-speaking Switzerland really have to cope with all the dialects? When we travel to Italy, we expect the Italians to speak to us in proper Italian, not in some indecipherable patois.

MENA CEBOLLA-HUONDER, MALAGA, SPAIN

Why Swiss politicians considered silencing the scientists on Covid



Reading this article made me feel very uneasy. Any political decision in a democracy needs to be made transparently. For a start, the unfortunate practice of consulting behind closed doors is anything but democratic, in my view. Don't politicians have the guts to come out and explain their decisions? If they can't be open, why should they tell us what to do? This attempt to

muzzle the scientists is a case in point.

ANDREAS MÜLLER, ELLWANGEN, GERMANY

It seems basic common sense to me to listen to the scientists, especially about a problem of the scale we are currently experiencing. Politics, by definition, is about serving the people and that's how it needs to stay. That means politicians should always give due consideration to the scientific perspective regarding an issue outside their field of influence.

RALF UDO KREBS, PASTO, COLOMBIA

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