

# Politicians accused of doublespeak on languages

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near. But I managed to run it all with gritted teeth (although just tired, not injured as such) and just walked at the drink stations so I wouldn't get the water down the wrong pipe. The worst was after the finish. I was so happy I cried and almost choked up with it. We had to walk about another 2 kilometres in a shuffling caterpillar of people to get to our bags before they let us out on the streets. It had gotten cold again and it took me forever to make my way back to the hotel. And that's it really! A huge journey has come to an end and I have proven that even a "fat" chick can run a Marathon!!! (in 4h.30.27)



After the marathon - Adrian and Pia

P.S. Donations for CatWalk, the Spinal Cord Injury Trust ([www.catwalk.org.nz](http://www.catwalk.org.nz)) are still very much welcome: [www.fundraisonline.co.nz/](http://www.fundraisonline.co.nz/) PiaWittwer

## Politicians accused of doublespeak on languages

Swiss politicians fail to recognize the value of multilingualism when the languages spoken are not the national tongues or English, a study found.

From the 1960s until the 1990s, discussions in parliament focused on ensuring equality among the official languages, German, French, Italian and Romansh, as well as dialogue between the language groups. A turning point came in the second half of the 1990s, when English became part of the debate on languages. One question was whether it should be taught in schools as the first foreign language ahead of German, French or Italian.

At the same time, political parties realized that immigrants were staying. So they emphasized the importance of learning an official language as part of the integration process. This came at the expense of immigrants' mother tongues. Politicians ignored the fact that Switzerland had become a land of immigration with ten per cent of the population claiming a language other than German, French or Italian as their mother tongue. Schoolchildren should be encouraged to retain their mother tongues. Pilot projects have been initiated across the country to encourage children to learn the local language as well as the one spoken by their parents. The command of that language is a precondition for learning other languages well. In Switzerland a lot more people speak Croatian or Serbian than Romansh. Would it be a threat to Romansh if we gave more rights to migration languages, or would it perhaps have a positive effect if we generally agreed that Switzerland is a multilingual country and gave rights to minority languages?

*swissinfo*

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