

SWITZERLAND

Date of Elections: 23 October 1983

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the National Council and for 37 of the 46 members of the Council of States on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Swiss Federal Assembly is bicameral, consisting of the National Council (*Nationalrat*) and Council of States (*Standerat*).

The National Council is composed of 200 members elected for 4 years. The Council of States comprises 46 members, two from each of the Confederation's 20 cantons and one from each of the 6 half-cantons. All *Standerat* members are elected for 4 years except for those from the canton of Glarus, whose term of office is 3 years. *Standerat* elections generally coincide with those for the *Nationalrat*.

Electoral System

While the electoral laws for the National Council are drawn up on the federal level, those for the Council of States are done so by the cantons.

In elections to the National Council, citizens at least 20 years of age and residing in Switzerland are entitled to vote unless they are insane, have been deprived of their civil rights or (in most cantons) are under guardianship.

Electoral registers are compiled on the constituency level and revised continuously. Voting is compulsory only in a small number of cantons, where those abstaining without a justifiable reason are subject to a small fine.

All qualified electors aged 20 years or more who are laymen may be candidates for the National Council. Membership thereof is incompatible with membership of the Federal Council (Cabinet) or the post of federal judge or official appointed by the Federal Council. Membership of the Council of States is incompatible with that of the Federal Council and the Federal Tribunal. Lists of candidates for the National Council must be supported by 15 electors; candidates are, in practice, nominated by political parties.

For purposes of elections, Switzerland is divided into 26 constituencies - one for each canton and half-canton. The number of seats allotted to each is based on the constituency's population. Candidates in multi-member constituencies appear on party lists and are elected so as to arrive at proportional representation calculated according to the Hagenbach-Bischoff method, the electoral quota within each constituency being established by dividing the number of seats to be filled, plus one, into the total number of valid votes; every party is given one seat for every completed number of times which this quota is contained in the

number of votes cast for it. Each elector can vote for a list as is or modify it by crossing out or repeating names appearing on it; he can moreover split his vote between different party lists (*panachage*) or select names from different lists in forming his own list on a blank ballot paper.

In the five single-member constituencies (two cantons, three half-cantons). National Council members are elected by simple majority vote.

Cantonal law governs election to the Council of States. Members are generally chosen by simple majority vote.

If a seat in the National Council becomes vacant between general elections it is filled by the individual who is "next-in-line" on the list of the party which formerly held the seat or by means of a by-election in constituencies which elect only one member. By-elections are also generally held to fill vacancies in the Council of States.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Central issues of the 1983 election campaign were, on the one hand, the economic recession and rising unemployment and, on the other hand, environmental questions. A total of 1,882 candidates - including 434 women - from 188 lists were in contention for the 200 National Council seats.

Polling day was marked by a turnout of 48.9% - the first increase since the 1947 elections. Results indicated a slight shift to the right, since the conservative Radical-Democratic Party (FDP) outpolled the Social-Democratic Party (SPS) for the first time in 58 years.

Although the four-party coalition of FDP, SPS, Christian-Democratic People's Party (CVP) and Swiss People's Party (SVP) continued in power as it has since 1959, the SPS raised the possibility of its leaving the coalition at a meeting in Bern on 10 December.

After voting for the 37 Council of States seats also at stake on 23 October, the four coalition partners retained their 43 seats. In the seven-man Cabinet, the SPS, FDP and CVP each hold two seats and the **SVP** has one.

Switzerland

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the National Council

Number of registered electors	4,068,532	
Voters	1,990,012	(48.9%)
Blank or void ballot papers	30,117	
Valid votes	1,959,895	

Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Seats
Radical-Democratic Party	454,268	23.4	54 (+ 3)
Social-Democratic Party	444,364	22.8	47 (-4)
Christian-Democratic People's Party	392,783	20.2	42 (-2)
Swiss People's Party	215,455	11.1	23 (=)
Independent Alliance	77,745	4.0	8 (=)
Liberal Party	54,774	2.8	8 (=)
National Action/Republican Movement	67,094	3.4	5 (+ 2)
Progressive Organizations of Switzerland/PSA	53,355	2.2	4 (+1)
Greens	56,646	2.9	3 (+2)
Evangelical People's Party	40,520	2.1	3 (=)
Labour Party	17,281	0.9	1 (-2)
Others			2 (=)
			<hr/> 200

2. Distribution of Seats in the Council of States

Political Group	Number of Seats
Christian-Democratic People's Party	18(=)
Radical-Democratic Party	14(+3)
Social-Democratic Party	6(-3)
Swiss People's Party	5(=)
Liberal Party	3(=)
Independent Party	<u>1(=)</u>
	46

3. *Distribution of Members of the National Council
according to Professional Category*

Lawyers and notaries.	33
Farmers.	23
Members of the teaching profession.	20
Officials and civil servants of cantonal and local authorities.	16
Officials of local bodies.	14
Journalists.	14
Contractors, craftsmen, industrialists, tradesmen.	12
Engineers and architects.	11
State Councillors (including former).	11
Managers.	11
Doctors, veterinarians, pharmacists.	10
Economists.	7
Clerical staff and manual workers.	4
Housewives.	4
Others.	<u>10</u>
	200

4. *Distribution of Members of the Federal Assembly
according to Sex*

	National Council	Council of States
Men.	178	43
<u>Women</u>	<u>22</u>	3
	200	46