

Switzerland in the foreign media: 3rd quarter 2023

UBS/CS: bank merger under observation

Foreign media continued to report in depth on the consequences of the takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS. In addition to UBS's waiver of the Confederation's loss absorption guarantee, the bank's quarterly figures and reported record profits received a great deal of media attention worldwide. Some media reports noted that

«Le conseguenze a lungo termine del salvataggio di Credit Suisse sono infatti tutte da valutare.»

(Corriere della Sera, Italy)

UBS had been allowed to buy Credit Suisse at a knockdown price, reaping a windfall profit, and were critical of the Swiss authorities' role in the emergency rescue deal. The bank was also criticised for a potential wave of lawsuits surrounding various shareholder and investor claims. On the other hand, the foreign media were largely factual in their coverage of the announced full integration of CS's domestic business and the associated job losses. Significant media attention was also focused on the resignation of FINMA CEO Urban Angehrn, and the publication of an expert report commissioned by the Federal Council on the collapse of CS, which said FINMA had proved too weak to adequately manage a banking crisis.



UBS Group CEO Sergio Ermotti confirmed that the bank will retain Credit Suisse's domestic business. (© *Financial Times*)

Ukraine war: Switzerland's position met with further scepticism

Switzerland's position in the context of the Ukraine war continued to generate critical coverage abroad, albeit less intensively than earlier in the year. European media

«Mit dem Rückverkauf von Leopard-2-Panzern an Deutschland betreibt die Schweiz politische Schadensbegrenzung.»

(FAZ, Germany)

continued to judge Swiss neutrality in negative terms, especially with regard to the blocked re-export of armaments. In this context, on the other hand, Parliament's approval of the decommissioning of Leopard 2 tanks as a precondition for selling them back to Germany was welcomed. Switzerland's declaration of intent to participate in the European Sky Shield Initiative, on the other hand, was interpreted by the German media in particular as security policy "free-riding". Leading Western media also repeatedly questioned the effectiveness of Swiss sanctions on Russia and raised the issue of their possible circumvention via the Swiss financial and commodity trading centre. While the public hearing of the US Helsinki Commission on corresponding accusations received barely any foreign media coverage, critical comments on social media showed that Switzerland remained exposed in this regard. Russian media, meanwhile, said that the Swiss financial centre had suffered damage owing to the sanctions.



The 'Banking Stability' group of experts pleaded for a strengthening of FINMA to prevent a new banking crisis. (© *Handelsblatt*)



The Leopard-1 tanks owned by RUAG continued to receive coverage in foreign media. Images that emerged of tanks stored unused in Italy led to renewed criticism. (© *NV*)

Principle of universal jurisdiction in Swiss criminal law

Foreign media reported with interest on several cases handled by the Swiss judiciary in accordance with the principle of universal jurisdiction, including a current case against the former Algerian defence minister and an international arrest warrant issued by Switzerland against an uncle of Syrian ruler Assad. Significant attention was paid to the trial of a former member of the Belarusian special forces, in which the principle of universal jurisdiction was applied for the first time to the crime of enforced disappearance. Foreign media were in part critical of the acquittal of the accused.

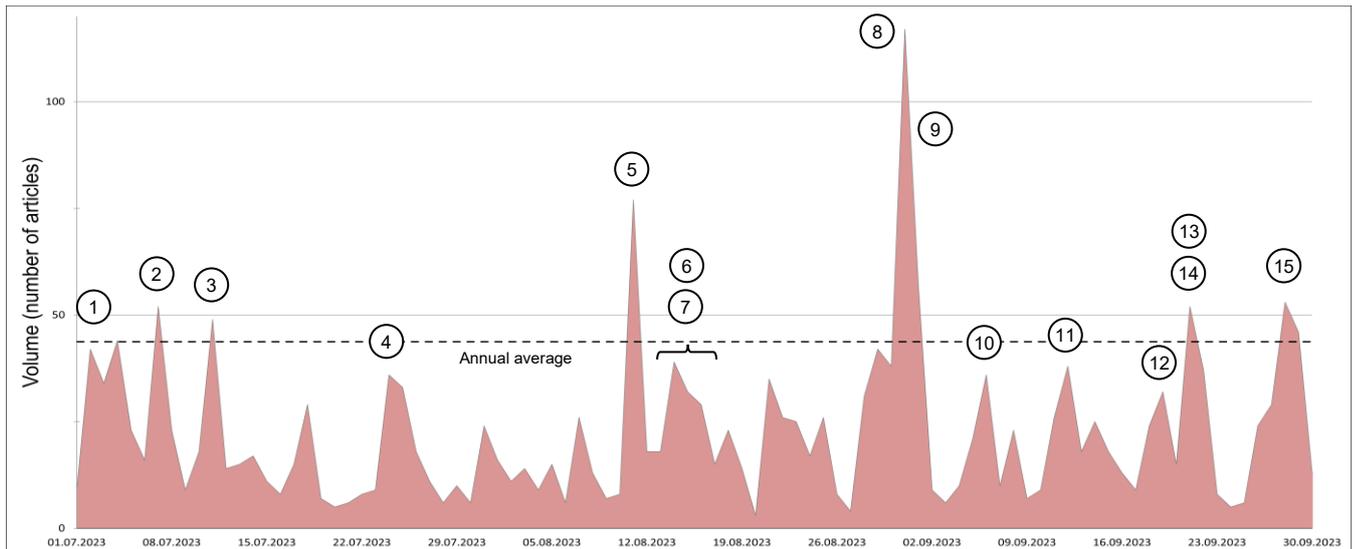
«... la Suisse a longtemps eu la réputation d'un havre de tranquillité, offrant opacité et impunité. Le vent est peut-être en train de tourner.»

(Le Monde, France)



Yuri Garavsky, a former member of a Belarusian special unit, during a break in the trial in St Gallen. (© *New York Times*)

Quantitative trends in foreign media coverage related to Switzerland

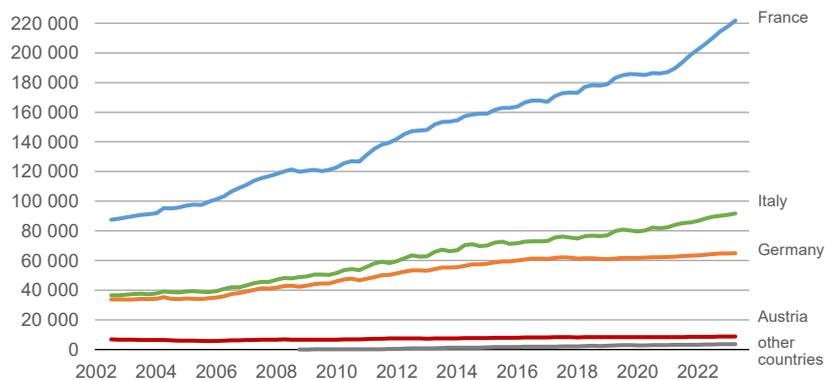


Changes in the volume and tone of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed, 01.07.2023 – 30.09.2023). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their volume and significance.

(1) Unrest in Lausanne following protests in France over police violence (2) Switzerland's intention to participate in the 'European Sky Shield Initiative' (3) Track and field athlete Semenya wins appeal against Federal Supreme Court decision before ECtHR (4) UBS–CS: Archegos-related fines (5) UBS–CS: waiver of Confederation's loss absorption guarantee (6) UBS–CS: Lawsuit by small investors following takeover (7) UBS: billions in fines following US legal dispute over junk mortgages 2006/07 (8) UBS–CS: presentation of quarterly figures following takeover (9) UBS–CS: full integration of CS domestic business into UBS (10) Resignation of FINMA CEO Urban Angehrn (11) Catholic Church abuse cases (12) Trial of former member of Belarusian special forces (13) No key interest rate increase by SNB (14) Implementation of full-face veil ban (15) Glacier melt

Focus: cross-border commuters in Switzerland

Switzerland is also attractive to foreign nationals as a place to work: according to the Federal Statistical Office (FSO), around 372,900 cross-border commuters worked in Switzerland in 2022. Since the year 2000, the number has risen steadily and has now more than doubled. Accordingly, the cross-border commuter issue regularly attracts media attention, especially in neighbouring countries. In this quarter, reporting often revolved around concrete issues such as the regulation of taxation or working from home. The main motives cited by cross-border commuters for working in Switzerland are the stable Swiss labour market and high wages compared to other European countries. In addition to illustrating Switzerland's economic attractiveness, foreign media coverage increasingly highlighted critical aspects. For example, some articles complained that the shortage of skilled workers in areas bordering Switzerland was being exacerbated by the attractive jobs available here. In Italy in particular, against the backdrop of competition for healthcare professionals, some of the media drew attention to the fact that Italian nurses often preferred a job in Switzerland because of better working conditions, even though they were urgently needed in Lombardy.



Foreign cross-border commuters by country of residence

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Monitoring the image of Switzerland in the foreign media covers all the reporting on Swiss-related topics in the leading media of 19 countries – Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US – as well as in the leading pan-Arab and EU media. Contact: FDFa, Presence Switzerland, Monitoring and Analysis Section, Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. +41 58 462 34 63, prs@eda.admin.ch, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/praesenzschweiz>