

Switzerland in the foreign media: 3rd quarter 2020

The Limitation Initiative in the headlines

Switzerland's vote on the popular initiative 'For moderate immigration' attracted considerable media attention worldwide. The outcome was widely and overwhelmingly

viewed as positive and as an important sign for Europe, particularly in neighbouring countries, whereby Switzerland's willingness to cooperate

– with a view to Swiss-EU relations – was also reported. A number of articles connected the initiative to Switzerland's negotiations with the EU for an institutional framework agreement, most of which concluded that the initiative's rejection should help ease Swiss-EU relations.

The foreign media outlets also highlighted the ongoing challenges facing the negotiations, however, making differences between Switzerland and the EU on this issue visible once again.

«Die Schweizer Volksabstimmung sendet das Signal, dass ein eng vernetztes Europa attraktiv bleibt» (*Handelsblatt*, Germany)

«In Europa c'è ora un elemento di tensione in meno» (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, Italy)



Yes campaign posters often used to illustrate reports on the Limitation Initiative (© *Le Monde*)

FIFA: credibility of Swiss judiciary called into question

Foreign media interest in Switzerland's Office of the Attorney General and its handling of the affairs surrounding FIFA remained high during this quarter. Reports mainly focused on the appointment of a special prosecutor – with extraordinary powers outside of the legal system, the resignation of Attorney General Michael Lauber and the decision to waive his immunity, and the opening of a criminal case against FIFA President Gianni Infantino. Many reports also went beyond the particular individuals and institutions involved to question the Swiss judiciary as a whole. Some media outlets pronounced the entire affair as a fundamental failing of the Swiss judicial authorities, criticising the influence of politics on the judiciary. The trial against ex-FIFA members Jérôme Valcke and Nasser Al-Khelaifi at the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona also received a great deal of attention abroad and is being portrayed as a test for the Swiss judiciary to restore its tarnished credibility.

«Schweiz und Fifa-Skandal: Verhältnisse wie in einer Bananenrepublik» (*FAZ*, Germany)

Opponents of the Limitation Initiative express their relief at the vote's final outcome (© *Los Angeles Times*)



Opponents of the Limitation Initiative express their relief at the vote's final outcome (© *Los Angeles Times*)

COVID-19: Switzerland seen as safe summer holiday destination

Foreign media continued to report regularly on developments in Switzerland in the context of the global pandemic. At the start of the quarter, most reports focused on the spike in new infections – particularly cases linked to bars and clubs – with a certain degree of concern. However, a number of favourable articles on tourism in Switzerland during COVID-19 continued to classify the country as a safe holiday destination for the summer. Switzerland's quarantine plan for certain countries and regions was reported on in a neutral and factual manner. Several reports also addressed the issue of Switzerland's inclusion on the travel quarantine lists of other countries, mainly in connection with the implications of this for tourism. Favourable reporting on the Swiss economy also continued, particularly in the pandemic context whereby Switzerland was generally viewed to have struck a good balance between protecting the economy and public health.

«Bullish Switzerland moves on from lockdown and focuses on economy» (*Financial Times*, UK)

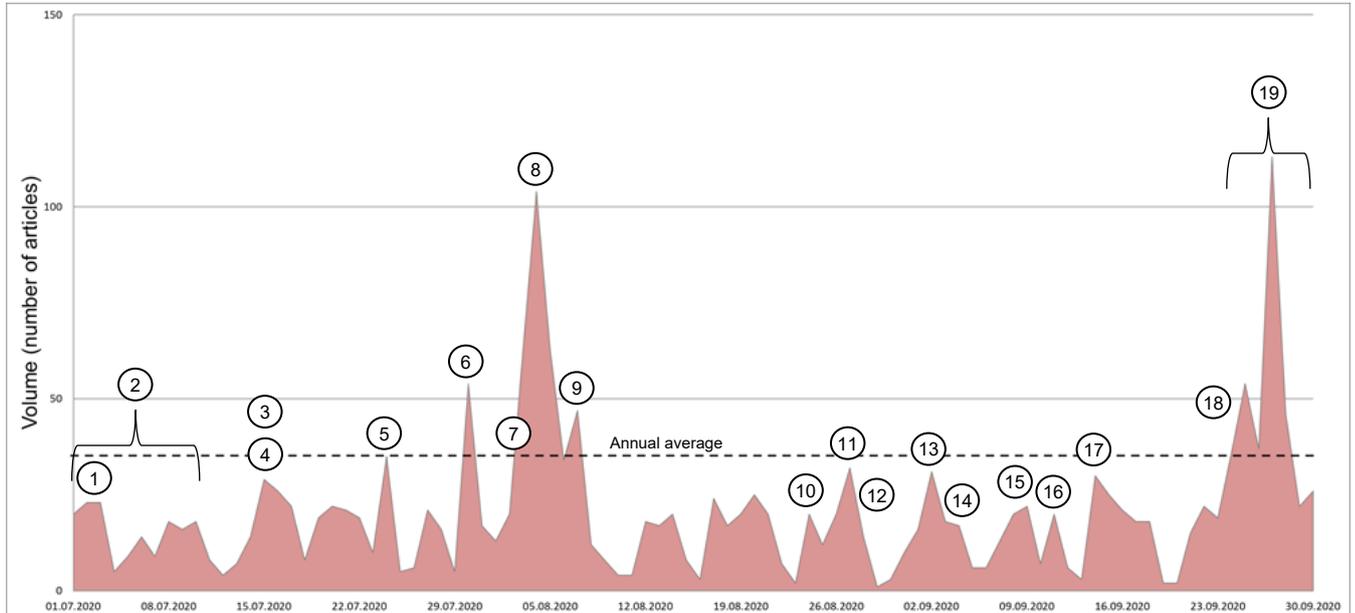


Former Attorney General Michael Lauber currently under review by a special prosecutor for alleged ties with FIFA (© *Kurier*)



Tourists visiting the Matterhorn despite the COVID-19 pandemic (© *BBC*)

Quantitative evolution of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland



Evolution of the volume of foreign media coverage in connection with Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed, 01.07.2020 – 30.09.2020). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their volume and significance.

(1) FIFA and the Office of the Attorney General: appointment of special federal prosecutor (2) COVID-19: spike in new cases and superspreader events (3) COVID-19 cases among Swiss footballers (4) Affair involving former Spanish King Juan Carlos I and his Swiss bank accounts (5) Attorney General Michael Lauber offers resignation (6): Opening of criminal case against FIFA President Gianni Infantino (7) COVID-19: Switzerland's quarantine plan for travellers from Spain (8) Juan Carlos I affair: departure from Spain (9) FIFA's response to opening of criminal case against its president (10) Waiver of immunity for Attorney General Michael Lauber (11) Juan Carlos I affair: stay in the UAE (12) COVID-19: Switzerland added to UK's travel quarantine list (13) Credit Suisse spying incident: Finma opens enforcement proceedings (14) Opening of Ceneri Base Tunnel (15) Federal Supreme Court ruling against athlete Caster Semenya (16) COVID-19: Switzerland's quarantine plan for travellers from Vienna and certain regions in France (17) FIFA trial against Jérôme Valcke and Nasser Al-Khelaifi at the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona (18) COVID-19: Switzerland's quarantine plan extended to Liguria and the UK (19) Vote of 27 September, particularly the Limitation Initiative

A closer look: Opening of Ceneri Base Tunnel

The opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel generated positive reviews in foreign media, particularly in neighbouring



President of the Swiss Confederation Simonetta Sommaruga cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony for the Ceneri Base Tunnel (© Deutsche Welle)

countries where the extensive reporting highlighted different elements of the story. The Italian media mainly focused on the transfer of freight traffic from road to rail, depicting Switzerland as a pioneer of sustainability committed to addressing environmental issues in freight transport. In Germany, the media praised the fact that Switzerland's construction project of the century was both on time and on budget – in comparison to its own large-scale public projects and as-yet unfinished feeder routes to the New Railway Link through the Alps. Widespread support for the project, based on Switzerland's system of direct democracy, was also highlighted as a positive aspect. In contrast, the French media chose to devote more space to the opening ceremony. Overall, the foreign media's portrayal of the Ceneri Base Tunnel as an

important contribution to European infrastructure and integration has been enthusiastic, showing Switzerland as a supportive and reliable partner that fulfils its international obligations.

Switzerland's monitoring of foreign media includes all coverage in connection with Switzerland in reference media in 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, India, Italy, Israel, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, USA) in addition to reference media across the Arab world and in the European Union.

Contact: FDFA, Presence Switzerland, Monitoring and Analysis Section, Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern
Tel. +41 58 462 01 83, email prs@eda.admin.ch, <http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/presenceswitzerland>