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Case report **Switzerland¹**

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Delphi Report: Switzerland
Political and Media Actors' Visions of the Future of Europe

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I. Analytic Summary

This analysis aims at a better understanding of the overall evaluation of the European integration process by different types of actors in Switzerland – state actors, political parties, interest groups, NGOs and the print media. Generally, a broad consensus emerged between all actor types on European integration contributing to security, political stability and economic growth on the European continent. Conversely, all actor types were rather doubtful whether the integration process would lead to environmental protection and social equality.

Despite this broad commitment to the integration project, some differences between various types of actors became apparent with regard to the visions and evaluations of the future of European integration and the European institutions, which can be summarised according to the fields, type and degrees of change, the attitudes to European integration and a specific focus on the integration process from a Swiss perspective.

i. Fields of change

According to the perception of all types of Swiss actors, EU enlargement is the main area of change the EU is facing in a near future. Despite a general recognition of the positive effects on political stability, most Swiss actors stressed the difficulties and challenges of eastward enlargement. On the one hand, many state actors, business groups and journalists expected enlargement to give rise to a process of differentiated integration, which was generally referred to as “two-speed” or “core” Europe, Europe of “variable geometry” or Europe “à la carte”. Such a process would allow some member states to go ahead with deeper integration while others do not participate in selected areas of integration. On the other hand, many interviewees predicted that enlargement would lead to a consolidation or even slowing down of the integration process. Thus, journalists of the NZZ argued that eastward enlargement would lead to a mere widening without a parallel deepening of the integration process. Others, mainly labour unions and NGOs, considered enlargement as a delaying factor for the achievement of a political and social union as well as for the realisation of a common European foreign policy.

Other issues of change such as the Convention on the Future of Europe, factors leading to a perceived “EU fortress” with regard to asylum policy or the EMU were of minor importance and only put forward by single actors.

ii. Type of change

As pointed out above, many Swiss interviewees of all actor types predicted the advent of a “two-speed” or “core” Europe, a Europe of “variable geometry” or a Europe “à la carte” as the most realistic outcome of the enlargement process.

Many interviewees – interest groups, state and party actors in particular – expressed their hope that the EU would evolve in the direction of more decentralisation, federalism and subsidiarity. A federal Europe or a Europe of the regions would, in the eyes of several interviewees, facilitate Swiss membership in the EU.

The reform of the European institutions and especially the decision-making procedure was advanced as another type of change by many Swiss interviewees. Considering institutions, several actors called for a real European government and/or a strengthening of the European Parliament while the editor of *Le Matin* underlined that not every member state could have its Commissioner after enlargement. With regard to decision-making, the introduction of more majority votes was seen as a means to remedy inefficiency within the EU.

iii. Degree of change

With regard to the degree and time of change, there was an agreement that institutional reforms should accompany eastward enlargement and be introduced as soon as possible to guarantee effective decision-making. However, Swiss interviewees were divided concerning the question whether enlargement would lead to stabilisation and consolidation or whether crisis should be expected. Whereas almost all actors put forward the potential risks of enlargement, only a few perceived the changes brought about by the enlargement process as sources of crisis, which would eventually lead to social tensions and weaken the European institutions. In general, thus, the outcome of European integration seemed not yet foreseeable.

iv. Attitudes to European integration

Although all Swiss actors interviewed criticised some selected aspects of European integration, most interviewees of all actor types were broadly in favour of the integration process in general and eastward enlargement in particular. Some accepted the EU as a fact of life – whether one agrees or not.

However, it is common knowledge that strong anti-European movements – such as the SVP, the Swiss Democrats or AUNS in our sample – do exist in Switzerland and so far successfully

prevented Switzerland from joining the EU. These organisations generally strongly condemned the bureaucratic and centralised nature of the EU and its institutions, and stressed the apparent polarisation between small and big member states at the detriment of the former. Apart from these organisations, interest groups in the agriculture sector also held a fairly EU-sceptical point of view; stressing that EU membership was a threat to Swiss interests.

v. Specific Swiss perspective

Many Swiss interviewees, particularly state actors, business organisations and anti-European NGOs, evaluated the benefits and drawbacks of the European integration process from a specific Swiss perspective, asking how perceived European developments would affect Switzerland. For instance, Swiss actors were unsure as of whether the perceived trend towards a “two-speed” Europe would be beneficial and facilitate Swiss membership in the EU. In a similar manner, many Swiss actors referred to the Swiss model of federalism, democracy and peaceful coexistence between different cultures when they criticised the EU or expressed a hope for change. Rather than adapting Switzerland to the EU, these actors seem to hope that the EU one day would integrate elements of the Swiss model and thus become more Swiss. Finally, whereas anti-European actors painted a very negative picture of the EU (undemocratic, bureaucratic, centralised etc.) more pro-European actors coupled their criticism of selected aspects of the integration process with suggestions for reform and a hope for a better future.

II. General Overview

To get an impression of how different actors perceive the role of European integration in the region, our interview partners were asked whether the process of European integration contributes in their view to security, political stability, economic growth and competitiveness, environmental protection and social equality. *Table 1* below shows the average scores for different actor types; the score ranging from no (0), partly (1.5) to yes (3).

Table 1: Actors' perceptions on whether European Integration contributes to specific developments in the European Region

	ALL	State Actors	Parties	Interest Groups	NGOs	Journalists
1. Security	2.6	2.9	2.3	2.8	2.2	3.0
2. Political stability	2.6	2.5	2.0	2.9	2.8	3.0
3. Economic growth	2.4	2.7	2.0	2.3	2.0	3.0
4. Economic competitiveness	2.3	2.9	1.7	1.9	2.2	3.0
5. Environmental protection	1.6	2.2	1.4	1.4	1.0	2.1
6. Social equality	1.8	2.0	1.5	1.6	1.3	2.4
ALL	2.2	2.5	1.8	2.2	1.9	2.8
N (Max numbers)	52	11	10	12	9	10

Overall, Swiss actors perceive the European integration process rather positively. In particular, EU integration is believed to lead to positive developments on the political and economic levels, but less so with respect to environmental and social aspects.

With regard to actor types, media and state actors appear to be the actor type most convinced of the positive effects of European integration on developments in Europe whereas NGOs and party actors were far more sceptical, and interest groups taking an intermediary position. Swiss newspapers are known to be traditionally pro-European. Especially in French-speaking Switzerland, a majority of print media actors support Swiss membership in the EU.¹ State actors, for their part, have always been the motors of Swiss integration in Europe. They generally are committed to the government's objective of joining the EU in a long-term perspective, and have an active role in the current bilateral negotiations between Switzerland and the EU. Both media and party actors believe the European integration process to have

¹ Nyffeler, Bettina (2000). „Schweizerische Aussenpolitik und Journalismus: Eine Befragung politischer JournalistInnen tagesaktueller Medien in der Schweiz“, in: Bonfadelli, Heinz; Nyffeler, Bettina und Roger Blum (Hrsg.). *Helvetisches Stiefkind. Schweizerische Aussenpolitik als Gegenstand der Medienvermittlung*. Zürich: Institut für Publizistikwissenschaft und Medienforschung der Universität Zürich (IPMZ), S. 3-92.

positive effects in all respects, but are a little less enthusiastic about the contribution of EU integration to the development of environmental protection and social equality.

This holds also true for party actors and NGOs, which feel least confident about the positive effects of European integration. If they tend to believe in the benefits of the EU with regard to security, political stability and economic growth, they are quite unsure about the EU's effects on economic competitiveness, environmental protection and social standards. The overall scepticism of Swiss party actors is however not surprising given that the Socialist party is today the only major pro-European party actor in Switzerland. With regard to NGOs, one has to bear in mind that a wide variety of non-governmental actors active in different policy fields were interviewed, resulting in diverse evaluations of the effects of the integration process on the European region. Interest groups follow the same pattern as party actors and NGOs. Today, labour unions are still rather favourable towards Swiss membership in the EU whereas employer's associations have become more and more reluctant over the last years, arguing that bilateral agreements are a more preferable way of settling differences with the EU.

In sum, a broad consensus emerged between different types of actors in Switzerland on European integration contributing to security, political stability and economic growth in the European region. Conversely, all actors were rather doubtful whether the integration process could lead to environmental protection and social equality. Swiss actors were most divided over the potential benefits or drawbacks of European integration with regard to economic competitiveness.

III. Detailed Analysis of Actor's Perceptions

In order to get a better understanding of the expectations and hopes of different types of Swiss actors with respect to future developments of European integration, the following analysis investigates two lines of inquiry. First, Swiss actors' perceptions of direction of European integration will be reported and, second, their evaluations of European integration in general and the role and performance of EU institutions in particular.

1) State actors

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

When talking about the direction the European integration process is likely to take, most Swiss state actors referred to the Eastern enlargement of the EU, the challenges it presents for effective decision-making in the enlarged union and for its internal cohesion. While some state actors underlined the benefits of enlargement ("Eastern enlargement brings a new dynamic in the integration process"²), many were rather concerned with the possible risks and drawbacks. In particular, the EU was believed to become much more heterogeneous with 25 member states, and governable only on the condition of institutional reforms. In the context of EU enlargement, several Swiss state actors also mentioned the possibility of more flexible forms of collaboration, leading to a sort of "two-speed" or "core" Europe ("Kerneuropa"), with some member states advancing more quickly than others. One interview partner strongly emphasised the dangers of such a differentiated integration process, qualifying it as "Zweiklassen-Europa"³ where small EU member states have almost no say. Another Swiss state actor also highlighted that the EU would break apart if the big member states had too much weight. Instead, the EU has an obligation to preserve the diversity between member states:

"It is not sufficient to transfer money to the new member countries. Rather, the EU has to protect minorities and to preserve their particularities, their language, culture and history."⁴

Thus for almost all Swiss state actors, EU enlargement with its consequences upon the institutional structure of the EU or the relationships between small and big member states

² Federal Committee against Racism, Secretary General, 16 September 2003.

³ Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of States, President, 11 June 2003.

⁴ Federal Office for Immigration, Integration and Emigration, Director, 7 October 2003.

were of key concern. Other aspects of the integration process such as the Convention were hardly considered.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

Overall, Swiss state actors are positive with regard to the EU, considering the integration process as fascinating and necessary, especially in the light of transnational political problems such as migration or climate change. Interestingly, almost all Swiss state actors evaluated European integration from a Swiss perspective, asking themselves how future European developments affect Switzerland or under what conditions Swiss membership in the EU could be envisaged. For instance, the Minister of the Integration Office was unsure about the consequences of future European developments upon Switzerland:

“More flexible forms of integration could facilitate EU membership for Switzerland. On the other hand, membership negotiations are more complicated with an EU of 25 members”.⁵

Or the President of the Conference of Cantonal Governments:

“The EU is only interesting for Switzerland if it has a federal structure”.⁶

In a similar vein, about half of all interviewed state actors emphasised that the EU would be well advised to move towards a more decentralised entity, a federal Europe of the regions according to the Swiss model. According to the Director of the Federal Office for Refugees, such a system would also allow to better protect minorities.

b) Role and performance of EU institutions

Almost all Swiss state actors underlined the weaknesses of EU institutions. Especially the European Parliament was seen as an institution lacking real power, which should be strengthened in order to introduce more checks and balances. State actors of the cantonal level expressed their wish to revise the institutional structures of the EU in a way to move towards the Swiss system of regional power. Similarly, referendum votes on some important European issues were seen as desirable although the Swiss system of direct democracy did not seem to be transferable to the EU level. Even if Swiss state actors would welcome institutional

⁵ Integration Office DFA/DEA, Minister, 12 May 2003.

⁶ Conference of Cantonal Governments, President, 16 June 2003.

reforms, especially in view of Eastern enlargement, they tended to doubt whether the Convention could be able to achieve its goals. As said the Minister of the Integration Office:

“The two-tiered process of institutional reform with proposals being elaborated in the Convent and adopted in a subsequent IGC will not lead to far-reaching reforms.”⁷

2) Political Party Actors

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

The four political parties represented in the Swiss federal government defend very divergent positions with regard to European integration. Whereas the Social-Democratic party is the main pro-European force in Switzerland, the Swiss People’s Party SVP has a strong anti-European profile. The Christian-Democrats (CVP) and the Radical-Democratic Party (FDP), for their part, are internally divided over the question of Swiss membership in the EU.

When asked what direction European integration was taking, representatives of the Socialists, Christian-Democrats and Radical-Democrats generally identified the Eastern enlargement of the EU as crucial challenge in the near future. Most interviewees were sceptical about the successful outcome of this endeavour. Some respondents doubted whether the existing institutional structure was suited for an enlarged union. In this context, a representative of the FDP underlined that the EU would have to change its structures, be subject to a democratic development and renounce on the “socialist power conception of centralism”⁸ whilst a Social-Democrat rather accused the EU of not having any political or social project. For him, a European Union of “variable geometry” (“à géométrie variable”⁹) could be one way to prevent the EU of becoming a purely economic free trade area after Eastern enlargement. Only a representative of CVP was clearly optimistic with regard to enlargement, assuming that “even an enlarged union is capable to act”.¹⁰

The representatives of the SVP, in contrast, referred to the general nature of the EU and the integration process. In their eyes, the EU is “moving towards even more centralisation and bureaucracy”¹¹ and risks to turn “more and more against democracy”¹². They also identified

⁷ Integration Office DFA/DEA, Minister, 12 May 2003.

⁸ Radical-Democratic Party (Agriculture), President of the party’s committee on Agriculture, 2 May 2003.

⁹ Social-Democratic Party (EU integration), President of the party’s European Affairs Committee, 3 June 2003.

¹⁰ Christian-Democratic Party (Immigration), President of the parliamentary group, 3 September 2003.

¹¹ Swiss People’s Party (EU integration), National Councillor, 13 May 2003.

¹² Swiss People’s Party (Immigration), National Councillor, 18 September 2003.

an increasing polarisation between small and big member states, as could be shown by the example of the EMU convergence criteria or the tendency towards more majority votes in EU decision-making.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

The representatives of the SVP were all opposed to a move towards more centralism, which they believed the EU to take. Rather, they would favour a development towards more decentralisation, federalism and subsidiarity, with a greater say of national governments especially in some policy fields. In a similar vein, a Radical-Democrat strongly rejected the EU as a centralised unit, and argued instead that a Europe of the regions would be needed in the long term¹³. A member of the Social-Democratic party also supported the idea of more regionalisation within the EU in order to tackle the problems at the right level¹⁴. Interviewees of CVP also expressed some doubts as of whether the EU was taking the right direction, deploring the strong tendencies towards liberalisation and the lagging behind of a political union. According to CVP, the future of the EU depends very much on whether a European constitutional treaty will be adopted or not. With regard to Eastern enlargement, a member of CVP underlined that the EU needed time for consolidation, and that Turkey should not be admitted to the EU because of “too important cultural differences”¹⁵.

b) Role and performance of EU institutions

Only the representatives of the pro-European Social-Democratic party and the anti-European SVP expressed their views of the role and performance of EU institutions. Generally, the democratic deficit of EU institutions was put forward by Swiss party actors. The interviewees of SVP emphasised the different democratic understanding between the EU and Switzerland. Respondents of the Socialist party, for their part, also recognised the democratic deficit of EU institutions, but at the same time expressed their hope for more democratisation through a strengthening of EU institutions. Especially the party’s specialist for European integration issues called for some form of European executive and more majority votes in order to achieve the political union and a common foreign policy¹⁶.

¹³ Radical-Democratic Party (Agriculture), President of the party’s committee on Agriculture, 2 May 2003.

¹⁴ Social-Democratic Party (Agriculture), President of the party’s committee on Agriculture, 2 May 2003.

¹⁵ Christian-Democratic Party (Immigration), President of the parliamentary group, 3 September 2003.

¹⁶ Social-Democratic Party (EU integration), President of the party’s European Affairs Committee, 3 June 2003.

3) Interest groups

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

Opinions of Swiss interest groups on the future direction of European integration seem to vary according to the type of organisation and the policy field in question. In the fields of European integration and immigration, there was a cleavage between labour unions and employer's organisations with regard to perceived developments the EU was taking. The five labour unions we interviewed criticised in concert the predominance of the economic dimension in the EU while the realisation of a social and political union was perceived as lagging behind. For two representatives of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, the EU is even a "liberalisation machine" ("Liberalisierungsmaschine"¹⁷), leading to inefficiency, high costs and, most importantly, to disintegrative and individualising tendencies¹⁸. In their view, the democratic deficit of the EU could be attributed to the prevalence of the economic dimension of the EU. In this context, Travail.Suisse¹⁹ feared that the realisation of a social Europe would become even more unrealistic with the Eastern enlargement of the union. In particular, he wondered whether an enlarged EU could still balance the interests between small and big, rich and poor member states. In addition, the process of enlargement was seen as an economic risk for the EU as could be learned from German reunification²⁰, but also as a danger for Swiss workers who fear social dumping²¹.

Swiss business associations, in contrast, were not concerned with the achievement of a social Europe. Most of them focused instead on the process and consequences of enlargement. Generally, Eastern enlargement was acknowledged to be a historical, but difficult process leading to more diversity. However, Swiss business organisations were mostly unsure whether the perceived developments and consequences were desirable:

"EU integration advances too quickly. The process of enlargement would need more time. It could open the door for a core Europe ("Kerneuropa").²²

"Historical differences between East and West seem to be very – one might even say too – large. The EU will probably move towards a union of "variable geometry" ("à géométrie variable").²³

¹⁷ Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (European integration), Political Secretary, 19 May 2003.

¹⁸ Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (Immigration), Political Secretary, 29 October 2003.

¹⁹ Travail.Suisse, Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of migration issues, 2 September 2003.

²⁰ Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (EU integration), Political Secretary, 19 May 2003.

²¹ Labour union "Construction & Industry" (Immigration), Director of migration policy, 15 September 2003.

²² Economiesuisse (EU integration), Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of EU affairs, 20 May 2003.

²³ Swiss Bankers Association, Communication Officer and member of the Executive Committee, 14 May 2003.

“The Eastern enlargement of the EU will delay the realisation of a political union, of a “United States of Europe”. The EU will rather move towards a big free exchange area, like the British want it to.”²⁴

Apart from political aspects, the evaluation of the economic dimension of the integration process was also disputed among Swiss business organisations. For example, the representative of *economiesuisse* in charge of European integration issues deplored that the overall tendencies in the EU were against the interests of the economy. For him, the EU “does not emphasise the liberal elements”²⁵. The interviewee from *economiesuisse* in charge of agriculture, on the other hand, highlighted that the highest level of economic integration had been reached with the introduction of the common currency, and that “the only remaining things are political”²⁶.

Interest groups of the agriculture sector, for their part, evaluated the European integration process from a purely Swiss perspective, and a fairly EU-sceptical point of view. While recognising the positive effects of European integration on peace and prosperity in Europe, Swiss Milk Producers and the Swiss Farmers Union both perceived EU integration as a threat to Swiss interests. While the former put forward the interests of its sector²⁷, the latter expressed the fear that membership in the EU could threaten the Swiss system of direct democracy and federalism, and would lead to a loss of autonomy²⁸. Migros, one of the key Swiss grocery stores, saw the danger of very asymmetric power relations between Switzerland and the EU; Swiss actors becoming very small players within the EU. However, selected issues such as gene technology should be discussed commonly according to Migros²⁹.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

Swiss interest groups tended to evaluate the process of European integration from different angles. Similar to state actors, most Swiss business organisations put the question into a Swiss perspective. The perceived move of the EU towards a union of “variable geometry” was seen as helpful for Switzerland by *economiesuisse*³⁰ whereas the Swiss Bankers Association³¹

²⁴ Schweizer Gewerbeverband, Vice-director in charge of Foreign Affairs, 12 May 2003.

²⁵ *economiesuisse* (EU integration), Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of EU affairs, 20 May 2003.

²⁶ *economiesuisse* (Agriculture), Delegate of the Board of Directors, 5 May 2002.

²⁷ Swiss Milk Producers, Director, 6 May 2003.

²⁸ Swiss Farmers Union, Vice-director, 3 June 2003.

²⁹ Migros, Officer for Agricultural Policy, 19 May 2003.

³⁰ *economiesuisse* (EU integration), Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of EU affairs, 20 May 2003.

³¹ Swiss Bankers Association, Communication Officer and Member of the Executive Committee, 14 May 2003.

rather doubted the benefits of this development for Switzerland. Others identified a growing pressure caused by EU enlargement to join the EU³². The Swiss Farmers Union, for its part, called upon Switzerland to be cautious with regard to EU membership and feared that Switzerland could not have an autonomous agricultural policy any longer³³.

Besides such concerns for Switzerland, some critical notes with regard to selected aspects of European integration itself were also apparent. For instance, the monetary policy of the ECB was criticised as being “too monetaristic and too much focused on inflation”³⁴. Others felt that in some respects there was “more integration than necessary”³⁵ or that the EU should have a greater say in the fields of migration and asylum, but leave more competences to the regions and nations in other policy fields³⁶. Some also disapproved the “technocratic nature of the EU”³⁷ and the perceived move towards a “European directorate”³⁸.

b) Role and performance of EU institutions

Generally, evaluations of EU institutions by Swiss interest groups remained rather vague, but an underlying criticism with regard to the performance of EU institutions was observable (“EU institutions should have a greater scope”³⁹, “the institutional structure is very complicated”⁴⁰). Some interviewees explicitly formulated the need for institutional reforms that should accompany Eastern enlargement, and would welcome if the EU adopted a federalist system or otherwise became a “big Switzerland”. Independently from institutional reforms, some argued that the EU should think about how to bring the EU closer to the citizens. As one interviewee pointed out, one way could probably be to give citizens more democratic right although direct democracy should not be overused at the EU level.

³² Schweizer Gewerbeverband (EU integration), Vice-director in charge of Foreign Affairs, 12 May 2003.

³³ Swiss Farmers Union, Vice-director, 3 June 2003.

³⁴ Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (EU integration), political secretary, 19 May 2003.

³⁵ Economiesuisse (Agriculture), Delegate of the Board of Directors, 5 May 2002.

³⁶ Travail.Suisse, Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of migration issues, 2 September 2003.

³⁷ Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (Immigration), political secretary, 29 October 2003.

³⁸ Economiesuisse, Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of European affairs, 20 May 2003.

³⁹ Travail.Suisse, Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of migration issues, 2 September 2003.

⁴⁰ Swiss Bankers Association, Communication Officer and Member of the Executive Committee, 14 May 2003.

4) NGOs

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

Compared to other types of actors, Swiss NGOs had far less concrete perceptions of the future developments in the European region. Interestingly, about half of the respondents focused on the EU as a power in international relations and the possibilities for a common European foreign policy. In this context, the EU was seen as a counter-weight to the USA, and it was underlined that the EU should not try to imitate the US, but rather to emancipate from them. However, the interviewees agreed that no common foreign policy had been achieved so far, and that this endeavour was even more difficult to achieve after enlargement.

Only two NGOs – Caritas and Red Cross Switzerland – referred to Eastern enlargement when talking about the direction European integration is taking. Whereas the Swiss Red Cross saw enlargement as “a chance that outweighs the potential risks”⁴¹, Caritas was more pessimistic, pointing to the danger of economic stagnation because of many compensatory payments in favour of the new members, which could eventually lead to social tensions and endanger stability in Europe⁴².

Another interviewee – the anti-European Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland – saw an even more negative future for the EU:

“There are two alternatives: either the EU breaks apart, or it becomes more democratic, assigns a greater say to small EU members, and moves towards a purely economic union”.⁴³

Such a vision of a purely economic union was in contrast heavily disputed by other organisations. Solidarité sans frontières accused the EU of being a union of economic interests while ignoring questions of world-wide justice⁴⁴ and Pro Natura was against the economically-driven integration process, which lefts aside socio-ecological and democratic questions⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Red Cross Switzerland (Immigration), Director of Migration Department, 20 October 2003.

⁴² Caritas Switzerland (Immigration), Director of Migration Policy, 1 September 2003.

⁴³ Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland, Secretary General, 15 April 2003.

⁴⁴ Solidarité sans frontières, Secretary for Political Affairs, 27 August 2003.

⁴⁵ Pro Natura, Head of section „Politics and International Affairs“, 9 May 2003.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

Generally, Swiss NGOs were rather divided when evaluating the process of European integration. While three out of four NGOs in the field of agriculture expressed their support for the overall integration process, most NGOs pointed out some negative aspects of the European developments. NGOs in the field of immigration seemed most concerned with questions of justice and solidarity with the third world, asylum seekers and refugees. In their view, Europe must not become a fortress. They also accused the heavy European bureaucracy (Caritas) as well as the EMU, which they felt is used to undermine the welfare state (Solidarité sans frontières).

Representatives of NGOs active on agricultural issues were rather committed to the overall integration process because “it is important that the countries come together in order to minimise the risks of confrontation”⁴⁶. Only the ecological organisation Pro Natura did not agree with the process of European integration that is “purely economically oriented” and “socio-ecological and democratic questions are not addressed enough”⁴⁷.

Several NGOs also evaluated the European integration process with respect to Switzerland, especially the two anti-European NGOs in the field of European integration. For the Swiss Democrats, Switzerland should learn from the EU sanctions against Austria that “small countries should remain sovereign and decide on their own”⁴⁸. For some others, however, Swiss membership in the EU could be envisaged on the condition that the EU becomes a loose economic confederation (Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland) or be facilitated if the EU moves towards a federal Europe (Caritas).

b) Role and performances of EU institutions

Only five out of eleven NGOs answered the question about the role and performance of EU institutions. Whereas two NGOs active in agriculture policy evaluated the role of EU institutions broadly positively (“they help to manage problems more easily”⁴⁹, “they take their role seriously”⁵⁰), NGOs in the field of immigration had a more differentiated opinion. With respect to migration issues, they agreed that the EU commission brings in very progressive

⁴⁶ Uniterre, Speaker, 18 June 2003.

⁴⁷ Pro Natura, Head of section „Politics and International Affairs“, 9 May 2003.

⁴⁸ Swiss Democrats, National Councillor and Secretary General, 7 May 2003.

⁴⁹ Uniterre, Speaker, 18 June 2003.

⁵⁰ Foundation for Consumer Protection (SKS), Executive Director, 13 May 2003.

ideas and proposals, which are usually watered down by national interests in the European Council. In this respect, the procedure of unanimous decision-making was criticised as very cumbersome and tiring. The representative of the Swiss Democrats, in contrast, painted a very negative image of EU institutions, accusing their bureaucratic nature, their democratic deficit and their centralism.

5) Media Actors

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

In Switzerland, two journalists did not have the chance to answer the questions about the future of Europe since they were added to the journalist's questionnaire only after some interviews had already been conducted.

All other interviewed journalists referred to the forthcoming Eastern enlargement of the EU, which was seen as a period of great change. However, the evaluations and perceived consequences of enlargement differed mainly according to the paper the journalists write for. Journalists of *Le Temps* identified the advent of a "two-speed" Europe, a Europe of "variable geometry" or a Europe "à la carte" as the most realistic scenario after enlargement. While they did not expect the EU to break apart, they however felt that enlargement brings about risks. As said the EU correspondent in Brussels, for example:

"The big countries, and especially the founding fathers of the EU, will become more weight. The institutional equilibrium risks to be put into question."⁵¹

Most journalists of *Le Temps* argued however that such an evolution towards a Europe "à la carte" would it probably make easier for Switzerland to join the EU, but they doubted whether such an evolution would be desirable for the EU itself.

The editor of the tabloid *Blick*, in contrast, explicitly asked for a two-speed integration to be allowed for. But he, too, pointed out a certain democratic deficit of the EU when he criticised that the EU "is not just composed of France and Germany" and that "more attention should be paid to smaller countries"⁵². However, he believed enlargement to become a success story because the EU had already realised the impossible in the past. The parliamentary correspondent of *Le Matin* joined this interpretation when she said that:

⁵¹ EU Correspondent in Brussels, *Le Temps*, 21 October 2003.

⁵² Editor, *Blick*, 26 September 2003.

“There is a risk of deadlocks. But the Europeans have proved that they can stand together in times of crisis.”⁵³

Despite this risk, she considered Eastern enlargement to be a factor of political and economic stability in Europe.

The editor and agriculture correspondent of the NZZ both argued that the Eastern enlargement of the EU would rather lead to a widening than a deepening of the integration process.

“A major question is what will happen with EU enlargement? Will it mean a widening and / or a deepening of the integration process? Enlargements until now have always been a widening and deepening at the same time, but this will probably no longer be possible within a Europe of 25”.⁵⁴

“The next step on the EU level will be an enlargement, not a deepening”.⁵⁵

Whereas the editor underlined that enlargement was the logical consequence of the events in 1989, the agriculture correspondent saw the forthcoming enlargement process as a time of crisis, which might eventually slow down the integration process and weaken the European institutions.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

The interviewed Swiss journalists by the majority agreed with the overall European integration process, which leads to peace and stability in Europe. Also, this process was by several seen as an inevitable reality:

“Whether one agrees or not, these things are just facts”.⁵⁶

In a similar vein, the Eastern enlargement of the EU was perceived by the editor of the NZZ as a logical and sensible consequence of the events of 1989. In a different perspective, the EU correspondent of *Le Temps* expressed her hope that the citizens of Europe develop a European identity which they are proud of.

⁵³ Parliamentary correspondent in Bern (specialist of European integration), *Le Matin*, 20 October 2003.

⁵⁴ Editor, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 14 October 2003.

⁵⁵ Agriculture correspondent, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 27 May 2003.

⁵⁶ EU correspondent in Brussels, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 July 2003.

b) Role and performances of EU institutions

Most journalists evaluated the EU institutions positively; the Commission with its right for proposals being “like an engine for further integration”⁵⁷. With regard to the Commission, the editor of *Le Matin* stressed a problem of inefficiency, especially after Eastern enlargement. According to him, efficiency could only be achieved at the price of asymmetrical rights, i.e. in an enlarged union all member states cannot have their commissioner. The agriculture correspondent of *Le Matin* shared this concern for efficiency and argued that a real EU government would be needed and decisions taken by a qualified majority. The editor of *Blick* also saw a need for reforms, but rather suggested to strengthen the European Parliament.

On a different register, the director of *Le Temps* expressed his hope for the emergence of a transnational democratic sphere in Europe. A step towards such a sphere could be a referendum vote on the Convention in all member countries or the election of a European president by the European citizens. The agriculture correspondent of *Le Temps* warned however that the Swiss system of direct democracy is not transferable to the EU. Nonetheless, Switzerland could serve as a model with regard to peaceful coexistence of different cultures.

6) Overall national impression: all actors

i. Perceptions of direction of European integration

Asked about the direction that European integration was taking, most Swiss actors interviewed referred to the eastward enlargement of the union. Despite a general recognition of the positive effects on political stability, Swiss actors generally stressed the difficulties and challenges of the enlargement process. As a consequence of EU enlargement, many state actors, business organisations and some journalists saw the integration process develop at different speeds for different groups of member states. This process was either termed as leading to a “two-speed” or “core” Europe, a Europe of “variable geometry” or a Europe “à la carte”. Some state and party actors also doubted whether enlargement could be successfully carried out with the existing institutional structure. Another question raised by journalists of the *NZZ* was whether enlargement would lead to a widening or a deepening of the integration process.

⁵⁷ EU correspondent in Brussels, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 July 2003.

Swiss labour unions and several NGOs criticised the predominance of economic integration while the realisation of a social and / or political union was perceived as lagging behind. In this context, EU enlargement was considered as a factor delaying the achievement of a political and social union. Rather, these actors saw a risk that the enlarged EU would become a large free trade area. In addition, some Swiss labour unions and journalists underlined that EU enlargement could put into question the institutional equilibrium and the balance between small and large member countries.

There was no consensus with regard to the economic benefits of the enlargement process. Whereas some interest groups of the agricultural sector expected enlargement to have positive effects on prosperity in Europe, some NGOs and labour unions warned that enlargement was a heavy financial burden for the EU that could lead to economic stagnation.

Apart from questions related to the eastward enlargement of the EU, Swiss NGOs identified the issue of a common European foreign policy and the EU as a power in international relations as crucial for the EU's near future.

ii. Evaluation of

a) European integration

With the exception of the overtly anti-European organisations (SVP, Swiss Democrats, AUNS), Swiss interviewees were positive with regard to the overall European integration process. Swiss media actors were probably most supportive of EU integration. Despite some perceived risks of EU enlargement, the EU was seen as a success story leading to peace and stability in Europe. NGOs, on the contrary, expressed most criticism with regard to various aspects of the integration process such as EMU, perceived tendencies of a “fortress Europe” or the absence of a social and political project. This lack of political and social integration was even held responsible for the EU's democratic deficit by the Swiss Federation of Trade Union. Other negative aspects of European integration according to Swiss labour unions were the disintegrative and individualising tendencies, the monetary policy of the ECB or the distribution of competences between the national and EU level in the field of immigration.

Swiss representatives of the three governmental parties SVP, SPS and FDP, rejected the idea of a centralised EU, and argued instead that the EU should move into the direction of more decentralisation – be it regionalisation or even federalism – and subsidiarity. This concern for

a federal Europe of the regions according to the Swiss model was shared by about half of all interviewed state actors.

Many Swiss interviewees, particularly state actors, business organisations and anti-European NGOs, tried to evaluate how future European developments would affect Switzerland. Especially the question whether the advent of a “two-speed” Europe could facilitate Swiss membership in the EU was disputed. Unsurprisingly, there was no consensus regarding the question if and under what conditions Switzerland could or should become a member of the EU.

In general, it could be seen from the interviews that if Swiss actors criticise the EU or express their hope for a change, they implicitly or explicitly refer to the Swiss model of federalism, democracy from below and peaceful coexistence between several cultures. This behaviour points to a secret hope that the EU would once become more Swiss.

b) Role and performance of EU institutions

In Switzerland, a general consensus existed that the EU institutions needed to be reformed, partly because of the eastward enlargement of the EU. The lack of power of the European Parliament was identified as one major weakness of EU institutions whereas the European Commission was positively evaluated by several interviewees. Consequently, several Swiss interviewees wanted to strengthen the European parliament whereas others asked for a real European executive.

Another source of complaint was the decision-making procedure, which was by some seen as inefficient and cumbersome. As a remedy, several media actors, NGOs and party representatives called for a more majority votes.

Third, several Swiss actors interviewed, ranging from the pro-European Socialists to the anti-European Swiss Democrats, criticised the democratic deficit of the EU as well as its remoteness from citizens. In this context, the idea of a European-wide introduction of direct democratic elements (e.g. election of a European president, referendum vote on the Convention) was put forward by several actors.

Appendix 1 List of interviewees and interview dates

European integration

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA); State Secretary and Political Director; 10 June 2003
Integration Office DFA/DEA; Minister; 12 May 2003
CH Parliament; President of the Foreign Affairs Committee (APK-SR) of the Council of States; 11 June 2003
Conference of Cantonal Governments (KdK); President; 16 June 2003
Social-Democratic Party (SPS); National Councillor and President of the European Affairs Committee of the Social-Democratic Party; 3 June 2003
Christian-Democratic Party (CVP); National Councillor; 18 September 2003
Radical-Democratic Party (FDP); State Councillor; 11 April 2003
Swiss People's Party (SVP); National Councillor; 13 May 2003
Economiesuisse (Swiss Business Federation); Delegate of the Board of Directors (in charge of European Affairs); 20 May 2003
Swiss Bankers Association (SBVg); Communication Officer and Member of the Executive Committee; 14 May 2003
Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGB); Political Secretary; 19 May 2003
Schweizerischer Gewerbeverband (business organisation of small and middle-sized enterprises); Vice Director in charge of Foreign Affairs; 12 May 2003
Swiss Democrats (SD); National Councillor and Secretary General; 7 May 2003
New European Movement Switzerland (NEBS); Vice-President; 5 March 2003
Action for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS); Secretary General; 15 April 2003

Agriculture

Federal Department of Economic Affairs (EVD); Advisor for Agricultural Policy at the General Secretariat; 2 June 2003
Federal Office for Agriculture (BLW); Director; 13 May 2003
Federal Office for the Environment, Forests and Landscape (BUWAL); Vice-Director; 23 May 2003
Cantonal Conference of Directors for Agriculture (LDK); Secretary General; 30 April 2003
Social-Democratic Party (SPS); National Councillor and President of the party's Committee on Agriculture; 2 May 2003
Christian-Democratic Party (CVP); National Councillor and Opinionleader on Agricultural Issues; 12 May 2003
Radical-Democratic Party (FDP); National Councillor and President of the party's Committee on Agriculture; 2 May 2003
Swiss People's Party (SVP); National Councillor and President of the party's Committee on Agriculture; 18 June 2003
Swiss Milk Producers (SMP); Director; 6 May 2003
Swiss Farmers Union (SBV); Vice-Director; 3 June 2003
Economiesuisse (Swiss Business Federation); Delegate of the Board of Directors; 5 May 2003
Migros; Officer for Agricultural Policy; 19 May 2003
Schweizerische Vereinigung zum Schutz der kleinen und mittleren Bauern (VKMB); Executive Director; 13 May 2003
Uniterre; Speaker; 18 June 2003
Pro Natura; Head of Section "Politics and International Affairs"; 9 May 2003
Foundation for consumer protection (SKS); Executive Director; 13 May 2003

Immigration

Federal Office of Immigration, Integration and Emigration (IMES); Director; 7 October 2003
Federal Office for Refugees (BFF); Vice-Director; 29 August 2003

Federal Committee against Racism (EKR); Secretary General; 16 September 2003
Conference of Cantonal Directors of Justice and Police (KKJPD); Secretary General; 2 September 2003
Social-Democratic Party (SPS); National Councillor and President of the Committee "Asylum and Migrants" of the Social-Democratic Party; 26 September 2003
Christian-Democratic Party (CVP); National Councillor and President of the Parliamentary Group; 3 September 2003
Radical-Democratic Party (FDP); National Councillor and President of the Committee of Migration and Asylum Policy of the Radical-Democratic Party; 8 September 2003
Swiss People's Party (SVP); National Councillor and specialist of Migration issues; 18 September 2003
Travail.Suisse; Delegate of the Board of Directors in charge of migration issues; 2 September 2003
Swiss Employer's Association (SAV); Vice-Director; 4 September
Labour union "Construction & Industry" (GBI); Director of Migration Policy; 15 September 2003
Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGB); Political Secretary; 29 October 2003
Caritas Switzerland; Director of Migration Policy; 1 September 2003
Red Cross Switzerland; Director of Migration Department; 20 October 2003
Swiss Aid for Refugees (SFH); Secretary General, Communication Officer, Officer for Political Issues; 25 September 2003
Solidarité sans frontières (SSF); Secretary for Political Affairs ; 27 August 2003

Media actors

Le Temps, Director, 23 October 2003.
Le Temps, Immigration Correspondent, 9 October 2003.
Le Temps, Parliamentary Correspondent in Bern (specialist of agriculture policy), 23 September 2003.
Le Temps, EU Correspondent in Brussels, 21 October 2003.
Le Matin, Editor, 6 October 2003.
Le Matin, Parliamentary Correspondent in Bern (specialist of European integration), 20 October 2003.
Blick, Editor, 26 September 2003.
Blick, Parliamentary Correspondent in Bern (specialist of agriculture policy), 5 May 2003.
Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Editor, 14 October 2003.
Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Immigration Correspondent, 12 May 2003.
Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Agriculture Correspondent, 27 May 2003.
Neue Zürcher Zeitung, EU Correspondent in Brussels, 31 July 2003.