

Switzerland in the foreign media: 4th quarter of 2022

Re-exporting licence denied: German media irritated

The media, especially in Europe, reported that Switzerland had not budged from its position of blocking the re-export of Swiss-made tank ammunition from Germany to Ukraine, following Germany's renewed request. Especially in the German media and on social media, the tone was predominantly highly critical of Switzerland. The tenor of many posts and tweets was that Switzerland lacked solidarity and was no longer a reliable partner for the West, especially in terms of defence. In some cases, the narrative was that Swiss neutrality primarily served Switzerland's economic self-interest.

"Nicht nur die Rüstungsbranche könnte den Unmut der europäischen Partner bald zu spüren bekommen; auch politisch fragen sich die Nachbarstaaten, wie verlässlich die Schweiz in Notlagen eigentlich ist"
(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany)

There was also talk of failure to render assistance. German media also reported over several weeks on statements by German politicians questioning future cooperation between Germany and Switzerland on defence. In the reporting of most other countries, the overall tone was mainly factual.



Ammunition for the Leopard-type anti-aircraft tank was the focus of interest. (© *Spiegel*)

Federal Council by-elections: political system under analysis

The replacement election of two members of the Federal Council received objective coverage from several media outlets, especially in neighbouring countries. The election of Elisabeth Baume-Schneider was perceived as surprising and sparked particular interest, as it would give members from the French and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland a majority on the Federal Council. Criticism by Swiss environmental

"D'abord, le système politique suisse n'est pas très réactif. Ensuite, il fonctionne par temps calme. Mais quand la mer s'agite (pandémie, guerre en Europe, crise climatique), le navire tangue"
(*Le Monde*, France)

organisations of the election of Albert Rösti was also covered. In their coverage, the foreign media also focused on the special features of the Swiss political system, portraying it as fundamentally efficient yet somewhat weak in times of crisis.



Coverage of the Federal Council replacement elections also sparked interest in Switzerland's political system. (© *Euractiv*)

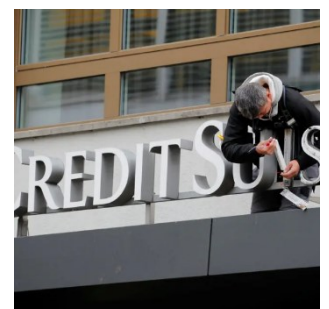


Pictures of the swearing-in ceremony of the new members of the Federal Council. (© *Independent*)

Credit Suisse: situation of the bank under critical fire

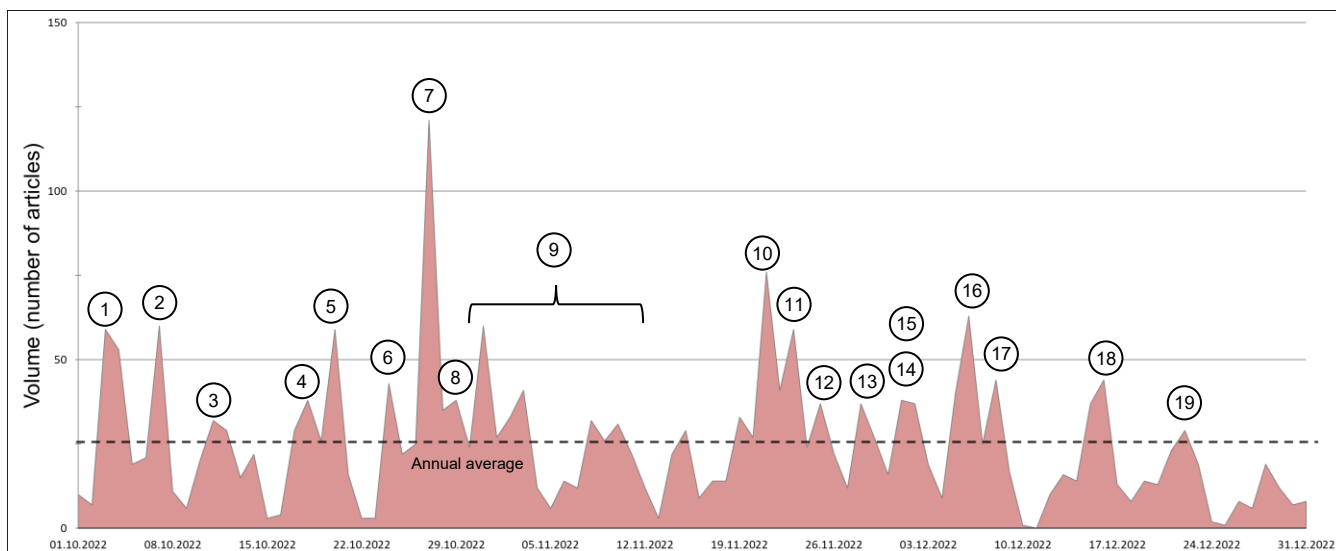
Banking giant Credit Suisse received a lot of coverage in foreign media worldwide throughout the quarter. The topics covered varied over the three-month period. One area of focus was the massive drop in the share price of Credit Suisse and the resulting speculation about the possible effects of the potential insolvency of the bank on global financial systems. The presentation of a new strategy as well as new Saudi investors at the end of October also received extensive coverage – mostly critical – by media worldwide. At the same time, many media outlets highlighted the overall situation of Credit Suisse and reran old stories covering previous scandals. Reporting on a settlement reached by the bank in a case of alleged tax fraud in France was also predominantly critical. The focus of the reporting was clearly on the specific bank, and not on Switzerland and its financial centre as a whole. In only a few cases did commentators fear negative effects on the reputation of the Swiss financial centre.

"Once a symbol for Swiss reliability, the bank's reputation has been tarnished by scandals"
(*Reuters*)



All is no longer well at Credit Suisse, suggested the New York Times with this picture. (© *New York Times*)

Quantitative trends in foreign media coverage of 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, 01.10.2022 – 31.12.2022). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their volume and significance.

(1) Credit Suisse: share price losses (2) Credit Suisse: bond buyback (3) ECHR ruling on widowers' pensions: unequal treatment upheld as discriminatory (4) Out-of-court settlement of Lafarge (Holcim) in the United States for alleged terrorist support in Syria (5) Credit Suisse: various reports (6) Credit Suisse: settlement with French public prosecutor's office for alleged tax evasion (7) Credit Suisse: presentation of new strategy and investors (8) World record longest train Rhaetian Railway (9) Consent refused for re-export of Swiss tank ammunition from Germany to Ukraine (10) Debate on Swiss model as possible model for UK–EU relations (11) FIFA World Cup: Switzerland–Cameroon (12) State visit by Italian President Sergio Mattarella (13) FIFA World Cup: Switzerland–Brazil (14) FIFA World Cup: Switzerland–Serbia (15) Switzerland freezes further Russian assets (16) FIFA World Cup: Switzerland–Portugal (17) Elections to replace Federal Council members (18) SNB raises key interest rate (19) Suspension of Swiss participation in UN resettlement programme

Focus: polarised view of Swiss integration policy as seen from abroad

During the quarter, foreign media discussed Swiss migration and integration policy on various occasions, arriving at very different conclusions. Sometimes the tone was very positive, as on the occasion of the state visit of Italian

"Molti figli della seconda generazione occupano posizioni di vertice. Una storica di emigrazione finita bene"
(*La Repubblica*, Italy)

President Sergio Mattarella, with the media describing the Italian community in Switzerland as a success story. In other cases, reporting was more factual, for example, various media outlets took

"Bis heute ist das Verhältnis der Eidgenossen zu ihrer "Nati" von dem Misstrauen geprägt, das viele Fans und Medienleute den Spielern mit Migrationsgeschichte entgegenbringen"
(*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany)

the matches of the Swiss team at the FIFA World Cup as an opportunity to point out the high proportion of players with a migration background.

"Children of migrants who came to work in Switzerland over decades are demanding an apology for a policy they say destroyed families and left many traumatised"
(*BBC*, UK)

Some reports on Swiss migration policy from the 1950s to the 1990s were critical, based on a research project by the University of Neuchâtel on labour migration as well as demands by the victims' organisation 'Tesoro'. According to them, migrant workers were not allowed to bring their children to Switzerland until Switzerland joined the EU Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. As a result, they were sometimes separated from their parents for decades or had to live in Switzerland illegally in hiding, without schooling. Overall, foreign media

presented a differentiated view of Swiss integration policy.

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.

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