



Political rights of the Swiss Abroad

Since 1 July 1992, you have been able to take part in Switzerland's political life, even when residing abroad. You can vote on **federal** issues and in elections for the National Council without having to travel to Switzerland. Participation by the Swiss Abroad in **cantonal** referendums and elections is governed by cantonal legislation and is possible in several cantons.

1. Conditions

You can exercise your political rights by post from abroad if you

- reside outside Switzerland,
- are at least 18 years old, and
- are registered with a Swiss embassy or consulate general in a foreign country (hereinafter referred to as representation).

2. Registration

2.1 Procedure

If you meet the above conditions, you can register with your representation in writing or in person. You can also use the form "Application to exercise political rights", which you will find on our website (www.eda.admin.ch → Services and publications → Services for Swiss nationals abroad → Political rights).

Your registration must contain all required personal data, your last place of residence, and your last political place of residence in Switzerland¹ (if until now you have exercised your political rights in an electoral commune that does not correspond with your last place of residence). If you have never been domiciled in Switzerland, you can choose one of your places of origin as your electoral commune.

2.2 Central voters' register

Some cantons operate a central voters' register for the Swiss Abroad. In these cantons, your vote will not be counted in the electoral commune of your choice but in the commune where the central register is located. Your representation will be able to provide you with information on the cantons that have introduced a central voters' register.

2.3 Electronic vote / E-voting

A number of cantons allow electronic voting in federal referendums and elections. Please contact your electoral commune for further information.

2.4 Confirmation of registration

Your electoral commune will confirm your entry in the electoral register in writing.

¹according to SAO art. 7 par. 3 lt. e

2.5 Deletion of an entry in the electoral register

Your entry in the electoral register in Switzerland will be valid throughout your stay abroad and does not need to be renewed. You can deregister only by written request addressed to your representation. Your entry can also be deleted ex officio if your voting papers are returned as undeliverable to your electoral commune three times in a row.

If your name has been deleted from the electoral register, you can reregister at any time by following the procedure set out under 2.1.

3. Dispatch of voting papers

Prior to every federal referendum or election, your electoral commune will send you by 'A Mail' (priority mail) the official voting papers together with the explanatory leaflet of the Federal Council. You can choose to receive this documentation **in one of Switzerland's four official languages** (German, French, Italian and Romansh), even if your language selection is not the official language of your electoral commune. Please indicate your choice of language when you register.

4. Information

In addition to the official explanations issued by the Federal Council or the election instructions issued by the Federal Chancellery, the "Swiss Review" or the "Gazzetta Svizzera", as well as swissinfo.ch provide comprehensive information on all elections, popular initiatives and referendums.

5. Participation in referendums and elections

5.1 From abroad

Please follow the instructions contained in the voting material you received from your electoral commune. The addressed reply envelope must not contain the voting envelope or voter ID of more than one person. Reply envelopes containing the voting envelopes or voter IDs of more than one person could be invalidated depending on applicable cantonal regulations. Please stamp (A Mail) the addressed reply envelope and send it to your electoral commune.

Please read the instructions provided by your electoral commune carefully as voting regulations differ from canton to canton.

Please note that Switzerland cannot guarantee efficient and reliable postal services abroad. You must therefore accept the risk of material or ballot papers arriving late at your foreign address or that your ballots or votes arrive late at your electoral commune.

5.2 When in Switzerland

If you are in Switzerland when a referendum or election takes place, you can vote in person at the ballot box or by post from within Switzerland. If you wish to vote at the ballot box, you must inform your electoral commune that you will be in Switzerland at least six weeks in advance of the election date in order to ensure that your voting papers are not sent to your foreign address, but are retained at the electoral commune where you can collect your envelope during business hours. Due to the risk of a double vote you will not be issued duplicate papers.

6. Signing of popular initiatives and referendums

If you wish to sign popular initiatives or referendums as a Swiss citizen living abroad, you can order the relevant signature/petition sheets directly from the committee concerned, sign them abroad, and return them to the committee – or download the documentation from the internet (the following sites are available in German, French and Italian only):

Popular initiatives http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html
Referendums http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/rf/ref_1_3_2_1.html

On the signature sheets you must provide your personal data, your electoral commune and canton as well as your exact foreign address (street, house number, postcode, city and country). If you are in Switzerland, you may also sign signature sheets in your electoral commune (while providing the same information).

Important note

In certain countries, participation in political events in another country can entail sanctions and/or lead to the loss of the non-Swiss citizenship for dual citizens. Additional information is available from your Swiss representation. However, only the authorities of your country of residence can give you binding information on this matter.

Do you have any questions?

The Swiss representations (www.eda.admin.ch → Switzerland around the world [link on top left of page] → choose your country) and the Consular Directorate of the FDFA (contact info see page 1) would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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