



# Citizen participation as a driver for system satisfaction

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# 1 Management summary

Professor Graber's exposé accompanying the study states that the **DEVELOPMENT OF SWISS DEMOCRACY** is by no means an organic process leading straight from the Rütli Oath to today's system. Rather, these developments took place as a reaction to problematic situations and partly due to foreign pressure. Switzerland was regarded, especially abroad, as a laboratory for the development of democracy and was therefore observed with favour and interest until the early 20th century. Over time, this pragmatic adaptability of Swiss democracy proved to be a remarkable strength. The further development of the current Swiss democracy is by no means complete, as democratic deficits still exist and current and future challenges may require further adjustments. In the past, Switzerland did well to adapt 'its' democracy when and to the extent that it was no longer sufficiently suited to provide the right answers to the problems and everyday situations of the time in question. Particularly in the current discourse on the EU, but also in relation to many major challenges that go beyond the national framework, there is now a tendency to view our current Swiss democracy as a non-negotiable red line. This contradicts Switzerland's many years of good experience as a field of democratic experimentation.

This survey-based study does not **AIM** to change Swiss democracy. On the contrary, it aims to develop a sensitivity for the current discourse about how democracy is generally an instrument for organising society and thus must regularly be measured by whether it ideally fulfils this purpose. In this study, we have therefore ascertained which elements of Swiss democracy are currently proving their worth from the point of view of Swiss citizens, where we can learn from other solutions from nearby countries and where nearby countries could benefit from solutions from our field of experimentation. We gained the following insights:



In **SWITZERLAND**, the majority of the resident population is satisfied both in general and with the sub-areas of political participation, rules and outcomes of the political system. Residents are particularly satisfied with the direct-democratic instruments (referendums at the legislative and constitutional level, political initiatives and the opportunity to adjust party lists). Potential for improvement is seen mainly, albeit by a clear minority, in the election of the Federal Council, the political participation of minorities and the independent media (for the purpose of forming opinions). With regard to the rules of the political system, the involvement of all relevant political forces, the status of municipalities and cantons vis-à-vis the federal government and the administration of justice are particularly appreciated. There is room for improvement with regard to the prevention of power accumulation, transparent decision-making and the relationship between civil liberties and state interests. With regard to the outcomes of the political system, residents are particularly satisfied with law and order, the protection of human rights and the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions. The resident population is currently dissatisfied with the ability to solve problems, the comprehensibility of laws and the use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of citizens. This is where the most explicit wishes for adaptation can be found.



In contrast, the inhabitants of the **NEIGHBOURING EU COUNTRIES** are visibly less satisfied with the EU's democratic system in all of its dimensions. This is already evident from the fact that only a slight majority is satisfied with the general system. Seventy-five per cent of respondents demand an expansion of opportunities for political participation. Currently valued means of participation include the independent media for forming opinions, freedom of expression and the election of the European Parliament. There is a need for improvement in the adjustment of party lists, referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments and political initiatives. In terms of institutional rules, residents value the inclusion of all relevant political forces in parliament and government, and the administration of justice and freedom of expression. At this regulatory level, the status of municipalities and regions vis-à-vis the EU, the transparency of decision-making and control over the distribution of power could be strengthened. On the level of outcomes, respondents are mainly satisfied with the human rights situation, the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions and the economic conditions. There is room for improvement in problem-solving competence, the citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money and the comprehensibility of laws.



The residents of Switzerland and neighbouring countries view **SWITZERLAND** as a **DEMOCRATIC ROLE MODEL** for the EU in the following points: Political participation by means of referendums on laws and the constitution, and by way of political initiatives. The strong position of municipalities and cantons vis-à-vis the national government and the subordination of state interests to civil liberties. In terms of outcomes, the service-oriented administration of the state and the use of tax revenues for the benefit of the population are convincing. If the EU moves towards Switzerland in these specific areas, this would not only fulfil a wish of its own population, but also strengthen the Swiss perception of EU democracy. The latter could form the basis for further intensification of cooperation between Switzerland and the European Union. Moreover, for a (slight) majority of Swiss residents, accession to the EEA or even a further development of the Bilateral Agreements is conceivable in the event that EU democratic instruments are adapted. Even under ideal conditions, however, the forms of cooperation 'acceptance of EU judges in disputes concerning the Bilateral Agreements', 'automatic adoption of law within the framework of the Bilateral Agreements' and 'EU accession' have no chance of success.



**COMPARISON OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES** has shown that only Germany and Austria have a majority that are generally satisfied with the EU policy system. In terms of EU policy outcomes, no absolute majority can be found in any neighbouring country that is mostly/very satisfied with its output. However, there is unanimous agreement on the desire for an expansion of the opportunities for political participation. This desire for reform is also reflected in the willingness to adopt opportunities for political participation. Referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments, political initiatives and freedom of expression are at the top of the wish list in all neighbouring countries. In terms of rules, all

neighbouring countries would like to adopt Switzerland's transparent decision-making and checks on power. At the output level, on the other hand, neighbouring countries are convinced of Switzerland's service-oriented administration and fair administration of justice.

Even though elements of Swiss democracy can indeed be found that a popular general consensus would regard as positive for the development of European democracy, it should not be forgotten that democracy and the steps in its development have a lot to do with country-specific conditions and prerequisites. What works well in one system does not necessarily work equally well in another. In the development of European democracies in the past, however, the focus was on how other countries solved problems. In our opinion, it therefore makes sense to continue to cultivate this view and to at least discuss possible better solutions. If, as a side effect, this discussion takes the currently blocked negotiations between Switzerland and the EU on the future ideal form of cooperation and reawakens them at a level of discourse that has not yet been considered, this would be in keeping with the spirit of the 'field of experimentation of Swiss democracy'.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Mandate

The Swiss population has always found it difficult to come to terms with its European neighbours. On the one hand, it maintains intensive economic relations and benefits from a well-trained workforce and research cooperation. On the other hand, it perceives the EU from the position of a minority and feels that its autonomy is threatened in many respects. In German-speaking Switzerland in particular, right-wing conservative circles cultivate the image of a bureaucratic, inefficient and anti-democratic EU, while left-wing circles fear for domestic wages. Switzerland has been intensively discussing the ideal form of cooperation with the EU around these values for 30 years. The starting point for this discussion was the EEA proposal, which was defeated by the people. Subsequently, with the Bilateral Agreements, Switzerland found a connection to the EU that has generally proven itself and has been confirmed several times at the ballot box. These treaties have been further developed continually over the past 20 years. Modernisation seems to be more difficult at present; a few weeks ago, Switzerland broke off the process of consolidating the various individual agreements into a framework agreement. The European Union, on the other hand, maintains that further adaptations and developments are only possible in connection with such a framework agreement. The Federal Council's decision to break off negotiations on the framework treaty was widely discussed in Switzerland. On the occasion of this discussion, Luzius Meisser approached gfs.bern research institute and commissioned it to conduct a comparative study on Switzerland and its EU neighbouring countries regarding the perception of and need for reform of democratic foundations in Switzerland and the European Union.

These interesting questions provide particular insight into which structural and systemic elements may lead to emotional distance from or proximity to the EU. We find it absolutely crucial not to simply analytically state that the Swiss population prefers its own environment and thinks that the EU should find it desirable. Accordingly, the research setting should compare the Swiss population's own desires with the identically surveyed desires on the part of the population of selected EU states.



## 2.2 Sample and survey

In Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and France, 1,000 people aged 18 and over were surveyed. The online survey was conducted with the panels Polittrends (Switzerland) and Bilendi (neighbouring EU countries). In this baseline study, we deliberately limit ourselves to Switzerland's direct neighbours. In this way, we reduce possible cultural differences in the comparison of countries, even though we are aware that such differences do exist between Switzerland and its direct neighbours as well. Detailed information on the survey can be found in Table 1:

Table 1: Methodological details

<b>Client</b>	Luzius Meisser, Meisser Economics AG
<b>Population</b>	Residents of Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and France aged 18 and over
<b>Data collection</b>	Online survey with the Polittrends and Bilendi panels
<b>Weighting and quota system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quoted according to age, gender and country of residence</li> <li>- Switzerland: Age/gender by language region, language region, type of settlement, education, party by language region and cantons</li> <li>- Neighbouring countries: Education by country, type of settlement by country, party by country and age/gender by country</li> </ul>
<b>Survey period</b>	14 September – 24 September 2021
<b>Sample size</b>	Total respondents N = 5,053 - n Switzerland = 1,021 - n Germany = 1,010 - n Austria = 1,008 - n Italy = 1,008 - n France = 1,006
<b>Sampling errors</b>	Switzerland: $\pm 3.1\%$ with 50/50 and 95% probability Germany: $\pm 3.1\%$ with 50/50 and 95% probability Austria: $\pm 3.1\%$ with 50/50 and 95% probability Italy: $\pm 3.1\%$ with 50/50 and 95% probability France: $\pm 3.1\%$ with 50/50 and 95% probability

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In sampling, two factors play a decisive role in determining the quality of the statements later obtained: on the one hand, the quality of the data is defined by the size of the **SAMPLING ERROR**. This index shows the probability and magnitude of error of a statistical statement. On the one hand, a 95% confidence level is usually defined in survey research, i.e. we accept a 5% probability of error that the proven statistical correlation does not exist in the population. On the other hand, statistical statements are subject to sampling errors, which depend on the size of the sample and the basic distribution of the variable in the population, whereby the larger the sample, the smaller the error.

Table 2: Sampling errors

Selected statistical sampling errors by sample size and basic distribution		
Sample size	Basic distribution error rate	
	50% at 50%	20% at 80%
N = 1,000	±3.2 percentage points	±2.5 percentage points
N = 600	±4.1 percentage points	±3.3 percentage points
N = 100	±10.0 percentage points	±8.1 percentage points
N = 50	±14.0 percentage points	±11.5 percentage points

Example: With around 1,000 respondents and a reported value of 50%, the effective value is between 50% ±3.2 percentage points, with a baseline value of 20% between 20% ±2.5 percentage points. In survey research, a 95% confidence level is usually defined, i.e. we accept a 5% probability of error that the proven statistical correlation does not exist in the population.

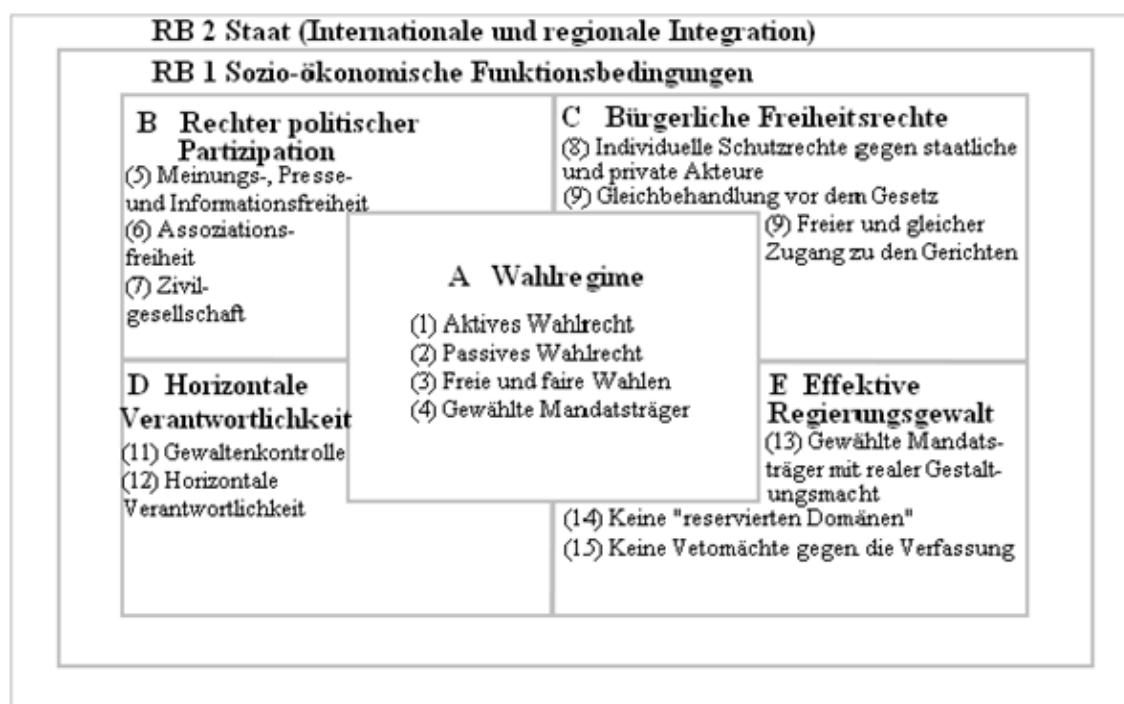
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The other element of high-quality analysis is guaranteeing **REPRESENTATIVENESS**. Representativeness means nothing other than that every person in the population must have the exact same chance of being able to participate in the survey. If any groups are systematically excluded during sampling, the survey is not representative.

## 2.3 Theoretical foundation

There are a variety of theories for operationalising satisfaction with democracy, but the measurement used here is based on Wolfgang Merkel's<sup>1</sup> theory of democracy. According to Merkel, democracy consists of five regimes: elections (as the central form of legitimation of state action), expansion of political rights/participation, development of individual fundamental rights, control of state power (horizontal distribution/control of power) and the emergence of effective governmental power. These regimes and their sub-elements (see Figure 1) were condensed and simplified to form three dimensions which can be surveyed without much need for explanation: political participation, rules and outcomes.

Figure 1



RB 2 Staat (Internationale und regionale Integration)	RB 2 State (international and regional integration)
RB 1 Sozio-ökonomische Funktionsbedingungen	RB 1 Socio-economic functional conditions
A Wahlregime	A Electoral regime
(1) Aktives Wahlrecht	(1) Active suffrage
(2) Passives Wahlrecht	(2) Passive suffrage
(3) Freie und faire Wahlen	(3) Free and fair elections
(4) Gewählte Mandatsträger	(4) Elected representatives
B Rechter politischer Partizipation	B Right to political participation
(5) Meinungs-, Presse- und Informationsfreiheit.	(5) Freedom of expression, press and information.
(6) Assoziationsfreiheit	(6) Freedom of association
(7) Zivilgesellschaft	(7) Civil society
D Horizontale Verantwortlichkeit	D Horizontal accountability
(11) Gewaltenteilung	(11) Checks and balances
(12) Horizontale Verantwortlichkeit	(12) Horizontal accountability
C Bürgerliche Freiheitsrechte	C Civil liberties
(8) Individuelle Schutzrechte gegen staatliche und private Akteure	(8) Individual rights against state and private actors
(9) Gleichbehandlung vor dem Gesetz	(9) Equal treatment before the law
(9) Freier und gleicher Zugang zu den Gerichten	(9) Free and equal access to the courts
(13) Gewählte Mandatsträger mit realer Gestaltungsmacht	(13) Elected representatives with real power
(14) Keine "reservierten Domänen"	(14) No "reserved domains"
(15) Keine Vetomächte gegen die Verfassung	(15) No veto powers against the constitution

<sup>1</sup> Merkel Wolfgang (2015): Demokratie und Krise - Zum schwierigen Verhältnis von Theorie und Empirie. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

(8) Individuelle Schutzrechte gegen staatliche und private Akteure	(8) Individual rights of protection against state and private actors
(9) Gleichbehandlung vor dem Gesetz	(9) Equal treatment before the law
(9) Freier und gleicher Zugang zu den Gerichten	(9) Free and equal access to justice
E Effektive Regierungsgewalt	E Effective governance
(13) Gewählte Mandatsträger mit realer Gestaltungsmacht	(13) Elected representatives with real power to shape policy
(14) Keine "reservierten Domänen"	(14) No 'reserved domains'
(15) Keine Vetomächte gegen die Verfassung	(15) No veto powers against the constitution

Source: Merkel Wolfgang (2015): Demokratie und Krise - Zum schwierigen Verhältnis von Theorie und Empirie. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

All figures in this study apply with 95% probability with an uncertainty range of  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points.

## 3 Swiss Democracy

### ARTICLE BY DR ROLF GRABER

The concept of the opinion survey *Perception of Democratic Foundations* is based on the idea that both Swiss and EU citizens have certain expectations regarding the further development of the political system, the mutual disclosure of which could promote more intensive cooperation between both parties. This gives rise to the following questions: what would a democratisation of the EU have to look like? Could the Swiss model serve as an example? Is this learning process just a one-way street, or could Switzerland also learn from EU countries? What are the historical and current deficits of the Swiss model? In view of these deficits, is the implicitly presupposed hierarchy between representative and semi-direct democracy at all plausible, or should both models be regarded as equivalent?

These questions will be discussed from a historical and democracy theory perspective. In the first step, the foreign perception of the political system in Switzerland from the early modern period to the present will be briefly presented. Secondly, the self-perception of political development will be shown on the basis of relevant sources. Thirdly, this external and self-perception will be placed in the context of the historiography on the emergence of semi-direct democracy. Fourthly, a look will be taken at the current debates in Switzerland and neighbouring countries. The ensuing considerations should help to contextualise the results of the survey and compare them with the findings of historical scholarship.

### 3.1 External perception

#### 3.1.1 Democratic regiments

An early perception and foreign assessment of self-governing territories of the old Confederation as ‘pure democracies’ can be found in Jean Bodin’s work *De republica libri sex* from 1586: ‘In the localities of Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Glaris and Appenzell, which are all pure democracies and, since their population consists of mountain dwellers, are particularly concerned with self-determination of the people, there is even, in addition to the extraordinary assemblies of the estates, an annual public assembly in which almost the entire population from the age of 14 takes part. There, the senate, the Ammann and other magistrates are elected. Voting is by a show of hands, based on the model of chirotony of the ancient democracies.’<sup>2</sup> In addition to the *Landsgemeinde* (cantonal assembly) towns, Bodin also mentions the Rhaetian confederations: ‘Notably, what has been said applies to the Grisons localities, which are more purely democratic in constitution and government than any other state.’<sup>3</sup> This means that the rural republics that were created from the ecclesiastical

<sup>2</sup> Jean Bodin, *Sechs Bücher über den Staat*, Books I–III. Translated and annotated by Bernd Wimmer. Introduced and edited by P. C. Meyer. Tasch, Munich, p. 395.

Original: ‘In den Orten Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Glaris und Appenzell, die alle reine Demokratien und, da ihre Bevölkerung aus Gebirgsbewohnern besteht, in besonderem Mass auf Selbstbestimmung des Volkes bedacht sind, findet sogar zusätzlich zu den ausserordentlichen Ständetagen, alljährlich eine öffentliche Versammlung statt, an der fast die gesamte Bevölkerung ab 14 Jahren teilnimmt. Dort werden der Senat, der Ammann und andere Magistrate gewählt. Die Abstimmung erfolgt nach dem Muster der Chirotonie der antiken Demokratien durch Handzeichen.’

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

principalities, such as the Grisons and Valais, are also described as pure democracies. As late as the 18th century, the political order in the Grisons was singled out by travel writers. The English pastor William Coxe, who travelled through Switzerland and the Grisons several times between 1776 and 1786, was particularly impressed in his work *Travels in Switzerland and the Country of the Grisons* by the judicial communities of the three confederations, which had their own constitution, laws and customs. He notes that their representatives voted according to instructions at the joint confederation assemblies, but could also introduce initiatives. Thus, the supreme power rested with the people. He mentions the district of Davos as a perfect democracy: *‘The form of government established in this district of Davos is similar to that of the small cantons of Switzerland, and is entirely democratical. The people must be assembled upon all extraordinary occasions, such as enacting new laws, deciding upon appeals from the general diet, and raising money. Every male at the age of fourteen has a vote.’*<sup>4</sup> However, of the Three Leagues, he negatively judges the people’s preference for anarchic criminal courts, the susceptibility of the officials to corruption and the influence of the aristocracy on the formation of parties.

### 3.1.2 Myth of Switzerland

In the 18th century, the image cultivated abroad of the Swiss Confederation as a haven of freedom and home of republican virtue and unspoilt morals condensed into the myth of Switzerland.<sup>5</sup> In numerous travelogues, Switzerland appears as the ideal image of enlightened Europe, which is simultaneously seen in contrast to the conditions in the author’s own country. This gave enlightenment intellectuals the opportunity to contrast this ideal image of Switzerland with the conditions in their own countries and to critically question the form of government there. Through the works of Albrecht von Haller, Salomon Gessner and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, such clichés receive additional support, reflecting the period’s enthusiasm for nature and the demand for the idyllic life of farmers and shepherds. Even in a German calendar from 1793, four years after the French Revolution, that ideal image of Switzerland is still to be found: *‘And Helvetia is still a model of a flourishing state, its national families – whether in democratic or aristocratic form – are still happy national families, the elders and most experienced of the people still watch benignly and patriotically over its welfare, reverence and obedience for the laws are still alive, love of country and bravery still burn, the foreign wanderer is still enchanted by the sight of prosperity, harmony and blessing and peace in the country, a sight which in the distance [still] refreshes his soul with sweet memories and nourishes in it the desire: O would that my abode were in that happy land.’*<sup>6</sup> This wishful image of a ‘democratic model state’ free of autocratic princes and absolutist rulers is only corrected by a few critical voices. The discrepancy between ideology and reality was already noticed by prominent contemporaries such as Johann Wolfgang Goethe when he sarcastically opined: *‘Free would be the Swiss, free the*

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Original: *‘In besonderem Mass trifft das Gesagte auf die Graubündner Orte zu, die nach Verfassung und Regierung so rein demokratisch wie sonst kein Staat sind.’*

<sup>4</sup> William Coxe, *Travels in Switzerland and the Country of the Grisons*, Basel 1802, Vol. 3, cited in Martin Bundi, Christian Rathgeb (eds.), *Die Staatsverfassung Graubündens. Zur Entwicklung der Verfassung im Freistaat der Drei Bünde im Kanton Graubünden*, Zurich 2003, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> For context, see Ulrich Im Hof, *Mythos Schweiz, Identität – Nation – Geschichte, 1291 – 1991*, Zurich 1991; Uwe Hentschel, *Mythos Schweiz. Zum deutschen literarischen Philhelvetismus 1700–1850 (Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, vol. 90)*, Tübingen 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Johannes Strickler, *Die alte Schweiz und die helvetische Revolution. Mit literarischen Beigaben*, Frauenfeld 1899, p. 88.

Original: *‘O wäre meine Wohnstätte in dem glücklichen Lande.’*

citizens in the closed cities? Free these poor devils on their cliffs and rocks? The things you can make people believe! especially if you keep such fairy tales in spirit. They once freed themselves from a tyrant and could think themselves free for a moment, now the dear sun has created a swarm of little tyrants for them from the carrion of the oppressor by a strange rebirth, now they continue telling the old fairy tale that they once freed themselves and have remained free.’<sup>7</sup> Goethe’s assessment is entirely consistent with the findings of modern historical research, which notes an increasing tendency towards seclusion and oligarchisation in the late Ancien Régime.<sup>8</sup> In both the towns and the countryside, power was concentrated in the hands of a few influential families.

### 3.1.3 Switzerland as a field of experimentation for democracy

On 15 January 1848, Alexis de Tocqueville presented a ‘Report on Democracy in Switzerland’ to the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques* in Paris. It refers back to observations made by the conservative publicist and politician in 1836 on the occasion of a trip to Switzerland. His assessment of the democratic development in the Confederation is noteworthy. Although he places it in the context of general revolutionary events, he also emphasises its special character: ‘*What is happening in Switzerland is not an isolated case. It is a special development within the general upheaval that is bringing the whole edifice of Europe’s institutions to ruin. Although the stage is small, the spectacle has its greatness. Above all, it has a unique originality. Nowhere else has the democratic revolution come about under such complex circumstances.*’<sup>9</sup> His remark ‘*all cantonal governments are now democratic, but democracy does not show itself in the same form in all of them*’<sup>10</sup> elucidates this ‘unique originality’. In the first half of the 19th century, two models of democracy competed in Switzerland, the representative model and the democratic-assembly model known as ‘*pure democracy*’. As Tocqueville astutely observes, this led to a mixed form in individual cantons: ‘*It should be noted, first of all, that even in the representative democracies of Switzerland, the people have retained the direct exercise of a part of the power in their own hands. In some cantons, the most important laws, after being approved by the legislative assembly, still have to be submitted to a popular vote,*

<sup>7</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Briefe aus der Schweiz, cited in Holger Böning, *Revolution in der Schweiz. Das Ende der Alten Eidgenossenschaft. Die Helvetische Republik 1798–1803*, Frankfurt, Bern, New York 1985, p. 14.

Original: ‘*Frei wären die Schweizer, frei die Bürger in den verschlossenen Städten? frei diese armen Teufel an ihren Klippen und Felsen? Was man den Menschen nicht alles weismachen kann! besonders wenn man so ein Märchen in Spiritus aufbewahrt. Sie machten sich einmal von einem Tyrannen los und konnten sich einen Augenblick frei denken, nun erschuf ihnen die liebe Sonne aus dem Aas des Unterdrückers einen Schwarm kleiner Tyrannen durch eine sonderbare Wiedergeburt, nun erzählen sie das alte Märchen immerfort, sie hätten sich einmal frei gemacht und wären frei geblieben.*’

<sup>8</sup> See for example Rudolf Braun, *Das ausgehende Ancien Régime in der Schweiz, Aufriss einer Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen and Zurich 1984, p. 218 f.

<sup>9</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Bericht über die Demokratie in der Schweiz, in: idem., *Kleine politische Schriften*, Berlin 2006, p. 163–177, in particular p. 165, cited in Jakob Tanner, *Die Schweiz im System Metternich. Das Revolutions- und Ordnungspotential der Demokratie*, in: Government Council of the Canton of Zurich, Daniel Brühlmeier (eds.), *Zürich und der Wiener Kongress. Erklärung über die Angelegenheiten der Schweiz vom 20. März 1815*, Zurich 2015, p. 57–74, in particular p. 67.

Original: ‘*Was in der Schweiz geschieht, ist kein Einzelfall. Es ist eine besondere Entwicklung innerhalb der allgemeinen Umwälzung, die den ganzen Bau der Institutionen Europas in den Ruin stürzt. Ist die Bühne auch klein, hat das Schauspiel doch seine Grösse. Es hat vor allem eine einzigartige Originalität. Nirgends kam die demokratische Revolution unter so komplexen Umständen zustande.*’

<sup>10</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Bericht über die Demokratie in der Schweiz, in: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* (2005), vol. 4, p. 447–458, in particular p. 450, cited in Benjamin Peschke, *Über Demokratie in der Schweiz. Der Mythos und die halb-direkte Demokratie*, Munich 2007.

Original: ‘*alle Kantonsregierungen sind heute demokratisch, aber die Demokratie zeigt sich nicht in allen in derselben Gestalt*’

thus degenerating representative democracy into pure democracy in special cases.<sup>11</sup> What Tocqueville calls degeneration is a new variant that had emerged through a complicated process: semi-direct democracy. This is not simply the result of a linear development, but of a confrontation between alternative concepts of democracy. Through creative confrontation, Switzerland has become a field of experimentation for democratic forms of participation. Another of Tocqueville's remarks proves prescient and particularly important for the interpretation of the development of democracy in the *Sattelzeit* (1750–1850). He emphasises not only the relevance of the liberation struggles against the aristocracy, but the simultaneous adaptation 'to the laws, and even the opinions and inclinations of the aristocracy.' Thus, freedom showed itself to them 'only in the form of a privilege, and the idea of the general and natural right of all men to be free; this idea remained as foreign to their minds as to that of the princes from the House of Austria whom they had defeated.'<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville distinguishes between the old corporate freedom, which can be connected to the estates-based feudal order, and the new freedom, as a natural right that applies not only to a privileged group but to all people. With reference to Tocqueville, the Zurich historian Leonhard von Muralt took up this idea again in 1941 and pointed out its relevance for understanding the Helvetic revolution in Switzerland.<sup>13</sup> However, he had clear reservations about this new freedom. He warns urgently of the 'immense danger of anarchy that lies behind the realisation of freedom' and demands that it be countered by a 'principle of order'.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.1.4 External perception in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

Even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Switzerland's political institutions were met with great admiration. For many intellectuals, Switzerland presented itself as an lesson in democracy.<sup>15</sup> They found that the history of the small state could be used to examine the extent to which the idea of sovereignty of the people could be realised in general. In his work *Histoire politique de L'Europe contemporaine*, the French historian Charles Seignobos writes about Switzerland: 'The interest of the history of Switzerland should not be measured by the size of its territory. This country has a very important place in the history of contemporary European institutions [...] to anyone who wants to understand the evolution of modern democratic societies, this history must be recommended as the most instructive compendium of the sovereignty of the people.'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Bericht über die Demokratie in der Schweiz, in: Berliner Journal für Soziologie (2005), vol. 4, p. 447–458, in particular p. 451, cited in Peschke, Über Demokratie.

Original: 'Anzumerken ist zunächst, dass das Volk selbst in den repräsentativen Demokratien der Schweiz die unmittelbare Ausübung eines Teils der Macht in den eigenen Händen behalten hat. In einigen Kantonen müssen die wichtigsten Gesetze, nachdem sie von der gesetzgebenden Versammlung gebilligt wurden, noch einer Volksabstimmung unterzogen werden, damit entartet die repräsentative Demokratie in besonderen Fällen zur reinen Demokratie.'

<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville, Bericht über die Demokratie in der Schweiz, p. 165, cited in Tanner, Die Schweiz im "System Metternich", p. 65.

Original: 'nur noch in Gestalt eines Privilegs, und die Idee, des allgemeinen und natürlichen Rechts aller Menschen, frei zu sein, diese Idee blieb ihrem Geist ebenso fremd wie dem der Fürsten aus dem Hause Österreich, die sie besiegt hatten.'

<sup>13</sup> Leonhard von Muralt, Alte und neue Freiheit in der helvetischen Revolution, in: Der Historiker und die Geschichte. Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Vorträge. Festschrift für Leonhard von Muralt, Zurich 1960, p. 147–160, in particular p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Schaffner, Die demokratische Bewegung der 1860er Jahre. Beschreibung und Erklärung der Zürcher Volksbewegung 1867 (Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 146), Basel, Frankfurt 1982, p. 3 f.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Seignobos, Histoire politique de l'Europe contemporaine. Evolution des parties et des formes politiques 1814–1896, Paris 1908, p. 238, cited in Schaffner, Die demokratische Bewegung, p. 3.

Original: 'Il ne faudrait pas mesurer l'intérêt de l'histoire de la Suisse à la taille de son territoire. Ce pays tient une très grande place dans l'histoire des institutions contemporaines de l'Europe [...] à quiconque veut comprendre l'évolution des sociétés démocratiques modernes, on doit recommander cette histoire comme le recueil le plus instructif de la souveraineté du peuple.'



## 3.2 Self-perception in a historical perspective

### 3.2.1 Republican self-perception

As early as the early 16th century, indications of a republican self-perception can be found in the old Confederation. Josias Simler writes in his work *De Republica Helvetiorum*: ‘Among the free regiments and states, which are not subject to any prince or lord, a commendable confederation after Venice is generally held in the highest esteem [...] Foreigners often wonder what form of government there is in the Confederation. Then they are surprised that so many cities and countries have joined together in a few years and become like a state, and have now remained steadfast and unanimous with each other for so many years. [...] although this is not a state in the most accurate sense, a common commendable confederation may nevertheless be considered and called a state, republic and government, and this state has now existed for two hundred years, and has also maintained its freedom in great unity with one another.’<sup>17</sup> His descriptions of the character of the Swiss already contain elements of the rhetoric of virtue that constitutes early modern republicanism. By analogy with examples from ancient Greece and Rome, the author repeatedly warns against decay and pleads for the restoration of the forefathers’ mores. Selfishness, corruption and moral decadence always endanger the ideal state.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.2.2 Contouring of self-image through Dutch influence

In the 17th century, the foreign policy threat posed by absolutist France led to a repositioning of Switzerland in the European system of states and to a stronger rapprochement with republics such as Venice and the Netherlands. Contacts with the Netherlands, in particular, also contributed to the contouring of Switzerland’s self-image. An important role in this development was played by the Dutch envoy Petrus Valkenier, who emphasised the commonalities between the two republics in his work *Her Verwerd Europa*: ‘The Swiss Cantons and the United Netherlands, because they both have a republican government which is hated and threatened by all potentates, must link themselves closely to each other and protect one another in their freedom, which they should regard as more important than their lives. The Swiss are all the more obliged to do this, because they owe the beginning of their free state to a Dutch count, namely Ludwig of Bavaria, who was at the same time an emperor and who, in its first beginnings, secured Swiss freedom against power of the House of Austria with official charters. These two republics are, as it were, the two arms of the German Empire, which are very strong and frightening, both because of the bravery of the inhabitants and because of their fortunate position. The first is sufficiently fortified by its high mountains and narrow roads, the other with water and morasses. The former rule over the mountains, the latter over the sea. The nature of these two peoples is so much in harmony with the nature of their two countries that the Swiss seem to have been born for the sake of the

<sup>17</sup> Josias Simler, Von dem Regiment der Lobl. Eydgenossenschaft. Zwey Bücher. Von Josia Simler. Nun aber mit erforderlichen Anmerkungen erläutert und bis auf dieser Zeiten fortgesetzt. Von Hans Jacob Leu, Zürich, Getruckt bey David Gessner 1722, p. 426–428.

Original: ‘Unter den freyen Regimentern und Staaten, die keinem Fürsten und Herren unterworfen sind, wird gemeinlich eine Lobliche Eidgenossenschaft nach Venedig auf das fürnehmste geachtet [...] Es fragen sich die Frömden oft und vil Was für ein Regierungsform in der Eidgenossenschaft seye. Dann es sie wunder nihmt, dass so vil Städte und Länder in wenig Jahren sich zusammen verbunden und gleich als ein Staat worden sind, und jez so vil Jahr standhaft und einmüthig bey einanderen verharret haben. [...] ob gleich das [auf] das accurateste zureden nicht ein Staat ist, so mag doch ein gemeine Lobliche Eidgenossenschaft für ein Staat, Republic und Regierung gehalten und genennet werden, und hat diser Staat nun bey zweyhundert Jahren gewährt, auch seine Freyheit in grosser Einigkeit mit einanderen erhalten.’

<sup>18</sup> In general, see Daniel Tröhler, Republikanismus und Pädagogik. Pestalozzi im historischen Kontext, Bad Heilbrunn 2006, p. 220 ff.

mountains and the mountains for the sake of the Swiss, the sea for the sake of the Dutch and the Dutch for the sake of the sea.’<sup>19</sup> By adopting the external assessment, but also by recourse to autochthonous attempts to situate themselves, a specific ‘republican self-confidence’<sup>20</sup> developed among the political elites of the towns, which can be described as ‘urban republicanism’ as opposed to the monarchical world of states.

### 3.2.3 Radicalisation of the virtue discourse

As shown in Josias Simler’s text, the ideal state of the republic was always endangered. The republican self-confidence of the political elites in the towns was counteracted by a radical republicanism that turned the concept of virtue into a political battle cry and took on an oppositional, anti-aristocratic character. An example of this is a political youth movement in Zurich from 1762 to 1768, which formed first in legal societies and later in secret societies.<sup>21</sup> Based on Montesquieu’s observation that revolutions are sometimes necessary even in democratic states, cases of abuse of power and corruption were sought out to demonstrate the decay of the republic. The founding document of one secret group states: *‘The ultimate purpose of our society shall be to work from the utmost powers to counteract the corruption which is spreading ever further in our fatherland, and to exert all that we can to restore the state to its original simplicity. [...] When we read the history of our fatherland, this should primarily be done in order to convince us, the longer, the more, that our fatherland has lacked state laws from its origin until now, and that especially with the ever increasing decay of morals, which could otherwise still fill the place of laws, a major revolution is necessary in order to have a good effect, since slow effect and improvement lead to nothing at all.’*<sup>22</sup> As the government met the movement with ever stronger repression, resignation spread and criticism of the state became more and more radical: *‘Switzerland is a barely visible speck of earth; if you want to see it, it must gleam like a diamond, and it is dirty, God*

<sup>19</sup> Petrus Valkenier, *Das verwirrte Europa*, Amsterdam 1677, p. 56, cited in Thomas Maissen, *Die Geburt der Republic. Staatsverständnis und Repräsentation in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft* (Historische Semantik, vol. 4), Göttingen 2006, p. 358.

Original: *‘Die Schweizerischen Cantonen und die Vereinigte Niederlande, weil sie beyderseits eine Republick Regierung haben, welche von allen Potentaten gehasset und gedräuet wird, müssen sich genau an einander verbinden und eine die ander in ihrer Freyheit, welche sie lieber haben sollten als ihr Leben, zu beschützen. Hierzu sind die Schweizer desto mehr verpflichtet, weil sie den Anfang ihres freyen Staats einem holländischen Graven zu dancken haben, nemlich Ludwig von Bäumen, der zugleich Keyser war und die Schweizerische Freiheit in ihrem ersten Anfang wieder den Gewalt des Hauses Oestreich mit offentlichen Urkunden hat befestiget. Diese beyde Republicken sind gleichsam die beyde Arme des Teutschen Reiches, welche sehr starck und erschrecklich sind, so woll wegen der Tapfferkeit der Inwohner als auch wegen ihrer Wollgelegenheit. Die erste ist genugsam gestärcket durch ihre hohe Berge und enge Wege, die andere mit Wasser und Morasten. Jene herrschen über die Berge, diese übers Meer. Die Natur dieser beyden Völcker kömt mit der Beschaffenheit ihrer beyder Länder so woll über ein, dass die Schweizer umb der Berge willen und die Berge umb der Schweizer willen, das Meer umb der Niederländer und die Niederländer umb des Meeres willen scheinen geboren und entstanden zu seyn.’*

<sup>20</sup> For context, see *ibid.* p. 77 ff. and *idem*, Petrus Valkeniers republikanische Sendung. Die niederländische Prägung des neuzeitlichen schweizerischen Staatsverständnisses, in: *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, no. 48 (1998), p. 149–178, in particular p. 156 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Rolf Graber, *Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit und spätabsolutistischer Staat. Sozietätenbewegung und Konfliktkonjunktur in Zürich 1746–1780*, Zurich 1993.

<sup>22</sup> *Aufhebung unserer historisch-politischen Gesellschaft auf dem Bach*, 1765, cited in Daniel Tröhler, *Politische Bildung im Untergrund Zürichs 1762–1767*, in: Jürg W. Link, Frank Tosch (eds.), *Bildungsgeschichte in Quellen*. Hanno Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag. Bad Heilbrunn 2007, p. 95–109, in particular p. 101 f.; extracts also in Rolf Graber, *Spätabsolutismus und Geheimgesellschaften in Zürich 1760–1780*, in: Helmut Reinalter, *Die demokratische Bewegung in Mitteleuropa von der Spätaufklärung bis zur Revolution von 1848/49*. Ein Tagungsbericht (Vergleichende Gesellschaftsgeschichte und politische Ideengeschichte der Neuzeit, vol. 6), Innsbruck 1988, p. 85–95, in particular p. 90 f. Original: *‘Der Endzweck unserer Gesellschaft soll seyn, aus äussersten Kräften der Verderbniss, die sich immer weiter in unserm Vaterland ausbreitet, entgegen zu arbeiten und alles was Wir vermögen, anzustrengen, den Staat wieder auf seine ursprüngliche Einfachheit zurückzuführen. [...] Wenn Wir die geschichte unsers Vaterlandes lesen, so soll es vornehmlich auch in der Hinsicht geschehen, um uns, je länger, je mehr zu überzeugen, das es demselben von seiner Entstehung an, bis auf jetzt an Staats-Gesezen gefehlt, und dass hiemit besonders bey dem immer mehr überhand nehmenden verfall der Sitten, welche sonst noch den Plaz der Geseze ausfüllen könnten, eine Haupt-Revolution vonnöthen seye, um gutes zu wirken, da langsames wirken, und verbessern Zu gar nichts führe.’*

knows. *The Swiss and the canton to which I owe my life have sunk and in my mind to their lowest state [...]. A council and citizens who weep or turn pale when a murderer and thief is chased away merely because he wears a collar instead of a rope, a pile of citizens, shopkeepers and merchants who, with incomparable frenzy, revelry, womanly vice, bourgeois gentilhommie, senselessness and tinsel thieving in the city, a pack of clergymen and professors, medical men and chancery clerks, who have made a salt covenant with ignorance, who condemn Jesus Christ and Rousseau to race with Calvin as their counterpart did with Loyola, who piss wine when they should see water, [...] that is all that inhabits my fatherland – I can write no more – damn the pen*<sup>23</sup>. When Johann Heinrich Füssli wrote these lines on 6 December 1765, he had already left for London, where he later made a career as a painter and professor of painting at the Royal Academy.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2.4 Modification of republican self-image under the influence of the French Revolution

After 1789, people were inundated with a flood of information that contributed to a change in political consciousness. Special newspapers for the people and pamphlets reached the broad masses via the communication networks of a newly emerging bourgeois public. Mobile populations such as peddlers, distillers, yarn carriers, pig traders, drovers, musicians and returning soldiers carried news of events in France to the remotest villages.<sup>25</sup> This led to a questioning of the political conditions in one's own country. A key document that emerged from the discussions of a rural reading society is able to illustrate the change in consciousness: the *Stäfner Memorial*. On the one hand, the republican self-image of the city-state of Zurich is questioned: *'There are perhaps few, perhaps not a single one, who does not recognise our form of government for a republic as the best and most expedient, and none who does not exalt the constitution of Zurich above all, because it grants the citizen all rights of acquisition and places all estates in equality. Only a man of the country regrets that this constitution is buried within the walls and the country people are excluded from it. Such a constitution is necessary not only in regard to government, but also in regard to the acquisition of all classes of people.'*<sup>26</sup> Surprisingly, the authors of the petition even find words of praise for the republican constitution; they only regret that it only applies to a privileged group, the urban citizens. In this way, they implicitly criticise the understanding of freedom associated with it and confront the old freedom

<sup>23</sup> Füssli an Lavater, 6. Dezember 1765, cited in Walter Muschg (ed.), *Heinrich Füssli, Briefe* (Sammlung Klosterburg, Schweizerische Reihe), Basel 1942, p. 118 f.

Original: *'Die Schweiz ist ein kaum sehbarer Erdflecken, wenn man ihn sehen will, so muss er diamantgleich schimmern, und er ist schmutzig, Gott weiss es. Die Schweizer und der Kanton, dem ich das Leben schuldig bin sind gesunken und in meinem Sinne bis zur letzten Hefe [...]. Ein Rat und Bürger, der weint oder erblasst, wenn man einen Mörder und Dieben weggagt, bloss weil er statt eines Strickes einen Kragen trägt, ein Haufe von Bürgern, Krämern und Kaufleuten, die mit unvergleichlicher Raserei, Schwelgerei, Weiberlaster, Bourgeoisgentilhommie, Sinnlosigkeit und Flittergold in der Stadt dieben, ein Pack Geistlicher und Professoren, Mediziner und Kanzlisten, die mit der Unwissenheit einen Salzbund gemacht, die Jesum Christum und Rousseau verdammten, um mit Calvin so wie ihre Gegenpartei mit Loyola zu rasen, die Wein pissen, wenn sie Wasser sehen sollten, [...] das ist alles was mein Vaterland bewohnt – ich mag nicht mehr schreiben – damn the pen.'*

<sup>24</sup>For context, see Rolf Graber, *Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, p. 118 ff.

<sup>25</sup> On the plebeian public sphere, see Rolf Graber, *Zeit des Teilens. Volksbewegungen und Volksunruhen auf der Zürcher Landschaft 1794-1804*, Zurich 2003, p. 118 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Heinrich Nehracher, *Das Stäfner Memorial. Ein Wort zur Beherzigung an unsre theuersten Landsväter, 1794*, in *Helvetia. Denkwürdigkeiten für die XXII Freistaaten der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, vol. 5, Aarau. In J.J. Schriften, Buchdrucker und Buchhändler, 1829, p. 6-23.

Original: *'Es sind vielleicht Wenige, vielleicht ist kein einziger, der nicht unsere Regierungsform für eine Republik als die beste und zweckmässigste anerkennt und keiner der nicht die Konstitution von Zürich über alles erhebt, weil sie dem Bürger alle Rechte des Erwerbs zugestehet und alle Stände in Gleichheit setzt. Nur bedauert es ein Landmann, dass diese Konstitution inner die Mauern vergraben, und das Landvolk davon ausgeschlossen ist. Eine solche Konstitution ist nicht nur in Ansehung der Regierung, sondern auch in Hinsicht auf den Erwerb aller Volksklassen notwendig.'*

with the modern idea of freedom under natural law. This becomes even clearer in the introductory remarks to the text: *‘Produced by free fathers, we are to be free sons; history speaks for this, documents testify to it, our authorities recognise us as such, as often as the defence of the fatherland is necessary; as such, that nation respects us, which at present plays on the political stage the role on a large scale, which our fathers once played on a small scale. But from this arises the important question: are we really what our fathers were, what we should be, what foreigners view us as and happily praise us for? The majority of our people, dearest country fathers, answer no!’*<sup>27</sup> The argumentation of the country citizens contains a double thrust. On the one hand, they complain that they are only perceived as free citizens when it comes to defending the fatherland. They have duties but no rights. On the other hand, the text contains a subtle threat. The guarantor of freedom is revolutionary France, which has taken over the role of the traditional free states and is becoming the political model of reference. Such considerations not only question the self-image of republican freedom, but also create a new point of reference.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2.5 Republicanism as an obstacle: self-perception from the perspective of women

On 18 April 1869, the male portion of the Zurich populace approved a constitution that was one of the most progressive of its time and served as a model for further democratisation in other cantons and in the Confederation. It was the result of the democratic movement in the canton of Zurich and contained essential achievements with regard to the expansion of direct democracy, such as legislative initiative, obligatory referendums on financial and legislative matters and the popular election of the members of the government and the Council of States. In the run-up to the constitutional revision, a commission appointed by the Constitutional Council invited the people to submit wishes regarding the design of the new constitution. Noteworthy is a submission from ‘several women of the people’ dated 25 May 1868: *‘Since the beginning of the revision of the constitution, a universal expansion of the people’s rights has been proclaimed and all sorts of possible and impossible things have been promised; only the poor women, like the poets in the division of the earth [allusion to Friedrich Schiller’s poem ‘Die Teilung der Erde’, 1795], seem to have to go away empty-handed. No one speaks of them and no one remembers their atrophied and suppressed human rights. If the slogan of the people of Zurich, “Freedom, Education, Prosperity”, is to become reality and truth, then unmarried and married women should be granted full participation in all civil rights from the age of 20. What we ask for, what we demand only for this reason, is the right and ability of the female sex to vote in all social and political matters and relations. If, as is unfortunately to be feared, the high constitutional council cannot rise to this point of view, which alone is worthy of a truly free man, then, like the great men of creation, we ask for a little more modesty in their private*

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Original: *‘Von freien Vätern erzeugt, sollen wir freie Söhne sein, dafür redet die Geschichte, dafür zeugen die Urkunden, dafür erkennt uns unsere Obrigkeit, so oft die Vertheidigung des Vaterlandes notwendig ist; als solche respektiert uns jene Nation, die gegenwärtig auf dem politischen Schauplatze die Rolle im Grossen spielt, die weiland unsere Väter im Kleinen spielten. Hieraus entsteht aber die wichtige Frage: Sind wir auch wirklich das was unsere Väter gewesen sind, was wir sein sollten, wo für uns Auswärtige ansehen, und dafür glücklich preisen? Der grösste Teil unseres Volkes, teuerste Landesväter, antwortet mit Nein!’*

<sup>28</sup> Rolf Graber, Kollektive Lernprozesse. Zur Bedeutung republikanischer Vorstellungen in Stadt und Landschaft Zürich im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert, in: Michael Böhler, Etienne Hofmann, Peter H. Reil, Simone Zurbuchen (eds.), Republikanische Tugend. Ausbildung eines Schweizer Nationalbewusstseins und Erziehung eines neuen Bürgers. Akten des 16. Kolloquiums der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften (Travaux sur la Suisse des Lumières, 2), Geneva 2000, p. 207–221, in particular p. 215 f.

and public manifestations of freedom.<sup>29</sup> A similar statement was made by women in 1872, in connection with the debate on the full revision of the federal constitution. In 1874, this introduced optional legislative referendums to the federal level and is therefore to be regarded as an important milestone in the expansion of the people's rights. In her essay 'Zur Frauenfrage in der Schweiz' (On the Women's Question in Switzerland), Julie von May von Rued draws attention to an 'anomaly' in the country's external assessment and self-assessment from women's perspectives, namely that *'the cradle, the foster mother, indeed the model of all European freedom and equality, Switzerland, still in many respects at the present time, and especially in the original democratic parts of the country, keeps its daughters more dispossessed and enslaved than any of the monarchies surrounding it; the most mature people in Europe regards and treats its female component, if not completely consistently in life, at least before the law and in custom, as the most immature child.'*<sup>30</sup> Historians have searched for reasons for this paradox. Gisela Bock writes in her survey *Frauen in der europäischen Geschichte* (Women in European History): 'In France and Switzerland, on the other hand, it was not the dictatorship that blocked women's suffrage or made it irrelevant, but the republic.'<sup>31</sup> The author observes a commonality between the two countries: they were pioneers with regard to the extension of men's suffrage and latecomers with regard to the realisation of women's suffrage. Responsible for this, she contends, was the republicanism anchored in both countries, which ensured that the class barriers specific to suffrage were removed early on through the introduction of universal equal male suffrage. Therefore, no group-specific alliances had formed for the purpose of extending the right to vote. Men had not depended on female support for this demand.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, because extensions of the right to vote were subject to a referendum in Switzerland, they were rejected by a large majority of male citizens. Of the 63 cantonal referendums held up to 1971, 55 ended with a negative result for women. In 1959 and 1960, the French-speaking cantons of Vaud, Geneva and Neuchâtel voted in favour of women's suffrage. It was not until 1970 that the first German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft, followed suit.

<sup>29</sup> Bei der Kanzlei des Verfassungsrathes eingegangene Vorschläge betreffend die Verfassungsrevision, Nr. 99, Staatsarchiv Zürich, call number BX 188.3, Fasc. c; on women's petitions, see Elisabeth Joris, Heidi Witzig (eds.), *Frauengeschicht(en). Dokumente aus zwei Jahrhunderten zur Situation der Frauen in der Schweiz*, Zurich 1986, p. 443 and 484 f.

Original: *'Man hat seit Beginn der Verfassungsrevision eine allseitige Erweiterung der Volksrechte verkündet u. dabei allenthalben alles Mögliche und Unmögliche versprochen, nur die armen Frauen scheinen gleich den Poeten bei der Theilung der Erde [Anspielung auf Friedrich Schillers Gedicht "Die Theilung der Erde", 1795 R.G.] mit leeren Händen davon gehen müssen. Niemand spricht von ihnen u. Niemand gedenkt ihrer verkümmerten und unterdrückten Menschenrechte. Soll die Losung des Zürcher Volkes 'Freiheit, Bildung, Wohlstand' zur That und Wahrheit werden, so müsste Jungfrauen und Frauen vom 20ten Lebensjahr an ein voller Antheil an allen bürgerlichen Rechten gewähret sein. Was wir nur aus diesem Grunde erbitten, was wir verlangen, das heisst Wahlberechtigung u. Wahlfähigkeit für das weibliche Geschlecht in allen sozialen und politischen Angelegenheiten und Beziehungen. Kann sich, wie leider zu fürchten steht, der hohe Verfassungsrath nicht auf diesen, eines wahrhaft freien Mannes allein würdigen Standpunkt erheben, so ersuchen wie die grossen Männer der Schöpfung um etwas mehr Bescheidenheit in ihren privaten und öffentlichen Freiheitsmanifestationen.'*

<sup>30</sup> von May, von Rued Julie, *Die Frauenfrage in der Schweiz. Zur Bundesrevision am 12. Mai 1872*, Biel 1872, p. 5., see also Caroline Arni, *Nichts versprochen, alles erkämpft*, in: Denise Schmid (ed.) *Jeder Frau ihre Stimme. 50 Jahre Frauengeschichte 1971-2021*, Zurich 2020.

Original: *'die Wiege, die Pflegemutter, ja das Vorbild aller europäischen Freiheit und Gleichheit, die Schweiz, zur Stunde noch in vielen, und zwar gerade in ihren urdemokratischen Landestheilen vornehmlich, ihre Töchter enteigneter und geknechteter [hält] als keine der sie umringenden Monarchien; das mündigste Volk Europa's betrachtet und behandelt seinen weiblichen Bestandteil, wenn nicht völlig konsequent im Leben, doch vor dem Gesetz und in der Sitte, als das unmündigste Kind.'*

<sup>31</sup> Gisela Bock, *Frauen in der europäischen Geschichte. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2005, p. 213.

Original: *'In Frankreich und in der Schweiz hingegen war es nicht die Diktatur, die das Frauenwahlrecht blockierte oder irrelevant machte, sondern die Republik.'*

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 214 f.

### 3.3 Stages of the historiography of democracy in the context of external and self-perception

#### 3.3.1 Scholarly study of the emergence of ‘popular legislation’

Scholarly study of the history of ‘direct democracy’ began with the anchoring of popular rights in many cantonal constitutions and the introduction of optional legislative referendums at the federal level through the constitutional revision of 1874. The pioneers were the journalist Theodor Curti and the Bernese constitutional law professor Gustav Vogt, who was originally from Hesse. Both were involved in the democratic movement of the 1860s. A first remarkable synthesis is Theodor Curti’s study entitled *Geschichte der schweizerischen Volksgesetzgebung* (History of Swiss Popular Legislation), published in 1882. It aims to show ‘*that modern Swiss democracy, as manifested in direct or popular legislation, is only the solution to the problem of a translation of the old democracies to larger territories in accordance with the changed conditions of the time, as well as the higher development of the democratic idea, and thus that the new forms of democracy cannot have sprung forth from the respective aberrations of the people’s soul, but have been shaped by the laws of history that have persisted through the centuries.*’<sup>33</sup> He maintains that this programme is to be realised through a combination of ‘Swiss constitutional history in general and [...] the history of political ideas’<sup>34</sup>. Curti begins with an account of different variants of *Landsgemeinden*, then deals with individual uprisings to which he attributes a system-transcending character (Geneva riots, Henzi conspiracy, Chenaux trade) and then focuses on the history of ideas and general political development. (Rousseau, popular sovereignty in the context of the French Revolution). He then turns back to the national level. (Helvetic Republic and regeneration). Particularly relevant are his comments on the cantonal developments in St. Gallen (first veto) and Vaud (first referendum). Another chapter is devoted to the federal constitution of 1848. After an excursus on the early socialist theorists of democracy Moritz Rittinghausen and Viktor Considerant, the democratic movement in Zurich in the 1860s receives a detailed appraisal. The following features are striking about Curti’s approach: It is not social and political struggles that are responsible for the realisation of popular rights, but ‘laws that have persisted through the centuries.’ Popular rights are seen as the result of an organic development that inevitably leads to a goal.<sup>35</sup> Although he speaks of ‘aberrations of the popular soul’, meaning the negative characterisation of the veto movements from a liberal point of view, no focus is given to these political contradictions. The teleological view makes the actors of the individual movements disappear behind a mythically exaggerated concept of the people. The veto movements in the Catholic cantons and the contribution of the Catholic population in the mixed-confessional areas to the expansion of popular rights do not come into focus either. This paves the way for a liberal master narrative. In the surveys of Swiss history published in the early 20th century, the

<sup>33</sup> Theodor Curti, *Geschichte der Volksgesetzgebung* (Zugleich eine Geschichte der schweizerischen –Demokratie), Bern 1882, preface, p. III.

Original: ‘*dass die moderne schweizerische Demokratie, wie sich dieselbe in der direkten Gesetzgebung oder Volksgesetzgebung verdeutlicht, nur das gelöste Problem einer, den veränderten Bedingungen der Zeit gemässen Uebersetzung der alten Demokratien auf grössere Territorien sowie die Höherentwicklung der demokratischen Idee ist und also die neuen Formen der Demokratie nicht aus jeweiliger Verirrung der Volksseele entsprungen sein kann, sondern durch die Jahrhunderte beharrlich wirkenden Gesetze der Geschichte sich gestaltet habe.*’

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. II.

Original: ‘*schweizerischer Verfassungsgeschichte im Allgemeinen und [...] der Geschichte der politischen Ideen*’

<sup>35</sup> Schaffner, *Die demokratische Bewegung*, p. 10 f.

realisation of popular rights is embedded in a line of development involving only liberals, radicals and democrats. In contrast, Curti's works still contain indications that make this narrative appear problematic. In his *Geschichte der Schweiz im 19. Jahrhundert* (History of Switzerland in the 19th Century), there is a passage that points to the conservative roots of the referendum: 'Democratic institutions in the sense not merely of electoral rights but also of popular legislation had existed almost exclusively in the Catholic cantons, and democratic aspirations only among the Catholic population of the mixed cantons.'<sup>36</sup> Curti's assessment of the liberal victory of 1848 and the importance of the federal constitution to the democratisation process is also noteworthy: 'In 1848, the representative state experienced a victory, and popular rights fell short.' This shows that the roots of plebiscitary direct-democratic elements must be sought not in the series of dates (1798/1830/1848) predetermined by the bourgeois revolutionary cycle, but in another basic historical current that goes back to the political unrest in the Ancien Régime, is expressed under new auspices in the Helvetic Republic and manifests itself in 1832, 1839–41, and 1861–1868 in manifold popular movements that not only parallel but also transverse the bourgeois revolutionary cycle.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3.2 The ambivalent role of the Helvetic Revolution

For a long time, the Helvetic Revolution was neglected by Swiss historiography. The assessment of the renowned historian Edgar Bonjour, who analyses the effects of the French Revolution on Switzerland and the establishment of the Helvetic Republic provides an example: 'With the schematic implementation of equality in all areas, it uniformed the multi-ethnic country and completely destroyed its character as a country of member states. Finally, independence and Christianity were largely abandoned as well. Never since its existence has the Confederation moved so far away from its original principle. For this renunciation from the past, which amounted to a betrayal of the Swiss idea of the state, the Helvetic Republic atoned with wartime misery, material hardship and state and cultural barrenness. The bureaucratic unitary state disappeared after a short time with the French arms that brought it, and no one has since wept for this constitutional experiment.'<sup>38</sup> This assessment of the Helvetic Republic dates from 1939 and must be understood in the context of intellectual national defence. In times of internal crises and external threats, the epoch is given a particularly negative evaluation. The Helvetic Republic is seen as a historic fall from grace, followed by deserved political punishment. This view, which has long prevailed in Swiss historiography, has prevented the significance of the Atlantic

<sup>36</sup> Curti, *Geschichte der Schweiz*, p. 591, cited in Schaffner, *Demokratische Bewegung*, p. 10.

Original: 'Demokratische Institutionen im Sinne nicht bloss der Wahlrechte, sondern auch der Volksgesetzgebung hatte es fast nur in den katholischen Kantonen und demokratische Bestrebungen nur in der katholischen Bevölkerung der gemischten Kantone gegeben.'

<sup>37</sup> Rolf Graber, *Zur Bedeutung der Revolutionen von 1798 (Helvetische Revolution) und 1847/48 (Bundesstaatsgründung) für die Ausgestaltung des politischen Systems der modernen Schweiz*, in: Heiner Timmermann (ed.), *1848 Revolution in Europa. Verlauf, politische Programme, Folgen und Wirkungen (Dokumente und Schriften der Europäischen Akademie Otzenhausen, vol. 87)*, Berlin 1999, p. 391–414, in particular p. 393 f.

Original: 'Im Jahre 1848 hat der repräsentative Staat einen Sieg erlebt, die Volksrechte sind zu kurz gekommen.'

<sup>38</sup> Edgar Bonjour, *Werden und Wesen der schweizerischen Demokratie*, in: *Die Schweiz und Europa. Ausgewählte Reden und Aufsätze von Edgar Bonjour*, vol. 2, Basel 1961, p. 325.

Original: 'Mit der schematischen Durchführung der Gleichheit auf allen Gebieten uniformierte sie das vielstämmige Land und vernichtete seinen gliedstaatlichen Charakter völlig. Schliesslich wurden auch noch die Unabhängigkeit und die Christlichkeit weitgehend aufgegeben. Nie seit ihrem Bestehen hat sich die Eidgenossenschaft so weit von ihrem Ursprungsprinzip entfernt. Für diesen Abfall von der Vergangenheit, der einem Verrat an der schweizerischen Staatsidee gleichkam, büsste die Helvetik mit Kriegselend, materieller Not, staatlicher und kultureller Unfruchtbarkeit. Der bürokratische Einheitsstaat verschwand nach kurzer Zeit mit den französischen Waffen, die ihn gebracht, und niemand hat seither diesem staatsrechtlichen Experiment nachgeweiht.'

revolutions (American independence movement and French Revolution) for the development of Swiss democracy from being adequately addressed. Despite the negative features mentioned above, the Helvetic Republic, which emerged under French pressure, introduced a democratic constitution, personal freedom for former subjects and a representative democracy. However, its centralised state structure, tight administration with a professional civil service and executive–state bureaucratic concept led to a loss of participation rights.<sup>39</sup> The restriction of the local tradition of self–government provoked resistance. Both in the political spring of 1798 and in the final phase of the Helvetic Republic, the inhabitants of the former subject territories in eastern Switzerland, who had gained freedom through the Helvetic Revolution, demanded more political participation and invoked the *Landsgemeinde* model. For example, Karl Heinrich Gschwend, the newly elected *Landammann* of the lower Rhine valley, wrote in a letter to Peter Ochs, the intellectual creator of the new constitution: ‘*The democratic cantons (Landsgemeinden) have for centuries been accustomed to awarding all state offices under the open sky with a free hand, and the newly released cantons of Toggenburg, St. Gallen, the old Rheinthal, Sargans etc., have already adopted this manner of government and elected Landammann and Council. This Landammann and Council, which the people confirm or dismiss every year, depending on whether they are dissatisfied with them, is already a representative republic of the people.*’<sup>40</sup> Gschwend confronts the representative democracy of the newly formed republic with the democratic–assembly model, referring to the *Landsgemeinden*. The significance of the Helvetic Revolution for the development of democracy in Switzerland is thus ambivalent. On the one hand, it brought freedom and legal equality to the former subjects; on the other hand, the new Helvetic constitution provoked resistance, which promoted the development from representative to semi–direct democracy through its demand for more participation of the population.

### 3.3.3 Controversy over continuity or rupture

The controversy over the significance of the French Revolution for the development of democracy in Switzerland has also led to the emergence of two competing interpretive approaches. The historian Peter Blickle argues that in the late Middle Ages, in contrast to the estates–based feudal order, an alternative principle of social organisation emerged, which he calls communalism. The communes were largely able to escape the influence of the lords and regulate their everyday affairs themselves.<sup>41</sup> Blickle draws a line that stretches from this communal, cooperative culture of autonomy in the late Middle Ages and early modern period to the direct–democratic movements of the early 19th century. A similar approach was already pursued by Adolf Gasser in his study

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Kölz, *Neuere schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte. Ihre Grundlagen vom Ende der Alten Eidgenossenschaft bis 1848*, Bern 1992, p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Heinrich Gschwend, *Landespräsident im obern Rheinthal*, an Peter Ochs, 1798, *Aktensammlung aus der Zeit der Helvetischen Republik (1798–1803)*, bearb. von Johannes Strickler, vol. 1, Bern 1886, p. 530–532, in particular p. 530; for context, see Rolf Graber, *Zur Einführung der Verfassung der Helvetischen Republik, Republikanismus der Eliten – Republikanismus des Volkes*, in: Helmut Reinalter (ed.), *Republikbegriff und Republiken seit dem 18. Jahrhundert im europäischen Vergleich. Internationales Symposium zum österreichischen Millennium (Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Forschungsstelle Demokratische Bewegungen in Mitteleuropa 1770–1850, vol. 28)*, Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Vienna 1999, p. 101–119.

Original: ‘*Die demokratischen Cantone (Landsgemeinden R. G.) sind seit Jahrhunderten gewohnt, alle Staatsämter unter freiem Himmel mit freier Hand zu vergeben, und die[se] Weise und Art der Regierung haben die neue[n] freigelassen[en] Cantone Toggenburg, St. Gallen, alte Landschaft Rheinthal, Sargans etc, auch schon adoptiert und Landammann und Rat gewählt. Dieser Landammann und Rath, den das Volk alle Jahre bestätigt oder absetzet, je nachdem es mit ihnen unzufrieden ist, ist schon eine repräsentative Republik des Volkes.*’

<sup>41</sup> Peter Blickle, *Kommunalismus. Skizzen einer gesellschaftlichen Organisationsform*, 2 vols. Munich 2000.



‘Gemeindefreiheit zur Rettung Europas’ (Communal Freedom for the Salvation of Europe), published during the Second World War<sup>42</sup>. His missionary zeal is already expressed in the preface when he emphasises: ‘Comprehensive discretionary freedom of the communes is the indispensable prerequisite for any political, social and moral recovery of Europe.’ His remarks must be understood in the context of intellectual national defence. He asserts that a federalist state structure and orientation towards the ‘Swiss model’ should prevent future armed conflicts and the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes. The commune is seen as a building block of a democratic Europe. The continuity thesis, as advocated by Blickle and Gasser, is contrasted with the ‘rupture thesis’ of the constitutional lawyer Alfred Kölz. He emphasises the fundamental importance of the French Revolution.<sup>43</sup> He sees the influence of the French Revolution not only in the implementation of a new concept of freedom based on natural law, but also in the orientation towards projected but unrealised constitutions of the radical phase of the revolution from 1792 to 1794, which was influenced by sansculottism. Thus, provisions of the Montagnard Constitution served as a model for anchoring the legislative veto in the Regeneration constitutions. The pre-modern culture of autonomy, he asserts, was merely responsible for creating favourable conditions for reception.<sup>44</sup>

### 3.3.4 New history of democracy: continuity and rupture

The history of direct democracy has recently attracted increased interest.<sup>45</sup> Both overviews<sup>46</sup> and cantonal case studies<sup>47</sup> have emerged that open up new perspectives by deconstructing common narratives. The rigid contrast between the continuity and rupture theses is broken down and differentiated. Continuity exists in the demand for

<sup>42</sup> Adolf Gasser, *Gemeindefreiheit zur Rettung Europas*. Grundlinien einer ethischen Geschichtsauffassung, Basel 1943.

<sup>43</sup> Alfred Kölz, *Zur Bedeutung der Französischen Revolution*, in: Andreas Auer (ed.), *Les origines de la démocratie directe en Suisse*, Die Ursprünge der schweizerischen direkten Demokratie, Basel, Frankfurt 1996, p. 105–118.

<sup>44</sup> Alfred Kölz, *Neuere schweizerische Verfassungsgeschichte*. Ihre Grundlinien vom Ende der alten Eidgenossenschaft bis 1848, Bern 1992, p. 627 and 629.

<sup>45</sup> See the following research reports: Rolf Graber, ‘Kämpfe um Anerkennung’. Bemerkungen zur neueren Demokratieforschung in der Schweiz, in: idem. (ed.), *Demokratisierungsprozesse in der Schweiz im späten 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Forschungsstelle "Demokratische Bewegungen in Mitteleuropa 1750–1850", vol. 40), Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford, Vienna 2008, p. 9–20; René Roca, *Schweizerische Geschichtswissenschaft und Demokratieforschung. – Vom Mythos über die Ignoranz zum historischen Untersuchungsgegenstand*, in: idem., Andreas Auer (ed.), *Wege zur direkten Demokratie in den schweizerischen Kantonen* (Schriften zur Demokratieforschung, 3), Zurich, Bern, Geneva, 2011, p. 3–10.

<sup>46</sup> Rolf Graber, *Demokratie und Revolten*. Die Entstehung der direkten Demokratie in der Schweiz, Zurich 2017; Rolf Graber, *Einleitung*, in: idem., *Wege zur direkten Demokratie in der Schweiz*, Eine kommentierte Quellenauswahl von der Frühneuzeit bis 1874, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar 2013, p.13–63; Martin Schaffner, *Direkte Demokratie "Alles für das Volk – alles durch das Volk"*, in: Manfred Hettling et al. (eds.), *Eine kleine Geschichte der Schweiz*. Der Bundesstaat und seine Traditionen (Edition Suhrkamp, 2079), Frankfurt 1998, p. 189–226; Martin Schaffner "Direkte" oder "indirekte" Demokratie. Konflikte und Auseinandersetzungen 1830–1848, in: Andreas Ernst, Albert Tanner, Matthias Weisshaupt, *Revolution und Innovation*. Die konfliktreiche Entstehung des schweizerischen Bundesstaates von 1848, Zurich 1998, p. 271–277; Andreas Suter, *Direkte Demokratie. – historische Reflexionen zur aktuellen Debatte*, in: Benjamin Adler, *Die Entstehung der direkten Demokratie*. Das Beispiel der Landsgemeinde Schwyz 1789–1866, Zurich 2006, p. 219–278.

<sup>47</sup> The following works on individual cantons emerged from a Swiss National Science Foundation project launched by Dr Andreas Suter and Dr Martin Schaffner: Adler, *Die Entstehung der direkten Demokratie*. Das Beispiel der Landsgemeinde Schwyz; Marco Arni, *Die katholische Opposition im aargauischen Verfassungsstreit*, thesis University of Zurich 2002 (typewritten); Ivo Berther, *Il mund sutura – Die Welt steht Kopf*. Alpine Peripherie und Moderne am Beispiel der Landsgemeinde Disentis 1790–1900 (Quellen und Forschungen zur Bündner Geschichte, vol. 25), Chur 2011; Bruno Wickli, *Politische Kultur und die reine Demokratie*. Verfassungskämpfe und ländliche Volksbewegungen im Kanton St. Gallen 1814 und 1831/32 (St. Galler Kultur und Geschichte, 35), St. Gallen 2006; in addition to the following studies: Marc H. Lerner, *A Laboratory of Liberty*. The Transformation of Political Culture in Republican Switzerland 1790–1848 (Studies in Central European Histories, vol. LIV), Leiden, Boston 2012; René Roca, *Wenn die Volkssouveränität wirklich eine Wahrheit werden soll... Die schweizerische direkte Demokratie in Theorie und Praxis – Das Beispiel des Kantons Luzern* (Schriften zur Demokratieforschung, vol. 6), Zurich, Basel, Geneva 2012; Barbara Weinmann, *Eine andere Bürgergesellschaft*. Klassischer Republikanismus im Kanton Zürich im späten 18. und 19. Jahrhundert (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 153), Göttingen 2002.

democratic-assembly procedures, and a rupture exists with regard to the understanding of freedom. A concept of freedom based on natural law is seen as a basic prerequisite for the democracy movements of the 19th century. This leads to the following findings:

- The national conservative interpretation of the emergence of semi-direct democracy as an organic development that inevitably led from pre-modern *Landsgemeinden* to modern referendum democracy cannot be upheld.
- The liberal master narrative, which constructs a line of continuity stretching from the liberals to the radicals to the democrats, must also be questioned. Popular rights had to be fought for against the resistance of the liberal and sometimes conservative elites. This dichotomy between the people and the elites is of great importance for the interpretation of the democracy movements. However, recent works have repeatedly warned against hypostatizing the concept of the people. The people is not a homogeneous entity, but consists of mature actors with the power to act who pursue specific interests.<sup>48</sup>
- The assertion of 'popular rights' is therefore the result of a conflictual process. The bearers of the democracy movements of the 19th century were the rural population. In the mixed-confessional cantons of eastern Switzerland, it was mainly the Catholic part of the population. In the cantons of western Switzerland, such as Vaud, a different constellation of conflicts was significant: the opposition between liberals and radicals. This development dynamic led to the early establishment of the legislative referendum and the popular initiative in Vaud.
- The actors of the democracy movements were able to draw on a culture of protest and resistance that extended into the early modern period. Because the Peasants' War of 1653 put a stop to the beginnings of an absolutist expansion of the state within the confederacy, there were no financial resources to build up a standing army ready for action.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to foreign princely courts, the authorities in the Confederation had less potential for repression. For the suppression of the uprisings, they had to rely on the 'domestic militias' and the loyalty of part of their own population.
- In this resistance, it was especially the losers of the economic modernisation advanced by the liberals who distinguished themselves. These plebeian elements gave the movement a rebellious dynamic by combining participatory and material demands.<sup>50</sup>
- For the demand for participation, the *Landsgemeinde* was the most important political reference model. Responsible for this was, on the one hand, the collective memory of the *Landsgemeinde* conflicts in the 18th century. Popular opposition to the oligarchs demanded the revitalisation of the *Landsgemeinde*.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the communalist, cooperative culture of autonomy created by the weak development of

<sup>48</sup> On the polysemy of the concept of the people, see Martin Schaffner, *Furcht vor dem Volk?*, in: *Werkstatt Geschichte* 49 (2008), p. 33-49.

<sup>49</sup> Andreas Suter, *Der schweizerische Bauernkrieg von 1653. Politische Sozialgeschichte. Sozialgeschichte eines politischen Ereignisses (Frühneuzeit Forschungen, vol. 3)*, Tübingen 1997, p. 580.

<sup>50</sup> See Rolf Graber, "Der verruchte, alles ekelhaftmachende Sansculottismus." *Plebejische Protestbewegungen als Wegbereiter einer Fundamentaldemokratisierung*, in: Roca, Auer (ed.), *Wege zur direkten Demokratie in den schweizerischen Kantonen*, p. 247-263.

<sup>51</sup> Fabian Brändle, *Nicht "Degeneration" sondern Revitalisierung. Die Landsgemeindekonflikte des 18. Jahrhunderts und das Werden der modernen Schweiz*, in: *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, vol. 40 (2013), no. 4, p. 593-621; *idem*, *Demokratie und Charisma. Fünf Landsgemeindekonflikte im 18. Jahrhundert*, Zurich 2005.

the state created favourable conditions for the reception of this model. In the Helvetic Republic period, it was additionally enriched with utopian and natural law ideas.

- There is no direct line from the veto movements of the 1830s and 1840s to the democratic movement of the 1860s. In addition to the autochthonous developments, foreign political impulses were once again important. Leaders such as Karl Bürkli were influenced by early socialist ideas.<sup>52</sup>
- In contrast to older research, more recent studies increasingly emphasise the deficits in the development of Swiss democracy, such as the late introduction of women's voting rights and suffrage; the long exclusion of ethnic minorities, the poor and social outsiders; the long periods of emergency legislation; and the hesitant political inclusion of migrants, which has currently led to a quarter of the adult resident population having no voting rights but paying taxes in Switzerland. These deficits show that direct democracy, as the supposedly most progressive variant of democratic development, is always an unfinished project.

### 3.3.5 Problematisation of nationally constituted popular sovereignty: the analytical concept of post-democracy

In order to overcome deficits such as patriarchal or ethnonational logics of exclusion, pressure from outside has always been necessary. This shows the limits of direct democracy based on the nation state. Realising this problem has led Swiss historians to examine the concept of post-democracy. This term, introduced by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière and popularised by the British political scientist Colin Crouch, addresses the impotence of nationally organised popular sovereignty in the face of globally operating international corporations and transnationally organised forms of media manipulation.<sup>53</sup> According to Crouch, democracy is degenerating into a sham democracy, and political actors and institutions are suffering a loss of legitimacy. In his much acclaimed farewell lecture, the historian Jakob Tanner dealt with the analytical concept of post-democracy from a Swiss perspective.<sup>54</sup> He comes to the conclusion that Switzerland has always functioned post-democratically or, in some respects, pre-democratically. The blockades and deficits caused by national referendums were only overcome through international pressure. He posits that the nation-state of Switzerland has always had a transnational history as well. Moreover, current problem areas such as peacekeeping, migration and environmental policy or banking and labour market regulation can only be solved at the transnational level. Therefore, he argues for overcoming the nation-state limitation of popular sovereignty, but 'in a more complex form than the mere continuation of the EU would suggest'. He refers to a concept of 'demoicracy' developed at the University of Zurich, which attempts to 'integrate nation-state demoi into a European decision-making matrix and at the same time test local, urban and regional models of a political shaping of society.'<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Hans-Ulrich Schiedt, *Die Welt neu erfinden. Karl Bürkli (1823–1901) und seine politischen Schriften*, Zurich 2001, p. 71 f.

<sup>53</sup> Colin Crouch, *Postdemokratie*, Frankfurt 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Jakob Tanner, *Von der Volkssouveränität zur Postdemokratie?*. Zur transnationalen Geschichte von Nationalstaaten. Farewell lecture on 29 May 2015. <http://www.denknetz.ch>

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Original: '*nationalstaatlich verfasste Demoi in eine europäische Entscheidungsmatrix einzubeziehen und zugleich lokale, urbane und regionale Modelle einer politischen Gestaltung der Gesellschaft zu erproben.*'

## 3.4 Current citizens' debate

### 3.4.1 Perspectives in Switzerland

Works that attempt to relate the history of the development of semi-direct democracy to the citizens' debate in Switzerland have been largely lacking until now. One exception is the essay 'Genese der direkten Demokratie – Aktuelle Debatten und wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse' (Genesis of Direct Democracy – Current Debates and Academic Results) by the historian Andreas Suter.<sup>56</sup> It is based on an NZZ blog titled 'NZZ Votum Europa Debatte' from summer 2010. The analysis of the posts is intended to reveal 'widespread attitudes, fears and hopes, discursive strategies and patterns of argumentation' that are common among Swiss citizens. The essay opens with the following letter to the editor: *'The peoples of Europe only need to be given a taste of direct democracy, and they need to be given a taste strong enough for them to transform their countries politically. Since the EU and democracy are not compatible, the EU will fizzle out. Then we'll have a Europe of democracies, and Switzerland will no longer be the only democracy on the planet.'*<sup>57</sup> Suter identifies four patterns of argumentation on the basis of the letters to the editor<sup>58</sup>:

1. Greater integration of Switzerland is seen as a threat to direct democracy. The automatic adoption of EU law is interpreted as an attack on sovereignty and direct democracy: *'For us, only one of the two will be available in the future. Either we continue with tried and tested direct democracy in its present form, or we give it – democracy – up and join the EU, thereby subjecting ourselves to its laws and treaties,'* says one reader.<sup>59</sup>
2. Many contributions assume a fundamental incompatibility of the political cultures of Switzerland and the EU or EU states. They describe direct democracy as the only true and possible form; representative forms are considered undemocratic and elitist.
3. The fight for the preservation of direct democracy is seen as a historic mission of Swiss citizens. The certainty of success is legitimised using historical experience: *'It's about believing and trusting, and a few hundred years of history prove us right that Switzerland is the better state-political entity to pursue our interests in the long term.'*<sup>60</sup>
4. Surprisingly, the few supporters of accession who offered their opinions also invoked historical arguments. The history of the emergence of direct democracy provides an example of how Switzerland has always been able to adapt its culture and institutions to changing external conditions. Switzerland is seen as a country of permanent institutional change.

<sup>56</sup> Andreas Suter, Die Genese der direkten Demokratie: aktuelle Debatten und wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse (Teil 1), in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte, vol. 62, issue 3 (2012), p. 456–473.

<sup>57</sup> Roland Moser, Leserbriefbeitrag NZZ Votum Europa-Debatte, 20 July 2010, cited in Suter, Genese, p. 456. Original: *'Die europäischen Völker müssen nur auf den Geschmack der direkten Demokratie gebracht werden und zwar so stark, dass sie ihre Länder politisch umbauen. Da sich die EU und die Demokratie nicht vertragen, wird die EU verpuffen. Dann haben wir ein Europa der Demokratien und die Schweiz ist nicht mehr die alleinige Demokratie auf diesem Planeten.'*

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 457/458.

<sup>59</sup> Walter Kunz, Leserbriefbeitrag NZZ Votum Europa-Debatte, 19 July 2010, cited in Suter, Genese, p. 457.

Original: *'Für uns wird in Zukunft nur eines von beiden zu haben sein. Entweder wir bleiben weiterhin bei der bewährten direkten Demokratie in der heutigen Form. Oder wir geben sie, die Demokratie, auf und treten der EU bei, wodurch wir uns deren Gesetzen und Verträgen unterstellen.'*

<sup>60</sup> Hans Christophel, Leserbriefbeitrag NZZ Votum Europa-Debatte, 20 July 2010, cited in Suter, Genese, p. 458.

Original: *'Es geht darum zu glauben und zu vertrauen und ein paar hundert Jahre Geschichte geben uns Recht, die Schweiz sei das bessere staatspolitische Gebilde, um unsere Interessen langfristig zu verfolgen.'*

Suter confronts these assessments with the research results. In general, he doubts the possibility of drawing guidelines for the present from past experiences and supposed continuities. He points out that direct democracy was not the result of a centuries-long process, but of a contingent rupture. Moreover, he finds the constructed opposition between direct and representative democracy problematic, since he sees both as variations of modern political orders based on the foundations of the Enlightenment and natural law. For this reason, he considers Switzerland's direct democracy neither a superior special case nor a model worthy of imitation.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.4.2 Perspectives in an EU country: the example of Germany

In Germany, impulses for greater citizen participation and interest in the Swiss model come from the political fringes: the right-wing populist and left-green camps. AfD politicians call for 'more democracy based on the Swiss model'.<sup>62</sup> At first glance, this is rather unusual, as this postulate has until now been more a concern of left-wing citizens' initiatives. As Annette Ohme-Reinicke demonstrates, the AfD's demand can be linked to an older tradition. The assembly democracy of the Swiss *Landsgemeinden* served as a model for right-wing thinkers such as Carl Schmitt. As early as 1927, he stressed the importance of democratic procedures such as citizens' petitions and referendums, referring to Switzerland. The most actual activity, ability and function of the people, according to Schmitt, '*the core of every popular expression, the democratic archetypal phenomenon [...] is the acclamation, the approving or disapproving shout of the assembled crowd. The people acclaim a leader [...] they shout up or down, cheer or murmur, beat their arms against a shield, say "amen" to a resolution with any word, or refuse by silence.*' Voting should in no case be conducted in secret, otherwise '*the immediacy of the assembled people [...] would be destroyed by the isolation of the individual voter*'. Such voting procedures are based on a *völkisch* distinction between friend and foe. There is no provision for the formation of judgements on the basis of discussions and debates because, according to Schmitt, these would destroy '*the naturalness of the community*'.<sup>63</sup>

The demand for more democracy remains present even beyond the discussion instigated by right-wing populist parties. As a representative example, we will take a look at the recently published book *Postheroische Demokratiegeschichte* (Post-heroic History of Democracy) by the renowned cultural historian Ute Daniel.<sup>64</sup> By analysing the development of parliamentary democracy in England and Germany, the author shows that the idea that these forms are the result of ancestors' heroic struggles, and that they reflect the aims of those ancestors, requires a thorough revision. In contrast to these pioneers' intentions, the design of the parliamentary system of government in the 19th century was the answer to a concrete problem of political practice at the time. The aim

<sup>61</sup> Andreas Suter, Die Genese der direkten Demokratie: aktuelle Debatten und wissenschaftliche Ergebnisse (Teil 2), in: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte, vol. 63, issue 1 (2013) p. 104–116, in particular p. 112 f.

<sup>62</sup> See Annette Ohme-Reinicke, Ein bisschen Schweiz gefällig, in: Kontext: Wochenzeitung, issue 284, 7. 9. 2016, p. 1–4.

Original: '*mehr Demokratie nach Schweizer Vorbild*'

<sup>63</sup> Carl Schmitt, cited in Ohme-Reinicke, Ein bisschen Schweiz gefällig, p. 3.

Original: '*der Kern jeder volkhaften Äusserung, das demokratische Urphänomen [...] ist die Akklamation, der zustimmende oder ablehnende Zuruf der versammelten Menge. Das Volk akklamiert einem Führer [...] es ruft Hoch oder Nieder, jubelt oder murr, schlägt mit den Waffen an ein Schild, sagt einem Beschluss mit irgendeinem Wort 'Amen' oder verweigert durch Schweigen. [...] die Unmittelbarkeit des versammelten Volkes [...] durch die Isolierung des einzelnen Stimmberechtigten*' "das Naturhafte der Gemeinschaft."

<sup>64</sup> Ute Daniel, *Postheroische Demokratiegeschichte*, Hamburg 2020.

was to produce stable governments, i.e. to bring about coordination between the parliamentary majority and the executive. The impetus for extensions of the right to vote was less due to idealistic motives, but rather a response to the practical political problems of the 19th century. According to the author, this realisation that parliamentary democracy did not stem from the values of the pioneers, but from other objectives, should inform reflections on how to improve the institution in Germany. In addition to Irish citizens' assemblies, she cites the Swiss political system as a model for reform. Thus, direct-democratic elements following the Swiss model could be incorporated into Germany's representative constitution. She emphasises, however, that the Swiss model cannot be arbitrarily transferred to other countries and other times, since the continuing ability to act 'from below' is based on Swiss-specific conditions: the culture of autonomy and the democratic-assembly model of the *Landsgemeinde*. In addition, she points out the danger that direct-democratic instruments such as referendums and initiatives could be abused by party politicians and used for party-political goals.<sup>65</sup> This assessment is realistic, because party-political instrumentalisation alienates popular rights from their actual purpose as an instrument of opposition and an opportunity for minorities to articulate their interests.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 152 f.

### 3.5 Conclusion from the historian's point of view

The research on external perception has shown that both the political order of individual localities and that of the Confederation as a whole were ascribed the attribute 'democratic' and were perceived as special even in the early modern period. Moreover, Switzerland's self-assessment as a republican state made it appear as a special case within the monarchically organised international order. At the same time, the dialectic of virtue and corruption inherent in republics promoted the awareness that revolutions were sometimes necessary in democratic states. This increased the willingness to protest. Switzerland was already one of the countries with the most revolts in Europe in the early modern period. The tradition of revolt and resistance, which remained virulent into the 19th century, led to Switzerland becoming a field of experimentation for expanded forms of participation in that period. Participatory elements were built into individual cantonal constitutions, which were later referred to as 'popular rights'. With the introduction of optional legislative referendums in 1874 and the realisation of the partial revision initiative of 1891, the system of semi-direct democracy became established at the federal level as well.

The opinion poll showed that this political system is highly accepted by Swiss citizens. The citizens of the neighbouring EU states also rate this system positively, and in some cases, even consider it worthy of emulation with a view of democratising the EU. Therefore, the reasons for this positive connotation must be investigated.

It should not be forgotten that implementing these popular rights was an extremely conflictual and violent process. Only uproar and resistance led to a result. With the introduction of initiatives and referendums, this culture of resistance with beatings, hostage-taking, reprimands and punitive rituals gradually became obsolete. Peaceful forms of protest already dominated the democratic movement of the 1860s. With the introduction of popular rights, pre-modern violent resistance was channelled into institutions.<sup>66</sup> Andreas Suter correctly describes direct-democratic instruments as the 'functional equivalent'<sup>67</sup> of popular violence. By helping to reduce violent resistance, popular rights promoted the country's political stability. The historian Caspar Hirschi aptly described them as a 'vaccine against bloody revolts'.<sup>68</sup> The perception of Switzerland as a stable model country also contributes to this positive image. However, realising that the implementation of popular rights was the result of tough disputes leads to the question of the impetus for a democratisation process in the EU countries. If this process were to follow the 'social logic' of the Swiss democracy movements, the initiative could hardly be expected to come from political elites. The prerequisite for a democratisation process would be protest movements that were ignited by current social problems, made concrete demands and at the same time demanded opportunities for participation.

<sup>66</sup> See Rolf Graber, Die Entstehung der direkten Demokratie im Aargau im Kontext der Demokratiebewegungen in anderen Mediationskantonen, in: Béatrice Ziegler, Andreas Glaser (eds.), Direkte Demokratie im Kanton Aargau in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Schriften zur Demokratieforschung 15), Zurich, Basel, Geneva 2020, p. 21-31, in particular p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> Suter, Die Genese der direkten Demokratie (Teil 1), p. 469.

<sup>68</sup> See Caspar Hirschi, Der Protest als Teil der direkten Demokratie, in: NZZ am Sonntag, 7. 10. 2021.

In this context, it must be remembered that demands for more political participation were always connected to material and social postulates. The democracy movements of the 19th century were simultaneously directed against the representative democracy favoured by the liberals, which excluded direct-democratic forms of participation, and against the liberal-capitalist path of modernisation, which left behind losers. This ability to act from below ensured a constant alignment of political ideas and social developments. The combination of thrusts towards democratisation and social reforms is still present in the consciousness of the Swiss population and additionally contributes to the positive perception of direct-democratic foundations.

The aforementioned ability to act from below was clearly better guaranteed with semi-direct democracy than with representative democracy. Popular rights offered effective opportunities for intervention and participation. They fostered the control and limitation of executive and legislative power. Referendums served to maintain the status quo and aimed to prevent unwelcome legislation. In this way, they also indirectly contributed to a higher acceptance of the existing laws and to the legitimacy of state actions. This is shown by the opinion poll's finding that not only the opportunities for participation, but also outcomes and regulations show high approval ratings. In contrast to referendums, initiatives had potential for change.<sup>69</sup> In the period from 1891 to 14 October 2021, 347 initiatives came to fruition. 223 were voted on. A total of 23 were adopted. This corresponds to a success rate of 10.3%.<sup>70</sup> However, it should be noted that even failed initiatives could lead to a counter-proposal and to a change in the status quo, or to partial reforms. A study that includes this option as well arrives at a success rate of 50%.<sup>71</sup> It is particularly noteworthy that among the 23 initiatives adopted, three led to a further expansion or restoration of the direct-democratic system: the introduction of proportional representation in the National Council (1918), the referendum on the state treaty (1921) and the initiative to restore direct democracy (1949).

Finally, it should be noted that republican states tend to seal themselves off from the outside world by only granting citizenship rights to a privileged group. In the old Confederation, this applied both to city republics and to *Landsgemeinde* localities. This 'exclusive' republican tradition continued into the 19th century, in that the poor, the homeless, Jewish people and women remained excluded from citizenship rights for a long time. International impulses were necessary to overcome these exclusions.<sup>72</sup> Only when the trading partners of the United States, France and the Netherlands made the conclusion of trade agreements dependent on granting full freedom of settlement to Jewish people, were the latter granted equality before the courts and the right to vote at the federal and cantonal levels in 1856. The canton of Aargau, where most Jewish people lived, had to be forced to implement these provisions by federal decree. Voting rights and suffrage, which had long been withheld from women, also led to problems with foreign countries. It was only when accession to the Council of Europe was threatened and international pressure to sign the European Convention on Human Rights increased that a rethink began. The external pressure, as well as the mobilisation drive triggered by the women's associations and the new women's movement, resulted in the introduction of

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<sup>69</sup> Bernhard Degen, article: Volksinitiative, in: Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz (HLS), vol. 13.

<sup>70</sup> Figures according to [www.bk.admin.ch/bk/de/home/politische-rechte/volksinitiativen.html](http://www.bk.admin.ch/bk/de/home/politische-rechte/volksinitiativen.html)

<sup>71</sup> Gabriela Rohner, *Die Wirksamkeit von Volksinitiativen im Bund, 1848-2010*, Zurich 2012.

<sup>72</sup> On these impulses, with further references, see Graber, *Demokratie und Revolten*, p. 199.



women's voting rights and suffrage at the federal level in 1971. In this case, too, one canton, Appenzell Innerrhoden, had to be forced to implement the provision.

This shows that the development of semi-direct democracy in Switzerland is a story of exclusion and inclusion. Measured against the universalist claim of human dignity as a realistic utopia of a just society, even the supposedly most progressive variant of democratic development is always an unfinished project that points beyond nation-state manifestations.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Comparison of Switzerland and neighbouring countries

#### 4.1.1 General satisfaction

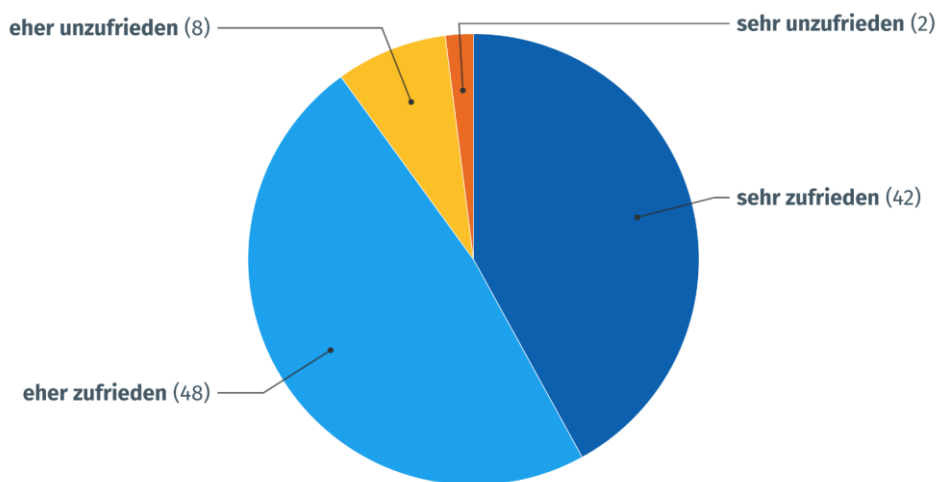
In general, the average Swiss citizen is satisfied with their political system:

Figure 2

#### Zufriedenheit politisches System Schweiz

"In einem ersten Schritt geht es um Ihre Einschätzung des politischen Systems der Schweiz. Wie zufrieden sind Sie generell mit dem politischen System der Schweiz?"

in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung



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Zufriedenheit politisches System Schweiz	Satisfaction with Swiss political system
"In einem ersten Schritt geht es um Ihre Einschätzung des politischen Systems der Schweiz. Wie zufrieden sind Sie generell mit dem politischen System der Schweiz?"	"The first step is about your assessment of the Swiss political system. How satisfied are you in general with the Swiss political system?"
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
eher unzufrieden (8)	somewhat dissatisfied (8)
sehr unzufrieden (2)	very dissatisfied (2)
sehr zufrieden (42)	very satisfied (42)
eher zufrieden (48)	somewhat satisfied (48)
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Ninety per cent of all residents aged 18 and over are more or less decidedly satisfied with the Swiss political system, while a marginal 10% are dissatisfied. This confirms the regularly measured high level of trust of Swiss citizens in Swiss politics, even in

September 2021. However, we do not find enthusiasm across the board: around half of those satisfied are decidedly satisfied, while the other half qualify their favour.

Among party supporters, those of the GLP and The Centre (both 100% very/somewhat satisfied) and the FDP (99%) are the most satisfied. Somewhat less satisfied are sympathisers of the Greens (94%) and the SP (91%). SVP supporters and those not affiliated with a political party are clearly the most dissatisfied, as only 77% and 78% respectively are somewhat or very satisfied with the Swiss political system.

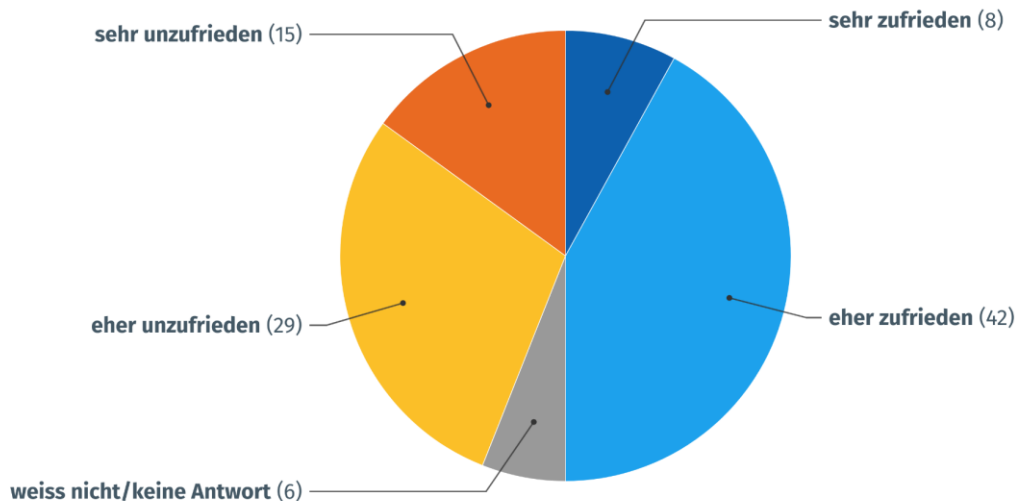
The general satisfaction of EU residents with their political system is visibly different:

Figure 3

### Zufriedenheit politisches System EU

"In einem ersten Schritt geht es um Ihre Einschätzung des politischen Systems der EU. Wie zufrieden sind Sie generell mit dem politischen System der EU?"

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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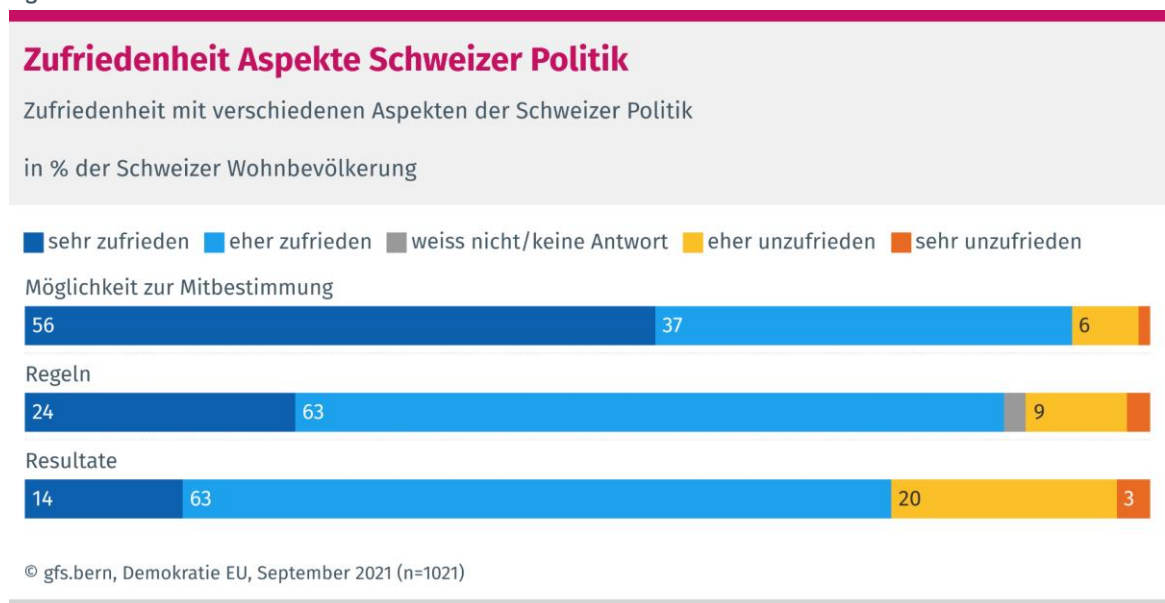
Zufriedenheit politisches System EU	Satisfaction with EU political system
"In einem ersten Schritt geht es um Ihre Einschätzung des politischen Systems der EU. Wie zufrieden sind Sie generell mit dem politischen System der EU?"	"The first step is about your assessment of the EU political system. How satisfied are you in general with the EU political system?"
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
sehr unzufrieden (15)	very dissatisfied (15)
sehr zufrieden (8)	very satisfied (8)
eher unzufrieden (29)	somewhat dissatisfied (29)
eher zufrieden (42)	somewhat satisfied (42)
weiss nicht/keine Antwort (6)	don't know/no response (6)
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A slight majority of 50% of all respondents from neighbouring EU countries are satisfied with the general political system of the EU. Decided satisfaction makes up a clear minority position. Conversely, a minority, albeit a large one, of 44% are somewhat or decidedly dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with the political system thus differs between residents of Switzerland and the neighbouring European countries surveyed, even at a general level: respondents from neighbouring countries are visibly more dissatisfied.

A look at the sub-dimensions of general satisfaction shows where there is room for improvement from the perspective of Swiss respondents:

Figure 4



Zufriedenheit Aspekte Schweizer Politik	Satisfaction with aspects of Swiss politics
Zufriedenheit mit verschiedenen Aspekten der Schweizer Politik in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	Satisfaction with different aspects of Swiss politics in % of the Swiss resident population
sehr zufrieden	very satisfied
eher zufrieden	somewhat satisfied
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufrieden	somewhat dissatisfied
sehr unzufrieden	very dissatisfied
Möglichkeit zur Mitbestimmung	Opportunity for participation
Regeln	Rules
Resultate	Outcomes
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The degree of satisfaction is highest for opportunities for participation, with a share of 93% somewhat/very satisfied. Eighty-seven per cent of Swiss respondents are at least somewhat satisfied with the political rules, although the share of those ‘somewhat satisfied’ at 63% visibly dominates over those who are decidedly satisfied. Evidently, this dimension provides the first indications of where Swiss democracy has shortcomings

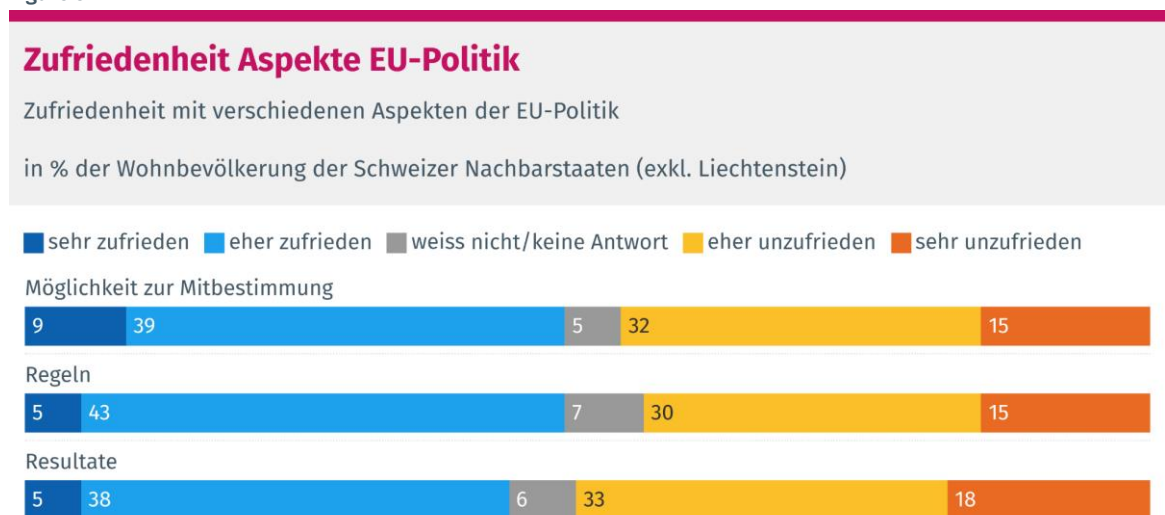
from the perspective of the country’s residents. The greatest dissatisfaction, although still in the minority, is with Swiss policy outcomes. Twenty-three per cent of the residents surveyed are somewhat or very dissatisfied with them. Together with the 63% who are somewhat satisfied, this dimension also indicates deviations from the general satisfaction with the Swiss political system.

When party affinity is taken into account, it becomes apparent that almost all parties have satisfaction values of between 97 and 100% with regard to the opportunities for participation. The only exceptions are the SVP (87% very/somewhat satisfied) and those without party affinity (77%). With regard to political rules, supporters of the GLP, The Centre and the FDP are the most satisfied (94% to 98%), while the GPS (84%), SP (88%) and SVP (86%) have lower satisfaction ratings. Satisfaction is lowest among those without party affinity at 67%. At the output level, sympathisers of the FDP and The Centre are the most satisfied at 89% each, followed by the SVP at 78%. In third place are the GLP and SP, each with 72% somewhat/very satisfied. The most dissatisfied are the GPS (63%) and those without party affinity (56%).

At first glance, this confirms the focus of the current public discourse on democracy. It is apparent that criticism is directed more at system output and less at the systemic justification of this output. The dimension of system participation is most clearly able to rally support, which is not surprising given the strong emphasis on the direct-democratic element in the current public discourse.

In the neighbouring EU countries, satisfaction is visibly lower for all sub-dimensions of democracy:

Figure 5



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte EU-Politik	Satisfaction with aspects of EU politics
Zufriedenheit mit verschiedenen Aspekten der EU-Politik in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	Satisfaction with different aspects of EU politics in % of the resident population of Switzerland’s neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
sehr zufrieden	very satisfied
eher zufrieden	somewhat satisfied
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don’t know/no response

eher unzufrieden	somewhat dissatisfied
sehr unzufrieden	very dissatisfied
Möglichkeit zur Mitbestimmung	Opportunity for participation
Regeln	Rules
Resultate	Outcomes
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 pro Land)	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 per country)

A relative majority of the resident population in the neighbouring countries (48% somewhat or very satisfied) assess the opportunities for participation and the democratic rules positively, whereby residents' uncertainty about the latter (7% don't know/no response) is slightly higher than with regard to the other dimensions. A (slight) majority of 51% are somewhat or very dissatisfied with outcomes, while 43% of the residents surveyed are somewhat or very satisfied.

#### 4.1.2 Satisfaction with opportunities for participation

In terms of concrete opportunities for participation in Switzerland, residents are most satisfied with the ability to vote on laws and constitutional amendments, political initiatives from the ranks of the population and the opportunity to adjust party lists in parliamentary elections:

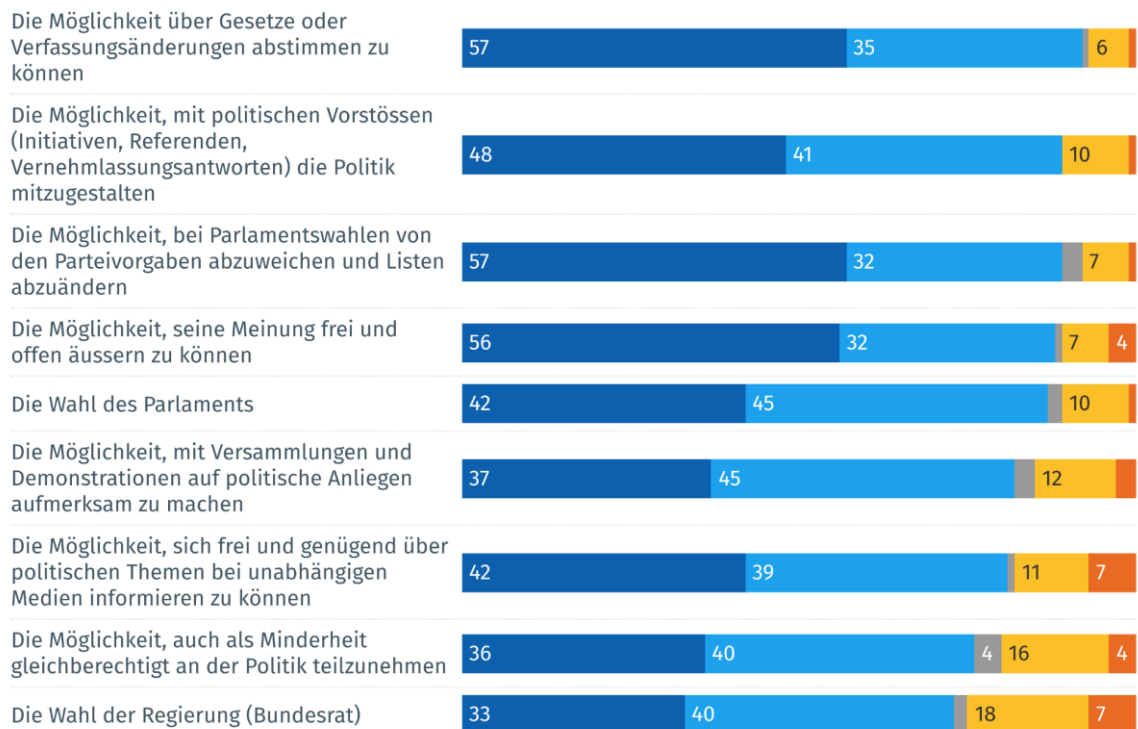
Figure 6

### Zufriedenheit Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung

"In der Schweiz gibt es verschiedene Formen von Mitbestimmung bei der Schweizer Politik. Wie zufriedenstellend sind aus Ihrer Sicht die folgenden Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung in der Schweiz gelöst?"

in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung

■ sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst ■ eher zufriedenstellend gelöst ■ weiss nicht/keine Antwort ■ eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst ■ sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung	Satisfaction with aspects of political participation
"In der Schweiz gibt es verschiedene Formen von Mitbestimmung bei der Schweizer Politik. Wie zufriedenstellend sind aus Ihrer Sicht die folgenden Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung in der Schweiz gelöst?"	'In Switzerland, there are various forms of participation in Swiss politics. In your view, how satisfactory are the solutions to the following opportunities for political participation in Switzerland?'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst	very unsatisfactory
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments

Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Wahl des Parlaments	The election of parliament
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Wahl der Regierung (Bundesrat)	The election of the government (Federal Council)
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However, the differences between the various opportunities for political participation are not very great: each individual participation option enjoys relatively high majority support from Swiss residents. Dissatisfaction, even if a minority position, relates primarily to the election of the Federal Council (25% somewhat/very dissatisfied), political participation by minorities (20%) and the forming of opinions with the help of independent media (18%).

Across all parties and among those without party affinity, it can be seen that the election of the Federal Council is a source of dissatisfaction, as the percentages of very/somewhat satisfactory are lower compared to other opportunities for participation, at 49% to 84%. For all parties, with the exception of the SVP and those without party affinity, there are also lower satisfaction ratings for the political participation of minorities. SVP supporters and those without party affinity are particularly dissatisfied with assemblies and demonstrations (70% and 51% respectively) and the independent forming of opinions (66% and 43% respectively).



Figure 7



Einfluss konkreter Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten auf die allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit politischer Mitbestimmung in der Schweiz	Influence of concrete opportunities for participation on general satisfaction with political participation in Switzerland
Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	Swiss resident population
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit politischer Mitbestimmung"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with political participation'
Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit politischer Mitbestimmung"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with political participation'
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n=1021); Erklärungsgrad: 24%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n=1021); explanatory power: 24%
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Wahl des Parlaments	The election of parliament
Die Wahl der Regierung (Bundesrat)	The election of the government (Federal Council)
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly

**EXPLANATION:** The linear regression method used describes the presence of the influence of independent variables (in decreasing order) on a dependent variable. The colour can be used to distinguish whether an element contributed more to satisfaction (blue) or dissatisfaction (orange). R2 is a coefficient of determination that indicates the explained proportion of the variance of the dependent variables by all independent variables in the model: the closer the value is to 1, the greater the explanatory power of the model. Elements that do not appear in the figure have no influence.

Not all individual elements are equally opinion-forming for general satisfaction with political participation in Switzerland. It comes as no surprise that satisfaction with political participation in Switzerland is more strongly influenced by satisfaction with the opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments. Equally opinion-forming is satisfaction with the opportunity to inform oneself freely about political topics through independent media. Both are viewed positively by the Swiss population and demonstrably lead directly to a generally positive image of political participation. Equal political participation for minorities, the election of the government and parliament and freedom of expression fundamentally reinforce this generally positive view. Conversely, this also provides indications of marginal dissatisfaction with political participation in Switzerland: those who express particular difficulty in being able to inform themselves freely through independent media, those who feel that minorities are not sufficiently involved and those who criticise the current method of electing the government are more likely to have a critical view. Since these are only a few people, the result is that criticism of political participation is clearly a minority position.

In the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**, the majority of the population is only satisfied with a portion of the opportunities for participation:

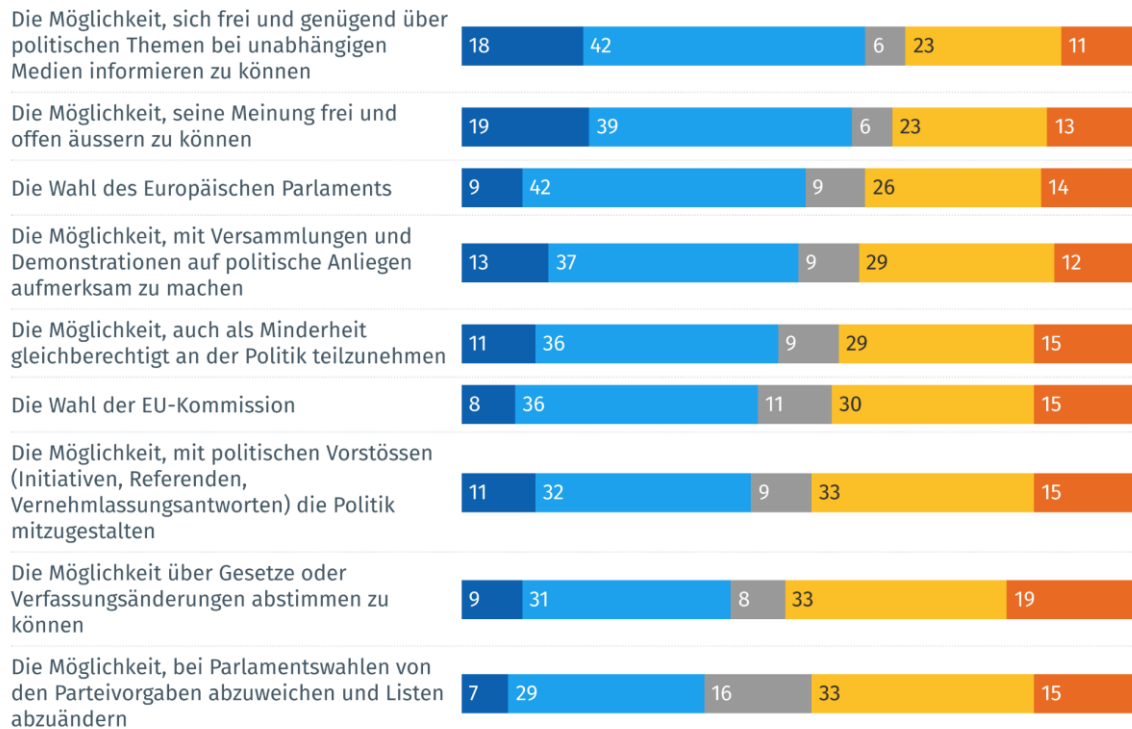
Figure 8

### Zufriedenheit Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU

"In der Europäischen Union gibt es verschiedene Formen von Mitbestimmung bei der Politik. Wie zufriedenstellend sind aus Ihrer Sicht die folgenden Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung in der EU gelöst?"

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)

■ sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst ■ eher zufriedenstellend gelöst ■ weiss nicht/keine Antwort ■ eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst ■ sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU	Satisfaction with aspects of political participation in the EU
"In der Europäischen Union gibt es verschiedene Formen von Mitbestimmung bei der Politik. Wie zufriedenstellend sind aus Ihrer Sicht die folgenden Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung in der EU gelöst?"	'In the European Union, there are various forms of participation in politics. In your view, how satisfactory are the solutions to the following opportunities for political participation in the EU?'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst	very unsatisfactory
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media

Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Wahl des Europäischen Parlaments	The election of the European Parliament
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Wahl der EU-Kommission	The election of the European Commission
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists

A majority of respondents are satisfied with the free forming of opinions through independent media (60% somewhat/very satisfactory), freedom of expression (58%) and the election of the European Parliament (51%). The opportunity to engage in political demonstrations polarises residents, as only 50% of respondents tend to be satisfied with it. Dissatisfaction can be found above all with changing election lists (48% somewhat/very unsatisfactory), referendums at the legislative or constitutional level (52%), political initiatives (48%), election of the European Commission (45%) and participation for minorities (44%).

Significantly, we find noticeable differences in the impact of these elements on overall satisfaction with political participation:

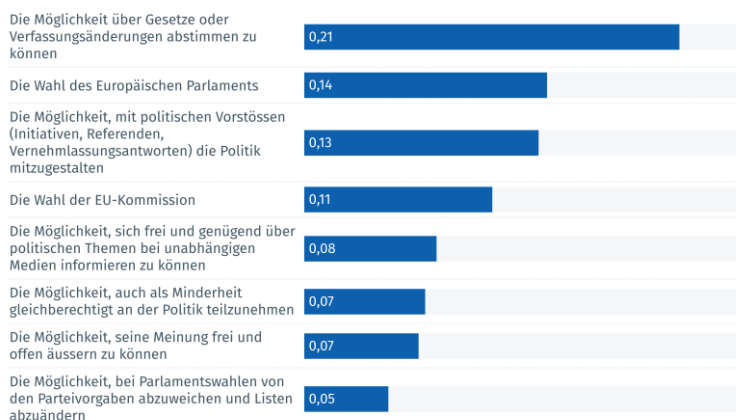
Figure 9

## Einfluss konkreter Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten auf allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten in EU

Wohnbevölkerung der Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)

Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit Regeln EU-Politik"

Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit Regeln EU-Politik"



© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 pro Land); Erklärungsgrad: 43%

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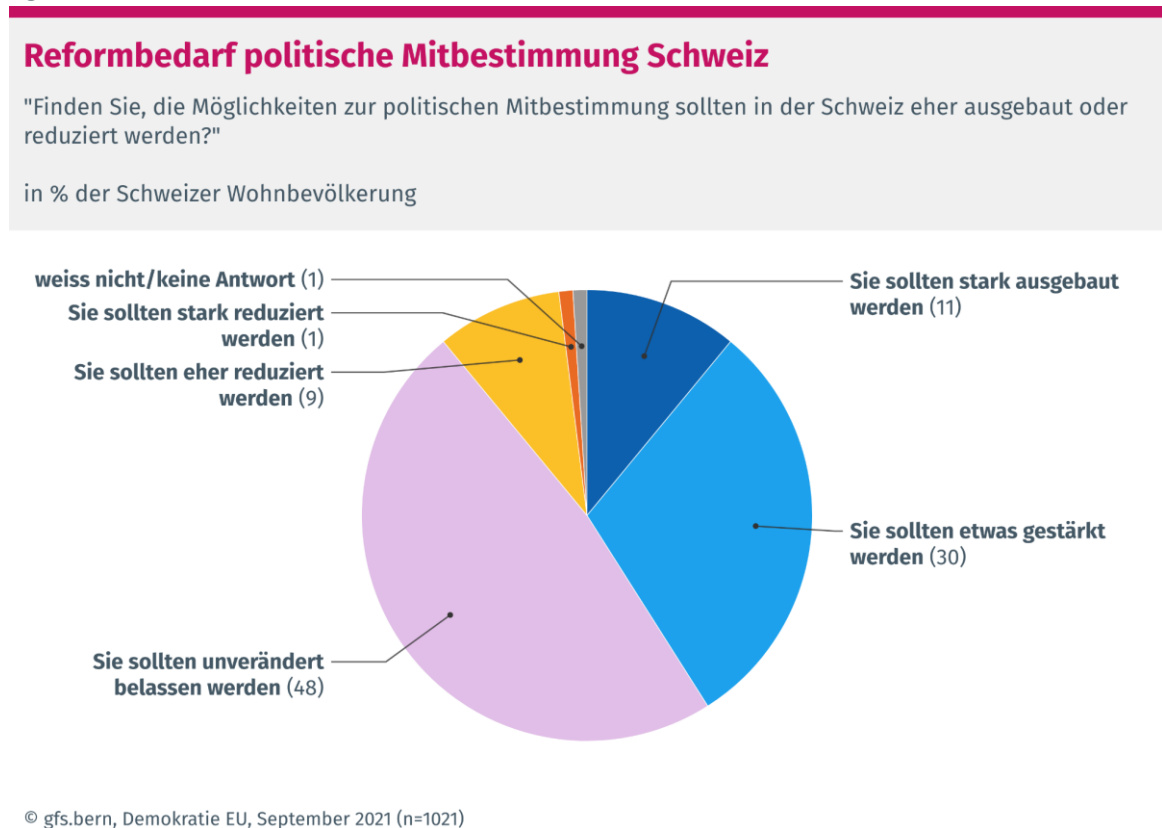
Einfluss konkreter Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten auf allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten in EU	Influence of concrete opportunities for participation on general satisfaction with opportunities for participation in the EU
Wohnbevölkerung der Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	Resident population of neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit Regeln EU-Politik"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with the rules of EU politics'
Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit Regeln EU-Politik"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with the rules of EU politics'
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 pro Land); Erklärungsgrad: 43%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 per country); explanatory power: 43%
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Wahl des Europäischen Parlaments	The election of the European Parliament
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Wahl der EU-Kommission	The election of the European Commission
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists

This general satisfaction is visibly influenced the most by the assessment of the possibility to vote on laws and constitutional amendments. This means that a single aspect which, in the view of a majority of EU respondents, has not been satisfactorily resolved, has by far the greatest impact on opinion.

### 4.1.3 Need for reform of political participation

Almost half of Swiss residents (48%) would like to see the opportunities for participation left as they are at present:

Figure 10



Reformbedarf politische Mitbestimmung Schweiz	Need for reform of political participation in Switzerland
"Finden Sie, die Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung sollten in der Schweiz eher ausgebaut oder reduziert werden?"	'Do you think the opportunities for political participation in Switzerland should be expanded or reduced?'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
weiss nicht/keine Antwort (1)	don't know/no response (1)
Sie sollten stark reduziert werden (1)	They should be greatly reduced (1)
Sie sollten eher reduziert werden (9)	They should be somewhat reduced (9)
Sie sollten stark ausgebaut werden (11)	They should be greatly expanded (11)
Sie sollten etwas gestärkt werden (30)	They should be somewhat strengthened (30)
Sie sollten unverändert belassen werden (48)	They should be left unchanged (48)
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Among the residents who see a need for reform with regard to political participation, the majority are in favour of extending such opportunities. Accordingly, 41% of respondents would like to see a more or less pronounced expansion, while 11% are firmly in favour of strong expansion.

In terms of party affinity, it is particularly those without one (58% somewhat strengthened/greatly expanded), Green sympathisers (52%) and SVP sympathisers (50%) who are in favour of expansion. The desire for expansion is lowest among The Centre (19%) and FDP (22%), while the GLP positions itself in between the two poles at 27%.

Overall, there is a relative majority of people who desire the status quo, but also many who see a rather significant need for expansion. Those who wish to reduce these opportunities are a visibly minority and their wishes are decidedly not at the centre of the current discussion.

Figure 11



Einfluss konkreter Mitbestimmungsmöglichkeiten auf den Reformbedarf der politischen Mitbestimmung in der Schweiz	Influence of concrete opportunities for participation on the need for reform of political participation in Switzerland
Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	Swiss resident population
Blau: Richtung "sollte ausgebaut werden" Orange: Richtung "sollte reduziert werden"	Blue: tendency towards 'should be expanded' Orange: tendency towards 'should be reduced'
Die Wahl der Regierung (Bundesrat)	The election of the government (Federal Council)
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstössen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations

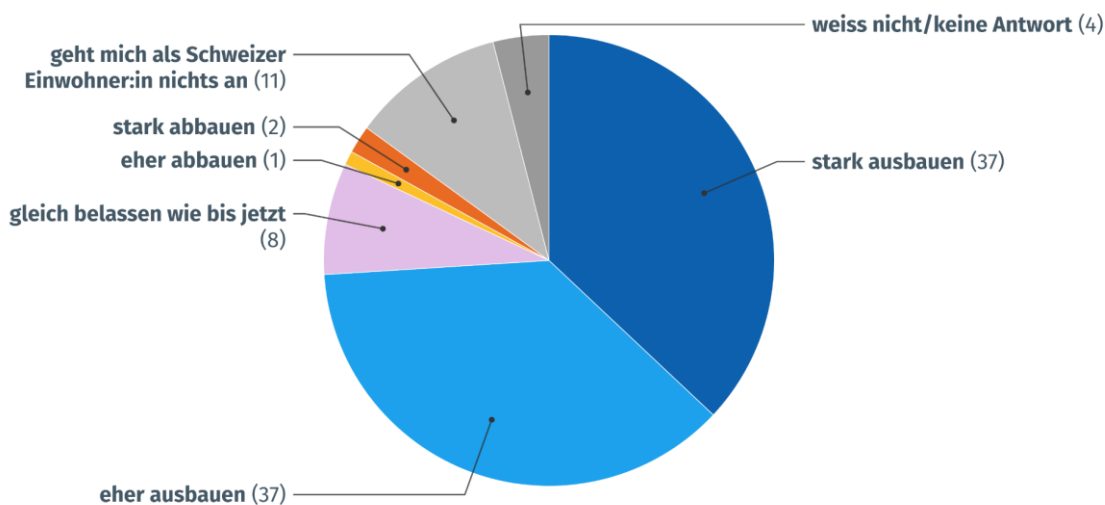
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Wahl des Parlaments	The election of parliament
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In particular, the content of the wishes for expansion is not surprising. These wishes particularly relate to questions concerning the election of the Federal Council, the participation of minorities and the opportunity to inform oneself freely through independent media. Those who are particularly concerned with such issues are more likely to wish for an expansion. The marginally existing desire for reduction, on the other hand, goes hand in hand with occasional criticism of the direct-democratic instruments.

With regard to the opportunities for participation in the European Union, the average Swiss citizen attests to a significantly greater need for expansion:

Figure 12

**Reformbedarf politische Mitbestimmung EU**  
 "Ganz generell, was ist Ihr Eindruck, soll die Europäische Union die eigenen Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung..."  
 in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung



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Reformbedarf politische Mitbestimmung EU	Need for reform of political participation in the EU
--	--



"Ganz generell, was ist Ihr Eindruck, soll die Europäische Union die eigenen Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung..."	'In general, what is your impression: should the European Union expand its own opportunities for political participation?'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
geht mich als Schweizer Einwohnerin nichts an (11)	none of my business as a Swiss resident (11)
stark abbauen (2)	greatly reduce (2)
eher abbauen (1)	somewhat reduce (1)
gleich belassen wie bis jetzt (8)	leave it the way it is now (8)
weiss nicht/keine Antwort (4)	don't know/no response (4)
stark ausbauen (37)	greatly expand (37)
eher ausbauen (37)	somewhat expand (37)
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Seventy-four per cent of Swiss residents would somewhat or even greatly expand opportunities for political participation in the EU. Eleven per cent are of the opinion that it is none of their business as residents of Switzerland. Eight per cent would prefer the status quo, while only 3% would consider a reduction.

When party sympathies are taken into account, it becomes apparent that an expansion of political participation rights in the EU is primarily demanded by the left-wing parties (between 83 and 86% somewhat/greatly expand). Among SVP supporters and those without party affinity, only 60% call for an expansion of opportunities for participation in the EU.

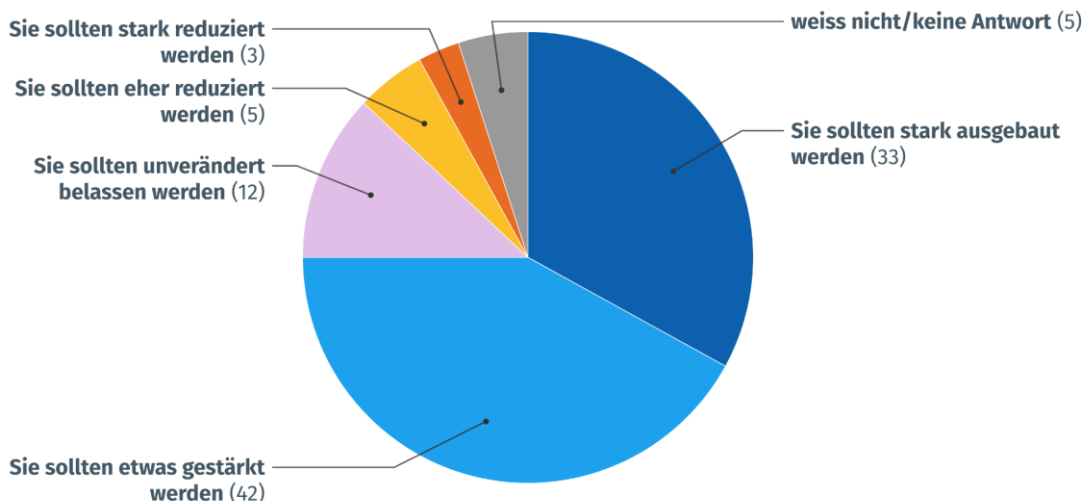
In neighbouring countries themselves, 75% of the residents surveyed would like to expand opportunities of political participation more or less decidedly:

Figure 13

### Reformbedarf Mitbestimmung EU-Politik

"Finden Sie, die Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung sollten in der Europäischen Union eher ausgebaut oder reduziert werden?"

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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Reformbedarf Mitbestimmung EU-Politik	Need for reform of participation in EU politics
"Finden Sie, die Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung sollten in der Europäischen Union eher ausgebaut oder reduziert werden?"	'Do you think the opportunities for political participation should be increased or reduced in the European Union?'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
Sie sollten stark reduziert werden (3)	They should be greatly reduced (3)
Sie sollten eher reduziert werden (5)	They should be somewhat reduced (5)
Sie sollten unverändert belassen werden (12)	They should be left unchanged (12)
weiss nicht/keine Antwort (5)	don't know/no response (5)
Sie sollten stark ausgebaut werden (33)	They should be greatly expanded (33)
Sie sollten etwas gestärkt werden (42)	They should be somewhat expanded (42)
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One in three respondents would like to see a strong expansion, while 12% would like to maintain the status quo. Only 8% would like to see a reduction in the opportunities for participation. It is noteworthy that the assessments of the Swiss and EU populations are very similar in this respect.

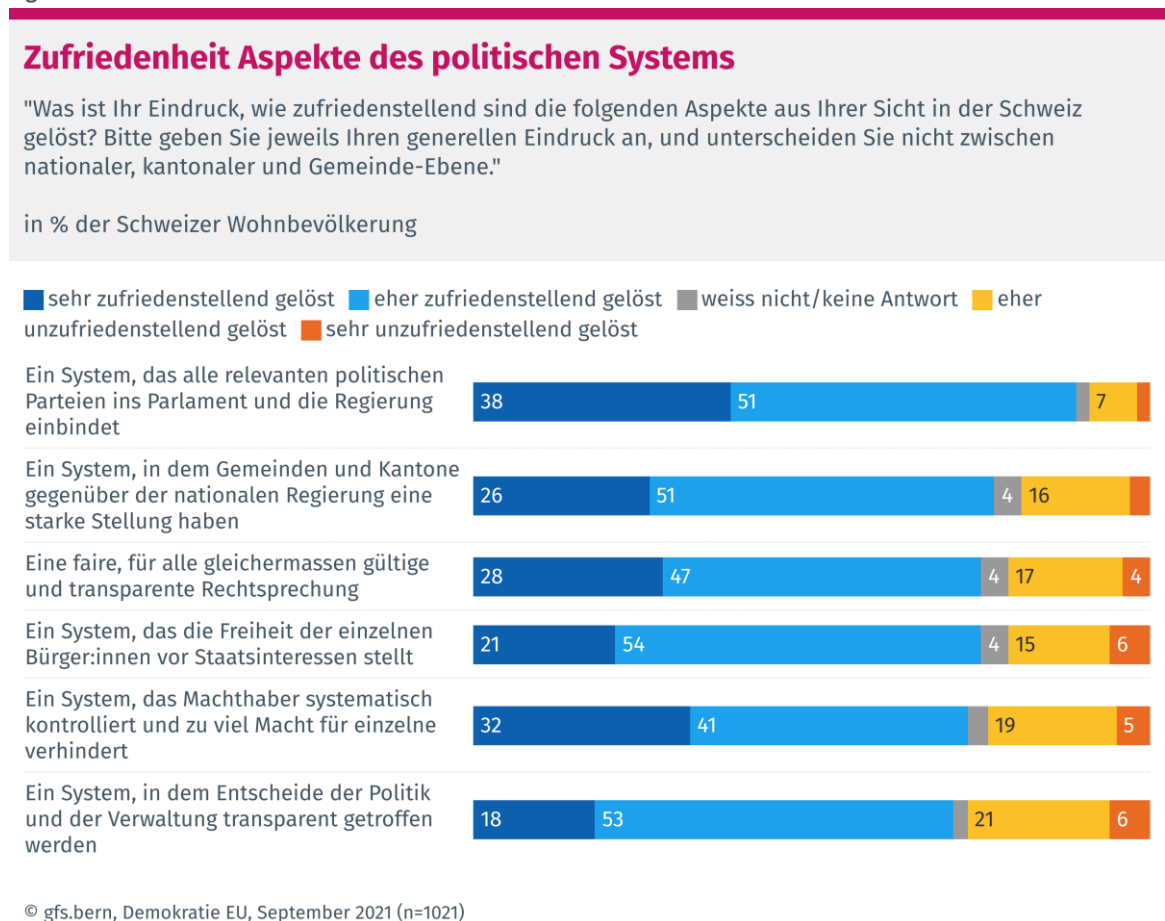
All in all, based on this first dimension of democracy (participation), which from the Swiss point of view is the most satisfactory, it is clear that development is by no means complete according to the residents concerned. In Switzerland, the desire for an

expansion of political participation may not be a majority position, but it is certainly a large one. In neighbouring EU countries, however, this desire for more political participation is more pronounced.

#### 4.1.4 Rules of the political system

The Swiss population is generally well disposed towards the Swiss political system and the rules associated with it, even if the overall level of approval is lower than with regard to the elements of participation:

Figure 14



Zufriedenheit Aspekte des politischen Systems	Satisfaction with aspects of the political system
"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Schweiz gelöst? Bitte geben Sie jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen nationaler, kantonaler und Gemeinde-Ebene."	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the solutions to the following aspects in Switzerland? Please indicate your general impression in each case, and do not distinguish between national, cantonal and municipal levels.'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst	very unsatisfactory

Ein System, das alle relevanten politischen Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Kantone gegenüber der nationalen Regierung eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and cantons have a strong position vis-à-vis the national government
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürger: innen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
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For a clear majority, the solutions to all system-relevant aspects are somewhat or very satisfactory. The highest level of satisfaction is achieved by the integration of all relevant political forces in parliament and government (89% somewhat/very satisfactory). It appears that this reference to Swiss consociation also manages to stand out slightly from the other dimensions (political participation and outcomes) in the perception of the population. The rules of Swiss democracy seem to be favourably associated with consociation from the respondents' point of view.

Taking party affinity into account, it becomes clear that transparent decision-making has lower satisfaction values among all party supporters. Satisfaction with checks on power is particularly low among Green Party sympathisers (57%). The prioritisation of civil liberties over the interests of the state leads to a comparatively lower level of satisfaction, especially among non-party supporters (43%) and supporters of the GLP (80%), the FDP (82%) and the SVP (67%).

Satisfaction with the position of the municipalities and cantons vis-à-vis the federal government (77%) and with the fair and transparent administration of justice (75%) comes in second place. The highest level of dissatisfaction, albeit in the minority, is with the transparency of decisions by politics and the administration (27% somewhat/very unsatisfactory), the distribution of power (24%) and the relationship between civil liberties and state interests (21%). Since the latter three dimensions are being discussed intensively in the context of the current Covid-19 situation, a certain situational momentum towards dissatisfaction cannot be ruled out.

In this respect as well, not all individual aspects lead directly to (dis)satisfaction with the democratic rules in Switzerland:

Figure 15



Einfluss von konkreten Regeln auf die allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit den Regeln der EU-Politik	Influence of concrete rules on general satisfaction with the rules of EU politics
Wohnbevölkerung der Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	Resident population of neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with participation in EU politics'
Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with participation in EU politics'
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürger:innen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 pro Land); Erklärungsgrad: 44%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 per country); explanatory power: 44%

The most opinion-forming assessment is whether individual freedom takes precedence over state interests in Switzerland, followed by the desire for federalism and consociation in parliaments. This means that the majority of Swiss residents not only appreciate the central pillars of the Swiss democratic system; these pillars also form the basis of their general satisfaction with the system.

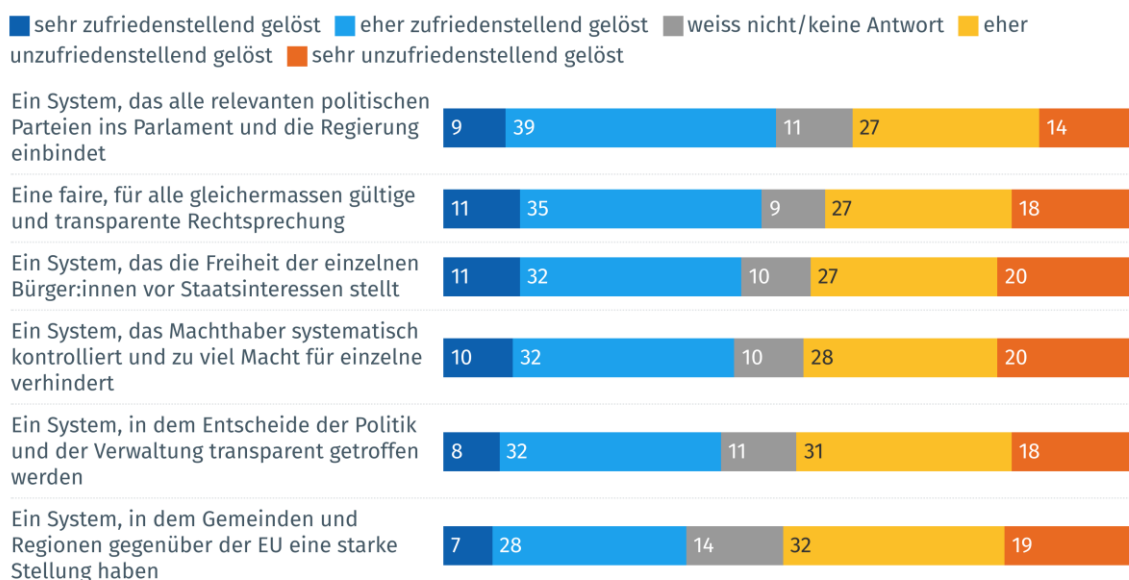
With regard to the political system of the EU, the residents of the neighbouring countries are divided, with a slight tendency towards dissatisfaction:

Figure 16

### Zufriedenheit Aspekte des politischen Systems EU

"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union gelöst? Bitte geben Sie jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte des politischen Systems EU	Satisfaction with aspects of the EU political system
"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union gelöst? Bitte geben Sie jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the solutions to the following aspects in European Union? Please indicate your general impression in each case, and do not distinguish between European, national and regional levels.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst	very unsatisfactory

Ein System, das alle relevanten politischen Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürgerinnen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
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None of the system elements surveyed shows an absolute majority for satisfaction. The resident population is comparatively most satisfied with the involvement of all political forces in parliament and government (48% somewhat/very satisfactory), the administration of justice (46%) and the prioritisation of civil liberties over state interests (43%). Dissatisfaction is highest regarding the position of municipalities and regions vis-à-vis the EU (51% somewhat/very unsatisfactory), transparent decision-making (49%) and the prevention of accumulation of power (48%).

Once again, there are exciting nuances in the opinions of EU citizens:

Figure 17



Einfluss von konkreten Regeln auf die allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit den Regeln der EU-Politik	Influence of concrete rules on general satisfaction with the rules of EU politics
Wohnbevölkerung der Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	Resident population of neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with participation in EU politics'
Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with participation in EU politics'
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 pro Land); Erklärungsgrad: 44%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n= ca. 1000 per country); explanatory power: 44%
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürger:innen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power



(Dis)satisfaction with democratic rules is not based on the overriding importance of individual freedom or federalism, but on the parliamentary involvement of all relevant political forces and fairness and transparency in the administration of justice and lawmaking. It appears that indirect democracy leads to the system being judged a bit less positively on individual benefit and a little more positively on involvement of powers and transparency. In Europe, these elements are also the reason for increased dissatisfaction with the system.

#### 4.1.5 Outcomes of the political system

As already noted in the general observation, the largest gaps in the satisfaction of the Swiss population are found in the output dimension. However, a majority of the Swiss population is also satisfied with all aspects of this dimension:

Figure 18



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Zufriedenheit Resultate der Schweizer Politik	Satisfaction with outcomes of Swiss policy
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"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Schweiz? Bitte geben Sie auch hier jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen nationaler, kantonaler und Gemeinde-Ebene."	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the following aspects in Switzerland? Here too, please indicate your general impression in each case, and do not distinguish between national, cantonal and municipal levels.'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
sehr zufriedenstellend	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend	very unsatisfactory
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die Schweizer Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the Swiss economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Der Umgang der Politik in der Schweiz mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Switzerland
Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürgerinnen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürgerinnen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Die Fähigkeit der Politik in der Schweiz zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in Switzerland to solve the major problems of our time
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The resident population of Switzerland is most satisfied with the guarantee of law and order (88% somewhat/very satisfied), the protection of human rights (85%), the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (85%) and the economic conditions (79%).

Across all party sympathies and those without one, satisfaction is lower on average, especially with regard to problem-solving ability. Another point of criticism for everyone, with the exception of the SP (85%), is the simplicity and comprehensibility of laws (between 44% and 74%). With regard to Covid policy, the lowest percentages of satisfaction were found among the those without party affinity (49%), SVP supporters

(61%) and Green sympathisers (70%). The most satisfied with the citizen-oriented use of tax money are supporters of The Centre (81%) and the FDP (84%).

Dissatisfaction is somewhat higher with the protection of minorities (24% dissatisfaction), the handling of the coronavirus pandemic (27% dissatisfaction), the role of the state administration as a service provider (27%) and the benefit created by taxpayers' money (30%). The biggest problems from the point of view of the average Swiss citizen are the ability to solve the problems of modern times (46% somewhat/very unsatisfactory) and comprehensibly worded laws (43%). In both cases, there is a dissatisfied minority, but by no means a negligible one, which is certainly worth addressing from a democratic policy perspective.

Significantly, the output of the Swiss political system is judged first and foremost on its ability to solve major problems and only secondarily on the benefits it provides to citizens, respect for human rights and the guarantee of law and order:

Figure 19



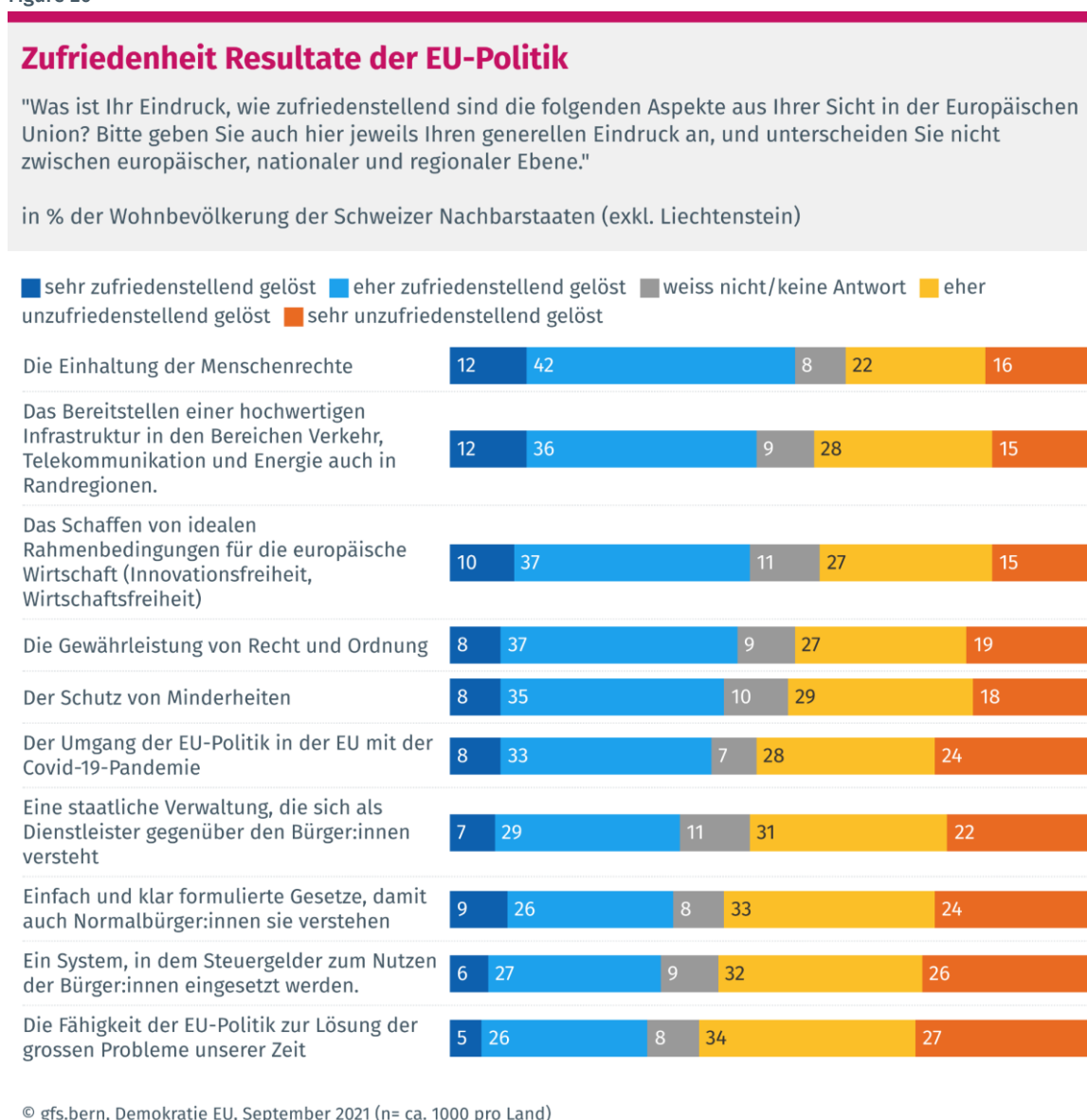
Die Fähigkeit der Politik in der Schweiz zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in Switzerland to solve the major problems of our time
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürgerinnen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die Schweizer Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the Swiss economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Einfluss von konkreten Politikresultaten auf die allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit den Resultaten der Schweizer Politik	Influence of concrete policy outcomes on general satisfaction with the outcomes of Swiss policy
Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	Swiss resident population
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit den Regeln der Schweizer Politik"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with the rules of Swiss politics'

Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit den Regeln der Schweizer Politik"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with the rules of Swiss politics'
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The creation of ideal economic conditions is also only marginally relevant to opinion. Thus, it is precisely the outcome that is judged most critically that has the greatest impact on opinion.

Satisfaction with the outcomes of the political system is once again significantly lower among residents of neighbouring countries than in Switzerland:

Figure 20



Zufriedenheit Resultate der EU-Politik	Satisfaction with the outcomes of EU policy
"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union? Bitte	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the following aspects in the European Union? Here too, please indicate your general impression in each case,

geben Sie auch hier jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."	and do not distinguish between European, national and regional levels.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
sehr zufriedenstellend gelöst	very satisfactory
eher zufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat satisfactory
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufriedenstellend gelöst	somewhat unsatisfactory
sehr unzufriedenstellend gelöst	very unsatisfactory
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
Das Schaffen von idealen	Creation of ideal
Rahmenbedingungen für die europäische Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	conditions for the European economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Der Umgang der EU-Politik in der EU mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by the EU
Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürgerinnen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürgerinnen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Fähigkeit der EU-Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in the EU to solve the major problems of our time
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The protection of human rights is the only outcome of EU policy with which an absolute majority of respondents are satisfied (54% somewhat/very satisfactory). Relative majorities are satisfied with the provision infrastructure for peripheral regions (48%) and economic conditions (47%). Residents' dissatisfaction is highest with the EU's problem-solving ability (61% somewhat/very unsatisfactory), the citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (58%) and comprehensible laws (57%).

Among respondents from the EU, satisfaction with outcomes is based first and foremost on problem-solving competence, as was already the case in Switzerland:

Figure 21



Einfluss konkreter Politikresultate auf die allgemeine Zufriedenheit mit Resultaten der EU-Politik	Influence of concrete policy outcomes on general satisfaction with EU policy outcomes
Wohnbevölkerung der Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	Resident population of neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
Blau: Richtung "zufrieden mit Resultate EU-Politik"	Blue: tendency towards 'satisfied with EU policy outcomes'
Orange: Richtung "unzufrieden mit Resultate EU-Politik"	Orange: tendency towards 'dissatisfied with EU policy outcomes'
Die Fähigkeit der EU-Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in the EU to solve the major problems of our time
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die europäische Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the European economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Der Umgang der EU-Politik in der EU mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by the EU
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürger:innen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürger:innen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürger:innen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
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As in Switzerland, such a connection explains the increased criticism of outcomes. Among respondents in neighbouring countries, on the other hand, the reference to individual benefit is clearly less effective in influencing opinion, while the benefit for the economy appears to be much more effective in influencing opinion. Even if indirect democracy is ultimately measured first and foremost in terms of problem-solving competence, there are certainly differences in assessment at the secondary level compared to direct-democratic systems.

#### 4.1.6 Differences along party affinities

Not all elements are rated equally by sympathisers of the individual major parties:

Table 3: Satisfaction by party

Percentage very/somewhat satisfactory	Green & GLP	SP	The Centre	FDP	SVP
<b>Participation</b>					
Freedom of expression	96%	95%	95%	99%	72%
Freedom to form opinions	85%	92%	95%	91%	66%
Legislative and constitutional referendums	95%	95%	95%	98%	87%
Political initiatives	91%	86%	97%	89%	86%
Election of parliament	95%	86%	93%	96%	86%
Amendment of party lists	92%	90%	95%	95%	85%
Election of the Federal Council	78%	75%	84%	82%	67%
Participation of minorities	67%	65%	91%	90%	78%
Assemblies and demonstrations	87%	91%	88%	91%	70%
<b>Rules</b>					
Fair and just administration of justice	79%	67%	58%	93%	66%
Checks on power	71%	69%	86%	69%	72%
Transparent decision-making	70%	65%	82%	79%	75%
Strong position of municipalities and cantons	81%	79%	86%	87%	79%
Civil liberties	77%	83%	89%	82%	67%
Involvement of all relevant parties	93%	92%	97%	93%	87%
<b>Outcomes</b>					
Service-oriented administration	74%	67%	76%	72%	73%
Comprehensible laws	54%	55%	54%	74%	56%
Protection of minorities	69%	70%	68%	91%	80%
Respect for human rights	87%	82%	93%	95%	81%
Problem-solving ability	34%	43%	66%	73%	57%
Ideal conditions for the economy	80%	84%	90%	84%	75%
Use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of citizens	65%	67%	81%	84%	62%
Law and order	92%	90%	88%	93%	87%
Provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions	89%	82%	87%	93%	78%
Handling of the coronavirus crisis	75%	86%	87%	84%	61%

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Of all the aspects examined, respondents who identify closely with the **GREENS OR THE GLP** are most satisfied with the elements of participation. Satisfaction is highest with the freedom of expression (96% somewhat or very satisfactory), followed by the direct-democratic tools (referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments and the election of parliament, each at 95%). Among the remaining areas, it is the involvement of all relevant parties (93%) and the guarantee of law and order (92%) that achieve the highest satisfaction ratings. On the other hand, supporters of the Greens and the GLP assess aspects from the area of policy outcomes as the least satisfactory: only 34% are satisfied with the ability of politics to solve the major problems of our time. The comprehensibility of laws is criticised second-most often, but still satisfies slightly more than half of respondents (54%).

For **SP** supporters, it is also the freedom of expression and the possibility to vote on laws and constitutional amendments that achieve the highest satisfaction ratings at 95% each. The SP's supporters also agree with those of the Greens/GLP on the aspects that are less satisfactory: the majority of them are dissatisfied with the problem-solving ability of politics (43%) and only a slight majority is satisfied with the comprehensibility of laws (55%).

Those who sympathise with **THE CENTRE** are most often satisfied with the opportunity to help shape politics by means of political initiatives (97% somewhat or very satisfactory). The Centre supporters consider the other aspects of political participation to be extremely satisfactory as well. The freedom to express and form opinions and the opportunity to vote in referendums and change party lists in elections are both rated as satisfactory by 95% of them. Outside of political participation, satisfaction is highest with the involvement of all relevant parties in the political process (97%) and with respect for human rights (93%). The majority of The Centre supporters are satisfied with all aspects surveyed. However, they are most likely to criticise the comprehensibility of laws (54%) and the fair and transparent administration of justice (58%).

Swiss residents who sympathise with the **FDP** are generally more positive about the elements surveyed than the rest of the population. They are practically completely satisfied with the freedom of expression (99%). The opportunity to vote on laws and constitutional amendments (98%), the election of parliament (96%), the opportunity to change party lists in these elections (95%) and respect for human rights (95%) also achieve high scores. In general, FDP supporters are extremely satisfied with all the elements surveyed. Only four aspects are considered satisfactory by less than three-quarters of them: the lowest value is achieved by checks on power (69%), followed by a service-oriented administration (72%), the problem-solving ability of politics (73%) and the comprehensibility of laws (74%). The generally very positive assessment of FDP sympathisers is also reflected in the fact that their satisfaction with problem-solving ability and the comprehensibility of laws is still clearly above average compared to the supporters of the other parties.

**SVP** supporters are generally somewhat more critical than other residents. In particular, their highest satisfaction ratings are clearly lower than those of the other parties. Interestingly, however, the majority of respondents are satisfied with all aspects of the survey, and only four elements are rated as satisfactory by less than two-thirds. The

elements with the highest and lowest satisfaction values, however, largely coincide with those of the other residents. As for the remaining parties, the focus is on aspects of political participation: referendums and the involvement of all relevant parties come in first at 87% each, followed by political initiatives (86%), the election of parliament (86%) and the opportunity to change party lists in elections (85%). Dissatisfaction is highest with regard to the comprehensibility of laws (56%) and problem-solving ability (57%). There are also low satisfaction ratings for the use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of citizens (62%) and for the handling of the coronavirus crisis (61%).

For some of the aspects examined, greater differences in satisfaction can be found along party sympathies: the most striking aspects are the assessment of the freedom of expression, the freedom to form opinions and the opportunity to participate in assemblies and demonstrations. Those who sympathise with the SVP are comparatively critical, as only 72% of them rate the freedom of expression as somewhat or very satisfactory. In the case of the freedom to form opinions, only 66% are satisfied, and 70% are satisfied with the opportunities for assemblies and demonstrations. At the same time, more than 95% of the supporters of other parties are satisfied with the freedom of expression. Furthermore, over 85% rate the freedom of expression as satisfactory and over 87% rate the freedom to demonstrate as satisfactory. SVP supporters are also visibly more critical (61%) of the handling of the coronavirus crisis than the other participants in the survey. On the left, on the other hand, criticism is clearly greater with regard to the participation of minorities (Greens/GLP: 67%; SP: 65%) and problem-solving ability (Greens/GLP: 34%; SP: 43%). Sympathisers of The Centre and the FDP are often very much in agreement on their satisfaction with the elements of democracy surveyed. Exceptions, however, are the fair and transparent administration of justice (The Centre: 58% vs. FDP 93%) and checks on power in the political system (The Centre 86% vs. FDP 69%).

#### 4.1.7 Comparison of satisfaction with democratic foundations

In the area of political participation, a majority of the **SWISS POPULATION** is almost universally of the opinion that the solutions to forms of participation are better in Switzerland than in the European Union:

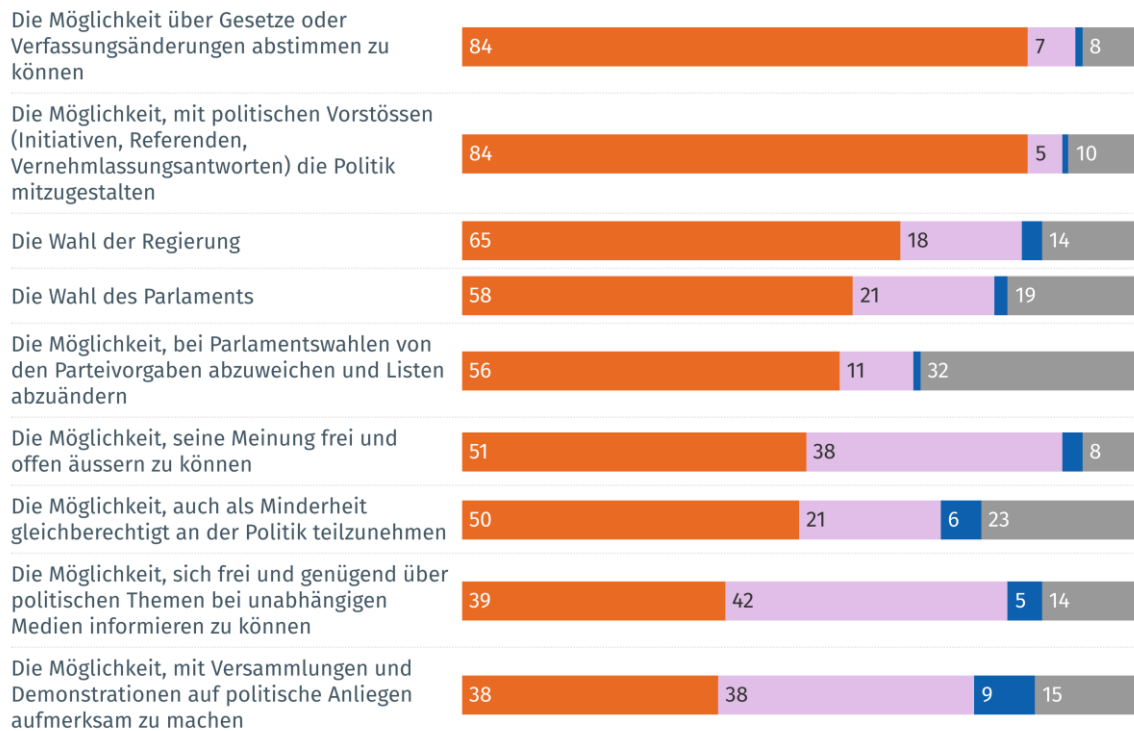
Figure 22

### Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU vs. Schweiz

"Diesmal interessiert, welche Elemente aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser funktionieren als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser funktionieren als in der EU."

in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung

- funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU
- funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz
- funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz
- weiss nicht/keine Antwort



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Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU vs. Schweiz	Aspects of political participation in the EU vs. Switzerland
"Diesmal interessiert, welche Elemente aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser funktionieren als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser funktionieren als in der EU."	'This time, we're interested in which elements you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland than in the EU.'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland
funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments

Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Wahl der Regierung	The election of the government
Die Wahl des Parlaments	The election of parliament
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
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From the perspective of its own residents, Switzerland performs best in the areas of legislative and constitutional referendums and political initiatives (84% each, works better in Switzerland than in the EU). The Swiss population perceives the solutions as equally good when it comes to the forming of opinions by means of independent media (42%, works equally well in the EU and in Switzerland), the right to demonstrate and the freedom of expression (38% each).

There is not a single surveyed opportunity for participation which, according to a majority of the Swiss population, works better in the EU than in Switzerland. The highest percentages can be found for the right to demonstrate (9% works better in the EU), minority participation (6%) and freedom to form opinions through independent media (5%).

From the point of view of the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**, there is no opportunity for political participation that works better in the European Union than in Switzerland:

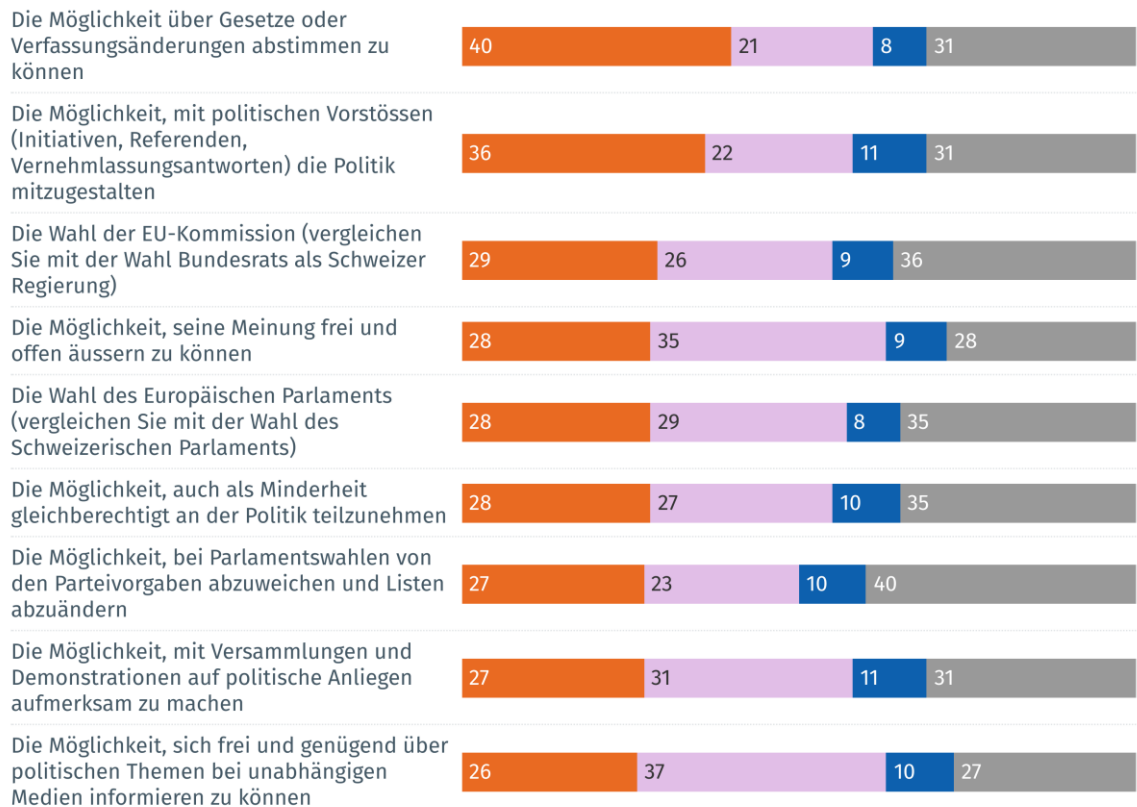
Figure 23

### Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU vs. Schweiz

"Nun sehen Sie die gleichen Elemente noch einmal. Diesmal interessiert, welche Elemente aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser funktionieren als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser funktionieren als in der EU."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)

- funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU
- funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz
- funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz
- weiss nicht/keine Antwort



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Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU vs. Schweiz	Aspects of political participation in the EU vs. Switzerland
"Nun sehen Sie die gleichen Elemente noch einmal. Diesmal interessiert, welche Elemente aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser funktionieren als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser funktionieren als in der EU."	'Let's take another look at the same elements. This time, we're interested in which elements you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland than in the EU.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland

funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Wahl der EU-Kommission (vergleichen Sie mit der Wahl Bundesrats als Schweizer Regierung)	The election of the European Commission (compare with the election of the Federal Council as the Swiss government)
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Wahl des Europäischen Parlaments (vergleichen Sie mit der Wahl des Schweizerischen Parlaments)	The election of the European Parliament (compare with the election of the Swiss parliament)
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
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Although in the minority, the highest percentages for opportunities for participation that work better in the EU than in Switzerland are found for political initiatives and assemblies and demonstrations (11% each). From the point of view of a relative majority, political initiatives work better in Switzerland (36% works better in Switzerland than in the EU), as do referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments (40%). Assemblies and demonstrations work equally well (31% works equally well in the EU and in Switzerland), as do the freedom to form opinions through independent media (37%), the freedom of expression (35%) and the election of parliament (29%).

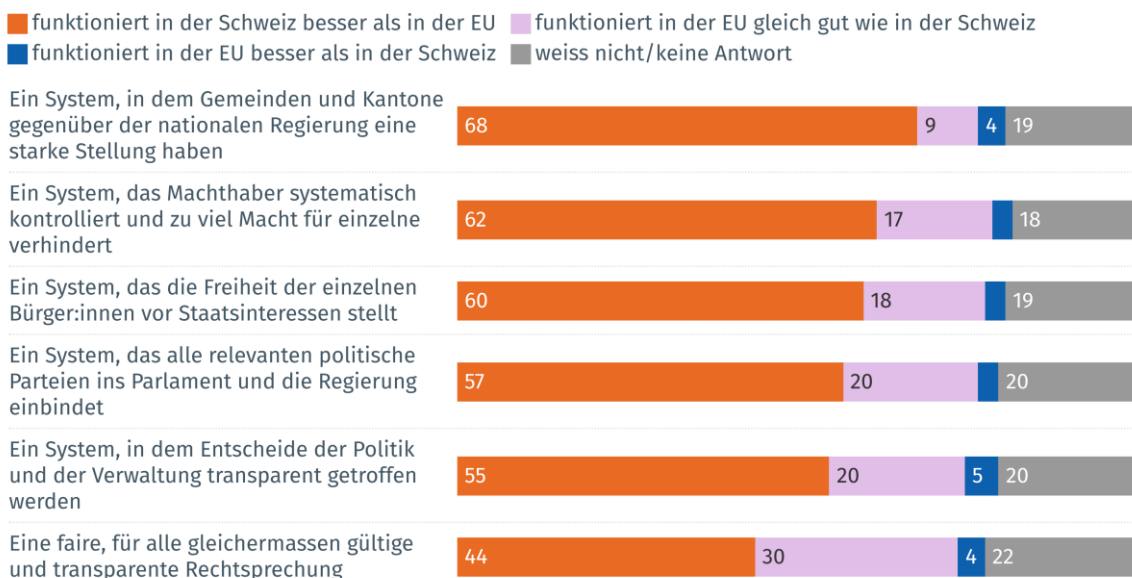
From the point of view of **THE AVERAGE SWISS CITIZEN**, the Swiss political system performs better than the EU in almost all aspects:

Figure 24

### Aspekte des politischen Systems EU vs. Schweiz

"Auch hier: welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche gleich gut in der Schweiz und in der EU und welche in der Schweiz besser?"

in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung



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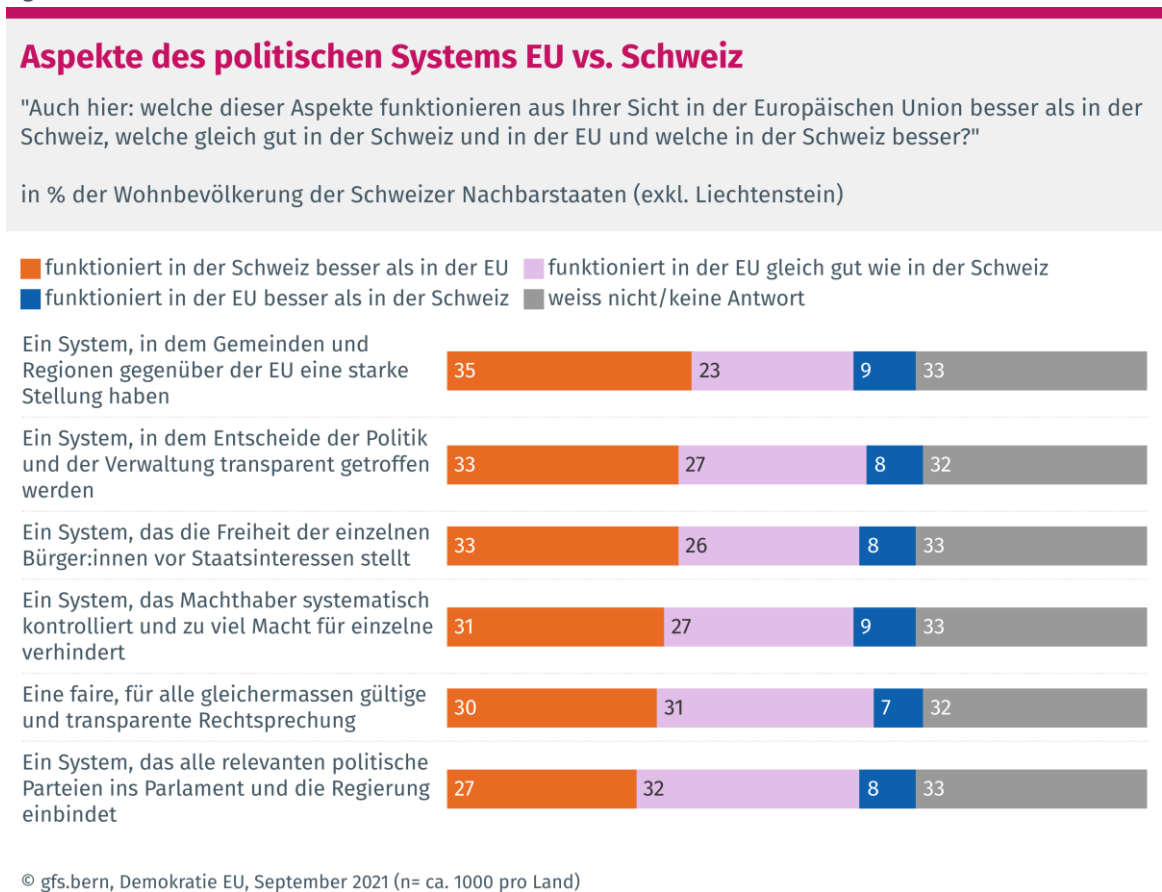
Aspekte des politischen Systems EU vs. Schweiz	Aspects of the political systems of the EU vs. Switzerland
"Auch hier: welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche gleich gut in der Schweiz und in der EU und welche in der Schweiz besser?"	'Again, which of these aspects do you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland?'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland
funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Kantone gegenüber der nationalen Regierung eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and cantons have a strong position vis-à-vis the national government
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürgerinnen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government

Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
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Satisfaction with the Swiss system is particularly pronounced when it comes to the position of the municipalities and cantons (68% works better in Switzerland than in the EU), checks on power (62%) and civil liberties (60%). The administration of justice (30% works equally well in the EU and in Switzerland), transparent decision-making and the involvement of all relevant political forces (20% each) are most frequently rated as equally good.

For the resident population of the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**, there is no aspect of the political system either in which the European Union performs better than Switzerland in the majority of cases:

Figure 25



Aspekte des politischen Systems EU vs. Schweiz	Aspects of the political systems of the EU vs. Switzerland
"Auch hier: welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz,	'Again, which of these aspects do you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally



welche gleich gut in der Schweiz und in der EU und welche in der Schweiz besser?"	well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland?"
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland
funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürgerinnen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
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From the perspective of a relative majority, checks on power (31% works better in Switzerland than in the EU), strengthening the position of municipalities and regions vis-à-vis the government (35%), transparent decision-making (33%) and prioritising civil liberties over state interests (33%) work well in Switzerland. In the majority view, the involvement of all parties (32% works equally well in the EU and in Switzerland) and the administration of justice (31%) work similarly well in Switzerland and the EU. There is no relative majority with the opinion that certain aspects of the system work better in the EU than in Switzerland. The maximum value achieved is 9% (works better in the EU than in Switzerland) for checks on power and the positions of municipalities and regions vis-à-vis the government.

At the output level, the assessment of the EU from a **SWISS PERSPECTIVE** is better compared to the previous dimensions:

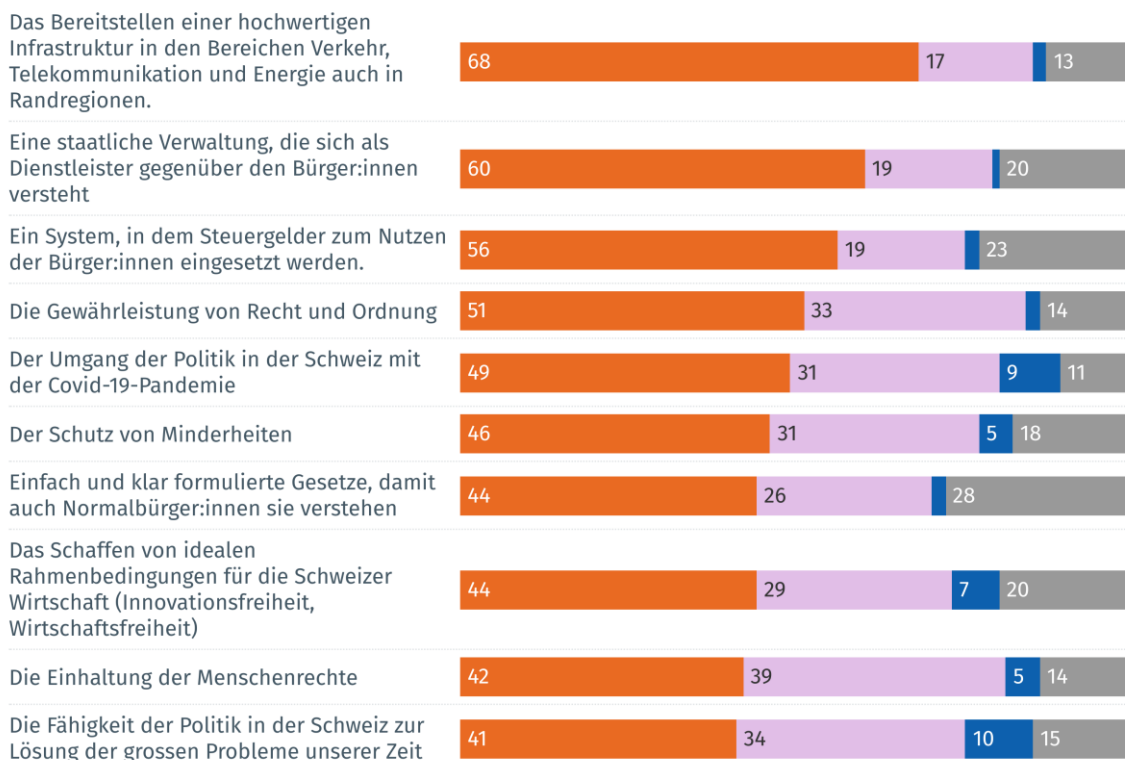
Figure 26

### Resultate der Politik EU vs. Schweiz

"Auch hier: welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche gleich gut in der Schweiz und in der EU und welche in der Schweiz besser?"

in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung

- funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU
- funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz
- funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz
- weiss nicht/keine Antwort



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Resultate der Politik EU vs. Schweiz	Policy outcomes in the EU vs. Switzerland
"Auch hier: welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche gleich gut in der Schweiz und in der EU und welche in der Schweiz besser?"	'Again, which of these aspects do you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland?'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland
funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions

Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürgerinnen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürgerinnen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Der Umgang der Politik in der Schweiz mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Switzerland
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die Schweizer Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the Swiss economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Die Fähigkeit der Politik in der Schweiz zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in Switzerland to solve the major problems of our time
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For its own population, Switzerland scores best on the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (68% works better in Switzerland than in the EU) and service-oriented state administration (60%). The highest percentages for an equally good solution are found in the areas of human rights (39% works equally well in the EU and Switzerland), problem-solving competence (34%) and law and order (33%). The best ratings for the EU, albeit in the minority, concern problem-solving competence (10% works better in the EU than in Switzerland), pandemic control (9%) and the creation of economic conditions (7%).

For the citizens of the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**, there is no aspect at the output level which the majority believe works better in the EU than in Switzerland:

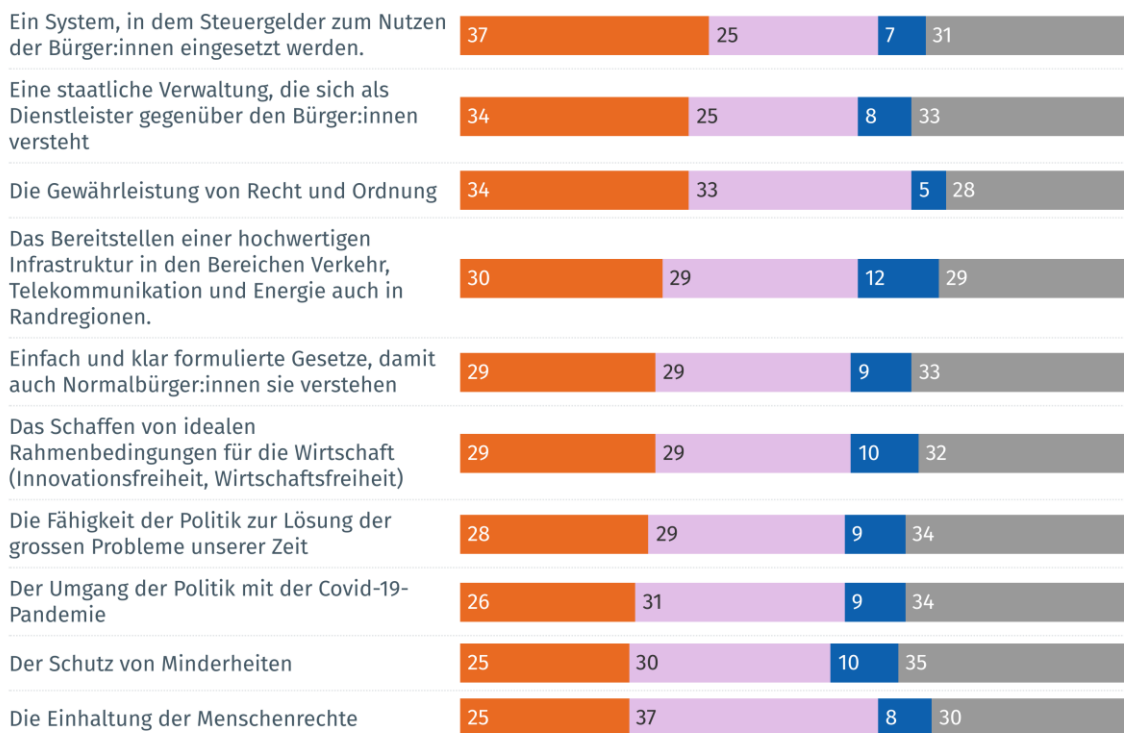
Figure 27

### Resultate der Politik EU vs. Schweiz

"Und welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser?"

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)

■ funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU 
 ■ funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz  
■ funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz 
 ■ weiss nicht/keine Antwort



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Resultate der Politik EU vs. Schweiz	Policy outcomes in the EU vs. Switzerland
"Und welche dieser Aspekte funktionieren aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union besser als in der Schweiz, welche in der Schweiz und in der EU gleich gut und welche in der Schweiz besser?"	'And which of these aspects do you think work better in the European Union than in Switzerland, which work equally well in Switzerland and the EU, and which work better in Switzerland?'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
funktioniert in der Schweiz besser als in der EU	works better in Switzerland than in the EU
funktioniert in der EU gleich gut wie in der Schweiz	works equally well in the EU and Switzerland
funktioniert in der EU besser als in der Schweiz	works better in the EU than in Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürgerinnen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens

Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürgerinnen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Die Fähigkeit der Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics to solve the major problems of our time
Der Umgang der Politik mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
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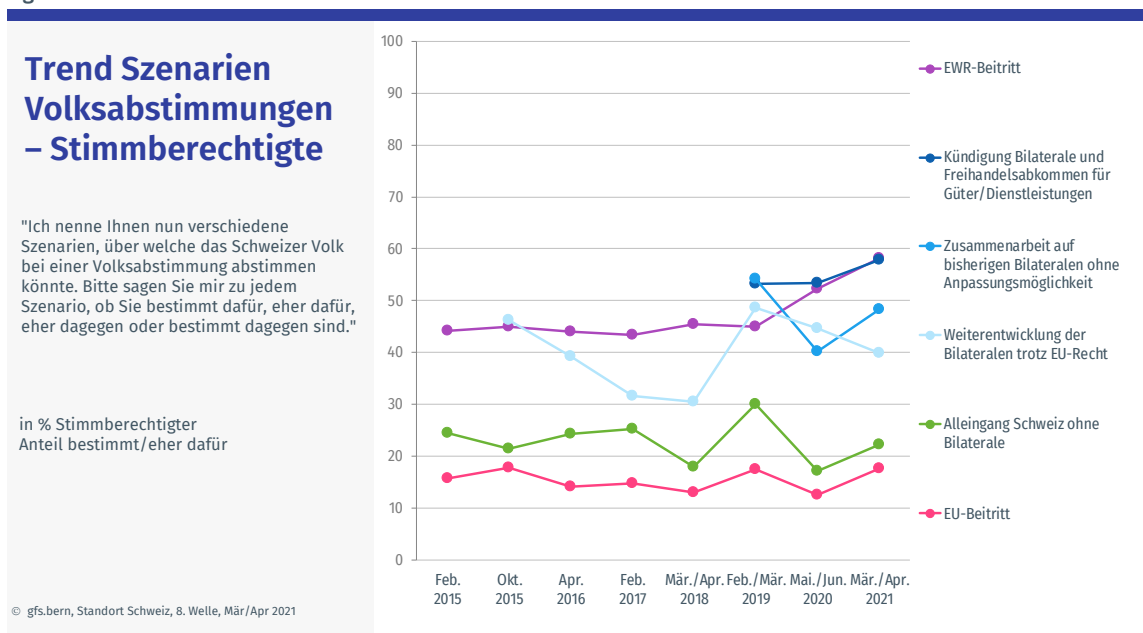
For a majority, the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (30% works better in Switzerland than in the EU), service-oriented administration (34%), citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (37%) and the guarantee of law and order (34%) work better in Switzerland. Similarly good are the protection of minorities (30% works equally well in the EU and Switzerland), problem-solving ability (29%), the handling of the coronavirus crisis (31%) and respect for human rights (37%). There is minority support for the aspects of the system that work better in the European Union than in Switzerland. This view is most held for the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (12% works better in the EU than in Switzerland), followed by the protection of minorities and economic conditions (10% each).

No clear judgement can be made regarding ideal economic conditions and comprehensible laws, as citizens are split between works equally well and works better in Switzerland than in the EU (29% each).

#### 4.1.8 Potential for cooperation and mutual learning

The largely shared idea of how the democratic systems of Switzerland and the EU could be optimised in terms of voter satisfaction could serve as a basis for further acceptance of forms of cooperation between Switzerland and the EU. A gfs study from early 2021 states that without such a convergence of systems, not all conceivable forms of cooperation will enjoy the same support:

Figure 28



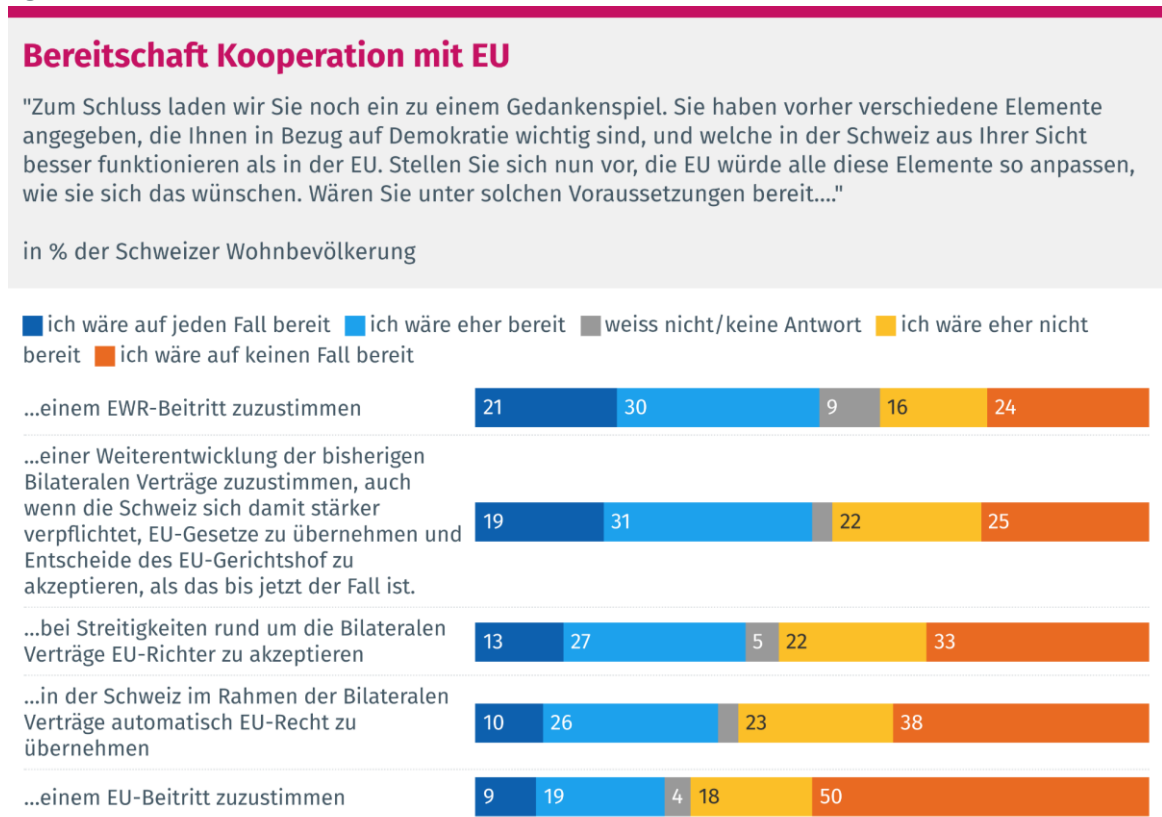
(N = jeweils ca. 2300)

Trend Szenarien Volksabstimmungen – Stimmberechtigte	Trend scenarios on referendums – eligible voters
"Ich nenne Ihnen nun verschiedene Szenarien, über welche das Schweizer Volk bei einer Volksabstimmung abstimmen könnte. Bitte sagen Sie mir zu jedem Szenario, ob Sie bestimmt dafür, eher dafür, eher dagegen oder bestimmt dagegen sind."	'I will now provide you with various scenarios on which the Swiss people could vote in a referendum. For each scenario, please tell me whether you are definitely in favour, somewhat in favour, somewhat opposed or definitely opposed.'
in % Stimmberechtigter Anteil bestimmt/eher dafür	in % of eligible voters definitely/somewhat in favour
EWR-Beitritt	EEA accession
Kündigung Bilaterale und Freihandelsabkommen für Güter/Dienstleistungen	Termination of bilateral and free trade agreements for goods/services
Zusammenarbeit auf bisherigen Bilateralen ohne Anpassungsmöglichkeit	Cooperation on existing Bilateral Agreements without possibility of adjustment
Weiterentwicklung der Bilateralen trotz EU-Recht	Further development of Bilateral Agreements in spite of EU law
Alleingang Schweiz ohne Bilaterale	Switzerland going it alone without the Bilateral Agreements
EU-Beitritt	EU accession
Feb. 2015	Feb 2015
Okt. 2015	Oct 2015
Apr. 2016	Apr 2016
Feb. 2017	Feb 2017
Mär./Apr. 2018	Mar/Apr 2018
Feb./Mär. 2019	Feb/Mar 2019
Mai./Jun. 2020	May/June 2020
Mär./Apr. 2021	Mar/Apr 2021
© gfs.bern, Standort Schweiz, 8. welle, Mär/Apr 2021	© gfs.bern, Switzerland as a Location, 8th Wave, Mar/Apr 2021
(N = jeweils ca. 2300)	(N = ca. 2300 each)

Thus, in March 2021, there was majority support for EEA accession and a pure free trade agreement, while in particular the further development of the Bilateral Agreements towards a framework agreement as discussed at the time was supported by a minority, albeit a significant one. EU accession, on the other hand, was clearly not supported by a majority.

Assuming that all the democratic wishes of the Swiss resident population would be implemented in the European Union, EEA accession or the further development of the Bilateral Agreements would be the most popular forms of cooperation:

Figure 29



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Bereitschaft Kooperation mit EU	Willingness to cooperate with the EU
"Zum Schluss laden wir Sie noch ein zu einem Gedankenspiel. Sie haben vorher verschiedene Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Stellen Sie sich nun vor, die EU würde alle diese Elemente so anpassen, wie sie sich das wünschen. Wären Sie unter solchen Voraussetzungen bereit...."	'Finally, we invite you to take part in a thought experiment. You have previously indicated various elements that are important to you in terms of democracy and which, in your view, work better in Switzerland than in the EU. Now imagine the EU would adapt all of these elements in the way you would like. Under these conditions, would you be willing...'
in % der Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	in % of the Swiss resident population
ich wäre auf jeden Fall bereit	I would definitely be willing
ich wäre eher bereit	I would be somewhat willing
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
ich wäre eher nicht bereit	I would be somewhat unwilling
ich wäre auf keinen Fall bereit	I would definitely be unwilling

...einem EWR-Beitritt zuzustimmen	... to agree to accession to the EEA
...einer Weiterentwicklung der bisherigen Bilateralen Verträge zuzustimmen, auch wenn die Schweiz sich damit stärker verpflichtet, EU-Gesetze zu übernehmen und Entscheide des EU-Gerichtshof zu akzeptieren, als das bis jetzt der Fall ist.	... to agree to a further development of the existing Bilateral Agreements, even if this means that Switzerland would commit itself more strongly to adopting EU laws and accepting rulings of the EU Court of Justice than is currently the case
...bei Streitigkeiten rund um die Bilateralen Verträge EU-Richter zu akzeptieren	... to accept EU judges in disputes concerning the Bilateral Agreements
...in der Schweiz im Rahmen der Bilateralen Verträge automatisch EU-Recht zu übernehmen	... to automatically adopt EU law in Switzerland within the framework of the Bilateral Agreements
...einem EU-Beitritt zuzustimmen	... to agree to accession to the EU
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Of all the options for cooperation, EEA accession would be the most popular, even if only a very narrow majority of 51% would be somewhat or definitely willing to agree to it. It should also be noted, however, that uncertainty about EEA accession is also the highest, at 9%. The acceptance of EU judges is defeated by relatively slight majority of 55%. The automatic adoption of EU law is even more decidedly rejected by 61% of those surveyed. EU accession has the least chance of success, as only slightly more than one in four residents would consider this step and a clear majority of 68% reject it.

When party affinity is taken into account, it becomes apparent that EU accession is the least popular form of cooperation for almost all parties, with the exception of the Greens. EU accession is most unpopular with the SVP (3% definitely/somewhat willing), while support for the idea is highest among the Greens (57%). From the point of view of the Greens (56%) and those without party affinity (7%), automatic adoption of law is the cooperation scenario with the lowest level of support of all possible options. In terms of the favoured form of cooperation, a clear divide emerges along the left-right spectrum. The Centre, FDP, SVP and those without party affinity prefer EEA accession, while the SP, the Green Liberals and the Greens prefer a further development of the Bilateral Agreements. On the whole, however, it is also evident that there is no majority support for any cooperation scenario among the SVP and those without party affinity: among both groups, EEA accession finds the most support compared to all the options presented, but remains a clear minority position at 17% (SVP) and 27% (no party affinity).

An interpretative comparison with the findings of the March 2021 study is striking. In particular, the further development of the Bilateral Agreements towards a framework agreement and EU accession both find around 10 percentage points more support. In the case of the framework agreement, this results in a slight majority, while acceptance of EU accession remains in a clear minority even based on such premises. In fact, a rapprochement between Switzerland and the EU seems to lead to a certain opening up of the discussion on concrete forms of cooperation.



Figure 30



Einfluss konkreter Demokratieaspekte auf die Bereitschaft dem EWR beizutreten	Influence of concrete aspects of democracy on the willingness to join the EEA
Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung	Swiss resident population
Blau: Richtung "für EWR-Beitritt" Orange: Richtung "gegen EWR-Beitritt"	Blue: tendency towards 'in favour of EEA accession' Orange: tendency towards 'opposed to EEA accession'
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Die Wahl des Parlaments	The election of parliament
Die Fähigkeit der Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics to solve the major problems of our time
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Wahl der Regierung	The election of the government
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n=1021); Erklärungsgrad: 13%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n=1021); Explanatory power: 13%

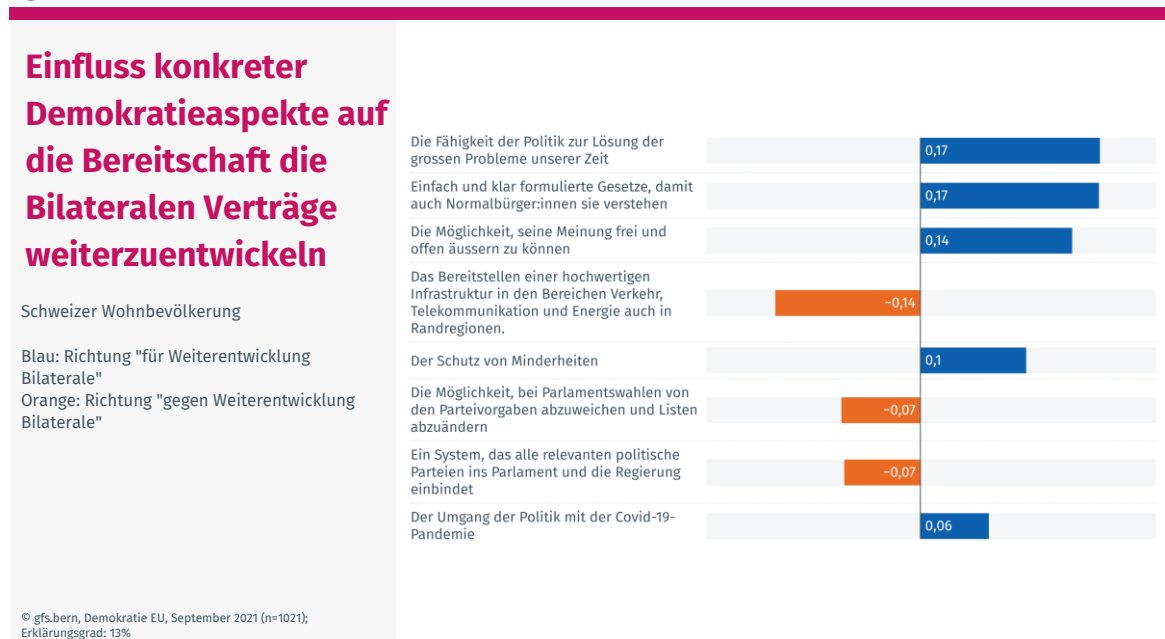
However, not all wishes for the EU to adapt to Swiss conditions promote the willingness to join the EEA to the same extent. The acceptance of EEA accession is most strongly promoted by a rapprochement with Switzerland on the part of the EU in terms of freedom of expression, respect for human rights, procedures in parliamentary elections and problem-solving competence. Direct democracy is also crucial, in general, even if it is missing from the statistical model for methodological reasons. Since the view that

Switzerland is better positioned than the EU in this respect and that the EU would ideally adopt direct democracy from Switzerland is virtually all-encompassing, a European development towards direct democracy is, from Switzerland’s point of view, more of a general premise than an actual driver for increased acceptance of EEA accession.

On the other hand, those who want an EU guided by Switzerland in terms of parliamentary consociation and federalism cannot imagine joining the EEA even with such an adaptation. Accordingly, such adaptations do not promote the will to cooperate.

However, the quality of the underlying statistical model also shows that EEA accession is only marginally influenced by adjustments to individual democratic elements and that the content of such cooperation is of main relevance to the decision.

Figure 31



<b>Einfluss konkreter Demokratieaspekte auf die Bereitschaft die Bilateralen Verträge weiterzuentwickeln</b>	<b>Influence of concrete aspects of democracy on the willingness to further develop the Bilateral Agreements</b>
<b>Schweizer Wohnbevölkerung</b>	<b>Swiss resident population</b>
<b>Blau: Richtung "für Weiterentwicklung Bilaterale"</b>	<b>Blue: tendency towards 'in favour of further development of the Bilateral Agreements'</b>
<b>Orange: Richtung "gegen Weiterentwicklung Bilaterale"</b>	<b>Orange: tendency towards 'opposed to further development of the Bilateral Agreements'</b>
Die Fähigkeit der Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics to solve the major problems of our time
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürger: innen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one’s opinion freely and openly
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions

Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
Der Umgang der Politik mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic
© gfs.bern, Demokratie EU, September 2021 (n=1021); Erklärungsgrad: 13%	© gfs.bern, EU Democracy, September 2021 (n=1021); Explanatory power: 13%

Acceptance of a further development of the existing Bilateral Agreements shows a similar effect. Problem-solving competence and freedom of expression as practised in Switzerland promote acceptance of such a form of cooperation. This acceptance is reinforced by the desire for comprehensible laws, the protection of minorities and the political handling of Covid as practised in Switzerland.

Even in the case of a further development of the Bilateral Agreements, adjustments to federalism and consociation do not promote the acceptance of such a form of cooperation, while direct-democratic instruments are more of a condition than a basis for negotiation.

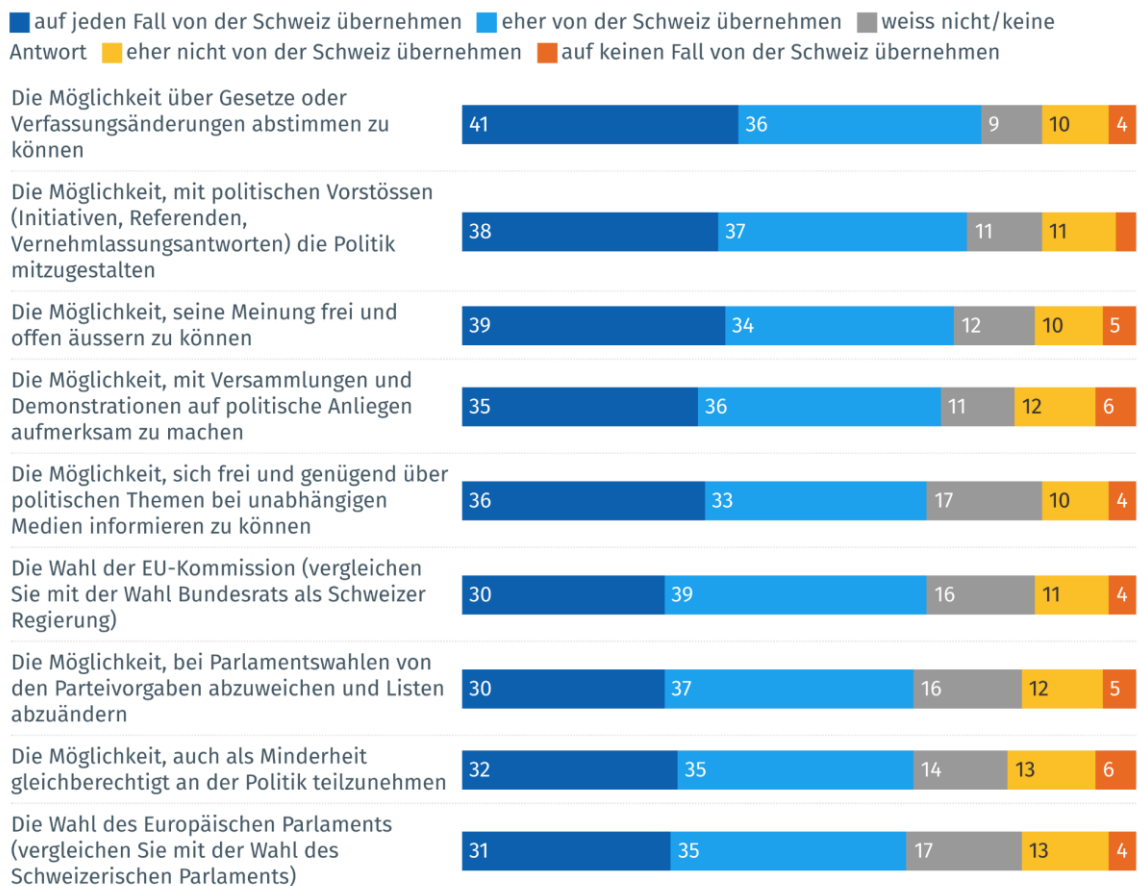
The majority of the **RESIDENT POPULATION OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES** would adopt every opportunity for political participation present in Switzerland:

Figure 32

### Reformbedarf politische Mitbestimmung EU

"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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Reformbedarf politische Mitbestimmung EU	Need for reform of political participation in the EU
"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall	'You have previously indicated one or more elements that are important to you in terms of democracy and which, in your view, work better in Switzerland than in the EU. For which of the following points should the European political system ideally adopt elements from the Swiss system? For each point, please indicate whether the European political system should definitely, rather, rather not or definitely not adopt such an element from the Swiss political system.'

vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."	
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
auf jeden Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely adopt from Switzerland
eher von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather adopt from Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher nicht von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather not adopt from Switzerland
auf keinen Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely not adopt from Switzerland
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Wahl der EU-Kommission (vergleichen Sie mit der Wahl Bundesrats als Schweizer Regierung)	The election of the European Commission (compare with the election of the Federal Council as the Swiss government)
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Wahl des Europäischen Parlaments (vergleichen Sie mit der Wahl des Schweizerischen Parlaments)	The election of the European Parliament (compare with the election of the Swiss parliament)
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The desire to adopt is strongest in the case of referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments (77% rather/definitely adopt from Switzerland) and political initiatives (75%). The greatest uncertainty is found primarily in the election of the Swiss parliament (17% don't know/no response), the forming of opinions on the basis of independent media (17%), the election of the Federal Council and the modification of party lists (16% each). Majorities, albeit less strong ones, are found for the adoption of party list modification (67%), the political participation of minorities (67%) and the election of parliament (66%).

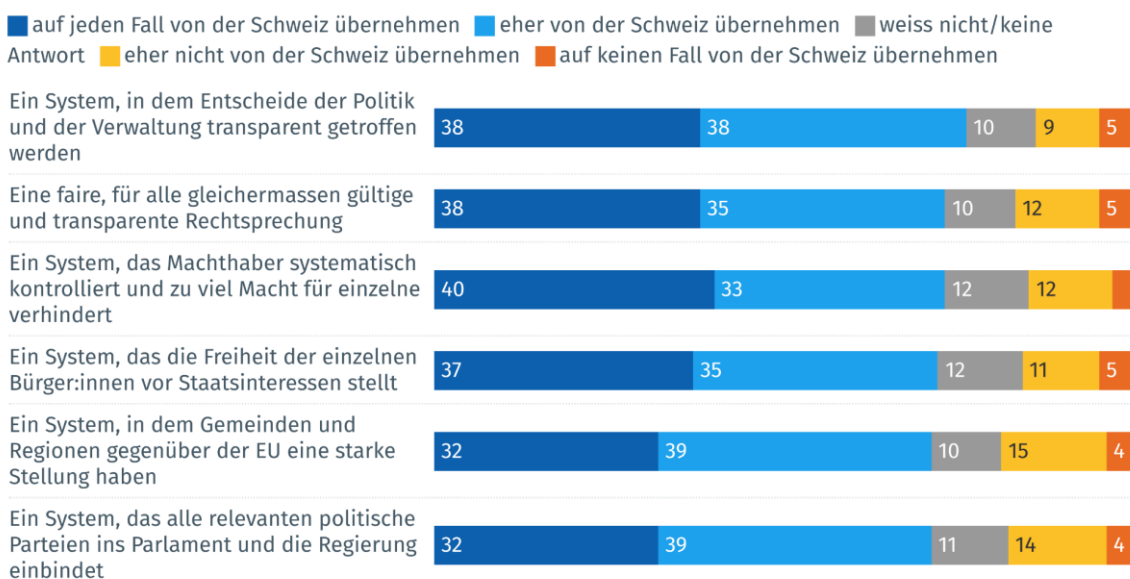
An absolute majority of the residents of neighbouring countries would also adopt every aspect of Switzerland's political system:

Figure 33

### Reformbedarf politisches System der EU

"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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Reformbedarf politisches System der EU	Need for reform of the EU political system
"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."	'You have previously indicated one or more elements that are important to you in terms of democracy and which, in your view, work better in Switzerland than in the EU. For which of the following points should the European political system ideally adopt elements from the Swiss system? For each point, please indicate whether the European political system should definitely, rather, rather not or definitely not adopt such an element from the Swiss political system.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)
auf jeden Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely adopt from Switzerland

eher von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather adopt from Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher nicht von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather not adopt from Switzerland
auf keinen Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely not adopt from Switzerland
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürgerinnen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government
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The aspects respondents most frequently wish to adopt from Switzerland are transparent decision-making (76% rather/definitely adopt from Switzerland), the administration of justice (73%) and checks on the distribution of power (73%). Less frequently, but still demanded by an absolute majority, are the strengthening of the position of municipalities and regions (71%) and the political involvement of all relevant parties (71%). These two aspects are also those with the highest proportion, albeit still a minority, of respondents who would oppose their adoption (19% and 18%, respectively).

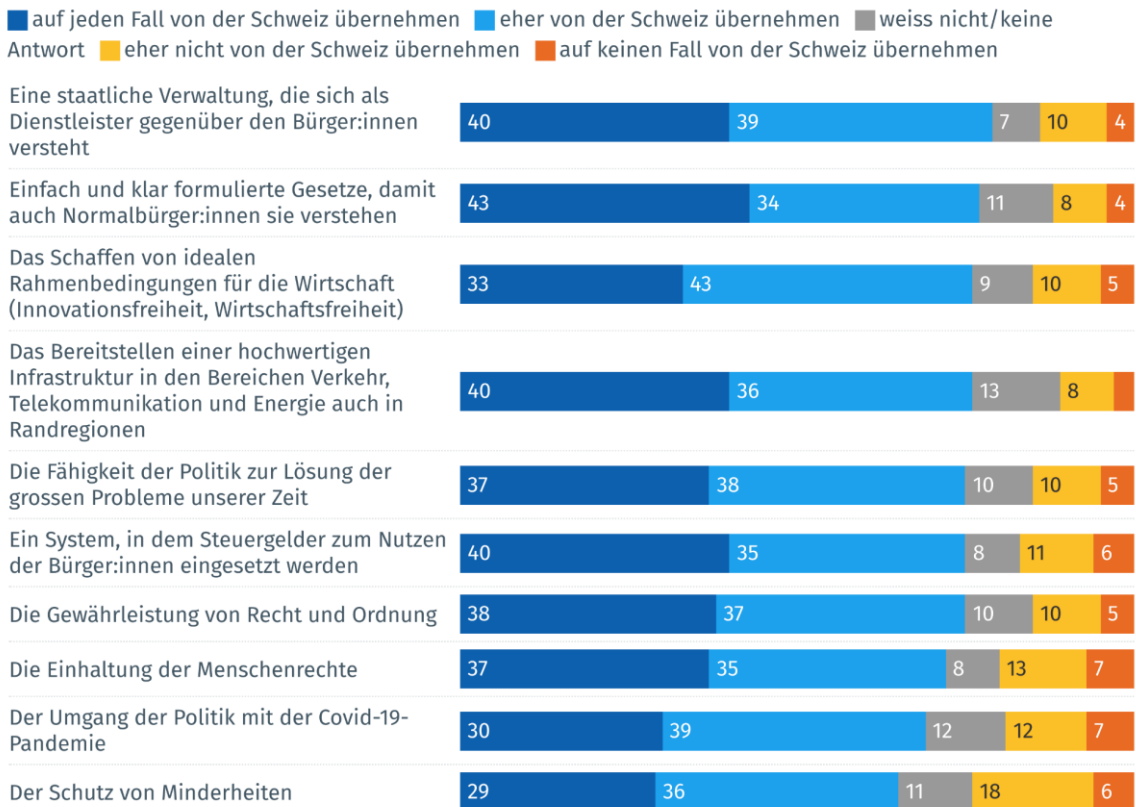
Policy outcomes also show an absolute majority that would like to adopt each aspect from Switzerland:

Figure 34

### Reformbedarf Resultate der Politik EU

"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)



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Reformbedarf Resultate der Politik EU	Need for reform of EU policy outcomes
"Sie haben vorher eines oder mehrere Elemente angegeben, die Ihnen in Bezug auf Demokratie wichtig sind, und welche in der Schweiz aus Ihrer Sicht besser funktionieren als in der EU. Bei welchen der folgenden Punkte würde das Europäische politische System idealerweise Elemente des Schweizerischen Systems übernehmen? Geben Sie bitte bei jedem Punkt an, ob das Europäische politische System ein solches Element auf jeden Fall, eher, eher nicht oder auf keinen Fall vom Schweizerischen politischen System übernehmen soll."	'You have previously indicated one or more elements that are important to you in terms of democracy and which, in your view, work better in Switzerland than in the EU. For which of the following points should the European political system ideally adopt elements from the Swiss system? For each point, please indicate whether the European political system should definitely, rather, rather not or definitely not adopt such an element from the Swiss political system.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung der Schweizer Nachbarstaaten (exkl. Liechtenstein)	in % of the resident population of Switzerland's neighbouring countries (excluding Liechtenstein)



auf jeden Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely adopt from Switzerland
eher von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather adopt from Switzerland
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher nicht von der Schweiz übernehmen	rather not adopt from Switzerland
auf keinen Fall von der Schweiz übernehmen	definitely not adopt from Switzerland
Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürgerinnen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, even in peripheral regions
Die Fähigkeit der Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics to solve the major problems of our time
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürger: innen eingesetzt werden	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Der Umgang der Politik mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
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The most frequent wishes are for an adoption of service-oriented administration (79% rather/definitely adopt from Switzerland), comprehensible laws (77%) and ideal economic conditions (76%). In comparison, adoption is most frequently rejected in the areas of minority protection (24%), handling of the coronavirus crisis (19%) and respect for human rights (20%).

Common areas of improvement and thus **POTENTIAL FOR JOINT LEARNING** exist in the areas of solving the major problems of our time, laws comprehensible to ordinary citizens and use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of citizens, as this is where both Swiss residents and those of neighbouring countries are most dissatisfied. The EU could learn from Switzerland in terms of direct-democratic instruments (referendums on legislative/constitutional amendments, adjustments to party lists and political initiatives) and the right of municipalities and regions to have a say, while Switzerland could take the EU as a model in terms of independent media and freedom of expression.

A **COMMON FOUNDATION** for future cooperation is the inclusion of all relevant political forces and a fair and transparent administration of justice. These elements ensure satisfaction on the part of the resident population both in Switzerland and in neighbouring countries.

According to the population of Switzerland and the neighbouring countries, Switzerland is democratically superior to the EU in the following respects: opportunities for participation based on legislative and constitutional referendums, the opportunity for political initiatives and the election of the government. At the rules level, this superiority is found in the strong position of the municipalities and cantons and the prioritisation of civil liberties over state interests. According to the residents interviewed, the Swiss administration is more service-oriented and tax revenues are increasingly used for the benefit of citizens.

## 4.2 Comparison of neighbouring countries

### 4.2.1 Satisfaction with EU politics

Only Germany (57% somewhat/very satisfied) and Austria (51%) have a slight majority of residents that are satisfied with the **POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**:

Figure 35

## Zufriedenheit Aspekte EU-Politik

Zufriedenheit mit verschiedenen Aspekten der EU-Politik

in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes

Aspekt	Land	sehr zufrieden	eher zufrieden	weiss nicht/keine Antwort	eher unzufrieden	sehr unzufrieden
Zufriedenheit politisches System EU	Deutschland	8	49	3	27	13
	Österreich	10	41	2	30	17
	Italien	10	37	4	33	16
	Frankreich	5	40	13	27	15
Zufriedenheit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik	Italien	15	45	5	25	10
	Deutschland	7	39	5	34	15
	Frankreich	4	38	11	32	15
	Österreich	9	33	3	37	18
Zufriedenheit Regeln EU-Politik	Deutschland	5	48	5	28	14
	Italien	5	45	4	31	15
	Österreich	8	38	4	30	20
	Frankreich	2	40	15	30	13
Zufriedenheit Resultate EU-Politik	Italien	7	40	5	31	17
	Deutschland	4	42	4	32	18
	Frankreich	3	38	13	31	15
	Österreich	6	32	4	36	22

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Zufriedenheit Aspekte EU-Politik	Satisfaction with aspects of EU politics
Zufriedenheit mit verschiedenen Aspekten der EU-Politik	Satisfaction with various aspects of EU politics

in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes	in % of the resident population of each country
Aspekt	Aspect
Land	Country
sehr zufrieden	very satisfied
eher zufrieden	somewhat satisfied
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
eher unzufrieden	somewhat dissatisfied
sehr unzufrieden	very dissatisfied
Zufriedenheit politisches System EU	Satisfaction with EU political system
Zufriedenheit Mitbestimmung EU-Politik	Satisfaction with participation in EU politics
Zufriedenheit Regeln EU-Politik	Satisfaction with rules of EU politics
Zufriedenheit Resultate EU-Politik	Satisfaction with EU policy outcomes
Deutschland	Germany
Österreich	Austria
Italien	Italy
Frankreich	France
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In Italy, a comparatively low 47% of respondents are somewhat or very satisfied with the general EU political system. At 45%, satisfaction is lowest in France out of all neighbouring countries surveyed. Dissatisfaction is highest in Italy (49% somewhat/very dissatisfied) and Austria (47%).

In terms of **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**, only in Italy is a clear majority somewhat or very satisfied (60%). Relative majorities can be found in Germany (46% somewhat/very satisfied), France and Italy (42% each). Austrians are the most dissatisfied with the opportunities for participation in the EU, as an absolute majority of 55% are somewhat or very dissatisfied.

When it comes to the **POLITICAL RULES OF THE EU**, only Germany (53% somewhat/very satisfied) and Italy (50%) have a slight majority of satisfied residents. In Austria and France, 46% and 42%, respectively, are more or less decidedly satisfied with the rules. Again, the highest levels of dissatisfaction are found in Austria (50% somewhat/very dissatisfied) and Italy (46%).

For the **OUTCOMES OF EU POLICY**, no absolute majorities of satisfied residents can be found in any of the neighbouring countries surveyed. The most satisfied are the populations of Italy (47% somewhat/very satisfied) and Germany (46%). The lowest percentages of satisfaction are found in France (41%) and Austria (38%). The most dissatisfied are the residents of Austria (58% somewhat/very dissatisfied) and Germany (50%).

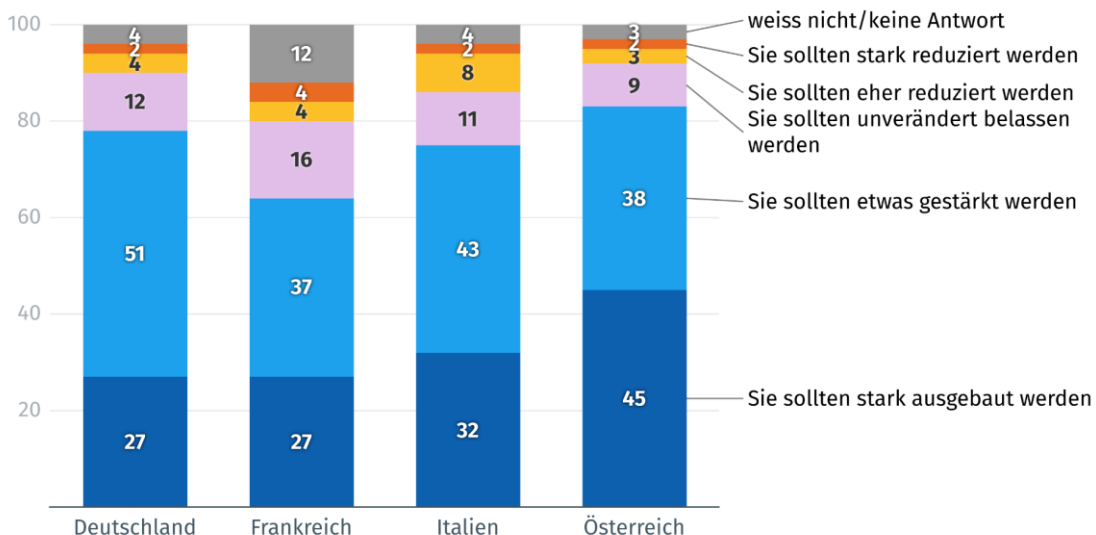
An expansion of opportunities for participation in the European Union is demanded by an absolute majority in every neighbouring country:

Figure 36

### Reformbedarf Mitbestimmung EU-Politik

"Finden Sie, die Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung sollten in der Europäischen Union eher ausgebaut oder reduziert werden?"

in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes



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Reformbedarf Mitbestimmung EU-Politik	Need for reform of participation in EU politics
"Finden Sie, die Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung sollten in der Europäischen Union eher ausgebaut oder reduziert werden?"	'Do you think the opportunities for political participation should be increased or reduced in the European Union?'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes	in % of the resident population of each country
weiss nicht/keine Antwort	don't know/no response
Sie sollten stark reduziert werden	They should be greatly reduced
Sie sollten eher reduziert werden	They should be somewhat reduced
Sie sollten unverändert belassen werden	They should be left unchanged
Sie sollten etwas gestärkt werden	They should be somewhat strengthened
Sie sollten stark ausgebaut werden	They should be greatly expanded
Deutschland	Germany
Frankreich	France
Italien	Italy
Österreich	Austria
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The most frequent and strongest calls for expansion are made in Austria, where 83% of the residents surveyed generally demand an expansion and 45% call for a strong expansion. In second place is Germany, where 78% would like to see an expansion, with 51% favouring a straightforward strengthening of opportunities for participation. Maintaining the status quo is most popular in France, where 16% oppose a change in

opportunities for participation. In each neighbouring country, only a small minority (between 5% and 10%) is in favour of reducing opportunities for participation. Compared to the other neighbouring countries, residents of France had the highest percentage of missing answers (12% don't know/no response), as respondents were unable or unwilling to give an answer to this question.

In terms of concrete opportunities for participation in the European Union, satisfaction is highest in the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES** when it comes to freedom to form opinions and freedom of expression:

Figure 37



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte der politischen Mitbestimmung EU pro Land	Satisfaction with aspects of political participation in EU by country
"In der Europäischen Union gibt es verschiedene Formen von Mitbestimmung bei der Politik. Wie zufriedenstellend	'In the European Union, there are various forms of participation in politics. In your view, how satisfactory are the solutions

sind aus Ihrer Sicht die folgenden Möglichkeiten zur politischen Mitbestimmung in der EU gelöst?"	to the following opportunities for political participation in the EU?"
in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes	in % of the resident population of each country
Anteil "sehr/eher zufriedenstellend gelöst"	Percentage very/somewhat satisfactory
Argument	Argument
Deutschland	Germany
Frankreich	France
Italien	Italy
Österreich	Austria
Die Möglichkeit, sich frei und genügend über politischen Themen bei unabhängigen Medien informieren zu können	The opportunity to inform oneself freely and sufficiently about political issues through independent media
Die Möglichkeit, seine Meinung frei und offen äussern zu können	The opportunity to express one's opinion freely and openly
Die Wahl des Europäischen Parlaments	The election of the European Parliament
Die Möglichkeit, mit Versammlungen und Demonstrationen auf politische Anliegen aufmerksam zu machen	The opportunity to draw attention to political concerns through assemblies and demonstrations
Die Möglichkeit, auch als Minderheit gleichberechtigt an der Politik teilzunehmen	The equal opportunity to participate in politics as a minority
Die Wahl der EU-Kommission	The election of the European Commission
Die Möglichkeit, mit politischen Vorstößen (Initiativen, Referenden, Vernehmlassungsantworten) die Politik mitzugestalten	The opportunity to help shape policy through political initiatives, referendums and responses to consultations
Die Möglichkeit über Gesetze oder Verfassungsänderungen abstimmen zu können	The opportunity to vote on laws or constitutional amendments
Die Möglichkeit, bei Parlamentswahlen von den Parteivorgaben abzuweichen und Listen abzuändern	The opportunity to deviate from party preferences in parliamentary elections and adjust the lists
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In almost every neighbouring country, there is a clear majority that finds the political participation aspects of freedom to form opinions and freedom of expression somewhat or very satisfactory. The only exception is the French population, where there is no absolute majority for any of the opportunities for participation. In Germany, absolute majorities are found for freedom to form opinions and freedom of expression, the election of the European Parliament and assemblies and demonstrations. An absolute majority of the Italian resident population is found for all aspects, except for assemblies and demonstrations (49% somewhat/very satisfactory) and the amendment of party lists (46%). In addition, it is striking that the Italian resident population achieves the highest minimum across all aspects (46% somewhat/very satisfactory), while this percentage is between 32% and 35% for the other countries. In Austria, freedom to form opinions and freedom of expression, demonstrations and assemblies are rated as somewhat/very satisfactory by a majority of residents.

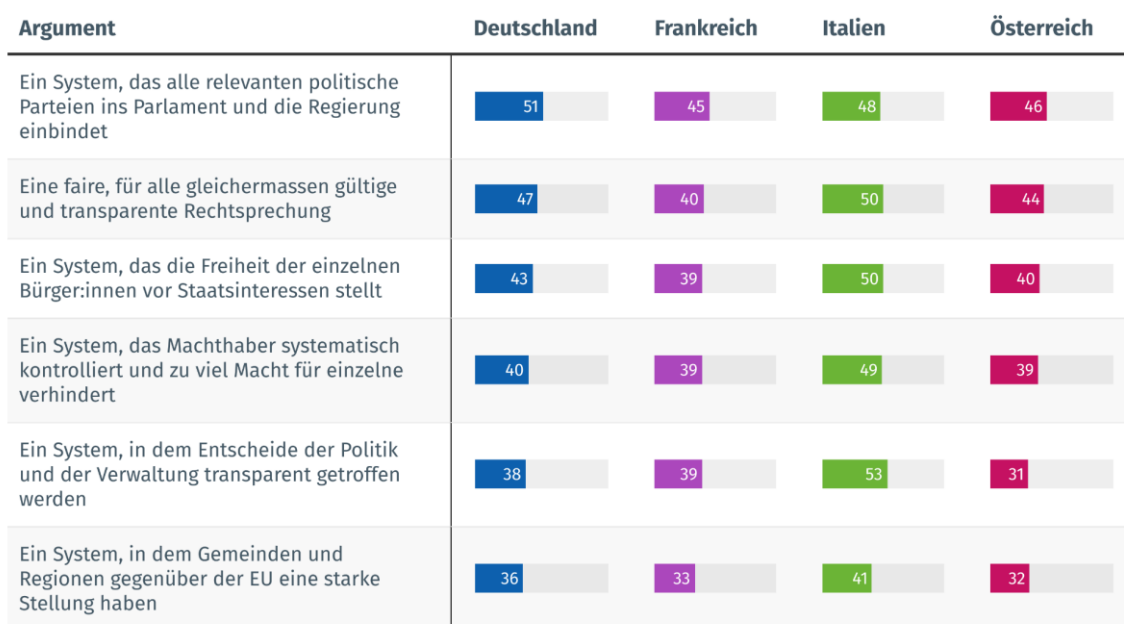
Residents of the **NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES** rate lower satisfaction with the political system of the European Union than with the opportunities for political participation:

Figure 38

### Zufriedenheit Aspekte des politischen Systems EU

"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union gelöst? Bitte geben Sie jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes  
Anteil "sehr/eher zufriedenstellend gelöst"



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Zufriedenheit Aspekte des politischen Systems EU	Satisfaction with aspects of the EU political system
"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union gelöst? Bitte geben Sie jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the solutions to the following aspects in European Union? Please indicate your general impression in each case, and do not distinguish between European, national and regional levels.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes	in % of the resident population of each country
Anteil "sehr/eher zufriedenstellend gelöst"	Percentage very/somewhat satisfactory
Argument	Argument
Deutschland	Germany
Frankreich	France
Italien	Italy
Österreich	Austria
Ein System, das alle relevanten politische Parteien ins Parlament und die Regierung einbindet	A system that includes all relevant political parties in parliament and government



Eine faire, für alle gleichermassen gültige und transparente Rechtsprechung	A fair administration of justice that applies to everyone equally and is transparent
Ein System, das die Freiheit der einzelnen Bürgerinnen vor Staatsinteressen stellt	A system that puts the freedom of individual citizens before the interests of the state
Ein System, das Machthaber systematisch kontrolliert und zu viel Macht für einzelne verhindert	A system that places systematic checks on those in power and prevents individuals from amassing too much power
Ein System, in dem Entscheide der Politik und der Verwaltung transparent getroffen werden	A system in which political and administrative decisions are made transparently
Ein System, in dem Gemeinden und Regionen gegenüber der EU eine starke Stellung haben	A system in which municipalities and regions have a strong position vis-à-vis the EU
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In France and Austria, there is no absolute majority that is satisfied with the implementation of any aspect of the system. In Germany, there is an absolute majority only for the involvement of all relevant parties (51% somewhat/very satisfactory). The Italian population is comparatively more satisfied, with an absolute majority (53%) for transparent decision-making and a relative majority for the administration of justice and the prioritisation of civil liberties over state interests (50% each).

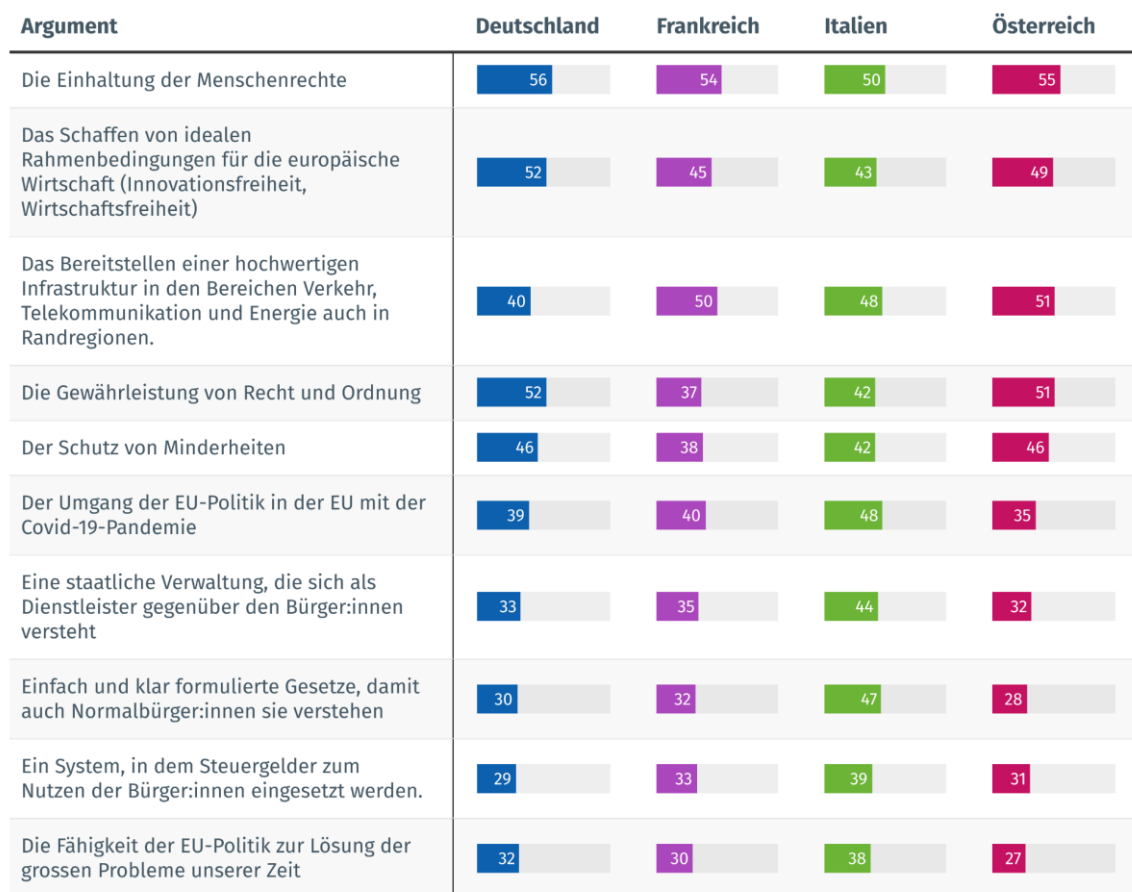
Regarding outcomes in the European Union, the neighbouring countries are particularly satisfied with respect for human rights and economic conditions:

Figure 39

### Zufriedenheit Resultate der EU-Politik

"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union? Bitte geben Sie auch hier jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."

in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes  
Anteil "sehr/eher zufriedenstellend gelöst"



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Zufriedenheit Resultate der EU-Politik	Satisfaction with the outcomes of EU policy
"Was ist Ihr Eindruck, wie zufriedenstellend sind die folgenden Aspekte aus Ihrer Sicht in der Europäischen Union? Bitte geben Sie auch hier jeweils Ihren generellen Eindruck an, und unterscheiden Sie nicht zwischen europäischer, nationaler und regionaler Ebene."	'What is your impression: how satisfactory are the following aspects in the European Union? Here too, please indicate your general impression in each case, and do not distinguish between European, national and regional levels.'
in % der Wohnbevölkerung des jeweiligen Landes	in % of the resident population of each country
Anteil "sehr/eher zufriedenstellend gelöst"	Percentage very/somewhat satisfactory
Argument	Argument
Deutschland	Germany
Frankreich	France

Italien	Italy
Österreich	Austria
Die Einhaltung der Menschenrechte	Respect for human rights
Das Schaffen von idealen Rahmenbedingungen für die europäische Wirtschaft (Innovationsfreiheit, Wirtschaftsfreiheit)	Creation of ideal conditions for the European economy (freedom of innovation, economic freedom)
Das Bereitstellen einer hochwertigen Infrastruktur in den Bereichen Verkehr, Telekommunikation und Energie auch in Randregionen.	Provision of high-quality infrastructure in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy, including in peripheral regions
Die Gewährleistung von Recht und Ordnung	Guarantee of law and order
Der Schutz von Minderheiten	Protection of minorities
Der Umgang der EU-Politik in der EU mit der Covid-19-Pandemie	Political handling of the Covid-19 pandemic by the EU
Eine staatliche Verwaltung, die sich als Dienstleister gegenüber den Bürger:innen versteht	A state administration that sees itself as a service provider to citizens
Einfach und klar formulierte Gesetze, damit auch Normalbürgerinnen sie verstehen	Simple and clearly worded laws that ordinary people can understand
Ein System, in dem Steuergelder zum Nutzen der Bürger:innen eingesetzt werden.	A system in which taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of citizens
Die Fähigkeit der EU-Politik zur Lösung der grossen Probleme unserer Zeit	The ability of politics in the EU to solve the major problems of our time
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In Germany, a majority is satisfied with human rights (56%), economic conditions (52%) and the guarantee of law and order (52%). In France, an absolute majority of the resident population is only satisfied with human rights (54%). Residents of Italy are most satisfied with respect for human rights (50%), but all other aspects fall below the 50% threshold. In Austria, on the other hand, there is a satisfied absolute majority for human rights (55%), the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (51%) and the guarantee of law and order (51%). Residents of Germany are most dissatisfied with the citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (29% somewhat/very satisfactory), while residents of the other neighbouring countries are most dissatisfied with the EU's problem-solving competence (between 27% and 38%).

## 4.2.2 Comparison of satisfaction with democratic foundations

When it comes to **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**, the neighbouring countries would most often like to adopt direct-democratic instruments from Switzerland:

Table 4: Political participation (neighbouring countries)

Political participation	Germany	France	Italy	Austria
1st place	Referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments (78% rather/definitely adopt)	Political initiatives (75%)	Demonstrations and assemblies (69%)	Referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments (82%)
2nd place	Political initiatives (75%)	Referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments (74%)	Freedom to form opinions (68%)	Freedom of expression (81%)
3rd place	Freedom of expression (74%)	Freedom of expression (69%)	Political participation of minorities (67%)	Political initiatives (79%)
Last place	Modification of party lists (64%)	Election of parliament (55%)	Modification of party lists (58%)	Political participation of minorities (74%)

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Residents of Germany and Austria would adopt the same elements from Switzerland: referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments, political initiatives and freedom of expression. Italy values the right of assembly and demonstration most highly, while the population of France would prefer to adopt political initiatives. It is also interesting that Italy is the only neighbouring country that would adopt freedom to form opinions, while the other countries prioritise freedom of expression. Amending party lists is ranked last among all opportunities for participation in Germany and Italy. In France, the adoption of parliamentary elections, and in Austria, the political participation of minorities take last place. Yet an absolute majority in all neighbouring countries would even consider adopting these elements as well.

With regard to political rules, the neighbouring countries most frequently toy with the idea of adopting checks on power and transparent decision-making:

Table 5: Political rules (neighbouring countries)

Rules	Germany	France	Italy	Austria
1st place	Transparent decision-making (79% definitely/rather adopt)	Checks on power (75%)	Transparent decision-making (72%)	Checks on power (81%)
2nd place	Fair administration of justice (77%)	- Fair administration of justice - Transparent decision-making (72% each)	Civil liberties before state interests (69%)	Involvement of all relevant parties (80%)
3rd place	Checks on power and involvement of all relevant parties (74% each)	- Strong position of municipalities and regions - Civil liberties before state interests (69% each)	- Strong position of municipalities and regions - Fair administration of justice (66% each)	- Fair administration of justice - Checks on power (78% each)
Last place	Strong position of municipalities and regions (72%)	Involvement of all relevant parties (62%)	Involvement of all relevant parties (60%)	- Strong position of municipalities and regions - Civil liberties before state interests (76% each)

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Adoption of fair administration of justice is also desired. It is also interesting that France and Italy would like to see a strong position for municipalities and regions, while this element comes last for Germany and Austria. A similar pattern emerges with the involvement of all relevant parties, which is in the top three candidates for adoption in Austria and Germany, but brings up the rear in Italy and France.

At the **OUTCOME LEVEL**, the neighbouring countries would most like to adopt Switzerland's service-oriented administration:

Table 6: Outcomes (neighbouring countries)

Results	Germany	France	Italy	Austria
<b>1st place</b>	Service-oriented administration (84% definitely/rather adopt)	Service-oriented administration (75%)	- Problem-solving competence - Economic conditions (74% each)	Service-oriented administration (85%)
<b>2nd place</b>	- Comprehensible laws - Citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (82% each)	Guarantee of law and order (73%)	Provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (73%)	- Problem-solving competence - Citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (84% each)
<b>3rd place</b>	Provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions (79%)	Citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money (70%)	Service-oriented administration (72%)	Comprehensible laws (83%)
<b>Last place</b>	Problem-solving competence (72%)	Minority protection (55%)	Handling of the coronavirus crisis (56%)	Minority protection (72%)

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The use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of the population, in particular, is in the top three desired outcomes in all neighbouring countries except Italy. The ability to solve the major problems of our time is something that residents of Italy and Austria in particular would like to take on. The comprehensible wording of legal texts, on the other hand, is preferred by the German and Austrian populations.

Protection of minorities is least often considered for adoption. For Germany, the relatively least important element that could be adopted is Switzerland's problem-solving competence, whereas Italy would be least likely to adopt its handling of the coronavirus crisis.

## 5 Synthesis

Professor Graber precisely states in his exposé accompanying the study that the development of Swiss democracy is by no means an organic process leading straight from the Rütli Oath to today's modern system. Rather, these developments took place episodically as pragmatic reactions to problems, and frequently also due to foreign pressure. Switzerland was regarded, especially abroad, as a field of experimentation for democracy and was therefore observed with favour and interest until the early 20th century. It was precisely this pragmatic adaptability of Swiss democracy that proved to be its strength. Democracy also promotes the legitimacy of laws and other political decisions as perceived by citizens, which underpins overall social stability.

Graber emphasises that the pragmatic and reactive further development of Swiss democracy in the present is by no means complete. Democratic deficits still exist and current and future challenges may require further adjustments. It therefore seems crucial not to idealise Swiss democracy or, in the worst case, define it as an unchangeable fact. It is precisely the latter scenario in which a certain danger lies for the current discourse: in the past, Switzerland did well to adapt 'its' democracy when and to the extent that it was no longer sufficiently suited to provide the right answers to the problems and everyday situations of the time in question. Particularly in the current discourse on the EU, but also in relation to many major challenges that go beyond the national framework, there is now a tendency to view our current Swiss democracy as a non-negotiable red line. This contradicts Switzerland's many years of good experience as a field of democratic experimentation.

The aim of this survey-based study is not to change Swiss democracy. On the contrary, it aims to develop a sensitivity for the current discourse about how democracy is generally an instrument for organising society and thus must regularly be measured by whether it ideally fulfils this purpose. In this study, we have therefore ascertained which elements of Swiss democracy are currently proving their worth from the point of view of Swiss citizens, where we can learn from other solutions from nearby countries and where nearby countries could benefit from solutions from our field of experimentation. We gained the following insights:



In **SWITZERLAND**, the majority of the resident population is satisfied in general, as well as with the sub-areas of participation, rules and outcomes of the political system. Residents are particularly satisfied with the direct-democratic instruments (referendums at the legislative and constitutional level, political initiatives and the opportunity to adjust party lists). Potential for improvement is seen mainly, albeit by a clear minority, in the election of the Federal Council, the political participation of minorities and the independent media (for the purpose of forming opinions). With regard to the rules of the political system, the involvement of all relevant political forces, the status of municipalities and cantons vis-à-vis the federal government and the administration of justice are particularly appreciated. There is room for improvement with regard to the prevention of power accumulation, transparent decision-making and the relationship between civil liberties and state interests. With regard to the outcomes of the political system, residents are particularly satisfied with law and

order, the protection of human rights and the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions. The resident population is currently dissatisfied with the ability to solve problems, the comprehensibility of laws and the use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of citizens. This is where the most explicit wishes for adaptation can be found.

The residents of the **NEIGHBOURING EU COUNTRIES**, on the other hand, are visibly less satisfied with the EU's democratic system in all of its dimensions. This can already be seen in the only slight majority reporting satisfaction with the general system. Seventy-five per cent of respondents demand an expansion of opportunities for political participation. Currently valued means of participation include the independent media for forming opinions, freedom of expression and the election of the European Parliament. There is a need for improvement in the adjustment of party lists, referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments and political initiatives. In terms of institutional rules, residents value the inclusion of all relevant political forces in parliament and government, and the administration of justice and freedom of expression. At this regulatory level, the status of municipalities and regions vis-à-vis the EU, the transparency of decision-making and control over the distribution of power could be strengthened. On the level of outcomes, respondents are mainly satisfied with the human rights situation, the provision of infrastructure in peripheral regions and the economic conditions. There is room for improvement in problem-solving competence, the citizen-oriented use of taxpayers' money and the comprehensibility of laws.



Residents of **SWITZERLAND AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES** see Switzerland as a democratic role model for the EU in the following respects: Political participation by means of referendums on laws and the constitution and with the help of political initiatives. The strong position of municipalities and cantons vis-à-vis the national government, and the subordination of state interests to civil liberties. The convincing outcomes of the service-oriented state administration and the use of tax revenues for the benefit of the population. If the EU moves towards Switzerland in these specific areas, this would not only fulfil a wish of its own population, but also strengthen the Swiss perception of EU democracy. The latter could form the basis for further intensification of cooperation between Switzerland and the European Union.



Comparison of neighbouring countries has shown that only Germany and Austria have a majority that are generally satisfied with the EU policy system. In terms of EU policy outcomes, no absolute majority can be found in any neighbouring country that is mostly/very satisfied with its output. However, there unanimous agreement on the desire for an expansion of the opportunities for political participation. This desire for reform is also reflected in the willingness to adopt opportunities for political participation. Referendums on legislative and constitutional amendments, political initiatives and freedom of expression are at the top of the wish list in all neighbouring countries. In terms of rules, all neighbouring countries would like to adopt Switzerland's transparent decision-making and checks on power. At the output level, on the other hand,





neighbouring countries are convinced of Switzerland's service-oriented administration and fair administration of justice.



In the neighbouring countries, there are majorities in all areas (participation, rules and outcomes) that would like to adopt elements from Switzerland. This would certainly be conducive to further acceptance of cooperation in Switzerland, since for a (slight) majority of the Swiss population, accession to the EEA or even further development of the Bilateral Agreements would be conceivable if the European Union were to adopt Swiss democratic instruments. Approval of the framework agreement in particular is about 10 percentage points higher than we recorded in a similar survey in March 2021. Even under ideal conditions, however, the forms of cooperation 'acceptance of EU judges in disputes concerning the Bilateral Agreements', 'automatic adoption of law within the framework of the Bilateral Agreements' and 'EU accession' have no chance of success. Overall, however, further-reaching statistical models also show that a rapprochement of the EU towards Swiss democratic participation, rules or outcomes would not simply lead to a majority desire for increased cooperation with the EU by the average Swiss citizen. A movement towards a Swiss understanding of democracy may generate goodwill in Switzerland, but it remains one element among many, especially in addition to the actual content of such cooperation.

Even though elements of Swiss democracy can indeed be found that a popular general consensus would regard as positive for the development of European democracy, it should not be forgotten that democracy and the steps in its development have a lot to do with country-specific conditions and prerequisites. What works well in one system does not necessarily work equally well in another. In the development of European democracies in the past, however, the focus was on how other countries solved problems. In our opinion, it therefore makes sense to continue to cultivate this view and to at least discuss possible better solutions. If, as a side effect, this discussion takes the currently blocked negotiations between Switzerland and the EU on the future ideal form cooperation and reawakens them at a level of discourse that has not yet been considered, this would be in keeping with the spirit of the 'field of experimentation of Swiss democracy'.

## 6 Annex

### 6.1 Team

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