

Council of States rejects UN migration pact

by Ralph Studer*



Ralph Studer.
(Picture ma)

(CH-S) *Ralph Studer presents the decision of the Council of States from the end of September on migration for the organisation "Zukunft CH". We would like to reproduce the summary of the council debate here because of its importance for the country.*

The Council of States had debated the UN migration pact again after more than three years. In the end, a clear majority of the council decided that Switzerland should not join it. The matter will now go to the National Council, which will make the final decision. If the National Council also rejects the pact, which is likely, Switzerland will not join it.

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Slow and steady wins the race. This could be a summary of the decision of the Council of States regarding the UN Global Compact for Migration (hereafter referred to as the "pact").

No control over the interpretation of the pact

The speeches of the conservative members of the Council of States, *Beat Rieder* (The Centre) and *Marco Chiesa* (SVP), were very clear.¹ Rieder put it succinctly: "I have rarely seen such an unrealistic, dishonest paper, obviously written by diplomats for diplomats. Rarely in a soft law pact is there such a great gap between the ideal and the terrible reality of migration as in this paper. [...] Whether you then tell us in here that this pact is not legally binding is of secondary importance. These pacts are not only interpreted by the Federal Council and parliament, but also by courts, by the Federal Supreme Court and the ECHR, and we are not able to control this inter-

pretation. Therefore, this pact must be rejected as a matter of urgency."

What is being kept secret

Rieder also addresses the "elephant in the room" that no one mentions, namely the demographic development in Africa. "The main topic that this pact ignores is demographics. That is why almost all African countries could agree on this pact. Population growth and the political consequences of population growth have been ignored. [...] Nigeria, for example, readily signed the migration pact, but also stated why in the final declaration. It wants to see an intensification of regular migration, but certainly does not want any influence on domestic political matters in Nigeria. Nigeria is the fastest growing country in Africa. It currently has 226 million inhabitants. By 2040, it will be 400 million. Eighty per cent of the population is willing to migrate."

Considerable risks for Switzerland

Chiesa also had no good words for the pact: "We all know that this pact, which is presented as a non-binding document, entails extraordinary risks for our national sovereignty, our internal security and our social well-being."

And Chiesa continues: "We know that this pact will be used as a basis for migration policy in the future. This pact undermines the central provision of our constitution that Switzerland should decide on immigration autonomously. Transferring such important decisions to international bodies that do not know or consider our national characteristics and needs would be a clear breach of what our constitution demands. We must not allow this. Some countries, such as the United States, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Austria and Australia, have already decided to reject this pact and protect their sovereignty."

Criticism of the pact unwelcome

Chiesa is right to point out the restriction of freedom of expression: "Goal 17 of the pact, which calls exclusively for positive public campaigns, will restrict critical debate and prevent the free

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expression of contrary views on migration policy. This will lead to a form of censorship in which legitimate criticism of migration policy is labelled as hate speech. This form of pressure on the press and public debate is unacceptable in a democracy like ours, which has made freedom of expression one of its fundamental pillars.”

Council of States follows its committee

With this negative decision, the Council of States is following the lead of its advisory committee. The committee had already spoken out against joining the UN Global Compact for Migration. It took the view that Switzerland would not derive any concrete benefits from ratifying the pact.² Migration policy interests would be better served if Switzerland continued to abstain from voting on the pact.

Zukunft CH campaigned against the pact on multiple occasions

The foundation *Zukunft CH*, which has spoken out clearly and firmly against the pact in the past, is pleased with the Council of States’ decision.³ In its latest statement on 12 September 2024, *Zukunft CH* once again made clear its negative stance for the following reasons:

- Strong self-imposed commitment by Switzerland and political obligation
- Increase in political pressure regarding the distribution of migrants/refugees
- Criticism of migration is suppressed
- Migration pact is at the expense of local employees
- Migration is the wrong incentive and creates new problems

What happens next?

The matter will now be referred to the National Council. If the National Council also says no – which is likely – the Federal Council will have to send a letter to the UN Secretary-General,⁴ stating that Switzerland will not join the pact.

Source: <https://www.zukunft-ch.ch/staenderat-lehnt-uno-migrationspakt-ab/>, 20 September 2024

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

¹ <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=65543>

² <https://www.parlament.ch/press-releases/Pages/mm-apk-s-2024-06-21.aspx>

³ <https://www.zukunft-ch.ch/bern-uno-migrationspakt-hat-schweren-stand/>

⁴ <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/cassis-wirbt-verblich-uno-migrationspakt-staenderat-sagt-nein>