

“Europe’s last candle”

Switzerland as a counter-model to Brussels’ centralism ... that could all come to an end with the EU framework agreement

by Michael Straumann*



Michael Straumann.
(Bild zvg)

The planned framework agreement with the European Union is a perennial topic of debate in Switzerland. Consequently, another power struggle broke out at the Federal Palace in Bern at the end of May. Parliamentarians are arguing over which committee – known in Switzerland

as a “commission” – should be responsible for the EU treaty package.

The *Foreign Affairs Committees* (FAC) of the National Council and the Council of States, which are notorious for their affinity with the European Union, are determined to claim the dossier for themselves. There has been discussion for some time as to whether a simple or a double majority is required for the treaty package. A simple majority means that only a majority of the voting population is needed for the proposal to be adopted. A double majority additionally requires the approval of the cantons, i.e. a majority of the cantons.

The EU lobby, which is strongly represented in the Foreign Affairs Committees, naturally has little interest in such high hurdles. The smaller, predominantly rural cantons of Central Switzerland have traditionally been far more sceptical of the EU than the large, urban cantons. That is why the Foreign Affairs Committees are attempting to bring the dossier under their control.

The *Political Institutions Committees* (PIC), which are responsible, amongst other things, for matters of state organisation, wish to put a stop to this. Accordingly, FDP Council of States member *Andrea Caroni* launched a proposal stipulating that a double majority would be required for the treaty package.¹ A majority of the National



The European Commission headquarters in Brussels.
“Switzerland embodies the living alternative to the EU.”
(Picture jpv)

Council’s PIC voted in favour of supporting Caroni’s proposal. Furthermore, the PIC announced that it would launch a further parliamentary initiative to ensure “that this initiative can be drawn up”, as stated in an official press release.

Europe in decline

What may at first appear unspectacular to an outsider from the EU should not be underestimated. For it is in Switzerland that the course for the future of the European continent will be set in the coming months and years.

Switzerland is Europe’s last beacon, where the flame of freedom still burns faintly. The rest of Europe is on the decline. The European Union bears significant responsibility for this development. Political integration has been advancing for more than three decades – and the direction has always been the same: more centralisation, more regulatory overreach, more surveillance, more encroachment on citizens’ fundamental rights, more expropriation, rising crime and a creeping dismantling of democratic participation.

With instruments such as the “Digital Services Act”, the “European Digital Identity Wallet” and the introduction of the digital euro, the Eurocrats are working flat out to turn the continent into a digital prison from which there is to be no escape for its inmates.

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There were countries that, for a time, were able to successfully resist this progressive loss of sovereignty to Brussels. But now even Hungary, once the spearhead of Europe's sovereigntist forces, has fallen. *Viktor Orbán* has only himself to blame for his electoral defeat. He never really got to grips with the corrupt machinations within his inner circle – or perhaps he was never seriously willing to root them out.

A profoundly European country

Switzerland thus remains the last counter-model to this centralist wasteland. For years, Brussels has been harassing the Swiss Confederation, even though politicians in Bern have repeatedly accommodated the Eurocrats with preemptive obedience. For instance, the EU excluded Switzerland from the Horizon research programme after it failed to approve the treaty package at the first attempt in May 2021.

Owing to its decentralised political organisation, Switzerland is a profoundly European country. It embodies precisely what the venerable German economist *Wilhelm Röpke* once wrote about the continent.² Europe is a “unity of diversity”, which is why “anything centralising is a betrayal and a violation of Europe, including in the economic sphere”.

Consequently, the financial expert *Andreas Marquart* and *Philipp Bagus*, Professor of Economics at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos in Madrid, also argue that the true enemies of Europe are those who turn their backs on the “idea of a politically fragmented Europe of diversity and freedom”.³ The European Union is therefore, in terms of its fundamental ideological orientation, profoundly un-European.

Switzerland is a thorn in the side of the EU because, for many people in Europe, it is seen as a shining example that things could work differently. Germans in particular, with whom I speak, often sing the praises of Switzerland's institutional architecture – even if it is sometimes somewhat romanticised in the process. Nevertheless, for many people, the “myth of Switzerland” remains a glimmer of hope that Europe is not yet entirely lost.

And it is precisely this hope that Brussels and its ideological allies within Switzerland, I am convinced, wish to destroy. Switzerland embodies the living counter-model to the EU: federal-

ism and subsidiarity instead of centralism. Direct democracy instead of technocracy. A militia system instead of career politicians. Neutrality instead of belligerence.

The threat posed by the EU treaty package

This is precisely why public opinion is divided over the framework agreement. After all, in the words of the historian *Oliver Zimmer*, it would “fundamentally alter Switzerland's political DNA”.⁴ Switzerland would commit itself to automatically adopting European Union laws in future; this is euphemistically referred to as “dynamic legal transposition”.

If the Swiss people vote differently in a referendum than Brussels would wish, the EU reserves the right to take “compensatory measures”. In other words: if Switzerland votes the “wrong” way, sanctions loom.

The Swiss Confederation would thus be reduced to a DINO (*Democracy in Name Only*). Referendums would become nothing more than democratic rituals with no real effect. The legal acts of the European Union to which the treaty package refers would be interpreted and applied in accordance with the case law of the European Court of Justice. This means that, in the event of legal disputes between Bern and Brussels, an EU body would ultimately decide. It is obvious in whose favour such proceedings would be decided. In short: if Switzerland were to accept the EU framework agreement, a success story that has developed over centuries would come to an end. Then, for Europe, it would finally be time to switch off the lights!

Source: <https://www.straumedien.ch/p/die-letzte-kerze-europas>, 3 June 2026.

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(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

¹ <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/unerwuenschetes-praejudiz-im-parlament-eu-freunde-wollen-befuerworter-des-staendemehrs-zurueckbinden-doch-die-wehren-sich-ld.10007914>

² <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/de/document/doi/10.1515/ordo-2012-0124/html>

³ <https://www.amazon.de/Wir-schaffen-das-Andreas-Marquart/dp/3959720432>

⁴ <https://schweizermonat.ch/die-politische-dna-der-schweiz-wird-sich-grundlegend-veraen-dern/>