

Polity IV Country Report 2007: Switzerland

Score:	2006	2007	Change			
Polity:	10	10	0			
Democ:	10	10	0			
Autoc:	0	0	0			
Durable:		159				
Tentative:		No				
SCODE	SWZ	CCODE	225	Date of Report	1 November 2008	
Polity IV Component Variables						
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP	
3	3	4	7	5	5	
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)						
End Date			Begin Date		12 September 1848 (Ind.)	
Polity Fragmentation: No						
Constitution	1999 (rewritten from 1874 constitution)					
Executive(s)	President Pascal Couchepin (FDP); elected by the legislature from the nine-member Federal Council for a one-year rotating term, 2008 (<i>Note: Micheline Calmy-Rey (SPS) held the presidency during 2007.</i>)					
Legislature	Bicameral: National Council (200 seats; proportionally elected; most recent elections, 21 October 2007) Swiss People's Party (SVP): 62 Social Democratic Party (SPS): 43 Freethinking Democratic Party (FDP): 31 Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP): 31 Other parties: 33 Council of States (46 seats; directly elected by cantons; most recent elections, 21 October, 11, 18, and 25 November 2007) CVP: 15 FDP: 12 SPS: 9 SVP: 7 Other parties: 3					
Judiciary	Federal Supreme Court					

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Executive authority is vested in the nine-member Federal Council as a collegial presidency, and major executive decisions are made by a majority vote of its members. The Federal Council is elected by a joint session of the legislature, which is formed by free multi-party elections once in four years. Presently, the Federal Council is made up by four major parties: SVP, SPS, FDP and CVP. The President of the Federal Council is also elected by the legislature from among the Councilors and is rotated annually.

Executive Constraints: Executive Parity or Subordination (7)

Swiss system is strongly influenced in its operation by the use of the popular initiative and the referendum, through which the electorate plays a direct role in making important political, economic, and social decisions at all levels of government. The Constitution stipulates that the sovereign power rests with the people, who vote on proposed legislation several times a year. Since the federal government is elected by the legislature, it is dependent on its continued support to remain in office. Furthermore, the Swiss system grants considerable autonomy to individual cantons, which also limits the powers of the federal government. Finally the rotating federal president serves his/her one-year term as "the first among equals" and has limited powers within the Federal Council. The judiciary is separate and independent of the Government.

Political Participation: Institutionalized Open Electoral Competition (10)

Representative democracy and civil liberties based on a national consensus have been instituted in Switzerland since the middle of the 19th century. The new Constitution that was approved by voters in 1999 and came into force in 2000 provides for new protection of citizens' rights including equal access to political process. Political participation is generally consolidated and consensual in nature and characterized by durable party organizations: conservative SVP, social-democratic SPS, liberal FDP and regionalist CVP; these same parties have been governing the country in a stable coalition since 1959.

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