

The Chaos Initiative will take effect *in five years*

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At a glance

- In just five years, family reunification in particular would have to be severely restricted due to the Chaos Initiative.
- This would affect not only Swiss nationals but also many people from the EU and would put a massive strain on bilateral relations with the EU.
- Everything is possible, from harsh countermeasures to the abolition of the bilateral agreements.

On June 14, 2026, Switzerland will vote on the SVP's "sustainability initiative". However, the only sustainable aspect of the initiative is the damage it causes, which is why it is being rejected by a broad alliance. [economiesuisse](#) recently highlighted the harmful consequences and absurdity of a rigid population cap in a detailed [dossier policy](#).

The Chaos Initiative will take effect in five years

The initiative specifically aims to limit the permanent resident population in Switzerland to ten million people by 2050. This is why it is also known as the "No 10-million-Switzerland!" initiative.

However, this initiative title is also misleading. This is because the initiative will not take effect as soon as the permanent resident population reaches 10 million people, which will be the case in 2042 according to the reference scenario of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). No, the initiative will take effect in five years' time!

The initiative stipulates that the Federal Council and Parliament must take measures within the scope of their competencies as soon as the population exceeds nine and a half million people, particularly in the area of asylum and family reunification - with a view to complying with the rigid cap of 10 million people. Based on the FSO's reference scenario for population development, this would probably already be the case in 2031.

Restriction of family reunification jeopardizes bilateral relations

In the worst-case scenario, Switzerland would have to inform the EU in five years' time that its citizens would no longer be allowed to come to Switzerland for family reunification, or only under severe restrictions. An urgently needed German doctor with a job offer in a Basel hospital might no longer be able to bring her husband and children with her, a French carer in a retirement home in western Switzerland would not be able to bring his wife to Switzerland and a top Slovenian biomedical researcher who would like to do research at the ETH would also be denied family reunification. The question therefore arises as to which foreign workers would come or stay in Switzerland at all in future under these conditions.

In addition to the economic and social consequences of such a measure, the political signal to the EU must also be borne in mind. It is a gross violation of the bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons. And this is not a one-way street: many Swiss citizens also make use of their right to live and work in the entire EU area. Conversely, imagine if the EU were to refuse Swiss nationals the right to join their families, meaning that a Swiss university professor living in the Netherlands would no longer be allowed to bring his Swiss wife to join him.

Anything is possible, from harsh countermeasures to the termination of contracts

The symbolic significance of such a step should not be underestimated. In terms of realpolitik, it is simply inconceivable that the EU would not react sharply to this. In the best-case scenario, Swiss nationals in the EU would face the same fate and be denied family reunification in future. In the worst-case scenario, the EU would terminate the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons itself, which would automatically mean that the other six Bilateral Agreements I would also cease to apply. This would also render Switzerland's Schengen/Dublin association, which is based on the free movement of persons, invalid. The successful bilateral path would thus come to an abrupt end.

The intention of the Chaos Initiative is clear: it is about a rigid population cap. To ensure that the fixed upper limit can actually be adhered to, drastic measures must be taken at an early stage - for example with regard to family reunification.</p></div>
<div data-bbox="162 198 910 302" data-label="Text"><p>Therefore, the electorate must also be clearly aware of one thing when it comes to the time horizon: chaos in bilateral relations with the EU is not just a threat in the decade after next, but in five years' time! And another thing: you cannot set an example and rely on its ineffectiveness at the same time - otherwise you could be in for a rude awakening in reality later on.</p></div>
<div data-bbox="166 734 251 795" data-label="Image">A small portrait photograph of Pascal Wüthrich, a man with short dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a blue tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.</div>
<div data-bbox="265 746 557 783" data-label="Caption"><p>Pascal Wüthrich
Project Manager International Relations</p></div>
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