



# Switzerland in the foreign media: 2nd quarter 2019

## Women's strike in the headlines

The Swiss women's strike attracted a great deal of attention abroad in both traditional and social media. News reports often focused on the gender equality gap and explained the strikers' demands. Many Swiss women received media coverage, outlining their grievances and the reasons why they were going on

«Frauen streiken für Gleichberechtigung: Warum die Schweiz zu den rückständigsten Ländern Europas zählt»

(Der Spiegel, Germany)

strike. In particular, the issues of wage inequality and work-family balance were widely discussed.

The tonality of the coverage was mainly critical of Switzerland's

equality policy and implicitly supportive of the women. After the strike, the foreign media was impressed by the strength and presence of the Swiss women's movement. In general, the reporting conveyed Switzerland as a country lagging behind in terms of gender equality. This image was reinforced by a UNICEF report on family-friendly policies – published around the same time and also attracting media attention – which ranked Switzerland last in Europe.



The women's strike in Bern  
(© The New York Times)

## FIFA: Swiss judiciary in the spotlight

In relation to the FIFA scandals, several occurrences that are linked to the Swiss judiciary attracted considerable attention from the foreign media. First, Valais chief prosecutor Rinaldo Arnold made the headlines when criminal proceedings for suspected acceptance of gifts and passive bribery were dropped. Shortly after that, Attorney General Michael Lauber was in the news several times for possible misconduct in his office's investigations into FIFA. For the most part, these reports were factual in relation to Switzerland. However, some media reports were more critical of the Swiss judiciary, suggesting that they did not do all they could have to prosecute the high-level officials involved.

«The scandal [...] threatens to cast a long shadow over Switzerland's reputation as a reliable partner in international efforts to combat financial corruption»

(Financial Times, UK)



The women's strike logo projected on the Roche Tower in Basel.  
(© The Sydney Morning Herald)

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FIFA case: Attorney General Michael Lauber investigated by the Swiss judiciary for possible misconduct  
(© Le Monde)

## Increased reports about friction in Swiss–EU relations

The conflict between Switzerland and the EU over an institutional framework agreement gained high visibility abroad, particularly after Switzerland lost recognition of stock exchange equivalence and retaliated with its own protective measures. The foreign media interpreted the EU's decision as a means to

«Bourse: le ton monte entre la Suisse et l'Union européenne»

(Les Echos, France)

pressure Bern into signing the agreement. News reports also referred to the drawn-out negotiation process and numerous compromises made by the EU.

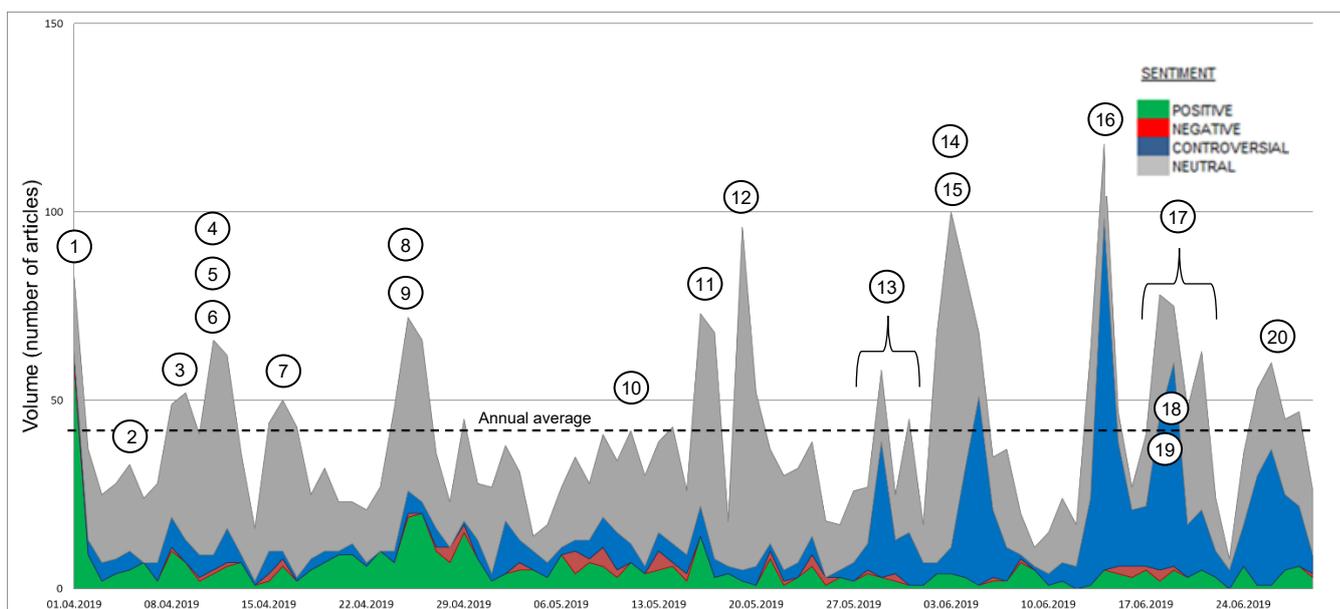
The European press was largely supportive of the EU's standpoint and, on the whole, the conflict

between Switzerland and the EU was seen as detrimental to both sides. However, some media outlets clearly positioned themselves for or against Switzerland. German and Austrian media were especially critical of what they perceived as reticence on the part of the Swiss government. Meanwhile, in the context of Brexit, much of the British media tended to side with Switzerland.



Images of the Swiss stock exchange used to illustrate reports on Swiss–EU relations  
(© The Economist)

## Quantitative evolution of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland



Evolution of the volume and sentiment of foreign media coverage in connection with Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed, 01.04.2019 – 30.06.2019). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their volume and significance.

(1) Miami Open ATP tournament won by Roger Federer. (2) Agreement on a Swiss protecting power mandate for the US in Venezuela. (3) Two Swiss studies on glacier melting. (4) Cum-ex trial against three Germans at Zurich district court. (5) Announcement of plans to end the emergency stockpiling of coffee. (6) FIFA: closure of criminal proceedings against Valais chief prosecutor Rinaldo Arnold. (7) Further developments in the AfD party funding case. (8) Visit by Swiss President Ueli Maurer to China and Swiss support for the Belt and Road Initiative. (9) FIFA: preliminary investigation into Attorney General Michael Lauber by the Supervisory Authority for the Office of the Attorney General (SA-OAG). (10) FIFA: opening of a disciplinary investigation into Attorney General Lauber by the SA-OAG. (11) Swiss President Ueli Maurer and US President Donald Trump met in Washington. (12) Voting on firearms legislation and the tax and pensions reform bill. (13) South African track and field athlete Caster Semenya before the Swiss Federal Supreme Court in a dispute over the testosterone rule. (14) Continuation of the Caster Semenya case. (15) Visit by US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo to Switzerland and Bilderberg Meeting in Montreux. (16) Women's strike. (17) Possibility of stock market equivalence not being renewed. (18) FIFA: Michel Platini detained on charges of corruption brought by the Office of the Attorney General, among others. (19) FIFA: Attorney General Lauber forced to recuse himself from FIFA probe for apparent bias. (20) Impending loss of stock exchange equivalence and announcement of protective measures.

### A closer look: protecting power mandates enhance Switzerland's image

Switzerland's good offices are regularly featured in the foreign press in connection with various current events. However, media attention is rarely as high as in the second quarter of 2019, when several events put a spotlight on Switzerland's diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives. The first of these was the signing of an agreement on Switzerland's protecting power mandate for the US in Venezuela, which attracted much attention in the foreign media and highlighted the role Switzerland plays in de-escalating international conflicts. Later in the quarter, the meeting between Swiss President Ueli Maurer and US President Donald Trump in Washington attracted great interest in the international media. Reports on the meeting referred to rising geopolitical tensions between the US and Iran and brought attention to Switzerland's protecting power mandate between these two countries. Similar news reports appeared a few weeks later when US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo visited Switzerland and met with Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis in Bellinzona. The tense international situation resulted in an unusually high level of media attention on both of these high-level Swiss-US meetings and on Switzerland's tradition of providing good offices. This repeated coverage promotes the international public perception of Switzerland as a mediator in international conflicts.

Switzerland's monitoring of foreign media includes all coverage in connection with Switzerland in reference media in 18 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, USA) in addition to reference media across the Arab world and in the European Union.

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