



Switzerland in the foreign media: 2nd quarter 2020

Largely positive response to Switzerland's handling of the coronavirus crisis

In the second quarter, the foreign media's reporting on Switzerland's approach to the COVID-19 crisis continued as part of their intensive coverage of the global impact of the pandemic. As before, the efficiency and rapid implementation of measures to grant Swiss companies liquidity loans and Switzerland's short-time work compensations were repeatedly reported abroad in a very positive light. However, there was also still coverage in April of Switzerland's relatively high

"Brilla, un'incollatura davanti all'efficiente Germania, un solo paese: la Svizzera, dove il processo della concessione degli aiuti e di liquidità ha funzionato come un orologio"

(La Repubblica, Italy)

coronavirus figures. The FOPH's statement around this time that children rarely transmitted the virus raised eyebrows in the international media. In the second half of April there was relatively high international coverage of the announcement of a roadmap for lifting restrictions and the first phase of reopening.

News of food parcels being handed out to people in need in Geneva was reported around the world in May, due to the story being at odds with Switzerland's stereotypical image as a wealthy country. In June the media covered numerous studies which indicated on the one hand that Switzerland was a safe country in regard to COVID-19, and on the other hand that its extensive easing of restrictions was placing it at risk of a second wave. The overall tone in the foreign press was positive: despite some initial failures, Switzerland now appeared to be handling the crisis well. There was some discussion about Switzerland's Epidemics Act possibly acting as a model for other countries.



Covid-19: The hospitality sector also sees changes as the country opens up.
(© *Financial Times*)



Covid-19: People in need queuing for food parcels in Geneva
(© *Daily Mail*)

Much attention on the Office of the Attorney General

News stories concerning the Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAG) regularly appeared in the foreign media during the months leading up to Swiss Attorney General Michael Lauber's resignation at the end of July 2020. The focus was on a number of cases concerning international football: e.g., the statute of limitations in the 'summer fairy tale' trial concerning irregularities in the awarding of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, and new details of meetings between the Swiss Attorney General and FIFA President Gianni Infantino. The decision to drop one of the cases against former FIFA president Sepp Blatter was also met with - sometimes-harsh - criticism, particularly in the European and US media. Several media outlets accused the OAG of bias and lack of credibility. In relation to a Russian money laundering case, European and Russian media were critical of the acceptance of gifts by Lauber's top Russia expert as well as the OAG's plans to share sensitive witness statements with Russian authorities, counter to international guidance. The international media also reported on calls by Swiss parliamentarians for Lauber to step down, Lauber's hearing before the parliamentary judicial committee, the launch of impeachment proceedings against Lauber, as well as Lauber's resignation in July 2020. The media reacted positively to the OAG's decision to open a criminal probe into Glencore over alleged corruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

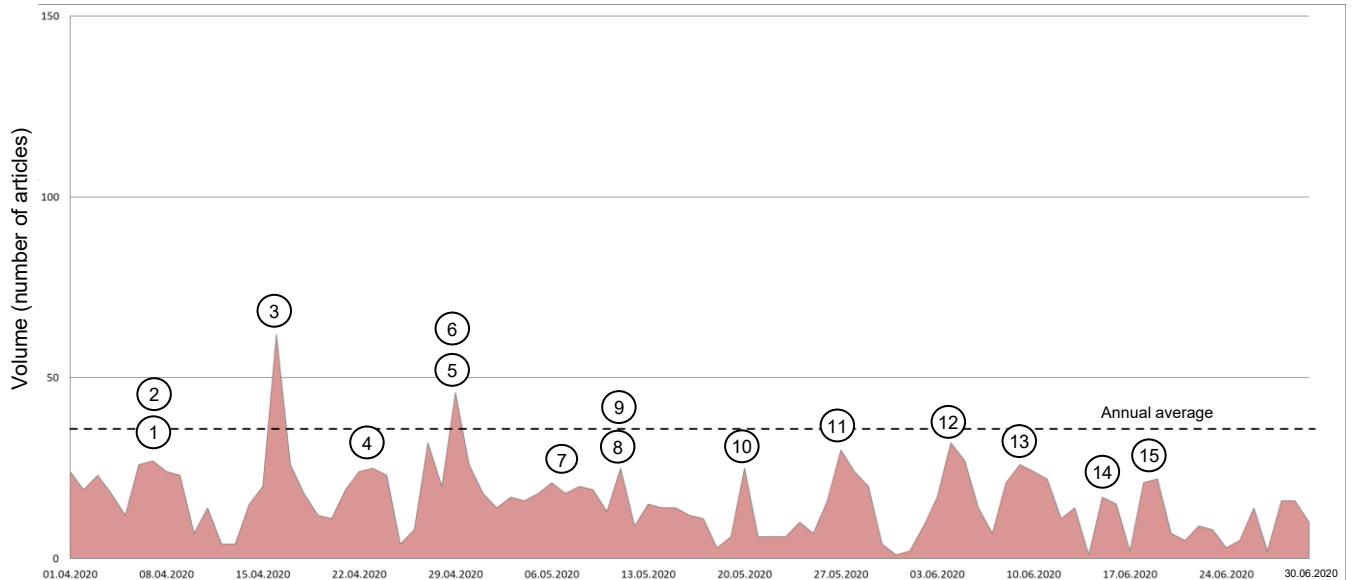


Attorney General Michael Lauber
(© *Le Monde*)



In connection with meetings between Switzerland's attorney general and FIFA's president, the senior prosecutor of the canton of Valais was also mentioned, seen here in a friendly match.
(© *Süddeutsche Zeitung*)

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, 01.04.2020 - 30.06.2020). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected based on their volume and significance.

(1) Introduction of liquidity relief loans for Swiss SMEs (2) Fence installed between Konstanz and Kreuzlingen (3) Announcement of roadmap to ease coronavirus restrictions (4) Statute of limitations in the 'summer fairy tale' trial (5) Swiss justice and international football (6) 1st phase of easing of restrictions (including hairdressers) (7) OAG and FIFA (8) 2nd phase of easing of restrictions (schools and shops) and food parcels in Geneva (9) Attorney general summoned to appear before judicial committee (10) Hearing of attorney general and launch of impeachment proceedings (11) Announcement of 3rd phase of easing of restrictions (hospitality sector) (12) Swiss support in securing the release of a US citizen in Iran (13) Parliamentary decisions on air ticket levy and 'Marriage for All' (14) Women's strike anniversary and Black Lives Matter protests (15) OAG investigations into Glencore

In focus: Matterhorn – sign of solidarity sent around the world

Tweet by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi

The messages of solidarity and flags of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic which were projected onto the Matterhorn over a five-week period received much international media attention. The project was a collaboration between Zermatt Tourism and Swiss light artist Gerry Hofstetter. In particular, media picked up on the images showing their own country's flag. For instance, pictures posted by Fox News and India Times were each shared over 200,000 times on social media. Many high-ranking foreign government officials also shared the pictures on Twitter. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted "Thank you to our #Swiss friends for this beautiful message of hope and solidarity", and Narendra Modi also shared a picture from the campaign with his 2.5 million Twitter followers. The United Arab Emirates reciprocated by projecting the Swiss flag on some of its most prominent landmarks, including the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. The countries abroad perceived the Matterhorn projections as a sign of Switzerland's direct solidarity with them.

Switzerland's monitoring of foreign media includes all coverage in connection with Switzerland in reference media in 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Spain, Great Britain, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, USA) in addition to reference media across the Arab world and in the European Union.
 Contact: FDFA, Presence Switzerland, Monitoring and Analysis Section, Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern
 Tel. +41 58 462 01 83, email prs@eda.admin.ch, <http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/presenceswitzerland>