

Switzerland in the foreign media: 3rd quarter 2022

Possible energy shortages also in Switzerland

Against the backdrop of a possible energy shortage in Europe, several articles relating to Switzerland appeared in foreign media. The Swiss government's savings targets and emergency planning were generally reported in a matter-of-fact way.

“Si avvicina la stagione fredda e la Svizzera si ritrova assolutamente impreparata ad affrontare autunno e inverno [...]”

(La Repubblica, Italy)

Some media in neighbouring countries criticised Switzerland for being ill-prepared for energy shortages, saying that in winter it is dependent on imports of electricity from abroad and thus on the solidarity of its European neighbours. The suggestion to shower together as an energy-saving measure elicited numerous comments, and some amusement. State aid for Axpo was mainly reported on objectively. Russian media reported remarkably widely on a possible energy crisis in Switzerland, including frequent references to Swiss sources that it could lead to civil unrest. In addition, in the Russian media and on social media in particular there were reports, and sometimes heated discussions, that the Swiss population might be threatened with prison sentences for excessive heating during energy shortages. At the same time, a fake poster did the rounds, in which the federal government was apparently calling on people to denounce anyone using excessive heating. The poster was mainly spread by Russian pro-government or right wing media and social media accounts in Russia. Only a few articles made it clear that it was fake news.



Preventing liquidity problems: Switzerland provides lifeline for Axpo power company. © *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*



Fake news on Switzerland received some coverage in the foreign media in the context of the possible energy shortage. © *Moskowski Komsomolets*

Ukraine war: Swiss neutrality in a global conflict

In the context of reporting on the Ukraine war, foreign media continued to be interested in the interpretation of Swiss neutrality. Information regarding a potential Swiss mandate as a protecting power for Ukraine in Russia was mainly factual. Russian media in particular, however, highlighted the position of the Russian

“Russia's attack on Ukraine poses the hardest dilemma Switzerland has faced since World War II”

(Washington Post, United States)

authorities, according to which Switzerland would not be eligible as a protecting power because it had abandoned its neutrality by adopting the EU sanctions. The media also reacted to the news that Switzerland was allegedly refusing to take in Ukrainian war casualties out of concern for its neutrality. The recommendation, often misinterpreted by foreign media as an official government decision, came in for heavy criticism in press articles and on social media, while the subsequent admission of casualties was unable to undo the damage. In addition, a few Western media outlets examined possible options for reinterpreting Swiss neutrality. Meanwhile, the decision to maintain the current direction of neutrality policy met with little media response abroad.



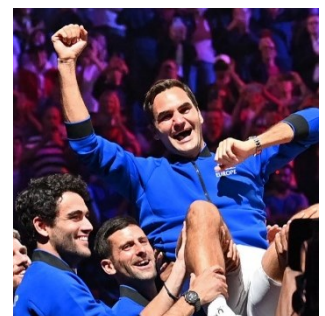
Reports on the alleged non-admission of Ukrainian war casualties often appeared alongside pictures of wounded people. © *The Daily Beast*

Roger Federer: a Swiss “legend” steps down

Roger Federer's retirement attracted great media interest worldwide. In addition to his outstanding sporting achievements, the media also paid tribute to his exemplary conduct. Although Switzerland was not the direct focus, the global coverage of Roger Federer with the reference to his Swiss origin had a positive effect on the perception of Switzerland.

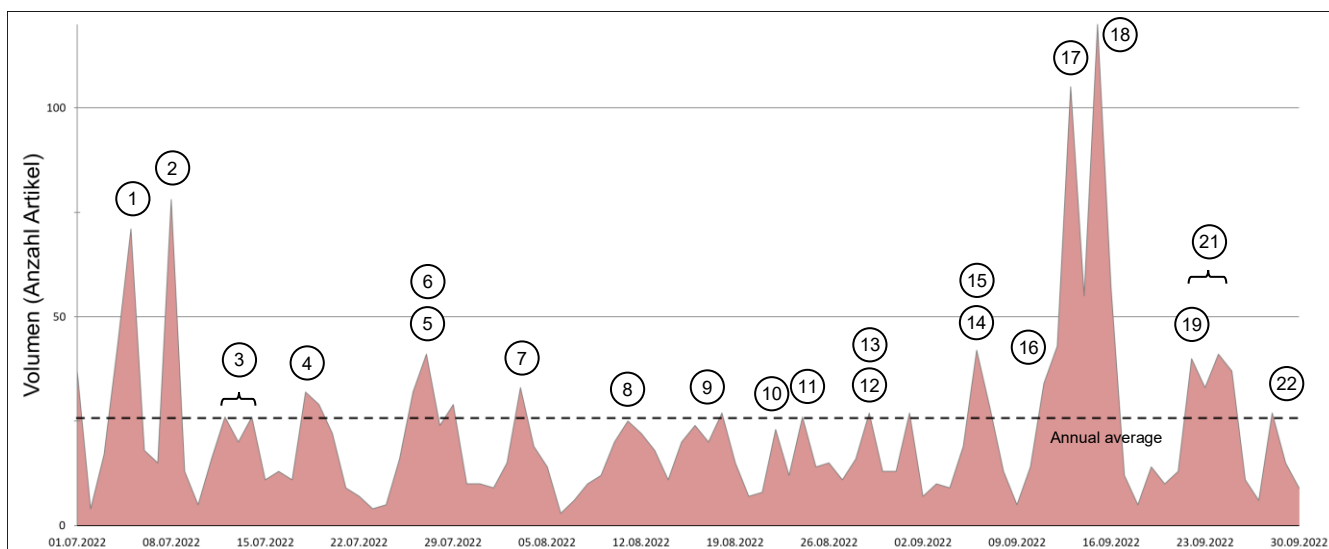
“Le Suisse a évidemment sa place au panthéon des plus grands sportifs de tous les temps”

(L'Équipe, France)



Roger Federer plays the last match of his career at the Laver Cup in London. © *BBC*

Quantitative trends in foreign media coverage related to Switzerland



Changes in the volume of foreign media coverage related to Switzerland (volume = number of articles per day in the leading media analysed, 01.07.2022 – 30.09.2022). A spike can correspond to multiple events. The numbered events have been selected on the basis of their volume and significance.

(1) Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano (2) Blatter and Platini acquitted in Federal Criminal Court (3) Ukraine war: implementation of sanctions (4) Ukraine war: alleged failure to admit Ukrainian war casualties (5) New CEO at Credit Suisse (6) Impact of climate change (7) Ukraine war: adoption of new EU sanctions (8) Ukraine war: developments regarding protecting power mandate (9) Ukraine War: various reports (10) Glacier melt (11 | 12) Possible energy shortage (13) Ukraine war: various reports (14) Possible energy shortage (15) State aid for Axpo (16) Decision on nuclear end storage site (17) Death of Jean-Luc Godard (18) Roger Federer resigns (19) SNB raises key interest rate (20) Federal vote (21) Federer at the Laver Cup (22) Study on glacier melt

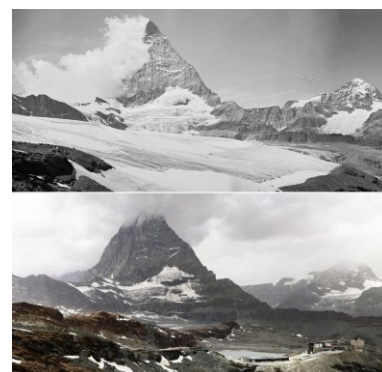
Focus: impact of climate change on the Swiss Alps

This year's record high glacier melt in Switzerland received global media coverage during the quarter. Several Swiss studies garnered much attention during the quarter: they showed that glaciers in Switzerland have lost a full 6% of their volume this year alone and half of their volume in the last 85 years.

“Switzerland's Glaciers Are Becoming a Front-Row Seat to Climate Destruction”
(Bloomberg, United States)

Numerous foreign media outlets also focused on the visible effects of the glacier melt, such as the Tsanfleuron Pass being free of ice for the first time in over 2,000 years, the shifting of the border between Switzerland and Italy as the

Theodul Glacier has retreated, or the uncovering of the mortal remains of several missing persons and other objects in the wake of the melt. Regarding the consequences of ice loss, specific pieces also reported on the Swiss population's fears of economic damage and the loss of their national heritage, or emphasised the importance of Swiss glaciers for the European water supply. The more in-depth coverage was primarily related to the global relevance of the issue of climate change. However, the iconic significance of glaciers as a symbol of the Alps and the threat to their survival also contribute to media attention. Indirectly, the quality of Swiss research, such as that of Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland (GLAMOS) or the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), also received worldwide attention through the reporting. The coverage also helped to raise global awareness of the implications of climate change for Switzerland.



The Matterhorn in the canton of Valais. Compared to 1930 (top), in 2022 (bottom) the glacier in the middle has disappeared, exposing a lake and a lift platform. (© Mainichi Shimbun)

Monitoring the image of Switzerland in the foreign media covers all the reporting on Swiss-related topics in the leading media of 19 countries, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US as well as in the leading pan-Arab and EU media. Contact: FDFA, Presence Switzerland, Monitoring and Analysis Section, Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. +41 58 462 34 63, prs@eda.admin.ch, www.eda.admin.ch/praesenzschweiz