

The limitation initiative of 2020

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The last test of the free movement agreement at the ballot box was the popular initiative "For moderate immigration" (limitation initiative), which demanded the termination of the agreement. It was rejected nationally on 27 September 2020.¹ Ticino was one of only four cantons to accept it, together with Glarus, Schwyz and Appenzell Innerrhoden, but with 53.1 per cent its majority was fifteen points smaller than in 2014. The Lega's State Councillor Norman Gobbi admitted that it had been difficult to rekindle "the sacred fire of February 2014", while the Socialist Party president Fabrizio Sirica read the result as a sign of declining credibility of the Swiss People's Party on the subject, although the 53 per cent still demanded protection at the workplace.² Since 2020 the debate has moved from the question of free movement as such to its terms, including the safeguard clause negotiated in the new package of agreements with the European Union, which Chapter K.I discusses.

Essentials. The free movement agreement signed on 21 June 1999 and in force since 1 June 2002 gives Italian residents the right to work in Ticino as crossborder commuters without priority for residents or frontier zones. The mass immigration initiative of 9 February 2014 (Art. 121a Cst.), accepted by 68.17 per cent in Ticino, was implemented only through a duty to announce vacancies (since 1 July 2018). The cantonal initiative "Prima i nostri", accepted on 25 September 2016 by 58.02 per cent, obtained the federal guarantee in December 2017 but was never implemented by statute, because a general preference for residents would violate federal law and the agreement. The limitation initiative of 2020 was rejected nationally and accepted in Ticino by 53.1 per cent.

1 Notes

1. Swissvotes, vote no. 631, "Begrenzungsinitiative", <https://swissvotes.ch/vote/631.00> (38.29 per cent yes, hence 61.7 per

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cent no; accepted only in Appenzell Innerrhoden, Glarus, Schwyz and Ticino). ↩

2. RSI, 27 September 2020 (above). ↩

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