

The political debate on immigration

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Immigration has been a central issue of Swiss politics for decades. The international economy of Zug has been part of the debate. In February 2014, Swiss voters accepted the popular initiative against mass immigration by a narrow majority. The initiative required Switzerland to control immigration through quotas, including for nationals of the European Union. In the canton of Zug, the initiative was narrowly rejected.¹ Parliament implemented it in a form that preserved the free movement of persons, with a preference for domestic workers in occupations with high unemployment. In September 2020, voters rejected a further initiative that would have ended the free movement of persons, which the canton of Zug rejected clearly.²

A further initiative, launched in 2023 and submitted in 2024, sought to limit the permanent resident population of Switzerland to ten million before 2050. Voters rejected it on 14 June 2026 with 54.8 per cent No votes nationally and 52.4 per cent in the canton of Zug.³ It would have required the Federal Council to take measures, including the termination of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, if the population approached that limit. The business community of Zug opposed the initiative, arguing that it would deprive the economy of the workers it needs. The debate reflects a tension that runs through Swiss politics: the economy depends on immigration, while a significant part of the population is concerned about its effects on housing, infrastructure, the environment and national identity.

1 Notes

1. Canton of Zug, "Wahlen & Abstimmungen", archive 2014, wab.zug.ch: popular initiative "Gegen Masseneinwanderung" of 9 February 2014 rejected in the canton with 50.06 per cent No (49.94 per cent Yes). National result of 50.3 per cent Yes: Wikipedia (German),

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"Eidgenössische Volksinitiative «Gegen Masseneinwanderung»", de.wikipedia.org. ↩

2. Canton of Zug, "Wahlen & Abstimmungen", archive 2020, wab.zug.ch: popular initiative "Für eine massvolle Zuwanderung (Begrenzungsinitiative)" of 27 September 2020 rejected in the canton with 60.36 per cent No. National result of 61.7 per cent No: Wikipedia (German), article on the Begrenzungsinitiative, de.wikipedia.org; vote also documented on admin.ch/de/begrenzungsinitiative. ↩
3. swissinfo.ch, "«Keine 10-Millionen-Schweiz!»: Die Schweiz lehnt die Initiative ab", 14 June 2026: popular initiative "Keine 10-Millionen-Schweiz! (Nachhaltigkeitsinitiative)" rejected with 54.8 per cent No; 13 cantons against, 10 in favour. Canton of Zug, "Wahlen & Abstimmungen", archive 2026, wab.zug.ch: 52.36 per cent No in the canton. Federal Council recommendation to reject: admin.ch/de/nachhaltigkeitsinitiative. The launch (2023) and submission (2024) dates are not stated in these sources. ↩

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