

# le News

WEEKLY SWISS NEWS IN ENGLISH

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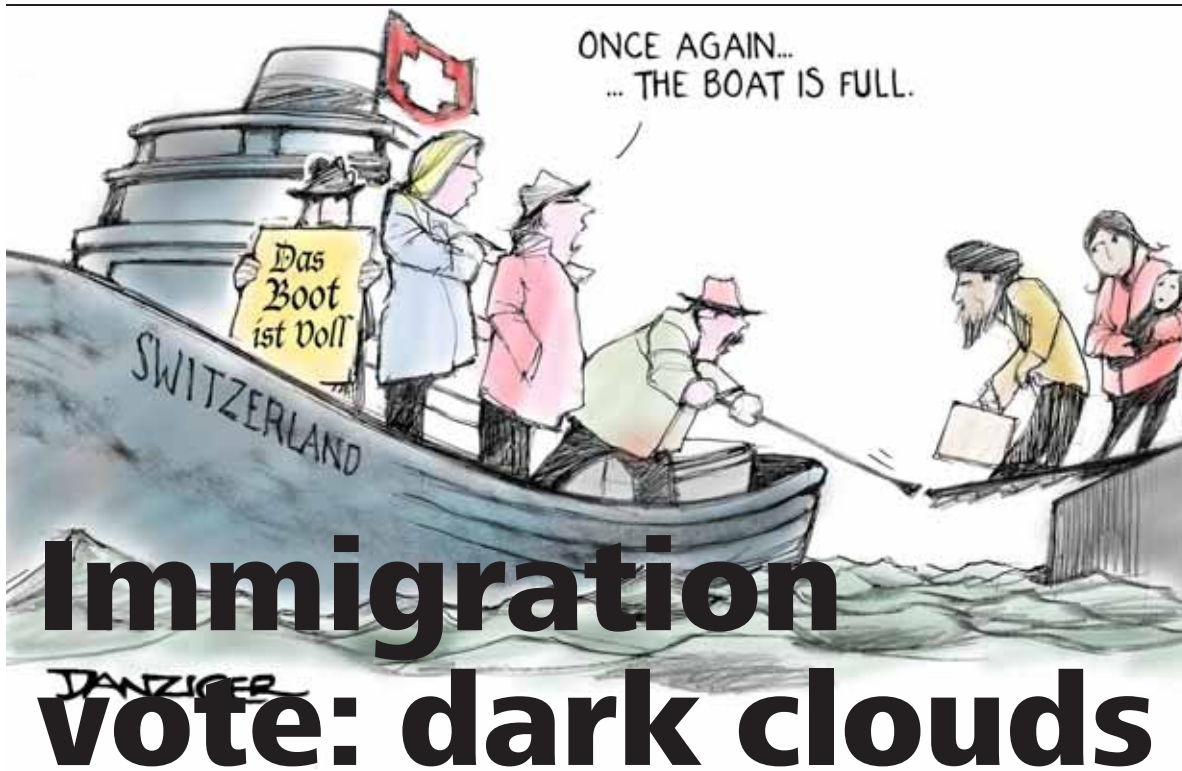
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**GENEVA** The European Union has warned that Switzerland's narrow vote (50.3%) on 9 February to curb immigration could seriously impede economic relations with the 28-member community.

Since the EU is the country's main trading partner, this outcome could have a dire impact on business and jobs, a view

widely shared by the main cities and industries. The Swiss People's Party (UDC) position could also open a can of worms with regard to other countries with constituencies favouring similar curbs on immigration.

According to EU ambassador Richard Jones, much depends on how Switzerland intends to implement the referendum's requirements. "No member state is ready to draw a line on the

freedom of movement," Jones told the *Tribune de Genève*. If Switzerland did proceed in a manner unacceptable to European norms, he warned, this could provoke repercussions, including the loss of subsidies, such as the annual €50 million provided to Geneva University. Another EU representative added that Europe cannot afford special cases. "If we did, then other countries might seek similar

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### Next week

The e-cigarette controversy. Do they encourage smoking? Are they better for health?



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## This Week in Switzerland

**Switzerland and Russia** have recently celebrated **200 years of diplomacy**. Didier Burkhalter's speech in Sochi praised the country's historical and present-day ties with Russia, emphasizing a relationship built on "mutual trust and confidence". Both **Burkhalter** and counterpart **Sergey Lavrov** reiterated the importance of Switzerland's neutrality and Geneva's special status as a hub of international diplomacy.



The **Federal Office for Sport** has seen a decline of more than 20% in the number of Swiss ski and snowboarding camps between 2005 and 2011. The Swiss Tourism Office estimates that 85% of immigrant children do not ski. Among the reasons behind the shortfall may be the high cost of winter sports and the number of other options that have emerged in recent years. **Andreas Keller** of Seilbahnen Schweiz, the cable car organization told Swissinfo: "If we want Swiss people in the mountains in 20 or 30 years' time, we have to act now." Initiatives to encourage kids back to the slopes include a proposal for a **compulsory snow sports** week for secondary schools, which is now before the Senate. As a key industry linking multiple fields, what kind of impact will this have on the Swiss economy in years to come?

The UN this week hosts Round II of the **Syria talks** aimed at ending the conflict, which has killed 136,000 people in three years of civil war. In the first round, which took place two weeks ago, the opposing factions failed to come to an agreement. While the Assad government wants to deal with the "terrorism" aspects of the rebellion, the Opposition wants to implement a political transition without the current regime.

A Swiss federal **law** effective since the beginning of this year now requires that all **clinical trials** must be registered and comply with ethical rules for further transparency and research. Currently only just over half of medical trials are published. Hermann Amstad of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences notes that "companies don't have any interest in publishing results about failures...and medical journals are more keen to accept trials with positive findings for publication." **Actelion, Novartis and Roche** have all been implicated in **withholding clinical trial data**.

With a **turnout** averaging around **56%**, the results of last Sunday's referendum conjured up both surprise and predictability. Only a tiny majority (50.3%) of voters endorsed the imposition of **immigration quotas**, 62% approved the funding of **railway infrastructure** development and 69.8% said no to proposed private funding of **abortions**.

**CERN** is initiating a long-term project that involves the construction of the successor to the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the **Future Circular Collider (FCC)**. Currently, the LHC's energy reaches around 14 TeV and was instrumental in the observation of the Higgs boson. Scientists hope that the FCC, which will be developed over the next 20 years, will be capable of reaching energies in the region of 100 TeV. CERN's Director for Accelerators and Technology **Frédéric Bordry** notes that "We need to sow the seeds of tomorrow's technologies today, so that we are ready to take decisions in a few years' time."



## Immigration vote

**Continued front page 1**

arrangements," he noted. "People are getting fed up with Switzerland's constant demands for special status." Possibly as a result of the vote, EU-Swiss negotiations on a cross-border electricity agreement appear to have been frozen.

Quotas could also affect the estimated 430,000 Swiss living and working in the EU. The same goes for frontaliers. Cities such as Geneva, Basel and Lugano rely heavily on outside labour to run their industries and public services. UDC vice president Luzi Stamm told RTS that the frontier policy should be determined at cantonal level. He also stated that farmers could keep foreign labourers but without families.

According to some Swiss, the vote, which found its broadest support in the more conservative parts of German-speaking Switzerland, represents a combination of nationalism, fear and reluctance to embrace change. The Italian-speaking Ticino also backed it, but for different reasons. This includes

feeling ignored by the rest of Switzerland, but also concerned by the growing influx of foreigners.

The irony, however, is that most problems associated with immigration are found in Switzerland's major cities. Yet rural Swiss who supported the initiative benefit from the thriving economy. Some commentators now suggest that quotas should be lower for those areas with a strong "yes" vote, while Geneva and Basel have larger quotas. Stamm dismissed this as ridiculous. When asked about institutions like the CHUV hospital with 40% foreign staff, he said Swiss in their 60s or retired could replace them. Fellow UDC politician, Christoph Blocher, who said Brussels needs to know "that the people have spoken", also lambasted the *Suisse Romandes* for refusing to support the initiative. Some French speakers suggest that Geneva and Vaud should reach their own accords with the EU, an indication of a broadening of Switzerland's linguistic divide, the "Röschti Graben".

*Edward Girardet*

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## Regional

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## Editor's comment

### Swiss democracy: Still the best thing

The razor-edge win by Switzerland's Swiss People's Party (UDC) last Sunday is bad news for those who see open borders as crucial, as well as for the nearly half a million Swiss living and working in Europe because of the EU accords. At the same time, like it or not, this is the extraordinary thing about Swiss democracy. While just under half the electorate did not get their way, a majority did pronounce on two other key issues, notably more investment for the railways and a refusal to allow only women with private insurance or the means to pay to seek abortions. Swiss Rail will now have the funds to move ahead with critical improvements not only for social and environmental reasons but also to ensure that it remains efficient.

An Afghan friend recently asked why democracy works in Switzerland. "We're also a mountain people and just as conservative," he said. "But our politicians don't play by the rules." You probably have to be Swiss to make alpine democracy work, I told him. Bern, which vehemently opposed the UDC initiative, will now have to respect the wishes of the majority. This means figuring out how to negotiate a new arrangement, which may prove impossible if the EU refuses to play ball, or to implement a consensus that responds to the wishes of 50.3% of voters.

Clearly, there is nothing stopping a new pro-EU initiative from being launched with more effective outreach that pragmatically explains why closed borders could provoke precisely the opposite intended by proponents – notably less investment, less wealth generation and less employment. Or that pulling up the gangplank as a sop to right-wing political rhetoric is not an informed solution. That, too, is Swiss democracy.

Edward Girardet

## Ideas and innovation at TEDx

**LAUSANNE** The World Economic Forum in Davos tries to be a meeting place for the rich and powerful. In contrast, TEDx (technology, entertainment and design), focuses on expanding your imagination. TEDx conferences are independent, home-grown affairs licensed by the main TED organization. Last Monday's 5th TEDx Lausanne meeting at the University of Lausanne (UNIL) may have lacked some of the polish of the original TED conferences, but still highlighted some intriguingly innovative ideas.

One of the best came from Yu-kai Chou, who flew in from California to explain how games can bring about social change. One of Yu-kai's suggestions: use highway speed cameras to enroll drivers in a national lottery. The cash payoff would come from fines of those who ignored the limits. Another imaginative approach came from Laura Schwengber, who showed how she mixes modern dance with sign language so that deaf people can visualize music performances.

TEDx will broadcast the talks on the Internet. For more information, see [tedxlausanne.org](http://tedxlausanne.org).

William Dowell

## Lausanne's tall towers

### LAUSANNE

With just two months before Lausanne decides the fate of Beaulieu's Taoua tower, the city has accepted plans to build a 117-metre tall edifice in Chavannes-près-Renens. A comprehensive proposal aims to erect the neighbourhood project in les Cèdres, catalyzing not only socio-economic activities, but also providing additional fiscal benefits for the commune. The approval of the venture comes as a surprise given the failure of the west Lausanne commune of Bussigny to woo its electorate in 2012 with a similar 60-metre tower proposal.

A majority 61% endorsed the project, which will create 700 new dwellings plus 1,000 jobs. La Tour du Léman, as it will be named, will be the second tallest tower in Switzerland, behind Zurich's Prime Tower. Originally designed to stand 140 metres,



Lausanne will have the second highest building in Switzerland

the revised tower will be 23 metres shorter to satisfy opponents to the urban proposal. The rationale behind such dimensions is to keep the height of surrounding buildings at a minimum while allowing more room for public spaces. Situated close to the M1 metro, the project's conception also embraces a more public-transport friendly solution.

For those who voted "yes",

the project ticks all the boxes of sustainable development. With construction scheduled to start next year, the CHF 500 million project will be monitored by local associations to ensure that all agreed plans are respected. The outcome of last Sunday's vote might also prove instrumental in swaying the balance in favour of the Taoua tower come April.

Christopher Woodburn

## Full steam ahead for rail reforms

**GENEVA** The canton of Geneva unanimously supported the FAIF initiative to enhance railway infrastructure across Switzerland last Sunday. An overwhelming 76.6% voted in favour of the project, which provides critical funding to a network already under considerable strain. Geneva was followed closely by canton Vaud, where 73.9% endorsed the proposal, while only one canton (Schwyz) stood against the project.

These results are hardly surprising given that the Lake Geneva region will receive a third of the projected funds, which total some CHF 6.4 billion. For Geneva, the results reflect the urgent need for improved facilities if CFF is to maintain high standards while coping with expected growing passenger numbers in the years ahead. More than CHF 1 billion will be invested in Geneva alone. This includes CHF 790 million out of a total of CHF 1.2 billion for Cornavin's planned underground expansion. The funds

will allow the city to improve its links with the rest of the country by providing more efficient, frequent and comfortable connections, all quality aspects for which the country's rail network is known worldwide.

Christopher Woodburn



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## National

# Bionic hand breakthrough

**LAUSANNE** A prosthetic hand with touch-sensitive fingers has allowed Dennis Aabo Sørensen to feel objects in his grasp for the first time since he lost his left hand in an accident almost 10 years ago, EPFL scientists said.

The 36-year-old Danish man was fitted with the "bionic hand" during a month-long trial last year, and was able to distinguish between different objects that he held in his grip while blindfolded.

It is the first prosthetic hand that has been able to send sensory information to the wearer's brain via electrodes implanted beneath the skin. Its invention, by researchers at EPFL and Italy's Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, could lead to a new generation of bionic limbs that can provide real-time, tactile information about the surrounding environment. "The idea is that the next implant will be ready within two years



The invention could lead to a new generation of bionic limbs.

and we aim to put the electrodes into the arm for the long term, perhaps months or years, and for everything to be completely portable," EPFL Professor Silvestro Micera said.

The hand works by sending information about the strength and shape of the grip around an object to a com-

puter chip, which re-packages the data into a format that is more readily understood by the body's peripheral nervous system. "The sensory feedback was incredible," Sørensen said. "When I held an object, I could feel if it was soft or hard, round or square."

Moyette Marrett

# Metro-misery: commuting more but enjoying it less

The term *pendulaires* conjures up images of people crammed into trains in New York or Tokyo, hanging from a strap because all seats are taken. Commuters on the Lausanne-Geneva line may have had similar images in mind when they voted on Sunday to approve an initiative to spend more on improving public transportation.

A new study, expected out this summer, by the Urban Sociology Laboratory at EPFL in Lausanne found that commuters in Suisse Romande use public transport more than other regions, despite the wider use of automobiles nationwide. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office put the number in the region at 807,865.

While job opportunities may be better for those who commute, the study indicates that long commutes are taking a toll on many travellers. In 2011 the average commute was 30 minutes, but it is now closer to one hour. Stéphanie Vincent, a sociologist who participated in the study, said they examined the trade-offs that people make when deciding whether to relocate or commute, balancing such issues as spousal employment, home



A long daily slog is taking a toll on many commuters.

ownership or simply attachment to a place.

"Surprisingly, the data does not support the hypothesis that greater mobility for professional reasons is more prevalent in younger generations," she noted, adding that "female

commuters between 25 and 35 years of age tend to have fewer children or none at all." The study also found an apparent link between overnight stays and increased fragility in marital relationships.

Pamela Taylor

## Swiss ski instructors out in the cold

Following a 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on ski-instructor qualifications, endorsed by Brussels and since then by 11 European countries, the issue of a professional ski card is compulsory for instructors teaching in signatory states. The rationale behind this multilateral agreement is to create a common framework defining the necessary skill-set ski instructors wishing to teach abroad must have. Switzerland, which hasn't ratified the accord, deplores the agreement – which effectively makes Swiss ski instruction illegal on French slopes.



Intended to curb influxes of unqualified ski instructors, it prohibits Swiss instructors competing with local staff across the border in neighbouring France. Those Swiss ski instructors caught illegally teaching in France will from now face a fine and a possible prison sentence.

The two countries have very different points of view when it comes to ski instruction. According to the French, the diploma homogenizes technical and theoretical competencies across Europe. In addition, two mandatory tests, Euro-security and Eurotest, ensure that instructors are trained in first aid and that they complete a giant slalom in a specific amount of time. Regarded as unnecessary by many Swiss, who place more emphasis on pedagogy and methodology, their instructors consider it little more than a protectionist ploy.

Christopher Woodburn



## Business & Economy

# Swiss tax shelters

**BERN** Switzerland has agreed to share information on Greek citizens sheltering money in Swiss banks, but declined to compensate Greece for tax income lost in the past from undisclosed accounts.

After talks between Swiss finance minister Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and her Greek counterpart Yannis Stournaras in Athens last week, the two countries remain divided on how to solve the problem. Widmer-Schlumpf said Greece's request to receive taxes for past funds was outdated – despite Switzerland having struck a similar arrangement with the UK. “We should be moving towards a different direction,” she said. Greeks may have hidden some CHF 42 billion in Swiss accounts, according to a 2009 report by Geneva-based brokerage firm Helvea SA.

Since last year Switzerland's biggest banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, have



French must prove they've paid tax.

required French taxpayers to present a document signed by a lawyer, an accountant or “another expert” licensed to practice in France verifying that the taxpayer's accounts have met French tax authority requirements. The demand for proof from French taxpayers follows a similar ultimatum delivered to the banks' German clients.

Swiss banks have given French clients until the end of May to prove that they are not attempting to evade French taxes by placing their money in Switzerland, according to a report in *Le Matin Dimanche*.

Moyette Marrett

### L'Oreal – Nestlé share deals

L'Oreal, the world's biggest cosmetics company, will buy back 8% of its stock for EUR 6 billion from Nestlé. It will also sell its half of the pharmaceutical skincare joint venture Galderma to Nestlé, in exchange for 21.2 million shares.

### Housing bubble inches closer

Switzerland's property market is at a greater risk of overheating. Last week UBS announced that its Swiss Real Estate Bubble Index rose to 1.23 points in the fourth quarter from 1.2 points in the third. A reading above two points indicates a bubble. Geneva, Lausanne, Nyon and Morges remain hot areas. “The potential for correction has increased further,” UBS economists said. But “a 5% fall in prices or a halving of mortgage growth in (2014) would be sufficient for a noticeable calming of the market.”

# Businesses condemn vote

**BERN** Almost 12 years after opening its borders to European Union workers, Switzerland voted on Sunday to draw up the bridge in a move that could have far-reaching consequences for businesses and the economy. Even though the Swiss government has three years to implement the new limits on immigration, companies may start reducing investment now. “What's the point of investing in Switzerland when in the end it's not certain whether you can get qualified staff to carry out your plans?” Swiss Employers Association President Valentin Vogt told the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.

Businesses say the vote threatens a Swiss economy that relies on the EU for nearly a fifth of its workers. In addition to EU citizens living in Switzerland, another 230,000 cross the border daily for work. Switzerland is home to Vevey-based Nestlé, the world's largest food company, pharmaceutical giant Novartis, and a host of other international firms. Foreign workers account for 45% of employees at Swiss pharmaceutical, chemical, and biotechnology companies. A quarter of Swiss bank employees are citizens of neighbouring EU countries, according to the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA), which includes UBS, Credit Suisse and Julius

Baer Group. The vote could reduce the pool of talent for Swiss financial-services companies, making it “much more difficult” to meet staffing needs, the SBA said.

The vote also comes at a time when Switzerland is under intense pressure from France, Italy and other European countries that want its banking system to become more transparent. The SBA is lobbying against EU proposals to stop Swiss banks from marketing wealth-management services from Switzerland directly to residents of the Union. This would oblige Swiss banks to relocate thousands of jobs to new branches or subsidiaries in EU countries. Credit Suisse economists Giles Keating and Fredy Hasenmaile warned in a research note that Switzerland will pay “a high price” for its decision. They forecast that the “Yes” vote could cause employment growth to contract by 50% in 2014, with around 80,000 fewer jobs created over the next three years. Economic growth this year is likely to slump from a forecast 2% to 1.7%, they said.

Moyette Marrett



Businesses say the vote threatens the Swiss economy.

## Insight

# Kosovo Day

Kosovars celebrate six years of independence

It is one of the youngest – and smallest – countries in the world, yet it has the second largest immigrant population in Switzerland. In fact, it is such a young nation that its independence has so far only received diplomatic recognition from 109 countries, including Switzerland. This is not expected to dampen enthusiasm among Switzerland's 200,000 Kosovars when they celebrate the sixth anniversary of their declaration of independence from Serbia on 17 February.

Serbia vehemently protested the nation's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008, arguing that Kosovo had been the cradle of its religion and civilization since 1389. The Serbs took their case to the International Court of Justice which ruled in 2010 that no law was violated. Nevertheless, this year's festivities are expected to be low key, possibly to avoid provoking

Switzerland's Serbian community or Swiss who view immigrants from the Balkans with suspicion.

Bashkim Iseni, a journalist with an Albanian language website *albinfo.ch*, said he plans to cover the major independence day events taking place in homes, mosques or one of the many organizations representing Kosovars from St Gallen to Geneva. "The many centres assisting Kosovars in Switzerland will create their own events, which may feature traditional songs and dances and of course traditional Albanian dishes. Usually, Swiss officials and our own diplomats are invited to attend."

Kosovo Albanians began arriving in Switzerland in the 1970s, like their compatriots from the former Yugoslavia. They mainly worked as *Gastarbeiter*, as did Italian and Portuguese immigrants before them. Then in the 1990s, a flood of asylum seekers arrived, many "ethnically cleansed" from Kosovo by Slobodan



Kosovo celebrates its sixth year of independence on 17 February.

Milošević's regime in his effort to create a Greater Serbia. Today they are considered one of Switzerland's best-integrated groups, quickly learning the languages of the cantons where they have settled while determinedly keeping to their own traditions and culture. Regular flights operate from Geneva and Zurich to Kosovo. Although most Albanophones are from Kosovo, there are many from Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. While this community is largely Sunni Muslim, it also comprises Catholics, Orthodox Christians and the secular.

However, the community is still trying hard to live down a reputation for clan warfare, drug dealing and repression of women. Today the Albanian-speaking population of Switzerland proudly counts many doctors and engineers, as well as artisans

and supermarket cashiers, who speak Swiss languages so well that only their unpronounceable nametags give them away.

A 35-year old Muslim Kosovar from Winterthur was even a candidate for the Swiss Evangelical People's Party in last Sunday's election. Blerim Bunjaku lost, however, despite widespread support from within the party. One of the best known Swiss-Kosovar is Behgjet Isa Pacolli, head of the Lugano-based Mabetex construction group. Not only was he a signatory of the Kosovo declaration of independence, but he was also president of the republic until he had to step down in 2011 for constitutional reasons.

Pamela Taylor

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## Correction

Le News omitted to give credit to the photographer, Benno Gut for this photograph. We regret this omission and thank Mr Gut for generously providing the image to Le News.





## Education & Technology

# Graduates: which future, which boss?

Thousands of students from the University of Geneva, L'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), the University of Lausanne and the many hotel schools in the area graduate each year, but where do they go?

The results of the recent Swiss Student Survey have identified which companies graduates view as the top employers, taking into consideration factors such as company sustainability and work-life balance. Business graduates rated Nestlé number one, followed by Google, UBS, Credit Suisse and Ernst & Young, while

natural sciences students voted Novartis top, tailed by Roche, CERN, Nestlé and Google. Top employers for IT and Engineering graduates also included Google, while Law graduates favoured Nestlé.

FORUM, the annual EPFL careers fair, which attracts over 5,000 visitors, hosts many international and national companies that wish to attract the best graduate talent. In addition to the ubiquitous presence of the likes of Swisscom, Roche and SBB, FORUM also invites and promotes many SMEs and SMBs. Whether the smaller companies are successful is another question. Dana Christen, a recent graduate in Computational Science and



Nestlé, Google, UBS, Credit Suisse and Ernst & Young all rated as attractive employers.

Engineering from EPFL commented "Even though I didn't have a particular preference for a large or a small com-

pany, the potential of R & D and the idea of joining a small and dynamic team appealed to me at once." Jennifer Rose

## New heights for Swiss hotel schools



The top three hotel schools in the world are Swiss: EHL in Lausanne, Glion (pictured) and Les Roches (Crans Montana).

According to a recently published survey conducted by Taylor Nelson Sofres, the top three hotel schools in the world are Swiss: École Hôtelière de Lausanne, Glion Institute of Higher Education and Les Roches International School of Hotel Management. The success of these schools is attributed to a unique "combination of professional excellence and international

business in a truly multicultural setting," says Alain Brunier, president of the Swiss Association of Hotel Schools. While expensive, particularly for Swiss students – many internationals have their own income sources – these establishments tend to ensure high-quality educational services, stemming from a protracted need to develop both the student and the name of the institution. In light of this, tolerance, diversity and ethics are on a par with professionalism and business acumen. The schools rely on strict codes of conduct and the portrayal of an image that is meant to define the students throughout their professional careers.

This pragmatic approach highlights Switzerland's historic links to the tourist industry and hotel-management schooling. The first school, the Vaud-based global reference EHL, was established in 1893. Director Michel Rochat expresses a vision that conjectures not only the value system of a particular establishment, but of Switzerland itself. This ideological symbiosis has created a reputation

that propels Switzerland and its hotel schools well beyond their international peers.

Many students opt to study at these schools precisely because they are Swiss. Though seemingly esoteric, the best hotel establishments enable alumni to experience an array of specializations while developing interpersonal skills and linguistic fluency. According to Rochat, this *quid pro quo* stems from a Swiss value system based on innovation, personal engagement, tradition, linguistic abilities and attentiveness. It is by staying true to these values, while adapting to the evolving trends of the industry, that Swiss schools have managed to create a name not only for hotel management, but *Swiss hotel management*. These Lake Geneva schools emulate what the hostelling culture is all about: internationalism while remaining Swiss. The progressive nature of these establishments also mirrors the direction Switzerland must take if it is to stay at the top of the global hotel management industry.

Christopher Woodburn

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## Chez Vous

# Lex Weber's impact on property

**VERBIER** The law that many property developers have been dreading came on the books on 1 January.

The so-called Lex Weber law will limit construction across the country as it restricts the number of second homes to no more than 20% of all residences within communes. The general consensus among estate agents, however, is that the market has not yet been affected, making it a good time to buy. "The Weber law is there, but there are no rules of application yet," said Verbier estate agent Patrick Fellay. "Once the rules are in place, we could see prices increase, but it does depend on how restrictive those rules will be. For now, prices are stable."

Estate agents and developers in the canton of Valais, with its many ski resorts, have been particularly worried about the effects of the new law. "Prices for chalets have stabilized," said chartered surveyor Simon Murphy. "In the resorts, Villars and Verbier, for example, prices had been following the general trend in Europe of going up, but they've been relatively unchanged recently." With interest rates favourable, this could be the time to make the investment in a holiday home. There are, however, restrictions in place for foreigners hoping to buy a second home in Switzerland.

The first hurdle is availability. Another federal legal restriction, the Lex Koller, caps the number of homes that foreigners can purchase annually at 1,500. Fellay said that Valais has approximately 300 permits a year for foreign buyers, but adds that there is no reason to worry that they run out



Chalets can still be picked up for a snip at between 1.5 and 20 million francs.

quickly. "If you wanted to buy a chalet in the canton today, you would be fine. Verbier itself is allotted around 50 permits," he said.

Foreigners resident in Switzerland must meet certain residency requirements including having a valid B or C settlement permit. Those working for embassies or international organizations, who do not possess B or C permits, must prove that they meet the requirements for settlement entitlement, that is five or 10 years depending on their nationality. There are also restrictions on the size of holiday home a foreigner can purchase. The maxi-

mum floor space allowed for a chalet is 200 square metres, and the plot can be no bigger than 1,000 square metres.

Foreigners generally also must provide a down payment of at least 40%. They are required to pay back 2% of the capital, plus interest, annually. A foreign owner of a second home cannot sell it within the first five years, except in the case of hardship. The law is in place to prevent "flipping" and distorting the market. "The rules for foreigners who want to purchase holiday homes in Switzerland can appear to be tricky," said Murphy. "But it is actually relatively easy to purchase here. It is

simply a matter of getting the right authorizations."

Fellay agrees. "I would say the process is quite easy for someone who is looking to purchase a normal-sized holiday home," he said. Potential buyers who meet the requirements have a wide open market from which to choose, added Murphy. "You can find beautiful chalets right now from between 1.5 and 20 million francs." All that is left is to decide whether the vibes of Villars or Verbier suit one best.

*Jackie Campo*

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## Chez Vous

### Cracking up

# Of snow, skiing and seven-year-olds

"I think I ski better than you," my daughter told me the other day.

"What makes you say that?" I asked, attempting to discreetly remove the icicle that had jammed up my left nostril a few moments earlier, when I ploughed into a snow drift.

"You fall down more than I do."

It's true. I attribute it to spending the first 40 years of my life somewhere very hot and very flat. But I'm trying hard to overcome that early hurdle and, when we arrived in Switzerland, I went all out to set an enthusiastic example for the children.

"How much fun is this?" I whooped through gritted teeth, as we snow-ploughed down mountainsides.

"Was that great or what?" I trilled at the bottom, hoping my rictus of fear would pass for an endorphin-drenched smile.

And it worked – on the seven-year-old, at any rate. She loves skiing and she's good at it. But unfortunately I never fell for my own propaganda, and skiing still gives me the horrors. So why on earth I agreed to go down a blue slope with the child last weekend, I have no idea.

"You have been on a chair lift before, right?" I asked, as we stood waiting in line for one of those wretched chariots of death.



She looked bored. "Lots of times."

"Just make sure you don't lean forward on the bar," I warned, keeping an anxious eye on the progress of the chair. "And lift your skis when you get to the top. And tuck your scarf into your jacket so it doesn't catch on anything. And definitely don't fall over when you get off because I can't help you."

"I'm not going to fall over. And I don't need help."

"Also, don't get in front of me. I can't steer that well and my braking is unreliable," I went on, positioning my skis

properly and bracing myself for the speed-waddle to the chair's runway.

She wasn't even listening. She was facing the wrong way, helmet unbuckled, poking icicles off a railing with her ski pole.

"What are you doing?" I panicked. "Why aren't you getting into position for the chair?"

"Mom," she sighed. "We're not even at the front of the queue yet."

Well, we made it to the top with no mishaps, and the child hopped off the chair and pointed herself straight at what looked like a precipice.

"I'll be fine," I called after her. "See you at the bottom."

And as I lay there in front of the lift, trying to disentangle my skis from my poles, I thought, this is what parenting is, isn't it? Giving them wings so they can fly away; putting an enormous amount of time, money and emotional effort into growing them up so that one day they'll leave you behind, in a crumpled heap, with everyone pointing at you.

"I do ski better than you," she said again, when I met her at the bottom, but this time the look on her little face told me that she felt the same way about this fact as I did: proud and anxious, in equal measure.

"That may be true," I said. "But you're still my baby. When we get to the car would you like me to take your boots off and make you some hot chocolate?"

"Yes, Mama."

And after she helped me back onto my feet, that's exactly what I did.

Robyn Goss is a South African writer, recently moved to Switzerland. Read her blog: [robyngoss.com](http://robyngoss.com)

## Geneva Writer's Conference

Webster University recently hosted the Ninth Geneva Writers' Conference, which attracted over 200 English-lan-

guage writers and would-be writers from the region and beyond. The bi-annual conferences are organized by the Geneva Writers Group (GWG), which was established by local author, Susan Tiberghien in 1993 with less than 20 participants. Today's GWG membership is around 200.

According to Tiberghien, "Each conference seems better than the one before, but this one was the best. Writers came from over 40 different countries, including Iran, and spent the weekend inspiring one another, networking and getting ready to take their words into the world."

Noted authors were invited from the US, the UK and Ireland, including British crime writer Henry Sutton, who conducted a workshop on the difference between plot and story. Marion Winik, a humourist from Baltimore in

the USA, discussed the personal essay, while Melissa Rosati and Ladete Randolph explained how to use social networking to develop an online voice. Other workshops dealt with the more traditional aspects of writing, such as what agents and editors look for in a writer and a manuscript.

The GWG is non-profit group with links to PEN International, the Paris Writers' Workshop and the International Women's Writing Guild in New York. The group meets once a month on Saturdays in Geneva with an average attendance of 50-60 writers seeking to improve their writing through workshops, master classes and critiquing sessions.

Jennifer Rose

## Fun fondue for Nyon's new arrivals

A large group of new expatriates met in the "cave" of Nyon's chateau on Tuesday night. This convivial annual event, organised by Ecole-Club Migros, Nyon Tourism and Living in Nyon, is organised to help recent arrivals meet up, to learn about the local area and, vitally, how to make a fondue.



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## Lifestyle

# Sochied out?

**ST MORITZ** Geneva-based writer Samantha Bolton checks out the St Moritz Tobogganing Club: one of the oldest, most mischievously incorrect and “relentlessly amateur” elite winter-sports clubs in the world.

Here the gentlemen runners – aged 18 to 80 – speed down at up to 130 km per hour, head first, on specially-made toboggans, wearing steel toe caps on their shoes to steer. Their outfits are either Plus Fours (British or Bavarian style khaki and brown hunting gear), or home-designed rubber outfits, the more eccentric and taped up the better.

Every year since 1885, the Cresta Run, a 1.2 km snow-and-ice skeleton track, is rebuilt by hand to curl down from St Moritz to Celerina. There are 10 bends, the most wicked of which is the “shuttlecock”.

Those who fall off at that point become members of the “Shuttlecock Club”, whose president is responsible for organizing just one of the club’s much-loved parties. From December to early March, any day in the Cresta Run season is an excuse to party.

*Their outfits are either Plus Fours or home-designed rubber outfits, the more eccentric and taped up the better.*

Two weekends ago, one of the winners filled a silver cup at the Sunny Bar – where members eat lunch every day – with 29 litres of champagne, which two

pretty girls then carried around for each member to sip.

Although ladies are only allowed to race on the last day of the season, they can also join the St Moritz Tobogganing Club for CHF 400 a year. Of the 1,400 members, 50% are Brits, 25% Swiss and 25% other nationalities, many of whom met at Sandhurst, in the City or at the Günther Sachs-famed “Dracula Club”. As club secretary David Payne put it: “Membership has nothing to do with money. If you’re generous and great fun, you’re more likely to get in than if you are deadily dull and fast on ice.”

Most members come recommended but only get in on the second try. Nevertheless, some younger ones assured me that “if you behave very badly, you can sometimes get in on the first go”.

*“Membership has nothing to do with*



Who say the Brits don't love kids?

*money. If you're generous and great fun, you're more likely to get in than if you are deadily dull and fast on ice.”*

They pointed out one dapper runner in odd socks who got in because “he slept in five different beds in five days – and not one a member’s wife’s.” For the Swiss, the most difficult thing is to meet the standard of a British sense of humour. “The Germans can just forget it,” said Gian Kasper, whose father and grandfather were also members. But he concedes: “The Brits do know how to run a club and make it fun. Swiss clubs are too regulated.”

A local waitress who used to work at the Kulm Hotel where the club holds its boozy lunches agrees: “The Cresta people do funny things. We like them in St Moritz. They don’t take things too seriously.” But one thing that fifth-generation sponsor Charlie Bott does take seriously are his undies. His brightly coloured and now severely ripped rubber suit was made to measure. “But I forgot about the padding, so it’s a bit tight. My wife makes me wear Y fronts to be more respectable.”

“And respectable he is,” chortles a Mrs Robinson. “Yes, we do so love his codpiece.” Then it was off for a few more runs on the ice and rounds at the bar before lunch. Just another day on the Cresta Run. [www.cresta-run.com](http://www.cresta-run.com)

Samantha Bolton

## Le News photo competition

Le News is offering a Poyet book token worth CHF 20 and the chance to be published in the magazine to the photographer who submits the best photo and caption on the subject of:

### “FANTASY”

Email your entry to:

[competition@lenews.ch](mailto:competition@lenews.ch)  
by 18 February 2014.

Congratulations to Michael Schwartz, winner of the Le News weekly photographic competition “Weather”



“Heavy Snow”, Michael Schwartz

## Cool in sites

[lenews.ch/coolinsites](http://lenews.ch/coolinsites)

Bored by “data loading” animations? This site bizarrely offers an online museum of past data loading meters to entertain you with their clunkiness and inventiveness. The yawn-inducing revolving egg timer is so well... yawn-inducing in comparison. [prettyloaded.com](http://prettyloaded.com)

Welcome to EUROBAD '74, an exhibition of Europe’s worst interiors of 1974. In fact it’s even worse than you could imagine – the stomach-churningly embarrassing fashions are a hoot. Sophisticated Not!

[omodem.com/Eurobad/euro.html](http://omodem.com/Eurobad/euro.html)



## Travel

# Instagramer “happening”

SAANENMÖSER A

“happening” of, Instagramers (IGs) descended on the Gstaad-Saanen valley over the weekend to shoot and immediately post a diverse selection of photographic “instagrams” focusing on the region’s “Slow Life Experience” (see #gstaad).

Hosted by Gstaad Tourism and Saanewald Lodge, a mountain hotel sporting a groovy and laidback 1960s design theme, a core of eight IGs deployed their mobile photographic approaches to discover “new cultures, countries and friends”, according to Instagramer network founder Phil Gonzales. “Instagram has changed the way we see the world, the way we communicate with people, the way we meet friends.”

Instagram is basically a broadening of the social media platform. It enables anyone to use their cameras, smart phones, iPads and other devices



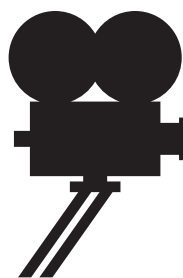
One million Instagramers are expected to follow the Gstaad event

to post artistic pictures and videos on the Instagram network and, with limited text, via Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and other means. Over a million IGs were expected to follow the Gstaad event. One objective, maintained

Saanewald Lodge owner Paul Peyer, is to use “a new form of communication showing that Gstaad is for anyone interested in the ‘active slow life’, whether relaxation or the outdoors.” While a useful tool to share travel expe-

riences, Instagram also opens a whole new dimension for aid workers or reporters to post from disaster zones.

Edward Girardet



## FILM REVIEWS

By Neptune

### AUGUST - OSAGE COUNTY ★★★★★

A searing drama about a dysfunctional family in the flat, barren plains of Oklahoma, this is part Tennessee Williams, part *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolff* and a bit of *King Lear*. This adaptation from the original Broadway play, directed here by John Wells, is above all a pure lesson in bril-

liant acting – from the always glorious Meryl Streep (her 17th Oscar nomination!) as the manipulative mother, to Julia Roberts as one of the daughters, Sam Shepard as the father and a moving Chris Cooper as an uncle, amongst a stellar cast. This is a fascinating look at a family's secrets, loves and jealousies, both darkly humorous and terribly twisted.



### GRUDGE MATCH ★★ ★

Here's another (after *Last Vegas*) old-guys-charming-us-before-they-croak tale. Sorry, don't want to be mean – for I really enjoyed the film, unlike most critics. This time it's about old boxers Robert De Niro and Sylvester Stallone (remember *Raging Bull* and *Rocky*?) who have had a grudge brewing for some 30 years, until the pos-

sibility of a new match comes up. But they're both slightly over-the-hill, to put it mildly. The dialogue is fun, their timing and delivery is pro-perfect and the mood is old fashioned entertainment, mixing street humour with good feelings. And the woman in between is the still-gorgeous Kim Basinger, there to soften the blows and their tough-guys stance. Maybe I'm an old softie, but the film got to me.



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Allison Bryan is a wife and mother. She's also a musical theatre actress, singer, and coach. She may or may not be an award-winning cook, contortionist, calendar girl and Sonheim junkie. All will be revealed.

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# Classifieds

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Email: jay@concierge-swiss.com

## DIY and gardening

Serious person offering weekend DIY and gardening (incl. mowing, strimming, wood-cutting). Pays de Gex and Geneva region. Good prices, if interested please contact Chris at cw12846@my.bristol.ac.uk, tel: +41(0)76.227.56.41



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Please contact: enilect@gmail.com

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### Home help wanted

Girl Friday required, large house, West Lausanne. Part of team. £500/week.  
Beate Keisa +44.752.844.1672

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West Lausanne. SRN / SEN preferred, but will consider others. £800/week.  
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### Doctor wanted

Full time, will train you to eradicate cancer using ultrasonography, and later set you up in your own clinic. West Lausanne.  
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## LE PROPERTY

### 5 room lakefront apartment - 114 m²

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Contact: +41(0)78.694.01.67  
or jacquie1990@yahoo.com



### Couple seeks apartment

Young professional couple seeks affordable apartment in Lausanne area, references available. Please contact +41 (0)77.497.75.60, jacrose6562@gmail.com

## LE MISCELLANEOUS

### Scots Kirk Business Network Presentation and networking event

Thursday 20th February at 19:30  
«Organisational cultures» - Alfred Colliander  
The presentation will be followed by a networking Apéro. The event is free although donations are requested to cover the cost of refreshments. Guests are warmly encouraged to attend.  
St Andrew's House, The Scots Kirk  
Avenue de Rumine 26, Lausanne  
Please register by emailing: [skbn@scotskirklausanne.ch](mailto:skbn@scotskirklausanne.ch)

### Geneva Curry Club

Expats and locals come together regularly to enjoy a curry night in the Geneva region. Great for making friends and since 2006 there have been two weddings!  
For more info: [www.curryclubgeneva.org](http://www.curryclubgeneva.org)

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## LE MEET

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[www.livinginnyon.com](http://www.livinginnyon.com)

Local events in Nyon area, photos, articles, interviews, frequently asked questions.

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## Regional Events



**These events have been recommended by Know-it-all passport!**  
**More events on: [www.knowitall.ch](http://www.knowitall.ch)**

### La Chaux Cossonay OH MA LUNE!

15 and 16 February, Saturday 20h00  
 Sunday 17h00

Edmée Fleury will put on an intimate and inventive musical show. In a giant music box, she will give life to instruments, toys, objects: a zither will be used like a grand piano, a banjo like an electric guitar, an empty tin will be the drums, bells become electro-pop, bringing you a concert like no other. There will be refreshments available before and after the show. Price: Fr. 20.-/adult, Fr. 15.-/child.

7, Rue de l'Eglise 1308 La Chaux Cossonay  
[www.laruelle.ch/theatre](http://www.laruelle.ch/theatre)



### Geneva PATEK PHILIPPE MUSEUM

Every Tuesday to Friday 14h00-18h00, Saturday 10h-18h. Closed Sunday and Monday.

A fascinating presentation of Geneva, Swiss and European watches and enamels dating from the 16th to the early 19th century, including a great number of masterpieces that have left their . This chronological spiral through time illustrates the evolution of man's mastery of time-keeping through both the aesthetic and technical features of horology. Price: Fr. 10.-/adult, children under 18 free-of-charge.

Rue des Vieux-Grenadiers 7  
 1205 Genève



### Lutry, EXECUTIVES INTERNATIONAL: HOW TO GENERATE LEADS THROUGH ONLINE MARKETING

20 February, 15h00-18h00

Start to immediately Improve your website's traffic with this EI Exchange workshop. Tackle very common "pain" points and gain insight by attending the EI Exchange workshop. You will discover how to optimize your online presence to generate more traffic and generate leads. This workshop will enable you to establish a targeted focus on lead generation and increased conversions.

Caveau Orpheus  
 Rue des Terreaux 16



### Saint-Jean-de-Gonville, THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (abridged)

22-23 February, 2014

A madcap comedy, in which three actors make an attempt to stage all 37 of Shakespeare's plays in less than two hours "of blood, sweat and tears"! Come and see Othello, brought to life by gangster rap, and observe how Hamlet is portrayed in just 20 seconds. This play definitely has to be seen to be believed.

Théâtre Les 50  
 01630 Saint-Jean-de-Gonville, France



### Morges, CAVEMAN

13 February, 20h30

If you're married, you should see this show!  
 If you're dating, you must see this show!  
 If you're single, you really need to see this show!  
 A hilariously insightful play about the ways men and women relate with hysterical insights on contemporary feminism and masculine sensitivity, in English. Audience members recognize themselves in the stories being told on stage. It is possible to reserve dinner for before or after the show at the Casino's restaurant.



**le News**

**PICK OF THE WEEK IN COLLABORATION WITH**



### Saint Valentine's at the Château de Grandson

14 and 15 February

Spend a poetic evening this St. Valentine's in the private rooms of Grandson Castle with your loved one with a candlelight dinner. Visit [www.chateau-grandson.ch](http://www.chateau-grandson.ch) for more information.

Place du Château  
 CH-1422 Grandson

Courtesy of Léman Regional Tourism



### Moonlight Night, Les Mosses

13- 15 February 2014

Easy 1h15 climb on snowshoes, crossed-country skis or on foot. A welcome glass of mulled wine will be served followed by a delicious cheese fondue and homemade dessert. Headlamp as well as warm sturdy clothing advised. Meeting point at the Arsat car park or the tourist office, guides possible on request. For more information visit [www.espacenordique.ch](http://www.espacenordique.ch), phone +41 (0)78 633 35 02 or [emonique.gonet@hotmail.com](mailto:emonique.gonet@hotmail.com) for details.

Courtesy of Léman Regional Tourism



### February Market at Villars-sur-Ollon

14 February to 9 March 2014

The February market: with its local produce and craftsmen, concerts and festive atmosphere it's the ideal place to enjoy a little après-ski, and also features a wealth of varied entertainment. Visit [www.villars.ch](http://www.villars.ch) for more information.

Courtesy of Léman Regional Tourism



### Lausanne Celtic Legends

6 March, 20h00

Artists of Irish descent with over 10 years of global success will present a variety of tap frenzied traditional dances exploring Irish folklore. The show always has a full house with its authentic live music featuring bagpipes, guitar and violins and sometime acrobatic performances. Book tickets at FNAC and TicketCorner or email [info@rrp.ch](mailto:info@rrp.ch).

Salle de Metropole, Lausanne



### Geneva, INSOMNI'HACK

20 March 09h00-18h00  
 21 March 09h00- 17h00  
 (competition 18h00-01h00)

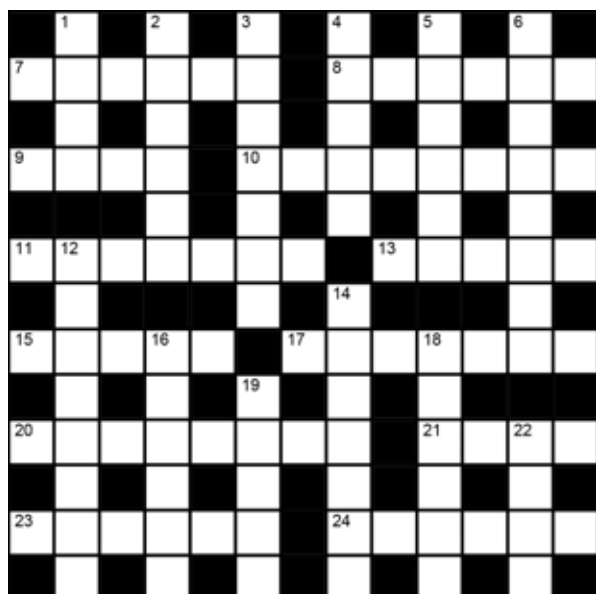
This year's edition will feature technical talks related to information security by many speakers including TED speaker Nicolas Gregoire and Axelle Apvrille. Workshops will also be on offer and the weekend will close with a ethical hacking competition. Visit [insomnihack.ch/conferences/](http://insomnihack.ch/conferences/) for more information and to register.

Palexpo, Geneva





## Puzzles



### QUICK CROSSWORD

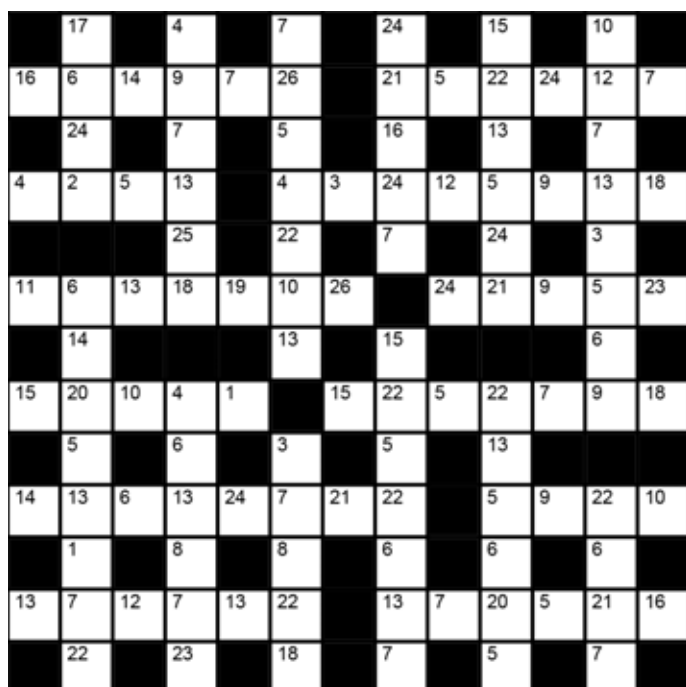
#### ACROSS

- 7 Assign (6)  
8 Having concealed difficulty (6)  
9 Distort (4)  
10 Where it is really at (8)  
11 Physique and form (7)  
13 Above board-often totally (5)  
15 Explosive creator of helium (1-4)  
17 Stupid incompetent fool (7)  
20 Demander of benefit or title (8)  
21 Test (4)  
23 Meant or adapted for a use (6)  
24 Disgustingly dirty (6)

#### DOWN

- 1 Frenzied, out of control (4)  
2 Beat through cleverness (6)  
3 Accept gladly (7)  
4 Apparently limitless in quantity (5)  
5 Smother (6)  
6 Reporting desks (5-3)  
12 Lacking definition (8)  
14 Deep-chested hound (7)  
16 One of two

Sorry! A gremlin crept in last week! Here are the corrected puzzles!



### CODEWORDS

Each letter has been replaced by the same number throughout the puzzle. Simply decide which letter is represented by which number and complete the puzzle. To start off we're given you the first three letters.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
												R
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
P								T				

## What's On

# Russian fare at the Olympic Museum

**LAUSANNE** This February the Olympic Museum will be featuring multiple exhibitions showcasing Russian culture as well as broadcasting the Winter Olympic Games from Sochi. These can be watched daily – and for free – from 10h to 18h in the Galerie. Every weekend, including 15, 16, 22 and 23 February, from 14h to 17.30h there will be a Russian exhibition in conjunction with the Association Léman Russe. This features traditional songs, dance, music and food, as well as workshops and games for children.

Be sure not to miss the White Side Story play performed by the Comic Trust Theatre Company from St Petersburg on 22 and 23 February at 16h. On 23 February there will be a concert featuring works by Tchaikovsky performed by the HEMU Wind



Orchestra conducted by Paul Meyer. The concert begins at 11.15h and tickets, starting from CHF 15, are on sale at the museum and online from

[www.staricket.ch](http://www.staricket.ch).

The Olympic Closing Ceremony will be broadcast live on big screens in a typical

Russian ambience on 23 February from 17h to 20h.

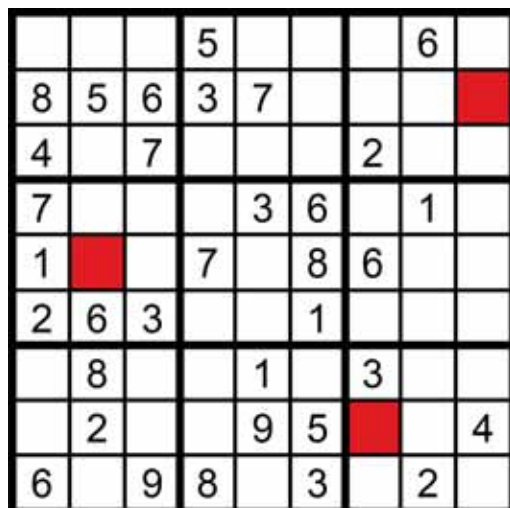
If you still haven't had enough of Russian-themed winter sports, come back on 27 March at 18.30h to meet Nicolas Vanier, film-maker and explorer as he describes his Siberian odyssey by dog sled. Entry is free, but limited spaces are available. Throughout it all, the Olympic Museum TOM shop will stock exclusive Sochi products and the TOM café will be serving Russian cuisine.

Jennifer Rose

### SUDOKU

Easy

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.



#### Win!

**Sudoku:** Send us the three numbers in the shaded squares for a chance to win CHF 10.00. The first correct answer drawn next Monday will win. Email: [prizes@lenews.ch](mailto:prizes@lenews.ch)

**Code word:** Send us the three letters in the shaded squares for a chance to win CHF 10.00. The first correct answer drawn next Monday will win. Email: [prizes@lenews.ch](mailto:prizes@lenews.ch)

## Weather

### SUISSE ROMANDE



#### GENEVA

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 9° Cloudy with rain	4 10° Cloudy with rain	6 12° Cloudy with rain	2 6° Cloudy with rain

#### LAUSANNE

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
0 6° Cloudy with rain	2 7° Cloudy with rain	4 10° Cloudy with rain	0 3° Cloudy with rain

### SNOW REPORT - ON THE SLOPES

Verbier	144 cm	Crans Montana	200 cm	Les Rousses	180 cm
Villars	130 cm	Château d'Oex	80 cm	Chamonix	170 cm
Leysin	145 cm	Les Crosets	160 cm	Morzine	280 cm



The ski & snow report is sponsored by



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