

Swiss vote no to free monthly income for all

8th June, 2016



Voters in Switzerland have overwhelmingly rejected a proposal that would have meant introducing a guaranteed basic monthly income for all citizens. The referendum took place on Sunday and resulted in

almost 77 per cent of voters opposing the plan. The idea was to provide a minimum salary to those who have been a citizen for at least five years, whether they worked or not. It was suggested the monthly amount could be around \$2,500. The group behind the proposal argued that the initiative was necessary to overhaul Switzerland's social welfare system. A spokesperson said it would help fight poverty and inequality. He added that it would provide a top-up for people who earned less than the minimum wage.

Supporters of the plan argued that because work was becoming increasingly automated across Switzerland, there were fewer jobs available for workers. Che Wagner from the campaign group Basic Income Switzerland argued that the monthly income would not be money for nothing. He said: "In Switzerland, over 50 per cent of total work that is done is unpaid. It's care work. It's at home. It's in different communities, so that work would be more valued with a basic income." Opponents said it would cause the country many immigration problems. Luzi Stamm from the Swiss People's Party said: "You would have billions of people who would try to move into Switzerland."

Sources: *BBC.com / CNN.com / expatica.com*

Writing

For a fairer society, all salaries should be the same, regardless of the job. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

voters / rejected / proposal / income / referendum / minimum / salary / welfare / supporters / automated / workers / Switzerland / communities / opponents / billions

True / False

- Nearly 77% of Swiss voters voted no to a free salary for all. T / F
- The scheme was only for Swiss people who are citizens by birth. T / F
- The suggested free monthly salary was around \$2,500. T / F
- People who were already working would not get any of the salary. T / F
- Supporters argued that automation meant a free salary was necessary. T / F
- A campaign group said the money would not be for nothing. T / F
- The group said 25% of all work done in Switzerland was unpaid. T / F
- The Swiss People's Party said millions would move to Switzerland. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. rejected | a. revamp |
| 2. referendum | b. free |
| 3. initiative | c. was paid |
| 4. overhaul | d. more and more |
| 5. earned | e. plan |
| 6. supporters | f. neighbourhoods |
| 7. increasingly | g. said no to |
| 8. unpaid | h. complications |
| 9. communities | i. public vote |
| 10. problems | j. backers |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think of robots doing all the work and people getting paid?
- Should everyone get the same salary, whatever his/her job?
- Should people get paid for housework and looking after elderly parents?
- Is there such a thing as 'money for nothing'?
- What things should a basic income cover?
- Would Switzerland have immigration problems if it introduced the plan?
- How should governments help poorer-paid people?
- What questions would you like to ask those who said no?

BreakingNewsEnglish - The Mini Lesson

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. overwhelmingly | a. welfare system |
| 2. provide a minimum | b. the minimum wage |
| 3. overhaul Switzerland's social | c. problems |
| 4. help fight poverty | d. of people |
| 5. a top-up for people who earned less than | e. salary |
| 6. work was becoming increasingly | f. rejected a proposal |
| 7. money for | g. work |
| 8. It's care | h. automated |
| 9. immigration | i. nothing |
| 10. billions | j. and inequality |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do you think voters rejected the idea?
- Is a guaranteed monthly state income a good idea?
- How happy would you be at getting a \$2,500 monthly salary for free?
- Is it better to give people a salary or give them welfare payments?
- What are salaries like in your country?
- What's the best way to deal with income inequality?
- What advice do you have for supporters of this plan?

Spelling

- overwhelmingly jdcrtee
- a euaeatndrg basic monthly income
- The munederfer took place on Sunday
- 77 per cent of voters gisnoopp the plan
- The group behind the ropaoslp
- the ieitvnatii was necessary
- work was becoming increasingly matuetado
- fewer jobs laalaivbe for workers
- the cmpaigan group
- It's in different ioimutmns
- many gmiormtiina problems
- blsliino of people

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. i	3. e	4. a	5. c
6. j	7. d	8. b	9. f	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Lunch for school kids

You think lunch for school kids is the most important thing governments should provide for free. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): healthcare, housing for the homeless or the Internet.

Role B – Healthcare

You think healthcare is the most important thing governments should provide for free. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): lunch for school kids, housing for the homeless or the Internet.

Role C – Housing for the homeless

You think housing for the homeless is the most important thing governments should provide for free. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): healthcare, lunch for school kids or the Internet.

Role D – The Internet

You think the Internet is the most important thing governments should provide for free. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): healthcare, housing for the homeless or lunch for school kids.

Speaking – Free

Rank these with your partner. Put the things a government should provide for free at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| • healthcare | • housing for the homeless |
| • school milk | • bus passes for the elderly |
| • passports | • water |
| • universities | • Internet |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.