Cover story

Women in Management

Change of Power in Bundesrat
Simonetta Sommaruga wins election and the gender balance shifts in the Bundesrat (Swiss Federal Council). Why do women have it easier in politics than in business today?

Interview with Andrea Pfeifer
The managing director of AC Immune discusses her commitment to research, her career, her professional successes, the advancement of women and her personal work-life balance.

Finland, the Land of Quotas
In the land of a thousand lakes, women are not only at the forefront of politics. They are also found on 76 percent of the supervisory boards of listed companies.
“We Urgently Need Women at the Top!”
Women Want to be Discovered!

It takes some courage to get involved in such an emotional issue. The “question of women’s rights” is being discussed at the management level with some controversy, but it is on the agenda everywhere. This is because the lack of women at the executive level is becoming more obvious and may lead to a competitive disadvantage for our economy in the long run. A new awareness is emerging about the diversification of top management. Studies have long shown how important gender diversity is to forward-looking companies. The gender mix in leadership leads not only to a more diverse corporate structure, but to demonstrably improved performance.

In our magazine, “schillingnews,” we compare trends at the international level with those in Switzerland. The data collected for this purpose in our “schillingreport 2010” (www.schillingreport.ch) are of great value. They clearly demonstrate that there is still much to do, although there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon. Andrea Pfeifer, CEO of AC Immune, believes this too, and she considers it one of her tasks to provide even better support for women than ever before. I personally am glad to hear this, because I also see great potential.

We executive searchers have been issued a challenge. Women have a great sense of responsibility, take specific risks, are sensible and more anchored in the “here and now” than their male colleagues. Women are not going to stand on our doorstep and call attention to themselves. Women want to be discovered, and they need our motivation. For our clients, we have made it our goal to purposely evaluate women on the market as well, because we want to see more female leaders in the Swiss economy in the future.

Since 22 September 2010, women have had a majority in Switzerland’s Bundesrat and the country is now ranked 10th again in the WEF’s “Global Gender Gap Report 2010.” The election of Simonetta Sommaruga confirms what studies have long concluded: Bodies that are expected to pass resolutions by majority must be representative of society as a whole. Some parties have introduced quotas for women to achieve this goal. The business world is also taking the offensive on quotas, and this has been met with criticism in many parts. Records of achievement should be the most important criteria for filling a vacancy. We also see it that way. That is why you can trust us to find the best candidates – and there will certainly be women among them!

Guido Schilling

Managing Partner, guido schilling ag
For decades, women had to fight hard for a place in the executive suite. Then, it looked as though the winds were turning. In Switzerland, the number of women CEOs or supervisory board members was slowly rising. Over the last year, however, this trend has stalled. The number of women in executive management positions has declined. Numerous studies have shown that companies with women at the top are more economically successful in the long term and have a better public image. Gender diversity is the catchphrase of the day.
“Five years ago, I predicted that the number of women in top management at our company would increase from 5 percent to 10 percent. Unfortunately, the actual number today is 4 percent, and has therefore declined. I hope that we will reach that 10 percent over the next 10 to 15 years, because we urgently need women at the top!” said Executive Searcher Guido Schilling in May of this year during a press conference for the publication of the “schillingreport 2010.” The renowned personnel consultant is not alone in this conviction. Business leaders are now ready to listen regarding the subject of “women in management.” Women’s networks and women politicians who support quotas for women believe they have taken a major step closer to their goal. For example, the study by Guido Schilling of the approximately 100 largest companies in Switzerland still provides a ray of hope, and Guido Schilling concluded his talk this way: “The figures showing that 10 percent of the vacant seats on management boards were filled by women last year is a clear indication for me that companies encourage women and give them opportunities. The potential of women has never been so clearly visible.”

Quotas for Women are Expected to Help

On 15 March 2010, Deutsche Telekom became the first DAX-30 company to introduce quotas for women in management positions. Chief Human Resources Officer Thomas Sattelberger would like to see the number of women in management rise to 30 percent by 2015. He intends to enforce this quota with specific support “along the entire talent chain.” Deutsche Telekom CEO René Obermann does not see this as merely tapping new resources, but also as a chance to improve performance: “Taking on more women in management positions is not about the enforcement of misconstrued egalitarianism. It is a matter of social fairness and a categorical necessity for our success. Having a greater number of women at the top will quite simply enable us to operate better.”

Another Bonn company quickly followed suit. Deutsche Post CEO Frank Appel announced that the executive board would be restructured and a woman would be appointed for the first time. This pleased German Minister of Family Affairs Kristina Schröder (CDU), who strongly supports a legislative solution. She would require businesses to increase the number of women executives to 20 percent by 2015.

The move by German corporations comes late. The numbers, according to “Spiegel Online,” are alarming: 2.5 percent of executives and just 10 percent of supervisory board members are women. Although demands to include women on top management boards have existed for a long time, those who have been able to do it have travelled a lonely road. Even in Switzerland. The “schillingreport 2010” figures clearly demonstrate this: Of 918 executive board members, 39 were women. A total of 3 of more than 100 companies examined were led by a woman. Female CEOs, Jasmin Staiblin (ABB Schweiz), Monika Ribar (Panalpina) and Susy Brüschiweller (SV Group), continue to be the exceptions. The numbers are less dramatic in the case of supervisory board members: of 896, 86 were women.

The Nestlé food group seized its chance at the supervisory board. Last year, South African Petraea Heynike forged ahead as the first woman in corporate management. However, the company does not want to implement quotas. In a recent interview with “Die Zeit,” Gerhard Berssenbrügge, CEO of Nestlé Germany, said: “It is necessary to bring the best leaders into top management, regardless of whether they are men or women. Furthermore, I am optimistic that there is another way to bring women into top management. This involves creating a business culture in which equal opportunity becomes a reality and performance factors tip the scales when it comes to promotions.”

At Credit Suisse, Pamela Thomas-Graham became the first executive board member at the beginning of the year. The bank would like to increase the percentage of women in management positions and sees itself in the future as a preferred employer for well-qualified women. The pharmaceutical giant Roche has made up its mind to do more. The company intends to introduce a quota for women. The number of women at the executive level is targeted to be 20 percent by 2014, CEO Severin Schwan announced. Indeed, the figures continue to be sobering: Of the top 120 positions at the pharmaceutical company, just 8 percent were held by women in 2009. Among all employees of the company, the number of women in 2008 was 46 percent. Silvia Ayyoubi is one of the women who has made it at Roche — as Head of Human Resources and a member of the executive board. Another gratifying individual case is the appointment of 48-year-old Basel-Land native Kathrin Amacker, who became Head of Corporate Communications and a member of corporate management at Swisscom in autumn of 2010.

Management Boards in Switzerland

This graph tracks the trend in the percentage of women and men in both of the last two years.

Source: “schillingreport 2009” and “schillingreport 2010,” guided schilling ag

"Without binding guidelines, there will be no equality at companies."

Thomas Sattelberger, Deutsche Telekom

Text: Christine Marie Oppelt
Illustration: Steven Swift/Corbis
Switzerland Compared with Europe

This graph shows the percentage of women in executive management positions in the countries indicated. The European average is 11 percent. With 4 percent, Switzerland is ranked third from last.


Proportional share of women in 2008

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European average: 11%

Female Virtues Welcome

Why is it that the chief executive and personnel strategies are paying more and more attention to calls for women’s quotas in business? A pioneering development was the research series “Women Matter” published by McKinsey & Company. With the first report in 2007, it was already clear that the performance of a company was directly related to the percentage of women. The more women at the top management levels the more successful the operation, both organizationally as well as financially. This effect was more pronounced for companies in which at least 3 of 10 top management positions were held by women.

Now, the ice had been broken. For many businessmen there were finally tangible arguments on the table that sounded much more convincing than political slogans. What came next was better still. The second study in 2008 went a step farther and asked: What behaviour corporate management. Therefore, gender diversity means variety and openness.

More and more, the diametrically supported structures of the financial world have driven women out in recent years. In America, there is even talk of a dramatic flight. Some have theorized that the collapse of the New York Stock Exchange would never have happened if more women sat on decision-making bodies. This assessment is backed by a long-term study by the financial services company Bloomberg, which published a comparison showing that funds managed by women often perform twice as well as those managed by their male colleagues.

“If we keep going like this, we will have a real problem in five years.”

Georg Graf Waldersee, Ernst & Young

The third McKinsey report in 2009 placed the existing analysis in the context of the economic crisis. The results underscored the previous research: The chances that a company will make it through difficult times in good shape increases along with the percentage of women at executive management levels. Women are better able to define objectives and to commit employees to them. The international auditing firm Ernst & Young reached similar conclusions. At the World Economic Forum 2009 in Davos, the company presented a study titled “Groundbreakers: Using the strength of women to rebuild the world economy,” which emphasizes the contribution of women to the business world and to economic growth. The report is a plea to stop ignoring and leaving untapped the achievement potential of women. A recent survey by the United Nations cited a specific statistic: U.S. companies with women on the boards of directors yield a 42 percent higher profit margin than competing companies run solely by men. This is a finding that resourceful Swiss bankers are already exploiting commercially: Naissance Capital has developed a fund that only invests in companies with a balanced gender ratio at the top. One of the funds most prominent backers is Cherie Blair. The Paris-based investment bank Bryan Garnier & Co. also works with similar funds.

Desperately Seeking Executives

The shortage of highly qualified experts is becoming more and more evident. Eastern markets have been scoured. The international and Swiss markets are equally void. For headhunter Guido Schilling, the focus on women is not only a necessity but a matter of great interest. He sees great potential in the resource of women as top executives for the management of Swiss companies: “We want to find and promote these women. If necessary, with a quota system for supervisory boards. However, I oppose quotas for the business management level, because these positions should be awarded according to achievement and qualifications.” The German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) shares this opinion. The number of working people will already decline by 2015, says Senior Economist Elke Holst. “If Germany does not radically change course and incorporate more women, things will get much harder,” she predicts. McKinsey & Company also provides convincing statistics in this regard. If men and women had the same professional opportunities, a shortage of 24 million employees in Germany in the year 2040 could be reduced to 3 million — projections that also apply to Switzerland.

There is a lot of evidence favouring women. In addition, there is the fact that they have it in their hands to bring our economy to a whole new level: Seventy percent of purchasing decisions are made by women, although they represent only 51 percent of the population. Women are also the decision-makers in a high percentage of large purchases. In politics, the knowledge that half of voters are women has long been
exploited. Political parties were obliged to appoint women to their leadership committees. Otherwise, their chances of election would have been reduced.

Quotas for women are not only met in this case, but even exceeded, as the Swiss Bundesrat elections on 22 September 2010 demonstrated. Beatrice Tschanz, a member of the supervisory board of the Schild Group, gives this assessment of the new women’s majority in the Bundesrat: “This is a happy day! Forty years ago, I took to the streets for women’s suffrage. I am even happier now that politics is taking the lead. Business could follow suit, because equality is not yet the norm, even though many say otherwise. In any case, the new women’s majority is outstanding for Switzerland’s image abroad.”

The challenge now is to clear the stumbling blocks of the past from the road. Even though women have been better at communicating and resolving conflicts since the Stone Age, they have problems when it comes to a showdown. And this often is an issue at the executive level. Women do poorly in situations dominated by extreme competition, while men are in top form. Women even lack self-confidence. While their male colleagues gloat about their successes, Women scrutinize their performance in a particularly critical manner. It is most often they themselves who reject women’s quotas in business. In an article published in the Swiss magazine “Bilanz,” only two of more than 20 women entrepreneurs, managers, supervisory board members and professors surveyed were in favour of quotas. The rest considered quotas to be “legislative diktat,” “an intrusion on entrepreneurial freedom” or “discriminatory”. “Women want to be discovered,” says Executive Searcher Guido Schilling, expressing exactly what women feel. “We do not want to make men out of women. That would be a mistake, because they bring to a company exactly what we urgently need. Hence, what we need to do is encourage, promote and qualify women.” He has doubts about whether women’s networks are the right solution, because women remain among the like-minded there. Instead, they should network where they work, or where they would like to work. This is the only way they can finally come out of their shell.

“Women must make their record of achievement and claim to leadership transparent.”

Hauke Stars, Hewlett Packard

Reconciling Career and Family Life

Monika Ribar, CEO of Panalpina, sees a need for the input of employers and state institutions on yet another matter: “In the long run, no one today can any longer afford to lose the capital invested in training and knowledge for women simply because no suitable way of reconciling career and family exists.” When examining the percentages of female executive board members in European countries, the following soon becomes clear: Women clear the decisive hurdles only in countries, primarily Norway and Sweden, in which parents have a right to a day nursery and all-day childcare. To date, there are only legal quotas in Norway and Finland, while there are proposals and draft legislation in many other European countries.

Ultimately, however, it must be women themselves who take the lead. With her British humour, Maggie Thatcher is supposed to have said once: “Women are like teabags. You never know how strong they are until they are in hot water.”

Equal Pay for Equal Work?

This inflames passions: According to information provided by the Federal Office for Statistics in Switzerland, women earn up to 20 percent less than their male colleagues. Payroll expert Urs Klingler puts the reasoning of a recent article in “Weltwoche,” i.e. that women do inferior work and therefore bring home less money, in another context. In his judgment, there are various reasons that can be blamed for the imbalance. These include insufficient transparency of market wages, incorrect job classification, and a lack of negotiating skills. The biggest differences are found in the case of young and poorly qualified women who are defenceless against wage dumping.

Women in higher positions are less affected, but Urs Klingler sees deficiencies here too, as the compensation of results with money does not correspond to the value system of women. He also sees a need for action by employers. “A wage difference of more than 2.5 percent should not be allowed by any company today.”

www.klinglerconsultants.ch

Guido Schilling
Executive Searching is his Passion

For more than 20 years, Guido Schilling has advised well-known companies, organizations and public corporations. With guido schilling ag, he specialized in filling top positions at senior management levels and in the placement of supervisory board member. As one of the leaders in his field, Guido Schilling constantly seeks dialogue with people. Customers think highly of him as an entrepreneur and benefit from his proven knowledge of the industry and his experience as a supervisory board member of service organizations and an NPO. Guido Schilling is affiliated with the “IMD International Search Group.”

This union of national leading, independent and owner-operated executive search companies is at the disposal of the customers of guido schilling ag and schilling partners ag to conduct international research and fill top positions abroad.

Guido Schilling has been committed to the task of leading women to management positions for many years. Even though his predictions in past years of the percentage of women in top Swiss management positions proved too optimistic, he is nonetheless convinced of a successful future for women in management — and intends to promote this more than ever.
"The passion to win"

“You can see a passion for the work we do in the eyes of every AC Immune employee,” says Andrea Pfeifer, alluding to the motto of the biotech company she founded in 2003. She works with a team of 40 international researchers to develop drugs and therapy to treat Alzheimer’s disease. During the doctor of pharmacy’s career, her “womanhood” was never an issue. Her motivation is job satisfaction and the desire to help others.
schillingnews: Seven years ago, you founded the biotech company AC Immune. What do you do?
Andrea Pfeifer: Our goal at AC Immune is to find an effective means of fighting Alzheimer’s disease, against which there is no effective therapy to date. There are currently about 35 million people affected by the disease worldwide today. This figure will triple by 2050 and trigger inconceivably high health costs. We are pursuing three innovative therapeutic approaches that attack the causes of the illness: a vaccine, antibodies and orally available “small molecules.” In addition, we also apply the results of drug development to generate new diagnostic means, as early detection of the disease is very important.

What have been the results of your research since 2003?
We were able to begin clinical development with our antibodies programme just four years after the initial steps in the laboratory. Our partner, Genentech, concluded the first phase of clinical trials with promising results. The therapeutic vaccine and an orally available drug are also in clinical trials in Europe. We still have a long road ahead of us, with many risks, but if the research results we are hoping for come in, we could put the first drug onto the market in about five years, thereby helping millions of patients.

You were able to secure investors and partners such as the US group Genentech and the German company Dietmar Hopp right from the beginning. What makes AC Immune stand out?
I may say with modesty that we have a leading role. We are surely not the first, but hopefully the best. I may say with modesty that we have a leading role. I was always ambitious, though. I simply always wanted to be the best.

You operate worldwide and have chosen Lausanne as a location. What were your reasons?
In 2003, we discussed several locations, including the U.S. or Germany. Several factors were decisive: good relations with the EPFL (École Polytechnique Fédéral de Lausanne) and Prof. Aebischer, the high quality of researchers, as well as a good network with business experts who understand biotechnology. The region is attractive to high-quality employees from around the world – important for recruiting – and Switzerland offers advantages to companies with a good work ethic.

The reward for the work of recent years was the selection as a “Technology Pioneer 2009” at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the “Entrepreneur of the Year 2009” award of Ernst & Young. What do such awards mean to you?
The awards from the WEF and Ernst & Young are first and foremost a great honour and have delighted me and my team. They are a fantastic acknowledgement and recognition of the achievements we have made in recent years. At the same time, they support our work by emphasizing our reputation and credibility.

You have had an astounding career. What were the key factors of success?
Time and again throughout my entire career, I have led and worked with people who remain humble despite their successes. I was able to learn entrepreneurship from these people, but also visionary leadership, discipline and flexibility.

Was it always your goal to be in top management?
It was my dream as a child to establish a business one day. My personal motivation comes from the will to achieve something that can help heal chronic illnesses. This need arose when I had to deal with the illnesses of my parents and took over responsibility for the family at an early age. That had a very profound effect on me.

Did you have a master plan, or did your ambition grow along with success?
Master plan is an overstatement, but I had clear ideas. Against the wishes of my parents, I wanted to enter science at all costs and complete my studies in the shortest time possible so that I could emigrate to America. Moreover, I wanted to work in an environment in which science and research could generate important data for society. For everything else, I followed the motto to do my best and not always be thinking about career, since good work opens doors automatically. I was always ambitious, though. I simply always wanted to be the best.

“My forte is converting research results into product ideas.”
What qualities do you need to be successful in the long run?
Courage, discipline, intuition, trust, a work ethic, humility, humanity and heart.

As someone with a PhD in the natural sciences, you specifically prepared yourself for a position in top management with management courses. How useful was this step?
To this day I am grateful to Nestlé and the IMD for the good introduction to the management world. Without this preparation, I don't believe I would have had the courage and the ability to organize my work today with the same degree of professionalism. On the other hand, I believe that, while the tools for leadership can be learned, a basic talent and the will to succeed is embedded in the genes.

“A balanced personal life is very important to me.”

As a female CEO, you are the exception in business in Switzerland. What does this fact mean to you?

In former years, I did not want to hear much about this, because performance is what mattered to me and not “womanhood.” In the meantime, however, I have learned that many young female students and women at the beginning of their careers take strength and courage from the success of other women to attempt the same. That is why I devote some of my time to encouraging and supporting them. I teach a management course at IMD, and, at UNIL (Université de Lausanne), I teach students who are earning their master’s in biotechnology. I encourage all of them to go their own way and I try to arouse the entrepreneurial spirit. I show them what they can achieve when they believe in themselves. The success of these young people pleases me, and this is a way to give a little thanks to those who encouraged me.

Do women have to be better than men?
I think a lot is expected of both men and women today to the same extent. For me the difference is rather that women are still all too frequently required to choose between career and family and/or must find an extraordinary partner who is willing to share the responsibilities and organization of the family on an equal basis.

I think there are two issues that are decisive if the situation is to change. The first involves improving childcare options. The second involves women themselves. They must believe in themselves and in their career options at an early age, and learn to assert themselves in a difficult environment with knowledge, steadfastness, courage, women’s intuition and, yes, even a bit of charm.

You yourself say that you and your team at AC Immune go to the limits of your capacity. Where do you find the strength for this?
I have the good fortune of being healthy, having a lot of energy and needing only five hours of sleep. That is a gift that I would like to make the most of. Work is not a burden for me, and the joy of achieving objectives gives me the strength and motivation to continue working with full commitment.

Where and how do you relax?
Primarily swimming, in the summer in Lake Geneva. I am also a passionate cook. I have the backing of my mother and my husband, who has always supported me and can deal with my high work ethic. And then there is my cat, waiting for me to come home.
It makes us proud!

Each of the top managers presented here has her own unique background. What they have in common is a good education, the ability to assert themselves, and ambition. It is of special interest here that two of the six women are from Germany, but the most powerful businesswoman in Germany is Swiss born.

Monisha Kaltenborn | CEO | Sauber Motorsport | www.sauber-motorsport.com

The curriculum vitae of this 38-year old is staggering: Monisha Kaltenborn was born in India and moved to Austria at 8. She studied law in Vienna, and attended the London School of Economics. In 1998, she took a position with the Fritz Kaiser Group in Liechtenstein, when Kaiser was a partner of the Red-Bull Sauber F1 Team. After Kaiser sold his shares, Kaltenborn joined Peter Sauber in Hinwil to head the legal department. In 2010, he appointed her as the first and only female racing team manager in the world. Monisha Kaltenborn is married, has a 7-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter.

Barbara Kux | Member of the Board | Siemens | www.siemens.com

In 2008, the Zurich native became the first woman to be appointed to the executive board of Siemens in the company’s 160-year history. Since then, she has been responsible for Supply Chain Management and is also Chief Sustainability Officer. Barbara Kux is considered to be one of the most powerful women in German business. She graduated from the Hotel Management School in Lausanne and studied further at Insead in Fontainbleau. She has held important career positions at McKinsey & Company in Düsseldorf, ABB in Zurich, Nestlé in Vevey and Warsaw, Ford in Vienna and Philips in Amsterdam. Barbara Kux lives in Munich and Zurich.

Monika Ribar | CEO | Panalpina | www.panalpina.ch

Monika Ribar grew up in Deggiersheim, in the Canton of St. Gallen. She studied at the University of St. Gallen, one of the most renowned business schools, and received her degree in finance and controlling in 1983. The business administrator began her professional career at the BASF chemical group in Vienna. After three years, she returned to Switzerland and worked for Fides, which is now KPMG. In 1991, Monika Ribar joined the logistics services provider Panalpina. On 1 October 2006, she was named CEO. Monika Ribar has also been a member of the supervisory board of Julius Bär and Logitec for several years. She is married.

Carolina Müller-Möhl | President | Müller-Möhl Group | www.mm-grp.com

The Zurich native received an excellent education. After finishing at Germany’s elite Schloss Salem boarding school, she earned degrees in politics, history and law at Ruprecht Karl University of Heidelberg, the London School of Economics and the Free University of Berlin, where she received a degree in political science. She founded the Müller-Möhl Group in 2000 after the accidental death of her husband, Ernst Müller-Möhl. In 2004, she was appointed to the supervisory board of Nestlé, and later of Orascom (2008) and NZZ (2010). She lives with her companion and her 12-year-old son in the Canton of Zurich.

Jasmin Staiblin | Chairwomen of the Executive Board | ABB Schweiz | www.abb.ch

Jasmin Staiblin has been the head of ABB Schweiz since March 2006. Born in southern Germany, she studied electrical engineering and physics at the University of Karlsruhe and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. By 1997, she was already enrolled in a trainee programme at ABB Schweiz. The positions she has held at the company are Sales, Portfolio Management and Business Development, as well the management of Marketing and Sales. Before she was named CEO, she also held a management position in the global Power Engineering Division. Jasmin Staiblin is married and became a mother in mid-1990.

Hauke Stars | General Manager | Hewlett-Packard Schweiz | www.hp.com

The career of Hauke Stars breaks all of the stereotypes. Born in East Germany, the business manager studied computer science at the University of Magdeburg and the Berlin Institute of Technology. After the reunification of Germany, she earned a Master of Science degree in Engineering at Britain’s Warwick School. She first worked at the IT service provider mediaSystems, and then at Thyssen-Krupp-Tochter Triaton, which was acquired by Hewlett-Packard. In 2007, Hauke Stars became general manager in Switzerland and was able to increase turnover by 10 percent in her first year in the post. She is married and has a son.
Switzerland means democracy, federalism, concordance — and now it means a majority of women in the Bundesrat. At least for one year. There is no guarantee of equal representation. But one thing is clear: Women politicians are predominantly on the right path and have achieved a lot today with a 28-percent share on the National Council, and 20 percent on the Council of States, which they have been aspiring to since 1971.

Simonetta Sommaruga
Member of the Bundesrat, SP | Bern | www.sommaruga.ch

On 22 September 2010, Simonetta Sommaruga of the SP (Social Democratic Party) was elected on the fourth round ahead of Johann Schneider-Ammann of the FDP (Free Democratic Party). She received a very good result of 159 votes with an absolute majority of 121 votes. Many observers had predicted this victory, although no one was really sure. After all, there had been some surprises in past Bundesrat elections. The 50-year-old candidate was well-known for her work as the executive director of the Foundation for Consumer Protection in German-speaking Switzerland. From 1999 to 2003, she was a member of the Swiss National Council, and has been a member of the Council of States since 2003.

There was not much of a fuss on this 22nd of September 2010 as Switzerland elected a majority of women to its government for the first time. Neither Swiss women nor men are known for exuberant reactions. Moreover, people had seen this coming. It was already clear in the nomination process that there would now be four women on the seven-member Bundesrat. Typically, it was the Social Democrats (SP) who entered the race with two women, Simonetta Sommaruga, who was elected, and Jacqueline Fehr, thus making it all so evident. This is because the SP has been encouraging women to run since the 1980s. At that time, at the national, regional and local level, women either had their own list of candidates or the female party members fought for the leading positions on the mixed-gender lists. This enabled the left to continuously increase the percentage of women in politics, and now, in 2010, they could not help but nominate two women for the Bundesrat — it was impossible to pass them over.

The “People of the Shepherds” (“Volk der Hirten”) as the Austrian Hans Weigel referred to the Swiss in the title of one of his books, were prepared for a women’s majority: The highest offices in the land were already in the hands of women this year. The top Swiss official is National Council President Pascale Bruderer Wyss (SP). The second highest officials are Erika Forster (FDP), president of the Council of States, and Doris Leuthard (Christian Democratic People’s Party or CVP), president of the Swiss Confederation. These are Johann Schneider-Ammann (FDP) congratulates Simonetta Sommaruga (SP) after the two were sworn in as new members of the Bundesrat.

Text: Monique Ryser
Foto: Lukas Lehmann/Keystone

On 22 September 2010, Simonetta Sommaruga of the SP (Social Democratic Party) was elected on the fourth round ahead of Johann Schneider-Ammann of the FDP (Free Democratic Party). She received a very good result of 159 votes with an absolute majority of 121 votes. Many observers had predicted this victory, although no one was really sure. After all, there had been some surprises in past Bundesrat elections. The 50-year-old candidate was well-known for her work as the executive director of the Foundation for Consumer Protection in German-speaking Switzerland. From 1999 to 2003, she was a member of the Swiss National Council, and has been a member of the Council of States since 2003.
favourable results for the lead-up to two anniversaries to be celebrated by Switzerland next year: It will be 40 years since Swiss women won the right to vote in the oldest democracy in the world. And it will be 30 years since an article on equality was included in the Swiss Constitution.

How people abroad laughed and vituperated about how long it would take Swiss men to be comfortable ceding women the same rights. And how women struggled and suffered. “Women in the Playpen” (“Frauen im Laufgitter”) ran the title of Iris von Rothen’s 1957 book. She had at least persuaded her husband to introduce women’s suffrage in the mountain community of Unterbäch in the Canton of Valais — despite the ban by the Valais government council. When women could finally vote and run for office in 1971, 11 women were elected to the National Council straightaway. One of them was Elisabeth Blunschy-Steiner, who became the first woman president of the National Council in 1977. The first woman member of the Swiss Bundesrat, Elisabeth Kopp, also belonged to a conservative middle-class party, as a member of the FDP. Today, the number of women in conservative middle-class parties is lower than in leftist parties. On the National Council, 28 percent of the 200 members are women. On the Council of State, 20 percent are women. The number of women in the SP and the Green Party is 45 percent, and the number in middle-class parties is between 7 and 33 percent. These percentages have steadily grown since 1971. The situation with the parties is somewhat different in the executive offices in the cantons. There, women are about equally represented in the SP and FDP.

Solidarity and Cooperation

Ruth Dreifuss, a former member of the Bundesrat, described the emancipation and equal rights movement as the “largest and most peaceful revolution of the 20th Century,” referring to developments culminating with the women’s majority in the Bundesrat. Her election came about in 1993 while there will still loud protests by women: Instead of the SP’s official candidate Christiane Brunner, the Federal Assembly elected a man. This was an unparalleled affront: Brunner was the organizer of the Swiss women’s strike of 1991, during which a half million women stopped working for one day to protest the delayed implementation of the article on equality. The strike did not cause alarm only in Switzerland. Around the world, the media reported the one-time action, which no one would have expected from Swiss women. The failure to elect Brunner to the Bundesrat caused an uproar among women. Under pressure from the SP and the public, the man was obliged to decline his election, and with Ruth Dreifuss, another woman became a member of the Bundesrat. The “Brunner Effect” had been established: In all elections in the following months, the percentage of women in regional and municipal parliaments increased significantly.

“People should not fear competition. It should challenge them.”

Simoneetta Sommaruga | Member of the Bundesrat

The wave of mobilization and solidarity in the Swiss women’s movement after the non-election of Christiane Brunner led to increased cooperation between women of all parties. It also led to popular initiatives “for fair representation of women in federal departments” (quota initiatives) that failed in 2000. Werner Seitz, head of the Politics, Culture and Media section of the Federal Office for Statistics, remarked: “Quotas as an instrument for equality have been politically repudiated. Needless to say, there are still sufficient arguments for the introduction of gender quotas; in addition to the most recent election results, there are other quotas in politics that are sensible and acceptable.” The results of the vote show that only women of the SP approved the quota initiative and that the no-vote was above average among young people. There are many quotas in Swiss politics, e.g. those resulting from regional language representation in the Bundesrat or the measures applied by the SP to promote women internally. Seitz also noted the following: “I think party politics should prompt the CVP and the FDP to make more and more adjustments and be taken to task, because they have a large deficit of women at the national and cantonal levels with 20 percent representation.”

Switzerland now has four women in the Bundesrat and, one should not forget, the federal chancellor is a woman. This could change next year. The general elections could result in a shift in party politics, and women have no guarantees of equal representation with elections in the future.
Finland has always been one of the most advanced countries in Europe with respect to women’s rights. Women already won the right to vote in 1906 and could be elected to political office. Today, women play an important role, and not only in politics. Female virtues have also been introduced at the highest management levels of business and the public sector.

The percentage of women managers has continuously increased in recent years in Finland. The Finnish government’s recommendation in 2003 to staff supervisory boards with both men and women was one of the first in the world. On 1 January 2010, the recommendation was renewed. By this spring, the number of companies that have selected women on the supervisory boards had risen to 74 percent. Two years earlier it was still 51 percent. Surely the quota of 40 percent for the supervisory boards of state-owned businesses established by the Finnish government contributed to this trend.

At first, private industry resisted such rules. Little by little, people learned to take different approaches. The percentage of women at the management level is currently just 17 percent. Even though Finland is in third place in Europe, there is still much to be done. Women are well represented on supervisory boards at 21.4 percent. By comparison, the European average is currently 11 percent.

Among the most important conditions for this development were the political agendas established over the last ten years. In Finland, a country in which – as in Switzerland – women hold the majority in the government, there is an entitlement to shared paternal leave. Finnish women enjoy 105 days of maternity leave. Afterwards, they can split another 158 days with the father of the child. In addition, there is a legal entitlement to all-day childcare. And even the companies have done their homework: They offer mothers in management positions more than just bonuses. They offer them domestic help as a fixed contract element.

With more than 150 personnel consultants at over 40 locations in 34 countries worldwide, the international executive-search network “IMD International Search Group” is one of the largest networks of independent, owner-operated executive-search companies.

Since 2004, guido schilling ag has been a member of the IMD search group. In this way, the consulting firm based in Zurich can offer its internationally oriented customers efficient recruiting of management personnel in all markets worldwide.

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Impressions from one of the northern-most countries in Europe: The land of a thousand lakes, as Finland is often called, is only slightly smaller than Germany with an area of 338,424 square kilometres. There are 5.3 million people living here, 2.5 million fewer than in Switzerland. Therefore, Finland is one of the most sparsely populated countries in Europe. A large part of the population is concentrated in the country’s South around the capital of Helsinki. The political life of the parliamentary republic is also found here. The highest political offices, those of the Prime Minister and President of the Republic, are currently held by women. Thanks to a clever economic policy, Finland is one of the richest countries of the EU. One of the driving forces continues to be the Nokia technology group.
Executive Search is our Passion. Over the past 20 years, guido schilling ag has grown to become one of the leading executive search companies of Switzerland. The company specializes in filling select top positions at the supervisory-board and executive-management level. To fulfill this mission, Guido Schilling brings many years of experience as an entrepreneur and member of the supervisory boards of various service organizations. He knows his client’s needs because of his own practical experience. Complementing the services of guido schilling ag is schilling partners ag, a company in which long-standing successful partners and their teams fulfill executive search orders at the corporate management level with a focus on the specific sector.

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Transparency at the Top. Since 1995, guido schilling ag has analysed approximately 100 of the largest Swiss companies regarding the staffing of executive management, as well as various aspects of their supervisory board members. In particular, the “schillingreport” includes Swiss Market Index (SMI) companies, which are analysed separately, and again examines the composition of supervisory boards. The current report can be ordered free of charge, and presented upon request.

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