

# SWISS ROLE IN EUROPE

By Lukas Reimann

There is a common mistake made by eurosceptics when they refer to Switzerland. It is to suggest that their particular country should become more like Switzerland by making its own laws. However, countries such as Switzerland and Norway are in fact directly influenced by the EU in their lawmaking.

Since 1988, Swiss bills have systematically been reviewed for their EU conformity. The "autonomous conformation" (so called autonomer Nachvollzug) to EU law made about 80 percent of the Swiss economic law EU compatible. Politicians often still lack the courage towards their own, superior solutions and prefer relying on the blind adoption of the EU law instead. It is

a development we are watching with high concern. A current example, which serves as a showcase for hundreds of such cases and only reached the public last week, can demonstrate this: In Switzerland it has been customary to feed meal left-overs from restaurants and staff-canteens to pigs. This is controlled by strict and rigid directives regarding the hygiene, procedure (boiling) and monitoring.

The process is very ecological and experts confirm that this type of nourishment is by far more healthful for pigs than chemical products are. It seems that in some EU countries hygiene had not been on top of the list, therefore, this type of feeding was forbidden within the entire EU. The Swiss government follows suit, even though no plausible reason exists. It is just one of the things the EU has decided. While the authoritative accession proponents pretend that a EU accession is currently not a subject, behind the scenes everything is being done to get Switzerland "ready for accession". They abolish "accession obstacles" systematically, i.e., they continuously adapt our legislation and general framework to EU standards to eliminate all differences. By doing so, they talk about an "autonomous conformation" by which they want to say that Switzerland is already constantly impelled to adopt EU laws. This is not true, however. There can be no question of a compelling adoption, as we would have the choice in each field of reference to maintain or introduce better regulations. The problem arises from the fact that the accession strategists consequently drive at adopting the EU regulations in order to bring everything into line. The alleged forced "autonomous conformation" to EU legislation is merely part of their strategic target.

It goes without saying that there are many EU regulations which are advantageous for us to adopt, if expedient laws have passed this (as in the case of technical developments). What happens in Bern, however, is something completely different. The authoritative accession proponents purposefully "harmonize" all delicate areas which could create problems during a future refer-

endum. The abolition of the 28-ton limit for trucks can still be cited as a primary example. Inevitably, these are those areas for which Switzerland (still) possesses better general conditions than the EU. This kind of "autonomous conformation", i.e., the purposeful elimination of our more advantageous parameters for the benefit of an enforced alignment with the EU is extremely harmful to our country. Years ago, Federal Minister, Moritz Leuenberger, stated with unexcelled clarity (Frankfurter Rundschau of 2 March 2001): "The more hurdles we eliminate, the more naturally the EU accession can later take place." We have already

arrived to the point at which everyone from politicians to media sources, who should normally be in the know, believe the absurdity that it is in the interest of our country to no longer lay down the rules ourselves, but to let them be laid down abroad instead. They say we need foreign directives, such as the EU environmental laws to protect our environment; such as the EU consumer protection to better protect our consum-

ers. All that, although Switzerland protects its environment and consumers better than the EU does.

Against all logic, the voters are made to believe that our wealth could only be maintained by adopting the EU directives. This line of reasoning is not only grotesque, it is downright devious, for the old EU strategists realized long ago that only then will the Swiss citizens vote for a EU accession, when also their wealth has dropped to EU level (when salaries / prices for the average citizen have been scaled down to EU level.) The urge for accession into the Brussels direction is therefore especially disastrous because, compared to that of the EU, our political system is fundamentally different in nature. Switzerland's typical direct democracy and a EU accession are mutually exclusive. There is an immediate logic behind that: for a superior entity like the EU, which enacts mandatory regulations for its member states, our democracy is out of place. The EU will never be able to tolerate that in a small member state 100,000 citizens have the chance to collect signatures for just about any issue and, in the event of a majority of ballots, can enforce a deviating solution. The moment in which Switzerland acceded to the EU, our value added tax (according to EU legislation) would jump up to at least 15% (currently 7.6%). Though the Swiss citizens would be able to collect 100,000 signatures (or 500,000 or even a million), they would not be able to lower the VAT down to 14 percent. The ones who have real interest in Switzerland's direct democracy and its prosperity will inevitably conclude: "Economic order - yes, political adaptation - no." We need a different type of regulations and more advantageous laws than those of the EU.

