



Swiss voters reaffirm bilateral path with the European Union

By means of a popular initiative, the right-wing Swiss People's Party called for the termination of the Agreement on the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the European Union. Today, the Swiss electorate has clearly rejected this radical proposal.

Given the fact that the Agreement on the free movement of persons includes a guillotine clause, the entire package of **Bilateral Agreements I** would have been automatically cancelled if the initiative had been adopted. This package contains many other significant agreements between Switzerland and the European Union (EU) covering technical barriers to trade, overland transport, civil aviation, research, agriculture and public procurement. Fortunately, a termination of this vital treaties could be avoided by today's vote.

In recent weeks and months, economiesuisse has led a dedicated nationwide campaign to maintain the bilateral path, along with a broad-based alliance called strong+connected. This alliance consists of numerous political parties, economic associations, trade unions and organisations from science, culture and civil society aiming to maintain and strengthen the bilateral relationship between Switzerland and the EU. "Especially in these difficult times, it is an important signal for the economy that a clear majority of Swiss voters keep supporting the bilateral path", said Heinz Karrer after his final voting campaign as president of economiesuisse. According to Karrer, the next step will be to continue Switzerland's constructive approach towards the EU. In order to be able to submit the negotiated Agreement on institutional questions to the Swiss parliament for ratification, the Federal Council must now quickly show how the open questions concerning wage

protection, state aid and the Citizens' Rights Directive are to be resolved