[CH] Popular initiative to halve SRG funding clearly rejected

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The eagerly awaited referendum on the future financing of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG) ended with a clear result: Swiss voters rejected the federal popular initiative "200 francs is enough! (SRG initiative)" in March with almost 62% of votes against. The "halving initiative", which was submitted in the summer of 2023, called for the radio and television licence fee for households to be reduced from the current CHF 335 to CHF 200 and for businesses to be exempted from the fee altogether.

In 2018, the Swiss electorate rejected the popular initiative "Say yes to the abolition of radio and television licence fees (abolition of Billag fees)" with 71.6% of votes against. It wanted to completely abolish public funding of the SRG as well as private local radio stations and regional television. Although the "halving initiative" didn't go as far, it would have had serious consequences according to the Federal Council (Swiss Government): from 2029, the SRG, Switzerland's most important public service broadcaster, would have received only around half of the current amount from the levies.

By downsizing the SRG and reducing its journalistic services, the initiative aimed to strengthen the entrepreneurial freedom of private providers. Initial polls had predicted a close vote in favour of the initiative, which was primarily launched by the conservative Swiss People's Party (SVP). However, the referendum on 8 March 2026 produced a clear result: the initiative was rejected by 61.95% of the vote. Voter turnout was 55.80%. According to a follow-up survey, around 77% of SVP supporters voted in favour of the proposed constitutional amendment, while supporters of the other major parties clearly rejected it. The popular initiative did not find a majority among young people either: the 18-34 age group rejected it with 61% of votes against and those aged 35-49 with 58% against. The majority of voters on a low income (up to CHF 4 000) were also against the initiative (56% of no votes).

In the run-up to the referendum, the Federal Council decided to gradually reduce the annual levies for households as part of a counterproject in 2024: in 2027, the levies will fall to CHF 312 and in 2029 to CHF 300. In addition to households, the Federal Council is also easing the burden on businesses: from 2027, the national government will exempt 80% of VAT-liable businesses from the levies. In so doing,

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the Federal Council is forcing the SRG to make savings.

In addition, the Federal Council wants to reformulate the SRG's mandate when the next licence is granted. According to the Federal Council's proposal, the SRG will have to focus its offering more strongly on information, education and culture as well as on the audience's new usage habits. Its online offering should focus more strongly on audio and video content. The SRG's current licence runs until the end of 2028.

Medienmitteilung der Schweizer Regierung (Bundesrat) vom 19.06.2024: „Bundesrat lehnt SRG-Initiative ab und schlägt stattdessen Abgabesenkung auf 300 Franken vor“ [deutschsprachig]

https://www.news.admin.ch/de/nsb?id=101502

Press release by the Federal Council, published on 19 June 2024: "Federal Council rejects SRG SSR initiative and proposes reducing fee to CHF 300 instead"

https://www.news.admin.ch/en/nsb?id=101502

Datenbank des Instituts für Politikwissenschaft der Universität Bern zur Volksabstimmung

https://swissvotes.ch/vote/683.00

Initiative "200 francs is enough!" (fees for public broadcasting)

https://swissvotes.ch/vote/683.00

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