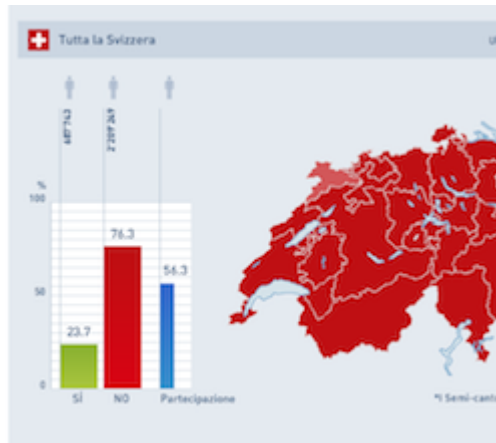


The Swiss reject the “minimum wage”

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The Swiss have said no to a minimum wage of SF 22 per hour: in the referendum on Sunday 18 May, the nos triumphed, with 77% of the votes. This position bucks the trend, with respect to the majority of European countries. **In Ticino, the nos were decidedly below the national average (68%).** In any case, the proposal was rejected in all cantons.

With today's popular decision, Switzerland remains among a minority of countries in Europe: currently, 21 of the 28 countries of the European Union have minimum wages set by law. Furthermore, in most of the countries in which minimum wages are not set by law, such as Italy, Germany and most of the Scandinavian countries, the collective labour agreements cover most employees and contain precise measures in terms of pay. In Switzerland, however, a little less than half of the people are covered by collective labour agreements, and only some of these provide for minimum wages. The initiative included a nationwide legal minimum wage of SF 22 per hour, equivalent to SF 4000 for a full, 42-hour week. It would have been the highest minimum wage in the world.

Another question in the referendum was about defence:

with 53.4%, the Swiss rejected the purchasing of 22 Saab Gripen fighter-bombers to replace the F/A-18 Hornets purchased after a similar referendum in 1993 (which had a favourable outcome). This is one of the rare cases in which the decisions of the government and parliament, on a proposal concerning the army, have been rejected by the people; it happened in the past, for example, on the participation of Swiss soldiers in operations under the UN. In this case, the differences from canton to canton were significant, with victory of the yeses in central and eastern Switzerland, and a **clear “No” in the cantons of French Switzerland. The position in Ticino was vaguer, with 54.7% voting against the new fighter-bombers.**

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