Federal Council recommends rejection of the initiative on Swiss citizenship law

The Swiss Federal Council recommended rejecting the popular initiative “For a Modern Citizenship Law (Initiative for Democracy)” without presenting a direct or indirect counterproposal. The Council believes that the initiative would significantly infringe upon cantonal powers. The initiative, submitted on November 2024, seeks to harmonize naturalisation conditions across Switzerland and give the federal government sole authority over citizenship matters. It proposes that foreigners could obtain Swiss citizenship after five years of legal residence if they meet basic criteria, including having no serious criminal convictions, posing no threat to national security and demonstrating basic knowledge of a national language. The initiative also calls for an entitlement to naturalisation for those who meet these requirements. According to the Federal Council implementing the initiative would lower the bar for ordinary naturalisation and transfer full responsibility for the process from the cantons and communes to the Confederation. The Federal Council, however, wishes to maintain the current three-tier system (federal, cantonal, and communal) reflecting Switzerland’s federal structure. It proposes that Parliament submit the initiative to a vote with a recommendation to reject it. During the same meeting, the Federal Council also approved two reports in response to parliamentary requests concerning naturalisation practices. One report addressed the low naturalisation rates among second-generation foreigners, revealing significant cantonal differences in procedures. The Council urged the cantons to work toward more consistent and simplified processes while maintaining their competencies. The second report examined how cantons document naturalisation interviews. Since many cantons conduct interviews orally without written records, the Council found that requiring written or recorded minutes would enhance legal certainty and clarity. These findings will be incorporated into the ongoing evaluation of Switzerland’s nationality law.

Source(s)

- Federal Council | Der Bundesrat | Conseil fédéral | Consiglio federale (5 November, 2025), Le Conseil fédéral recommande de rejeter l’initiative pour la démocratie [Federal Council recommends rejection of the Democracy Initiative], https://www.news.admin.ch/fr/newnsb/AN4u1Rk2sOx8

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