

VOX Analysis of the campaign against the JUISO-Initiative

Late June 2016 saw the publication of the VOX Analysis on the initiative « Stop the speculation on food Commodities ». Produced by GFS Bern, the Universities of Geneva, Zurich and Bern, the VOX Analysis looks at Swiss national votes and offers insights into the results based on representative surveys and statistical analysis. These confirm the assumptions on which STSA built its successful campaign against the JuSo initiative.

On February 28th, 59.8% of the voters rejected the JuSo initiative. Nevertheless, because of the increasingly loud discussions around the UDC initiative on the automatic deportation of criminal foreigners from Switzerland, an unusually high voter turnout of 63% was recorded, the highest in more than 20 years. Traditional left-wing electors turned out massively to vote against the UDC proposal and decided to also support the JuSo initiative.

The VOX-Analysis shows that the political affiliation of the voters had a significant impact on the decision-making process. On the left 60% of the Socialist and 84% of the Greens voted yes. On the right 30% of Christian-Democrats supported the initiative, 27% of UDC supporters and only 9% of Liberals. In general, socio-demographic factors had very little influence on the vote decision. It is first and foremost political factors and the positioning on the right-left axis that determined the vote.

Another angle of analysis shows that the voter's core concept of economy and environment influenced their voting decision: 67% of the people being favourable to state interventionism over free market voted in favour of the initiative. So did 55% of the people who consider environmental protection as more important than economic prosperity.

The lack of usefulness of the initiative was the first reason for voters to reject it. The argument that a ban - as foreseen by the initiative - will not change anything to the global situation was supported by the majority of the voters. It corroborates the reasoning put forward by STSA during the campaign. The moral argument was the first mentioned among supporters of the initiative. But the objective of fighting Hunger worldwide went largely unnoticed, helping in the rejection of the initiative.

It appears that the voters found it difficult to build their own opinion on the initiative. Their final vote decision was reached very late compared to the others topics. This reflects the absence of a polarised debate with a clear opponent, which would have allowed JuSo to mobilize more voters as shown by the low support from the Socialist electorate. The existence of reasonable doubt among voters was favourable to the rejection of the initiative, as foreseen by STSA.

When examining the arguments developed by each camp, the VOX-analysis concludes that the Swiss population lacks knowledge when it comes to agricultural markets and fears any new regulation which would be applied unilaterally by Switzerland. The possibility of negative consequences on the Swiss economy was a fundamental argument for those who voted against the initiative. However, the majority of voters, whatever their side, considered that speculation on food commodities leads to the enrichment of a few at the expense of the poorest.