

## **PRO HELVETIA**

Who we are

What we do

For over 60 years now, the Arts Council of Switzerland Pro Helvetia has been responsible for presenting Swiss culture abroad, promoting cultural dialogue between the various linguistic regions of the country and fostering supra-regional understanding. Through its activities it supports a contemporary, culturally diverse and open-minded Switzerland.

Pro Helvetia is one of several publicly funded promoters of culture; it is in constant contact with the Federal Office of Culture, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the cantons and the cities. This profile offers insight into the way Pro Helvetia is organized and the wide range of activities it undertakes. For more detailed information, see the links at the end of the text.

## **CULTURAL PROMOTION IN SWITZERLAND – THE PLAYERS**

### Who does what?

Like education, cultural promotion in Switzerland is entrusted to the cantons and communes (cultural sovereignty). While they have, for the most part, long possessed a legal framework for this sector, it is only since 1999 that cultural promotion has been anchored in the Constitution. Paragraph 1 of [Article 69 of the Federal Constitution](#) confirms the cantons' responsibility for culture within their own frontiers; paragraph 2 validates the responsibility of the federal government wherever cultural endeavours are of overall Swiss interest. With that, cultural promotion has become an established component of federal policy. A new federal law in conjunction with Article 69 is currently being drafted; it will give concrete form to the overall system of federal cultural promotion and is scheduled to go into force in 2007.

### Who pays how much?

Of the over SFr. 1.8 billion francs invested in the public funding of culture, SFr. 913.7 million (50%) is spent by the [communes](#) and SFr. 682.2 million (38%) by the [cantons](#), with the [federal government](#) contributing SFr. 230 million (12%).

### What does the federal government do?

The federal government undertook activities in the cultural field long before a constitutional framework for them existed. Federal responsibility for foreign relations has, for example, always been interpreted to include foreign cultural relations as well.

Little by little the role of the federal government expanded to include tasks that exceeded the possibilities of the cantons or were not being fulfilled by them: in the field of art preservation, support for the film industry, the establishment of the National Museum, National Library and Cinémathèque suisse, and promotion of Rhaeto-Romanic as the fourth national language.

Today the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) and Pro Helvetia, a foundation under public law, share the institutional mandate for federal cultural promotion. As an administrative authority, the FOC supports cultural umbrella organisations by contributing to their operating costs, plays an active role in art and monument preservation and promotion of the film industry, is responsible for cultural mediation, the promotion of reading, participation in biennials, cultural legislation and more. The National Library, National Museum, Swiss Literary Archive and Centre Dürrenmatt are also affiliated with the FOC. The Arts Council of Switzerland Pro Helvetia has a legally defined cultural mission to preserve the national heritage, promote artistic creativity, disseminate the fruits of this creativity across the country's linguistic frontiers, and foster cultural exchange with other countries.

The political component of Swiss cultural policy – which is designed to contribute to national cohesion - draws on the country's character as a "nation of the will" with links to three great European (linguistic) cultures, and on a federal structure subsuming a host of smaller-scale governmental units and cultural and social groups. All measures relating to cultural promotion are ultimately guided by the underlying principles of Swiss democracy: the twofold objective of keeping alive the political will that unites the country and encouraging the exploration of cultural identities and cultural diversity, while reinforcing regional and social differences - be it in questions of tradition or contemporary forms of artistic expression.

Thus timely cultural policy always understands itself as a corrective to the forces of the culture market and leisure industry. With its commitment to diversity and innovation, it joins in Switzerland's continuing efforts to contribute to the cultural development of Europe.

## **THE ARTS COUNCIL OF SWITZERLAND PRO HELVETIA**

### History and legal framework

Founded as a working community dedicated to the protection and preservation of the national heritage in 1939, when the country was gravely threatened by an external enemy, Pro Helvetia was transformed into a foundation under public law in 1949. Its new aim: overcoming cultural and intellectual isolation.

The law concerning Pro Helvetia of 17 December 1965 entrusts the foundation with the following tasks:

- preserving and maintaining Switzerland's cultural identity;
- promoting cultural creativity on the basis of the energies at work in the cantons, linguistic regions and cultural groupings;
- encouraging domestic cultural exchange among Switzerland's linguistic regions and cultural groupings;
- fostering cultural relations with other countries.

### Pro Helvetia today

In carrying out its mission today, Pro Helvetia places the emphasis on promoting contemporary artistic production, facilitating cultural exchange and fostering intercultural dialogue at home and abroad.

In its efforts to promote creativity, Pro Helvetia supports works in the areas of music, literature, theatre and dance; the cinema, fine and applied arts, video art and photography fall into the province of the Federal Office of Culture. Pro Helvetia interprets cultural exchange as taking Swiss artistic products of all types to other countries and initiating dialogue with the cultures of other countries. This dialogue can and should, in turn, have an effect on artistic production in Switzerland. And on the Swiss population's image of other cultures.

Culture is local and international at the same time; it is the process of self-reflection in the light of the New and of openness to development. With this in mind, Pro Helvetia makes an active commitment to a Swiss popular culture that has neither lofty pretensions nor claims to lasting value, but pursues a productive approach to tradition with a view to the future.

### Applications and projects

The activities of Pro Helvetia fall broadly into two categories: support for projects in response to applications and projects initiated by the Arts Council itself. Applications account for by far

the largest share of funding extended: some 85% of Pro Helvetia's operative resources are disbursed to projects proposed by cultural producers.

Projects are evaluated according to the following criteria: connection with Switzerland, professionalism of approach, acceptable cost-benefit ratio, potential impact and long-term effect, social relevance and - as key factors - artistic quality and degree of innovativeness. The procedures themselves are detailed in the Federal Council-approved Grant Regulations and in the Guide for Applicants.

On this basis Pro Helvetia supports art and thematic exhibitions; concept events; screenings of Swiss films; readings; tours by theatre and dance troupes, orchestras and musical ensembles of all types and genres; festivals; cooperative undertakings in the humanities and more. But Pro Helvetia's support is not limited to the awarding of grants; it frequently includes advisory services, the facilitation of contacts and logistic help as well.

Pro Helvetia's own projects focus on areas it considers in particular need of support, be they individual forms of expression or timely subjects. This approach sometimes results in large-scale multidisciplinary projects beneficial to mutual understanding and the intensification of cultural exchange. What these projects share is their encouragement of dialogue between cultures and communities at home and abroad.

In every field, Pro Helvetia works with Switzerland's diplomatic and consular missions abroad and with diverse domestic and foreign institutional and organisational partners.

### Funding

Since 1981 Pro Helvetia, a foundation created by federal law, has been financed by federal resources allocated for four-year periods on the basis of a programme drafted by the Board of Trustees. The sums awarded to projects and applications are determined by the specialist working groups of the Board of Trustees and the heads of the individual departments.

### Headquarters

Since its foundation, Pro Helvetia has maintained its head office in Zurich. A staff of approximately 65 work in the five specialised departments and three staff services there and at the Geneva office. Counting its cultural centres and branch offices abroad, Pro Helvetia employs a total of approximately 110 people sharing 75 full-time posts.

### Organisation

The most senior body of Pro Helvetia is the Board of Trustees, whose 25 members are appointed by the Federal Council. They meet regularly in their respective specialised working groups to evaluate applications and Pro Helvetia's own projects. Three times a year the

Board of Trustees meets in plenary session to decide on the annual programme and budget, and to debate basic policy questions.

### Information

Rounding out its activities, Pro Helvetia maintains a Communication Service, which disseminates information in and outside Switzerland about Pro Helvetia's objectives, strategies and projects, and about the cultural work being done in Switzerland. Its own publications, available at home and abroad, foster understanding for and insight into Swiss culture.

## **PRO HELVETIA'S FIELDS OF ACTIVITY**

### Visual Arts

The Arts Council maintains advisory and mediational links with museums, galleries and cultural centres throughout the world. It regularly initiates touring exhibitions and supports events connected with a host of different forms of artistic expression in the areas of the fine and applied arts, New Media, architecture and folk art. Although the Arts Council's activities cover all periods of art history, the focus is on contemporary art. The image of Switzerland conveyed by Pro Helvetia is timely, challenging and often critical. By application, the Council supports exhibitions and the exchange of specialists at home and abroad, and provides funding for art publications and periodicals.

### Music

In the music field Pro Helvetia supports world premieres and first performances of Swiss music with supraregional impact. It promotes performances beneficial to cultural exchange between regions and cultures, and helps establish links between concert promoters. Pro Helvetia regularly awards composition and project commissions in all musical genres.

Outside Switzerland Pro Helvetia supports concert tours by soloists and ensembles from Switzerland, but also master classes, seminars and lectures.

The department concentrates on supporting artists from Switzerland who can make significant contributions to musical development and on events relevant to that development.

### Literature and the Humanities

Fostering understanding among Switzerland's linguistic regions is one of Pro Helvetia's key concerns. The Arts Council therefore places particular emphasis on promoting translation and on supporting Swiss and foreign events designed to encourage encounter.

Every year it commissions works from Swiss and Swiss-based foreign authors; it also extends support to translators, in acknowledgement of their contribution as cultural mediators. Publications about Swiss culture are eligible for grants; literary and cultural magazines receive continual support.

Outside Switzerland, Pro Helvetia distributes books to libraries and cultural institutions open to the public. It awards grants for literary events, the defrayal of authors' travelling expenses, and participation in literary and humanities conferences in cooperation with foreign organisers.

### Theatre

In the Theatre sector, Pro Helvetia focuses on independent professional productions, supporting both their development and dissemination (tours and festivals at home and abroad) with the aim of enabling them to be internationally competitive. This can be achieved only if ensembles have the opportunity to network with strong event organisers. The scope for support to ensembles of subsidised theatres is limited to grants for important guest performances abroad.

In its work outside Switzerland, Pro Helvetia places particular emphasis on cooperation with its eight foreign liaison offices.

### Dance

In the Dance sector, Pro Helvetia aims to support and showcase Swiss choreographic work in all its variety. Placing the accent on independent professional productions, the Council is particularly interested in seeing this work blossom at a supraregional level and helping it to become internationally competitive. To this end, the Council awards grants for tours and important performances at home and abroad. Pro Helvetia also contributes to the international presence of Swiss ballet ensembles and cooperates with event organisers and festivals committed to raising public awareness, disseminating works and encouraging intercultural dialogue.

In the national context Pro Helvetia is one of the partners, alongside the Federal Office of Culture, the cantons and the cities, dedicated to realising "Project Dance". The programme is designed to improve working conditions for Swiss dance, foster choreographic work, further the forms and aesthetics of dance, and intensify the dissemination of works.

### Culture & Society

Pro Helvetia addresses timely issues with a cultural component. The accent is on fostering domestic understanding and intercultural dialogue. In the field of Culture & Society, Pro

Helvetia focuses on the role of art and culture as part of the social process. It supports activities that encourage exchange, the transfer of experience and the building of bridges, and projects that use cultural and artistic means to advance public discussion of timely cultural topics.

In the areas of cultural mediation, everyday and folk culture, and intercultural dialogue, Pro Helvetia provides financial support for pilot projects by application, but also initiates projects in close cooperation with other cultural institutions.

Because of its particular concern for active popular participation in cultural processes, Pro Helvetia - via Culturemobile, its travelling animation workshop - supports initiatives focusing on the cultural practices of diverse ethnic groups.

### International coordination

Pro Helvetia is intent on providing Swiss arts professionals with the best possible conditions for the creation and dissemination of artistic products in an international context, and on helping Switzerland acquire a convincing international image in keeping with its potential. The Arts Council serves as an intermediary, offering advice, coordination and information, facilitating contacts and providing on-the-spot representation.

For this purpose Pro Helvetia maintains foreign liaison offices, which promote collaboration and dialogue between Swiss and foreign artists, promoters and organisations. Projects in all areas of the arts, whether literature, theatre, dance, music or the visual arts, are realised - in Cape Town, Cairo, Budapest, Bratislava, Prague and Cracow - in cooperation with local partners or - in Paris and Milan - in the context of the Arts Council's own infrastructure.

The accent is on the development of a network of lasting relationships between Swiss and foreign arts professionals, and cultural venues and institutions; coordination with federal agencies, particularly Präsenz Schweiz and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, form an integral part of this approach. Support is extended to projects with more than short-term potential: projects geared to long-term, mutually fruitful cultural exchange.

### Swiss Cultural Programme South-East Europe and Ukraine (SCP)

The SCP is a mandate tasked to Pro Helvetia by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Local offices are maintained in six countries of South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia & Montenegro), in the Ukraine and in Kosovo.

The SCP reflects the conviction that culture plays a key role in processes of social change. It promotes local partner organisations and cultural practitioners committed to fostering the diversity, independence and vitality of cultural life. This is achieved, on the one hand, via project-specific grants for activities undertaken by local cultural practitioners and, on the other, through medium-term cooperation projects aimed at building and strengthening cultural organisations and institutions.

### Film

Pro Helvetia promotes the Swiss cinema under the auspices of SWISS FILMS, a partnership between the Swiss Film Centre, the Swiss Short Film Agency and Pro Helvetia.

The primary activities of SWISS FILMS include dissemination of Swiss film work abroad, promotion of the image of the Swiss cinema at home, short film distribution, provision of information on the latest developments in the Swiss cinema, compilation of important data concerning Swiss films and maintenance of a stock of copies.

The staff of the Swiss Film Centre, the Swiss Short Film Agency and the Pro Helvetia Film Service can now be reached at the Zurich and Geneva offices of SWISS FILMS.

#### SWISS FILMS

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### Further information:

If you would like to learn more about Pro Helvetia:

- The website extensive information on the Arts Council and downloadable forms is constantly being updated: [www.pro-helvetia.ch](http://www.pro-helvetia.ch)
- The Grant Regulations and Guide for Applicants provide more detailed information on who is eligible for Pro Helvetia support and how it can be obtained: [www.pro-helvetia.ch](http://www.pro-helvetia.ch) → Applications
- The Mission Statement: Self-Image and Future Work offers information on how the Arts Council views itself and its responsibilities.
- The Annual Report, which appears every spring, shows how, where and whom Pro Helvetia awards support and lists the projects the Council undertakes itself: [www.pro-helvetia.ch](http://www.pro-helvetia.ch) → Publications

- Pro Helvetia Brochures on a variety of cultural topics, Composer Portraits, Cinéportraits and Cahiers d'artistes furnish deeper insight into the work being done in the arts in Switzerland; these series, which are constantly updated and expanded, are published in numerous languages: [www.pro-helvetia.ch](http://www.pro-helvetia.ch) → Publications.

- The Swiss cultural magazine Passages, which appears twice a year, offers thematic insight into the Swiss cultural landscape: [www.pro-helvetia.ch](http://www.pro-helvetia.ch) → Publications

- A list of the Arts Council's own cultural publications can be ordered from Pro Helvetia: [info@pro-helvetia.ch](mailto:info@pro-helvetia.ch)

Outside Switzerland, Pro Helvetia publications are obtainable from Switzerland's diplomatic and consular missions. In Switzerland the Brochure series is available from bookshops; all other information material can be obtained directly from the Arts Council.

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