



GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT LAWYERS

Unions have mountain to climb in Switzerland

The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, supported by the Socialist and Green parties, has failed in its attempts to convince the Swiss public of the merits of imposing a minimum wage of 22 Swiss francs (currently around £14.63) an hour in the politically discrete nation. In a recent referendum, 75% of voters voted against the proposals, which would have given Switzerland the highest minimum wage in the world - a basic annual salary for a 35-hour week of £27,000.

To those of us living in the UK, where the minimum wage for those aged 21 or over is only £6.31 (due to rise to £6.50 in October this year) this may seem inordinately high, but it is worth bearing in mind that Switzerland is a very expensive place in which to live - a club sandwich will set you back a not-to-be-scoffed-at average of £19.46 in Geneva, compared to £14.59 in London. It was in fact the high cost of living in Switzerland that brought about the proposal, but the countervailing view of the Government and business-owners - that many small businesses would not be able to bear such a high minimum wage, and that higher personnel costs would be catastrophic for Switzerland's manufacturing industry - ultimately won the day.