



BABY WINDOW

The Swiss Baby Box – Acceptance through Quality Work





Swiss Aid for Mother and Child Foundation

- A charitable and independent foundation for counselling and support to mothers in distress due to a pregnancy or birth of a child
- Founded in 1998
- 1442 requests for help in 2017
- 24 highly motivated employees and many volunteer helpers
- 20,000 regular donors
- Six Baby windows



Baby Window – An Idea from Germany

- **Summer 2000**
Newspapers report about a
Baby hatch in Hamburg
- **Autumn 2000**
We contact the
Einsiedeln Hospital
- **Spring 2001**
Opening of the first
Swiss Baby window



First Baby Window in Einsiedeln

- Opening on May 9, 2001
- Broad media coverage:
 - 5 TV stations
 - 30 representatives
 - from radio and print
 - 4 hours of interviews
- Since then:
 - 13 healthy babies
 - placed in this Baby window



Goals of the Baby Window

- 1) Avoiding abandonment and infanticide (save lives)
- 2) Offering a solution for pregnant women in extreme crisis situations
- 3) Establishing a symbol of care for life



The Response of the Department of Justice in 2001: **The Baby Window is illegal !**

- Infringement of the child's **right to his or her identity** (article 24, UN Pact II)
- Infringement of **the child's right to know his or her parents** (art. 7, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- Violation of the **obligation to register a child within 3 days** (Swiss Civil Code, fine of up to 500 CHF for the mother)

∅ The Baby window is illegal and should be closed!



Why the Baby Window was not Closed

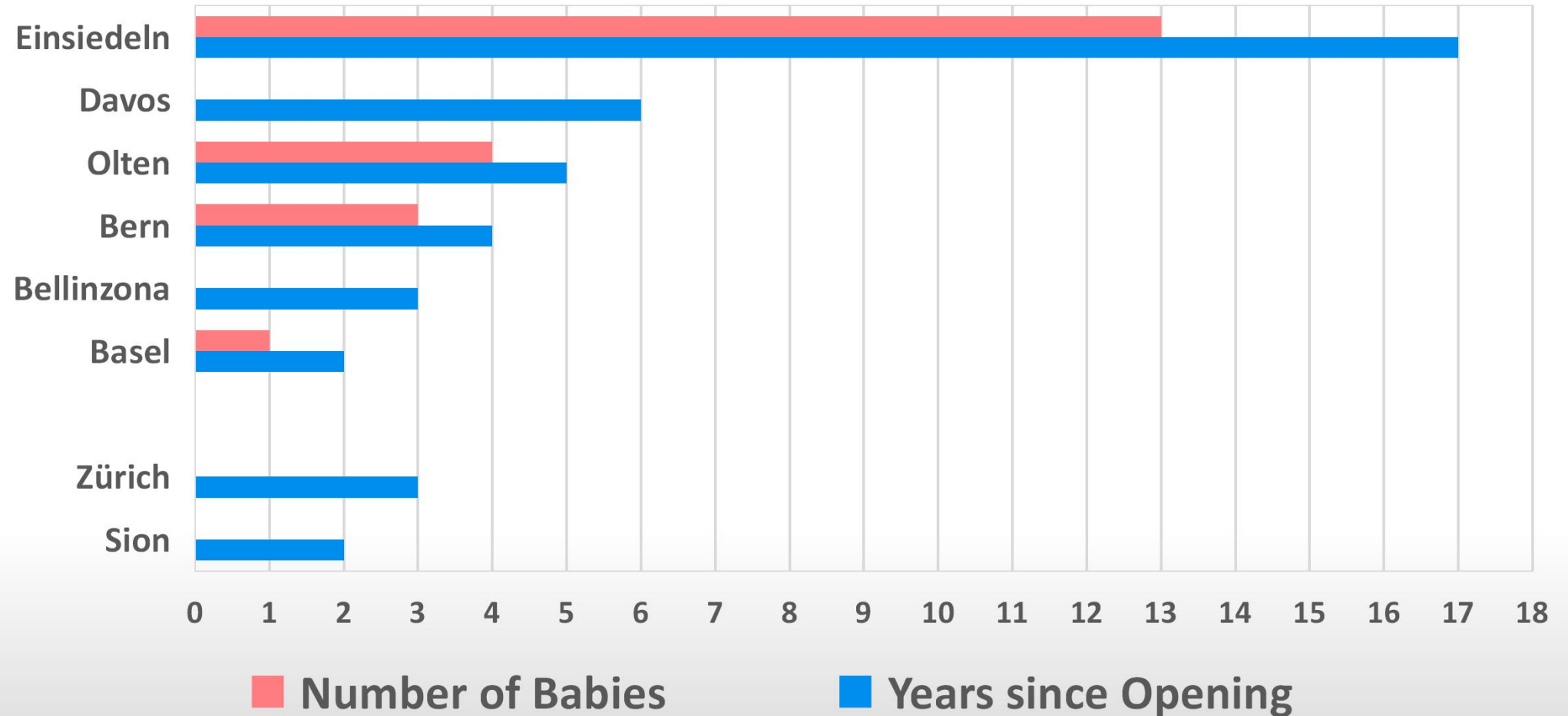
- Because the baby window was opened at a **private hospital**
- Because the baby window aims to **prevent abandonment and infanticide**
- Because the baby window had immediately conquered **the hearts of the population**
- Because the **cantonal government defended** the baby window



Today: Six SAMC-Baby Windows and two Others



Baby Windows in Switzerland



5 Criteria for the Quality of Baby Windows

- 1) Selection of a **suitable location/hospital**
- 2) Cooperation of **three institutions**
(Youth Welfare Office, hospital, SAMC)
- 3) Standardized **internal processes**
- 4) Best technology for the **alarm mechanism**
- 5) Regular **statistics** to help form public opinion

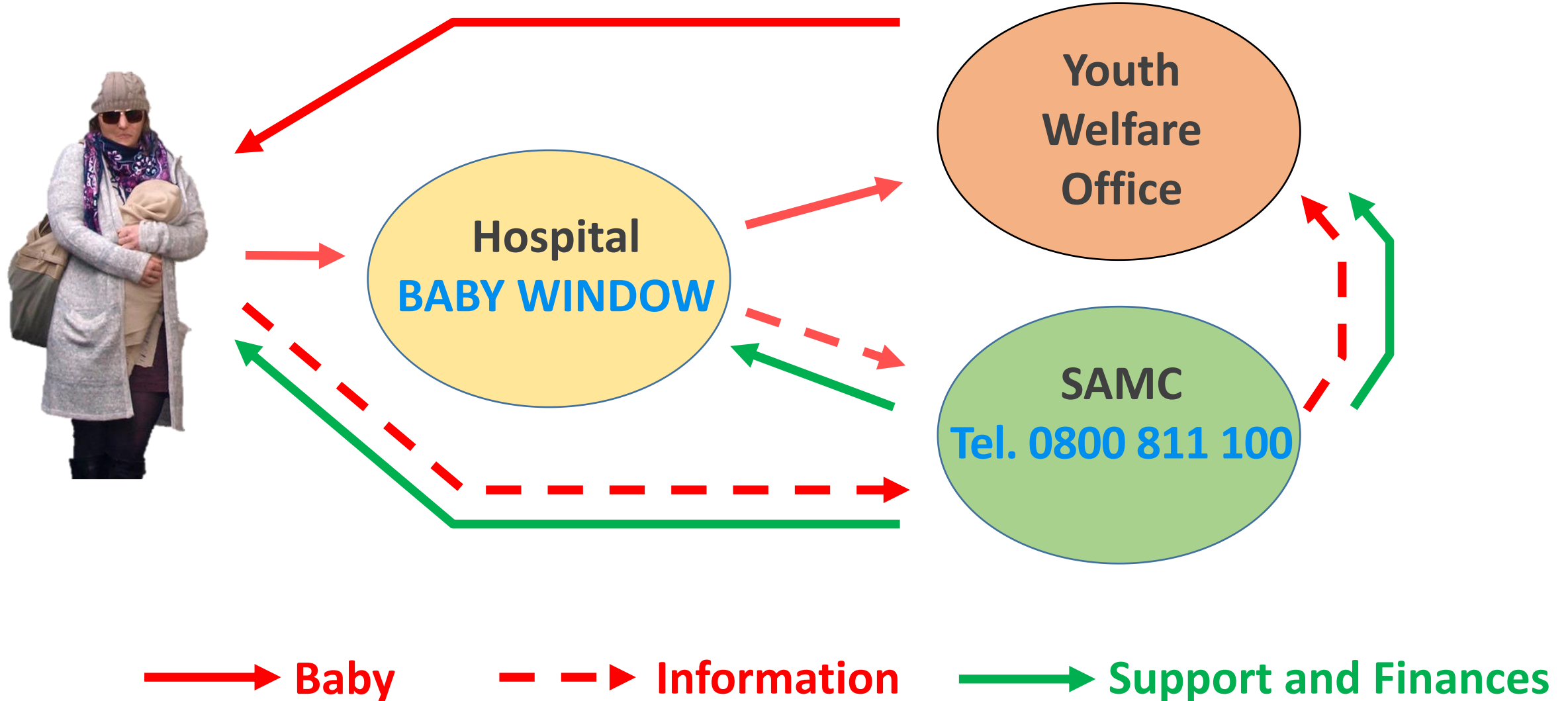


1) Quality thanks to Suitable Location/Hospital

- A selected hospital must have a **neonatal intensive care unit** (in a maternity ward or at a children's hospital)
- **Private hospitals** are preferable: They are more stable and need baby windows for marketing purposes
- **Maintain a distance** from the nearest baby window: of at least 40 km



2) Quality via Cooperation



3) Quality via Standardized Processes

Alarm in Baby Window Procedure

- Photograph the baby
- If the child is dead: call the police
- Bring baby to station
- Possibly trigger a resuscitation alarm
- Keep clothes, letters, etc.
- Blood test (various tests)
- Vaccination (hepatitis B)
- Status (various tests)
- Place child in guarded room



Hospital Communication Plan

Provide Internal Information

- to management
- to medical staff
- to the communications department

Provide External Information

- to the Youth Welfare Office
- to Swiss Aid for Mother and Child
- Press communiqué: "Mother, get in touch!"
- for Website and Social Media
- ⊘ Communication as marketing for the hospital
- ⊘ Protect privacy of mother and baby



4) Quality via Best Technology

- Alarm is triggered by opening the window, not by closing
- Alarm after about 7 minutes (protection of anonymity of the mother)
- Provide at least two independent alarm systems: Opening detectors, photoelectric sensors, weight alarm
- No video surveillance
- Regular checks and logging



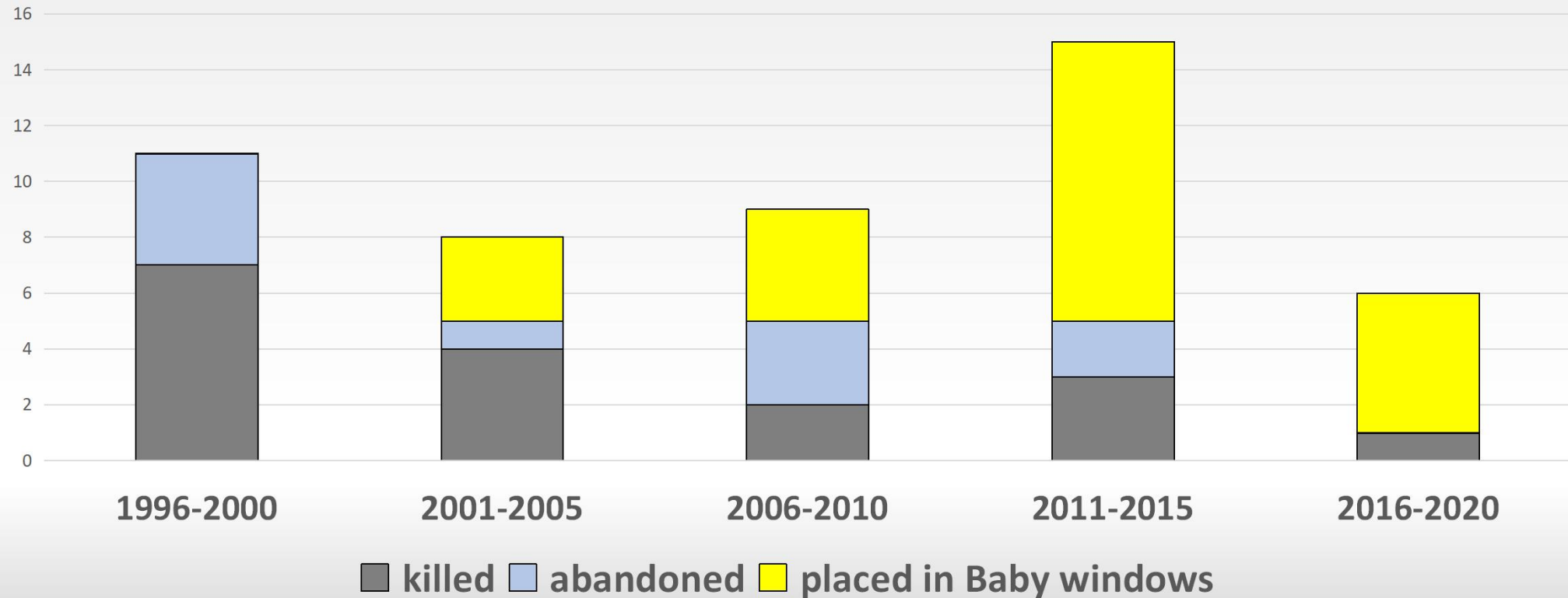
5) Quality via Statistics

- Statistics on the number of abandoned, killed or deposited babies (foundling statistics)
- Representative opinion polls
- Statistics on mothers who have got in touch after depositing a baby

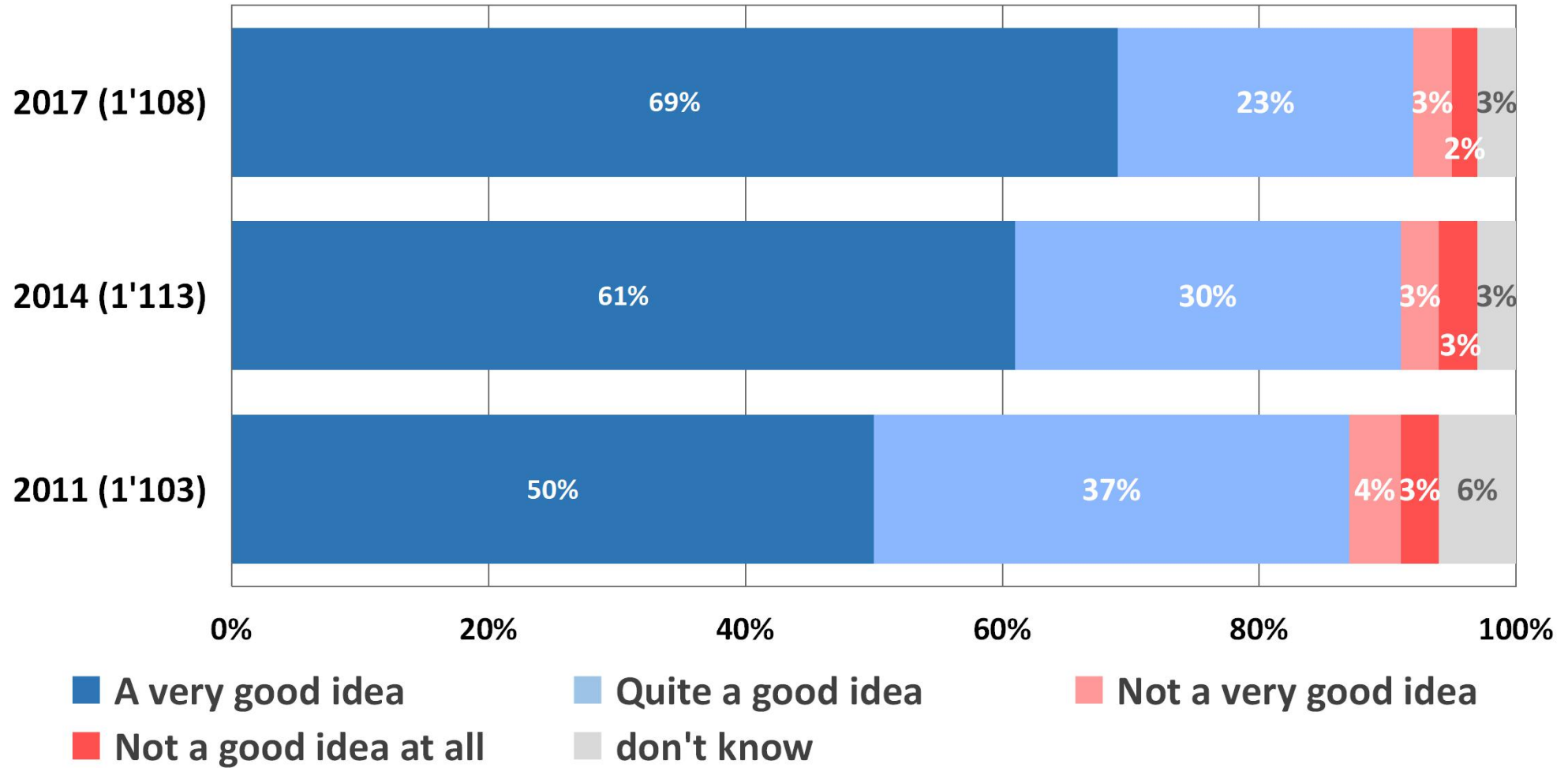
⊘ **Important for public opinion formation**



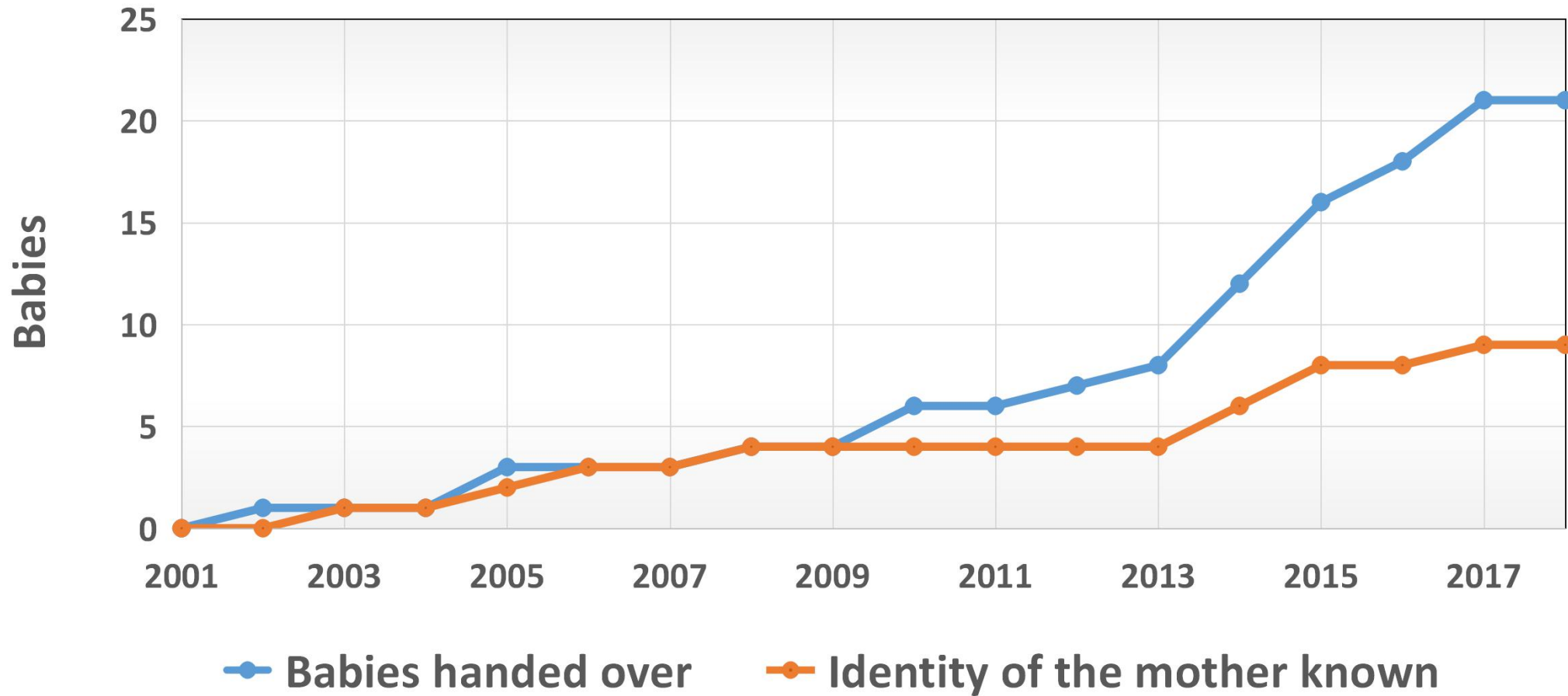
Foundling statistics in Switzerland (1996-2020)



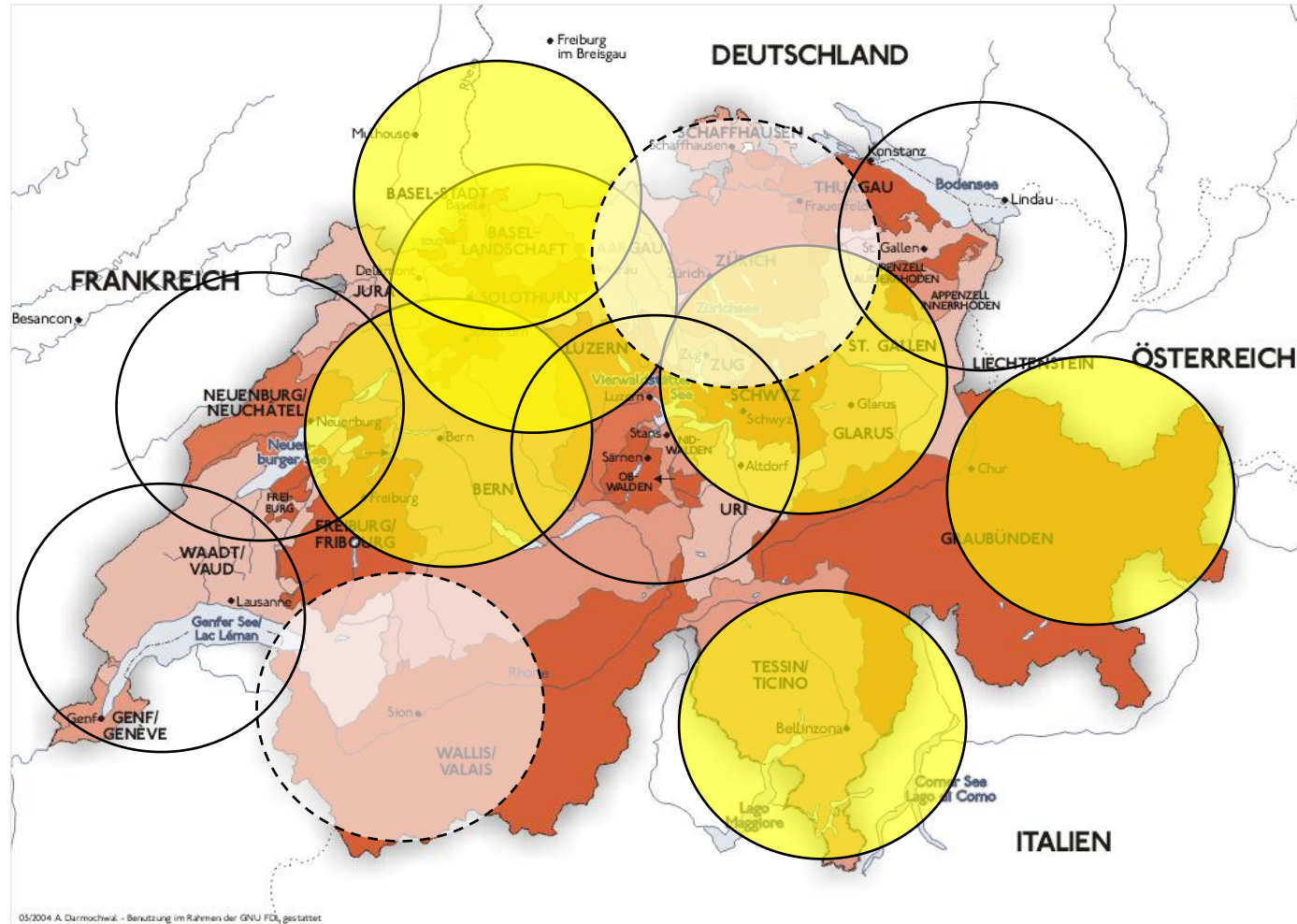
Representative Opinion Polls



Statistics of Babies placed in a Baby Window



Max. 12 Baby Windows Planned



Reasons for Handing Over a Baby

A typical mother says:

- 1) "Nobody must find out about my pregnancy or the birth."
- 2) "I can't keep the baby."
- 3) "I didn't want to abort the baby."
- 4) The typical mother writes a letter to the child:

**«My dear child deserves a good family that can offer more than me.
Forgive me. All my love, wishing you health and happiness, your Mommy»**



The Turnaround in Federal Politics

2001	Department of Justice:	The baby window is illegal!
2005	Politician demand: Federal Government:	Federal government must close the baby window! No, the baby window can stay in place if it prevents abandonment and infanticide.
2012	Politician demand: Federal Government:	Confidential birth must replace the baby window! No, both are necessary.
2016	Politician demand: Federal Government:	All children should know their origin! Rescuing the child's life far outweighs its right to knowledge of its origin.



Court Case with a Positive Effect for Baby Windows

In 2016, a young mother killed her newborn baby.
She was arrested and appeared in court.

The judges passed sentence very sympathetically based on an old law:
18 months on probation and **a 500 CHF fine**.

Politicians and journalists were outraged:

**The verdict is too lenient! The law must be made tougher.
The mother could have put the baby in the baby window!**



Confidential Birth

- The Mother goes to the hospital to give birth
- The Mother announces her identity and receives a pseudonym
- The Child is given for adoption
- Information about mother is registered confidentially
- The Costs of birth are paid for by health insurance
- The Mother has to consent to adoption at the Youth Welfare Office
- At 18, the child learns who the mother is



Benefits of Confidential Birth

- All the advantages of a normal birth in a hospital
- The child can learn about its biological origins at 18 at the latest



Disadvantages of Confidential Birth

- No total anonymity: Up to 30 specialists learn the identity of the mother
- After 6 weeks, the mother has to consent to adoption at the Youth Welfare Office
- The mother soon loses her rights to the child, after a maximum of 12 weeks, but at the Baby window only after a maximum of 15 months
- At the Youth Welfare Office, the mother is registered as a problem case
- After 18 years, the child turns up and says: «Hi Mom, here I am!»

⊘ For women who need anonymity, confidential birth is not suitable



Disadvantages of the Baby Window

- The mother must secretly give birth, which is associated with risks for her and the baby
- The child may never meet his or her biological parents



Advantages of the Baby Window

- Helps in avoiding abandonment and infanticide
- Provides the baby with immediate and fast medical assistance
- Makes it possible to give a baby away in total anonymity
- Enables women to reduce stress in crisis situations
- Prevents women from committing a criminal offence
- Ensures that mothers can always find out where their baby is
- Acts as a symbol of humanitarian handling of babies



Three Options for Mothers with Unwanted Babies

- 1) **Normal birth** in hospital and ordinary adoption
- 2) **Confidential birth** in hospital (via a pseudonym) and adoption
- 3) **Secret birth and placement in the Baby window** and adoption

(Anonymous birth in a hospital is prohibited in Switzerland)

- ∅ **Give women the freedom to decide how they want to give birth!**
- ∅ **Help to prevent abandonment and infanticide!**



The most famous ... of Switzerland is

Mountain

Athlete

Window

Matterhorn

Roger Federer

The BABY WINDOW

Thank you for your attention !

