

The BABY WINDOW – acceptance through quality work

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The most famous window in Switzerland is the "BABY WINDOW", the Swiss edition of a baby box. No other window in Switzerland has been written or talked about more than the baby window. According to opinion polls, 92% of the population of Switzerland approves of the baby window. The government recently abandoned its initially negative attitude, thanks to the quality work on the part of the baby window project, and because baby windows deliver on what they are designed to do: Save lives and prevent children from being abandoned.

The first baby window was installed in 2001 in Einsiedeln. Shortly before, a dead baby had been found there. It had frozen to death. The population was shocked. The SAMC-Foundation's initiative to set up a baby window came at just the right time. Since 2012, further baby windows have been installed. Today, there is a total of eight baby windows and, to date, 21 healthy babies have been placed in them. Five guidelines have been designed to ensure the highest possible quality:

1. Only suitable locations at qualified hospitals should be used.

The hospital should have a neonatal department, either as part of the maternity ward or of a children's hospital.

2. Each baby window is a cooperation between three institutions.

These three institutions are a hospital, the child protection services (youth welfare office), and the SAMC-Foundation. The hospital provides the best initial medical treatment, the authorities assume responsibility in place of the parents and the SAMC-Foundation supports women who come forward after they have given up their baby and require advice, support, and assistance.

3. Standardized medical tests and professional communication must be used.

All hospitals with baby windows must ensure a uniform program of initial medical treatment for babies as well as a professional communication plan.

4. Baby windows must have the best alarm systems and be inspected frequently.

The hospitals are obliged to test the baby windows regularly and to keep corresponding records. The SAMC-Foundation will conduct regular inspections and ensure that the best possible technology is used.

5. Three statistics should be tracked regularly in order to inform public opinion.

- a) A statistic on the number of babies abandoned, killed, or placed in baby windows.
- b) A representative survey on the acceptance of the baby windows every three years.
- c) A statistic on the mothers who get in touch after they have given up their baby.

In Switzerland, there have been sensational stories again and again: A woman once killed her baby, which was born in secret, and threw it into the Rhine River. At almost the same time, another woman placed a baby, which was also born in secret, into a baby window. A 20-person criminal committee has been set up searching for the first woman for 15 years. The other woman returned to the hospital, was able to hold her baby again, and opted to put it up for adoption. Cases like this demonstrate that baby windows are a necessary humanitarian facility for extreme emergencies.

Thanks to some great work and also because of the baby windows' success, the Swiss government reversed its stance on baby windows, from initially negative to approving. Baby windows – as the government said in October 2016 – save children's lives. And the life of a child ranks highest in terms of individual rights.