

Report from the delegate to the Swiss abroad : from the annual report for the Council of the Swiss abroad : "The future belongs to our youth"

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REPORT FROM THE DELEGATE TO THE SWISS ABROAD

FROM THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE COUNCIL OF THE SWISS ABROAD.

"THE FUTURE BELONGS TO OUR YOUTH".

This is the Motto the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has been following for some time. The more popular services dedicated to our young compatriots living abroad are:

The Committee organising and running the Swiss Schools abroad of which there are 16 situated in Europe, South, Latin and North America. Some of them have been in existence for over half a century. They are open to both Swiss and foreign pupils. Finance comes from direct Government subsidy, fees payable by pupils, donations and sponsorships.

"Die Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer" (AJAS) which looks after the very popular summer holiday and winter skiing camps. It also arranges holidays with a Swiss family. Finance for these activities comes from Government grants and donations, as well as from families concerned.

The Committee for "Ausbildung junger Auslandschweizer/innen" (AJAS) is enabling youngsters between 16-25 years of age to find training possibilities in Switzerland (Apprenticeships, University studies). Costs for such training/studies are generally very high. However, bursaries and or a form of student loan scheme (similar to the New Zealand scheme) is available from the Authorities of the applicants' home Canton. It is absolutely essential that the applicant speaks one or the other of the local languages, preferably German or French (Swiss German is not enough). More information is available from the Swiss Embassy or the Delegate/Deputy

Delegate or from the Secretariat in Berne.

VOLUNTARY OLD-AGE, SURVIVORS AND DISABILITY INSURANCE (AHV/IV).

Of very great interest are the discussions currently under way to overhaul the scheme. The proposal by the Federal Council was to either abandon the scheme completely or, at the very least, to curtail it quite drastically. I will not go into details at this stage as the "status quo" will remain for some time yet. But to refresh our memories: Swiss citizens living abroad may join the scheme until one year after the 50th year of age. Insured persons in employment contribute 9.2% (7.8% for AHV and 1.4% for IV) from their annual income for as long as they cannot get the old-age pension. If the income amounts to less than SFR 46,000, the rate is reduced on a sliding scale to a minimum of 4.954%. Non-employed persons pay a minimum of SFR 378. Contributions are payable in Swiss Francs to the Office in Geneva. Applications forms are available from the Swiss Embassy in Wellington or directly from the Geneva Office. Address: 18 Avenue Ed. Vaucher, CH-1211, Geneva 28.

DELEGATE/DEPUTY DELEGATE

It is my duty to inform Clubs that the Delegate and Deputy Delegate are coming up for election/re-election at our next AGM in Hamilton (Queens Birthday Weekend). It is every Club's democratic right to make nominations. Since the present setup of the Council for the Swiss Abroad came into force in 1989, Delegates are elected for a 4 year term. Both myself and Marie-Therese are putting our positions at the electors' disposal, but are willing to accept nomination for a further term.

P.S. Marie-Therese and I are here to help you in any way we can. Make use of the information that is available.

See you at the AGM
Heinz Leuenberger.



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NEW GERMAN LANGUAGE

In less than 18 months, on August 1 1998 to be precise, the German language will change for ever. On that day the new spelling and grammar will be officially introduced. The total change-over to the new language will take up to 7 years and is scheduled to be completed by July 31, 2005. The purpose of the reform of the German language is mainly to eliminate a lot of anomalies in the grammar in general and the spelling of quite a number of words. Although the new language is supposed to make life easier for the new generations to come, the present generation will no doubt find the look and the sound of the new language somewhat bewildering.

Some primary schools have already started to teach their children the new language, arguing that it would be useless to instruct the children in the present language simply to change it all again in less than 18 months.

The costs of the change (estimated at some 300 million DM in Germany alone) have not yet been worked out for Switzerland. Those people who will benefit most from this forthcoming change will be the editors of dictionaries because practically every family will need one or two of them for quick reference.

The biggest expense will come from having to re-print all school and law books and all other official and legal documentations. Computer software producers will also have a busy time as new software has to be produced to take in account the new spelling.