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European Economic Area

# More freedoms for Swiss Abroad

About 60% of Swiss Abroad live in the 19 countries of western, southern and northern Europe which will belong to the EEA from next year onwards if the treaty is ratified. These will all be affected by the EEA and particularly by the provisions relating to "free movement of persons" (see Swiss Review 2/92).

In the past Swiss citizens have been subject to an increasing number of disadvantages compared with EC citizens, e.g. in matters affecting residence and establishment, work permits and social security. Implementation of the EEA four freedoms, i.e. free movement of goods, persons, services and capital, will lead to the disappearance of such discrimination on grounds of nationality. In other words, Swiss and EC citizens will be on a completely equal footing in the area of free movement of persons which is so important to you.

## Residence

At the end of a five year transition period – i.e. on January 1, 1998 – it will be possible for a Swiss citizen to live in any other EEA country and work there, although there will be some conditions.

A person taking up employment must have a valid identity document and a work contract or a declaration of employment. These will give him the right to a five-year residence permit renewable automatically. A valid identity document will be enough for those intending to work independently.

If you are a student or a retired person, i.e. not in gainful employment, you will also be free to settle in any EEA country provided that you possess sickness insurance cover and have sufficient means to avoid reliance

on the social services of the country in question.

## Is your diploma valid?

At present foreign countries are not obliged to accept diplomas issued in Switzerland. But if the EEA is ratified this will change. Swiss

diplomas, including foreign diplomas issued in Switzerland, will be recognised in the following cases:

- If your diploma is the fruit of studies at a recognised university or its equivalent lasting at least three years (recognition of studies lasting less than three years is still at the preparatory stage), the authorities of the country in which you wish to work must recognise your diploma; but in certain circumstances a practical course or an additional examination may be required.
- In some areas, e.g. for doctors, para-medical professions, lawyers and architects,

the EEA Treaty contains special provisions.

In the clauses governing these various diplomas and professions, it is not so much academic recognition which is in question as the right to exercise the profession.

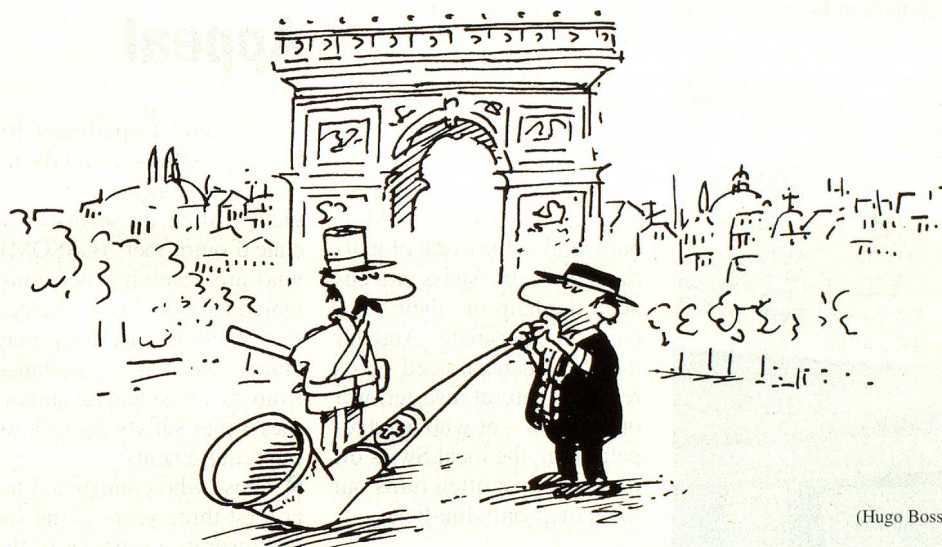
## How well are you insured?

In view of the very varied social security systems in European states, EEA provisions are limited to coordinating social security cover for immigrant workers. Not only must nationals of all EEA

transition between one national system and another.

As Swiss Abroad, you will come under the social security system of the country in which you work. For both contributions and benefits you will be subject to the legislation applied in that country. This is valid for all the traditional fields of social security i.e. sickness, motherhood, disability, old age, industrial illness, unemployment, family allowances and death.

If you move from one EEA country to another, you will not lose your right to be-



(Hugo Bossard)

member states be treated equally, but the various national legislations must be coordinated in such a way as to eliminate insurance gaps within the EEA and to ease

benefits. In this way the provisions of the EEA Treaty will act as a bridge between the social security systems of the various member-states.

GUA

## Join the Pension Scheme

From the date the treaty comes into force, probably as early as January 1, 1993, changes may have to be made to the voluntary old age and disability pension scheme and in the worst case new entries could be barred (see No 3/92 of the Swiss Review).

If you want to be certain that you can be insured under the scheme even if Switzerland ratifies the EEA, if you are still not a member and if you are under 51, we advise you to register at your diplomatic post before the end of this year.



Registration of Swiss Abroad

## Rights bring obligations

**Those who register at Swiss embassies and consulates abroad not only ensure that they receive all important information, but they are also expected to observe certain rules.**

The Diplomatic and Consular Service Regulations issued by the Federal Council require every Swiss citizen to register at his diplomatic post if he resides in a consular area for more than one year. Why is this required? What consequences can it have for you? And how can you help your embassy or consulate – and in the last resort ourselves here in Berne – to offer

you an increasingly effective service?

### Purpose

This obligation was laid down by the Federal Council mainly in the interest of the Swiss Abroad themselves. Registration ensures that you are known to your local diplomatic post, so that it can act on your behalf in a number of different ways.

For example, all Swiss Abroad – even those who have no contact at all with Switzerland – can apply for a Swiss passport or for its prolongation. When a child is born, and in the event of marriage or death, Swiss citizens need the help of “their” embassy or consulate. And for those in financial need – as a result of natural disaster, war or accident – or who need repatriation, the local Swiss diplomatic post often turns out to be their only life-belt.

### Important news source

And last but not least: those who register get something concrete in return: the Swiss Review is sent regularly to the private address of every registered Swiss citizen free of charge! This is a magazine containing articles on all aspects of political, economic and artistic life in Switzerland – and it is now mandated to prepare you for upcoming referendums and elections.

Alongside the above, the Swiss Review also contains the Official News section that you are now reading. This regularly informs you

about any changes in the law which may affect you, as well as dates that you have to respect.

### You can help us

For Swiss embassies and consulates abroad, as well as the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Berne, registration is an essential working instrument enabling them

to provide you with an efficient service. Of course this must imply a certain amount of bureaucratic formality.

But you can help us to keep the administrative part down, as also the cost. You can do this by **immediately** informing your local diplomatic post of births and deaths, changes in marital status, any new address and movement from one consular area to another. By doing this you not only keep our bureaucracy to a minimum, but you make sure you can continue to exercise your own rights.

**GUA** ■

Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi

## Appeal

The Federal Department for Foreign Affairs reminds all Swiss pensioners of the Belgian “Office de sécurité sociale d’outre-mer” (OSSOM), who are receiving pensions, which have not been adjusted for inflation, that they may claim financial assistance from the Swiss federal authorities if they satisfy the following requirements:

- Those who contributed for at least three years to the social insurance schemes of the former Belgian colonies of Congo and Ruanda-Urundi (i.e. before October 1, 1961)
- and whose claim to an OSSOM old age, widow’s or accident pension has not been indexed, i.e. which has not been adjusted for inflation since 1961

● and who reach the age of 65 (for men) or 62 (for women) before December 31, 1994

● and, in the case of a widow’s pension, where it may be proved that the deceased insured person would have reached the age of 65 before December 31, 1994

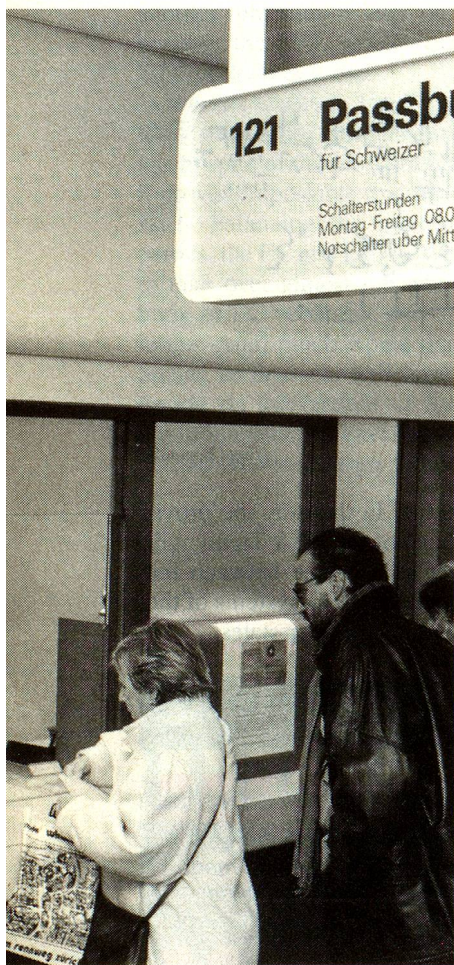
● and, in the case of an accident pension, where it may be proved that the accident in question occurred before December 31, 1994.

Applications may be made to the diplomatic post responsible (embassy or consulate) or directly to the: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Indemnity Agreement Section, CH-3003 Berne.

**Indemnity Agreement Section** ■

### An EEA Documentation Kit

is available on request and free of charge in French, German and Italian. A special publication on the consequences for the Swiss Abroad also exists in the same languages. These may be obtained from: Integrationsbüro EDA/EVD, Sektion Information, Bundeshaus Ost, CH-3003 Berne. Please send an addressed **glue-on label**.



**Even those who have no contact at all with Switzerland may need the help of their embassy or consulate. (Photo: Keystone)**