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Returning to Switzerland definitively

Take precautions!

Someone who once more takes up residence in Switzerland after many years spent abroad is so-to-speak retilling familiar soil. The following describes a number of important precautions which ought to be taken when returning to Switzerland definitively.

In view of the present relatively unfavourable situation on the Swiss job market, reintegration of returning emigrants may often be very difficult. This is particularly the case when those wishing to return have had no or only loose links with the homeland over many years, when they do not speak any national language fluently, when they possess none of the vocational training in demand or when they are of advanced age.

For this reason an existing job abroad should not be given up hastily. Rather, those wishing to return should if possible investigate employment possibilities on the spot during holidays in Switzerland and take up contacts with potential employers. The cantonal labour offices, the new regional work placement centres and the professional associations are in the best position to provide information about job possibilities in a given region.

Change of address

It is very important to notify immediately a change of address to the following places:

- the authorities of the place of residence abroad,
- the Swiss diplomatic post responsible
- the registration authority of the Swiss place of residence (within 14 days of taking up residence there), and
- friends, the post office, insurance companies, etc.
- Those liable for military service must inform the section head of their Swiss place of residence within 14 days of arrival.

Looking for a job

Information on looking for a job is available from the following: 1. the Federal Office for Industry and Labour (BIGA); 2. the cantonal and local labour offices and/or the regional work placement centres; 3. professional and vocational organisations

(addresses provided by BIGA); 4. Swiss dailies and specialised newspapers; and 5. private job placement businesses.

Customs provisions

Switzerland has enacted special customs provisions for Swiss Abroad wishing to visit their homeland or to return definitively.

If they are registered as Swiss Abroad and return to Switzerland to take up residence, they may import their so-called "resettlement property" free of duty. Such property is defined as personal belongings and effects for exercising their own professions or businesses which they have used abroad for no less than six months and which they will themselves continue to use in Switzerland. Household stocks of normal type and reasonable quantity and alcoholic drinks also fall into this category. If the latter have an alcohol content of over 25%, however, only 12 litres may be imported free of duty.

In the case of automobiles, motorboats and aircrafts, exemption from customs duty is granted only if the owners commit themselves to continuing to use them as

previously for no less than one year after their entry free of duty.

Exemption from duty must be applied for at the time goods are imported. A list of objects must accompany the special form entitled "Declaration/Clearance Application for Resettlement Property" to be presented to the customs office.

We recommend those returning to inquire about the precise provisions before arrival directly from the responsible Swiss diplomatic post in the country of residence, the Regional Customs Directorate or the Federal Higher Customs Directorate.

Military service

In principle, Swiss Abroad returning definitively must register with their head of section within 14 days of arriving in Switzerland. They may be recruited up to the end of the calendar year in which they complete their 25th year. Those found fit for service will be called upon to undergo basic training and further military service prescribed by the law. Once they are recruited, they may be called up for basic training until the end of the calen-



dar year in which they complete their 27th year.

Swiss Abroad liable for military service who have resided abroad for longer than six years without interruption and are no longer required by the army will upon returning definitively be recruited only upon application. Those applying may complete their basic training up to the age of 32.

Those not liable for military service must make themselves available for civil defence and must pay a military exemption tax.

Dual nationals who have already performed military service or civil defence service in the country of their second nationality are not liable to service in the Swiss army.

Further information may be obtained from the responsible Swiss diplomatic post or the Federal Military Department.

Retirement

The Pro Senectute Switzerland Foundation can provide advice to persons of pensionable age on all questions concerning retirement. The central office in Zurich will direct you to the branch office nearest to your place of residence.

Welfare

The authorities of your Swiss municipality of residence are responsible for welfare matters.

Sickness insurance

The new Law on Sickness Insurance entered into force on January 1, 1996. It introduced compulsory sickness insurance and free choice of sickness insurance fund and in this way permits those returning definitively to take up basic sickness insurance at any time and without disadvantage (regardless of age and without reservations).

Any sickness insurance fund anywhere in Switzerland may be chosen, but this must be done within three months of taking up residence or birth in Switzerland. Provided a person returning registers within these three months with a sickness insurance fund, he or she is insured retroactively from the date of taking up residence in Switzerland – which is considered to be the date of registration in the municipality of residence.

For further details, you may apply directly to any sickness insurance fund.

Unemployment

Swiss Abroad returning definitively or entering Switzerland for the first time are insured against unemployment if they are taking up permanent residence in Switzerland (see Swiss Review 1/1997). They are so insured without having paid contributions provided they are re-

turning to Switzerland after residing abroad for no less than one year and have been employed abroad for no less than six complete months within the previous two years.

Upon arrival, unemployed persons must immediately register in person with their municipality of residence. A claim to unemployment benefit must be made within one year of arrival in Switzerland. In addition, Swiss Abroad are subject to the same claims prerequisites as persons who have resided in Switzerland.

Please apply to BIGA for information on general un-

employment questions; for questions on individual cases you should apply to your responsible cantonal authority and/or to your responsible regional work placement centre.

Education and training

If you wish to enter educational training in Switzerland, you should apply to AJAS, the Association for the Training of Young Swiss Abroad, or to a national or local vocational advisory office.

NYF

Initiatives in Brief

Deregulation initiative

Various federal and cantonal centre-right parliamentarians have launched the initiative "More Freedom – Fewer Laws" (Deregulation Initiative). Voters are urged to require the inclusion of the following new transitional provisions in the federal constitution:

- Within five years of the acceptance of this transitional decision, all federal laws and all generally binding federal decrees whose validity has not been confirmed either in whole or in part by the federal parliament up to this point should be abolished. In this way, government expenditure would be reduced and effective deregulation and reprivatisation would take place.

- Federal laws and generally binding federal decrees, which a) are based on international agreements or state treaties, and b) are indispensable for ensuring state security would be excluded. The Federal Council should make proposals as to which enactments fall into this category and should open a consultation procedure on its proposals.

- A referendum might be initiated challenging the confirmation of validity either in whole or in part of federal laws and generally binding federal decrees.

NYF

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

Deregulation initiative: more freedom – fewer laws
until June 5, 1997

Ernst Cincera, Former National Councillor, P.O. Box 8494, CH-8050 Zürich

For financing costly and longlasting infrastructure programmes
until October 16, 1997

Arnold Schlaepfer, 18 Avenue Cardinal-Mermillod, CH-1227 Carouge

For free choice of doctor and hospital
until May 26, 1998

Dr. Bernhard Gasser, lawyer, St. Alban-Vorstadt 110, CH-4052 Basle

For one Sunday without automobiles per season – a trial for four years
until August 11, 1998

Mrs. Judith Hauptlin, P.O.Box 40, CH-9414 Schachen bei Reute

Useful addresses:

- Federal Office for Industry and Labour (BIGA), Bundesgasse 8, CH-3003 Berne
Federal Higher Customs Directorate, Monbijoustr. 40, CH-3011 Berne
 - Federal Military Department, Army Personnel Sub-Group, Military Service Section, Rodtmattstr. 110, CH-3003 Berne
 - Pro Senectute Switzerland Foundation, P.O. Box, CH-8027 Zurich
 - Federal Office for Industry and Labour (BIGA), Unemployment Insurance Division, Bundesgasse 8, CH-3003 Berne
 - AJAS, the Association for the Training of Young Swiss Abroad, Alpenstr. 26, CH-3000 Berne 16.
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