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Condensed overview (II)

In the last issue of "Swiss Review" we gave an explanation of the social security agreement. The following article outlines the main points of the EU agreement on free movement of persons.

When the agreement with the EU governing free movement of persons comes into force (on 1 January 2001 at the earliest), the co-ordination regulations valid between EU states will replace our bilateral social security agreements with EU member states. These are contained in ordinances (EWG) No. 1408/71 (akin to a social security agreement) and No. 574/72 (implementing provisions).

For Switzerland's part, the agreement covers all federal and cantonal legislation governing sickness and maternity, disability, old age, death (survivors' bene-

fits), industrial accident and industrial illness, unemployment and family benefits which was in force when the agreement was signed (21 June 1999).

rent social security agreements in our country, the relevant regulations of the agreement on free movement of persons correct existing restrictions under the

age pension benefits for Swiss Abroad: When calculating old age pension benefits for Swiss nationals, EU countries which stipulate minimum insured periods must



The agreement on free movement of persons improves old age pension benefits.

For the EU's part, the agreement covers all social security sectors valid in EU states. As with cur-

national law of the participating states. The agreement on free movement of persons is based on the same principles as our social security agreements but in some areas incorporates more comprehensive regulations.

now also take into account all periods during which premiums have been paid in Switzerland or in one or more EU states. For instance, a person who has lived in Greece for five years, Germany for four years, Italy for six years and Switzerland for seven insured years, will in future receive a partial pension from all these countries indexed to the insured period in each country.

At present this is not guaranteed since every EU state, in addition to the contribution years in its own country, is obliged to take only the years spent in Switzerland into account for the minimum insured period. EU state pensions will continue to be paid in Switzerland and in all EU states, but additionally also in third-party countries.

For further information, contact the Federal Office of Social Security, International Affairs Department State Accords Section, Effingerstrasse 20, CH-3003 Berne, info@bsv.admin.ch

Patricia Messerli, Service of the Swiss Abroad, EDA

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"Against abuse of the right of asylum"

(until 25 November 2000)
Swiss People's Party, Aliki Panayides, Brückfeldstrasse 18
PO Box, CH-3000 Berne 26

"For popular initiatives to be put to the vote within six months, excluding the Federal Council and parliament"

(until 22 December 2000)
Flavio Maspoli, National Councillor, Medeag SA, CH-6648 Minusio

"For redirecting surplus gold reserves to the AHV fund (gold initiative)"

(until 10 February 2001)
Swiss People's Party, Peter Kneubühler, Brückfeldstrasse 18
PO Box, CH-3000 Berne 26.

"Moratorium on taxes"

(until 1 March 2001)
Liberal Democratic Party of Switzerland, Johannes Matyassy
PO Box 6136, CH-3001 Berne.

"Avanti – for safe and efficient motorways"

(until 11 July 2001)
Touring Club of Switzerland TCS
Rudolf Zumbühl, chemin de Blandonnet 4, PO Box 820
CH-1214 Vernier GE

"Animals are not objects!"

(until 29 August 2001)
Fondation Franz Weber
Villa Dubochet 16
CH-1815 Clarens VD

"For better animal rights (animal initiative)"

(until 14 September 2001)
Dr. A.F. Goetschel, Postfach 218,
Ilgenstrasse 22, CH-8030 Zürich

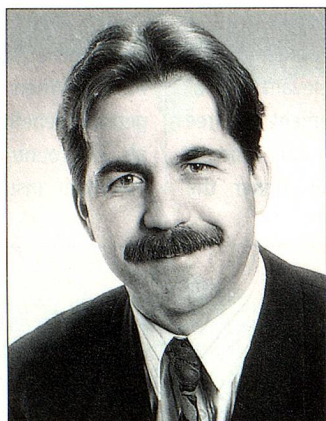
Health insurance

In terms of health insurance it improves insurance coverage for Swiss Abroad by, for example, allowing Swiss retirees resident in the EU to continue being covered by Swiss health insurances provided they are drawing a Swiss pension (depending on country of residence, however, this is optional). The agreement on free movement of persons also provides for medical and hospital care in the event of illness or accident abroad. Swiss nationals resident in an EU state who fall ill while vacationing in Switzerland are treated by Swiss doctors and hospital at the cost of their foreign health insurer.

Old age pension

The agreement also improves old

New members of Swiss Abroad Service



Within a short space of time two staff changes have occurred at the Swiss Abroad Service of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. On 1 May Ambassador Walter Thurnherr took over from Thomas Füglistner who has been appointed Amba-

sador in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania).

Born in Muri/AG in 1963, the new Head of Political Department VI studied theoretical physics at the Federal Institute of Technology and graduated in 1987. In 1989 he joined the Federal Department of

Foreign Affairs and worked as a trainee in Berne and Moscow. From 1991 to 1995 he worked at the Foreign Policy Planning unit in Berne, and from 1995 to 1997 he was engaged at the Swiss Embassy in Moscow in association with Switzerland's chairmanship of the

OSCE. In 1997 he was appointed personal assistant to Federal Councillor Cotti, and from May 1999 held the post of Minister and Deputy Head of Political Department VI.

On 2 August Patricia Messerli joined the Swiss Abroad Service as a legal assistant to take over from Robert Nyffeler, among other things as editor of the Official News section of "Swiss Review". Patricia Messerli was born in Berne in 1971 and studied law at the University of Berne, graduating in 1997. This was followed by an internship at the Thun Judicial Court and in a law office in Berne. In Spring 2000 she received her attorney's licence.

Patricia Messerli, Service of the Swiss Abroad, EDA 

"Tax Stop" initiative

The Swiss Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) has launched the "Tax Stop" initiative. This proposal calls for the following addition to the Federal Constitution:

1. For seven years after this ruling comes into force, federal taxes, social security taxes, and other levies may only be introduced or raised if existing federal taxes, social security taxes or other levies are lowered by the same extent.

2. If after this ruling comes into force the average ratio of federal taxes, social security taxes and other levies to GDP is exceeded in 2001 and 2002, the following measures shall be enacted in the second consecutive year:


Based on half each of the surplus amount, direct federal tax shall be reduced for all taxpayers and the federal contribution to old age and survivors' insurance shall

be increased. The Federal Council shall define the appropriate percentage rates and contributions.

3. Paragraphs 1. and 2. apply neither to incentive taxes which

are fully reimbursed nor to any increase in federal taxes, social security taxes or other levies which are essential for compensating demographically related

additional expenditure on old age and survivors' insurance.

4. The proposal shall be enacted on acceptance by the electorate and states. **MPC** 

2001 call for applications for grants

The Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation is inviting applications for grants to fund advanced research fellowships in the fields of humanities and social science, mathematics, natural science and engineering, biology and medicine, and social and preventive medicine. The grants are available for a period of one to three years to students under 35 years of age (born 1966 or later), and must be used for

study abroad. Candidates must have proof of a scientific relationship with a Swiss university. The deadline for applications is 1 February 2001. For information and application forms, contact the Fellowship Office of the Swiss National Science Foundation (Tel +41 31 308 22 22), PO Box 8232, CH-3001 Berne. E-mail: fellowships@snf.ch. Home page: www.snf.ch.

Fellowships in clinical and ex-

perimental medicine are offered by the Swiss National Foundation for Fellowships in Medicine and Biology. Deadlines for applications: 1 February, 1 May and 1 October 2001. For application forms and further information, contact the SSMB Secretariat, c/o F. Hoffmann-La Roche AG, Bau 52, Raum 311, CH-4070 Basle (Fax +41 61 688 94 89).