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Information in the Internet

What do I have to do if I want to marry abroad? Where can I find information on facilitated naturalisation for my spouse? Nowadays the answers to these and other questions are often to be found on the Internet pages of Swiss representations abroad or the Service for the Swiss Abroad in Berne.

Not every Swiss Abroad has access to the Internet in their own home. But even if they do, they may not know where to find the right information. The following details should help you find initial answers to questions that concern you as a Swiss Abroad.

The Swiss Embassy in Madrid was the first representation to activate its own web site. Now 28 different web sites are operated by Swiss representations.¹ Several embassies and general consulates around the world are currently constructing their own Internet pages. A list of Internet addresses of Swiss representations is available under www.eda.admin.ch/eda/e/home/emb/addchweb.html

These Internet pages provide a comprehensive range of information: for instance, how to acquire or retain Swiss nationality or the circumstances in which Swiss nationality has to be relinquished, voting rights for Swiss Abroad, how to go about changing your marital status details or optional AHV/IV data. For those wishing to return to Switzerland with their children, there are lots of tips on the Swiss educational system as well as links to most Swiss educational institutions. Moreover, many sites offer downloadable information sheets for Swiss Abroad who have just completed secondary education as well as forms for regis-

The Internet pages of the Swiss Abroad Service offer a wealth of information.

tration with a Swiss representation. Swiss Abroad and interested non-Swiss citizens will also find information on Swiss culture in their country of residence, vacationing and living in Switzerland, economic relations between Switzerland and their country of residence, and other services offered by the local Swiss representation. The pages offer links to other sources of information.

Many representations have enhanced their web sites with special tips. The Swiss embassy in Tokyo, for instance, has included recipes for cheese fondue and carrot cake, while the general consulate in Hong Kong publishes information on the conditions under which your pet is permitted to travel to Switzerland. "Switzerland for kids" is the title of a special page run by the Swiss Embassy in Washington. It describes a day in the life of a Swiss schoolchild, or explains how Christmas is celebrated in Switzerland. Under the heading "Questions and Answers" in the home page operated

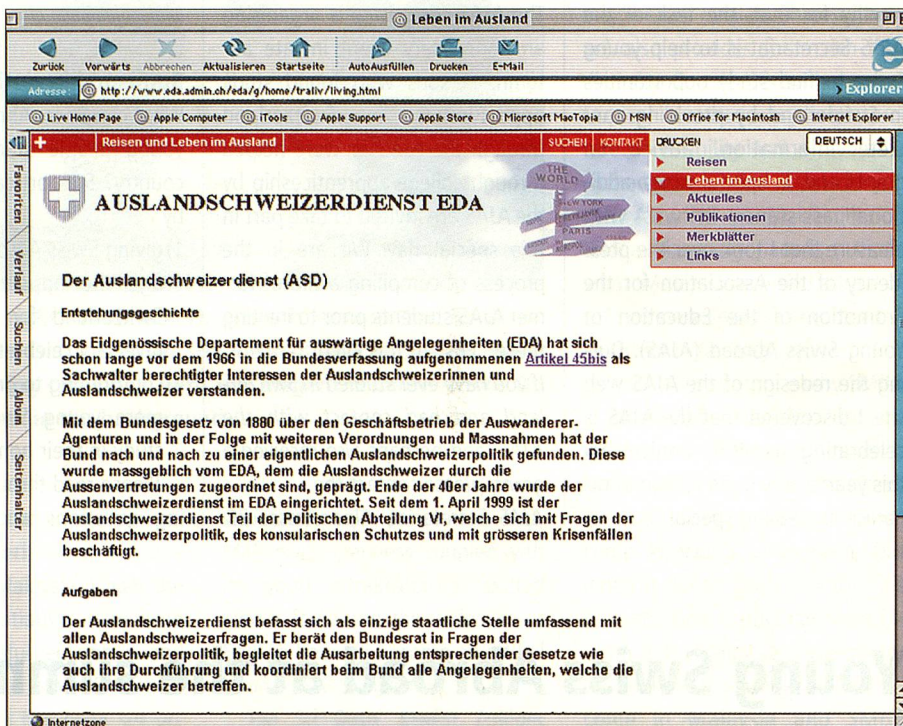
by the Swiss representation in Germany, Swiss residents can find useful tips on the range of consular services available to them.

Since the beginning of this year the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs' Service for the Swiss Abroad has had its own Internet presence. Swiss Abroad will find a comprehensive range of information and data sheets in three of our national languages under www.eda.admin.ch/asd. The newly-designed advice sheet for Swiss Abroad is already available

in downloadable form in German and French. Information on the revised, printed edition will be published in a later Swiss Review. The advice sheet for Swiss Abroad can also be ordered on-line.

Here, too, you will find a list of links to other federal offices concerned with Swiss Abroad issues. Click around and find out how much useful information the Internet has to offer.

Patricia Messerli
Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA



Swiss representations in the following countries operate a web page

Africa	Ghana
America	Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru, USA
Asia	China, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand
Europe	Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Romania, Russia, UK

INTERNET

- www.eda.admin.ch/asd
- www.eda.admin.ch/eda/e/home/emb/addchweb.html
- www.presenceswitzerland.ch

¹ Status on 10 March 2002

For "fairer" child allowances

The Christian National Trade Union Association of Switzerland has launched an initiative to harmonise child allowances.

Up to now, child allowances in Switzerland have varied from canton to canton. Benefits are financed by employers, defined in 26 cantonal laws, and administered by over 800 compensation funds. The allowance for children and education varies from CHF 140 to

378 per child per month, depending on the canton. Children of self-employed and unemployed persons are generally not eligible for benefit.

This initiative calls for a national child allowance system and a standard rate of CHF 15 per child per day (CHF 450 per month) to be written into the constitution and adjusted every two years to reflect changes in wages and the

cost of living. This allowance would be paid out for all children from their date of birth until they reach age 17 and for children in education until they complete their studies but until age 26 at the latest. At least half the costs would be paid by the state and cantons, while the rest would be covered by contributions from employers.

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Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"For a minimum basic insurance at affordable health insurance premiums ('mini-Max' Initiative)"

(until 9 July 2002)

Federal Democratic Union, EDU, Central Secretariat, PO Box, CH-3607 Thun

"National Bank profits for the AHV"

(until 10 October 2002)

Committee for a secure AHV PO Box 105, CH-4011 Basle

"Postal service for all"

(until 28 February 2003)

Gewerkschaft Kommunikation, Oberdorfstrasse 32, CH-3072 Ostermundigen

"For fairer child allowances!"

(until 30 April 2003)

Christlichnationaler Gewerkschaftsbund der Schweiz (Swiss Association of Christian Trade Unions, CNG), Postfach 5775, 3001 Berne

"More control over health insurance premiums"

(until 5 August 2003)

R.A.S.: Rassemblement des assurés et des soignants, PO Box 1280, 1001 Lausanne

"For a modern concept of animal protection (Yes to animal protection!)"

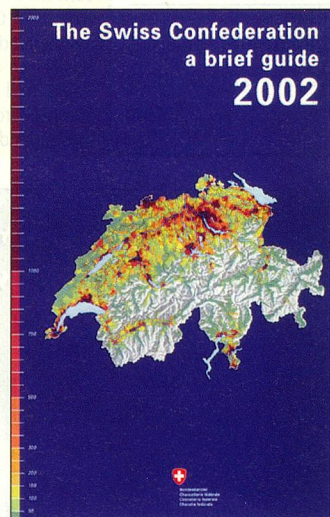
(until 29 July 2003)

Schweizer Tierschutz STS, PO Box, 4008 Basle

You can download the signature form for current initiatives from <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html>

The Swiss confederation – a brief guide

The brochure entitled "The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2002" has been published in the four national languages as well as in English. The brochure contains pictures, diagrams and organisational charts which help readers find out how Swiss political life is organised, what people's rights are exercised, or the composition of the National and State Councils. The complex path to new laws is explained in simple terms. Additionally, the tasks of the departments and federal offices, parliamentary services, the federal



chancellery, federal court and insurance court are described. The brochure also contains interviews with Federal Councillors and other political decision-makers. Swiss Abroad interested in this publication can obtain a free copy from the following address (please select the relevant language):

BBL, Vertrieb Publikationen
3003 Berne, Fax +41 31 325 50 58
Internet
www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen or
<http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/bk/order/index.html>

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New Swiss passport

On 1 January 2003 a new Swiss passport will be introduced. From this date, everyone will receive a personal passport and children may no longer be entered on a parent's passport.

The new passport can be ordered from your Swiss representation from 1 November 2002 but will be available only after 1 January 2003. As before, applications for a new passport must be made at diplomatic and consular representations. The price of the new passport has not yet been defined.

From 1 January 2003 only new passports will be issued. Current passports (Pass 85) will not be extended from this date and passports issued or extended before 1 January 2003 will remain valid until they expire or until 31 December 2007 at the latest.

If your passport expires before 31 December 2002, you have until 31 December 2002 to extend it for another five years. However, the passport must not be valid for more than 15 years from the date of issue.

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Translated from the German by N. Chisholm