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Exercising political rights made easier

The Federal Council has decided to simplify the procedure for re-registering on the electoral roll. This addresses a wish frequently expressed by representatives of the Swiss Abroad community and by members of parliament.

Until now, Swiss nationals resident abroad who wished to continue exercising their political rights had to re-register with their constituency within four years of deregistration. Representatives of the Fifth Switzerland and members of parliament have at various times called for the obligation to re-register on the electoral roll to be lifted and for the introduction of an "automated" procedure.

From now on, constituencies must send Swiss voters resident abroad a preprinted card together with referendum material at least once a year. Swiss Abroad wishing to re-register on the electoral roll can then sign and date the card and return it with the referendum material to their constituency.

In future, at least once a year you will receive a form for re-registration on the electoral roll along with referendum documents. Even if you receive such a card every year, you still only need to renew your registration every four years. It is up to you whether you complete the card every year or not.

As before, your constituency will send you confirmation of reregistration. Also as before,

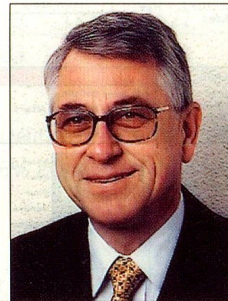
Swiss voters abroad who fail to re-register will be struck off the electoral roll four years

after their last re-registration.

Patricia Messerli, Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA

Staff changes

This summer saw two changes in the Service for the Swiss Abroad at the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (EDA). On 1 September 2002 ambassador Peter Sutter took over from ambassador Walter Thurnherr, who has been appointed General Secretary of the EDA by the Federal Council. Peter Sutter is head of "Political Department VI – Swiss Abroad", which also includes the Service for the Swiss Abroad. Ambassador Sutter is also head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad.



Peter Sutter was born in Herisau in 1948 and grew up in the Appenzell. He studied in Zurich and Basle and graduated as a Doctor of Law. After practising as an attorney in Zurich he joined the diplomatic service of the EDA in 1979 and was sent to Ottawa as an intern. In 1985, after a stint in the EDA's legal service in Berne, he was sent to Nairobi as First Secretary and then to Helsinki in 1988, also as First Secretary. He returned to Berne in 1991 to take over as Head of the Service for Peace Building and was entrusted with building a pool of experts as independent observers of elec-

tions. Between 1994 and 1999, in the rank of Major-General, he headed the Swiss delegation to the neutral monitoring commission in Panmunjom (Korea). In 1999 the Federal Council appointed him as Head of Mission responsible for opening and overseeing a Swiss liaison office at the UN Transition Management Centre in Kosovo, in Pristina.

On 12 August 2002 **Gabriela Brodbeck** joined the Service for the Swiss Abroad as a legal assistant. She takes over from Patricia Messerli, among other things as editor of the official section of "Swiss Review". Gabriela Brodbeck was born in Basle in 1963 and in 1991 graduated from Basle University with a degree in law. After various positions in the cantonal and federal administration



(including the Federal Office for Social Insurance in Berne) she worked with the Canton of Basle Country's Justice, Police and Military Directorate, where she was responsible for supervising cantonal registrar offices.

Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"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), PO Box 5775,
CH-3001 Berne

"More control over health insurance premiums"

(until 5 August 2003)
R.A.S.: Rassemblement des assurés et des soignants, PO Box 1280,
CH-1001 Lausanne

"For modern animal welfare (Yes to animal protection!)"

(until 29 July 2003)
Schweizer Tierschutz STS, PO Box,
CH-4008 Basle

"Moratorium on mobile communications antennae"

(until 12 September 2003)
www.Antennenmoratorium.ch
PO Box 321, CH-8029 Zurich

"Against ritual slaughter without an anaesthetic"

(until 26 September 2003)
Verein gegen Tierfabriken VgT
PO Box, CH-9501 Wil

"For a comprehensive revision of the federal constitution by the new parliament (initiative frühling)"

(until 2 October 2003)
initiative frühling, PO Box
CH-5001 Aarau

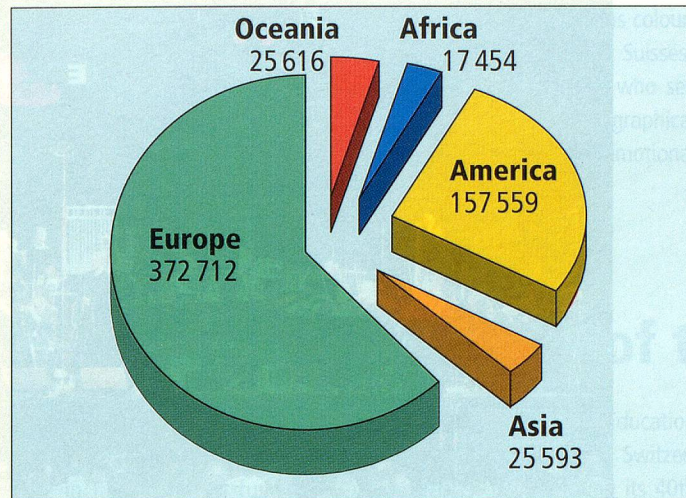
You can download the signature form for current initiatives from <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vi10.html>



The Fifth Switzerland is growing

At the end of June, 598,934 Swiss nationals were registered with Swiss embassies and consulates around the world. The number of our compatriots abroad has grown by 7,274 since last year. 421,680 Swiss Abroad (70.40 percent) have dual citizenship.

The majority of Swiss nationals resident abroad (358,347 or 59.83 percent) live in the member states of the European Union (see table). Outside Europe, most live in the USA (69,526). The statistics also show that almost 60 percent of Swiss adults abroad, i.e. 270,425 persons, are women. The number of men is 187,538, while the number of persons under 18 years of age is 140,971. 92,235 persons (15.4 percent) are above age 65. The largest Swiss colony remains in France.



Burj-Gratik

Swiss nationals in the EU

France	158 215
Germany	68 761
Italy	43 302
UK	25 678
Spain	20 484
Austria	12 616
Netherlands	6 693
Belgium	6 566
Sweden	4 277
Greece	2 921
Portugal	2 691
Denmark	2 668
Finland	1 292
Ireland	1 273
Luxembourg	910
Total	358 347

One Swiss passport-holder lives on the island of Tuvalu in the south-west Pacific, while the islands of Kiribati and St. Vincent and the Grenadines each have two registered Swiss nationals.

Of the 454,213 eligible Swiss voters living abroad, 82,682 (18.20 percent) have registered with our representations to exercise their voting rights.

Want to know how many other Swiss are resident in your country

of residence? The statistics can be consulted on-line at the Service for the Swiss Abroad website, www.eda.admin.ch/asd.

MPC

Repayment of assets deposited in the former GDR

The German Federal Office for the Settlement of Open Property Issues (BARoV) in Berlin (www.barov.bund.de) has published a list of Swiss account-holders who in 1945 held accounts at banks in territory that later became the GDR.

Although the deadline for concluding direct settlements between account-holders or their heirs and BARoV has expired, entitled Swiss nationals can still make a claim with the assistance of their home country by presenting the appropriate documents. The deposited assets can be paid out if the applicant (i.e. the original owner or his or her legal heirs) can prove that he or she is entitled to the assets in question.

Swiss citizens whose names appear on the list (which can be con-

sulted on-line under www.eda.admin.ch/ddrkonto), or their heirs, must submit a written application as soon as possible to the following address, enclosing copies of the relevant documents:

EDA, Direktion für Völkerrecht, Dienst für Entschädigungsabkommen, Bundesgasse 18, CH-3003 Bern, Tel.: +41 31 322 31 91 / +41 31 323 01 95, dv-entschaedigung@eda.admin.ch.

The list can also be consulted at Swiss representations abroad. The Swiss authorities are responsible only for forwarding applications; the decision regarding valid claims and their processing is in the hands of the German authorities.

Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA

New Swiss passport

On 1 January 2003 a new Swiss passport will be introduced. From then on, everyone will receive their own passport and children will no longer be included on their parent's passport.

The new passport can be ordered from Swiss representations from **1 November 2002** and will be issued after 1 January 2003 at the earliest. As before, applications for passports must be made to 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, and passports which are currently valid (Pass 85) will not be extended. **Passports issued or extended before 1 January 2003 will remain valid until their expiry date but not beyond 31 December 2007.**

If your passport expires before 31 December 2002, you have until this date to apply for a five-year extension. The passport's total period of validity, from the date of issue, must be no more than 15 years.

To avoid difficulties and delays, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs urges all Swiss residents abroad to apply for a new passport or identity card at least two months before the document's expiry date.

Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA