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"Images Suisses" – the Fifth Switzerland at Expo.02

On Saturday 10 August Swiss Abroad Day attracted over 14,000 visitors to the Bienne arteplage – a resounding success according to Rainer Müller, Marketing Director of Expo.02, in view of the miserable weather. Neither cold nor pouring rain appeared to spoil Swiss Abroad visitors' enjoyment of "their day".

(gk) Between 600 and 1,000 Swiss Abroad visited "Images Suisses" at the Bienne Expo.02 site. Many expressed their pleasure at this opportunity to present the Fifth Switzerland to a broad public at the national exhibition. And Swiss at home were treated to an image of their country which in many respects was unfamiliar to them.

The Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA) exhibited works which Swiss Abroad had created to depict their home country through a wide range of media. Nine installations symbolised the countries where most Swiss residents abroad live. Suitcases on mail trolleys served as a platform for pictures, texts and official wel-



Patrick Lüthy/Imagopress

World Quintett and the Basle Symphony Orchestra transported the 1000-strong audience to a world of poesy, nostalgia and lightness.

coming messages. Swiss from the relevant countries distributed specialities from their country of residence and chatted to members of the public from all over Switzerland.

What is our image?

In the morning a panel discussion chaired by Filippo Leutenegger, CEO of Jean Frey AG, was held on the subject "Image of Switzerland – between reality and fiction". The topic triggered a heated debate. According to National Councillor Claude Frey (FDP/NE), President of the Foreign Policy Commission of the National Council, Swiss are guilty of excessive self-criticism. Our reputation abroad, he claimed, was far better than the media would have us believe. This view was shared by Urs Schöttli, NZZ correspondent in Tokyo. Ruth Grossenbacher, President of "Presence Switzerland" welcomed the growing awareness of Switzerland

as the homeland. Barbara Rigassi, economic advisor and former ambassador at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco) said that the Swiss should view the values of their country with more self-confidence. The panel members were unanimous regarding the major importance of Swiss schools abroad.

The brass band of the Papal Guard, performing in public for only the second time in Switzerland, was a huge hit. Visitors were also enchanted by the 48 Swiss Abroad children who performed songs from Latin America and Switzerland. These included around 20 boys and girls averaging 11 years in age from the Swiss School in Santiago de Chile. The other children were attending the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (SJAS) summer camp. The "Störtebeckers" sailors' choir also earned loud applause. The former Swiss sailors performed at various locations on the arteplage, singing old sea shanties and accompanied on the accordion. Praise was also heaped on Basle-born dance

artiste Lisa K. Lock, who has lived in Los Angeles (USA) since 1989.

Swissinfo/SRI attracted a large audience with its brief interviews with Swiss Abroad, broadcast on a large screen at the Swisscom pavillion during the afternoon.

Music from another world

Some 1000 persons attended the evening recital. After a short address by OSA President Georg Stucky and Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid, who underscored the importance of the Fifth Switzerland's ties with the home country, the World Quintet Klezmer Band (formerly "Kol Simcha") performed alongside the Basle Symphony Orchestra. Their unique combination of jazz, Klezmer and classical music transported the audience to another world.

With this musical crossover the organisers once more opened a window on the world and expressively highlighted the mixture of homeland ties, wanderlust and open-mindedness that characterises the Fifth Switzerland.



Patrick Lüthy/Imagopress

The lusty singers of the "Störtebeckers" sailors' choir.

Young Swiss Abroad at Expo.02

Around 200 young people from all corners of the globe attended the Swiss national exhibition during the summer camp. For them Expo.02 was simultaneously a source of fascination, food for thought and the object of heated

discussion. A review of the Youth Service's summer camps.

(TM) How do I see Switzerland, as a Swiss Abroad? This was the question we addressed over the first few days of camp. And it comes as no surprise that the same

old clichés were rolled out: cheese, money, chocolate, Heidi, cows.

We tried to refine and compare the images and set them down in artistic form. The result was colourful and critical "Images Suisses" created by young people who see Switzerland from a geographical and sometimes also an emotional distance.

Then we looked forward to seeing how Switzerland would present itself at Expo.02. We were surprised and not at all disappointed to find very few signs of a clichéd Switzerland at Expo.02. What we saw was a modern, entertaining Switzerland, and we often found it hard to find anything Swiss in the exhibits. We enjoyed being present at Expo.02.

The Council for the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Berne on 9 August

Yes to the Solidarity Fund

After reminding members of the remarkable result achieved by Pierre-Alain Bolomey, Swiss Abroad candidate for the National Council in 1999, CSA President Georg Stucky encouraged our compatriotes abroad to stand for next year's elections.

(SD) As an organisation which represents the interests of some 600,000 Swiss living abroad, the OSA is lobbying on the following issues with an eye to next year's elections:

- Promotion of education for young Swiss Abroad
- Facilitation of political participation for Swiss Abroad
- Enhancement of the information flow between Switzerland and its citizens abroad
- Optimisation of consular care for Swiss communities
- Promotion of Switzerland's presence in the world
- Facilitation of international mobility for Swiss.

Yes to the Swiss Solidarity Fund

The OSA makes recommendations on referendum issues which directly affect Swiss nationals resident abroad. The next topic to be put before Swiss voters concerns the use of surplus gold reserves by the Swiss National Bank and the Solidarity Fund.

After intensive debate, the CSA has decided to recommend a vote in favour of this fund with its humanitarian mission, in order to foster Switzerland's image abroad. The OSA is of the opinion that, like the Red Cross, the fund can boost our country's image abroad and hence benefit all Swiss citizens.

The CSA has also decided to devote the **2003 Congress**, to be held in Crans-Montana from 29 to 31 August 2003, to the "Importance and Future of Switzerland as a Financial Centre"...

40 years of the AJAS

The Association for the Education of Young Swiss Abroad in Switzerland (AJAS) is celebrating its 40th anniversary. During the CSA's public session the AJAS was able to launch its first anniversary action with a new Internet page. This provides a network for the 50,000 or more young Swiss Abroad currently studying. Former head of AJAS Regula Dütschler has drawn up an excellent, comprehensive overview of all study options, opportunities for grants and links to educational partners. Now the AJAS can provide young Swiss Abroad with better-than-ever advice and assis-

tance. Even now the secretariat team (Chantal Dünninger and Fabienne Feuz) respond to around 1,500 queries a year.

As yet there are insufficient funds for more languages. With help from Spanish, Italian or English-speaking donors abroad, however, AJAS could immediately start work on adding more languages to the site.

In conjunction with the Youth Session and the Preparatory Course for University Studies in Switzerland (Vorbereitungskurse auf das Hochschulstudium in der Schweiz, VKHS), AJAS second anniversary action will be to organise an event week for 25 to 30 Swiss Abroad students from 2 to 9 November 2002. AJAS will be offering: a tour, a visit to the Houses of Parliament and the Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss, an introduction to Swiss politics, and a special festival at the University of Fribourg. We are still looking for another five Swiss students abroad who want to take part in this anniversary week (AJAS will pay the costs in Switzerland, while travel to Switzerland should be paid for by Swiss clubs, Swiss companies abroad or the students' parents. (Information available from AJAS Tel 0041 31 351 61 40 or ajas@aso.ch).

Remo Galli, Autumn Session of the Council for the Swiss Abroad
AJAS President, CVP National Councillor

Winter arrangements for young Swiss Abroad

The OSA Youth Service and the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad awaits you in snow-covered Switzerland. Register now!

New Year's ski camp in Sedrun (GR)

26.12. 02–04.01.03

Ski and snowboard camp for Swiss Abroad aged 14-25

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad New Year ski camp

26.12. 02–04.01.03

Ski and snowboard camp for young Swiss Abroad aged 8-14

Winter sports week in Grindelwald

08.03.03–15.03.03

Easter sports camp in Fiesch (VS)

13.04.03–21.04.03

Further information at www.aso.ch or from OSA Youth Service or SJAS, Tel: ++41 (0)31 351 61 00
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