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Marrying abroad

Are you planning to marry abroad? If so, you need to know which documents you require and which formalities have to be observed vis-à-vis the Swiss authorities. The following information is essential.

A marriage contract is subject to the laws of the state in which you intend to marry. Contact the authorities in the intended place of marriage or the country's representative in Switzerland (embassy or consulate) to obtain information on the required documents.

The table below provides information on which documents are available from which authorities. As a Swiss resident abroad you can also obtain the papers via the relevant Swiss representation.

Some countries require a certificate of marriageability prior to marriage (valid for six months).

DOCUMENT	AVAILABLE FROM
Recently issued birth certificate (in multilingual format)	Relevant Swiss representation / Registry office in your place of birth
Recently issued certificate of civil status	Relevant Swiss representation / Registry office in your place of origin
Recently issued confirmation of place of residence	Relevant Swiss representation / Community office in your Swiss place of residence
Valid proof of identity	Relevant Swiss representation / Community office in your Swiss place of residence

This is obtainable from the registry office at the Swiss place of residence or, if resident abroad, from the registry office in your place of origin. In Switzerland it is issued on an international form printed in several languages and certifies that there are no impediments to marriage with the named person under Swiss law. Swiss registrars only issue such a certificate if the bride or bridegroom is a Swiss citizen.

Recognition of marriage in Switzerland

You must report your marriage without delay in order to have it recognised and registered in Switzerland.

– If you or your spouse is a Swiss citizen, report the marriage to the relevant Swiss representation enclosing the original marriage certificate.

– If your spouse is a foreign national and the marriage has not been contracted on the basis of a pre-issued certificate of marriageability, you also need to provide a birth certificate as well as proof of parentage, civil status and nationality. If necessary, your Swiss representation will translate, authenticate and examine the documents and forward them via the Federal Office of Civil Status to the supervisory authority in your canton of origin, which decides on recognition and entry of the marriage in the relevant civil register.

Effects of marriage

– You can choose the family name by which you wish to be known. It is best to obtain such information prior to marrying, either from your Swiss civil registry office or the relevant Swiss representation.

– If both spouses are Swiss nationals, both retain their cantonal and community citizenship. In addition, the wife is granted citizenship of her husband's canton and community.



You can also tie the knot abroad. But there are several pointers to remember.

– Swiss nationals who marry a foreign national retain Swiss citizenship. However, the alien law of your spouse's country dictates whether or not you can acquire your spouse's citizenship. Ask the relevant authorities in your spouse's country. A foreign national does not automatically acquire Swiss citizenship but it is easier for him or her to become naturalised. For more information, ask your Swiss representation.

– A mutual child is accorded the parents' family name following their marriage. If both parents are Swiss citizens, the child is granted the father's cantonal and community citizenship (and loses the cantonal and community citizenship formerly acquired from its moth-

er). If the mother is a Swiss national and the father a foreign national, the child is automatically entitled to Swiss citizenship by birth. The child of a foreign-national mother is granted Swiss citizenship as well as the Swiss father's cantonal and community citizenship provided the mother is married to him.

For more information, visit <http://www.ofj.admin.ch/d/eazw-index.html> or (for information on citizenship) http://www.bfa.admin.ch/einbuengerung/index_d.asp.

Service for the Swiss Abroad / FDFA

Gabriela Brodbeck

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"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

"For the abolition of obligatory health insurance"

(until 10 March 2004)
www.stopplamal.ch, PO Box 2875,
1211 Geneva 2

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

Infostar: civil status data in electronic form

IT has now made inroads into Swiss civil status registers. The Infostar project launched by the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) is planning to set up a central database.

Registry offices in Switzerland keep civil status records on birth, death, marriage and child affiliation. Such events are recorded by the registry office responsible for the locality where the event occurred. Added to this, the registry office in a Swiss citizen's place of origin keeps the family register as a type of "collective register", entering all civil status events as well as legal and administrative decisions relevant to civil status.

If, for example, Eva Muster was born in the Cantonal Hospi-

tal of Basle and is a citizen of Laufen, her birth will be entered in the birth register of the Basle City registry office, and at the same time recorded in the family register kept by the Laufen registry office.


The government is launching the Infostar project with the aim of introducing electronic administration of all civil status registers and integrating all registry offices in a nation-wide network. However, data will continue to be recorded decentrally by the individual cantons. The IT Service Center (ISC) of the FDJP has been commissioned by the Federal Office for Justice to develop and operate the Infostar system. Following a pilot trial, the system will be introduced throughout Switzerland in the course of 2003. Info-

star is scheduled to become fully operational in the second half of 2004.

While Infostar will not affect the functions traditionally performed by registry offices, civil status events and family relationships will now be attributed to individual persons rather than on a family basis, as has been the case to date.

For more information on Infostar, log onto <http://www.infostar.admin.ch>.

Service for the Swiss Abroad/FDFA

Gabriela Brodbeck 

Voting confidentiality assured

If you are concerned about keeping your vote secret, you have the option of placing your ballot in a neutral envelope (communities are not obliged to enclose such an envelope) and sealing it. Return this sealed envelope in the posting envelope. In some communities the posting envelope acts as a voting permit ("Stimmrechtsausweis"). If this is not the case, you must enclose the separate voting permit.

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Change of address

Please do not notify Berne

If you have changed your address, please notify your Swiss embassy or consulate rather than Berne. Swiss representations alone are responsible for keeping records of address of our compatriots abroad and hence for the correct delivery of the "Swiss Review".

By contacting your Swiss representation you can help the Service for the Swiss Abroad to save time and effort tracking down addressees of returned copies of the "Swiss Review".

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"Moratorium on mobile communications antennae"

The federal people's initiative "Moratorium on mobile communications antennae" was launched by an initiative committee which claims to be politically neutral, non-denominational and independent. The aim is to change the transitional provisions of the federal constitution.

The initiative calls for a moratorium on the construction of private

and commercial transmitters for communications such as mobile telephony, UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), WLL (Wireless Local Loop) or wireless LAN (Local Area Network), as well as on extensions to existing installations. The moratorium would remain in force until definitive proof has been furnished that non-ionising radiation as well as

magnetic and electromagnetic field emissions, including their athermal effects, are harmless to human beings and the environment. Moreover, the initiative recommends that current approval procedures be shelved until such proof is obtained. Suspicion of doubt must be allayed only by law.

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