

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 30 (2003)
Heft: 3

Rubrik: Official news

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Avoid problems on returning home

In 2001, 24,331 Swiss nationals returned to their home country*. A few administrative precautions will help you avoid any unpleasant surprises on your return home.

You are free to choose your future domicile in Switzerland: no resi-

bassy or consulate), you must de-register. Within 14 days of your arrival in Switzerland you must report to the residents' registration office of the community where you intend to stay for at least three months.

Persons eligible for military duty must report within 14 days to the

If you have been abroad for less than a year, you are treated in the same way as unemployed persons in Switzerland. In concrete terms you must have been paying contributions for at least six months during the past two years. This regulation is valid until 30 June 2003. From 1 July 2003 the

mining the period during which persons may draw benefits in Switzerland.

- Your insured salary is calculated based on your earnings in Germany.

To take advantage of unemployment benefits you should report immediately to the Employment Office (job centre) of your future place of residence. Entitlement and waiting times (if applicable) begin from the date of registration. If you fail to register within a year of returning, you lose any entitlement to unemployment benefits.

The following two information sheets provide further details: "Arbeitslosenentschädigung" (No. 716.200 d/f/i); "Leistungsansprüche für die Auslandschweizer" (No. 716.203 d/f/i). You can obtain a copy from your Swiss representation or from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (seco), GDTC, Effingerstrasse 31, 3003 Berne. For additional information, visit: www.seco.admin.ch, www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch, www.swissemigration.ch.

Financial support

Generally speaking, the government can provide financial assistance to Swiss nationals in need who live abroad but are not also naturalised in their country of residence. Under certain circumstances it can also facilitate their return to Switzerland. Once they have returned, cantonal or community social services are responsible for providing additional financial support, if applicable. If they have spent at least three years abroad before their return, the government provides them with initial assistance for the first three months in place of cantonal social benefits.

Finding accommodation

If you are looking for accommodation, you should contact a real es-



Departure lounge in Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris.

dence permit is required. However, you must observe the visa regulations for foreign spouses or partners and their non-Swiss children. For information on Swiss visa regulations, visit the home page of the Federal Office for Immigration, Integration and Emigration, IMES (formerly ie up to 1 May 2003 the Swiss Federal Aliens Office) www.imes.admin.ch/einreise/index_visumvorschriften_e.asp. This office has also published an information sheet for entry to Switzerland, available from www.imes.admin.ch/einreise/merkblatt_e.asp or Tel ++41 (0)31 325 95 11.

If you were registered with a Swiss representation abroad (em-

responsible head of section in their community of residence.

Unemployment insurance

If you are returning to Switzerland from a non-EU/EFTA country, you are in principle entitled to unemployment benefits even if you have never paid contributions to the Swiss unemployment insurance scheme. However, you must have been abroad for more than a year and be able to produce proof of at least six months' employment (from 1 July 2003: at least 12 months) during the last two years. Self-employed persons are not entitled to unemployment benefits.

contribution period amounts to 12 months during the past two years.

If you have been working in an EU/EFTA country before returning to Switzerland, in principle you must apply for benefits in the country where you were last employed. This country will export your benefits to Switzerland for up to three months, which will help you to find employment here.

Special regulations apply to Germany:

- The full contribution period in Germany is taken into account in Switzerland.

- Benefits drawn in Germany are taken into account when deter-

tate agent in your future place of residence or the cantonal real estate administration. Useful Internet links in this respect are: www.immoline.ch, www.immoclick.ch.

Health insurance

According to the valid legal provisions, in principle all persons with a civilian residence in Switzerland are obliged to take out health insurance. Persons returning from abroad can take out a basic insurance policy at any time without restrictions (i.e. irrespective of age or health reservations). You are free to choose your health insurance company, but you must be insured within three months of taking up residence in Switzerland. This does not apply to any optional supplementary insurance. Further information is available from the following Internet link: www.bsv.admin.ch.

Military service

Every male Swiss resident abroad who returns home before reaching his 25th year of birth and has not completed any military service abroad is eligible for conscription. For more information on military service, ask your local Swiss representation or contact the Federal Department for Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, General Staff, Section "Wehrpflicht", 3003 Berne (Tel. ++41 (0)31 324 80 60, Internet: www.vbs.admin.ch).

Exemption from customs duty

If you are returning to Switzerland to take up residence, you can import your household goods free of customs duty. This applies to items which you have been using for at least six months for your own personal, professional or commercial purposes and intend to continue using in Switzerland. You can apply for exemption from customs duty on arrival in Switzerland by completing the form entitled "Erklärung/Abfertigungsantrag". The form is available from your Swiss

representation or from the Federal Customs Directorate, Monbijoustrasse 40, 3003 Berne (Tel ++41 (0)31 322 65 11, Internet www.zoll.admin.ch). Details on customs regulations are obtainable from Swiss representations abroad or from the Customs Directorates in Basle, Schaffhausen, Lugano and Geneva.


Education

Education in Switzerland is governed by the cantons. Your future Swiss community will provide additional information on schooling.

For questions on study options after the obligatory school age, contact the Association for the Promotion of the Education of Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS), which can provide addresses of universities, career advisory centres and cantonal grant authorities, as well as information sheets on most careers. The address is: AJAS, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16 (Tel.: ++41 (0)31 351 61 40, Internet: www.aso.ch).

Tax obligation

Swiss citizens pay taxes at the community, cantonal and federal level. For information on the applicable provisions, contact your future community of residence or the finance department of your future canton of residence.

Service for the Swiss Abroad/FDFA 
Gabriela Brodbeck

*Federal Office of Statistics (Migration 2001)

Translated from German.

INTERNET

www.eda.admin.ch/asd,
"Publikationen/Ratgeber"

www.aso.ch,
"Beratung/Rechtsdienst"

Advice for Swiss Abroad

In the Official News section of the 3/2002 edition of "Swiss Review" we informed you about the new advice booklet for Swiss Abroad. The Italian version has been available since February 2003 and can be ordered from the following address:

Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik (BBL), CH-3003 Berne, (Fax: ++41 (0)31 325 50 58).

The booklet can also be ordered over the Internet from www.bundespublikationen.ch – verkaufziv-il@bbl.admin.ch.

If ordering by post, please enclose an adhesive label with your address.

The current version in the three official languages can be downloaded from the Service for the Swiss Abroad home page at www.eda.admin.ch/asd ("Publikationen").

"The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2003"

The brochure entitled "The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2003" was published in spring this year by the Federal Chancellery and is available free of charge 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, how people's rights are exercised, and how the National and State Councils are made up. Legislative procedures are 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. In fourteen full-page photographs on the subject of "National aspects of Switzerland", Zurich photographer Meinrad Schade has endeavoured to depict the effects of referenda on people in Switzerland.

The publication is available free of charge from:

Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik (BBL), Vertrieb Publikationen, CH-3003 Bern
Fax: ++41 (0)31 325 50 58
Internet: www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen

Federal people's initiatives at the signature stage

The following new people's initiatives has been launched and is open for signature:

"Restriction on immigration from non-EU states"

(until 11 September 2004)
Swiss Democratic Party (SD),
Po Box 1213, 5401 Baden

The signature form for pending initiatives can be downloaded from
<http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html>.