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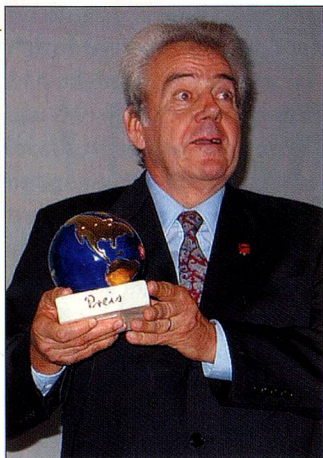
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Citation for Swiss resident in Argentina

Swiss FDP International Chapter



Hans Rudolf Würgler, 2004 Swiss Abroad of the Year

The Swiss FDP party has named Hans Rudolf Würgler Swiss Abroad of the Year for 2004, in recognition of his outstanding work in the service of the population of the province of Misiones.

This was the third year in which the Swiss Abroad prize had been awarded for outstanding work in the service of Swiss Abroad. The aim of the prize is to raise aware-

ness at home of the importance of the Fifth Switzerland.

In the summer of 2003 the international chapter of the Swiss FDP party asked Swiss representations abroad, members of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad and its own members to nominate persons or institutions for the prize. Chaired by Hugo Bütler (editor-in-chief of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), the distinguished jury selected Hans Rudolf Würgler, a Swiss resident in Argentina, from the 25 nominees.

Born in 1937 to a Basle father and a Bernese mother, Würgler has devoted his life to the population of the small, impoverished province of Misiones, home to one of the largest Swiss expatriate colonies in Argentina. For the past 40 years he has built up the "Instituto Linea Cuchilla" school for agriculture and technology. Also known as the "Scuola Suiza", the school is one of the most important social institutions in the district, providing young people with further education and vocational training to promote their employa-

bility. In 1980 Hans Rudolf Würgler was appointed as correspondent to the Swiss embassy in Argentina, and ten years later the Federal Council promoted him to the post of Honorary Consul. Due to the understanding and sympathy Wür-

gler showed in addressing the problems of Swiss citizens, he became their main point of contact and spokesman in the province of Misiones. *com*

Translated from German.

New youth arrangements in autumn

The registration deadline for summer camps has now expired, but we are still offering exciting packages for young Swiss Abroad who want to spend time in Switzerland in the autumn.

The Valais trip (Switzerland mobile – the alpine world of the Valais) is a jewel among the summer arrangements offered by the Youth Service. Young Swiss Abroad from age 18 can expect a stimulating week with lots of exercise, adventure and recreation in the Valais Alps: from an introduction to alpine sports to the ascent of a 4000-meter alpine peak, wellness in the alpine spas of the Valais, and loads of fun with like-minded contemporaries from all over the world.

The seminar on "Technological innovation: the challenges facing Switzerland" is aimed at young people wishing to find out more about the dynamic world of technology. Visit the Technorama in Winterthur to gain hands-on expe-

rience of natural science and technology. You will also receive lots of information on study opportunities in Switzerland. And after the seminar, you can put the experience you have acquired into practice during debates at the Congress for the Swiss Abroad.

This year's Federal Youth Session will be addressing the issue of health. Past participants have enthused about Switzerland's youth parliament. The OSA provides an introduction to Switzerland's political landscape and prepares you for the session and the topic to be debated. Then you, too, can be an active member of Switzerland's Youth Parliament between 4 to 6 November.

Information:

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Translated from German.

Address to the Swiss Abroad

"Argentina provided a dramatic example of how essential Swiss social security mechanisms can be for Swiss Abroad. It is therefore imperative to pay your premiums whenever possible. Swiss Abroad should voice their interest in revising the regulations governing voluntary AHV. Swiss Abroad are so important to the image of our country abroad that, as a quid pro quo, authorities and politicians should realise the necessity of a special provision for people in developing and newly industrialised countries. Naturally this can only be realised if it is financially viable.

It is important for Swiss Abroad to maintain contact with home country. If possible, they should also practice one of our national languages. Just as important as keeping up ties with the home country is the necessity of taking part in elections and referenda. You should also take advantage of the youth arrangements (holiday camps and study opportunities) which the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad offers."

Hans Rudolf Würgler, editorial staff: gk

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We look forward to your online visit.



Council decides against system change

Swiss Abroad reject the idea of a virtual "Fifth Switzerland" canton as well as a consultative council along the lines of the French model. These decisions were made by the Council for the Swiss Abroad (CSA) at its spring session on 27 March in Berne. On the other hand, the Council voted in favour of creating a parliamentary group that addresses Swiss Abroad concerns.

As the recent parliamentary elections demonstrated, Swiss Abroad find it particularly difficult to get elected, and at the meeting of the CSA there were loud calls advocating a change of system and citing the consultative council in Paris, which represents French nationals living outside France. There was also discussion on creating a virtual Swiss Abroad canton, on reserved seats in the federal assembly and (why not?) a quota regulation. Delegates from Switzerland and abroad who attended the spring session of the CSA voted virtually unanimously (70 to 1–3 votes per proposal) in favour of sticking to the status quo but

stepping up lobbying efforts. OSA President and former National Councillor Georg Stucky announced the Organisation's intention of setting up a group of members of parliament specifically to address the interests of the Fifth Switzerland. The project was welcomed and approved by Council members.

Speakers argued that a change of system was neither practicable nor advantageous, claiming that most of the proposed solutions would require a constitutional amendment or would lead to unequal treatment of Swiss at home and their compatriots abroad.

Moreover, the current political structure affords Swiss Abroad the opportunity to actively influence political affairs back home, as witnessed by the election to the St.Gallen cantonal council of Beat Eberle from Bad Ragaz, a military attaché at the Swiss embassy in Stockholm (see Interview, page 11).

E-voting: the solution of the future

The Council also discussed alternatives to the often unreliable system of postal voting. Judging by

the results of a survey conducted by swissinfo/SIR, which found that some 80 percent of Swiss Abroad have Internet access, e-voting would appear to be the ideal solution. "Swiss democracy needs electronic voting – preferably today rather than tomorrow!" emphasised Georg Stucky, and called on the government to support the dynamics of current pilot projects in Geneva and two other cantons.

Assistance for Swiss Abroad in Argentina

Reporting to the Council on the situation of Swiss nationals in Argentina who are insured under the voluntary AHV/IV scheme, Hans Rudolf Würgler, Swiss Honorary Consul in Ruiz de Montoya (see Box, page 14), said that despite a slight improvement, there was still cause for concern and that, as a result of the crisis, many Swiss in Argentina run the risk of losing their benefit entitlement because they are unable to pay their insurance contributions. Happily, thanks to efforts by the OSA and the support of the government, increased private support will soon be available for hardship cases.

In the discussion on the Federal Law on Radio and Television (FLRT), the CSA restated its fundamental position: the government must bear half the costs of swissinfo/SRI as an international service of the SRG. The CSA also voiced concern about the cutbacks, which it believes are jeopardising relations between Switzerland and its citizens abroad (Swiss schools abroad, Presence Switzerland, consular representations). In Georg Stucky's opinion, these measures will cause long-term damage rather than result in long-term savings.

Two new members

The CSA also elected two new members in the persons of SVP National Councillors Hans Kaufmann (ZH) and André Reymond (GE). ASO

Translated from German.

INTERNET

www.aso.ch
www.swissinfo.org

Visit Switzerland with "Swiss Ping Pong"

Ever been to Agra? Or would you prefer a trip to Zäziwil? Every year Swiss "Ping Pong" offers Swiss Abroad the chance to spend a holiday with a difference, staying as a guest of families in Switzerland.

"Swiss Ping Pong" is a project run by the Stapferhaus Lenzburg, an Aargau cultural institution, with support from the canton of Lucerne, the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad, the DFA and Pro Patria. As a Swiss Abroad you have the opportunity to get to know your home country at close quarters, by spending three to eight days as the guest of a Swiss family. Board and lodging are free, the cost of travel is borne by you, and

the administrative charge is modest. "Swiss Ping Pong" is aimed at single persons, couples and families, with a special programme for young people from age 15.

Write to us, call or visit our web page. By the way, "Swiss Ping Pong" also works the other way round. If you would like to act as host, let us know. We will gladly make arrangements in the other direction, too.

Further information available from:

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