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New Swiss passport Model 06

Readers of the 2/06 issue of "Swiss Review" will recall that Swiss passports containing electronically recorded biometric data will be issued from September onwards. Specimens of the new "06" passports are currently being printed for testing purposes.

The first test passport offices are located in Berne and Frankfurt (Germany). Eight such offices will be set up for the duration of the pilot project to introduce the new passports in Switzerland. Eight more will be set up at Swiss representations abroad. These offices will be provided with special cameras that can take digital passport photographs. The location of these offices can be found in the 2/06 issue of "Swiss Review".

During an initial test in Berne and Frankfurt, photographs were taken of the faces of 160 volunteers of different age and appearance. These were then combined with fictitious data and used to produce about 500 test passports. The passports were then used for "chain tests" to check the effectiveness of systems and procedures. The test passports will remain in federal government hands during the test phase, after which they will be destroyed.

Model 06 passports will be issued in parallel to current

Model 03 passports from this September. Applications for the new passport can be made from 4 September onwards.

If you already have an 03 passport or are issued one before 26 October 2006, you can continue to visit or transit the United States without a visa after this date. In other words, you do not need an electronically-readable biometric 06 passport.

Holders of 03 passports issued after 26 October 2006 will in future require a visa to travel to the United States. Binding information on travel to the USA is available from your nearest US representation. Further details can also be found at the following websites:

www.unitedstatesvisas.gov
www.travel.state.gov
www.dhs.gov/us-visit

The Federal Office of Police in Berne has published a leaflet containing the most important information on the passport 06. This can be ordered at the following Internet address:

www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen
 Order no.: "403.300.d"
 (the inverted commas must be entered).

Further information:
 "Swiss Review" 2/06 (www.revue.ch)
www.schweizerpass.ch
schweizerpass@fedpol.admin.ch
www.schweizerpass.ch
 Hotline: +41 (0)800 820 008.

ORDER YOUR 2003 PASSPORT NOW!

■ The Federal Council recommends holders of the old Model 85 passport – whether resident in Switzerland or abroad – to order an 03 passport now. This is also cheaper than a biometric passport: 03 passports cost CHF 120 for adults and CHF 55 for children, while the new 06 passport will cost CHF 180 for infants under the age of 3 and CHF 250 for everyone else.

■ If you want to receive your 03 passport by 26 October 2006, you need to apply for it as soon as possible. **Swiss nationals resident abroad should apply no later than the end of August.**

Swiss diplomas valid throughout EU and EFTA

The Agreement on Free Movement of Persons (FMP), signed jointly by Switzerland and the European Union and the European Free Trade Association, has been in force since 1 June 2002. Amongst other things, it enables Swiss nationals to seek work throughout the EU and EFTA. Another condition for professional mobility is the recognition of different diplomas if the profession is regulated. The FMP therefore coordinates the bilateral recognition of diplomas and certificates because each country issues its own professional titles.

The FMP does not cover the recognition of academic titles, a matter Switzerland has subsequently resolved through bilateral agreements with neighbours France, Italy, Germany and Austria. These agreements are completely separate from the FMP.

Regulated professions

Professions requiring a diploma, certificate or qualification to practise in a particular country are described as "regulated". Every member state has its own rules on the qualifications required to practise a particular profession. As a result, Swiss nationals abroad need to find out if the profession they wish to practise is regulated in the country in which they want to work. If this is the case, they must apply to have their diplomas recognised. If their profession is not regulated (e.g. chef), no official recognition of their

qualifications is required because anyone with a Swiss qualification can seek work abroad.

Diploma recognition system

The system for recognising diplomas within the EU and EFTA is based on three pillars:

- Sectoral directives (for medical and paramedical professions and for architects)
- General directives (for academic professions and those requiring an apprenticeship)
- Transitional directives (for professions in industry, trade, commerce, the service industry and the handicraft trades. These particularly take account of professional experience).

Sectoral directives

The EU has issued so-called sectoral directives for some professions. These apply specifically to general care nurses, dentists and vets, midwives, pharmacists, doctors and architects. In these cases, diplomas are more or less recognised automatically. If, for example, a French nurse wants to work in Geneva, the Swiss authorities merely check whether she has a French nursing diploma.

The recognition of diplomas for these professions only relates to the applicant's basic training. Special training courses – e.g. supplementary vocational training to become an anaesthetist – must be reported ("notified") to the European Commission by member states and Switzerland. The Commission then decides whether to approve such special training. Switzerland has notified and submitted to the Commission the specialist titles awarded in Switzerland.

