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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.

A list of these can be found in Appendix III of the FMP (Appendix III: Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications; Agreement on Free Movement of Persons with the EU, SR 0142.112.681).

Even though recognition is effectively guaranteed, Swiss nationals seeking to pursue one of these seven professions within the EU/EFTA must apply for a permit to do so. To do this, they must present their diploma. The host state may demand further documentary proof, which Swiss nationals can obtain from the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET).

General directives

All other professions are covered by general directives. In order for a diploma obtained in an applicant's home country to be recognised by a host state, the content and duration of the training course must in principle be comparable. If the host state does not consider the two qualifications to be equivalent, it must allow the applicant to make good any shortcomings. This may take the form of an aptitude test or a further training course.

There are three types of general directives:

First general directive:

This applies to professions requiring a minimum of three years' study at university level and not already covered by a sectoral directive.

Second general directive:

This applies to all regulated professions for which the course of study lasts less than three years (paramedical and social work professions).

Third general directive:

This replaces numerous transitional directives signed by Switzerland and the EU/EFTA

states. It mainly applies to trade, commercial and handicraft professions.

The basic principle of recognition in the EU

It is assumed that courses of study pursued in EU/EFTA Member States are generally equivalent and that host states should therefore trust diplomas issued in other countries. For this reason, the general directives are based on the principle of mutual recognition of training courses. The following rule-of-thumb applies: All applicants may have the content of their diploma checked and recognised. In so doing, the titles themselves are not compared, but rather the content and duration of the courses.

Swiss citizens who want to use their diploma to work in an EU/EFTA country must apply for a work permit from the relevant official bodies. At the same time, they must seek confirmation of the equivalence of their diploma. If you are a Swiss national and want to have your vocational diploma recognised in an EU or EFTA member state, please contact the national contact office in the relevant host country.

The contact addresses can be found at:

www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/hoehere/00169/00370/00374/index.html?lang=en

Further information on diploma recognition:
www.bbt.admin.ch/, "Topics", "International Diploma Recognition", "EU Diploma Recognition"

The brochures "Swiss diplomas in the EU" and "EU diplomas in Switzerland" can be downloaded from the "Further Information" section.

Switzerland and the UN

The Federal Council has submitted to Parliament its fourth annual report, "Switzerland and the UN", on Switzerland's co-operation with the UN and the international organisations based in Switzerland. The report focuses on the outcome of the 2005 World Summit (Follow-up Summit in 2005 of the UN-Millennium Sum-

(www.dfae.admin.ch/sub_uno/e/uno.html) and can be ordered free of charge. When ordering please indicate your name, address and the required language (German, French, Italian and English) to:

DFA UN Coordination
Bundesgasse 28, 3003 Berne
Fax: (+41) 031 324 90 65
E-mail : uno@eda.admin

CURRENT POPULAR INITIATIVES

No new initiatives have been launched since the last issue. Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vivis_1_3_1_1.html

VOTING

Federal referendum
24 September 2006

■ Popular initiative of 9 October 2002: „National Bank profits for the AHV“

■ Federal law of 16 December 2005 on foreigners (provided the move for a referendum is successful)

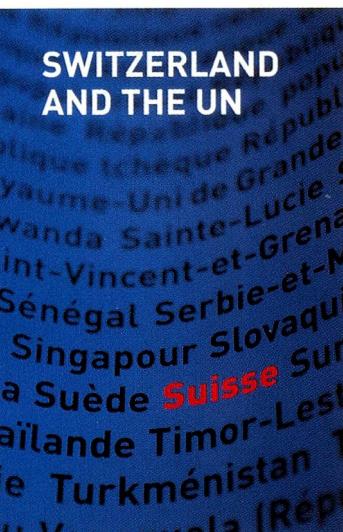
■ Amendment of 16 December 2005 to the asylum law (provided the move for a referendum is successful)

Date of forthcoming referendum in 2006:

26 November

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mit in 2000) as well as on the challenges to Swiss policy on hosting international organisations. The report also includes a chapter on Swiss candidacies and staff within the UN system. In its conclusion, it sets out Switzerland's main priorities for the 61st session of the UN General Assembly.

An illustrated brochure on the report is available online

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