

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 33 (2006)
Heft: 5

Rubrik: OSA information

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84th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Basel

The 84th Congress of the Swiss Abroad was held in Basel on 18–20 August under the motto “Partnership between Business and Culture”. As the representative of the Federal Council, Christian Blocher welcomed the 400 participants, who were also given a chance to visit Basel’s chemicals plants and museums.

Federal Councillor Blocher spoke about the role of both the Swiss abroad and foreigners living in Switzerland. He

lates, before engaging in an extensive discussion of political issues with young Swiss abroad.

Saturday’s plenary session included speeches by Michael Plüss, head of Novartis Switzerland, Guido Magnaguagno, the director of Basel’s Tinguely Museum, and Charles-Henri Favrod, a writer, journalist and founder of the Elysée Museum in Lausanne.

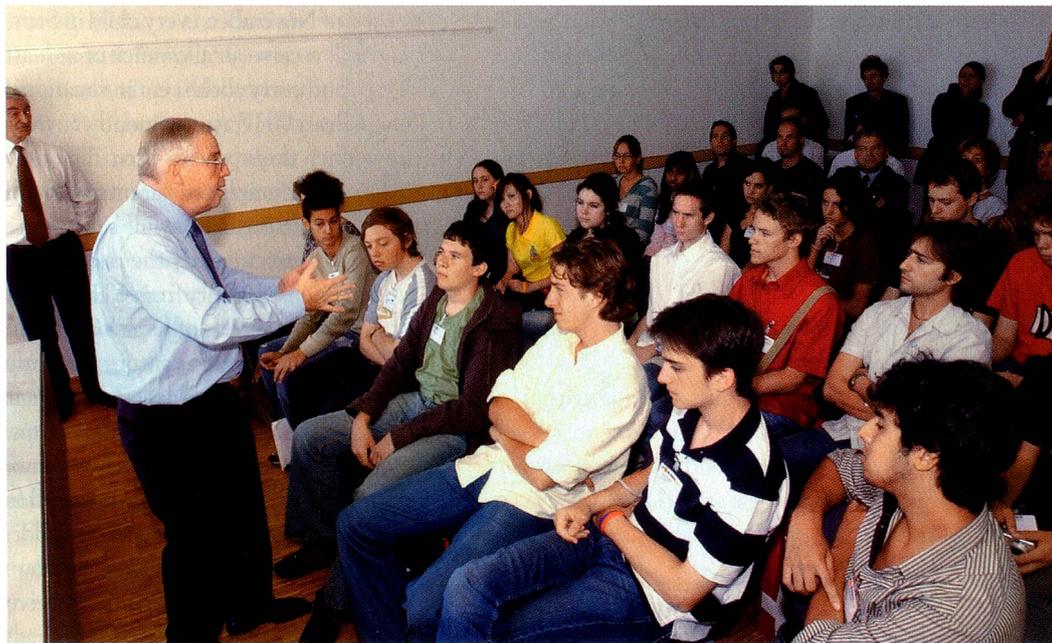
Basel and the surrounding area are one of the best examples of fruitful cooperation between business and culture in Switzerland. Participants at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad were given an opportunity to witness this for themselves during organised visits to major

the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) gathered in Basel Town Hall to discuss current issues on all aspects of the Fifth Switzerland, including the introduction of electronic ballots (e-voting) for elections and referenda. Federal Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz gave a progress report on developments at the national level. She confirmed that pilot projects were working well and that e-voting could therefore be introduced. The CSA considers e-voting a valuable tool for encouraging Swiss abroad to become politically active, and has therefore lobbied vigorously for the rapid introduction of this alternative method for

more Swiss abroad involved in the political debate and encourages them to run for a seat in the Federal Parliament.

In the hope of preserving the rights – including free movement of persons – acquired through bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union, the CSA reiterated its support for a CHF 1 billion cohesion contribution by Switzerland to the ten new EU Member States, and recommended voting in favour of the federal law on cooperation with eastern European countries on 26 November. The Council approved the law by 70 votes to 2.

The CSA had a lively debate about solidarity and asylum ahead of the 24 September referendum on the new Foreigners’ Law and amendments to asylum legislation. Several Council members expressed their unease about the moves, emphasising Switzerland’s humanitarian traditions and the loss of image the country may suffer in the rest of the world if it introduced legislation which some critics consider inhuman. After a heated debate, the Council eventually voted in favour of both laws by 38 to 26. *The 85th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in Geneva on 17–19 August 2007. The topic for debate will be the humanitarian role of Switzerland.*



Federal Councillor Blocher discussing politics with young Swiss abroad.

reminded listeners that writer and Switzerland critic Max Frisch once said his passport was his only link with his homeland, although Blocher doubted that this was generally the case for the Swiss abroad. He then provided information on the new Asylum Law, which will be put to the vote on 24 September. After his address, Blocher answered questions from the audience and spoke out strongly against closing more consu-

panies in Basel, including Novartis, Roche and Syngenta, as well as the cultural venues that help give the city its international repute: the Beyeler Foundation, Jean Tinguely Museum, Schaulager, Kunstmuseum, the Antiquities Museum and the Museum of Ethnology.

Council of the Swiss Abroad

The day before the Congress, approximately 100 members of

casting ballots in elections and referenda. According to the CSA, the aim should be to turn e-voting into reality by 2010.

With just over a year to go before the next general elections in October 2007, the CSA agreed an election manifesto based on five pillars: politics, mobility, education, Switzerland’s international presence, and maintaining contact with one’s homeland. On the political front, the CSA would like

Swiss schools abroad invited to Zurich: Key factors in producing Swiss quality

From 4 to 6 July, the presidents and headmasters of the 16 Swiss schools abroad gathered in Zurich for their annual meeting in Switzerland aimed at gathering information and exchanging experiences.



The main topics of this year's conference were financial management, multilingual education in a multicultural environment, educational benchmarking, a cohesive concept for presenting education and training in Switzerland, as well as comparing best practices in the business and educational sphere.

On 4 July, the representatives of the Swiss schools met delegates from the worlds of politics, business and the media. For this official rendez-vous, the canton of Zurich provided the use of its council chambers. Zurich is the patron canton of the Swiss schools in Madrid (Spain), Catania (Italy), Cuernavaca (Mexico) and Accra (Ghana).

Every year, the Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA) invites the 16 state-recognised and -sponsored Swiss schools abroad to send delegates to a seminar with the following objectives:

- To exchange information and experiences
- To define their position on relevant political, educational and business developments in Switzerland
- To maximise the synergy effects between the different schools
- To encourage a cohesive approach to the presentation of schools in Switzerland

The 16 Swiss schools abroad have a total of 6500 pupils and are operated as private, non-profit institutions that receive federal aid to ensure that they provide high-quality education and retain Swiss characteristics. These schools make a major contribution towards positive assessments of our country. They have an excellent reputation and offer top-level teaching and, as such, play a decisive role in shaping the image of Swiss quality.

The Swiss schools are not only open to Swiss children abroad, but are also very popular with children from the host countries. This casts Switzerland in a favourable light and creates a network of contacts that is of lasting benefit to Switzerland and the Swiss economy. *For further information, contact: The Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad*

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Head for Switzerland this winter

Welcome to the wonderful holiday paradise of Switzerland. We invite you to come and experience Switzerland's spectacular mountain panoramas, fabulous snow-covered forests, and unique ski resorts.

The OSA Youth Service offers a wealth of holiday options and study opportunities in Switzerland. We look forward to seeing you soon.

New Year ski camp in Sedrun (GR) 27.12.2006 – 5.1.2007

This popular ski resort in the Grisons mountains is a must for young Swiss abroad, or indeed anyone who wants to celebrate New Year in the snow. The camp already has cult status, so be there or miss out!

Language course in Berne 8.1. – 19.1.2007

Four language lessons in the morning, group outings in the afternoon and cordial host families. What more do you

need to learn one of the languages of Switzerland?

Winter sports week in Wengen (BE)

3.3.7 – 10.3.2007

(Minimum age: 18)

Some fans of this camp return year after year, and newcomers are always welcome. It's a week-long chance to sample every winter sport imaginable and make friends with Swiss from around the globe.

Easter sports camp in Fiesch (VS)

7.4. – 14.4.2007

The Valais always has plenty of wonderful snow at Easter. So come and enjoy winter sports in the spring sunshine by day and convivial evenings with the rest of the group at night.

Education

Gain a very personal insight into education in Switzerland. Our host families look forward to welcoming you, while your general travel pass gives you the freedom to explore Switzerland on your own.

*Further information on the packages can be obtained online at www.aso.ch or by ordering the new prospectus from Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Youth Service
Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3006 Berne
Tel.: +41 (0)31 356 6100
youth@aso.ch*

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad Winter sport adventures for 8- to 14-year-olds

We still have a few places left at our winter sport camps.

So if you want your children to take part, register them now.

Hasliberg (Bernese Oberland) Saturday 10 February 2007 to Saturday 17 February 2007

Number of participants: 24
Age: 8–14
Cost: CHF 640.–
Ski hire: CHF 120.–
Snowboard hire: CHF 125.–

Easter sport camp in Fiesch (Valais) together with the OSA Youth Service

**Saturday 7 April 2007 to
Saturday 14 April 2007**

Number of participants: 24
Age: 12–14
Cost: CHF 640.–
Ski hire: CHF 20.–/day
Snowboard hire: CHF 20.–/day

A reduction in costs may be granted by the Foundation fund on application.

Programme

Ski and snowboard, enjoy other winter sports like tobogganing and ice skating, or simply have a ball with other young Swiss abroad from around the globe.

Staff

Experienced teams of camp leaders from the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad.

Rendezvous

Zurich Airport. Parents are responsible for the organisation and cost of the outward journey to Zurich Airport on the first day and the return journey on the last day.

Further information and application forms for these camps are available at www.aso.ch ("Youth", "Holiday camps for 8- to 14-year-olds", "Program Winter") or from: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

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