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Please register any change of address, telephone number or e-mail address, etc. in good time with the representation responsible for you: www.eda.admin.ch (Representations).

Your cooperation will prevent time-consuming searches, and registering these changes is the only way to ensure you automatically receive your voting documents (provided you are registered with a Swiss electoral commune) and "Swiss Review" at your new address. Please do not send notification of a change of address to the Service for the Swiss Abroad or the editorial department of "Swiss Review" in Berne.

Voting papers and documents

Do you receive your voting documents only shortly before the vote takes place and do you not have time to study them? Would you prefer to receive your voting documents in another language?

The timescales and procedures concerning the sending of documents are governed by law. The electoral communes are obliged to send voting documentation to Swiss citizens living abroad five weeks before the day of the vote. The timescale is considerably shorter for National Council elections, at ten days. The speed and reliability of the delivery cannot be predicted as the communes have no influence over the organisation and procedures of foreign postal services.

The Federal Chancellery publishes the voting papers and the commentary by the Federal Council not just in paper format but also on the Internet at

www.admin.ch (Political business – Elections and popular votes; available in German, French and Italian) from the sixth week leading up to the day of the vote. You can use this facility to save time and make up your mind early so that you can complete and return the ballot paper as soon as it arrives. This also gives you the opportunity

to study the voting documents in another language.

Expansion of the Service for the Swiss Abroad website / new bulletins

Would you like to know where to apply for a new Swiss pass-

port? Do you have questions concerning social insurance or the Swiss citizenship of your children?

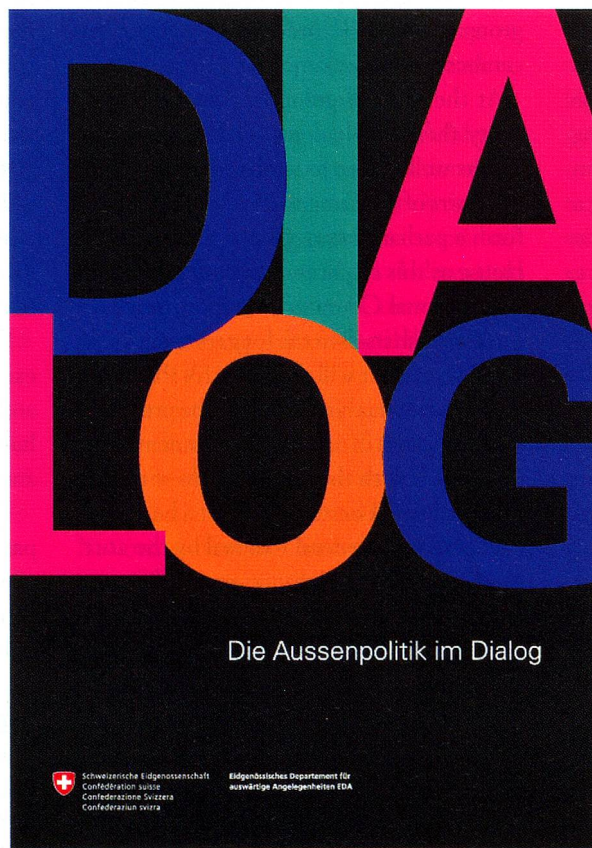
The Service for the Swiss Abroad has extended the range of information on its website and has combined the most frequently asked questions in a bulletin entitled "Frequently asked questions". If you have recently moved abroad, the new "Bulletin for persons who have recently moved abroad" may prove a useful rough guide (available in German, French and Italian). Comprehensive information on all issues affecting the Swiss abroad is contained in the popular document "Advice for Swiss citizens living abroad" (available in German, French and Italian).

www.eda.admin.ch (Documentation – Publications – Travelling and living abroad)

Electronic voting for Swiss people living abroad – a look at the past and the future

On 1 June 2008, Swiss citizens abroad were able to vote electronically for the first time in the Canton of Neuchâtel. The Canton of Zurich is planning to allow the Swiss abroad to vote electronically in 13 communes in 2009.

57 of 155 registered Swiss citizens abroad voted electronically in the Canton of Neuchâtel on 1 June 2008. The vote was held without any problems. For reasons to do with the reliability of electronic services, only Swiss citizens living in an EU state or a country that has signed the Wassenaar Arrangement can currently vote electronically.



Dialogue on foreign policy

Do you understand the key aspects of Swiss foreign policy? Would you like to get to grips with this complex issue?

The "Dialogue" brochure launched by Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey explains how Swiss foreign policy works and where its emphasis lies using the examples of "The neutrality of Switzerland", "The Swiss embassies and consulates", "Peace policy", "Switzerland and the international organisations", "Switzerland's policy on Europe" and "Development cooperation".

The "Dialogue" brochure can be downloaded in German, French and Italian from the DFA website at www.eda.admin.ch (Documentation – Publikationen – Die Aussenpolitik im Dialog) or ordered from the following address: Information EDA, Bundeshaus West, CH-3003 Berne



However, 90% of Swiss people presently living abroad and entered in a Swiss electoral register are resident in one of these countries. The following countries have signed the Wassenaar Arrangement: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK and the USA.

The Canton of Zurich is currently putting in place the structures needed to allow the Swiss citizens abroad registered in 13 Zurich communes to vote electronically in 2009. The communes concerned are Bertschikon, Bülach, Schlieren, Mettmenstetten, Kleinandelfingen, Boppelsen, Bubikon, Thalwil, Männedorf, Fehraltorf and Maur as well as the Altstadt district of Winterthur and districts 1 and 2 of the city of Zurich. Swiss citizens living in an EU state or a country that has signed the Wassenaar Arrangement will be entitled to vote this way.

Protection against firearms violence

A lobbying association made up of various parties and organisations launched the Swiss popular initiative "Für den Schutz vor Waffengewalt" (Protection against firearms violence) in September 2007.

The initiative aims to increase safety, reduce the potential of violence and prevent suicides.

Anyone wanting to purchase, own, carry or use firearms and ammunition would have to provide evidence of the need to do so and possess the necessary capabilities. Military weapons would no longer be kept at home but instead stored in secure army premises. Weapons surplus to requirements, which are kept at home, would be collected in. All other weapons would be registered, which would help towards the prevention and prosecution of crime. The initiative aims to add an Article 118a to the Swiss Constitution of 18 April 1999 for this purpose.

More information on the issue can be found on the website of the committee behind the initiative at www.schutz-vor-waffengewalt.ch. The "Protection against firearms violence" initiative can be signed until 4 March 2009.

Less taxation for housing savings

The "Swiss society for the promotion of saving for housing" submitted a Swiss popular initiative in March 2007 entitled "für ein steuerlich begünstigtes Bausparen zum Erwerb von selbst genutztem Wohneigentum und zur Finanzierung von baulichen Energiespar- und Umweltschutzmassnahmen" (tax benefits for saving to purchase a residential property for personal use and to finance energy-saving and environmentally-friendly construction measures), also known as the "Bauspar-Initiative" (housing savings initiative). It originates from the Canton of Basel-Landschaft, which has been using a system like this for over 15 years.

The initiative is seeking a change to Article 129 of the Swiss Constitution. This Article governs the harmonisation of direct taxes from the federal government, cantons and communes, and the initiative would add sub-paragraphs a) and b). Sub-paragraph a) would govern the taxation of home loan and savings deposits and sub-paragraph b) the taxation of premiums on home loan and savings deposits.

The initiative would enable all cantons to voluntarily introduce two forms of housing savings schemes with tax benefits. This would allow the as yet unknown "energy-saving housing savings scheme" to be added to the already established housing savings scheme. The housing savings scheme for the purchase of residential property should make it easier for people renting to buy their own home. The energy-saving housing savings scheme should pro-

vide home owners with an incentive to make their property energy-efficient (e.g. upgrading cladding, installing energy-efficient heating systems and switching to technologies using renewable energy).

The introduction of the new sub-paragraph a) would also see a new section 8 added to Article 197 of the transitional provisions of the Swiss Constitution. The new transitional provisions would enable the cantons to adopt their cantonal provisions directly based on Article 129 a) and b) of the Swiss Constitution. This would apply until the amended provisions enter into force as definitive federal law.

More information on this issue can be found on the website of the committee behind the initiative at www.bausparen.ch. The housing savings initiative can be signed until 27 September 2008.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following initiative has been launched since the last issue:

■ "Gegen neue Kampfflugzeuge" (Against new fighter planes), until 10 December 2009

Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html

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