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A(H1N1) influenza: precautions remain important

A(H1N1) influenza, first discovered at the end of April 2009, is currently continuing to spread, principally in the Americas and the southern hemisphere. However, when the WHO declared Phase 6, it stressed that the spread of the A(H1N1) influenza was not an indication of the threat posed by the virus or the severity of the illness.

According to the WHO, the epidemic will spread further, and it is highly possible that the virus will mutate and become more dangerous. However, it is currently assumed that not everyone who becomes infected will become ill and that most of those infected will only have mild symptoms.

This edition went to press on 22 June 2009. To enable you to receive information quickly in the event of an emergency, supply the Swiss representation responsible for you with your e-mail address and mobile telephone number via its website (www.eda.admin.ch – Representations).

The A(H1N1) influenza has once again clearly shown that it is often too late for preparations in the event of the outbreak of an epidemic. A preventive private purchase of Tamiflu® and breathing masks was no longer possible in Mexico, or in many other countries, after the acute risk of a pandemic had been established.

The pandemic alert is also a warning to the international community. Despite the current uncertainty about the new virus, many countries, who previously neglected to make provisions for a pandemic, are stepping up their preparatory mea-

asures. However, not all countries are in a position to do this, and individual responsibility is required even in countries with good pandemic provisions.

Everyone can help to protect themselves with the right conduct and by taking a few precautionary measures. In cooperation with the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the FDFA has drawn up recommendations on personal pandemic precautions. You will find these recommendations and lots of other useful information on the risk of pandemics on the FOPH website www.pandemia.ch (Prävention und Behandlung – Kranke Schweizerinnen und Schweizer im Ausland). The information is available in German, French and Italian.

ANDREAS WORMSER, FDFA, POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION VI,
SWISS ABROAD

Biometric passport

On 17 May, the Swiss people approved the proposal for the introduction of electronically stored biometric data in the Swiss passport and in travel documents for foreign nationals. The new passport will be introduced on 1 March 2010.

The federal decree does not include an obligation to introduce an identity card (ID) with electronically stored data in addition to the passport. The ID will continue to be issued in its current form, without a chip, until further notice. The Federal Council will decide at a later date whether there will be a Swiss ID card with a data chip. Any decision will also have to take international developments into account.

Further information is available in German, French and Italian at www.schweizerpass.ch and will also be published in “Swiss Review” at a later date.

Electronic voting: soon to be made available to Swiss voters abroad in the cantons of Geneva and Basel-City

The cantons of Geneva, Neuchâtel and Zurich have been carrying out trials with electronic voting for federal referenda since 2004.

The aim is to gradually extend these trials to include Swiss voters abroad. The Canton of Neuchâtel began doing this in 2007. At the end of 2009, Swiss citizens abroad entitled to vote in the cantons of Geneva and Basel-City will now also be able to use electronic voting if they live in a Member State of the European Union or of the Wassenaar Arrangement* on Dual-Use Goods. This amounts to 9 out of 10 Swiss abroad with voting entitlement in these cantons.

This extension of electronic voting has been made possible thanks to the technical hosting of Swiss voters abroad from the Canton of Basel-City on the Geneva system, which required extensive and precise agreements and technical provisions. Geneva would like to gradually enable Swiss abroad from other cantons to use electronic voting from 2010. Intensive negotia-

Private purchase of Tamiflu®

25% of the population may become ill during a pandemic outbreak, according to the estimations of national and international health authorities. Although a vaccination is the most effective protection against a pandemic virus, the vaccine required is only available around 4 to 6 months after the outbreak of the pandemic. It takes this long for the new virus to be isolated and characterised and for the vaccine to be produced. Wealthier nations should have sufficient vaccines against the A(H1N1) virus by this autumn.

Should a person still become ill with the A(H1N1) influenza, the antiviral drug Tamiflu® is the most important medication. It can mitigate the symptoms of the illness, reduce its duration and prevent serious complications or even death in some cases. However, Tamiflu® can only be taken under medical supervision due to the risk of side-effects and the build-up of resistance.

If the country you are in has Tamiflu® supplies for 25% of the population, it is not necessary to purchase it privately. Private precautionary purchase of the medication is advisable in all other countries. Please be aware that counterfeit Tamiflu® is also being sold, particularly over the Internet. For information on the distinctive characteristics of original Tamiflu®, visit:

www.roche.com/de/med_mbtamiflu05d.pdf (German)

www.roche.com/tamiflu_factsheet.pdf (English).



Electronic "Swiss Review"

14,285 people had registered to receive the electronic version of "Swiss Review" by the time of going to press.

They appreciate the fast delivery, the option of reading "Swiss Review" in the language of their choice and being able to make

an active contribution towards reducing costs and protecting the environment. If you too would like to receive the link to the latest edition of "Swiss Review" by e-mail and to read it online, you can register at www.swissabroad.ch.

Simple step-by-step instructions can be found at www.swissabroad.ch or in the February edition of "Swiss Review" (No. 1/09).

At www.swissabroad.ch you can also register to receive information by e-mail from your representation (embassy or consulate general) on topics such as culture and the economy, etc.

For security reasons, your personal information will be compared with the registration data that you provided when you registered with your Swiss representation. Therefore, please pay attention to the following points when registering and use an official document, such as your Swiss passport, identity card or birth certificate, to assist you when entering information. Otherwise, you will receive a message stating that the system cannot match the data you have entered.

■ Do not confuse the fields "last name" and "first name" or "last name" and "maiden name".

■ Only use double-barrel names (Müller Meier or Müller-Meier) if these are the names entered in official documents.

■ Pay attention to the entry format for the date of birth (day/month/year), as the date is written differently in some countries.

■ Pay attention to the use of the "Umlaut"-use "ä" or "ae", but not "äe" or other variations.

■ Do not use titles in the name field. Titles are not registered in the database.

■ Check your entries are correct and do not contain any typing errors before you send off the registration.

■ Do not copy the e-mail address into the second entry field, but instead enter it again. This prevents typing errors from being copied.

A number of smaller communes in Switzerland have merged, automatically changing

your place of origin. A simple Internet search (e.g. at www.wikipedia.org), entering the name of the commune, will usually provide you with additional information and the name of the "new" commune.

One person per family is indicated as head of the household in the database. All official statements are sent to this person in written and electronic form. This prevents publications from being sent to your family several times, putting excess strain on the server. Please therefore only register the data of the person to whom the paper version of "Swiss Review" has been addressed up to now.

tions on this issue are currently being held between Geneva and other interested cantons.

You will receive information on registration procedures for the cantons of Geneva and Basel-City at a later date in "Swiss Review".

**The following countries have signed the Wassenaar Arrangement: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK and USA.*

HANS-URS WILL, FEDERAL CHANCELLERY,
HEAD OF THE POLITICAL RIGHTS SECTION

Travel to the USA

From 1 July 2009, the USA will only accept the current provisional Swiss passport, without a data chip, if accompanied by a visa.

This regulation applies to all travellers with provisional passports from all countries which, like Switzerland, are participating in the USA's Visa Waiver Program. For visa-free travel into and within the USA, the USA will only continue to accept the biometric passport (passport with a data chip) and machine-readable passports issued before 26 October 2006. Further in-

formation on Swiss passports and travel to the USA can be found at www.schweizerpass.ch or, alternatively, you can contact your nearest US embassy.

Voting rights: registration and renewal of entries

If you are over 18, you are entitled to take part in federal referenda and National Council elections.

You must re-confirm your wish to participate within four years of your initial registration. If you fail to do so, you will be deleted from the electoral roll. However, you can re-register at any time. Further information on this matter and the relevant forms can be obtained from the representations or found at www.eda.admin.ch (Documentation – Publications – Swiss Abroad).

The "Registering to vote as a Swiss Abroad" registration form should be completed and returned to the Swiss representation (embassy or consulate general) where you are registered. Registrations must be received by the polling commune at least six weeks before the next vote or election to ensure you can be entered in the electoral roll and will receive your voting documents in good time. The next Swiss federal referenda are scheduled to take place on the following dates: 27.9.2009, 29.11.2009.



The “Renewing your registration to vote” form should be completed and returned directly to your polling commune in Switzerland.

Please send the forms by post and not by e-mail. Your original signature is required on the document. Please do not send forms to the Service for the Swiss Abroad. We cannot process them for technical reasons.

Voting made easy!

The FDFA's Service for the Swiss Abroad is frequently asked how the ballot papers should be returned to the polling commune, why the envelopes are so large or why no separate envelope is enclosed for the ballot papers.

The voting procedures are governed by cantonal legislation, and there are 26 different regulations. It is therefore not possible for us to explain the individual procedures here, but please bear in mind the following points when you next receive voting documents and want to vote.

Please read the instructions from your polling commune carefully (e.g. on a separate sheet or on the back of the delivery envelope). This will help ensure that your vote counts.

Voting documents

Your polling commune will send you the voting documents in the official language you specified (German, French, Italian) before the day of the election or vote. These essentially include:

- Federal Council information on the individual ballot proposals,
- a blank envelope from the polling commune for the ballot papers, if this is provided for by cantonal legislation,
- possibly a separate reply envelope (the delivery envelope can be used as a reply envelope in many cantons),
- the ballot papers for the individual proposals.

Return delivery

The following voting procedures exist, among others:

- You have received a blank ballot envelope from your polling commune. Put the ballot papers inside this envelope. Seal and return it to your polling commune in the official reply envelope;
- You have not received a separate envelope for your ballot papers from your polling commune. In this case, put your ballot card together with your voting identification open inside the reply envelope, seal it and return it to your polling commune;
- If the delivery envelope is also your voting entitlement identification, it must be signed before it is returned;

- If the delivery envelope is not valid as voting identification, you will receive separate voting identification from your polling commune. Please put the signed voting identification inside the reply envelope in such a way that the recipient's address is visible through the window.

For logistical reasons, the communes use the same envelopes for citizens abroad as for citizens in Switzerland. The envelopes must be large enough to contain the voting documents for proposals at cantonal and communal level as well as for federal referenda for Swiss citizens in Switzerland. The lists are particularly long in densely populated cantons at National Council and Council of States elections every four years. Individual modification of the envelopes for Swiss citizens abroad is unfortunately not possible in view of global postal tariffs. However, according to the Federal Chancellery, simply folding the ballot paper and envelope in half will not affect its validity.

Please contact your polling commune directly with any further questions concerning the voting procedure.

If you move home, please immediately inform the Swiss representation (embassy or consulate general) where you are registered of your change of address: www.eda.admin.ch (Representations).

NEW POPULAR INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA

By the time of going to press, the following new popular initiatives had been launched since the last edition:

- “Für den öffentlichen Verkehr” (In favour of public transport), initiative committee: Verkehrsclub der Schweiz VCS, www.verkehrsclub.ch, signing deadline: 17.9.2010
- “Verteidigen wir die Schweiz! Das Bankgeheimnis muss in die Bundesverfassung” (Let us defend Switzerland! Banking confidentiality must be enshrined in the Federal Constitution), initiative committee: Lega dei Ticinesi, www.legaticinesi.ch, signing deadline: 1.10.2010
- “Schutz vor Passivrauchen” (Protection against passive smoking), initiative committee: Lungenliga Schweiz, www.lung.ch, signing deadline: 19.11.2010
- “68 Milliarden für die soziale Sicherheit” (68 billion for social security), initiative committee: Künstler Partei Schweiz, www.kuenstlerpartei.ch, signing deadline: 26.11.2010

At www.bk.admin.ch/aktuell/abstimmung you will find a list of pending referenda and popular initiatives and the corresponding signature forms if available. Please complete, sign and send the forms directly to the relevant committee which is responsible for the authentication of your signature.

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