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88TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD FROM 20 TO 22 AUGUST 2010 AT OLMA IN ST. GALLEN


The world-famous St. Gallen Abbey Library

Theme - political representation of the Swiss abroad

No-one is indifferent to the issue of political representation for the Swiss abroad. Should our compatriots abroad be directly represented in Parliament and, if so, should a 27th Swiss canton be created for them? Some politicians believe it should, while others see it as bringing the very foundations of our system into question.

Is it not the role of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) to advocate and defend the political interests of the 700,000 Swiss expatriates around the world in the best way possible? On what is its legitimacy based? Is the system of indirect representation currently provided by the Council of the Swiss Abroad adequate, or does it need to be improved? Is it not astonishing that the Swiss abroad pay no taxes in Switzerland yet have the right to vote at federal level, whereas lots of foreigners in Switzerland who participate in the life of the country and pay their taxes do not enjoy this right? Should the right to political participation and representation be based on the notion of

territoriality, nationality or both? What is the situation internationally? How have other countries resolved the issue of political participation by their diaspora?

Two years ago, the debate on direct representation of the Swiss abroad in Parliament was reignited when two parliamentary proposals were submitted. OSA took the opportunity to set up a study group made up of public figures from all walks of life, including politics. This project also enabled a re-evaluation of the issue of the legitimacy of OSA and

its structures. The 2009 OSA Congress focussed on the question of whether the Swiss abroad represented an asset for Switzerland. In 2010, the 88th Congress will examine the best way of capitalising on this asset.

Congress participants will be invited to voice their opinions and express their needs and expectations. Because it is up to the Swiss abroad to say what kind of political representation and recognition they expect from their government.

88TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD: 20 TO 22 AUGUST 2010, OLMA MESSE ST. GALLEN

I am interested in the next Congress of the Swiss Abroad. In spring 2010, please send me the registration documents for the 88th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (20 to 22 August 2010 in St. Gallen) to the following address:

Surname/first name: _____

Address: _____

City/postcode/country: _____

E-mail: _____

Please write clearly in block capitals and return the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Communications Department, Congress Organisation, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne. To save on postage and time, you can also contact us directly by e-mail: communication@aso.ch. The latest information on the forthcoming congress will also appear regularly at www.aso.ch/de/angebote/auslandschweizer-kongress. It is worth visiting our website from time to time.



OSA ADVICE

QUESTION:

I am a Swiss abroad residing in Malta and I would like to have a biometric passport. Which authority should I apply to?

ANSWER:

From 1 March 2010, all passports issued will be biometric. For the Swiss abroad, the Swiss representation (embassy or consulate) where they are registered is responsible for issuing identity documents. A distinction has to be made between passport applications and the recording of biometric data.

An application for the issue of a passport must always be made to the representation where the Swiss abroad is registered. In the case of Swiss citizens residing in Malta, this is the Swiss embassy in Rome. This can be done by telephone, online or in person.

For the recording of biometric data, persons registered abroad can contact the representation responsible for them, any other Swiss representation abroad or, in special cases, an issuing authority of a Swiss canton, provided the representation responsible for them and the cantonal authority have given their consent beforehand. This means that, for this step, Swiss citizens in Malta do not necessarily have to contact the Swiss embassy in Rome. However, it is important that they inform the representation responsible for them of where they intend to have their biometric data recorded so that the data required to issue a passport can be transferred from one authority to the other. Applicants must make an appointment to present themselves in person at the chosen authority for the recording of biometric data with the documents required by the authority concerned.

In cases of serious physical or psychological disability, the competent authority can waive the requirement for the applicant to present himself/herself in person provided his/her identity can be definitively confirmed in another way and the data required can be obtained by another means. In such cases, applicants must firstly contact the Swiss representation where they are registered.

For further information on the biometric passport, visit:

www.schweizerpass.ch
www.passeportsuisse.ch
www.passaportosvizzero.ch

For further information on the procedure, please contact the Swiss representation responsible for you: www.eda.admin.ch/eda/fr/home/repr.html.

OSA's Legal Department provides general information on Swiss law in areas which specifically concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

SARAH MASTANTUONI
 HEAD OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT

A new obstacle for future Swiss students from abroad

For more than 40 years, University Preparatory Courses for Studies at Swiss Universities, which are held in Fribourg, have given holders of foreign qualifications the opportunity to take higher education courses in Switzerland. School-leaving qualifications obtained abroad are not automatically recognised. In order to enter university-level education, would-be students are therefore required to pass the "Fribourg exam". Each year, the establishment welcomes between 500 and 600 young people from 60 to 80 different countries. Swiss abroad account for 15% to 20% of these students.

Federal government and the eight university cantons, which have to date supported the preparatory courses financially

through a foundation, have now decided to stop their funding from 2012. This announcement obviously compromises the pursuit of activities in the medium term.

The reasons given to justify this decision are not very convincing. According to the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER), the preparatory courses no longer meet current requirements. It is argued that, thanks to the Bologna agreements, universities today primarily receive students already holding a bachelor's degree who are coming to Switzerland to take a master's course.

Like Manfred Zimmermann, Director of the University Preparatory Courses for Studies at Swiss Universities, various political figures have expressed their regret at this decision, which they deem absurd. It effectively goes against the mobility of students advocated by the Bologna process. What is worse, this measure is discriminatory because it clearly puts young people from developing countries, including many young Swiss abroad, at a disadvantage. While Switzerland is endeavouring to enhance its image abroad and open its borders with Europe, access to this crucial gateway for future students from other countries is being jeopardised. It is vital that all Swiss abroad have the opportunity to study in their home country, which is one of the main concerns of the Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS). If the preparatory courses are abandoned, this will present another obstacle, limiting access to higher education for young Swiss abroad to an even greater degree.

In the meantime, the courses are to be maintained until 2011. A satisfactory solution needs to be found by then to enable the continuation of the courses. Various options are emerging, in particular one

OFFERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 AND ABOVE

The holiday and educational offers of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are aimed at young Swiss people abroad aged 15 and over. Information on OSA's offers for young people can be obtained from the **OSA Youth Service**:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 00
youth@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.

CAMPS FOR CHILDREN AGED 8 TO 14

The camps for young Swiss people abroad aged 8 to 14 are organised by the **Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)**. Information on these camps can be obtained from FYSA:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 16
sjas@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.

from the Association of Universities in French-Speaking Switzerland (Conférence des universités de Suisse occidentale). An appeal has also been made to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation on this matter.

Your summer in Switzerland

Holidays in Switzerland – OSA is offering young people no end of variety, entertainment, adventure and fun this summer at its holiday camps in the Engadine. OSA also enables young Swiss abroad to put together their own interesting and informative educational holidays. There is something for everyone.

OSA is expecting around 120 young people this year at the summer camps in Grisons alone. We organise unforgettable activity holidays with participants from more than 30 countries. We offer the opportunity to improve at certain sports or to learn new ones. We also offer plenty of alternatives at our camps for those who are less sporty, with workshops on creative, electronic and musical activities. Young Swiss abroad have fun getting to know others of the same age.

Action 72 Hours – a community-interest project

Hundreds of youth organisations will take part in an event to be held across Switzerland this autumn. In a race against the clock, a community-interest project must be completed within 72 hours. OSA is looking for motivated, spontaneous and innovative young Swiss from abroad who are eager to take part. Information at: www.aso.ch (Offers).

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Our services:

- Legal Department
- Youth Service
- Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS)
- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
- Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Phone +41 31 356 6100, Fax +41 31 356 6101, info@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

Unforgettable winter camp

Over the 2009/2010 New Year period, around 60 young Swiss from abroad attended winter camps organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (SJAS) in Wildhaus (St.Gallen) and Saas Grund (Valais).

Lauren Fabey (14), from California, describes her visit to Switzerland:

During winter break I had the opportunity to attend an amazing camp in Wildhaus, Switzerland. There I had loads of fun and made lots of friends from around the world. I've never been away from my family that long, but it was worth it. Everyday started

off waking up and having a wonderful breakfast. We would then head to our rooms and get ready and pack. Next we would walk down to the chairlift and off we'd go. We split off into groups and either learned to ski or snowboard. We would then head back down later in the afternoon. Then we had our free time where we could do what we wanted. Dinner was always so yummy, we had the best food! Every night we did a different activity, like walking around with torches, and going ice-skating. My favorite night was New Year's Eve. We walked a little bit and settled down near a fire pit, we then predicted our future and waited for the fireworks to begin! It was so beautiful. Some days we didn't go to the slopes, and we had fun either ice-skating or swimming, or playing outside. It was so nice to meet other kids from different places around the world, just like you. We learned about the places other people came from and shared about ourselves, where we lived, and other interesting facts. This camp was so great, it allowed me to have fun, learn, and meet new and inspiring people, I think it's a great opportunity for many people, and if you get the chance you should go. I miss everyone from Wildhaus, and I hope to see them again.

Learning a language made easy

OSA's range of offers extends far beyond summer camps. Young Swiss abroad can learn German or French on two-week language courses. Our hospitable host

families welcome motivated young people and give them the opportunity to gain an insight into everyday Swiss life.

We also advise young Swiss abroad on educational matters and, finally, we encourage them not to miss out on the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. This traditional seminar will take place in St.Gallen and will focus on the topic of tourism.

Information on the offers mentioned is available from:

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Youth Service
Tel.: +41 (0)31 356 61 00
youth@aso.ch
www.aso.ch*

