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www.swisscommunity.org: chat – search – find

What is OSA's role in the age of electronic communication platforms? We are answering this question with a global network for the Swiss abroad or, to put it another way, a global virtual community for all Swiss citizens living outside Switzerland.

SwissCommunity was set up by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and is an Internet platform for our fellow citizens outside Switzerland. It is a bit like Facebook, Xing or Linked-In, yet different at the same time. The new Swiss abroad club will be an exclusive communication platform specifically tailored to the requirements of Swiss people living abroad. SwissCommunity primarily aims to facilitate contact between the Swiss abroad themselves and with Switzerland. At the same time, www.swisscommunity.org also intends to promote communication between OSA and the communities of Swiss abroad.

The key feature will be an online platform enabling targeted contact between Swiss people abroad and interested parties and institutions in Switzerland. We are aiming, for example, to facilitate contact between the Swiss abroad and their cantons of origin.

Swiss abroad planning to visit their old homeland can obtain tourist information,

tips and offers at www.swisscommunity.org. Swiss associations and institutions abroad can use the new platform and SwissCommunity to provide information on events and to advertise for members. And, for example, people from Berne living abroad who want to exchange experiences with other people from Berne abroad will also have the opportunity to do so at www.swisscommunity.org. We also hope the new network will carry information on OSA's services and its partners' offers to a wider audience.

The general aim with www.swisscommunity.org is to enhance and step up communication across all national borders.

www.swisscommunity.org offers an environment for exchanging useful addresses and advice, meeting new people and taking advantage of special offers. Anyone looking to spend their free time with other people or establish social contacts can do so via SwissCommunity – one Swiss abroad to another. An events calendar will provide information

on events of particular interest to Swiss abroad, such as the cultural programme of the Swiss embassy in London, fondue evenings in New York or networking cocktail parties in Shanghai. Members can also enter their own events and invite their contacts to them.

OSA's online community is geared entirely to the needs of Swiss people living outside Switzerland, regardless of whether they have recently left home or have been living abroad for many years. www.swisscommunity.org is a comprehensive link to Switzerland and all Swiss citizens on all continents – at the click of a mouse and free of charge. The new platform is also useful for people returning to Switzerland who wish to keep in touch with their friends from all over the world.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad has created the new Internet platform in cooperation with its partners swissinfo, Switzerland Tourism, Mediaparx and ManRey.

"Switzerland needs swissinfo"

Filippo Lombardi, a journalist from Ticino and member of the Council of States, believes swissinfo must be maintained at all costs. He also reminds the Federal Council of its legal obligations and the importance of international information to Switzerland. Interview by Heinz Eckert

"Swiss Review": swissinfo once again finds itself under threat. Can Switzerland with its focus on globalisation afford to do without an international media presence?

Filippo Lombardi: In my opinion, absolutely not! It would be a huge mistake to abandon this privileged media site, especially right now at a time of growing international political and media pressure on Switzerland.

What are swissinfo's main strengths?

As a journalist, I am impressed by the selection, organisation and presentation of the issues, which are, of course, different for an international readership than for a domestic one. I also believe the site's editorial independence sets the standard internationally. We can be proud that we have such a highly regarded "voice of Switzerland" which is not a government mouthpiece. Finally, the fact that swissinfo appears in nine languages is almost unique worldwide and this feature should most definitely be retained. Just Russian is missing in my view.

How important is swissinfo to Switzerland's image abroad?

It is vital. Talking to family and friends abroad, it has become increasingly clear to me that they really are dependent on swissinfo for keeping their links with Switzerland alive. swissinfo explains Switzerland and its political system to the international community, including foreign journalists. It was crucial in the referendum on minarets and also with regard to banking confidentiality and the Swiss financial centre.

Would it not be sufficient to just produce swissinfo in the Swiss national languages and in English?

Absolutely not! As I said, I'd like to see Russian added too. I fail to understand

why we are talking about a reduction in a country like Switzerland where we are well aware that translation is vital to ensuring good communication and cohesion!

Don't organisations such as Pro Helvetia, Economiesuisse, Osec and Presence Switzerland all have an interest in retaining swissinfo and supporting it?

Yes, they all need swissinfo. However, cooperation needs to be stepped up and improved in Switzerland's interests.

The SRG is faced with financial problems and must make savings. Where do you see potential to do so?

Not with swissinfo, that's for sure. If the SRG uses 1% of its licence fee income on international information, this is exactly in line with the public service mandate. Or is public service just a means of legitimising licence fees? Under the Radio and Television Act 2007, based on a Lombardi proposal, federal government is obliged to finance the other half of swissinfo. It is therefore remarkable that just three years later the Federal Council is threatening to relinquish its legal obligation as part of its drive for savings.

OSA advice

Question: I live abroad; can I withdraw second-pillar capital in cash?

Answer: The situation varies depending on whether someone lives in an EU/EFTA member country or in a country outside the EU/EFTA.

In the case of residency in an EU/EFTA member country, it is no longer possible in principle to withdraw second-pillar capital if the person concerned has compulsory insurance in the country of residence for the risks of old age, invalidity or death. This means, for example, that self-employed persons can withdraw their second-pillar capital to set up in business if the law in their country of residence does not provide for compulsory insurance for the abovementioned risks for the self-employed.

Persons living outside an EU/EFTA member country can request the withdrawal of their second-pillar capital in cash. We recommend finding out about

this from the pension fund concerned in good time. It could refuse payment in cash if the person concerned has already reached the age at which the pension fund provides for the possibility of early retirement.

However, it is still possible to use second-pillar capital to finance, build or renovate a main home or to pay off a mortgage even if the property is located in an EU/EFTA member country.

Finally, the non-compulsory part of the second-pillar capital can still be paid out.

If second-pillar capital is withdrawn in cash, we recommend taking out an insurance policy to cover invalidity and death.

SARAH MASTANTUONI,
HEAD OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Offers for young people and projects of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

OSA offers young Swiss people living abroad a wide range of opportunities to discover Switzerland and meet young people from all over the world.

A unique project will take place this autumn across Switzerland. Thousands of youth groups will be taking part when "Action 72 Hours" kicks off on 9 September. Swiss from abroad will also be involved and will hopefully be successful in completing the community-interest project assigned to them in a race against the clock. Information on "Action 72 Hours – and Switzerland goes wild!" is available at www.72h.ch

**Seminar on the Federal Youth Session
09. – 15.11.2009**

Switzerland's young people have the opportunity to influence the country's politics. In November, the youth parliament will once again convene in the Federal Palace. 200 young people will have the chance to express their views on current political issues. OSA is giving young Swiss people abroad the opportunity to take part in this event. We will prepare the young parliamentarians for the session and provide them with support throughout the week.



Swiss abroad can now register for the 2011 winter camps.

New Year ski camp in Sedrun (Grisons)

27.12.2010 – 05.01.2011

60 young people from more than 20 countries will meet in the mountains of Grisons. The beautiful ski resort of Sedrun is guaranteed snow. The cosy accommodation is located right in the village. It goes without saying that a lively New Year's Eve party is also part of the programme.

Winter sports week in Wengen (Berne)

26.02. – 05.03.2011

A very special camp will be held in the Bernese Oberland. Participants of the winter sports week must be aged 18 and over. Quite a number of regular visitors meet up in Switzerland and enjoy the international atmosphere in the camp and in the ski resort. New faces are more than welcome.

Easter camp in Fiesch (Valais)

16.04. – 24.04.2011

The sports centre in Fiesch offers Swiss abroad magnificent facilities, with gyms, sports areas and an indoor swimming pool. The conditions on the Fiescheralp are still ideal for winter sports in April. Skiing in the spring sunshine is great fun.

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

Winter camps for children aged 8 to 14

Whether they are skiers or snowboarders, beginners or at an advanced level, Swiss children living abroad aged 8 to 14 will have a great time at our winter camps.

Winter camps

Tschierv (Grisons)

Date: Monday, 27 December 2010 to Wednesday, 5 January 2011

No. of participants: 36

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: Approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 October 2010

REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE DRAW FOR JUSKILA LENK (2. – 9.01.2011)

Please complete in clear print.

First name:

Surname:

No., street:

Town/city, postcode:

Country:

Date of birth:

Name of parent(s)/guardian(s):

Female Male

Telephone:

Commune of origin in Switzerland (see Passport/ID):

E-mail address of parent(s)/guardian(s):

Type of sport* Alpine skiing Cross-country skiing Snowboarding

Language of child: German French Italian

*Please only tick one box. The type of sport cannot be changed after the draw.

Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s):

Signature of child:

Please send the form, together with a **copy of the Swiss passport** of a parent/guardian or of the child, by 15 October 2010 (date of receipt) to: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01, E-mail: sjas@aso.ch

Arolla (Valais)

Date: Monday, 27 December 2010 to Wednesday, 5 January 2011

No. of participants: 36

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: Approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 October 2010

Registration

Precise details on the winter camps and the registration form will be available from 15 September 2010 at www.sjas.ch ("Our forthcoming activities"). Reduced contribution rates are available in justified cases. The form required can be requested on the registration form. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request.

JUSKILA Lenk

Draw to attend a ski camp (JUSKILA) in Lenk for young Swiss abroad aged 13 and 14

600 Swiss children, including a number of Swiss children living abroad, born in 1996 and 1997 will have the opportunity to attend Swiss Ski's big ski camp in Lenk free of charge. This will take place between 2 and 9 January 2011. To take part in the Juskila trip, Swiss children abroad must be able to communicate in at least one of the three Swiss national languages (German, French or Italian). The draw only covers the camp itself (winter sports coaching, food and accommodation). Parents will be responsible for organising and financing travel to and from the camp. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the draw at the end of October.

Information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16, sjas@aso.ch, www.sjas.ch

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



SwissCommunity.org

The platform for the Swiss Abroad

“The SwissCommunity platform networks Swiss people worldwide via the web.”



Ursula Deplazes
Researcher from Graubünden, living in Rome



“Networking plays an important role among the Swiss abroad – both personally and professionally.”



Daniel Keller
Manager from Zurich, living in Hanoi



“The local experience of Swiss people can be very valuable to an international consultant like me.”



Urs Steiner
Teacher from Berne, head of the Swiss School in Peru



“Get to know other Swiss people abroad, exchange useful addresses, find out about Switzerland ... I can do all these things on SwissCommunity.”

- ✓ Network with other Swiss abroad
- ✓ Keep up to date on relevant news and events
- ✓ Find an apartment – or the best fondue in town
- ✓ Discover Switzerland



Sign up for free membership

www.swisscommunity.org

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