

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 39 (2012)
Heft: 4

Rubrik: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

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Fifty years spent helping young people

For fifty years, the Association promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS) has been providing young Swiss abroad with support and advice on matters concerning education in Switzerland. Thanks to this experience, AJAS is able to look in depth at their particular circumstances.

Every year, many young Swiss abroad opt to receive education in their country of origin. However, these young people often have no knowledge of what is involved when embarking on education in Switzerland. They often face problems to do with language, recognition of their qualifications, funding, the climate and integration, for example, which prove too much for them. To avoid this situation, young people should contact AJAS as early as possible.

AJAS dealt with around 850 enquiries from all over the world last year. The association handled around 80 grant applications made by young Swiss abroad to their cantons of origin and, in many cases, also discussed educational funding options in addition to cantonal grants.

Information on the association's activities and reports by young Swiss abroad on their experiences in Switzerland can be found in our latest annual report. This can be ordered from our office or read online at www.ajas.ch

All AJAS' services are provided free of charge. Despite significant contributions from federal government, they can only be made available thanks to financial support from third parties, such as companies, foundations and private individuals. AJAS is also reliant on your support in order to maintain its current level of service. AJAS and, of course, the young Swiss abroad receiving education in Switzerland are grateful to you for your help.

We would like to take the opportunity of our 50th anniversary to thank all our current sponsors, donors and benefactors most sincerely for their support. If you too wish to assist the association or would like to use its services, please contact us at the following address:

AJAS, Association promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad,
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND, Phone: +41 31 356 61 04, ajas@aso.ch

OSA advice

As a Swiss citizen abroad, am I entitled to a grant to study in Switzerland?

Under Swiss law, it is primarily parents who are responsible for providing for their children's education. If they do not have sufficient means, the question of a grant is raised. The cantons are generally responsible for education in Switzerland. This means that there are 26 different ed-

ucation systems. In the case of the Swiss abroad, it is the canton of origin that is responsible. Grant applications have to be addressed to the grant department of the canton concerned. In the event of language problems arising, for example, where young students do not speak the language of their canton of origin, the Association promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS) can assist them with their application. However, it should be noted that the entitlement to study grants differs depending on the canton of

origin. Some cantons have a more restrictive policy than others in awarding grants, particularly if the student's parents live in an EU country, where theoretically the student is entitled to a grant from the country of residence (but not necessarily for study in Switzerland).

The grant amounts also differ from one canton to the next. It is important to find out first whether the country of residence provides grants and then obtain information on other funding options (cantonal grant, private grants, etc). It should be noted that, in principle, only initial post-compulsory educational courses that are undertaken at a public establishment or one recognised by the Swiss confederation provide the entitlement to a grant, although there are exceptions. In order to apply for a grant, students have to be in possession of an apprenticeship contract or confirmation of definitive enrolment at a recognised educational institution. The application forms can be obtained from the grant department of the canton of origin or from AJAS.

If the cantonal grant is not sufficient to fund the course of study or if the canton refuses to award a grant, there are private organisations that can help to finance study either through grants or loans. For further information on funding options and any questions concerning education in Switzerland, the Swiss abroad can contact AJAS.

For more details on AJAS, please read the article on the left.

SARAH MASTANTUONI,
Head of the Legal Department

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

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SOLISWISS

Pupils and ambassadors

Swiss schools abroad make a major contribution to the image of our country. As part of a new education law, these schools are now set to have the opportunity to adapt more successfully to local conditions.

There are currently 18 Swiss schools abroad recognised by federal government. With some 7,500 pupils, they not only act as a major flagship for Switzerland but also constitute an instrument and network for Swiss foreign relations. They are highly regarded worldwide on account of their high educational standards.

In recent years, the notion that the Swiss schools are not just important for educating the children of Swiss parents but that it is also an attractive and beneficial proposition for our country to provide school education for children from foreign countries to Swiss standards has gradually taken hold. Pupils at Swiss schools abroad learn about Switzerland



from nursery age upwards. By the time these children leave school with Swiss university-entry qualifications or the International Baccalaureate (IB), they have formed a relationship with our country. They are familiar with our mentality and speak our language. This makes them ideal discussion and trading partners and, in a manner of speaking, ambassadors for Switzerland.

These aspects will also be taken into consideration by the new Education of the Swiss Abroad Act (AAS), which is currently at the consultation stage.

Changes to admission criteria have been slated, among other things, and the previous requirement for a minimum quota of Swiss pupils is set to be discarded. This would primarily provide the schools with more room to manoeuvre commercially thanks to the potential for growth and would enable better integration into the country concerned.

Over 25 % of pupils are currently the children of Swiss citizens. German is the second teaching language at all schools alongside the national language or English. The school in Bogotá is the only Swiss school to have a stream with French in addition to the national language.

The Swiss schools abroad and other independently run establishments are to be allowed to offer dual basic vocational education in cooperation with Swiss professional associations and Swiss companies in the host country. The act will also provide for the opportunity to secure financial support for the foundation and establishment of new schools in locations of importance to Swiss foreign policy.



SWISS SCHOOLS ABROAD

| Founded | School | Country | Comments |
|---------|-------------------|-----------|--|
| 1839 | Naples | Italy | Closed in 1984 |
| 1851 | Genoa | Italy | Closed in 1983 |
| 1883 | Luino | Italy | Closed in 1990 |
| 1921 | Alexandria | Egypt | Closed in 1970 |
| 1946 | Florence | Italy | Closed in 1983 |
| 1860 | Milan | Italy | Founded as the "International School of Protestant Families in Milan", "Swiss School" since 1919 |
| 1893 | Bergamo | Italy | |
| 1904 | Catania | Italy | |
| 1919 | Barcelona | Spain | |
| 1939 | Santiago de Chile | Chile | |
| 1943 | Lima | Peru | |
| 1946 | Rome | Italy | |
| 1948 | Bogotá | Columbia | |
| 1963 | Bangkok | Thailand | |
| 1963 | Rio de Janeiro | Brazil | Withdrawal of recognition in 2004 |
| 1966 | Mexico City | Mexico | |
| 1966 | Accra | Ghana | |
| 1966 | São Paulo | Brazil | |
| 1967 | Singapore | Singapore | |
| 1968 | Madrid | Spain | |
| 1981 | Curitiba | Brazil | |
| 1992 | Cuernavaca | Mexico | Subsidiary of the school in Mexico City |
| 2007 | Querétaro | Mexico | Subsidiary of the school in Mexico City |
| 2011 | Como | Italy | Subsidiary of the school in Milan |



"You have to overcome your anxiety!"

OSA's Youth Service does not just arrange sports camps; it also organises stays for young Swiss abroad with host families in Switzerland. 19-year-old Kathy from Chile is currently living with two families alternately. Her two Swiss "mothers", Pascale and Barbara, tell us about their experiences.

What made you decide to take in Swiss from abroad?

PASCALE: We were both once Swiss abroad ourselves and wanted to maintain contact with like-minded people who have shared the same experience.

BARBARA: The idea that our own children will be welcomed with open arms by families abroad is also part of the reason for getting involved.

Kathy has been living with your families on an



alternate basis since mid-March. How has the visit gone so far?

PASCALE: Kathy has lived with us since mid-March. She has undertaken several work experience days as set out in her programme. During our spring holiday, she went to stay with Barbara, along with our dog. It would be great for Kathy if she had some more work experience opportunities or, better still, if she could find a job so that she could earn some pocket money.

BARBARA: Kathy has spent two weeks with us so far. She was very taken with Pascale's dog, whom she "adopted". She will mainly live with us from July onwards, which will

hopefully provide a nice change and a fresh challenge for everyone.

Kathy, what has staying with a host family been like for you?

KATHY: It is not easy to join a family you have never met. But it is an opportunity to be enjoyed. It is an experience that not everyone gets and you can learn a great deal. You must always remember that you are a guest but also a new member of the family. I was quite nervous when I arrived. It was a new thing for me being alone without my father to give me advice. At the very beginning, I would rather have flown straight back to Chile. But then I saw a sign saying: "BIENVENIDO KATHY! WELCOME!" It was Pascale, Barbara and Martin, my host families. They welcomed me by taking me to Starbucks for a coffee – my favourite! What a great welcome. I started a new life that day. It's okay to be anxious but you have to get over it.

PRISCA BLINDENBACHER /OSA YOUTH SERVICE

Information: blindenbacher@aso.ch
www.aso.ch > Offers > select "Host families" under "Quick access"

Winter camp for 8 to 14-year-olds

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 camp.

Winter camp in Lantsch (Grisons)

Date: Thursday, 27 December 2012 to Saturday, 5 January 2013

No. of participants: 48

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: Approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 October 2012

Registration

Precise details on the winter camps and the registration form will be available from 15 September 2012 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.

Draw to attend JUSKILA

600 Swiss children, including twenty Swiss children living abroad, born in 1998 and 1999,

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 2013. 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.

For more information:

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 Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01
 E-mail: sjas@aso.ch www.sjas.ch*

REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE DRAW FOR JUSKILA (2 TO 9 JAN. 2013)

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 or of the child, by 15 October 2012 (date of receipt) to: Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND