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Switzerland's good image abroad

Switzerland continues to be perceived positively abroad, generally speaking. Various surveys and rankings in 2012 confirmed the excellent reputation that Switzerland enjoys abroad. However, this is in contrast to the critical reports by foreign media on the Swiss financial centre.

Switzerland ranks in eighth place, one place higher compared to the previous year, in the Nation Brands Index 2012, which analyses the image of 50 countries. Thus, as a small nation, Switzerland finished ahead of Sweden, the Netherlands, Austria and New Zealand. Only the USA, Germany, the UK, France, Canada, Japan and Italy came above it.

Switzerland's positive image is primarily thanks to its good governance, system of direct democracy, high quality of life and competitiveness. This is consistent with data from various rankings on economic, political and social performance. Switzerland is credited with having great innovative capabilities and competitiveness. This is attributed to effective governance, an efficient regulatory environment, a good education system and an excellent infrastructure. Switzerland is also still rated highly as a travel destination, although the high prices do detract from its image somewhat.



Extensive media coverage of Switzerland

Critical and often negative reports in foreign media contrast with Switzerland's good image and high performance capability. These primarily address the Swiss financial centre, the activities of the major



Postcards
from top to bottom:
Tania Fricker
François Montandon
Eveline Sperry

banks and the national bank's monetary policy. This is why media coverage of Switzerland abroad in 2012 was high compared with Austria or Sweden.

There was considerably less media coverage of Swiss tourism, high-quality and luxury Swiss goods, and the system of direct democracy although it was more positive. Topics such as sports, research, innovation and culture in relation to Switzerland receive less attention in foreign media. When they do, it is famous people like Roger Federer, spectacular research projects at the Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich and Lausanne, and prestigious festivals and exhibitions, such as Art Basel, that make the headlines.

This is where Presence Switzerland comes in. As part of its communication abroad campaign, it is adopting a more targeted approach to ensuring that topics that are perceived positively but have attracted little attention to date receive better coverage in the future. It is also counting on the support of the Swiss abroad to help achieve its goals. It is seeking to intensify contact with them as they are important ambassadors for Switzerland and know about Switzerland's image abroad from their own experience.

Winning images chosen in photo competition among the Swiss abroad

As part of this intensified dialogue, Presence Switzerland launched a photo competition in December to discover more about the lives of the Swiss community abroad. Under the slogan "How is your Swiss identity perceived abroad?" the Swiss abroad were urged to send in photos depicting their life in their host country and their Swiss identity. The jury, made up of employees of Presence Switzerland and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), had a wide range of personal impressions

and insights into life abroad from which to make their choice. They selected ten photos, which were posted on SwissCommunity.org, OSA's online platform and social network. The members of SwissCommunity.org chose their favourite photo at the end of January 2013. The three winning impressions come from Bulgaria, Canada and Chile and can be seen on Presence Switzerland's official website. All ten images that made the final can be sent as electronic postcards via the portal swiss-world.org

The ten images from the final and the analysis of Switzerland's image abroad in 2012:

www.eda.admin.ch/praesenzschweiz

Electronic postcards:

www.swissworld.org/postkarten

Statistics on the Swiss abroad in 2012

The rise in the number of Swiss abroad, which has been observed for decades, continued in 2012. On 31 December 2012, there were 715,710 Swiss citizens living abroad – around 12,000 more than at the end of 2011 and twice as many as in 1980.

Year-on-year, the number of Swiss abroad rose by 1.72% from 703,640 (2011) to 715,710 (2012). The largest Swiss communities abroad numerically are found in Europe (442,620 people, 96.54% of whom live in EU states), the Americas (175,954) and Asia (45,793). Over the last five years, the number of Swiss citizens registered with a Swiss embassy or consulate general climbed by 6.59% in Europe, by 3.91% in the Americas and by 28.11% in Asia.

Around 47% (335,810) of all Swiss abroad live in the five countries bordering Switzerland, which equates to a 5.84% growth rate compared to 2007. Today, there are 186,615 Swiss citizens in France, 80,715 in Germany, 50,091 in Italy, 14,795 in Austria and 3,594 in the Principality of Liechtenstein (around 10% of the principality's total population).

The largest communities of Swiss abroad outside Europe are found in the USA (76,330, + 3.2% since 2007), Canada (38,959, + 3.4%), Australia (23,633, + 7%) and Israel (15,970, + 21.44%). On the African continent, just under half of all Swiss citizens live in South Africa (9,284 out of 20,696). São Tomé and Príncipe, Micronesia and Kiribati appear at the bottom of the list with one registered Swiss citizen each.

The proportion of Swiss abroad registered on a Swiss electoral roll has levelled off at around a quarter of those eligible to vote. The proportion in Europe (31.25%) is significantly higher than the global average. You can register to exercise your political right through the representation where you are registered as a Swiss abroad. A telephone call is sufficient – the representation will be happy to provide you with the necessary information.

The statistics on the Swiss abroad have been produced centrally by the Consular Directorate of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs since 2011. They include all Swiss citizens registered with a Swiss representation. As Switzerland does not have an embassy in Vaduz, the figures for the Principality of Liechtenstein are provided by the local statistical office and reflect the status of the respective previous year.

The statistics on the Swiss abroad on the FDFA's website:

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi/ptrali/statis.html>

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Travel advice

www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise
 Helpline DFAE: +41 (0)800 24-7-365
www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

itineris

Online registration for Swiss citizens
 travelling abroad

www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris

Federal Council 2013

The 2013 photograph of the Federal Council has been published (from left to right): Johann N. Schneider-Ammann (Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research; formerly the Federal Department of Economic Affairs), Simonetta Sommaruga (Federal Department of Justice and Police), Didier Burkhalter (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs), Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (Federal Department of Finance), Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss

Confederation (Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport), Alain Berset (Federal Department of Home Affairs), Doris Leuthard (Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications) and Federal Chancellor Corina Casanova.

The former Federal Department of Economic Affairs was renamed the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) on 1 January 2013. This now includes the ETH Domain (Federal Institutes of Technol-

ogy of Zurich and Lausanne) and the State Secretariat for Education and Research, which, together with the Federal Office for Professional Education, now makes up the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation.

Important notice

Please notify your embassy or consulate general of your email address and mobile telephone number and/or any changes.

Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters, etc.). The latest "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (called "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent to all Swiss citizens abroad registered with an embassy or consulate general either in printed format or electronically (via email and as an iPad and Android app) free of charge.



ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The following proposals will be put to the vote on 9 June 2013:

- Popular initiative of 7 July 2011: "Election of the Federal Council by the people" (BBl 2012 9643);
- Amendment of 28 September 2012 to the Swiss Asylum Act (AsylG) (urgent amendments to the asylum law, AS 2012 5359, BBl 2012 8261)

See also page 14

Information on the proposals (voter pamphlet, committees, party statements, etc.) can also be found at www.ch.ch/abstimmungen.

Further referendum dates in 2013: 22 September and 24 November

POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press for this edition, no new federal popular initiatives had been launched. The list of pending popular initiatives can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website at

www.bk.admin.ch under "Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen".

FDFA OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER:
 JEAN-FRANÇOIS LICHTENSTERN, RELATIONS WITH THE SWISS ABROAD
 BUNDESGASSE 32, CH-3003 BERNE, TEL: +41 800 24-7-365
 WWW.EDA.ADMIN.CH / E-MAIL: HELPLINE@EDA.ADMIN.CH

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