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## OSA advice

**Why are some Swiss nationals living abroad able to vote electronically while others are not?**

Many Swiss nationals living abroad are eagerly awaiting the chance to vote electronically. In practice they are often unable to exercise their right to vote due to lengthy delays in the postal system making it impossible either to receive their voting papers in time or to send them back before the deadline. Electronic voting would offer a solution to this problem, which is why the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad launched a petition in 2012 asking for the introduction of electronic voting for all citizens to be established by the 2015 federal elections. This petition was handed over to Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter at the last Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

Authority for organising elections lies with the cantons. That means that it is each individual canton that is responsible for deciding how people can vote. Some cantons have launched electronic-voting pilot projects. The cantons that have gone down this road are Aargau, Berne, Basel-City, Fribourg, Geneva, Grisons, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, St Gallen, Schaffhausen, Solothurn and Thurgau. Having been one of the first cantons to take action in this respect, Zurich has now temporarily suspended the option of electronic voting for its citizens until an internet voting system can be introduced for the whole population.

Many Swiss nationals living abroad who exercise their right to vote in the above-mentioned cantons are therefore able to have their say via the internet provided they live in one of the countries of the European Union, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Northern Cyprus, Vatican City, Monaco, San Marino or countries that are signatories to the Wassenaar Arrangement. That covers nearly 90% of Swiss nationals living abroad. This explains why some people can vote electronically while others cannot.

More and more cantons are working on the possibility of offering internet voting to Swiss citizens living abroad and it is therefore to be hoped that increasing numbers of Swiss nationals living abroad will be able to take advantage of this additional voting option soon.

With regard to federal government, a third report on electronic voting is ex-

pected to be published by mid-2013. This government report should draw conclusions from past experiences and suggest some avenues that can be explored in the future.

*For more information:*

*Federal Chancellery website: [www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch)  
> Thèmes > Droits politiques > Vote électronique  
[www.wassenaar.org](http://www.wassenaar.org)*

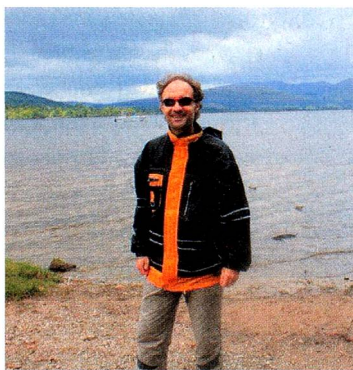
SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department  
The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between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

## I was 15, and it was my first time away from home

**In 1978, José-Walter Sutter from Spain attended a walking camp organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA). He grew up in Spain. He talked to Simone Riner about his experiences and his relationship with Switzerland.**

*How did you come to take part in the camp in Switzerland?*

In my family we always had a strong awareness of our roots. That trip to Switzerland was an important experience and a good opportunity to get to know my homeland better, practise the language a



José-Walter Sutter comes from Alt St. Johann in the canton of St. Gallen. He lives in Murcia in southeastern Spain, where his parents also live. Sutter works in IT training and is very keen on sports, being an athletics and basketball coach. His father, Carlos Sutter (77), was a professional footballer with Real Madrid in 1956/57.

bit and, of course, meet other Swiss living abroad.

*What did you do at the camp?*

We met up in Berne, where we started off from, and we hiked a stretch every day. We also travelled by rail, bus and boat. We visited places like Charmey, Gruyères, Château d'Oex, Erlenbach, Interlaken and Thun.

*What was a typical day like?*

We started walking after breakfast, and about halfway to our destination we would stop for lunch. We didn't walk as one big group but in smaller groups, each with its own leader. After we arrived at our destination we usually had time to chat or play sport before dinner. On occasion, we were able to go to a café or disco in the evening. But we always had to be in bed early because we needed to recover after a long day's hiking and sightseeing.

*What are some of your favourite memories?*

The people at the camp were really nice, especially the girls. I also loved the scenery in the Alps, swimming in cold lakes and rivers, and, of course, playing football in the evenings in spite of the long mountain walks.

*Were you ever homesick, being alone and so far from home?*

I was 15, and I had travelled to Switzerland on my own. It was my first time away from home without my parents and brothers. I felt a little homesick now and again, but I also had the same feeling once the camp was over because I left a lot of friends behind.

*Are you still in touch with any of the people you met at the camp?*

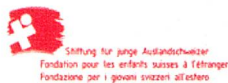
I corresponded with one of the leaders, Elisabeth König, for a while, but we lost touch quite some time ago.

*And what is your relationship with Switzerland today?*

I'm still in touch with a few cousins and their families, but we see each other very rarely. We're planning to meet up next summer in the Sierra Nevada in Grenada. I follow Swiss news in "Swiss Review" and online, on swissinfo, for example. That's how I recognised myself in an old photo of the



walking camp that appeared in "Swiss Review"!



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[www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch)  
Information about the winter camps will be published in the next "Swiss Review". You can register for the winter camps online at [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch) from mid-September 2013.

#### DEPENDENT ON DONATIONS

For many years, the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) has been organising camps to give children with Swiss roots all over the world the opportunity to discover their homeland. The organisation is particularly keen to give children from lower-income families a chance to visit Switzerland. To continue this tradition, it depends on donations. Why not become a donor for the ZEWO-certified Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad?

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## Youth seminar at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad

This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be devoted to the question of Switzerland's role in a globalised world. Traditionally, the congress is preceded by a seminar for young people, and OSA hopes to welcome as many young Swiss abroad as possible to Davos for what promises to be an exciting and entertaining week.

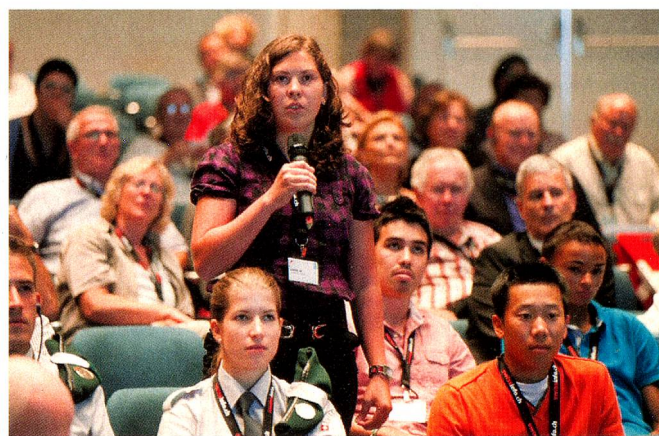
Young people today are born into a globalised world. They take it for granted that they encounter the same consumer brands all over the globe. In India, people listen to the same songs on their smartphones as in Australia. People in Scandinavia wear the same summer fashions as in North America, and in southern Europe the films at the cinema are the same as in South America.

Young people have to learn to forge their future lives in this fast-moving, networked and high-tech world. In today's globalised economy, they are consumers, competitors and contributors. At OSA, we believe that young people have a great deal to contribute on this year's topic.

#### New media

One particular focus of the seminar will be the importance of communication in a globalised world. Thanks to new technologies we can now access information at any time and from any location. If something major happens somewhere in the world, news of it is available instantly everywhere. We can take part in discussion and debate in real time. So, new media will be a very important topic in the young people's seminar.

Of course, the time in Davos – a famous holiday resort and conference venue –



should also be fun, full of activity and entertainment. Hiking, a dip in Lake Davos, ball sports and games are all part of the programme.

Finally, the group will take part in the Congress of the Swiss Abroad and present the results of their project week to the audience.

*You can sign up for the seminar and all the other offers for young people online: [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch)*



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## Switzerland vs. globalisation?

**The issue of globalisation and its consequences for Switzerland will be the central topic of the 91st Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Davos.**

In an increasingly globalised world, Switzerland must strengthen its position both in order to remain competitive economically and in order to be able to continue to play a role on the international political scene. Banking secrecy cannot survive for much longer and our country is not a member of the European Union. What strategy should be adopted in such a situation? What assets does Switzerland have and how can they be used to best advantage?

The Swiss abroad are perhaps our country's trump card in understanding the

challenges that lie ahead. Switzerland should make better use of the international mobility of its citizens.

This congress aims to demonstrate the importance of human networks in the context of globalisation. This means explaining that individual action is of vital significance alongside collective action, whether on the part of the State or businesses or in terms of cooperation within international organisations. Individual networks themselves are also becoming more international and are contributing to this move towards globalisation.

Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, head of the Federal Department of Finance, will also be taking part in the congress. She will focus on the impact of the globalised economy and will highlight the significance of the Swiss abroad for our national economy. Some 10% of our national population lives abroad. Also present will be Franz von

Däniken, former Secretary of State and Political Director of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. He will look back over past years to point out the developments that have led to the current situation with regard to globalisation. He will also explain the major challenges facing Switzerland over the coming years.

Workshops led by experts and federal parliamentarians will provide an opportunity for delegates to express their views and to debate the issue of globalisation from the points of view of migration, the economy and whether or not to participate in international institutions.

This will be also be an occasion to socialise and enjoy cultural events.

*More information and registration documents can be found on our website:*

*<http://aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2013>*

## 91st Congress of the Swiss Abroad: 16 to 18 August 2013, Davos Congress Centre

Switzerland vs. globalisation will be the main topic of debate at the 91st Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Davos. Among the speakers will be Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.

More on this topic and the latest information on the 2013 Congress can be found in German at: [www.aso.ch/de/angebote/auslandschweizer-kongress](http://www.aso.ch/de/angebote/auslandschweizer-kongress).

Put the Congress dates in your diary today. We look forward to seeing you!

Please send me the registration documents for the 91st Congress of the Swiss Abroad (16 to 18 August 2013 in Davos).

My address is:

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ first name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country: \_\_\_\_\_ postcode/city: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write clearly in block capitals

The registration documents are available in two languages: ☐ German ☐ French (Please check the box of the language required.)

Send the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Communications & Marketing, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND, Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01 or email us at [communication@aso.ch](mailto:communication@aso.ch)

