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# The Congress of the Swiss Abroad

The varied offering at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad attracted around 320 Swiss Abroad this year as well as several visitors from Switzerland.

Swiss living abroad met up for this year's congress in Baden, in the canton of Aargau. The theme of "information technology and social media: opportunities for the Swiss Abroad" was discussed by Otfried Jarren, professor of journalism at the University of Zurich, as well as Federal Councillor Alain Berset, head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs. The former pointed out that the systems of nation-state democracies were reaching their limits owing to digitisation in the media society, which can also be referred to as the information society, knowledge society, network society or multi-option society. He also observed that "positive, emotional and personalised content predominates" in the use of social media, whereas content in politics is determined by a relatively small number of players. Jarren said that he did not wish to and could not predict whether this would lead to greater democracy and possibly more revolutions.

Federal Councillor Alain Berset began his address by stating that "the world would be a poorer place without the Swiss Abroad". He named many institutions worldwide that would probably not exist without Swiss people living abroad. These included the Ritz Hotel, Chevrolet, the Golden Gate Bridge and Madame Tussaud's. He also emphasised that the 730,000 Swiss Abroad play a significant role as "ambassadors" of Switzerland. He expressly referred to the many Swiss schools abroad which do



**Federal Councillor Alain Berset at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Baden**

not just provide education but also create a "cultural, social and emotional relationship with our country". "The Swiss Abroad understand foreign countries. But they also understand Switzerland and perhaps sometimes better than we Swiss at home. This is because distance allows you to appreciate what really matters," remarked Berset. "In this globalised world, you have to be able to see things from another person's perspective because we all know that misunderstandings, misinterpretations and breakdowns of communication occur all the time."

The Federal Councillor finally joined a group of young Swiss Abroad for a discussion to which journalists were not invited.

## Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad

On 15 August, the day before the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Aarau for its second ordinary annual meeting of 2014. The Council adopted two resolutions by a large majority. The first concerned mandatory registration for Swiss Abroad within the framework of the new law on the Swiss Abroad. Through this law, which is currently being debated by Parliament, federal government wishes to dispense with the present obligation for Swiss Abroad to register with an embassy or consulate. The CSA clearly expressed its wish for this obligation to be retained. The second resolution contained the call on the government to oblige the Swiss Post Office's financial institution, PostFinance, which is run similar to a bank, to give all Swiss citizens abroad the opportunity to hold an account with them. The Council discussion once again highlighted the fact that the Swiss banks are closing the accounts in Switzerland of many Swiss Abroad.

Adrian Beer from Madrid, who holds dual Swiss-Spanish citizenship, was elected by the Council as a new member of the Executive Board of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad.

## OSA advice

*I am Swiss and live abroad. I have a close relationship with Switzerland and would like my estate to be administered through Switzerland. Is this possible or does it have to be done in my country of residence? Where can I deposit my will?*

The country of residence is generally responsible for inheritance proceedings, which is why the laws of that country usually also apply in the case of inheritance following a death.

In theory, it is also possible to specify in a will that the inheritance should be governed by Swiss law and that the Swiss authorities should be re-

sponsible for dealing with it. However, anyone wishing to specify this should check with the competent authorities in the country of residence beforehand whether such a regulation will be recognised. This is not an option for real estate; succession in this case usually has to be governed by the law of the state on whose territory the property is located.

The new European succession regulation will enter into force on 17 August 2015 in all EU states except for Denmark, Ireland and the UK. This regulation also applies to Swiss residing in EU states which adopt the EU inheritance law. The new succession regulation stipulates that, in the event of death, the inheritance law of the coun-



try in which the deceased was last domiciled will apply. This will also apply to real estate. The regulation nevertheless also provides for the opportunity to choose by will the inheritance law of the country of which the person writing the will is a citizen.

It should be noted that the inheritance arrangement (how the estate is divided) and inheritance tax (which tax rate applies) concern two different areas. The information above only relates to the inheritance arrangement and not inheritance tax.

As far as depositing a will is concerned, we generally recommend contacting the Swiss representation (consulate or embassy) responsible for the place of residence abroad. It is possible to deposit a will there in certain cases. Swiss representations will also provide the contact details of local notaries. If you are unable to contact the embassy by telephone, you can also enquire using the FDFA helpline:

Consular Directorate, helpline: Tel.: +41 800 24-7-365, [helpline@eda.admin.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.admin.ch)

OSA'S LEGAL DEPARTMENT

OSA'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.

## This winter's offers for youngsters

**New Year ski camp in Sedrun (Grisons), 27 December 2014 to 5 January 2015**  
The popular ski resort in the Grisons mountains is a hit with young Swiss abroad. The camp enjoys cult status with those who like celebrating New Year in the snow.

**Language courses in Berne and Fribourg, 5 to 16 January 2015**  
Four lessons of language tuition in the mornings, joint activities in the afternoon and a welcoming host family. We will inspire you to learn a Swiss national language – German or French.

**Easter camp in Davos, 5 to 12 April 2015**  
We spend a week in Davos over Easter where we enjoy skiing and snowboarding before the snow disappears. Top-class slopes await us for spring skiing – want to join us?

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### Winter and summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

#### There are still some places left on our New Year ski camp in Lantsch/Lenz

Date: Saturday, 27 December 2014 to Monday, 5 January 2015

No. of participants: 45

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: approx. CHF 150

#### Registration

Full details of the winter camps and the registration form can be found at [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch). Reduced contribution rates will be granted in justified cases. The form required for this can be requested on the registration form. We would also be pleased to post you our information brochure on request. The winter camp in Lantsch/Lenz in the canton of Grisons is the only FYSA offer in the 2014/15 winter season.

#### Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

Registration for the summer camps begins in January 2015

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND, Tel. +41 31 356 61 16, Fax +41 31 356 61 01

Email: [sjas@aso.ch](mailto:sjas@aso.ch), [www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch)

#### Educational offers

We can provide you with an insight into the Swiss education system. Friendly host families await you, and you can travel around Switzerland on your own with the general travel pass.

Further information on the offers can be found online at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) or at [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org).

#### Federal Youth Session, (10 to 16 November 2014)

In Switzerland, Youth Parliament sessions are organised solely by young people. A session takes place every year in the Federal Palace where young people express their views on current affairs and set out their demands to Switzerland's decision-makers. The Youth Session always involves Swiss abroad. This is a unique opportunity to take a look behind the scenes of Swiss politics. Issues such as Switzerland and Europe, food waste, gender equality and racism are on the agenda this year with the promise of riveting debates. Are you interested? Find out about it from us as soon as possible.

[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) > Offers or [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org) > Youth

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