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OSA advice

Before emigrating I spent several years working in Switzerland and paid old-age and survivors' insurance/invalidity insurance (AHV/IV) contributions. How can I find out about my entitlement to an AHV pension?

You can request a pension calculation forecast based on the contributions you made from the Swiss Compensation Office in Geneva. In relation to these projections, the website of the Central Compensation Office (CCO) in Geneva states: "The presence of hypothetical elements in the calculation means that the amounts predicted are merely estimations. These amounts consequently are not legally binding."

An application form to download and complete can be found at www.zas.admin.ch under Services > Projected/provisional pension calculation

You can complete and print out this form and then sign and send it to the address given below. An official document containing your personal details (surname, first name, date of birth and spouse's name) has to be attached to the form – for example, a copy of your identity document, birth certificate, family record book or an extract from the civil register.

It is advisable for married couples to submit two individual pension calculation applications at the same time.

OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Swiss Compensation Office
Av. Edmond-Vaucher 18
P.O. Box 3100
1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law, in particular in the areas that concern the Swiss Abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

Good opportunities for young Swiss Abroad

Switzerland's dual education system is often held up as a successful export. The USA, for example, is showing great interest in application-oriented vocational training with freedom to choose paths. Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann revealed this in January after a visit to Washington. Training in a company offering apprenticeships is also often an extremely attractive and worthwhile alternative to university courses for the Swiss Abroad, according to Ruth von Gunten, the head of the "educationsuisse - Education in Switzerland" advisory service.

How many enquiries concerning advice on education do you receive each year from young Swiss Abroad?

We receive around a thousand each year. The enquiries do not just come from young people but often also from parents or relatives in Switzerland. They tend to come from two different groups of people. There are those who have very general questions about education and training in Switzerland. They are usually young people who do not yet have any specific ideas about their choice of career and objectives. And then there are those, who make up around half, who have already chosen a course and now require support with the organisational side of things in Switzerland. These enquiries often concern admission conditions and the grant system.

What are the most common career aspirations of the young Swiss Abroad?

We have noticed that most still believe they need to study at university to obtain a good education. While



Ruth von Gunten, head of the advisory service for education and training in Switzerland

many Swiss Abroad are familiar with the Swiss system of vocational training, few are aware that the opportunity exists to sit a vocational university-entrance exam and to study at a university of applied sciences.

Are there specific requirements that are the same for all paths or careers?

The most important requirement for any path is a good knowledge of a national language. Anyone wishing to study in Lausanne, for example, has little chance without an in-depth knowledge of French. There are still only a very small number of courses conducted in English at universities in Switzerland. The same applies to vocational training. Linguistic knowledge is essential, otherwise a trainee will not cope at vocational college.

Can you provide any details of the cost of an education?

Fees for university courses are comparatively low in Switzerland. Living costs, however, tend to be high. Depending on the place of study, we estimate costs of between CHF 18,000 and CHF 28,000 a year. Slightly lower costs are incurred for parents during vocational training as the trainees re-

ceive a small wage from the first year of apprenticeship.

Do young Swiss Abroad remain in Switzerland or return to their country of origin after completing their education?

We do not have any exact information on that but we do know that many gain their first professional experience in Switzerland after an apprenticeship or course of study. Those who return to their second homeland with the "complete package" certainly have good opportunities available to them and are often also good intermediaries between different cultures. They also make a major contribution to economic development in many countries.

INTERVIEW: BARBARA ENGEL

This summer's offers for young people

The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has again put together a wide range of attractive offers this year.

Whether for one of our summer camps, an individually tailored language course or one of our exciting seminars, a visit to Switzerland is sure to provide a memorable experience.

All our offers can be found on the websites www.swisscommunity.org > Youth or www.aso.ch > Offers > Youth offers. In the categories of leisure activities, education and politics, everyone is certain to find the ideal offer for them.

The 2015 offers

- Adventure travel from 14 to 24 July 2015
- The Swiss Challenge from 25 July to 7 August 2015
- Summer camps in Grindelwald from 11 to 24 July and from 25 July to 7 August 2015
- Language courses with variable dates
- Training in Switzerland and Springboard with variable dates
- "Operation 72 hours and Switzerland gets involved" from 7 to 13 September 2015
- Seminar at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad from 10 to 16 August 2015
- Youth Session 2015 with preparation from 24 to 30 August 2015

Information and registration at www.swisscommunity.org or www.aso.ch.

Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

From the end of June to the end of August 2015, Swiss children abroad can have a fantastic time at two-week summer camps while also discovering Switzerland and its culture together with 30 to 50 other children from all over the world.

There are still individual places available at our holiday camps. The exact details and the registration form can be found at www.sjas.ch under Camps. Should you request it, we would also be pleased to send you our information brochure by post with an overview of the offers. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to discover Switzerland in this way on at least one occasion. We can offer reduced rates in justified cases. The form required can be requested on the registration form. We would be pleased to provide you with further information.

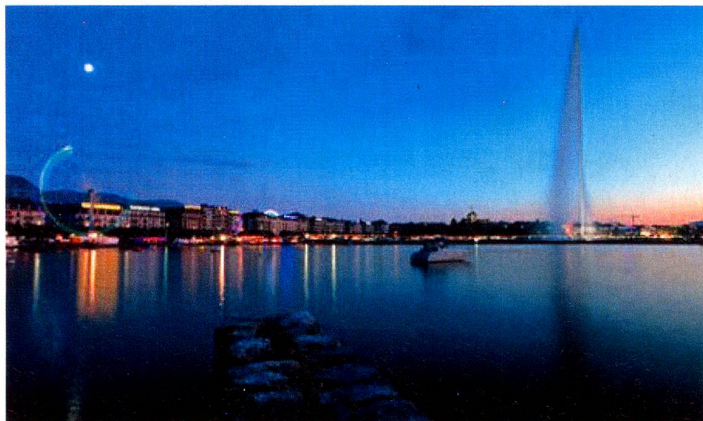
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Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundaziun per giuvens svizzers a l'ester



93rd Congress of the Swiss Abroad – 14 to 16 August 2015, International Conference Centre in Geneva (CICG)



This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Geneva will focus on the theme of "Educating citizens: the guarantee of a vibrant democracy". The speakers will include Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard, head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications.

At www.aso-kongress.ch you can find out more about the theme of the congress. Here you can also order your congress registration pack and book your hotel online.

Put the congress dates in your diary today. We look forward to meeting you!

Information on the right to participate in votes and elections

The Swiss Abroad can participate in elections and referenda in Switzerland provided they are registered on an electoral roll in Switzerland. Swiss citizens are not automatically enrolled when they regis-

Please send me the registration documents in spring 2015 for the 93rd Congress of the Swiss Abroad (14–16 August 2015) in Geneva.

My address is:

Surname/first name: _____

Address: _____

Country/postcode/city: _____

Email: _____

It is important that you write legibly and in block capitals.

The registration documents are available in two languages:

◇ German

◇ French

(Please tick 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 send an email to communication@aso.ch

ter with a consulate or embassy abroad. They must explicitly request the right to vote. Swiss Abroad are usually registered on the electoral roll at the commune where they last resided in Switzerland. This enrolment must be renewed regularly – at least every four years – with the commune (not the representation abroad). This does not take place automatically. Some communes regularly ask their eligible voters abroad to do this, while others do not. The forms for enrolment and renewal can be found at: www.eda.admin.ch > Documentation > Publications > Swiss Abroad > Leaflets "Political rights"

Services provided by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and partner institutions

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), a foundation governed by private law, is a centre of expertise for safeguarding the interests of Swiss citizens living abroad. Besides the publication of "Swiss Review", it provides various services for Swiss citizens abroad in collaboration with its partner organisations.

■ **Legal advice.** Free advice on emigrating abroad and returning to Switzerland.

www.aso.ch – "Consultation" section

■ **Network.** The website SwissCommunity.org provides the opportunity to network with Swiss citizens all over the world.

www.swisscommunity.org

■ **Offers for children and young people.** Organisation of holiday camps and language courses, etc. for young

Swiss Abroad seeking a better understanding of their native country.

www.aso.ch > Offers

■ **Advice on education and training in Switzerland.** Young Swiss Abroad wishing to train or study in Switzerland receive support and guidance in selecting training and educational opportunities and making grant applications.

www.educationsuisse.ch



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