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100 years of the OSA and six priorities for the future

2016 will remain in the memories of members and friends of the “Fifth Switzerland” as the centenary year of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). The celebratory year was marked by events, exhibitions and publications. But what will be the legacy at the end of it?

ARIANE RUSTICHELLI, FOR THE DIRECTION OF THE OSA

Having officially begun on 2 March, a day before the issue date of the special stamp commemorating 100 years of the OSA, the anniversary year had two highlights. Firstly, the ceremony marking 25 years of the Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen attended by Johann Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation, during which a permanent exhibition of posters on the history of Swiss emigration was officially opened. The second memorable moment was the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Berne. On 5 August, the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) delegates had the honour of sitting in the Federal Palace. This shows just how important the 762,000 Swiss Abroad are



Sarah Mastantuoni (left) and Ariane Rustichelli, directors of the OSA. Photo OSA

to the Swiss Confederation. The presence and speech by Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter on the Bundesplatz during the official part of the event in front of hundreds of people and 170 young Swiss Abroad who had come especially for the occasion further underlined this message. With free concerts and activities for everyone, the celebrations were a huge success.

Under the motto “Switzerland in the world”, the anniversary year set out to look back on 100 years of history of Swiss emigration and the OSA. However, this reflection on the past primarily sought to look

to the future. The international migration of our fellow citizens continues to increase and to take new forms. What will be the specific requirements of future emigrants? Questions are consequently also raised about the role of the OSA and the services it will make available. To provide answers, a questionnaire was sent to the delegates of the CSA. The results were made public at the CSA meeting on 5 August in Berne. On this basis, six development priorities were defined and adopted by the Council’s members. They represent a roadmap for the OSA in the years to come and to some extent a legislative programme. Their aim is to:

- improve information for the Swiss Abroad, above all through the “Swiss Review”, but also through other existing OSA information channels.
- better integrate young people in the OSA’s structures, ensuring in particular a minimum number of seats for young people on the CSA.
- open up the electoral base of the Council of the Swiss Abroad so that all Swiss Abroad can elect their delegates to the CSA.
- encourage the political participation of the Swiss Abroad by introducing electronic voting.
- increase contact between the Swiss societies worldwide through an information and exchange of expertise initiative undertaken by the OSA.
- raise the profile of the OSA in Switzerland and abroad through promotional campaigns.

These goals, some of which are already in progress, are certainly ambitious. However, it is vital that they are achieved in order for the OSA to ensure its services meet the challenges of future migration and the specific requirements involved. This is crucial if it is to continue to carry out its mission in an optimal way which involves representing and protecting the interests of the Swiss Abroad.

The detailed results of the questionnaire and further information about the future development priorities are available at:
<http://aso.ch/en/about-ourselves/the-osa/aims>.

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Hans Ambühl – the new President of educationsuisse

The umbrella organisation of the Swiss schools abroad and advisory service for young Swiss Abroad said farewell to Derrick Widmer, its President for many years, in fitting style at its annual conference. Thanks to his remarkable commitment, the association has developed into a powerful organisation, providing many services for the schools and representing their interests in public life.



Educationsuisse's association members voted Hans Ambühl as its new President at the General Assembly, which took place on the periphery of the Conference of the Swiss Schools Abroad in Lenzburg on 12 July. Hans Ambühl, who grew up in Lucerne, worked as a lawyer and notary in Sursee after his law degree at the University of Fribourg. In 1988, he was appointed Department Secretary of the canton of Lucerne's

Education and Culture Department. He has been Secretary General of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) in Berne since January 2000. He is stepping down from this position in March 2017.

Hans Ambühl has extensive knowledge of the Swiss education system and Swiss politics. He is also very well acquainted with the issue of Swiss schools abroad, given that he has been a member of educationsuisse's Executive Board since 2013. In spring 2017, he will also become a member of the OSA's Council of the Swiss Abroad in his capacity as President of educationsuisse.

As President of educationsuisse, Ambühl hopes to establish excellent links between the Swiss schools abroad and the Swiss education system and to provide the schools with optimal conditions for ensuring genuine Swissness. In return, the Swiss education system will obtain benefits from the educational presence abroad and learn to take advantage of this to greater effect.

A recent interview with Hans Ambühl can be found on our website www.educationsuisse.ch/Publications in our November 2016 news.

Further information on the Swiss schools abroad and the advisory service for young Swiss Abroad and pupils at Swiss schools abroad who would like to undertake courses of education or training in Switzerland can be found at www.educationsuisse.ch.

OSA advice

I would like to study in Switzerland. What would happen in terms of military service?

In Switzerland, all men are obliged to carry out military service before the end of the year in which they turn 30 years of age or 34 years of age if they had already completed military training school before leaving Switzerland. Upon your return to Switzerland, you will therefore be called upon to fulfil your military obligations based on your age and level of suitability. Swiss citizens can be recruited until the end of the year in which they turn 25 years of age. They will then be asked to attend military training school before the end of the year during which they turn 26 years of age. An exception exists for men who have already carried out military service in Switzerland, who have been granted military leave to go abroad or who have not been in the country for an uninterrupted period of over six years and are no longer needed by the army. Citizens not recruited owing to their age do not have to complete military training school but have to pay military service exemption tax. Swiss citizens abroad who wish to stay in Switzerland for a period of over three months have to notify the relevant cantonal district command within 14 days of their arrival.

If you hold dual nationality and have already carried out military service or alternative civilian service or have made an exemption payment in your country of origin, you no longer have to carry out military service in Switzerland. However, this does not release you from the obligation to provide notification of your arrival to the district command, and you may have to pay the military service exemption tax. If you have carried out military service or alternative civilian service in Germany, Austria, France or Italy, you will be exempt from paying the military service exemption tax owing to agreements that Switzerland has concluded with these countries.

You can also voluntarily decide to attend military training school in Switzerland as a Swiss citizen abroad. Requests in such cases should be addressed to:

Führungsstab der Armee,
Personelles der Armee (FGG 1)
Steuerung und Vorgaben
Rodtmattstr. 110, 3003 Bern
Tel. +41 58 464 20 63, Fax +41 58 464 32 70,
Email: personelles.FSTA@vtg.admin.ch,
Website: www.vtg.admin.ch

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA): Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) is celebrating its centenary in 2017. To mark this important anniversary, it has organised special activities, in addition to the usual ones, for summer 2017, such as a circus camp and a second Swiss Trip.

Programme

Participants in the summer camps held in July and August have the opportunity to gain fascinating insights into Switzerland. We look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.



The interaction with participants from other countries and the exchange across linguistic, cultural and national boundaries present a unique opportunity to make new friends and enjoy some unforgettable moments.

Camp language

Those taking part in our programmes come from all over the world and speak various languages. The FYSA therefore tries to provide its programmes in German, French, Italian, Spanish and English. The language at each camp is not determined by the language spoken at the camp venue.

Prices

The prices of the offers are set out in the list below. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to enjoy a holiday in Switzerland at least once if possible. We therefore offer the possibility of reduced camp rates. The relevant application form can be requested with the registration form.

Travel / meeting point

The meeting point is around lunchtime at Zurich airport. Travel to Zurich airport and the return journey home from there are organised and paid for by parents.

Leaders

Experienced, well-trained and multilingual teams of leaders ensure that the two-week holiday camps are well organised and offer a wide variety of activities.

Registration

The exact details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form will be available from January 2017 at <http://sjas.ch/en/camps/>. We would also be pleased to post you our information brochure on request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2017.

Please contact our office for further information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern/SCHWEIZ
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16, Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01,
Email: info@sjas.ch, <http://sjas.ch>

2017 summer camps

Dates, camp location and age groups

■ Saturday, 24 June to Friday, 7 July 2017:

Engelberg (OW) for 42 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900
Mariastein (SO) for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

■ Wednesday, 12 July to Friday, 21 July 2017:

Swiss Trip for 24 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 950

■ Saturday, 8 July to Friday, 21 July 2017:

Vignogn (GR) for 42 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900
Vallorbe (VD) for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

■ Saturday, 22 July to Friday, 4 August 2017:

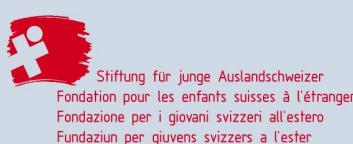
Hergiswil (LU) circus camp for 40 Swiss children from abroad and 40 living in Switzerland aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 950
Satigny (GE) for 42 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

■ Saturday, 5 August to Friday, 18 August 2017:

Valbella (GR) for 42 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900

■ Wednesday, 9 August to Friday, 18 August 2017:

Swiss Trip for 24 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 950



Youth Service offers

Each year, the OSA's Youth Service organises winter camps, summer camps, language courses in French and German, seminars and individual trips to Switzerland for young Swiss Abroad aged 15 and over. Find out about the latest offers and take part.

There are still a few places available on the following winter programmes:

- New Year's camp in Valbella (Grisons) for those aged 15 and over (27.12.2016 to 6.1.2017)
- Winter camp in Grächen (Valais) for young adults aged 18 and over (27.12.2016 to 6.1.2017)
- Language course in Berne (9.1. to 20.1.2017)

Discover Switzerland

If you are unavailable during the camp weeks but would still like to visit Switzerland, you can also do so alone or with friends. You can stay with a welcoming host family in one of the four linguistic regions for a week or more. From there you can set out on a new journey of discovery every day, visiting famous places and museums. We will put together an interesting and diverse sightseeing itinerary for you.

Summer camps 2017: advance notice – start of registration

Preparations for the summer camps are already in full swing. The camp accommodation has been organised, and the teams of leaders are being put together. From 1 January 2017, you can find out about our extremely varied programmes and register for the 2017 camp season on our website. So, save the date and see you next summer.

Subsidy

Thanks to the Pro Patria Foundation and the FDFA, the Youth Service has funding available to support participants faced with financial hardship. The application form can be found on our website.

All information and registration forms can be found at www.aso.ch or www.swisscommunity.org.