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96th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Visp/VS

From 10 to 12 August, 2018 the 96th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in Visp with panoramic views of the mountains of Valais.

The theme of our upcoming congress, "Switzerland without Europe – Europe without Switzerland", illustrates that the relationship between Switzerland and Europe is a topic that extends far beyond the Europe issue. It is a topic with global dimensions, not only because of potential consequences for Switzerland, but also because of implications for domestic and foreign policy, as well as the economy.

On Friday, 10 August 2018, from 6 p.m., all participants are cordially invited to a Congress aperitif at the Vespa Beach Nights venue.

On the morning of Saturday, 11 August 2018, participants have a

choice between three excursions in Visp and the surrounding area subject to registration. This will be followed by the plenary assembly at the

La Poste conference centre where visitors can look forward to interesting presentations and discussions with figures from Swiss business, politics and the media. The final evening with a wine tasting will bring this day at the conference centre to an end on a celebratory note.

On Sunday, 12 August 2018, a trip to Zermatt – the world-famous mountain village at the foot of the Matterhorn – is on the itinerary. This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad will draw to a fitting close with a typical Valais Raclette dish, a congress declaration, and a folklore festival being held in the village at the same time.

Register now at www.aso-kongress.ch for the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Visp and take advantage of a 75 % discount on the purchase of a Swiss Travel Pass from 1 June to 31 July 2018.



The Swiss Travel Pass from the Swiss Travel System

The Swiss Travel Pass entitles you to unlimited travel on consecutive days throughout the rail, bus and boat Swiss Travel System network. The Swiss Travel Pass is available for 3, 4, 8 or 15 days. This pass is only available to non-residents of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

FSCA: A patron to Swiss children abroad for one hundred years

The Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad was founded in 1917. It is still involved in organising holiday camps today.

Founded in 1917 during the Great War by a group of people from Basel, the Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad initially aimed to host young Swiss Abroad living in war-torn countries where there were shortages and restrictions.

In its current form, it organises several holiday camps each year to give Swiss children abroad the opportunity to get to know and appreciate their native country.

The memory of the internment of Bourbaki's army in 1871 was still very much alive in 1917. This welcome, which was remarkable for the solidarity it signified, meant that several generations of Swiss people saw it as their duty to help people in war-torn countries. One member of a family, which offered to take in a "child victim" on the spur of the moment in 1917, recalled in 2001 that his father had witnessed the arrival of Bourbaki's army in Switzerland during his youth.

During the First World War, children in the nations at war were extremely vulnerable. They suffered terrible conditions, were malnourished, poorly clothed and often badly educated. Switzerland began taking in children from regions blighted by war very early on in the conflict. By this time many Swiss had emigrated to elsewhere in Europe. Their children suffered just as much as those in the countries where they were living. A decision was made to come to their aid. In 1917, a handful of philanthropists from Basel welcomed 280 Swiss children from Germany. The Swiss Confederation met the costs. This marked the birth of the Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad, which survived thanks to donations, grants and volunteer work.

When peace returned, awareness of the needs of children in the regions devastated by war gave rise to the establishment of the International Save the Children Union

in Geneva in 1920. This was followed by the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923. In 1924, in cooperation with Pro Juventute, around 3,000 children were welcomed to the holiday camps. They came from big cities and very poor areas where children's illnesses were rife and tuberculosis was prevalent.

At the end of the 1920s, the foundation almost disappeared due to a decline in donations, funding and hosts. The economic crisis of the 1930s saw needs resurface. While Switzerland was also affected, it took in Swiss children from deprived backgrounds in Paris, Berlin, Hamburg and Brussels during this difficult period. Benefiting from the patriotic spirit that emerged with the national exhibition in 1939, the Foundation gradually transformed itself into a fund-raising organisation, enabling Pro Juventute to organise holiday camps and accommodation. These two partners ratified their cooperation by signing an agreement on 13 January 1940.

The situation during the Second World War was very different to that during the Great War as this time Switzerland was encircled. Families continued to host Swiss children in poverty but the Foundation also started to organise trips to Switzerland. Throughout the war, this enabled a growing number of Swiss youngsters from bordering countries to visit places of significance or importance in the country. In 1942, for example, 330 children from Germany, France, Italy and Hungary obtained the visas required thanks to the efforts of Heinrich Rothmund, the director of the federal aliens' police division and in other respects a very controversial figure. The first ski camp was organised in 1944. It was visited by General Guisan.

PHILIPPE VUILLEMIN

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Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundazion per giovani svizzeri a l'estero

Summer offers of the OSA Youth Service

Language courses:

This summer we are once again providing you with the opportunity to learn two of the four national languages on a beginners' course or to improve your linguistic skills on our advanced courses.

As well as the language lessons, you will also visit Swiss cities and experience the mountain landscape in an exciting programme of recreational activities. You will gain a close insight into Swiss culture in a welcoming host family. Don't wait, register now!

There are still places available on the following language courses:

German course in Zurich, 9/7 to 20/7/2018

German course in Basel, 23/7 to 3/8/2018

French course in Fribourg, 9/7 to 20/7/2018

For further information and to register, visit www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org:

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Attractive offers from other Swiss youth organisations:

Federal Youth Session (8 to 11/11/2018):

www.jugendsession.ch

Swiss Youth in Science (competition 2019):

www.sjf.ch

Focus remains on e-voting

Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad – 10 March 2018 at the City Hall in Berne

Seventy-four members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Berne for their spring meeting. Two issues were once again the centre of attention – e-voting and the attitude of the Swiss banks towards the Swiss Abroad.

Shortly before the CSA meeting, Franz Grüter, the SVP National Councillor from Lucerne and IT entrepreneur, had launched an initiative calling for a nationwide ban on e-voting which has since caused a stir amongst the Swiss Abroad too. While more and more cantons are endeavouring to meet the requirements to enable all citizens – including those abroad – to vote electronically, the initiative committee is seeking to put the brakes on this development.

In Berne, Franz Grüter took part in a debate with Claudia Pletscher of Swiss Post, which manages the e-voting system. "The question is not whether but when e-voting will be manipulated by hackers," remarked Grüter. "I believe it's extremely important that we can have faith in referendum and election results." Many countries, such as France, Norway and Finland, have abolished e-voting again. "We also attach top priority to security and trust. Swiss Post is therefore

working with a system where any manipulation will be universally detectable," responded Claudia Pletscher. "This will enable us to verify where and how many votes have been manipulated." However, complete security against manipulation cannot be guaranteed. "The comparisons with other countries are misleading. The systems that were hacked in the USA, for example, have nothing to do with our system. Online voting was not scrapped for security reasons in Finland."

After a lengthy debate on e-voting, Remo Gysin, the OSA president, and Filippo Lombardi, its vice-president, reported on the current state of play in relation to the Swiss banks. "We're approaching systemically important and public cantonal banks to engage them in in-depth talks," said Gysin. "We've made some initial progress. The Banque cantonale de Genève has promised to reach out to the Swiss Abroad." Council of States member Lombardi reported on the latest developments concerning political proposals on the issue and called for patience. "Little strokes fell big oaks," summed up Tim Guldmann, the Council member and SP National Councillor.

MARKO LEHTINEN



Franz Grüter and Claudia Pletscher debating the risks of e-voting at the CSA meeting.
Photo: OSA/Adrian Moser

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OSA advice

How can you find information on the conditions applied by the banks to the Swiss Abroad?

The easiest way is to contact the banks directly. Following discussions with systemically important banks (Credit Suisse, Raiffeisen, UBS, Zürcher Kantonalbank and PostFinance), the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has provided interested parties with advice and contact person details on its website. This can be found at: www.aso.ch > Consultation > Living abroad > Swiss banks.

The OSA has also entered into a partnership with the Banque cantonale de Genève (BCGE). The BCGE has undertaken to provide and maintain banking relationships with the Swiss Abroad under similar conditions to those offered to persons residing in Switzerland subject to the applicable regulatory provisions in Switzerland and abroad. This is the Xpatbking.ch programme which is aimed specifically at the Swiss Abroad. The services, conditions and charges that apply can be found on the BCGE's website at www.bcge.ch.

The OSA's Legal Service provides general legal information on Swiss law, particularly in areas which concern the Swiss Abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law or intervene in disputes between private parties.

Thank you, Tim Guldmann!

Tim Guldmann was our OSA National Councillor from October 2015. He unexpectedly stepped down on 15 March. That is regrettable but, of course, we must respect his decision. In his role as National Councillor, Tim Guldmann was a standard-bearer for the Swiss Abroad, a visible symbol playing an extremely important role for us which he carried out impeccably. He campaigned tirelessly on our issues, including e-voting, social insurance, bank policy and many more besides, and initiated and followed up many matters in cooperation with the "Swiss Abroad" parliamentary group and the OSA office. I wish to thank Tim Guldmann, who will continue to serve on the Council of the Swiss Abroad, most sincerely on behalf of the OSA.

REMO GYSIN, PRESIDENT OF THE OSA

THE SWISS ABROAD ON INSTAGRAM



From sport and nutrition advice to Insta star

Doris Hofer believes keeping fit was the best investment she has ever made in her life. The 42-year-old reinvented herself in Turkey, where providing tips on fitness and healthy eating has turned her into a much sought-after expert.

My Job: My fans on social media say I inspire them to eat a healthier diet and be more active. Many have written telling me that they love my short videos because the exercises are fun and my cheerful nature is infectious.

My Turkey: People love you if you speak Turkish. That's very useful and stands me in good stead, particularly when appearing on TV. I've never received hate mail in Turkey, in stark contrast to Switzerland. That's either because of my accent or that people here are less frustrated.

My Switzerland: I'm very proud of Switzerland. Politically in particular, we act as a role model. If someone thinks differently, they can also express and defend their views as long as they are reasonable. I love Switzerland's public transport and recycling system.

My heart: I miss my friends and family most of all. In terms of food, it has to be the wonderful cheese I miss most. After my divorce, I became self-employed and founded the company Squatgirl. I would love to visit Switzerland more often again and work with Swiss companies. But we probably wouldn't move back because we have a patchwork family: the father of my children is here and I don't want them to grow up without him.

This interview was published on swissinfo.ch, the online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Company, which is available in ten languages. Do you live abroad too? Then tag your Instagram photos **#WeAreSwissAbroad**.