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# “I was also able to improve my language skills”

The young Swiss Abroad Pol Giralt from Spain was a student at the Swiss school in Barcelona, like his grandmother and father. During the last long summer holidays, he visited Switzerland and worked on a farm.

INTERVIEW: RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE

Agriviva was founded over 75 years ago. The organisation aims to build a bridge between town and country and different cultures by arranging placements of several weeks for young people from all over the world. In return for free board and lodging and a small amount of pocket money, you will help a farming family with their daily work. Ideal for all those who like to be active, like nature, and want to get to know a new family and life on a Swiss farm.

## Pol Giralt, how did you find out about the Swiss organisation Agriviva?

My father read an article in the “Swiss Review” by educationsuisse on the subject of “Gaining work experience in Switzerland”. Agriviva was also mentioned in it. I thought working on a farm was a good idea and I really wanted to try it out. I found all the necessary information on the Agriviva website and so I signed up.

## How did you like it on the farm in Switzerland?

I spent a whole month on the farm in the village of Bözberg in the canton of Aargau and experienced a lot. I liked it very much, although it was sometimes exhausting work.

## Describe for us your typical day on the farm.

I got up at 7 am and had a big breakfast with the family. At 8 o'clock we went to the field to pick cherries. Every day there were about 15 people working, but sometimes there were 30 people. The cherry trees are about four metres high. So, we climbed ladders or picked from the ground more than 500 kilos of fruit every day. After the lunch



Pol Giralt: “To experience hard work yourself teaches us to have respect for the farmers.”  
Photo donated

break, I either helped pick cherries again or was in the barn milking cows.

## Were there any language problems or other problems of understanding?

I learned German at the Swiss school in Barcelona and at home with my grandmother. So, there were few misunderstandings. The farmer’s family knew that I didn’t understand Swiss German. There were also some employees from Germany, so we always spoke German. And I was also able to improve my language skills.

## What did you like most on the farm?

It was very interesting to meet many new people and the different cultures. It was also interesting to see how the farmers market the fruit and to follow the path of the cherries from the field to the supermarket.

## Will you return to Switzerland to work on a farm again?

I would like to go to a farmer’s family again next year. However, in September I started my studies in chemical engineering at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya - UPC. I am not sure whether I will have enough time for Agriviva.

## Would you recommend a stay with a farm family to your friends?

Yes, for sure! And not only to my friends, but to all young people, I recommend helping on a farm. It’s not only a great experience, but you also learn new things. To experience yourself the hard work that is done so that we have food on the table every day teaches us to have respect for the farmers.

Educationsuisse offers young Swiss Abroad advice on all matters related to education in Switzerland.



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## Taking out health insurance on my return to Switzerland

*The question: I thought I would automatically have health insurance when I return to Switzerland, because health insurance is mandatory after all. No one told me I would have to take out health insurance myself. When can I actually do this?*

The answer: No, you do not automatically have health insurance. But as soon as you become a Swiss resident again, you can and must take out basic insurance. This cover will normally apply retroactively from the date you register with your local municipality (i.e. as soon as you legally reside in Switzerland).

Health insurance is mandatory for everyone living in Switzerland. Health insurers are therefore also obliged to provide basic insurance to anyone who resides in Switzerland, regardless of age or state of health. Furthermore, you are free to choose your health insurer (from the list of authorised insurers). The law governs which services are covered by basic insurance.

Health insurers cannot refuse basic insurance to Swiss who have returned to Switzerland after living abroad, nor are they permitted to impose any restrictions (e.g. due to pre-existing medical conditions). You must take out health insurance within three months of taking up residence in Switzerland. Cover will then apply retroactively from the date you started legally residing in the country.

Certain people are exempt from the obligation to take out insurance in Switzerland. These include retired persons who draw a pension from an EU country but do not receive a Swiss pension, as well as anyone who is in Switzerland for education or training purposes and has insurance equivalent to basic Swiss cover.

Health insurance is taken out individually for each family member (adults and children). All insured persons pay a premium which can vary depending on the health insurance scheme, but the basic insurance services are the same for everyone. It is worth comparing premiums. The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) provides a comparison of premiums online: [www.priminfo.ch](http://www.priminfo.ch).

OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT



Photo: Thomas Schneider

## The 2nd Congress of Young Swiss Abroad will be devoted to green issues

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad is organising the 2nd Congress of Young Swiss Abroad this summer in collaboration with the Youth Parliament of Swiss Abroad (YPSA).

The very first Congress of Young Swiss Abroad was held in July 2021 – and it was a success. Never before has there been a dedicated event of this type providing young Swiss Abroad with a broad-based opportunity for interaction. The congress, which took place online, was organised in collaboration with the Youth Parliament of Swiss Abroad (YPSA), which acts as the voice of all young Swiss living abroad. Topics of interest such as Swiss politics, education, jobs and culture featured on a varied agenda. Thanks to the virtual format, around 50 young people from 23 different countries ranging from France to Sri Lanka, Chile and Australia were able to contribute.

As this online get-together was such an encouraging experience, a second congress is now being planned for 13 July 2022. “Green Switzerland” will be its key theme and focus. From 16 May 2022, you can enrol for the event on our website at [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org) > Youth Offers. Further information as well as a detailed schedule will shortly also be available on the website. (MB)

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