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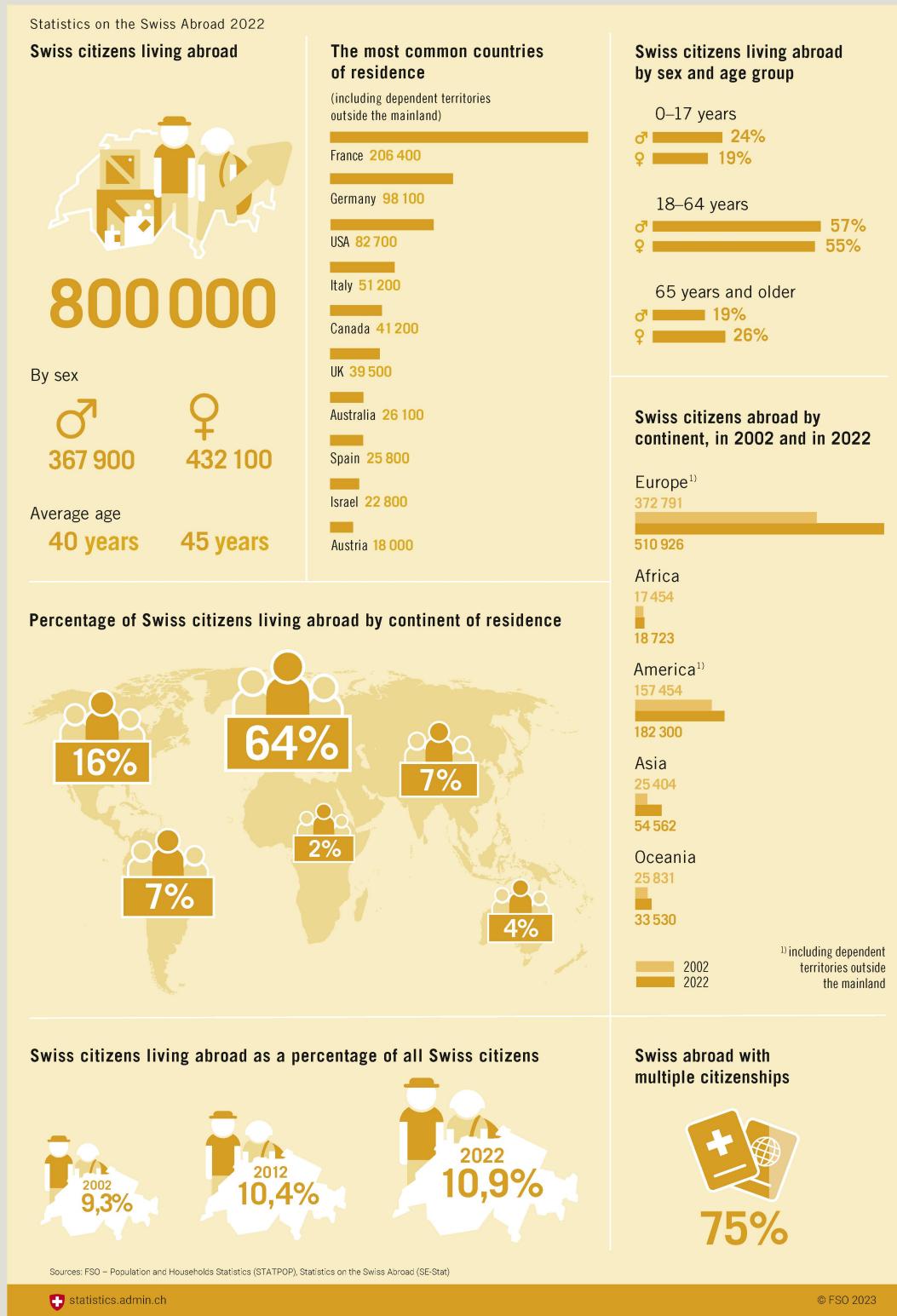
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Number of Swiss Abroad up by 34% since 2002

The number of Swiss nationals living abroad has grown constantly since 2002 and exceeded 800,000 in 2022. More and more people are living in South-East Asia. These findings and more are revealed in the statistics on the Swiss Abroad published by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO).



As at 31 December 2022, 800,041 Swiss nationals were registered with a competent Swiss representation abroad. This number has grown continuously from 598,934 in 2002, an increase of 34%. The upwards trend was observed in every continent, but was more marked in some than in others: +115% in Asia, +37% in Europe, +30% in Oceania, +16% in America and +7% in Africa.

South-East Asia, Europe, North America and North Africa are the main destinations

The population of Swiss citizens abroad has increased in all countries in South-East Asia, North Africa, Europe and North America (+132%, +59%, +37% and +18% respectively) since 2002. In South-East Asia, the largest increases were seen in Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, and in North Africa in Algeria and Morocco. The European countries recording the greatest increases included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Turkey (Türkiye). The United States and Canada, meanwhile, saw increases of +19% and +17% respectively.

By contrast, other regions of the world saw their Swiss community shrink between 2002 and 2022. For example, the number of Swiss nationals in Central and Southern Africa fell by 24% and 10% respectively. In both regions, most countries recorded a decrease. A similar trend was observed in many Caribbean and South Asian countries, which also recorded a drop in the number of Swiss nationals.

FEDERAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

Further information
revue.link/statistics



The Swiss Abroad are our calling card

The Consular Directorate of the FDFA acts as a central point of contact, providing efficient administrative services geared to the needs of our compatriots in other countries. We spoke to its new director general, Ambassador David Grichting, about his priorities and how he is approaching his new role.

Since April 2023 David Grichting has been at the helm of the Consular Directorate, which oversees the laws governing the Swiss Abroad and is a privileged partner of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). After graduating in business administration and entrepreneurial studies, the 43-year-old from Valais spent several years working in marketing and project management roles before joining the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in 2009. Since then he has gained extensive and varied experience both in foreign representations and at head office (attaché in Tel Aviv, head of consular services in Pristina, CFO of the FDFA, ambassador in Astana), giving him a wide-ranging perspective on issues pertinent to the Swiss Abroad that he will be able to leverage to good effect over the coming years. How does he see his role?

A long and dynamic history

“People tend to forget that Switzerland is also a country of emigration, and has been for several centuries,” says Ambassador Grichting. Johann August Sutter, Louis Chevrolet and Francesco Borromini are some of the most illustrious examples. While the reasons for this emigration, be it temporary or permanent, may have changed, the flow of people has not. Whether for love, work, education or a desire to discover the world, emigration clearly helps improve the diversity and dynamism of our population. The ambassador notes that “the pace of this increasing mobility is picking up, giving rise to varying needs among the Swiss Abroad that we have to take into account in our day-to-day activities”. The “Fifth Switzerland” is hugely important and therefore merits special attention. With this in mind, the new director general hails the importance of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and underlines how much it matters that expats are still able to exercise their political rights.



Ambassador David Grichting at his new place of work, the Consular Directorate in Berne. In his new role, he is also keen to “engage with our compatriots and listen to what they have to say”. Photo: Danielle Liniger

Interaction in the common interest

Ambassador Grichting makes the point that 11 percent of Swiss citizens live abroad. “They are not only a key source of information but also an ideal intermediary for our economy, businesses, research, etc.,” the diplomat says. “I have observed on multiple occasions the enormous contribution they make to promoting Switzerland’s positive image by helping open up our geographically landlocked country to the rest of the world.” He also notes that “this idea of interaction between Switzerland and its community of citizens living abroad is enshrined in

Article 40 of the Federal Constitution, which stipulates that the Confederation shall encourage relations among the Swiss Abroad and their relations with Switzerland.” The SwissInTouch app helps support this requirement.

What role does the FDFA Consular Directorate play?

As outlined in the May 2023 edition of “Swiss Review”, “the Consular Directorate works closely with other institutions to best serve the interests of the Swiss Abroad”. However, the ambassador is keen to stress that a key



David Grichting came to Berne via Kazakhstan. As Switzerland's ambassador to the country, he immersed himself in local cultural activities such as the Nauryz Spring Festival seen here. Photo: Lisa Wermelinger

aspect of its activities is working with other offices and partners to generate synergies and maximise its impact. He also points out that “the principles of individual responsibility and of the subsidiarity of state action form the cornerstones of consular activities”. As such, the Consular Directorate must provide the Swiss Abroad with services and information that meet their needs and develop modern instruments aimed at facilitating relations. Personal dialogue is essential in order to better understand expats’ needs and expectations. David Grichting: “I shall make it a point of honour to listen to and engage with our compatriots through our representations abroad or during my travels around the world. I look forward to accompanying and supporting our communities abroad, and first and foremost to meeting my expat compatriots. By transporting kindness and our values to the places they now live, the Swiss Abroad are both a calling card and a key intermediary for Switzerland.”

FDFA, CONSULAR DIRECTORATE

Federal elections 2023

The general elections to both chambers of the federal parliament take place on 22 October 2023. For information, explanatory videos, and interactive charts about the elections to the National Council and the Council of States, visit www.ch.ch/wahlen2023 – a service brought to you by the Federal Chancellery, the Parliamentary Services, the Federal Statistical Office and the cantons. This website will also publish the election results on 22 October 2023.

This information, including the election results, will also appear on the Federal Chancellery app Voteinfo. To download the app, visit revue.link/voteinfo.



Federal votes

Due to the elections, there are no further voting dates in 2023. The next voting date is 3 March 2024. The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date.

Everything you need to know about these voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by parliament and the Federal Council, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's Voteinfo app.



Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiatives have already been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Anyone wanting to pay in cash should be able to do so!’ (21.09.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Yes to the secure supply of medical products’ (04.10.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘For the equality of people with disabilities (Inclusion Initiative)’ (25.10.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘To protect humans, domestic animals and livestock from wolves.’ (02.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Yes to a future without animal testing’ (09.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘Confirmation of Federal Council members by the people and the cantons’ (16.11.2024)
- Federal Popular Initiative ‘For a modern right to citizenship (Democracy Initiative)’ (23.11.2024)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen

