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“Swiss Review” – theft of mailing address data

As already reported on the FDFA and OSA websites in June, the Swiss printing company Vogt-Schild, which prints and sends out “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, has been the victim of a cyber attack.

The Swiss printing company Vogt-Schild, which prints and sends out “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, has been the victim of a cyber attack.

As part of the attack, an unknown number of mailing addresses for the March 2023 issue of “Swiss Review” were stolen. Depending on how the “Swiss Review” is sent, the stolen data includes either the email addresses or the surnames, first names and postal addresses of the recipients. Vogt-Schild does not hold any other personal information relating to the mailing of “Swiss Review”. Vogt-Schild has taken additional measures to strengthen the security of its IT infrastructure and has lodged a criminal complaint. In the meantime, the federal authorities responsible for data protection and combating cyber-crime have been informed.

As a reminder, everyone is advised to change their passwords regularly and, ideally, to use two-factor authentication.

For all questions relating to cyber security, important additional information can be found on the website of the National Cyber Security Centre NCSC: revue.link/ncsc

Help to obtain an education or training in Switzerland

Young Swiss Abroad receive personal counselling on the topic of education in Switzerland.



Information related to education in Switzerland is available in various languages. Photo: Anja Lötscher

Every year, the staff of educationsuisse receive numerous inquiries from Swiss citizens abroad or from their relatives and friends in Switzerland. Most questions concern scholarship opportunities and university studies. However, educationsuisse also receives a wide variety of questions about vocational training, finding an apprenticeship, accommodation, insurance and the language skills required. What often becomes apparent is that owing to the rather high cost of living in Switzerland, financing an education can be a problem. However, a solution can always be found.

The educationsuisse service offers free advice and support in the search for suitable education or training solutions:

- Information relating to different educational options such as university studies or vocational training
- Information relating to specific questions regarding admission requirements, required language skills, deadlines, accommodation, insurances, etc.

- Individual counselling on site in Berne or online regarding education in Switzerland
- Vocational and study counselling in co-operation with a professional career counselling provider (fee-based)
- Assistance in applying for cantonal scholarships and administrative support
- Financial help (grants/loans) from educationsuisse and private foundations

The educationsuisse staff speak English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. They will be glad to help and answer questions about education in Switzerland via email, telephone or Skype, or on site in Berne.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE



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The new e-voting system is “miles better than all the alternatives”

Whenever e-voting is on the political agenda, the main questions have to do with security. Initiated by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), the meeting between the “Swiss Abroad” parliamentary group and Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr was no exception.

MARC LETTAU

The time was right. In May, about one month before the popular votes of 18 June 2023, Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr and members of the National Council and Council of States came together to look closely at the issue of e-voting. An important pilot had been scheduled for 18 June, with the new Swiss Post e-voting system due to be trialled for the first time in the cantons of Basel-Stadt, St Gallen and Thurgau. We now know that the system passed the test (see page 9) – although this outcome was still uncertain at the time of the OSA-initiated meeting of the “Swiss Abroad” parliamentary group.

Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr was already in confident mood. A lot of time had passed since the last e-voting pilots were suspended in 2019, he said at the meeting. But it was wrong to think that nothing had happened in the interim. “The time was used to rethink everything, take on board criticism of the previous pilots and expand collaboration with experts.” They also cranked up the technical requirements for e-voting, he added. The integrated control mechanisms in particular are now reliable, and it is even possible at the time of voting to check whether your vote has been properly recorded.

Yet there was, and still is, scepticism in some quarters. National Councillor Jean-Luc Addor (SVP, canton of Valais) wondered at the meeting whether just a “gradual” or “partial” approach to the issue would be better, such as the voting papers being sent electronically (and returned by post). Dispatching the voting papers in advance was fraught with risks, Thurnherr replied. The new e-voting system was “miles better than all the alternatives”, in his view. “Why not use the safer method?”

The Federal Chancellor also believes that e-voting in its new guise is better and safer than the idea put forward by National Councillor Andri Silberschmidt (FDP, canton of Zurich) of dispatching and returning voting papers via diplomatic courier. Thurnherr: “A modern e-voting system is much safer than postal voting – a procedure that we already trust – and more secure than the usual e-banking platforms that we use on a daily basis.”



Walter Thurnherr: “Why not use the safer method?”

Photo: Danielle Liniger



Talks took place at the Federal Palace, but the future conversation on e-voting will now be shaped by the cantons. Photo: Danielle Liniger

The parliamentary group co-chair, Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter (The Centre, canton of Basel-Landschaft), noted that any decisions to expand the new e-voting pilot to more cantons depended not on the federal government but on the cantons themselves, because it is the cantons that organise the voting process. She agreed with the Federal Chancellor on one thing: if Swiss Abroad express an interest in using e-voting in their canton, this would exert

additional pressure and help to change the dynamic.

The Federal Chancellery itself will not put any pressure on the cantons, stressed Thurnherr. Piloting the new e-voting system is their decision alone. “We are not applying pressure or banging the drum. All we want is to be transparent.”

Well-trained camp leaders are essential to every great holiday camp

Our holiday camps for children and young people are a source of exciting experiences and enduring memories. Well-trained camp leaders are vital to ensuring that all participants remember their time fondly. Here is a brief look back at this year's training course.

The Y+S training course, run jointly by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) and the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), took place again over Easter. Y+S stands for Youth and Sport, the federal government scheme to promote sport. Camp leaders for our summer holiday camps are trained at these courses over nine days.

Well-trained camp leadership teams are immensely important to the success of OSA and FYSA summer holiday camps. Specific Y+S criteria apply to anyone offering and running summer holiday camps in Switzerland. One of these criteria is that, for every 12 participants, there must be a competent camp leader who has done the Y+S Camp Sports/Trekking training course. This is because our summer holiday camps fall into the Camp Sports/Trekking sports category.

The primary themes of this year's training course were: planning and carrying out the programme of camp activities, getting to know the needs of children and young people, and taking responsibility as a camp leader. The course also provided information on specific activities, such as how to plan hikes, read maps, or put up a tent correctly and safely.

There was a lot to take in over a relatively short space of time, so each course day was long – starting at 9 a.m. and rarely ending any time before 10 p.m. This is an intense but unique course, because camp leaders not only get to know the theory but are also able to immediately put what they have learned into practice. For example, all the participants were put in groups. They then planned and performed their own sports activities and prepared and did their own hikes, learning first-hand about relevant opportunities and challenges while having to consider and take necessary precautions.

In addition, prospective camp leaders were invited to think about and discuss other themes such as styles of communica-



Camp leaders need to trust and count on each other – in every situation. Photo provided

tion, styles of leadership, and social interaction. We also took an interesting practical look at intercultural awareness and communication, as well as providing tips on how to handle challenging behaviour.

Despite its instructive nature, the course had plenty of that inimitable camping atmosphere. We cooked over a fire every evening, learned lots of new games and spent a night camping outdoors. Sleeping in our tents was the highlight of the trip for many.

Everything that our young camp leaders learned and experienced will stand them in

good stead for drawing up camp activities themselves and making sound decisions. Thanks to this year's course, we now have a new generation of camp leaders who can put their knowledge into practice at our summer holiday camps and provide good support to our team.

Incidentally, it is gratifying to see that our people want to carry on learning. Camp leaders do a refresher course every two years to ensure they retain their Y+S accreditation, and often attend other important training courses.

ISABELLE STEBLER (FYSA) AND FABIENNE STOCKER (OSA)

We would like to know what you think

We at the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) want to respond to the needs and wishes of young Swiss Abroad more effectively, which is why we are now conducting a questionnaire about our activities and offers. In doing so, we want to help young expatriates to think about and strengthen their connection to Switzerland. We would be delighted if you could take 15 minutes of your time to fill in the questionnaire.

This survey is dedicated primarily to young people aged 15 to 25, as well as adults that know young Swiss Abroad who are interested in what we offer.

FABIENNE STOCKER, OSA YOUTH SERVICE

Revue.link/survey



OSA to hold more webinars after successful debut

Retirement abroad and the OASI state pension scheme were the important themes of the inaugural webinar held by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) last February in collaboration with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), the Swiss Compensation Office (SCO), and Soliswiss. Retirement is on many expatriates' minds, given that the number of Swiss pensioners in the "Fifth Switzerland" is currently increasing by around three per cent every year. During the webinar, Michel Malizia of the FDFA, Philippe Girard and Susan Flückiger of the SCO, and Nicole Töpperwien and Isabelle Baur of Soliswiss all provided insights into this complex issue. The event was a big success, with over 500 Swiss Abroad dialling in from around the world.

A recording of the webinar is now available to watch at revue.link/webinar.

The event attracted very positive feedback, which is why OSA has decided to hold more webinars on issues of interest to the Swiss expatriate community. A webinar on estate planning for Swiss Abroad took place on 13 June 2023 in partnership with the FDFA.

Webinars on the following themes are scheduled to take place.

20 September 2023:
Military service for Swiss Abroad
(see the adjacent article)

17 October 2023:
Banks

13 December 2023:
Social security and health insurance

These events are part of OSA's ongoing mission to inform and advise the Swiss expatriate community. Given the success of the format, it intends to offer further webinars next year.

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA

"Will I have to do military service when I return to Switzerland?"

Question: "I live in France and have both a Swiss and French passport. I am 18 years old and would soon like to start a university course. I am now thinking of studying in Switzerland. Will I have to do military service when I return to Switzerland?"



Recruits in Colombier (canton of Neuchâtel). Drills are an integral part of basic military training.
Photo: Keystone

Answer: Military service in Switzerland is mandatory for all Swiss men but voluntary for Swiss women. You are obliged to do military service after you turn 18, and are liable for conscription until you reach the age of 25. You must complete basic military training within a year of conscription.

Provided you are living abroad, you are exempt from conscription and military service in peacetime. However, if you return to Switzerland to study and therefore intend to stay in Switzerland for a period of more than three months, you will be liable for conscription and obliged to do military service – assuming that you are deemed fit for military service. You will consequently be obliged to report to the relevant cantonal district command within 14 days of your arrival in Switzerland.

Alternatively, you have the option of doing civilian service instead of military service. If you do neither military service nor civilian service, you must pay a levy called the military service exemption tax. If you return to Switzerland after you turn 25, this tax obligation will continue at the latest until the end of the year in which you reach the age of 37.

Military service is also mandatory if you hold dual nationality. However, if you can

prove that you are a dual national and have already carried out military service or civilian service in the other country of which you are a citizen, you no longer have to do military service in Switzerland. Switzerland has concluded bilateral agreements with various countries – including France – with regard to military service for dual nationals. In your specific case, you can do military service in either France or Switzerland, after which the obligation to do military service or pay exemption tax would then no longer apply in any other country.

If you have any other questions regarding the military service obligation for Swiss Abroad, please address them to:

STEPHANIE LEBER, OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Training and Education Command
Armed Forces Personnel
Area of application of law/guidelines
Rödtmattstrasse 110, 3003 Berne, Switzerland
Telephone +41 800 424 111
Email: personnelles.persa@vtg.admin.ch
www.vtg.admin.ch

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad will also hold a webinar about military service on 20 September 2023 (see adjacent text). Participation in the webinar is free of charge.

Discussion: Carl Lutz and the Holocaust

Agnes Hirschi, from Berne, escaped the Holocaust in Hungary as a child – thanks to the diplomat Carl Lutz, who later became her stepfather. Today, Hirschi is doing all she can to ensure that we never forget what Lutz did in saving her and thousands of others. Our readers were moved by her story.



Agnes Hirschi
Photo: Danielle Liniger

Carl Lutz rescued 50,000 Hungarian Jews

WOLF STAUB, AYSÉN, CHILE

This recognition is richly deserved and, unfortunately, much too late. People like Carl Lutz are true heroes in our nation's history. And there were still others who, as the article mentions, never got due recognition. Indeed, quite the opposite. It tells of a dark chapter in Swiss history.

KATHARINA HOTZ, WINTERTHUR

Thank you very much for this enlightening article. In 2017, a plaque commemorating Carl Lutz was inaugurated at the Riehen Memorial (near Basel). Shedding light on historical events and, specifically, on Switzerland's role during the Second World War, this privately founded site is of notable educational value for young people including Swiss Abroad. revue.link/riehen

ARNO FUCHS, ISRAEL

I have long wondered why the Swiss government needed half a century to rehabilitate Carl Lutz and Paul Grüninger (1995) – and why they applied double standards. They chose not to punish Carl Lutz, but they cheated Paul Grüninger of his pension. They stole his money. I suddenly realised why a few days ago: Carl Lutz only cost the country a little extra paperwork. The Jews whom he rescued in Hungary emigrated to Palestine. There was no expense involved for Berne. On the other hand, Paul Grüninger cost the country money. "His" refugees remained in Switzerland and had to be

supported. Who had to cough up the francs? Exactly.

RALPH UNO, ARGENTINA

Was there ever a reason found why the government did not agree with Mr Carl Lutz for saving so many lives? If there was a reason, it should be known.

PETER OCHSNER, NAIROBI, KENYA

Your article forgot to mention one phrase: never forget. Lutz had no interest in fame, even on his deathbed. What he wanted was that the world would never forget the death and destruction caused by the Nazis and their warped ideology. Phrases like "It's such a long time ago" or "Life goes on" are intolerable in this context.

About "Swiss Review" in general

TONI CAVELTI, WEST VANCOUVER, CANADA

I enjoy every edition of "Swiss Review". The March issue was particularly interesting for two reasons. I first encountered the beautiful Shep-en-Isis during my youth in St Gallen. Our classroom was situated directly above her sarcophagus, and visits to the Abbey Library were an annual occurrence. Who would have thought back then that she would be at the centre of an international squabble! Secondly, your article about Romansh. Although I grew up in St Gallen, it is still the language that my family and I use to speak to each other at home here in Canada. The type of Romansh that we speak has become our own little dialect. I find it hard to read and understand the "standard" Romansh that they use today.

Visit the online edition of "Swiss Review" at www.revue.ch.

Read the latest comments on our articles and join the conversation yourself.

The "Swiss Review" thanks its readers

Many readers in the "Fifth Switzerland" particularly appreciate the print edition of "Swiss Review". Not only do they want to read the magazine, but they also want to hold something tangible and tactile from Switzerland in their hands. We are very grateful to those who support the paper version of "Swiss Review" with a voluntary subscription fee: Your donations are a source of encouragement to us.

At the same time, the challenges remain enormous: Extremely high mailing costs coupled with the sharp rise in energy and raw material prices – not least due to the war in Ukraine – mean that "Swiss Review" has had to take a financial hit. What compounds the situation is that we have no additional funds available – and that the magazine is essentially free of charge for Swiss Abroad.

Voluntary subscriptions from our readers are, therefore, an important and much-appreciated way to ensure the print edition's long-term survival. We hope you agree that this latest magazine illustrates our unwavering commitment to the hard-copy format, as we believe that we have put together another content-packed, stimulating and highly readable "Swiss Review". And we would really like to continue doing this in future - for you, our readers.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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