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Your Corner.....

IMMIGRATION TO NEW ZEALAND

Every so often some of us have been asked by friends and family living in Switzerland (or another country),

"What are the requirements needed for Immigration to New Zealand" -

is there a specific criteria and do I qualify?

The following article may help to answer some of those questions and at the end of it are some contact addresses for anyone requiring more information.

We would like to thank the Embassy of Switzerland, in particular Mr. Franz Schneider, for his time in replying to our questions on immigration issues for Swiss Citizens.

The fundamental authority for immigration to New Zealand is held by the NZ Government, entrusted to the Department of Labour.

Correspondence by telephone or letter should be addressed to the **National Office of Immigration Services in Wellington** or to any of the branch offices in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch and Dunedin. A booklet (*New Zealand, the right choice!*) is available and contains all the addresses of the above mentioned branch offices. Also available is a brochure entitled *"Self Assessment Guide for Residence in New Zealand"*, which explains in detail the **Point-System** being used in regard to residence permit applications.

Basically there are two ways to immigrate to New Zealand;

- a) Temporary Permit to cover;
 - Studies, (maximum 4 years)
 - visitors permit (maximum 9 months)
 - work permit (maximum 3 years)
 - permit for **'Stagiaires'** (French word for trainee in practical work environment)

Since June 28. 1984, New Zealand and Switzerland have an agreement which allows an exchange of a limited number of 'Stagiaires' (Trainees).

Stagiaires are Swiss Citizen aged 18 - 30 with a completed professional education. This exchange scheme gives them the opportunity to extend their professional and language skills for a full-time working period of **up to 12 months in New Zealand**.

'Stagiaires' must work full-time in

their chosen field but they are **not allowed to work in self-employment**. This type of exchange is applicable regardless of the prevailing job-market in the host country.

To obtain a work permit it is necessary for the prospective employer in New Zealand to prove that there was no "Kiwi-employee" available for the particular job applied for. The proposed employer then has to apply to the Immigration Service for an *"Approval in principle"*. - Once this *"Approval in principle"* is obtained by the prospective employer, the candidate for immigration overseas can submit the application for the work permit at the New Zealand Embassy in his country.

b) Residence Permit

- general skills category
- business investor category

in both instances a **Point system** will be used.

The number of points necessary for every applicant are determined by the prevailing immigration-situation in New Zealand at the time. -The amount of points needed for a successful application can be increased or lowered at the discretion of the New Zealand authorities depending on the numbers of applications in total in order to satisfy the annual quota. (In 1997, for instance, New Zealand granted a total of 35000 permits).

While it is possible to apply for a **Residence permit** after arrival in New Zealand, under normal circumstances the application should be submitted while residing overseas. *The Swiss Embassy has indicated that it does not have the information necessary to ascertain the chances of an application.* - However the Swiss Embassy is aware that in a few cases the application was rejected because of shortcomings like 'lack-Of-language-skills' or 'unsatisfactory professional qualifications'..!

Please note that the 'New Zealand Qualification Authority' is appointed to calculate the number of points while assessing education and work experience of the applicant.

An immigration consultant can be employed to support the application.

As part of his services the 'Immigration-Consultant' will normally assess the applicant's

chances giving an indication of possible success or failure. Depending on each individual case such a service costs approx. \$100.- (or with luck it might be done free of charge!)

- In any case it is advisable to obtain a clear indication of possible costs.!!

-- The above article has been translated from German and every care has been taken to retain accuracy.

Through the New Zealand Immigration lawyer, **Paulo Kündig, partner of Lane, Neave, Ronaldson**, we were fortunate to make contact with a family still living in Switzerland, who are in the process of immigration to New Zealand. They have shared some of their thoughts with us, and how the Immigration System has worked for them.

They write....

We have had the desire to emigrate for many years. Every time we returned to Switzerland after having spent holidays abroad, we felt 'confined' again.

- Due to various circumstances I had to close my office in August 1992 and so had to close down my business.

I had to take out a mortgage, we owed a lot of taxes and we didn't qualify for financial assistance from any Swiss social agency. These events formed a clearer picture for us about Switzerland and strengthened our desire to emigrate.

However during these bad times I furthered my education and rapidly

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things started to improve.

- As our thoughts focused on emigration, New Zealand was one of our first choices. By chance we saw an advertisement in the 'Neue Zürcher-Zeitung' regarding a seminar for people contemplating 'Emigration to New Zealand'.

That is how we came to meet the New Zealand Immigration lawyer Paulo Kündig, partner of "Lane-Neave Ronaldson" in July 94.

In October 1995 we received a Returning Residence Visa for New Zealand.

- We travelled for a month around New Zealand from Christchurch to Northland in a campervan. It was for us a wonderful experience and strengthened our desire to live in New Zealand.

- We found the tough selection of the points system good.

Our job qualifications and experience were in our favour, also our state of health was checked. Some disadvantage is the age factor - (if over 50 you don't receive any age-related points).

- We weren't too happy that a time limit was put on our immigration. But we shouldn't complain as we were given a two year extension on our Visa.

- We have to complete our Immigration to New Zealand by March 2000.

Paulo Kündig is a specialist Immigration lawyer, and head of the Immigration Division at Lane Neave, Barrister & Solicitors, in Christchurch.

- Over the years he has acted on behalf of a large number of individuals who have immigrated to New Zealand.

- Paulo believes there is no immigration-related problem or area

that they cannot handle. He specialises in assisting overseas individuals in obtaining permanent residency in New Zealand. Gaining a residence permit is of course subject, to meeting the criteria of one of the four residence categories of the Government's current residence policy.

Our readers have been most cooperative in readily giving us some account of their personal experiences on immigration to New Zealand. It transpired from all our recent Immigrants that they all feel it is extremely important to know as much as possible about the country you wish to immigrate to; travel to New Zealand, have a good look around. - Spend some time living here. Look beyond a tourist's point of view. Ask questions, read New Zealand newspapers. Find out about the library, the school system, vocational training, apprenticeships and the polytechnic - especially if you intend to raise a family here. What about the country's political or health systems?

- All agreed that saving money in Switzerland with its high scale of income, was a lot easier than in New Zealand. It is important to be able to make an informed decision before starting official proceedings.

- The 'point-system' has been pointed out to be a major hurdle for some. Since the New Zealand education-vocational training is very different from the Swiss system, it would be an advantage if the Swiss Government would explain the merits of the Swiss School System to the New Zealand Government, as this could help in earning those vital points.

Once you get yourself established here, our recent Immigrants feel it is a superb idea to belong to a group of people you feel at ease and comfort-

able with. Join a club e.g. tramping, swimming, bowling, Swiss Club or maybe your local church. If you have children, get involved with their play-group, school or sports activity. Pursue a new hobby or interest - try something new! Belonging seems to be the key word. Try not to criticise your chosen country - just remember you chose to move here!!

We hope this article has been of help to some of you. And remember, if you've got something you'd like to share with us, drop us a line.

Trudy and Doris.

Contact addresses:

Embassy of Switzerland: Panama House, 22, Panama St., Wellington

New Zealand Immigration Service:

Refer to your local Telephone Directory.

Citizen's Advice Bureau:

Refer to your local Telephone Directory.

Barristers & Solicitors:

Lane, Neave, Ronaldson, P.O.Box 13149 Christchurch.

CONTACT WITH OTHER CLUBS AND ETHNIC ORGANISATIONS

As a matter of practice for many years now, complimentary copies of the *Helvetia* are forwarded to a variety of similar ethnic organisations around New Zealand, so that these groups are able to keep in touch with events in the Swiss community. In addition, our advertising is being seen by a greater scope of readers. We, in turn, have now recently been sent copies of magazines from two of these organisations - "Das Echo Deutscher", written in German; and "Alliance Francaise", written in French. I am hoping that the Society will receive regular issues now, but for anyone who is interested in subscribing to these publications personally, please contact me for further information. Beatrice.

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