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What to do when returning to Switzerland to live

(Article provided by Heinz Leuenberger - Delegate for Swiss Abroad)

Many times, the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in Berne becomes aware of cases of Swiss nationals, when returning home for good, find that adjusting to the new environment can be very troublesome. This usually happens mainly if they failed to investigate and plan their return in depth, if indeed at all.

Second and onward generation nationals abroad often find that their lack of knowledge of one of Switzerland's languages is a distinct disadvantage. Also very frustrating can be the fact that qualifications acquired abroad (diplomas, certificates, etc) may not be recognised. It goes without saying that all Swiss citizens going or returning to Switzerland to live can take up residence wherever they choose, without having to seek a residential permit first. As well, should one get into major financial difficulties, the chosen 'county of residence' (or Wohngemeinde) is responsible for your well-being.

To make the transition easier, follow the list of steps to take as follows:

Changing Addresses:

- Inform your Embassy, as well as your Local Authority, of your intended departure
- Change your postal address
- Cancel your insurance
- Within 14 days of your arrival at your new address in Switzerland, inform your new Local Authority (this is a legal requirement)
- for men, also inform the local military Section Head (Sektionschef) of your arrival

Job Hunting:

Swiss nationals can take on a job in Switzerland at any time without the need of a work permit.

For job seekers, information is available from:

- Federal Office for Questions concerning Foreigners, Section Emigration, Quellestrasse 15, 3003 Bern
- The Cantonal Labour Offices
- Trade organisations
- Daily papers and private employment agencies

House Hunting:

- Daily papers
- Real Estate Agencies (preferably in the region of new domicile)

Customs:

All personal property, for your own personal use, brought into Switzerland from abroad, can be imported free of any custom's charge. For more information, contact either your Embassy, or:

Eidg. Oberzolldirektion
Monbijoustrasse 40
3003 Berne

Military Service:

Principally, all (male) Swiss Abroad, when returning to live in Switzerland before reaching 35 years of age, and who have not been called up for service by their country of former residence, will be called up for military service. Further information is available from the Embassy, or directly from the:

Department of Defence
Sektion Wehrpflicht
Rodtmattstrasse 110, Berne

Retirement in Switzerland:

Retirees can address their retirement questions to:

Stiftung pro Senectute Schweiz
Lavaterstr. 60 (Postfach 8077)
8002 Zürich

For nursing home facilities, information is available from: Association pour les bien-être des Residents en Etablissement Medico-Social, 10 Avenue de Chailly 1000 Lausanne (PO Box 226)

Unemployment Insurance Benefit:

Returning Swiss nationals applying for the unemployment benefit will be eligible by providing proof that they were previously employed for at least six months over the last two years. Further information is available at the local labour exchange.

Sickness Insurance:

According to the Sickness Insurance Law, in force since 1/1996, basic health insurance is compulsory for all people living in Switzerland. When returning from abroad, you must insure against sickness with a recognised insurer within three months.

Education and Training:

Information is available from:

- Swiss Abroad Secretariat, AJAS Section, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16
- Swiss Career Advisory Office 98 Zürichstrasse, 8600 Dübendorf
- Association of Swiss Private Schools, Christoffelgasse 3, 3007 Berne
- Swiss Tourism Bellarisstrasse 38, 8038 Zürich

Remember: if in doubt, the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad is always there to assist in the first instance !!



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