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ASO and Embassy news

Association for the Swiss Abroad (ASO) in New Zealand:

New representatives wanted!

Dear members of the Swiss Society: Herewith just an update of what's happening in 2013. It's now four years since Mani Züst and I were elected to represent the Swiss Abroad in New Zealand to inform our members on political and social matters in Switzerland. At our forthcoming AGM in Hamilton, we will need to elect two new representatives, as both Mani and I are stepping down.

Mani represented New Zealand in 2010 at the conference in St.Gallen, and I attended the Swiss Abroad conference in 2009 in Lucern and 2012 in Lausanne. Most topics concern Swiss living in Europe or Swiss opting to work overseas for a few years. In contrast, most Swiss immigrate into New Zealand on a permanent basis. A representative needs to read through all the information or e-mails sent by ASO, and pass relevant information on to Society members through the Helvetia magazine. Anyone who might be interested to represent New Zealand from 2013 until 2017, please advise myself or Mani Züst, or the president of the Swiss Society.

At the time of writing this report, we are staying in Engelberg and it's snowing. Skiing has been excellent. Lots of different European nationals are working here. With a Swiss passport, anyone can work anywhere in the EU on an unrestricted basis. So parents and grandparents, make sure your children and grandchildren are registered at the Swiss Embassy before the age of 18 (after that it becomes quite difficult). Also, anyone with bank accounts in Switzerland, most banks do now charge between SFr. 40.- to 60.- per month, if you aren't living in Switzerland. There is nothing ASO has been able to do about this so far.

I hope you all had a great start to the New Year.

By Othmar Hebler

(E-mail: othmar.hebler@swiss.org.nz, Phone 06 278 6878)

Swiss-related scholarships in New Zealand

For the first time, young and talented New Zealand students are now also eligible for the "Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships", the official scholarship programme of the Swiss government. The Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington has indeed received a number of highly qualified applications for the academic year 2013/14 and the final selection procedure is currently underway at the Swiss State Secretariat for Education and Research.

The next scholarship offer for the academic year 2014/2015 will again be published on the Embassy website in the second half of 2013. The deadline for submission of applications is likely to be in November this year.

Not only the Swiss government, but also private institutions, companies or trusts are offering scholarships in Switzerland and/or in New Zealand. For instance, the Embassy recently learned about a family trust honouring the famous landscape architect Fred Tschopp from Switzerland, which regularly offers scholarships for talented New Zealanders in the field of landscape architecture at Unitec Institute of Technology.

It is our aim at the Swiss Embassy to intensify the exchange and outreach to academic institutions and networks in New Zealand. A number of activities in the context of the upcoming celebration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and New Zealand (1963-2013) are likely to focus specifically on Science and Research.

In this context, the Embassy is interested to learn about other existing private or corporate scholarship offers for New Zealanders with a link to Switzerland. If you should happen to know of such scholarship programmes or academic exchanges with a Swiss link, please contact us at we.vertretung@eda.admin.ch. Thank you in advance.

By Flavio Milan, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington

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