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ASO News

Report On The Meeting Of The Council Of The Swiss Abroad In Berne, 22 March 2014.

- The Swiss Referendum against mass migration, which was accepted by the majority of Swiss, has been discussed at length at Council level. The President, Mr. Jacques-Simon Eggly, stated that the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad fought against acceptance of the initiative, as the consequences for the Swiss Abroad could be very negative, especially with regards to the student exchange program, Erasmus, in Europe. Mr Eggly also stated that the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad has to take political decisions where the interests of the Swiss Abroad are involved.

- Ambassador Bruegger, Head of Consular Services in the Department of Foreign Affairs, stressed the following points. He confirmed that some items on the agenda of the Council of the Swiss Abroad have been there for quite some time and need to be resolved, such as bank accounts for the Swiss Abroad, electronic voting, and the Law of the Swiss Abroad. He also mentioned that the Swiss Review has now a circulation of 380,000, of which 150,000 are in electronic form. His Department is pursuing the project "Guichet Unique". This will be the centre of information and coordination of the Swiss Abroad at a Federal level. Furthermore, the "Mobile Consulate" enables the processing of biometric passport applications more efficiently outside the Swiss Consulates abroad. Mr Bruegger will leave his post as he was appointed Ambassador to Ghana and his successor will be Mr. J. Burri.

- After 28 years as CEO of the ASO, Mr Rudolf Wyder went into retirement and was elected Honorary Member with great acclaim. The President expressed the thanks of all present. As his replacement, Mrs Sarah Masantuoni and Mrs Ariane Rustichelli were elected as co-directrices. Both have been with the ASO for some time. The discussion about fixed terms for members of the Committee and for the Council Members were discussed without resolution.

- The CEO of Pro Helvetia, Mr Holland, made a presentation about his organisation which has been in existence in Zurich

since 1939. Pro Helvetia fosters and supports Swiss art and Swiss artists in Switzerland and also abroad. Any applications should be sent to www.myprohelvetia.ch.

- The Law for the Swiss Abroad was commented on by Mr Lombardi, State Councillor. The Council of State has already approved the draft law and it is expected that the National Council will follow suit later this year, therefore the law should be enacted in 2015. The new law will replace eight [8] previous pieces of legislation.

- Regarding "direct" elections of the members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad, Ms Sarah Masantuoni presented the results from a larger opinion poll [6,000 replies]. Some of the highlights are that the Council of the Swiss Abroad is not very well known but is in a position to represent the interests of the Swiss Abroad effectively. The majority thinks that a direct election by those Swiss who are registered to vote in Switzerland is positive. The Swiss Clubs abroad are encouraged to promote the Council of the Swiss Abroad in order to get candidates and / or people interested in offices.

- This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be held in Baden from 15 – 17 August 2014.

- Furthermore, it was mentioned during the general discussion that the Council of the Swiss Abroad needs additional funds, therefore sponsoring in various forms is being sought.

- Mr. Rudolf Wyder is in charge of planning the Centenary of the ASO in 2016 in Bern

Peter Ehrler
Elected Council Member of the Swiss Abroad
representing New Zealand.

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ASO News

A Museum for the Swiss Abroad to visit

*It is not widely known that there is a museum near Geneva dedicated to the Swiss Abroad, **Musée de Penthes**. Dr. Peter Gerdes [Sydney] has prepared the following article which gives some highlights of the museum's activities and its importance. I encourage the Swiss Abroad to make contact and to visit the museum.*

1292: This Swiss postcode is rather exciting - in 1291, we are told, Switzerland as we know it was founded by representatives from Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden on the Rütli. 1292, however, is the postcode of Pregny-Genève where, on the "Chemin de l'Impératrice", one finds the very impressive looking Château de Penthes, situated in a beautiful park, almost symbolically representing those Swiss who live somewhat outside the "real" Switzerland. This castle, or rather manor, is the "Swiss Museum" or, as is right and proper in a multilingual country, the "Museum der Schweizer", "Musée des Suisses" or "Museo degli Svizzeri". It is the headquarter of the "Friends of the Institute of the Swiss Abroad", a Society the aim of which is mainly to support the Museum but also its archives and its research centre. And if you think that a museum devoted to the Swiss Abroad should be situated somewhere in the centre of the country - well, the Swiss Abroad live all over the world, they are an international "society" and what city more international than Geneva is there in Switzerland? Penthes lies close to Geneva's many international organisations which fits the concept of a Museum of the Swiss Abroad perfectly.

The museum has a history quite of its own. It opened more than 45 years ago, initially presenting a detailed history of Swiss mercenaries, young men who went to fight abroad (mostly to escape

poverty at home), often died on foreign soil but in many cases also eventually turned into early Swiss Abroad. Later, the museum began to highlight the careers of Swiss working abroad in all areas of life, from traders to bankers to missionaries, artists and researchers.

The museum wants, on the one hand, to show the internationalisation of Switzerland by way of the Swiss Abroad, but also highlight the crucial moments and events which linked and still link the history of Switzerland to the rest of the world, or, as the director of the Museum, Anselm Zurfluh, stated, the Museum should be "a window to the world for the Swiss, and a window to Switzerland for our foreign friends". To this end, the Museum wants to show in particular where the modern connections between Switzerland and the rest of the world are - where and how they started and who is creating and maintaining these connections, be that in politics, science, art, sport, the economy or any other field of human endeavour. It reveals what (often surprising) activities Swiss Abroad get up to anywhere in the world, including whether they leave Switzerland, achieve great things abroad and return or leave, achieve, stay abroad but stay Swiss.

Attached to the Museum is the Sandoz Research Centre, where anyone interested in the topic of "Switzerland and the World" can do some research - and, typically Swiss, not to forget, there is a



fabulous Restaurant where Swiss and Swiss Abroad can indulge - and later do some research on the influence Swiss cooks had abroad... And all this only a short bus ride from Geneva main station. A unique Swiss Abroad venture. We encourage the Swiss Abroad to make contact and to visit the Museum: Webpage: www.chateau-de-penthes.ch

I would like to thank Beat Knoblauch, OSA Delegate, NSW, for passing this article on to me for further publication.

Peter Ehrler,
Elected Council Member of the Swiss Abroad

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