

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 82 (2016)
Heft: [1]

Rubrik: Embassy news

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Embassy News

Dear Compatriots,

The Embassy would like to inform you about modifications due to the entry into force of the Law for the Swiss Abroad on 1 November 2015.

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

It is now the single contact point for all Swiss citizens living or travelling abroad. In New Zealand, it acts through the Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington. In emergency situations, either the Embassy (021 84 75 56) or the Foreign Affairs Department helpline +41 800 24 73 64, helpline@eda.admin.ch) can be reached at any time.

Registration

Registration with the relevant Swiss representation (for New Zealand and a number of other countries the Embassy in Wellington) is compulsory for all Swiss citizens abroad. Persons who fail to register will of course not be sanctioned, but cannot receive any administrative services from the Embassy or be contacted by it in an emergency. Please register therefore, encourage others to register, communicate address changes rapidly and provide telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

Political Rights

You may register through the Embassy to exercise your political rights in the Swiss town where you last lived prior to moving abroad, or in a commune of origin if you have never lived in Switzerland. If you are already registered, this registration remains valid. The prior renewal every four years is not necessary anymore.

Information

You may receive the "Swiss Review" either on paper or as e-mail. Internet gives you access to virtually all sources of information from back home. If you travel to third countries, please consult the Department of Foreign Affairs travel advice prior to the trip.

Personal responsibility

Gathering information about the condition in a country where you travel, respecting the legal order of other countries or making sure of an adequate insurance cover is the personal responsibility of every traveller. If one fails to do so, the Embassy will still try its utmost to assist, but this assistance may become costly.

AHV und Superannuation

The Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington reminds Swiss citizens and former residents of Switzerland in New Zealand of the following:

Switzerland has a contribution-based old age and disability pension scheme AHV/IV. New Zealand has a taxpayer-funded scheme called Superannuation. Since 1964, New Zealand has deducted AHV pensions paid to residents of New Zealand from Superannuation payments, including those of spouses, leading in some cases to zero Superannuation. Switzerland, like all other developed countries, has never

accepted this practice and uses every possible opportunity, including contacts at the highest level, to stress the Swiss point of view. As long as the matter is not resolved, no social security agreement can be concluded between the two countries.

There is, however, one important and positive development to note. The Social Security Appeal Authority of New Zealand has decided, on a concrete case back in 2005, that AHV pensions based on voluntary contribution cannot be deducted for lack of specific legislation. It gave the Government ten years to submit such legislation to Parliament. This has not happened, and the decision regarding the voluntary AHV is now permanent.

Swiss citizens and former residents of our country, who have contributed also to the voluntary AHV scheme and whose AHV pension is deducted from their Superannuation pension, should ask the Swiss Compensation Office to calculate which part of their AHV comes from compulsory contributions and which part from voluntary contribution. Based on this calculation, they can then demand that the Ministry of Social Development refrains from deducting the part of the pension based on voluntary contributions.

The Embassy will gladly assist persons who fall in this specific category.

Jürg Bono

Embassy of Switzerland to New Zealand
Wellington

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