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Embassy News

Heidi and Schellen-Ursli are coming to New Zealand

The Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington is pleased to announce the screening of two great new Swiss family movies.

Heidi is the Swiss contribution to the German Film Festival which will take place in five cities across New Zealand (Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, New Plymouth, Auckland) in September/October 2016.

A special screening of Heidi will be offered by the Embassy to the Swiss communities in Auckland and in Wellington (details will be available soon).

Schellen-Ursli (Little Mountain Boy) will be our contribution to the second edition of the Screenies Children's Film Festival, which will take place in Auckland at the end of September 2016.

Also for this movie a special screening for the Swiss community will be offered and organized in Auckland by the Embassy and the Auckland Swiss Club.

The final programs of both festivals and detailed information about the special extra screenings will be available by the end of August on the Embassy Website. The Swiss Clubs will be kept informed.

Stay tuned and prepare your family to meet two beloved Swiss characters for an unforgettable virtual trip to Switzerland!

Heidi is a new (2015) film based on the world-famous book by Johanna Spyri. The film is directed by Alain Gsponer and it stars Anuk Steffen in the title role, alongside famous Swiss actor Bruno Ganz as Alp-öhi, Katharina Schüttler, Quirin Agrippi, Isabelle Ottmann and Anna Schinz.

Schellen-Ursli is also a 2015 Swiss movie made by well-known director Xavier Koller. It is based on the book by Selina Chönz, illustrated by the artist Alois Carigiet, one of the most famous Swiss children's books. It is the heartwarming story of a poor boy in the Engadine mountains who has to overcome many challenges to help his family through the winter and to save his pet goat.

OSA News

Meeting Of The Council Of The Swiss Abroad

In Brunnen, 15-17 April 2016

Brunnen was chosen as the meeting place for the Bi-Annual Session this year because of the 25th Anniversary of the Auslandschweizerplatz, the Place of the Swiss Abroad, which is in this village on the Lake of Lucerne. For this occasion, the Council was invited to visit the site and to listen to the plight of the President in Charge, Mr. Alex Hauenstein who is seeking additional funds for upkeep and beautification. He mentioned that they still lack CHF150,000.- and asked Swiss Clubs Abroad as well as individual Swiss for donations which can be transferred to:

Schwyzer Kantonalbank, Schwyz
Auslandschweizerplatz
IBAN CH91 0077 7002 0398 2195 1
BIC: KBSZCH22XXX

To mark the occasion, the participants had the pleasure to listen to a speech by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Schneider-Amman. He congratulated the Swiss Abroad and in his speech, stressed the following points:

- Prosperity in Switzerland is, to a large degree based on its proven vocational education system, in particular to the unique apprenticeship system and to the technical and further professional education system.
- The Swiss Export Industry is continuously under pressure caused by the high value of the Swiss franc versus the other currencies. The government tries to assist as much as possible to keep Switzerland competitive but tourism and some export industries are suffering. He stresses that the bilateral agreements with the EU is of vital importance for Switzerland to remain competitive.
- Switzerland is not immune from the refugee crisis in Europe and Federal Government has gone through a number of emergency exercises.
- The high importance of Research and Development in Switzerland of which about 1/3 is funded from public funds and 2/3 from private industry. Continuous Research and Development is at the forefront of a successful economy and Switzerland ranks high in the world in innovation and patent applications.
- His aim to reduce "red tape" in Switzerland and to reduce bureaucracy as much as possible.

In the ensuing session of the Council, the following matters are noteworthy:

Old Age Insurance [AHV]: there were two interesting speeches by the Federal

Director for Social Insurance and by the Director of the AHV: it is noteworthy that only about 5% of the Swiss Abroad are members of the voluntary AHV. OSA will fight that the voluntary AHV is not being abolished. Those Swiss living in EU countries cannot join the voluntary AHV. A total revision of the AHV is not in sight and needs a parliamentary decision. Therefore the internal working of AHV, such as proof of "continued life", as required by law, cannot be adapted for the time being to new and available electronic methods such as voice recognition.

Health Insurance: A representative of the Federal Health Department stated that the Swiss Abroad should have a better chance to re-join their old insurance company after return to Switzerland by paying an annual suspension fee. It is to be remembered that the premium for health insurance in Switzerland is not regulated or dictated by government but the premium has to cover costs.

Other matters:

- Swiss Review: Mr Juerg Burri, Director of Consular Services in Berne, explains that in future the Swiss Review will still have 6 issues, however, only 4 are to be printed and sent by post, but all six in electronic form.
- Citizens with dual citizenship: it was noted with dismay that one political party in Switzerland suggested to abolish dual citizenship for the Swiss. It was decided to put this topic on the agenda of the next OSA meeting in Berne on August 5th, 2016.
- The OSA delegate from Israel made a proposal for the reimbursement of travelling costs of the delegates to the OSA. After long discussions the OSA Committee decided to study the proposal and to come forward with an alternate proposal.
- The Centenary of the OSA is to be celebrated on the occasion of the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Berne from the 6-7th August, 2016. See <http://aso.ch/en/100-years-of-the-osa/>
- Enrol to vote in Switzerland: Swiss Abroad can make a mark in Federal Referenda and Elections and participating in the voting process is the best method to be heard.

Peter Ehrler

Elected Council Member of the Swiss Abroad representing New Zealand.

Printed with the courtesy and approval of Beat Knoblauch,
Australian OSA Delegate