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New Swiss passport from 2003

Next year the current Swiss passport, which has been in use since 1985, is to be replaced by a new model. This new, high-quality Swiss passport, is accompanied by a number of innovations.

Although the current Swiss passport is relatively difficult to forge, several counterfeit passports have turned up lately. Moreover, the passport is not machine-readable, which could cause difficulties when travelling to the USA. As a result, the government decided to develop a new Swiss passport. The Federal Law on Passports and Identity Cards for Swiss Nationals was approved by parliament during the 2001 summer session, and introduces a new standard procedure for issuing passports and identity cards. The law will come into force on 1 January 2003 and involves several departures from the current regulations.

In future, every Swiss national will receive his or her own passport. Children can no longer be entered on their parents' passports. This does away with problems of guardianship in the case of unmarried parents or in the event of divorce, and makes child abduction more difficult. Moreover, it will be easier for children to travel with friends and relatives.



The red booklet-type Swiss passport has been in use only since 1959

For adults the new statutory passport will be valid for a fixed period of ten years, while the passport for children and youths will be valid for three and five years respectively. The same applies to the identity card. Unlike the old passport, the new passport cannot be extended.

Apply early

Due to exacting security standards and the associated high cost of production facilities, statutory passports will in future be produced in a central location in Switzerland, rather than locally by individual representatives. The

new process takes much longer: depending on country of residence and the extent of associated enquiries, up to 30 working days must be allowed from date of application to receipt of the document. To avoid unnecessary delay, the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs advises all Swiss Abroad to apply for a new passport or identity card in good time i.e. at least two months before the current papers expire. As before, passports/ID cards may be applied for from diplomatic and consular representations, who will process and register your personal details electronically and forward the

data on-line to the relevant central document production facilities.

In future, foreign representations will be able to issue a temporary passport for immediate use in the event of emergencies. However, it will be valid only for a specific trip and period. The temporary passport costs more, so it is better to order a normal passport in good time unless this is unavoidable.

Validity of the current passport

According to the ordinance on introduction of the 2003 passport, only the new passport (Passport 2003) will be issued from →

How much longer is my current passport valid?

- If your passport expires before 31.12.2002, you have until 31.12.2002 to extend it for another five years. The overall age of the passport from date of issue must not exceed 15 years.
- After 1.1.2003 you can no longer extend your old passport and must apply for a new Passport 2003 in good time.

The current passport is issued or can be extended until 31.12.2002 (valid until 31.12.2007 at latest).

From 1.1.2003 only new passports (Pass 2003) will be issued. Old passports (Model 85) can no longer be extended.



1.1.2003. Current passports (Passport 85) will not be extended beyond this date. Passports issued or extended prior to 1 January 2003 will remain valid until their date of expiry, but not beyond 31 December 2007.

Examples:

- A five-year passport was issued on 25 October 1996. The holder has until the end of 2002 to extend the passport for another five years.
- A passport issued on 1 July 2001 is valid until 30 June 2006. This passport cannot be extended beyond its expiry date and must be replaced by a new passport.


Costs

At present, each canton defines the price of a passport itself. Hence the Passport 85 varies in price depending on where in Switzerland it was issued. The

cost of the identity card is the same throughout Switzerland. The new law stipulates that the new passport should also be issued at a standard price, although this price has not yet been defined.

Loss of identity papers

If you lose your passport or identity card, you must report it to the police as soon as possible and ask for a "confirmation of loss" notice which you must submit to the relevant Swiss representative abroad. The lost or stolen passport or identity card is registered on a missing papers list which is distributed around the world. This reduces the risk of misuse. If your passport or identity card is returned to you, you can no longer use it.

Patricia Messerli, Service for the Swiss Abroad EDA 

Identity card

- Since 1 July 1994 a credit-card type identity card (IDC 95) has been in use. The old paper card is valid until its date of expiry.
- Swiss Abroad must apply to their Swiss representation for an identity card.
- The IDC 95 is issued for a ten-year period (or five years for children under age 15) and costs CHF 35.00, or CHF 25.00 for persons under age 15.
- The hologram on the IDC 95 (picture of a crystal in which a Swiss cross turns into a CH when the card is tilted) can wear off. However, the IDC 95 is still valid even with a damaged or missing hologram.

What will change in the IDC in 2003?

- Like the Passport 2003, the validity of the IDC for children and youths will be reduced to three or five years respectively
- more compact layout
- price

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"For a minimum basic insurance at affordable health insurance premiums ('mini-Max' Initiative)"

(until 9 July 2002)
Federal Democratic Union, EDU,
Central Secretariat,
PO Box, CH-3607 Thun

"National Bank profits for the AHV"

(until 10 October 2002)
Committee for a secure AHV
PO Box 105, CH-4011 Basle

"Postal service for all"

(until 28 February 2003)
Gewerkschaft Kommunikation,
Oberdorfstrasse 32,
CH-3072 Ostermundigen


You can download the signature form for current initiatives from <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vi10.html>

History of the Swiss passport

The modern passport furnishes proof of the nationality and identity of Swiss citizens when travelling abroad. In the Middle Ages the passport initially acted as a letter of protection. It still performs this function to this day, since the owner of a Swiss passport is entitled to consular or diplomatic protection when abroad.

The word "passport" comes

from the Latin "passus", meaning "right of way". Switzerland developed a passport system relatively late in the day. During the 17th century many states imposed a general obligation for foreigners to carry identity papers. With the French Revolution, this obligation was extended to cover nationals, too. Influenced by France, Switzerland introduced the first universal passport system in 1798-1803. By

the 19th century the Swiss passport had also evolved to become a travel document recognised under national law. The first federal ordinance on passports was enacted only in 1928, and the red Swiss passport in booklet form has been in use since 1959. 

Translated from the German by N. Chisholm

"Postal service for all"

With the support of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SPS) and parliamentary representatives of various different parties, unions and consumer organisations have joined forces to launch the "Postal service for all" initiative in response to Swiss Post's plan to reduce its network by clos-

ing down several hundred post offices. The initiative proposes that the government guarantee a basic provision of postal services which meets the needs and expectations of the general population and the business sector and provides for a nation-wide network of post offices. The individual communities

should be involved in decisions concerning the network of post offices. If necessary the costs of this basic provision of postal services, which are covered neither by income from reserve services nor licensing fees, must be financed from the federal budget.

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