

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 46 (2019)
Heft: 2

Rubrik: OSA news

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Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Montreux

The 97th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place from 16 to 18 August 2019 in Montreux (VD) on the banks of Lake Geneva, surrounded by vineyards and against the breathtaking backdrop of the snow-covered Alps.

This congress, with the theme “*Quel monde pour demain?*” (“What will tomorrow’s world hold?”), will provide an opportunity to reflect on social, political and economic realities, as well as unemployment, current migratory situations and even the mobility of the future. What major challenges will society be facing and how can they be tackled? How can we begin to respond to these issues today? The programme includes interesting debates involving leading personalities from the world of economics, science and Swiss politics. A highlight of the congress will be a speech by a member of the Federal Council.

During the congress, participants will also have the chance to meet compatriots from around the world, learn about current news and events in Switzerland and discuss their respective experiences. Sightseeing tours of world-renowned sites and a political programme conceived especially for the Swiss electoral year will top off the agenda for this 97th Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

You will find further information regarding registration procedures on our website: www.ose-congres.ch. Save the date now, so that you can participate in the 97th Congress for Swiss Abroad in Montreux! (AC)

Swiss Travel System has a special offer open to those participating in the congress:
75 % reduction on the cost of a Swiss Travel Pass.

Nine different summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

Swiss children living abroad will have an opportunity to get to know Switzerland and its culture – and have a great time – at two-week summer camps between the end of June and the end of August 2019.

Run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), these camps offer the chance to explore lakes, mountains, rivers and countryside on foot, and visit various sights and cities. Games, sports and workshops will also feature strongly among the daily activities.

Children at the camps will learn a lot about their home country – from traditional songs and cooking recipes, to typical Swiss games and sports. One of this year’s highlights is our music camp (27 July to 9 August) for children who are interested in music and want to learn more about Switzerland’s musical diversity. You don’t need to play an instrument to participate – you just need to enjoy music.

The camps all have one thing in common in that children of similar age from different countries meet and interact with each other across the linguistic, cultural and geographical divide. They are a chance to make new friends and share unforgettable memories. For a full schedule and further details as well as the relevant application form, visit www.sjas.ch/en/camps. Alternatively, we can send you a comprehensive overview of our camps by post on request.

The FYSA wants to enable all Swiss children living abroad to visit and experience Switzerland for themselves at least once. We therefore offer price reductions whenever these are justified. Simply fill in the “Application form for reduction of the camp fees”. We will also be happy to help if you require any further information. (LR)

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne.

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Bank: Berner Kantonalbank,
Bundesplatz 8, CH-3011 Bern
BIC/SWIFT: KBECCH22
Beneficiary:
BEKB Bern, Account 16.129.446.0.98
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
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Reference: Support Swiss Review
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Inclusion in the electoral register is easy

You can live abroad but still vote on Swiss matters. Doing so helps strengthen the bond with your native country. But to exercise your political voice, you must be included in the electoral register.

Some 752,000 Swiss live abroad, of whom a large proportion – around 600,000 – are older than 18 and therefore entitled to vote under Swiss law. However, many do not avail themselves of the political rights that Switzerland grants to its expatriate citizens. Last year, the electoral register contained the names of 174,000 Swiss Abroad. Many who have not voted to date may well be wondering how they can get their names on this register now that the election year is under way.

How to qualify

The procedure is relatively easy and only needs to be completed once. After being entered in the register, you will always receive the necessary ballot material automatically by post. The statutory requirements for being entered in the electoral register are also quite simple: you must be at least 18 years old, your permanent residence must be abroad, you must be registered with the Swiss representation in your country of domicile, and you must not be legally incapacitated from voting. There are no further conditions. Neither will you incur any fees for this. Furthermore, you pay nothing for the privilege of voting per se – or almost nothing: if you are unable to vote electronically, there is still the small matter of covering the cost of postage when returning your ballot papers.

How to proceed

Voting in Switzerland helps you to develop an even closer connection to your native country. The fact that Swiss Abroad are always entered in the electoral register of their most recent Swiss commune of residence further accentuates this bond. If you have never lived in Switzerland, you will be registered with your Swiss commune of origin. The name of your commune is one of the items of information



that you will need when going about the simple business of getting on the register. The “Application to exercise political rights” is a straightforward form that you can download online, fill in by hand and send to the Swiss representation in your country of domicile.

Numerous opportunities to participate in Swiss democracy

Swiss who live in Switzerland can exercise their democratic voice in many ways, and are able to shape political discourse at communal, cantonal and federal level. The rights of Swiss Abroad are not quite as wide-ranging. Expatriates can vote at national level. Apart from casting their ballots, they also have the right to sign petitions calling for referendums or popular initiatives, as well as the right to run for election to the larger chamber of parliament, the National Council (see also page 18). Ten cantons – Berne, Basel-Landschaft, Fribourg, Jura, Geneva, Grisons, Neuchâtel, Solothurn, Schwyz and Ticino – also grant voting rights at cantonal level to their citizens living abroad.

As mentioned above, entries in the electoral register are permanent and do not need to be renewed. They are valid for the entire time that you are abroad. However, you can ask to have your name removed from the register, by writing to the Swiss representation in your country of domicile. Note that your name will also be deleted from the register if your voting papers cannot be delivered three times in a row. Even if this occurs, it is still possible for you to get back on the electoral register without any problem.

More often than not, people in Switzerland either submit their ballots by post or prefer the old-school method of voting at the ballot box. What electronic voting will look like in future continues to be the subject of lively debate

IMPRINT:
“Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 45th year of publication and is published in German, French, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 418,000, including 223,000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year. The ordering parties

are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. This content does not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.
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Jürg Müller (JM); Susanne Wenger (SWE); Simone Flubacher (SF),

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3003 Berne, Switzerland
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Sandra Krebs
TRANSLATION: SwissGlobal Language
Services AG; LAYOUT: Joseph Haas,
Zürich; PRINT: Vogt-Schild Druck AG,
4552 Derendingen
POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial

office, advertising: Organisation of the
Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26,
3006 Berne, Tel.: +41313566110,
Fax: +41313566101, Postal account
(Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9.
Email: revue@aso.ch

COPY DEADLINE for this edition:
31 January 2019

All Swiss Abroad who are registered
with a Swiss representation receive
the magazine free of charge.
Anyone else can subscribe to the
magazine for an annual fee
(Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50).
Subscribers are sent the magazine
direct from Berne.
www.revue.ch

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within Switzerland. E-voting is of particular benefit to Swiss Abroad, given that Swiss expatriates often do not receive voting papers sent by post until very late, thus making it difficult or sometimes impossible for them to return their ballots in time. This is why the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad submitted a petition at the end of 2018 calling on the Federal Council and Parliament to allow all Swiss Abroad to vote electronically. (MUL)

Application to exercise political rights (multilingual document in English, German, French and Italian) <http://ogy.de/register>

Experience politics and culture up close and personal – just right for you

Are you interested in Swiss politics? Would you like to experience a fantastic cultural and sports programme in your native country? If so, our Politics and Culture Camp is the right place for you.

In the run-up to the Swiss Abroad Congress in Montreux, a two-week summer youth camp will be held with a political and cultural focus on the topic of "What will tomorrow's world hold?" and the 2019 parliamentary elections. During this camp, you will experience Swiss politics up close – explained simply, concisely and objectively. In addition, this summer camp is focused on your native country and all it has to offer, including lovely mountain landscapes, impressive historic cities and a great deal of culture.

You will spend two weeks with other young Swiss expatriates, over-nighting at youth hostels, campgrounds, farms and even under the stars around a campfire. Whether you find yourself exploring Switzerland by train, bicycle or hiking through the mountains, it will definitely be a memorable time.

The camp costs 1,030 Swiss francs. This includes the programme, accommodation, food, excursions and travel. It will be held from 3 to 18 August 2019 and is designed for young Swiss expatriates aged 15 to 21. Are you eager for a summer full of variety in Switzerland? If so, register today! (DB)

Information and registration

More detailed information and registration forms for this as well as other camps can be found at www.swisscommunity.org/youth or www.aso.ch. The Politics and Culture Camp is organised by the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern; telephone +41 (0)31 356 61 00, e-mail: youth@aso.ch

THE SWISS ABROAD ON INSTAGRAM



"Our traditions keep us united and define us"

Twenty-seven-year-old Heidi Amstalden Albertin lives in Helvetia, Brazil – a Swiss colony that her ancestors helped to found. Today, she helps keep Swiss traditions alive through food, festivals and folk dancing.

My job: I graduated from law school and worked as a lawyer for a while. Now I am a public servant, more specifically a judge's assistant at the Tribunal de Justiça do Estado de São Paulo (Court of São Paulo State), and I am very happy with my job.

My Brazil: I live in Helvetia, a Swiss colony in Brazil founded in 1888 by four Swiss immigrant families. Our traditions keep us united and define us, and therefore we keep them alive. Tradition is present even in the name of our main celebration to commemorate the Swiss National Day: "Festa da Tradição", which translates as "Tradition Party" or "Celebration of Tradition".

My Switzerland: I have been a member of a Swiss folk dance group (Tanzgruppe Helvetia) since I was four years old, and in 2010 we took part in the Eidgenössisches Trachtenfest (Swiss National Costume Festival) in canton Schwyz. The biggest differences with Switzerland are the lack of security and economic instability.

My heart: My great-great-grandfather, Benedicto Amstalden, was a Swiss citizen from Sarnen in canton Obwalden and one of the founding fathers of Colônia Helvetia. To carry his name is a source of pride and a way to preserve his heritage, heroism and great accomplishments. I will keep working to keep the traditions brought here by him alive.

The original interview was published on swissinfo.ch, the online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Company, which is available in ten languages. Do you live abroad too? Then tag your Instagram photos [#WeAreSwissAbroad](https://www.instagram.com/WeAreSwissAbroad).