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A service to the Fifth Switzerland

In the proliferation of acronyms and abbreviations for use in designating a multitude of organisations nowadays, one ought to be known to every Swiss, living abroad or in Switzerland itself, namely “OSEC”. Its full name, as shown in the heading to this article, can be translated as “Swiss Office for Commercial Promotion”. And OSEC is indeed one of the three pillars of support for the furtherance of Swiss exports. The other two are the service for guaranteeing protection against export risks, in particular those connected with exchange rates, and the world-wide network of Swiss diplomatic and consular representations. And as Switzerland’s prosperity is so very dependent on its foreign trade, the role played by an organisation such as OSEC can be of vital importance.

Statutes in line with current reality

Founded in 1927, OSEC has the legal form of a private association. Acting as a link between national foreign trade policy on the one hand and commercial activities in the private sector on the other, OSEC performs the function of a “turntable” in relation to the promotion of exports. It fulfils its tasks in close collaboration with the leading commercial associations, with the Federal Office for Foreign Trade, as well as with the embassies and consulates and the Swiss chambers of commerce in foreign countries. OSEC centres its range of services on the

needs of the exporting businesses – and especially those of small and medium size – and on the special conditions prevailing in the foreign markets. The services that can be described as of general interest are to some extent financed by an annual subsidy of ten million francs from the Confederation. But OSEC finances more than half of its activities (58% in 1988) by itself selling its own services.

Concrete help for exporters

Having been active in the foreign trade sector for more than 60 years, OSEC has gained considerable experience in the promotion of exports and in the search for new markets. It has two principal offices, located in Zurich and Lausanne – complemented by a branch in the Ticino since 1987 – and has a staff of some 120 persons, some of whom have had practical experience of selling in foreign countries.

In practice, OSEC has a dual objective:

- To further the image of the Swiss economy, world-wide, and
- To help exporting firms to find new outlets in the international markets.

And indeed, OSEC is able to assist Swiss exporters in all the many sectors of export marketing, regardless of whether it is a matter of providing information about a foreign market, of giving advice on personalised export activities, of finding trading partners for Swiss firms and helping them in publicising their products, or of arranging special promotional campaigns and so on. Whatever the exporter’s problem is, OSEC will be able to offer sound advice and suggest possible solutions.

A “Swiss Connection” of genuine worth

Acting in accordance with its global planning, OSEC is just as much at the disposal of Swiss expatriates as it is of foreign commercial and industrial enterprises. If any of these want to represent a Swiss firm in their country of residence, or to obtain supplies of Swiss merchandise or equipment, they need only to contact OSEC, who will put them into touch with suitable suppliers who are of good repute and whose products are of outstanding quality.

Once they have decided to establish commercial links with Switzerland and selected the quality products that interest them, these compatriots of ours will be able to confront

How to contact OSEC

Zurich: Telephone: 01 365 51 51
Telefax: 01 365 52 21

Lausanne: Telephone: 021 20 32 31
Telefax: 021 20 73 37

Lugano: Telephone: 091 22 02 29
Telefax: 091 22 03 41

Addresses:

Zurich: Stampfenbachstrasse 85
8035 Zurich

Lausanne: Avenue de l’Avant-Poste 4
1001 Lausanne

Lugano: c/o Camera di commercio
dell’industria e dell’artigianato
del cantone Ticino,
Corso Elvezia 16
6901 Lugano

their competitors successfully, as well as having the satisfaction of knowing that they have done something to help firms in their far-distant “home country” to improve their footing in world markets.

Bernard Peitrequin

OSEC’s broad range of services

1. Collection and provision of information about Swiss enterprises, their products and their trade-marks
2. Provision of advisory services regarding exports
3. Provision of information about foreign markets
4. Contacts with representatives and other business partners
5. Research into possibilities of new business openings, and negotiation in connection therewith
6. Collecting information about exporting firms
7. Publishing material about exports, public relations and engaging in publicity in promotion of the Swiss economy
8. Trade fairs and exhibitions
9. Other collective events
10. Professional training courses/study seminars
11. Sundry services
12. Indirect promotion of exports and recruiting of new members
13. Certification of export achievements and award of prizes
14. Commercial promotion in support of «Third World» countries



Every year, OSEC organises official Swiss participation in more than thirty trade fairs and exhibitions abroad.