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New edition of advice booklet

The revised edition of the information booklet for Swiss Abroad was published in April 2002 and is available in German and French ("Ratgeber für Auslandschweizer", "Aide-mémoire pour les Suisses de l'étranger"), with Italian to follow later.

The booklet was drawn up with the aid of several government departments and Swiss Abroad institutions, and provides Swiss Abroad with details of their many rights and obligations. The first section contains answers to frequently asked questions, while the second section is arranged in alphabetical order of subject. Important addresses at the end of each chapter list points of contact for further information.

You can download the individual chapters of this booklet in electronic format from the Service for the Swiss Abroad home



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The new advice booklet is currently available in German and French.

page www.eda.admin.ch/asd or order the printed version on-line. The handbook can also be ordered from: Bundesamt für Bauten und Logistik (BBL), Vertrieb Publikationen, CH-3003 Berne,

Fax. +41 31 325 50 58, www.bundespublikationen.ch, verkauf.zivil@bbl.admin.ch, order number 201.210.d (for the German version) or 201.210.f (for the French version). If ordering by post,

please enclose a self-addressed adhesive label.

Patricia Messerli, Service for the Swiss Abroad, EDA

Translated from the German by N. Chisholm

Important information for Swiss nationals

resident in Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein

From 1 June 2002, Swiss nationals resident in these three member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) can no longer join the optional AHV/IV scheme.

Swiss citizens resident in Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein who joined the optional AHV/IV scheme no later than 31 May 2002 can remain insured until 31 May 2008, or in the case of those who reached the age of 50 before 1 June 2002, until reaching the legal retirement age.

Swiss nationals who move from Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein before 31 May 2008 to a country which is a member neither of the European Union (EU) nor of EFTA, will remain members of the voluntary AHV/IV scheme beyond this date.

From 1 June 2002, therefore, the voluntary AHV/IV option is available only to Swiss Abroad who are resident in a non-EU or non-EFTA state and were insured under the obligatory AHV/IV scheme for at least five years before they left Switzerland.

Patricia Messerli, Service for the Swiss Abroad, EDA

Bilateral accords

The seven bilateral accords between Switzerland and the European Union (EU) came into force on 1 June 2002. Following the signing of these pacts by the EU and Switzerland in June 1999 and the approval of the EU parliament on 4 May 2000, the Swiss electorate voted in favour of them on 21 May 2000. However, the agreement on free cross-border movement of persons has still to be ratified by all EU member states.

Once the agreement on free cross-border movement of persons comes into force, it will enhance the mobility of current and future Swiss residents abroad. In particular, Swiss employees already in possession of an EU residence and work permit on 1 June 2002 will be entitled to the same treatment as their EU colleagues. Depending on their country of resi-

dence, retired persons drawing only an AHV pension from Switzerland can or must once more insure themselves with a health insurance company in Switzerland.

Switzerland has conducted separate negotiations with the EFTA states of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein to achieve a similar status to the one ensured in EU states. The so-called Convention of Vaduz also came into force on 1 June 2002. Free movement of people, co-ordination of social security systems, and mutual recognition of academic diplomas will also be introduced for the EFTA region.

For further information on the bilateral accords, log onto: www.europa.admin.ch.

MPC
Translated from the German by N. Chisholm

Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

"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

"For fairer child allowances!"

(until 30 April 2003)
Christlichnationaler Gewerkschaftsbund der Schweiz (Swiss Association of Christian Trade Unions, CNG), PO Box 5775,
CH-3001 Berne

"More control over health insurance premiums"

(until 5 August 2003)
R.A.S.: Rassemblement des assurés et des soignants, PO Box 1280,
CH-1001 Lausanne

"For modern animal welfare (Yes to animal protection!)"

(until 29 July 2003)
Schweizer Tierschutz STS, PO Box,
CH-4008 Basle

"Moratorium on mobile communications antennae"

(until 12 September 2003)
www.Antennenmoratorium.ch
PO Box 321, CH-8029 Zurich

"Against ritual slaughter without an anaesthetic"

(until 26 September 2003)
Verein gegen Tierfabriken VgT
PO Box, CH-9501 Wil

"For a comprehensive revision of the federal constitution by the new parliament (initiative frühling)"

(until 2 October 2003)
initiative frühling, PO Box
CH-5001 Aarau

You can download the signature form for current initiatives from <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html>

"For modern animal welfare"

The Swiss Society for the Protection of Animals (Schweizerische Tierschutz, STS) recently launched a popular initiative entitled "For modern animal welfare" ("Yes to animal protection!") in response to the Federal Council's bill for a new animal rights law.

Among other things, the initiative proposes that Switzerland's ban on ritual slaughter be restored to the constitution, and at the same time demands a ban on the import of animals and animal products if they have been raised or manufactured abroad under con-

ditions which violate the principles of the federal law on animal protection. Ritual slaughter refers to the slaughter of animals without an anaesthetic prior to draining their blood. In its proposed reform of the law on animal rights, the Federal Council intends to relax the ban and permit ritual slaughter as required by the Jewish and Muslim religions.

The initiative also calls for animals to be kept and treated in a manner appropriate to their species and given regular outdoor exercise, and for animal transpor-

tation to be kept to a minimum. Moreover, it calls for a ban on animal experiments which cause severe or permanent pain and suffering, and recommends the use of alternative methods wherever possible.

The animal protection law would be implemented by cantonal animal protection offices and cantonal animal rights lawyers who would represent and advocate the interests of maltreated animals.

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Avoid multiple copies!

The Swiss Review is the only source of information on Switzerland which you receive free of charge if you are registered with a Swiss embassy or consulate abroad. Besides reports on a wide range of subjects, each issue of the Swiss Review contains two pages entitled "Official News" which are written by the Service for the Swiss Abroad at the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs. This section is akin to a government publication for Swiss Abroad: it contains explanations on laws, rights and obligations which directly interest and affect Swiss Abroad. Often it also publishes deadlines which must be observed. Consequently, Swiss nationals living abroad cannot reasonably claim to have been unaware of an event or deadline which affects them if it has been published in the Swiss Review. We therefore recommend that you read the Swiss Review regularly and from cover to cover.

The increase in Swiss Abroad has driven circulation numbers up to over 360,000 copies. At least half the "Swiss Abroad Information" budget goes towards postage costs. If someone in your

household already receives a copy of the Swiss Review, you can prevent multiple copies being sent to the same address. If you no longer wish to receive the Swiss Review,

complete the coupon below and send it to your Swiss representation.

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Translated from the German by
N. Chisholm

Cancellation of Swiss Review

- I have access to the Swiss Review through another member of my household and would like to cancel my individual copy for the time being (please name the member of the household who currently receives the Swiss Review*).
- I should like to cancel the Swiss Review for other reasons.

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Signature: _____

- *I live in the same household as the following person:

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Please send to your local Swiss representation (embassy or consulate).