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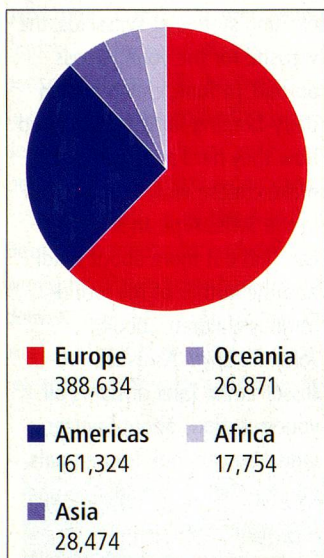
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2004 Statistics on Swiss Abroad

More than 620,000 Swiss nationals living abroad

At the end of December 2004, a total of 623,057 Swiss nationals were registered at Swiss embassies and consulates. This represents a year-on-year increase of



10,495 Swiss Abroad compared to December 2003. 442,643 Swiss Abroad (71 percent) have dual nationality.

The most popular countries of residence are in the European Union, which accounts for 377,383 or 60.5 percent (see Table). Outside Europe, most Swiss Abroad live in the USA (71,419). According to the statistics, approximately 59 percent of adult Swiss Abroad, i.e. 278,712, are women. The number of men is 196,628 (41 percent), while the number of persons under the age of 18 is 144,092 (23 percent).

Of the 475,340 Swiss Abroad entitled to vote, 95,322 (20.05 percent) have registered at Swiss representations to exercise their voting and electoral rights. The statistics can be viewed at www.eda.admin.ch/asd, "Publikationen".

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Swiss Abroad in EU States

France	166,199	Finland	1,363
Germany	70,455	Ireland	1,332
Italy	45,442	Czech Republic	999
UK	26,617	Luxembourg	934
Spain	21,532	Poland	522
Austria	12,980	Cyprus	420
Netherlands	6,777	Slovenia	262
Belgium	6,690	Slovakia	197
Sweden	4,359	Malta	145
Greece	3,094	Estonia	26
Denmark	2,727	Lithuania	20
Portugal	2,707	Latvia	18
Hungary	1,566	Total	377,383

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People's initiatives can also be signed abroad

Initiative committees as well as the Federal Chancellery are making it easier for Swiss Abroad to sign federal initiatives by providing electronic signature lists. Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html

You may only sign a people's initiative if you are entitled to vote in Switzerland. Enter your political municipality (constituency) and canton. Complete the signature list legibly and in hand writing, and sign with your usual signature. Give your official address abroad as your place of residence.

Important: Only members of the same constituency may sign any one signature list. If a signature

form contains signatures by persons from other constituencies, it is rendered invalid.

Send the signed form to the relevant initiative committee.

For additional information on political rights in the Confederation, visit www.admin.ch/ch/e/bk/index.html

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Initiatives

No new initiatives have been submitted since the last issue.

You can download signature forms for current initiatives from

www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html

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Freedom of access to vitamins for all

The independent ProGesundheitSchweiz association has launched the federal initiative entitled "For free access to nutritional supplements (Vitamin Initiative)", with the aim of promoting preventive medicine and cutting the spiralling cost of healthcare.

The people's initiative calls for an addition to Article 118 and an amendment to Article 197 of the transitional provisions of the Swiss constitution. The aim is to liberalise the Swiss market for vitamins and nutritional supplements. Unlike other countries, effective dosages of vitamin preparations are not available over the counter. Yet the majority of the population is increasingly consuming vitamin products that are either overpriced or available in very small dosages. The initiative calls for people in

Switzerland to be granted free access to good-quality, effective vitamin preparations. The requisite level of safety would be ensured by the legislator, which would have the task of withdrawing poor or hazardous products from circulation.

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Federal Referendum

25 September 2005

Federal decree of 17 December, 2004, on inclusion of the new EU member states in the agreement on free movement of people, and the revision of related measures

Date of forthcoming referendum in 2005

27 November

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Biometric passport delayed

On 13 April 2005, the Federal Council decided against going it alone with the introduction of the biometric Swiss passport. Switzerland will now coordinate its procedure with the European Union (EU) states.

Contrary to the information published in recent issues of the "Swiss Review" (1/05 and 2/05), the new biometric Swiss passport will not now be introduced as planned at the end of 2005. In consideration of new technical requirements by EU states, the Federal Council is revising the schedule, in order to ensure that the development of a biometric Swiss passport complies with European standards. These standards for data protection and forge-proofing, defined by the EU Commission at the end of February 2005, are stricter than the international standards currently in use. Introduction of the biometric EU passport is scheduled for the end of August 2006.

The EU decisions in February 2005 have created a new situation which could not be taken into account in the Federal Council's decision of last September to intro-

duce biometric passports. Consequently, the earliest date for introduction of the new biometric Swiss passport is now 1 September, 2006. If the EU or USA pass new regulations (for example, with regard to the schedule), the possibility of Switzerland having to once again revise the schedule and launch date cannot be excluded.

Order Passport 03 early

The decision to postpone the introduction of biometric passports affects Swiss citizens who intend to travel to or via the USA without a visa, under the terms of the Visa Waiver Program, between 26 October 2005 and the date of biometric passport introduction in September 2006. **Persons who come under this category must ensure that they have a Model 2003 machine-readable passport that was issued before 26 October, 2005.** According to US regulations, a passport of this type will also entitle the holder to enter or transit the USA after 26 October 2005. Bear in mind that it can take several weeks for a new passport to be issued (up to 40 working days, depending on the country of residence and the checks required,

and in some cases several months if clarification of civil status is required). The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs therefore advises Swiss Abroad who wish to apply for a new passport for travel to the USA to contact their responsible Swiss representation abroad (www.eda.admin.ch/eda/g/home/emb/addch.html) in good time for details of the application process.

Further details on biometric passports were published in Issues 1/05 and 2/05 of "Swiss Review" (www.revue.ch) and are also available at www.fedpol.ch, under "Brennpunkt". The Federal Office of Police has set up a hotline for enquiries on this topic. The line is open between 09.00 and 12.00 and between 14.00 and 17.00 (Swiss time) on Tel. +41 800 820 008.

Service for the Swiss Abroad/DFA

Gabriela Brodbeck

INTERNET

Binding information on travel to the USA is available at www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/ www.dhs.gov/us-visit or your nearest US representation.

"The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2005"

The brochure entitled "The Swiss confederation – a brief guide 2005", published in March 2005 by the Federal Chancellery in the four national languages as well as in English, is available free of charge.

This year's brochure is once more enriched with photographs, diagrams and organisational charts (photos by Zurich photographer Marc Latzel), and the introduction features a discussion between representatives of three generations and Federal President Samuel Schmid. The publication provides an explanation of Switzerland's political system, the people's rights that can be practised, as well as the composition of the National Council and Council of States. The brochure also explains in simple terms how new laws are created, and describes the tasks of the Federal Council, departments and federal offices, parliamentary services, the Federal Chancellery, Federal Court and Insurance Court.

The publication is available free of charge from:

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