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Holiday greetings from the Engadine

Sixty young Swiss Abroad from 27 nations got together in each of the two 2005 summer camps.

This year's venue was the Engadine. Participants took advantage of the extensive sports programme and got to know Switzerland "up close and personal".

Lots of them are already looking forward to meeting up again at our winter camps.

"Schellen-Ursli" was selected by Alois Carigiet as the camp motto. Young campers learned the story of this Engadine picture-book, and we contrasted the traditional image of young Swiss farm-boys with the tourist region of Engadine and the jet-set in St. Moritz. This gave rise to heated discussions and creative productions which caused some amusement at the camp party.

As in past years, there were some tearful farewells at the end of the camp. Since then, e-mails have been flying round the world and some young Swiss Abroad have already registered for the forthcoming winter camps:

New Year's ski camp in Sedrun (GR) 27.12.2005 – 5.1.2006

This popular ski resort in the mountains of Graubünden has proved very popular with young Swiss Abroad. Ideal for those who want to celebrate New Year in the snow. This camp is already a firm favourite!

Language course in Berne 9.1. – 20.1.2006

Four hours of language instruction, group activities in the afternoon, and a friendly host family. We'll motivate you to learn a Swiss national language.

Winter sports week in Scuol (GR) 25.3.05 – 1.4.2006 (from age 18)

Some of our loyal customers have been meeting up at this camp for years. Newcomers are cordially welcome. A week packed with all kinds of winter sports activities and the opportunity to meet Swiss Abroad from all over the world.



Inline skating in and around La Punt in the Engadine

Easter sports camp in Fiesch (VS) 15.4. – 22.4.2006

A spring camp offering a wide range of sports in a modern sports centre with all kinds of possibilities. And the alpine world of the Valais at our feet.

Study arrangements

We also offer a chance to get to know the Swiss education system. Our friendly host families

await you, and you can travel throughout Switzerland on your own with the general pass.

For further information on the arrangements, check out www.aso.ch or order the new brochure from

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad Youth Service
Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 6
Tel. ++41 (0)31 356 61 00
youth@aso.ch

Federal Youth Session 30.10.05 – 5.11.05

In Switzerland, young Swiss are exclusively responsible for organising the assembly of the Youth Parliament. Every year a session is held in the Houses of

Parliament, when young people formulate their opinions and demands for submission to Swiss decision-makers.

This year sees the seventh Youth Parliament to be held with the participation of young Swiss Abroad. A unique opportunity to take a peek behind the scenes of Swiss politics. Interested? Contact us for more information! Subject for the next session: Mobility.

Swiss schools abroad visit their home turf

Warth/Weiningen. Representatives from Swiss schools around the world met in Kartause Ittingen for an exchange of ideas. One of the topics discussed was German as a foreign language.

There are 16 Swiss schools on four continents, from Lima to Hong Kong. Two hundred and fifty teachers give classes to 6,500 pupils, of whom 2,000 are actually Swiss. The schools follow the Swiss educational system. Once a year, representatives from these schools meet in their home country to exchange ideas and experiences. This year's conference, organised by the Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA), was held in Kartause Ittingen.

Financial difficulties

One of the topics discussed was the financial difficulties facing some Swiss schools in recent years. While the individual schools are not profit-oriented, they need to generate more income than expenses in order to maintain or upgrade their infrastructure. "If a school has financial problems, they have to cut into their teachers' salaries," warned Derrick Widmer, President of the CSSA.

German as a foreign language

Part of the conference was devoted to a discussion of "German as a foreign language". While pupils at Swiss schools are instructed in the language of the

SWITZERLAND: NEW TELEPHONE PREFIX FOR THE ZURICH AREA

■ In March 2005, Swiss telecommunications operators switched all telephone numbers in their networks in the Zurich area which used to have the prefix +41 1 for international calls from abroad to the prefix +41 44. Since April 2005, the old +41 1 numbers have automatically been displayed as +41 44 on equipment which shows calling line identification.

■ Private or business callers with partners in Switzerland must change numbers stored in their telephones and fax machines, electronic diaries, databases, directories, etc., and bring them in line with the new prefix (+41 44 replaces +41 1). Contacts in the Zurich area should now be dialled using the +41 44 prefix. Numbers which already have a +41 44 or +41 43 prefix and all other telephone numbers

in Switzerland remain unchanged. The Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) has prepared a comprehensive dossier which is available on the internet at www.bakom.ch/044. OFCOM Swiss Federal Office of Communications; E-Mail: numbering@bakom.admin.ch

host country and in English, German is part of the curriculum for the first four school years. According to Widmer, Switzerland could benefit from the experiences acquired by teachers at Swiss schools abroad; because for more and more children in Switzerland, German is becoming just as much a foreign language as it is for most children at Swiss schools abroad.

There is a long tradition in Switzerland of providing support for Swiss schools abroad. Patron cantons not only offer Swiss schools administrative guidance, but also advice on teaching. The patron canton also supplies teaching materials.

SDA

83rd Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Interlaken

Federal Councillor Merz praises Swiss Abroad. More than 400 Swiss Abroad gathered in Interlaken's Kursaal between 2 and 4 September for the 83rd Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Despite the fact that the Unspunnenfest was postponed to next year due to the disastrous flooding in the region, the congress was a resounding success.

Ominous portents accompanied preparations for the Interlaken congress. Ten days before the start, floods in the Bernese Oberland placed the entire event in doubt. Then, for the same reason, the Unspunnenfest was postponed to next year. Nevertheless congress participants enjoyed the event, which this year centred on the topic of tourism. "Is Switzerland still in the Champions' League of tourism?" asked the experts. Jürg Schmid, Director of Switzerland Tourism, summed up the situation thus: "If you can't be cheaper, you must be better." He reckons on an annual increase of around 1.8 percent in



Federal Councillor Merz talks to young Swiss Abroad and New York-based actress Linda Geiser.

foreign visitors up to the end of 2010.

In his much-applauded speech, Federal Councillor Hans-Rudolf Merz praised the contribution that Swiss Abroad make to Switzerland's image around the world. Swiss living abroad, said Merz, are "success factors that boost

our country's performance abroad." They export values like precision, punctuality, reliability and diligence, to the point that people abroad assume that the Swiss nationals living in their country represent Switzerland as a whole. And that has a positive effect, in tourism as well as elsewhere.



Adolf Ogi, UN Special Ambassador, and Jürg Schmid, Director of Switzerland Tourism.



Federal Councillor Merz reminded his audience that last year tourists in Switzerland spent CHF 22.4 billion, of which more than half was from foreign visitors' pockets. Local structures, said the Minister of Finance, can no longer address global trends. But holiday resorts know that their competitor is not their neighbouring community, but "sun'n'sea" tourism. According to Merz, the problem is that tourist services have to cover local Swiss costs yet the market is based on international prices, and in this connection he promised to simplify value added tax (VAT) for hotel operators.

The second guest speaker, ex-Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi, now travelling the world as the UN Special Ambassador for Sport, delighted the audience with his talk on the contribution which sport can make to peace, citing his activities and the projects which have been launched on all continents in the service of sport and peace.

The Council for the Swiss Abroad deliberated on the referendum of 25 September on free movement of persons, voting overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal with only four No votes. Once more the parliament of the "Fifth Switzerland" underlined the fact that a country which has such close international relations as Switzerland is economically, politically and culturally dependent on the mobility of its citizens. The Council also issued a resolution appealing against any downsizing of Swissinfo/SRI, and urging the absolute necessity of retaining existing services.

The next Congress for the Swiss Abroad will be held in Basle from 18 to 20 August 2006, when the theme will be the symbiotic relationship between business and culture, of which Basle – where cultural life is heavily dependent on patronage – is a prime example.

HEINZ ECKERT