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Federal Councillor Calmy-Rey with young Swiss abroad

Congress of the Swiss Abroad Calmy-Rey wants legislation for the Swiss abroad

Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey told the 88th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in St. Gallen that the Swiss abroad were playing an increasingly important role. She indicated that she was therefore supportive of the creation of legislation for the Swiss abroad.

The Congress focused on the political participation of the 700,000-strong Swiss community abroad in their homeland. Around 400 Swiss abroad from 48 countries attended the event at the Olma-Halle in St. Gallen from 20 to 22 August. As one in ten Swiss citizens is now living abroad and with that figure on the rise, the Swiss abroad want to improve their participation in political life. To achieve this goal, they are calling for their own legislation to govern the rights and duties of the 130,000 or so Swiss abroad eligible to vote.

Corresponding draft legislation was approved on the Friday by the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA), the Parliament of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. According

to a statement from the CSA, the draft legislation is set to be presented to the federal authorities this year. Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey also voiced her support for this legislation for the Swiss abroad while addressing 400 Swiss citizens living all over the world. The Federal Councillor said she was looking forward to the Congress' proposals. She said that the Swiss living abroad were playing "an increasingly important role; their

political influence is growing and they want to participate in political life in our country". There has been a sharp rise in the number of Swiss abroad, from around 580,000 in 2000 to 684,974 in 2009. 130,000 Swiss abroad have registered on the electoral rolls to enable them to vote in Switzerland. The Swiss abroad therefore make up a virtual canton.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's new social network was also presented at



Council of the Swiss Abroad in session



the Congress. The online platform www.swisscommunity.org is a “club for international Switzerland” tailored to meet the needs of Swiss people worldwide. The network aims to promote contact between the Swiss abroad and enhance their relationship with Switzerland. The Swiss abroad now have their own search-and-find platform, an electronic network for making contact with one another globally and keeping in touch with Switzerland. Swiss-Community also aims to encourage a lively exchange of ideas and opinions and direct dialogue between Swiss people abroad. The platform also gives them a voice in Switzerland. “The right to be represented and heard requires an opportunity to voice opinion” stresses project manager Ariane Rusticelli. In this spirit, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad is looking forward to the participation of large numbers of the people who make up the virtual 27th canton. EC

Canton of Lucerne: E-voting for Swiss abroad

In the canton of Lucerne, voting is being made easier for Swiss people abroad. On 28 November 2010, they will be able to vote via the Internet for the first time.

Lots of information and services are accessed via the Internet these days. Comprehensive trials in other cantons have confirmed that e-voting is secure. Now Swiss citizens living abroad, who are registered on the canton of Lucerne’s electoral roll, are set to be able to use the Internet for electronic voting. The canton of Lucerne’s electronic ballot box will be open from the fourth Monday (1 November 2010) up to and including the final Saturday (12 p.m. CET) before the referendum on Sunday, 28 November 2010. The Swiss abroad can find instructions on electronic voting on the homepage <http://www.lu.ch/evoting> and in an illustrative brochure.

AUTHORISED STATES

For security reasons, the federal government only authorises e-voting in countries which ensure ballot secrecy: European Union, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Northern Cyprus, San Marino, the Vatican State, Argentina, Australia, Japan, Canada, Croatia, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine and the USA.

Preparation for studying in Switzerland

Christina is aged 19 and was born in Greece. She has been in Switzerland since 2009 and is currently attending the University Preparatory Course for Studies in Switzerland in Fribourg. She shares with us her impressions of her homeland since arriving here ...

AJAS: *Why did you decide to study in Switzerland?*

CHRISTINA: At the beginning, it was because I wanted to study in French rather than in Greek, but afterwards the following reasons led me to take this decision:

- the major difference between the standard of education in Switzerland and that in Greece
- the benefits for students in Switzerland, which are greater than in Greece
- the organisation of and respect for education in Switzerland. There are always lots of strikes in Greece which prevent students from completing their studies properly.

Was this an easy decision to make?

When the time came to decide on my future studies, yes, it was an easy choice to make. And I’m glad to say that it’s proven an excellent one too!

My parents don’t really earn enough to pay for me to study in Greece where the cost of living is very high and the state provides no support. Even if there weren’t problems with the education system in Greece, I’d still have come to Switzerland because the cost of living is lower, relatively speaking, and grants are available. I’m delighted to have received a grant and I’d like to thank AJAS for the help they gave me with the procedures. Without a grant, I simply wouldn’t be able to study.

Do you think you could have prepared yourself better before leaving for Switzerland and what advice would you give young people abroad who, like you, would like to come here to study?

I’d recommend finding out about Switzerland’s geography because it’s a unique country with all its cantons! Switzerland’s history and political institutions are also very special. I find it fascinating to look at what makes Switzerland work, what makes it what it is today. And finally, I’d recommend finding accommodation early.

Before arriving, what impression did you have of Switzerland? Was it different to the reality?

I saw and still see Switzerland as a country which sets an example to all other countries. What has always made it stand out is its organisation in all areas of life, its respect for the environment (recycling) and its highly sophisticated transport system, which no other country has.

What do you miss most about Greece?

What I miss most are the traditional festivals, the customs and the sun. But I’ll go back to all of that in a few years when I find a job and can afford to go on holidays, especially at Easter.

Do you think you’ve changed since arriving in Switzerland?

Yes, I think I have. I’ve been in Switzerland for nine months now and I’ve already had so many new experiences in such a short space of time. I’ve also learned how to survive on my own and I feel more grown-up and Swiss at last!!

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Take advantage of offers for young people – register now

OSA offers young Swiss people abroad a wide range of opportunities to visit Switzerland. Accommodation is booked for winter sports camps, host families welcome guests and those eager for knowledge can enjoy our educational programmes.

Anyone who has yet to attend a winter sports camp for the Swiss abroad has really missed out. Young people from all over the world spend ten days together under the same roof and enjoy the slopes and the atmosphere in the camp. OSA’s qualified skiing and snowboarding instructors demonstrate the latest techniques and ensure you succeed on the pistes. What’s exciting about the camps is meeting different people who all share Swiss heritage. You’ll find out about the land of your forefathers and will have the opportunity to discuss your own background. A highly enjoyable fringe programme offers diversity and entertainment. And, of course,



you'll also enjoy an amazing camp party. There are still places available for the following camps:

New Year camp in Sedrun (Grisons)
27.12.2010 – 05.01.2011

Winter sports week in Wengen (Berne)
26.02. – 05.03.2011

A skiing and snowboarding camp for young adults aged 18 and over in the magnificent alpine region of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. Wengen is a well-known winter spa resort famous for its Lauberhorn races. You too will be able to tackle the World Cup course. There is always a tremendous atmosphere at this camp.

Easter camp in Fiesch (Valais)
16.04. – 24.04.2011

As Easter will arrive very late in 2011, we are running a multisport camp for young people aged between 14 and 25. However, there will definitely still be an opportunity to practise winter sports.

Youth Session: 09. – 15.11.2010

Latecomers can still register for the Seminar on the Federal Youth Session. OSA will provide participants with an introduction to the Swiss political system and the issues to be addressed during the Youth Session. Together with 200 young politicians from Switzerland, the Swiss abroad will help shape policy in our country.

Educational offers:

Our offers allow you to combine holidays and learning. We provide individual advice for people wishing to find out about Switzerland's educational institutions. Discover Switzerland's highly regarded universities. OSA offers a practical insight into the career of your dreams. A welcoming host family looks forward to meeting you.

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Our services:

- Legal Department
- Youth Service
- Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS)
- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
- Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Phone +41 31 356 6100, Fax +41 31 356 6101, info@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

OFFERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 AND ABOVE

The holiday and educational offers of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are aimed at young Swiss people abroad aged 15 and over. Information on OSA's offers for young people can be obtained from the **OSA Youth Service**:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 00
youth@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.

OSA advice

Question: I live abroad and I have lost my driving licence, which was issued in Switzerland. Can I get a new one from the cantonal authority that issued it or from a Swiss representation abroad?

Answer: The Swiss authorities are not able to issue a new Swiss driving licence. From the date on which you begin residing abroad, it is the authorities of your country of residence that have authority with regard to your driving licence rather than Switzerland. On account of the principle of territoriality, you are subject to the legal system of the state you reside in. Consequently, the area of road traffic is exclusively governed by the law of the country of residence. The cantonal road traffic authority that issued the driving licence can therefore only provide you with an attestation stating that you are the holder of a Swiss driving licence. By issuing this attestation, the cantonal authority certifies that you have obtained a driving licence based on the conditions stipulated by Swiss law. You will then have to check with the authorities responsible in your country of residence which conditions have to be met for a driving licence to be issued to you (confirmation of the information contained in the attestation, driving test, etc.). The attestation from the cantonal road traffic au-

thority may be useful to you at this stage. If necessary, this document can be certified by your Swiss representation abroad.

The contact details of the cantonal road traffic authorities can be found at:

<http://www.strassenverkehrsamt.ch/>

SARAH MASTANTUONI, HEAD OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Camps for children aged 8 to 14

There are still some places left on our two New Year ski camps in Arolla and Tschieriv!

Winter camp in Arolla (Valais)

Winter camp in Tschieriv (Grisons)

Date: Monday, 27 December 2010 to

Wednesday, 5 January 2011

No. of participants: 35 per camp

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: approx. CHF 150

Registration

Precise details on the winter camps and the registration form are available at www.sjas.ch ("Our forthcoming activities"). Reduced contribution rates are available in justified cases. The form required can be requested on the registration form. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. The two winter camps in Arolla and Tschieriv are the only FYSA offers available during the 2010/11 winter season.

Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

Registration for the summer camps begins in February 2011.

Precise details on the various summer camps in 2011 (dates, locations and age groups, etc.) and the registration form will be available from February 2011 at www.sjas.ch ("Our forthcoming activities"). If you would prefer to look through our offers on paper, you can order a brochure from the office from February 2011.

CAMPS FOR CHILDREN AGED 8 TO 14

The camps for young Swiss people abroad aged 8 to 14 are organised by the **Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)**. Information on these camps can be obtained from FYSA:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 16
sjas@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.