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OSA advice

What is Switzerland's position on multiple nationalities? What consequences does dual citizenship have?

Over 70% of all Swiss abroad have another nationality in addition to Swiss citizenship. Switzerland has unrestrictedly recognised multiple citizenships since 1992. Swiss citizens do not therefore have to relinquish their Swiss citizenship if they apply for the nationality of another country unless this is stipulated by the law of their other country. Not all countries recognise dual citizenship. It is therefore advisable to ask the authorities in the country where nationality is enjoyed about the consequences before obtaining another nationality.

Dual citizenship has various consequences for the Swiss abroad. The welfare institutions, for example, only generally assume responsibility for persons with dual citizenship if they can prove that their Swiss citizenship is of primary importance. This means that they must have a closer relationship with Switzerland than with their other country. The country to which persons with multiple nationalities have the strongest relationship is also responsible for diplomatic protection. If such persons reside in their other country, Switzerland cannot intervene on their behalf. However, the consular and diplomatic representations can take action in cases of serious and repeated infringements of international law (e.g. violations of the ban on torture). Swiss abroad with multiple citizenships are generally exempted from compulsory military service by Switzerland if they have carried out their military service in their other country or have performed alternative civilian service. This is without prejudice to the obligation to pay the military service exemption tax. Swiss abroad with dual citizenship who have also taken the nationality of their country of residence cannot voluntarily perform their military service in Switzerland unless the compulsory military service agreement between Switzerland and other countries stipulates otherwise. Dual citizenship can also have implications under civil law. Swiss abroad can, for example, decide by will that their inheritance matters will be governed by Swiss law. This is, of course, subject to recognition of this decision by their other country, which is often also their country of residence.

SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

Holiday adventures and educational visits for young Swiss abroad

Over 200 young Swiss abroad enjoyed an exciting stay in their second homeland this summer. The visitors gained broad insights into Switzerland, established contacts with Swiss people living in Switzerland and abroad, and took lots of memories home. OSA's Youth Service is looking forward to welcoming old and new faces to the forthcoming winter programmes.



Register now for OSA's winter offers!

OSA's Youth Service wants to help even more young people create memories of Switzerland. The 2013/14 winter programme will provide youngsters with opportunities to practise winter sports at various holiday regions in Switzerland, to improve their knowledge with a language course or to enjoy a visit tailored to individual requirements with one of OSA's offers for young people.

Discover Switzerland (aged 16 and above)

Young people will explore Switzerland for two weeks. They will stay with host families and choose trips suggested by OSA.

Training in Switzerland

(aged 16 and above)

During a two-week visit, OSA will arrange for young people to visit educational institutions to help them achieve their career ambitions. The participants will receive extensive advice on educational opportunities and meet students from the disciplines concerned. They will stay with host families during their visit.

New Year's ski camp in Lantsch/Lenzerheide (Grisons) (15 to 25-year-olds)

The traditional winter sports camp for young Swiss abroad will take place in Grisons from 26 December 2013 to 4 January 2014.

The **language courses** will take place in Berne and Fribourg from 6 January to 17 January 2014.

Winter sports week in Davos (Grisons)

(aged 18 and above)

29 March 2014 to 5 April 2014

A programme for young adults in the famous winter sports resort of Davos.

Right across Switzerland

(aged 14 and above)

19 April 2014 to 26 April 2014

An exciting journey through Switzerland with lots of places of interest and highlights.

Information on the programmes for young people can be found in the "Offers" section at www.aso.ch.

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SEMINAR ON THE FEDERAL YOUTH SESSION

Are you a young Swiss person abroad aged between 14 and 21, do you speak a national language and are you interested in social or political issues?

Register now for the one-week political seminar organised by OSA (from 11 to 17 November 2013) and then take part in the Federal Youth Session! Together with 200 young people from Switzerland, you will have the opportunity to express your political views in the Federal Palace and to influence politics in Switzerland. Young Swiss people have had a powerful voice for over 20 years thanks to the Youth Session.



The Swiss abroad, globalisation and the Federal Councillor

This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad was a resounding success. The topic of "Switzerland and globalisation" generated great interest, as did the visit and speech by Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.



Around 400 Swiss from Switzerland and abroad attended the 91st Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Davos between 16 and 18 August. The highlight was the plenary session with several votes on globalisation and on the opportunities and risks that this presents for Switzerland.

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE SWISS ABROAD

As usual, the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Davos on the day before the congress. The Council was reconstituted as its members all over the world had been newly elected for the 2013-2017 term of office in recent months. Filippo Lombardi, a CVP Council of States member from Ticino, and Irène Beutler-Fauguel, a representative of the Swiss in Italy, were elected as new members of OSA's Executive Board. Jean-Paul Aeschlimann stood down from the Executive Board. His Executive Board seat, which is reserved for the Swiss

community living in France, will not be occupied until the next CSA meeting in March.

Michel Duclos, the French ambassador to Berne, attended the Council's meeting as a guest. He comprehensively set out the position of the French government in the row over a new inheritance tax agreement with Switzerland. In a nutshell, he explained that as France has terminated the old agreement, Switzerland only has two options. Either it can accept France's proposal for a new agreement or an unregulated situation will prevail. Ambassador Duclos said that

"Globalisation is neither good nor bad," remarked Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf in her speech on the Saturday afternoon. "Globalisation presents opportunities and risks. It is a matter of deciding how to take advantage of the opportunities and to minimise the risks." Minimising risks is a current focus for Switzerland primarily because of its financial centre, the Federal Councillor emphasised, as Switzerland is by far the most important location for cross-border asset management. Swiss financial institutions manage around 2,100 billion US dollars in foreign assets. (The full speech can be found at www.efd.admin.ch > press releases and speeches)

After appearing at the plenary session, the Federal Councillor met young Swiss abroad taking part in a project week organised by OSA's Youth Service as part of the congress. The youngsters revealed that the meeting with Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, from which journalists were excluded, was very animated and humorous at times, while critical views were also expressed.

During the plenary question-and-answer session, those attending mainly focused on the new tax agreement between France and Switzerland which foresees a high level of taxation of inheritances in Switzerland and applies to French citizens and Swiss citizens living in France (see also the box on the CSA). Federal Councillor Widmer-Schlumpf expressed the view that an unregulated situation would be even more disadvantageous than the agreement sought by France. (BE)

the proposed agreement was clearly a better option than no agreement at all. This opinion is also shared by the Federal Council, which has already signed the agreement. However, it has yet to be ratified by Parliament.

Finally, the Council unanimously adopted OSA's position statement for the consultation procedure on the new Swiss Abroad Act. This is set to be discussed by the Swiss Parliament this year.

The names of all members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad are published on OSA's website. www.aso.ch > Politics > Council of the Swiss Abroad > Members (BE)

SERVICES PROVIDED BY OSA

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), a foundation governed by private law, is a centre of expertise for safeguarding the interests of Swiss citizens living abroad. Besides the publication of "Swiss Review", it provides various services for Swiss citizens abroad in collaboration with its partner organisations.

■ **Legal advice.** Free advice on emigrating abroad and returning to Switzerland. www.aso.ch - "Consultation" section

■ **Offers for children and young people.** Organisation of holiday camps and language courses, etc. for young Swiss abroad seeking a better understanding of their native country. www.aso.ch - "Offers" section

■ **Advice on education and training in Switzerland.** Young Swiss abroad wishing to train or study in Switzerland receive support and guidance in selecting training and educational opportunities and making grant applications. www.aso.ch - "Consultation" section

■ **Network.** The website Swiss-Community.org provides the opportunity to network with Swiss citizens all over the world.

www.swisscommunity.org



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