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OSA advice

I've been away from Switzerland and have been domiciled abroad for the past few years and have not made contributions to the old-age and survivors' insurance (OASI) scheme. Can I make up for these missing years by contributing when I return to Switzerland? I've heard that contributions can be paid retroactively for a five-year period.

It is no longer possible for those returning from abroad to make retroactive contributions for missing years.

The option of paying contributions retroactively for a five-year period exists but only for people who were subject to OASI contributions during that period, primarily due to being domiciled in Switzerland.

People living abroad are not subject to OASI contributions unless exceptional circumstances apply. They can therefore no longer contribute retroactively for the missing years.

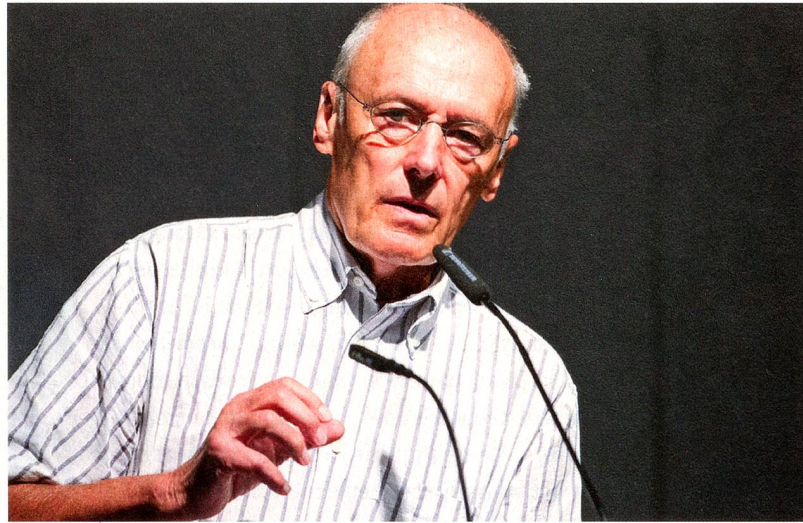
It is advisable to contact your cantonal compensation office for more detailed information before leaving Switzerland. Making arrangements to accrue pension assets - either by taking out optional OASI with the Swiss Compensation Office in Geneva, where possible, or by taking out a private insurance policy - is also recommended.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT OF THE OSA

Swiss compensation Office:
www.zas.admin.ch > Swiss compensation Office SCO

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

New OSA President



The delegates of the Council of the Swiss Abroad met in Geneva on Friday, 14 August, the day before the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, for their second meeting of the year. The most important item on the agenda was the election of the new President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). Remo Gysin, who was previously Vice-President, was elected receiving 67 of the 71 valid votes. The 70-year-old from Basel succeeds Geneva's Jacques-Simon Eggly, who had been OSA President since 2007. Council of States member Filippo Lombardi has been appointed Vice-President.

Gysin was a cantonal councillor in the canton of Basel-Stadt from 1984 to 1992 and a National Councillor from 1995 to 2007. He has been a member of the OSA's Executive Board since 2001.

He takes over a challenging task as the OSA has been in some disarray since its long-standing Director Rudolf Wyder stood down at the end of 2013. Around three quarters of the staff at the office in Berne have left the OSA, resulting in a huge loss of expertise. This has also led to criticism from Swiss associations and clubs abroad, which have complained of a lack of support and poor communication.

Remo Gysin is aware of the problems and willing to focus intensively on the OSA. He is also in a position to do so as he no longer holds any professional or political mandates. He is regarded as an analytical thinker and an integrative figure.

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Disappointment over e-voting

The Council of the Swiss Abroad has unanimously adopted a resolution on e-voting. This was triggered by the Federal Council's decision two days before the Council meeting not to permit nine cantons, which had made an application, to use electronic voting at the 2015 elections for security reasons. Instead of the expected 85,000, only 34,000 Swiss Abroad can now exercise their right to vote via the internet.

The Youth Service's winter offers

The Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is offering young people various programmes again this winter. These include two winter camps and a German course in Berne.

German course in Berne
 from 3 to 15 January 2016

Easter camp in Saas Grund
 from 19 to 27 March 2016

Further leisure and educational offers will be published on the OSA's websites on an ongoing basis.

Information and registration:
www.aso.ch > Offers or
www.swisscommunity.org > Youth > Leisure offers

The OSA's Youth Service would be pleased to provide further information on
 +41 31 356 61 00 or via youth@aso.ch

Summer camps for 8 to 14-year-olds

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) will again be organising various holiday camps next summer for Swiss youngsters abroad aged 8 to 14.

The exact details and the itinerary of the individual camps as well as the registration form will be published in January 2016 at www.sjas.ch and in "Swiss Review" from February 2016. An application for financial support with the camp costs can be made for all camps.

The foundation would also be pleased to send you its information brochure by post upon request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2016.

Summer camps in 2016 – Overview of dates, camp locations and age groups

- Sat 25/6 to Fri 8/7/2016: Stäfa (ZH) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900
- Sat 25/6 to Fri 8/7/2016: Obersaxen (GR) for 40 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900
- Wed 29/6 to Fri 8/7/2016: Swiss trip for 24 children aged 12 to 16, price: CHF 950
- Sat 9/7 to Fri 22/7/2016: Venue yet to be decided for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900
- Sat 9/7 to Fri 22/7/2016: Buochs (NW) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900
- Sat 23/7 to Fri 5/8/2016: Weggis (LU) for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900
- Sat 23/7 to Fri 5/8/2016: St-Cergue (VD) for 36 children aged 8 to 12, price: CHF 900
- Sat 23/7 to Sun 7/8/2016: Magglingen (BE) sports camp for 42 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 950
- Sat 6/8 to Fri 19/8/2016: Bevaix (NE) for 42 children aged 8 to 14, price: CHF 900

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email: info@sjas.ch,
www.sjas.ch/en/



Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundazion per giuovens svizzers a l'ester

Frequently asked questions about education in Switzerland

How can I find an internship?

There is no official or central agency for internship places in Switzerland. Finding a suitable internship requires a great deal of initiative. Candidates must proactively search for appropriate places. Internships are also advertised alongside job vacancies on various websites.

Students wishing to go to a university of applied sciences after obtaining their school-leaving qualifications can contact their chosen institution directly. Many offer support with finding internship places either by providing a list of places that may offer internships or by offering information on partner companies. Some of these universities also provide preliminary courses which include internships and support interns during the pre-study placement.

Will my qualifications in Switzerland also be recognised abroad?

A distinction has to be made between professional and academic recognition with regard to the acknowledgement of degrees. Professional recognition is required to practise a profession or for professional accreditation. In contrast, academic recognition is important for admission to further courses of education or post-graduate study.

Professional recognition of a Swiss degree abroad must be verified with the authorities in the country concerned and not in Switzerland. It is generally assumed that courses of study in the EU/EFTA Member States are essentially equivalent. Each EU/EFTA country has a point of contact responsible for the recognition of professional qualifications. http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/docs/contact-points/info-points_en.pdf

The vocational qualifications of some professions, such as doctors, dentists, vets, chemists, general care staff, midwives and architects, are subject to specific guidelines.

What opportunities are available to bridge the period between school and education?

It is often actually quite difficult to find a training position directly after mandatory education. This not only applies to young Swiss people abroad but also to many youngsters who have grown up in Switzerland. Various reasons exist for this including, for example, insufficient linguistic knowledge, inadequate general education or the fact that the youngsters have not yet made a definite decision on their education. To provide these young people with more time, many private and public schools run special courses (10th year of school, career preparation courses and integration classes for youngsters speaking a foreign language, etc.). However, these bridging opportunities vary depending upon the canton. It is advisable to find out which bridging option is most suitable at an early stage.

Can I do a medical degree in Switzerland?

Places to study medicine are restricted in Switzerland. This means either that admission is based on a suitability test (in German-speaking Switzerland) or more stringent selection takes place after the first year of study (French-speaking Switzerland). Registration for medical degrees is carried out centrally and electronically and is mandatory. The registration deadline is 15 February 2016.

Candidates must check whether foreign school-leaving qualifications meet the admission criteria before registration.

We also recommend the online self-assessment test for checking a candidate's suitability. More detailed information can be found at www.swissuniversities.ch

Further FAQs and information on education in Switzerland is available at www.educationsuisse.ch or can be obtained directly from the staff of *educationsuisse*.

RUTH VON GUNTEN, EDUCATIONSUISSE