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ASO Report

93rd Congress of the Swiss Abroad

The Congress of the Swiss Abroad was held between the 14th and 16th August 2015 at the Centre international de conference in Geneva, attended by about 75 elected delegates from around the world.

This year's conference was marked by the lack of new and interesting topics. The Swiss Government's austerity measures were however an issue in a number of areas

New President elected

Jacques-Simon Eggly, after eight (8) years as President, has stepped down and in his place Remo Gysin, who was the Vice President, was elected President. The new Vice President is Filippo Lombardi.

E-Voting

E-Voting has long been an issue with the OSA. It is the aim of OSA for all Swiss living abroad to be able to vote by E-Voting if they wish. For the Federal Elections which were held in October 2015, an anticipated 142'000 registered voters should have been able to vote via E-Voting. Unfortunately in July a security leak was found in two of the three different computer systems used by the Cantons. The Federal Government then rejected these two systems because the secret ballot voting was not sufficiently guaranteed. Due to this, only four Cantons with 34'000 registered overseas voters (GE, BS, LU, NE) were given the go ahead by the Government and were able to vote by E-Voting in the October 2015 elections.

Swiss Banks

At the moment there is no real positive change concerning the Swiss bank policies. Swiss living abroad are still treated like they all have the pest or rabies. I personally hope that Swiss banks will change their attitude towards the Swiss living in New Zealand with the introduction of the automatic exchange of financial account information (Automatischer Informationsaustausch (AIA) between New Zealand and Switzerland which will probably come into effect at the beginning of 2018.

Closure of Embassies and Consulates

With the Swiss Government's austerity measures to reduce expenditure and save money, more Embassies and Consulates have been or are about to be closed. This is unacceptable to the

OSA and we are doing everything to stop this process. It is important for the Swiss Abroad to be able to receive consular services, advice and help within a reasonable distance from where they live. In New Zealand we are very fortunate to be in such a comfortable position with our Embassy in Wellington and a Consulate in Auckland providing us with above average services.

The Law for the Swiss Abroad

(Auslandschweizergesetz)

The Law for the Swiss Abroad is going to be enacted at the end of 2015 after both Chambers of the Federal Parliament passed it and the time limit for a referendum against it has expired.

Nomination and Election of the Council of the Swiss Abroad

Further discussions and a strategy plan was presented to us this year on how the Executive Board plans to go forward with the 2017 election of the delegates worldwide. They have not come up with a viable alternative to the present system, which involves the Swiss Clubs of every country in the election process. Some of the delegates including myself objected to a number of proposals presented. At the moment no one really knows what the strategy of the Executive Board is. It is more than optimistic to say that the new ruling should be implemented by 2021. For me some of the proposals presented by the Executive Board at the assembly this year are out of touch with reality to say the least.

Swiss Revue

Up to now, the Swiss Revue magazine for the Swiss Abroad appeared 6 times a year providing information about what is happening in Switzerland and for us, through the regional Issue "Oceania" introduced in 2015, the activities of our local Swiss associations in the Pacific Region. The Swiss Revue is published by the OSA in Bern, which receives government funding for the publication. It is edited with 422'000 copies and an electronic version is also available.

At the meeting we were informed that as of 2016 the number of paper issues will be reduced from 6 to 4 per year. This is all in line with the Swiss Government's austerity measures to save money and reduce expenditure. However, the electronic version will still be published 6 times a year. With these measures the Swiss government hopes that readers

will be encouraged to cancel the paper version and switch to the electronic version.

The next Spring-Meeting of the Swiss Abroad will be on the 16th of April 2016 in Brunnen.

Core Areas of discussion will be medical insurance (Krankenversicherung) and voluntary contribution to the Swiss pension system (Freiwillige AHV).

The next Summer Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be from the 5th – 7th of August 2016 in Bern.

Peter Ehrler

Elected Council Member of the Swiss Abroad, representing New Zealand.

Swiss Tourist Entrepreneurs and Small Business Owner operating in the Tourist Industry in New Zealand

I have recently come across a webpage platform which might be of interest to Swiss Entrepreneurs in New Zealand operating in the field of tourism or small business owners be it: B&B, Cafés, Restaurants, tourist operators etc, etc.

Behind halloswiss is a Travel Office called "Reisebüro Hauger" with six office branches in the Central part of Switzerland and Zürich

Similar websites exist for "hallogerman" and "halloaustrian". They are all platforms with various touristic offers and propositions.

The link is: <https://halloswiss.ch/>

From my knowledge, the platforms present expat providers who have either emigrated or have a connection to Switzerland, Germany or Austria for a small annual fee and advertising possibility. I believe the only limitation is that the provider needs to be able to speak and write the German language.

Are you interested in the electronic version of the Helvetia ?
Please advise Nelly Steinemann at nelly.steinemann@swiss.org.nz.