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Electronic voting – a pilot project for Swiss Abroad

Around 450 persons from 38 countries attended this year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad held in Zug from 18 to 20 August. Presentations focused on the present and future status of Switzerland as a centre of education. In her address, Federal Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz revealed that the Fifth Switzerland is to play a pioneering role in electronic voting.

In the opinion of State Secretary Charles Kleiber, Switzerland's education and research system has developed very well, but it is threatened by internal and external factors. A comprehensive series of reforms has now been launched by the universities themselves in order to boost their attractiveness at international level.

Geneva State Council Martine Brunschwig Graf, President of the Cantonal Department of Education, gave a speech on the school of the 21st century, which she believed needed to promote intellectual and critical faculties. Brunschwig Graf believes that school "needs to foster creativity and encourage initiative."

Education as a production factor

Johannes Randegger, National Councillor and member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad, believes that innovation is the force that drives the Swiss economy. Our country must respond to competition and invest more in research – a task to which private industry as well as the state should be duty-bound.

In the opinion of Thomas Straubhaar, a Swiss Abroad and Professor of Economics at the University of Hamburg, Switzerland must make its educational facilities more attractive at the international level. As a country with no

natural resources it boasts a long tradition in the export of education. This factor must be exploited since it could open up new sources of income.

Claudio Fischer, Scientific Attaché to the Swiss Mission in Brussels, welcomed the acceptance of the bilateral agreements but pointed out that "their impact on the educational field is minimal." He added that a great many barriers are currently impeding the international mobility of Swiss

Abroad and cited the agreement on free movement of persons, which grants the right to live and exercise one's profession in the EU but does not accord unlimited access to educational institutions.

This year the traditional address by a member of the government was given by Federal Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz. She reminded the audience that democracy is the concern of all and urged Swiss Abroad to exercise

their political rights so as to "enrich national debate through their experiences."

Recognising the difficulties which confront the 582,000 registered Swiss Abroad in exercising their right to vote, the Federal Chancellor stressed that "the ideal solution to all these problems would unquestionably be electronic voting (so-called e-voting)."

Back in 1998 the Federal Council defined its strategy on "e-government", focusing on two main projects: the "guichet virtuel" project which aims to create a portal for all the state organs of our federalist system, and a project to set up an electronic voting system as a solution to the problems of postal voting.

Ambitious goals

This objective, however, will take some time to accomplish since it will not be easy to implement. Huber-Hotz announced that the Federal Chancellery was "currently devoting major efforts to a pilot project for electronic voting for Swiss Abroad, who are set to play a pioneering role in this area."

Isabelle Schmidt-Duvoisin



Photo: Stefano Iori

Federal Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz gave this year's traditional speech by a member of the Swiss government. Pictured with OSA president Georg Stucky.

Council for the Swiss Abroad in favour of UN membership

"The Fifth Switzerland needs a strong lobby", emphasised Georg Stucky, President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) at the autumn session of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) held in Zug on 18 August. In recognition of this fact, the CSA decided to increase the visible presence of Swiss Abroad in our country. In line with this aim, the CSA announced that it would be holding the 2002 Congress for the Swiss Abroad in Bienne and intends to organise a Swiss Abroad Day at Expo.02. The CSA also declared its support of Switzerland's membership of the United Nations (UN). Next year's congress will focus on "Switzerland and the UN".

ISD

Youth Service Winter Programme

Sports & Fun

- New Year's ski camp in Sedrun (GR) – the friendly ski resort in the Graubunden Oberland: 27.12.2000–5.1.2001, ages 15–25, CHF 700
- Snow sports week in Engelberg (OW) – the largest and best-known ski resort in Central Switzerland: 3.3.–10.3.2001, ages 20–35, CHF 750
- Easter ski camp in Bettmeralp (VS) – car-free ski resort situated on a high plateau in the Aletsch region: 8.4.–17.4.2001, ages 14–25, CHF 700

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For details on the individual

arrangements, check out www.aso.ch ("Camps and Events"). Brochure, information and registration:

Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad
Youth Service
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CH-3000 Berne 16
Tel: +41 31 351 61 00
Fax: +41 31 351 61 50
E-mail: youth@aso.ch

Ten days of snow and fun

There are still a few vacancies for the New Year ski camps run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (SJAS). Which children aged 8 to 14 would like to join us?

Dates: Wednesday 27 December 2000–Saturday 6 January 2001.

Locations: Splügen/GR and Engelberg/OW.

Programme: Skiing and snowboarding, plus other winter sports such as sledging, ice-skating etc., cozy camp atmosphere.

Leaders: Experienced camp leader

teams from the SJAS.

Costs: 800 CHF per child incl. inland travel from the Swiss border. It is possible to apply for a contribution to costs from the Foundation Fund.

Additional information:

SJAS

Alpenstrasse 26

CH-3000 Berne 16

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E-mail: sjas@aso.ch

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Olivier Reverdin dies

A prominent figure in the political and intellectual world has passed on: Geneva resident Olivier Reverdin has died at the age of 86. Throughout his full life the former National and State Councillor was active in a wide range of areas. He held the Chair of Classical Greek at the University of Geneva, was editor-in-chief of the

"Journal de Genève", and was the first and only Swiss to preside over a session of the European Parliament. He was also President of the OSA between 1954 and 1959, and many of the guiding principles which still dictate the direction of our organisation were laid down during his term of office.

Readers' Trip 2000

The third readers' trip organised by the "Swiss Review" again proved a major attraction. A group of around 70 interested Swiss Abroad travelled along the Rhine, learning fascinating facts on Switzerland's rich history from the accompanying experts. The enthusiastic participants were also re-

ceived by well-known political figures such as State Council President Carlo Schmid, who gave a speech in his home canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden and dispensed local specialities, including the popular Appenzell schnapps, to the group. LS

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