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Swiss Abroad launch election year

At its meeting in Berne, the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) focused on the upcoming national elections. The CSA will make voting recommendations for the first time in its history.

“This year is an election year, and it is more important than ever for us to defend the interests of the 760,000 Swiss Abroad and remind politicians that expatriate votes count,” said the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Remo Gysin, at the start of the CSA meeting at Berne’s city hall on 23 March. Some 172,000 Swiss Abroad are currently entered in the electoral register, which corresponds to the number of eligible voters in the canton of Thurgau.

In Berne, the CSA decided that it will be making voting recommendations for the first time ever. Its objective in doing so is to take even greater account of the needs and concerns of Swiss Abroad in the forthcoming legislative period. These recommendations will be finalised at the next CSA meeting on 16 August 2019 in Montreux.



In session – the main focus of the CSA in Berne centred on the 2019 elections. Photo: Marc Lettau

The OSA has already started an election website specifically for the Swiss Abroad (www.aso.ch/en/politics/federal-elections-2019), containing practical information about the voting procedure as well as

general information about the Swiss party-political landscape. The website will serve as an expatriate platform for the political parties that currently have seats in the Federal Palace. These parties will also have the opportunity to address delegates from around the world directly at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Montreux.

Furthermore, the CSA will also approve a 2019 election manifesto officially on behalf of the Swiss Abroad, the basic tenets of which it drew up in Berne. The CSA will adopt a finalised version of this manifesto at its August meeting in Montreux. First and foremost, the election manifesto will target Switzerland’s political parties and their candidates for the federal elections. It will focus on issues of importance to Switzerland’s expatriate citizens, such as the future of voting rights, international mobility, preservation of the consular network, and the unsatisfactory deal that Swiss banks currently offer their Swiss expatriate clients.

With this in mind, the CSA in Berne again made reference to the fact that Postfinance expatriate clients pay much higher banking fees but do not receive the same level of service as their compatriots in Switzerland – something that many Swiss Abroad view as discrimination. According to the CSA, Postfinance AG, whose main shareholder is state-owned Swiss Post, also has a special responsibility towards Swiss citizens who live abroad. Many Swiss move abroad for professional reasons and often just for a relatively short time, making it all the more important for them to keep an account in Switzerland.

However, the CSA prefers a non-confrontational approach on this important matter and will not be taking any legal action against Postfinance for the time being. Nevertheless, the resolution that it adopted in Berne was unequivocal: “We, the Swiss Abroad, demand non-discriminatory access to the services of Postfinance.” (ASO)

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)

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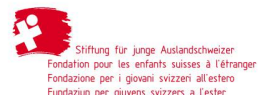


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Tailored advice

Do you have any questions on the topic of education in Switzerland? If so, *educationsuisse* will help you find the right answers.

educationsuisse is an expert contact partner for young Swiss Abroad who are interested in studying in Switzerland. The staff provide general information on the different educational opportunities available, whether it is a degree at a Swiss university or a vocational training course. They also answer questions on admission criteria for university study, the required language skills, searching for an apprenticeship, accommodation, insurance and other topics. Nearly all of *educationsuisse*'s services are free of charge.

Personalised advice

The staff, who speak German, French, Italian, Spanish and English, will help you find the right answers and assist you with any special enquiries. Many questions can be answered by email or by phone. Personal consultations are possible at our office in Bern by prior appointment.

Vocational & study counselling

Targeted consultations are offered in collaboration with the official careers guidance centre BIZ Bern-Mittelland. During these consultations (in German, French, Italian, Spanish or English) with an expert on-site in Bern or via Skype, you can raise questions regarding your choice of career or study programme. These consultations are subject to a charge. Registration is via *educationsuisse*.

Scholarships

Any young Swiss Abroad whose parents are unable to cover all the costs of their education may apply for a grant. Young Swiss Abroad usually have the opportunity to apply for a scholarship for their initial qualification (up to and including a tertiary-level Master's degree) in their canton of residence. Every canton has its own laws and regulations and thus also different conditions and deadlines. *educationsuisse* provides assistance with such matters and also looks after the documentation. Furthermore, *educationsuisse* is itself able to award

The OSA Youth Service is conducting a survey to help better meet the expectations of the Swiss Abroad.

Each year, the OSA Youth Service presents various offers for young people from Switzerland living abroad. In a manner of speaking, the Service is a memory maker for these Swiss youngsters living outside their country; through its wide variety of appealing and contemporary offers, it hopes to weave strong ties between them and their homeland. It is for this reason that in order to better meet your expectations, we have compiled a questionnaire that we would be delighted if you could complete.

By filling out the questionnaire, you will be automatically entered into a prize draw* to win two free sets of two-person tickets for the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, which will take place in Montreux from 16 to 18 August 2019.

This questionnaire will only take a few minutes of your time but will be invaluable for us in providing your children, grandchildren, friends or acquaintances with unforgettable memories of their stay in Switzerland: <https://www.swisscommunity.org/en/youth/youth-offers>. Thank you for your participation and good luck in the prize draw! (MB)

Information

The winter camps for young people aged 15–18 years and those for young adults will take place from 27 December 2019 to 4 January 2020. They will be organised by the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Switzerland; tel.: +41 31 356 61 00; email: youth@aso.ch.

*) No exchange of prizes or cash payments of an equivalent monetary value are possible. All legal recourse is excluded. No correspondence shall be entered into regarding the prize draw.

small scholarships or loans in cases of hardship thanks to various funds and private foundations.

Information and contact

The Swiss educational system is illustrated and outlined in an easy-to-follow diagram on www.educationsuisse.ch. The website also contains a lot more information on the topic of education in Switzerland. Any interested parties who have additional questions are welcome to contact *educationsuisse* by email on info@educationsuisse.ch or by phone on +41 31 356 61 04.

educationsuisse, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Bern, Switzerland, www.educationsuisse.ch.

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Camps for children aged eight to 14

Swiss children living abroad can experience the Grisons mountains at our next winter camp. And there are still some free places available at our fantastic summer camps.

At its winter camp, the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) offers Swiss children living abroad aged eight to 14 the chance to experience the Swiss Alps in winter and enjoy the snow on their skis or snowboards. The 2019-20 winter camp will take place at the Tga da Lai chalet in Valbella (canton of Grisons) from Thursday, 26 December 2019 until 4 January 2020. You can sign up your child for the camp from 1 September 2019 via our website (sjas.ch/en/).

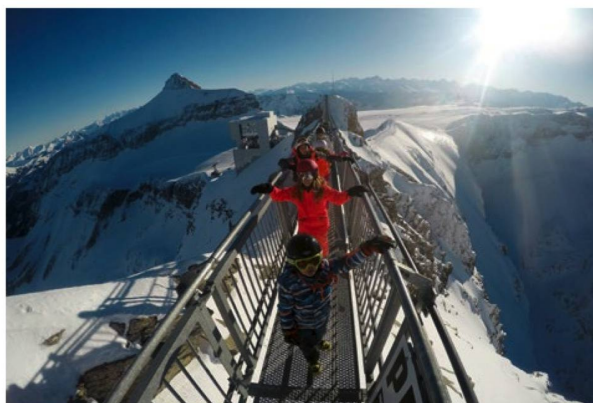
Free spots at our summer camp

There are still some free places on our two-week summer camps. Taking place between the end of June and the end of August 2019, these camps are an opportunity for children to get to know Switzerland and its culture – and have a great time. For further details as well as the relevant application form, visit sjas.ch/en/.

Price reductions

The FYSA wants to enable all Swiss children living abroad to visit and experience Switzerland for themselves at least once. We therefore offer price reductions whenever these are justified. Simply fill in the 'Application form for reduction of the camp fees'. We will also be happy to help if you require any further information. (LR)

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What will tomorrow's world hold?

97th Congress of the Swiss Abroad, from 16 to 18 August 2019 in Montreux



The 97th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will provide an opportunity to reflect on social, political and economic realities, as well as unemployment, current migratory situations and even the mobility of the future. What major challenges will society be facing and how can they be tackled? How can the elements for solving and responding to these issues be implemented from today? Leading figures from the world of economics, science and Swiss politics will attempt to tackle and provide answers to these questions.

Since this is election year, this congress will welcome the political parties represented in the federal parliament. Leading politicians will come to Montreux to address participants and to discuss issues of interest to the Swiss Abroad.

The congress will also provide the opportunity to explore the wealth of tourist attractions the area has to offer. This year, participants will have the chance to visit Chaplin's World in Vevey, and to enjoy a meal in the breathtaking surroundings of the Lavaux vineyards, which boast UNESCO World Heritage status. (AC)

Full schedule:

Friday 16 August 2019

9:00–17:30

Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad

Saturday 17 August 2019

Congress of the Swiss Abroad

9:00–12:30

Political programme:

Federal elections 2019

The Swiss Abroad and Political Parties: status report and mutual expectations

10:00–12:00

Cultural programme

Guided tour of Château de Chillon for participants not wishing to participate in the political programme

13:45–17:45

Conference: What will tomorrow's world hold?

19:00–22:30

Closing event at the Grand Hôtel Suisse Majestic

Sunday 18 August 2019

9:15–15:30

Chaplin's World visit – Meal in the Lavaux vineyards

Price per person

Saturday 17 August 2019

Daytime events CHF 180.00

Closing event CHF 95.00

Sunday 18 August 2019

Excursion CHF 60.00

Register now at

www.ose-congres.ch

Special offer for Congress participants –75 % reduction on the cost of a Swiss Travel Pass

With the Swiss Travel Pass, people living outside Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein can enjoy unlimited travel on the full road, rail and water transport networks of the Swiss Travel System, for a period of 3, 4, 8 or 15 consecutive days.