

Info to Embassy / Clubs: 95th congress of the Swiss Abroad

The Organization of Swiss Abroad (OSA) held its 95th congress from the 18th to 20th August in beautiful Basel and marks the beginning of the period 2017-2021 with newly or re-elected delegates of the Council of Swiss Abroad (CSA).

The UK delegates have been represented by a diverse and enthusiastic team with **Loredana Guetg-Wyatt, Nathalie Chuard, Franz Muheim** and **Vincent Croset**.

Alexandre Tissot sent his apologies (for more details about your UK delegates please visit the FOSSUK website)



From left to right: Vincent, Nathalie, Loredana, Franz



Townhall Basel

On Friday 18th of August, 116 delegates from all over the world assembled in the historic town hall for the constituent meeting, kicking off with the unanimous re-election of **Remo Gysin** as president of the OSA and **Peter Wuethrich** as treasurer.

Following three members representing the Executive committee from within Switzerland:

- **Filippo Lombardi**, State Councillor (re-elected)
- **Laurent Wehrli**, National Councillor (new)
- **Claudio Zanetti**, National Councillor (new)

Some great news from a UK perspective! We are very proud that **Franz Muheim** got elected into the CSA Executive Committee together with following 5 Swiss citizens:

- **Silvia Schoch** (Canada) (new)
- **Gian Franco Definiti** (Italy) (new)
- **Davide Moerker** (USA) (new)
- **Sabine Silberstein** (Singapur) (re-elected)
- **Roger Sauvain** (France) (re-elected)

2 further seats have been allocated to the Young Parliament of Swiss Abroad (YPSA) an important step to ensure early involvement and political engagement of the next generation.

- **Laura Derrer** and **Francisca Espinoza** (both from Santiago)

On the political agenda was the **Pension Reform 2020 (Altersvorsorge 2020)**, an update on **E-Voting** as well as the **discriminatory banking practices** against Swiss abroad.

- After an interesting discussion between supporter Tim Guldemann (National Councillor) and opponent Francois Baur (Economie suisse) of the **Pension reform 2020**, a majority of the CSA delegates recommended approval of the amended social security package. A similar pattern across the 4 UK delegates with 75% supporting the reform.
- The **importance of E-Voting** has been highlighted, especially by the CSA delegates from overseas that receive the voting documents never in time due to the long postal way. Currently only six cantons (BS, GE, LU, BE, NE and FR) allow the electronic vote, with cantons AG and SG recently joining for the recent referendum on the 24th of September. Progress is slow and still many cantons are lagging behind to implement E-Voting nationwide.
- The assembly discussed the **controversial policy of Swiss banks towards Swiss Abroad clients**, following several complaints about discriminatory business practices. In May, parliament threw out a call by National Councillor Rino Buechel urging the government to propose a legal amendment aimed at guaranteeing Swiss expats the right to open a bank account with a major financial institution. The results were close and just missed 3 supporting votes. In response, two new motions were filed by the ASO executive committee members, reiterating the need of Swiss Expats having access to an account at a major Swiss bank. Please let us know if you have been affected in any way, we are happy to collect examples and report back to the OSA.



Team UK voting

Some interesting developments initiated from our UK delegates. More to follow in 2018, but a quick overview below:

- **Franz Muheim** is continuing to lead a working group to ensure a better representation of the Council of Swiss Abroad through direct vote for the next term 2021 – 2025. An impact on this project might also have the result of the pilot project in Mexico and

Australia, where CSA delegates have been elected electronically, for the first time ever! The result was a great success with significant uplift in voting participation and a big step forward in modernizing and democratizing the election process of the CSA.

See video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vr7oX8njIP4>

- **Vincent Croset** is keen to investigate the possibility of having National Councillors representing Swiss people living abroad. Other countries allow this, so why should Switzerland follow the same example?
The congress was a great opportunity to raise awareness for this topic and to build a working group with the objective to present a more concrete project at the next meeting.

Around 400 participants attended the **Plenary Assembly on Saturday**, where keynote speaker **Federal Councillor Alain Berset** touched on the Pension Reform 2020 of which he is a strong supporter. Juerg Schmid, current CEO of Swiss Tourism celebrated the 100 anniversary of this organization with an interesting retrospect and Thomas Milic presented the slightly different voting patterns between Swiss living in Switzerland vs Expats.



Federal Councillor Alain Berset

Next OSA meeting is scheduled on the 10th of March and the upcoming congress will be held from the **10th to 12th of August in Visp (VS)** with the topic "Switzerland without Europe, Europe without Switzerland". A hot topic, especially from a UK perspective regarding Brexit and its implications for us Swiss citizens.

Ahead of this congress, we will start a dialogue with you to ensure we represent the Swiss living in the UK the best possible way.

Please follow FOSSUK on Facebook or Twitter and visit our website <http://www.swiss-societies.co.uk> for more information.

Text: Nathalie Chuard, info based on Swissorg.com

Photo credit: Adrian Moser, official photographer at the ASO event.