

## Report on the Meeting of the Delegates

**Meeting of the Delegates of the Council of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) held on 8 April 2011, in the Waldstätter Hof in Brunnen, on the occasion of the Attended by Yves Guisan, Margrit Lyster, Alain Meyer and Freddie Wyser.**

Jacques-Simon Eggli, OSA President welcomed members and guests present and declared the meeting open; out of 175 members with votes 75 were present.

After the minutes of the previous meeting of 20 August 2010 were unanimously accepted Jacques-Simon Eggli delivered the President's report. The full text can be found on the FOSSUK website. He particularly elaborated on the following:

- **Electronic Voting**
- **Consular Services/Consular network**
- **SwissCommunity.org**
- **Politics and the Swiss Abroad**

**Ambassador Gerhard Brügger**, head of the newly formed consular department of the EDA, formally concerned with matters relating to Swiss Abroad and Swiss Tourists abroad then addressed the meeting. His exposé outlining the massive reorganisation program of the consular network worldwide, mainly **closures of consulates** met with a lot of disbelief and protest. These intended drastic closures will have considerable consequences for Swiss abroad needing new passports, identity cards or other documentation. They could in future have to suffer long and extremely costly journeys for the renewal of their papers which could prove to be too much of a challenge for elderly or infirm people quite apart from the costs involved. Hon. Consuls are not able to offer a full consular service. After Mr Brügger had been bombarded with countless questions and concerns not only about the practicalities of these implementations but also the possible far-reaching consequences for the image and importance of Switzerland, he tried to calm the situation. He replied to the queries as detailed as possible aiming to assure the audience that their concerns had been heard and noted. Ambassador Brügger made the delegates aware of the 24 hour helpline.

**EDA Helplines: Tel 0800 24 7 365 [helpline@eda.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.ch)**

**A resolution drawn up by the ASO executive, formulating the delegates' demands with regards to the closures of consulates was unanimously passed.**

In view of the forthcoming parliamentary elections this autumn the ASO executive submitted a draft **election manifesto** stating today's requirements and demands for the Swiss abroad --- this was unanimously accepted.

**E-voting:** Considering the long drawn out process of comprehensively introducing e-voting for swiss abroad the Delegates are again unanimously accepting a resolution. They acknowledge the positive steps that have been made towards the introduction of e-voting but demand that the program be speeded up and be fully operational in time for the parliamentary elections 2015.

**Banking:** ASO is keenly watching developments with regards to Swiss bank accounts for Swiss abroad with great indignation. Monthly charges for accounts held by Swiss abroad are now common practice with all big Swiss banks. This is widely conceived as discrimination against Swiss abroad. Whilst OSA will try to intervene where ever possible there appears to be little hope for a change or even a u-turn. Cantonal Banks or Post Finance may at least at the moment still offer a possible option.

**Nicolas Bideau, Head of “Präsenz Schweiz”** talked on the future strategy to coordinate the promotion of Switzerland abroad by various institutions. New partners in Switzerland and abroad are sought to create a big network --- a partnership with ASO is envisaged.

The Council unanimously accepted the **Draft Annual Report as well as the audited accounts 2010 and the Budget 2011.**

**The Swiss Club “International Bundesbrief Society”** Exton USA was elected as new member of OSA.

**The Congress 2011** will be held in Lugano 26 - 28 August 2011 with the theme:  
**„Direkte Demokratie im internationalen Kontext“**



The Saturday was dedicated to the celebration of 20 years “Place for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen”. The weather could not have been better, snowy mountains and deep blue cloudless sky, just perfect for the festivities in the bay of Brunnen and for the boat journey and the walk along the path of Switzerland including the visit to the Rütli.

ps: Documentation on ASO delegates’ meetings including minutes of the meetings is available on the website of the Organisation for the Swiss abroad: [aso.ch](http://aso.ch) - click “politics” - click “Council of the Swiss abroad”