

Report on the Council of the Swiss Abroad Meeting

March 2022

The legislative body of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), the [Council of the Swiss Abroad \(CSA\)](#), met for its Spring meeting on 12 March 2022. The meeting was held online due to the continuing uncertainties related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delegates attending from Australia were Katja Wallimann Gates (Brisbane), Beat Knoblauch (Sydney), Roland Isler (Melbourne) and Carmen Trochsler (Adelaide) as well as Peter Ehrler from New Zealand (New Plymouth).

The meeting was chaired by OSA President Filippo Lombardi.

ANNUAL REPORTS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The 2021 Financial reports, the budget and the annual report (available soon here) were adopted as well as the goals and strategic priorities for the current term. The focus is on improvements in the areas of banking relationships, social insurance (old age, health) and the exercise of political rights. To achieve these goals, the strengthening of the network with key contacts on federal and cantonal level is a priority.

A new directive for the establishment of working groups has been approved. This initiative forms part of a new strategy making the best possible use of the competences of the members of the Executive Board and the Council of the Swiss Abroad. Another priority is to strengthen the online communication and visibility of the Organisation.

With two thirds of Swiss abroad living in European countries, maintaining bilateral relations with the EU to ensure free movement of persons but also access to funding instrument for research and innovation continues to be one of the important issues in the new year. The preservation of bilateral relations will also be discussed at the upcoming 98th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano in August.

UPDATE FROM THE FDFA

State secretary Johannes Matyassi did provide an interesting update on behalf of the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

- **“Ageing abroad”** is a project the FDFA has been working on. It serves the preparation for retirement for those living abroad. An article on this will appear in the April issue of the Swiss Review.
- The FDFA is working on a **Smartphone app** for the Swiss abroad community. The app will provide useful information and help to reach out to Swiss. President of the Swiss Confederation, Ignazio Cassis will say more about the app at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano in August. The introduction of the App is planned for the end of the year.
- The **country specific emigration advice** of the FDFA is being redesigned. The previous pdf documents for each country will be replaced by a more modern and interactive Internet dossier. Thailand and New Zealand are available in the new format, others will follow.
- In relation to **OASI/old age pension beneficiaries**, a new life verification process has come into effect this year thanks to the implementation of automated exchanges. The change will be staggered throughout the year and each beneficiary will be informed when they no longer need to submit the certificate life certificate. Whilst automated in the future, random checks will be done by the Swiss Central Compensation Office.
- The new trial phase for the re-introduction of **E-Voting** is on track. According to the plan several cantons will be conducting e-voting trials with Swiss Abroad registered in those specific cantons later this year.
- **Alternatives to e-voting** are being explored in the meantime. Another test run using diplomatic courier to send voting papers will be done this year and a report will be available at the end of 2022.

State secretary Johannes Matyassi finished his presentation stating that the direct contact with the Swiss abroad communities is key for the DFDA. He confirms the importance of listening to what the realities are and finding out what tools are needed. A visit to Australia this year is planned.

RECOGNITION OF THE AUSTRALIAN AND NZ UMBRELLA ORGANISATIONS

The application of the newly established [Swiss Alliance Australia](#) to be recognised as Umbrella Organisation for Australia, has been approved by the Council of the Swiss Abroad. An application has also been submitted and approved on behalf of the [Swiss Society of New Zealand](#). Whilst the Society has been around since 1935, a formal request to be recognised has only been made this year.

Congratulations to both Umbrella organisations on behalf of the Oceania delegates!

This was the 6th time that due to Covid-19 the 140 delegates met online. Whilst participation happened at low cost and in an environmentally friendly manner from home, the drawback was the lack of networking and lively discussions, that lead to instant feedback, reflection and better understanding ahead of decision taking. Another

downside is the meeting time, which due to the time difference means staying awake until 3.30am in Australia respectively 5.30am in New Zealand. We certainly look forward to being able to meet our fellow delegates in person again!

The next meeting will be on 19 August, as part of the [98th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lugano](#).

*Carmen Trochsler
CSA Delegate, Adelaide
15 March 2022*

Links:

[Live Streaming Recording Meeting 12 March 2022](#)

[Website Organisation of the Swiss Abroad](#)

[Website Swiss Alliance Australia](#)

[Website Swiss Society of New Zealand](#)