



ORDER OF MALTA
SWITZERLAND
FOUNDATION HELP AND ASSISTANCE

Foundation
« Help and Assistance » –
what we do, who we are.



Introduction

The Order of St John of Jerusalem is one of the oldest institutions of Western and Christian civilisation. It is a lay religious Order, traditionally of military, chivalrous, noble nature. What distinguishes the Knights of Malta is their commitment to reaching their spiritual perfection within the Church and to expending their energies serving the poor and the sick. The Order of Malta remains true to its inspiring principles summarised in the motto «Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum», defence of the Faith and assistance to the poor and the suffering. Today the Order carries out these activities in over 115 countries.

This booklet is aimed at giving a brief introduction to the activities of the Order of Malta in Switzerland.

More information can be found on the web page:

www.orderofmaltaswitzerland.ch

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History of the Order of Malta

The history of the Order of Malta covers a period of nearly 1000 years and it continues today its ancient tradition.

1050: The birth of the Order in Jerusalem. Merchants obtained the authorisation to build a church, convent and hospital in Jerusalem, to care for pilgrims.

1113: Pope Paschal II approved the foundation of the Hospital and placed it under the aegis of the Holy See. The Hospital became an Order exempt from the Church. All the Knights were religious, bound by the three monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

1310: When the last Christian stronghold in the Holy Land fell, the Order settled on the island of Rhodes.

13th century: For the defence of the Christian world the Order built a powerful fleet and sailed the Eastern Mediterranean, fighting many famous battles for the sake of Christendom – for example, the Crusades in Syria and Egypt.

14th century: The Order organizes itself in eight Langues (Provence, Auvergne, France, Italy, Aragon (Navarre), England (with Scotland and Ireland) and Germany, as well as Castilla and Portugal.

1523: After six months of siege and fierce combat against the fleet and army of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, the Knights were forced to surrender and left Rhodes with military honours.

1530: Grand Master Fra' Philippe de Villiers de l'Isle Adam took possession of the island of Malta, granted to the Order by Emperor Charles V with the approval of Pope Clement VII. It was established that the Order should remain neutral in any war between Christian nations.

1565: the Knights defended the island for more than three months during the Great Siege by the Turks.

1571: The fleet of the Order, then one of the most powerful in the Mediterranean, contributed to the ultimate destruction of the Ottoman naval power in the Battle of Lepanto.

1798: Napoleon Bonaparte occupied the island and the knights were forced to leave Malta.

1800: The English take over Malta. Although the sovereign rights of the Order in the island of Malta had been reaffirmed by the Treaty of Amiens (1802), the Order has never been able to return to Malta.



1834: the Order settled definitively in Rome, where it owns, with extraterritoriality status, the Magistral Palace in Via Condotti 68 and the Magistral Villa on the Aventine Hill.

20th and 21st century: The original Hospitaller mission became once again the main activity of the Order, growing ever stronger during the last century, most especially because of the contribution of the activities carried out by the Grand Priories and National Associations in so many countries around the world.

Large-scale Hospitaller and charitable activities were carried out during World Wars I and II.

1960 saw the rebirth of the Order in Switzerland at the old Commanderie of Reiden. The Swiss organisation has the name «Swiss Association of the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta» and is registered in Lucerne.

The objective of the Swiss Association is to implement the mission of the Order in Switzerland, as defined in its Constitution. It is providing support for hospital care and for charitable and humanitarian works. In addition it organizes church services, supports historical research of the Order and publishes regular activity reports for the public at large.

Members of the Association are Swiss citizens or foreigners living in Switzerland who have been invited to join the Order and have been approved by the Grand Master and its Sovereign Council.



They are organized in three so called Delegations:

- French speaking Region
- German speaking Region
- Italian speaking Region

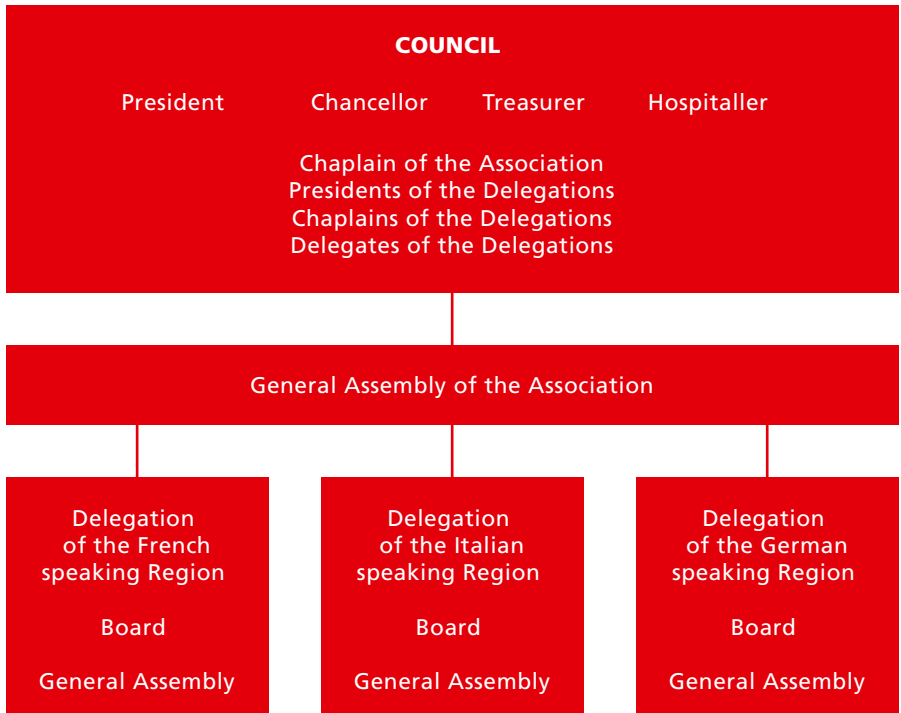
The first establishments

The Order of St. John started quite early to establish itself outside the Holy Land. In what is today the territory of Switzerland the Order created between 1180 and 1456 about twenty establishments, the so called Prebends.

The oldest Prebends were Münchenbuchsee (1180), Hohenrain (1183) and Bubikon (1192). They were followed later by Basel, Biberstein, Biel, La Chaux, Compesières, Contone, Fribourg, Klingnau, Küsnacht, Leuggern, Reiden, Rheinfelden, Salgesch-Simplon, Thunstetten, Tobel and Wädenswil.

These Prebends were attached to small hospitals for local patients and pilgrims. Many of these Prebends fell victims of the Reformation; others were confiscated during the early years of the 19th century. The last one in the city of Fribourg was confiscated in 1825.

Organigram



Foundation «Help and Assistance»

«Help and Assistance» was created as a section of the Swiss Hospital Service of the Order of Malta in 1994 and has been transformed into a Foundation of the Swiss Order of Malta in January 2013. During the last 18 years we were able to ship over 610 trucks and containers with a total volume of 58 000 cubic meters and a total weight of 26 000 tons. The total value of the goods shipped so far amounts to some 150 million Swiss Francs. Our help is completely free of costs for the receiving organizations and we are completely non-profit.

Activities in 2011/ 2012

During these two years the Section «Help and Assistance» was able to ship 125 trucks and 16 containers, with a total volume of about 10 000 cubic meters and a weight of 2800 tons, to a number of countries. The cooperation with the Order in Poland and Hungary is very effective. The members of the Order in these countries received 26 trucks of hospital goods. We were able to ship as well 3 containers with school furniture for 850 pupils in Saida (Lebanon).

With annual expenses of about CHF 100 000 we generated support for an approximate value of CHF 11 million – thanks to our volunteers.

Such help is only possible through the work of all the many voluntary helpers from our Sections and our volunteers in the warehouse. A big Thank You goes as well to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for its financial support of the shipping and to the Swiss Army for giving practical support for transports inside Switzerland.

The action of the Foundation «Help and Assistance» is, together with the many activities of the Hospital Service, an important illustration of our mission «Obsequium Pauperum».

Services

«Let us go to the crisis, otherwise the crisis will come to us» said our past minister A. Ogi. In that spirit our Foundation «Help and Assistance» has been collecting since its inception second hand materials and shipping it to countries in need of help. Many of us do not realize that humanitarian crisis have consequences for all. It is our utmost priority that such material reaches its destination safely and can be used adequately.

How do we do it?

The action is planned very carefully by diplomatic representations in Switzerland or representatives of the Order of Malta locally. The sovereign status and the tradition of the Order are recognized in about 80 % of all countries. During the planning phase we have to consider carefully the nature of the goods to be shipped and the necessary manpower to prepare it. All work is voluntary.

What are the goods?

Hospitals, pharmacies, shops, manufacturers and private persons are giving to our Foundation «Help and Assistance» all sorts of goods that cannot be used anymore for different reasons and in good condition. For example, a hospital will wish to change all the clothing of its employees or a large distributor needs space in its warehouse for the next season.



Possible goods are:

- School material such as tables and chairs, writing material, boards, etc.
- Construction material and equipment: sanitary equipment, pumps, building material
- Hospital equipment: beds, blankets, even drugs, invalid chairs, crutches, etc.
- Others goods like toys, music instruments, clothing, furniture, etc.

The warehouse of the Foundation in Flamatt (FR)

The complete logistic is happening here. All goods have to be packed for export. Details are important: for example all indications of price have to be removed; otherwise the custom authorities of the importing country might consider the goods as commercial and take a heavy duty on them.



The transport

In order to save on space, all bulky equipment like beds has to be dismantled. It seems to be simple, however, considering the huge volume it becomes a major piece of work. In practice hospital beds are dismantled at the point of origin by the helpers. Large quantities of beds would take up the entire capacity of the warehouse. Preparing such transport requires the help of a large number of voluntary workers and we can enlist the help of schools, private associations and clubs or even companies.

How do we optimize transport costs?

Often big trucks bring goods into Switzerland and drive back empty. We use this opportunity to ship the goods at low costs. Inside Switzerland we have the help of the Swiss Army Transport troops; it gives them the opportunity to exercise their driving skills in a profitable way.





Arrival – an example in Eastern Europe

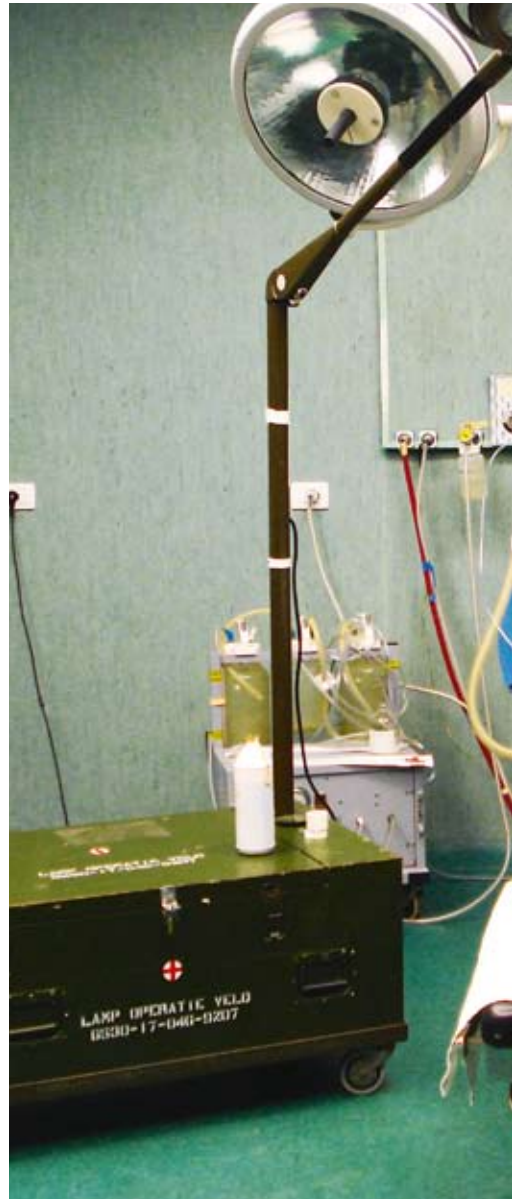
Next to luxurious government palaces we find hospitals in a desolate condition built with materials which would need big investments to sanitize. As a result it just stays as it is: rusted steel concrete, light bulbs hanging from the ceiling, beds without mattress, rusted surgery tables from the sixties... Sanitary installations are similar to rundown highway toilets; hospital pharmacies are just in a wooden cabinet with drugs stored in half PET bottles. Power cuts happen many times a day – one old power generator is the only backup. Nobody knows when the next power cut will happen – nor for how long.



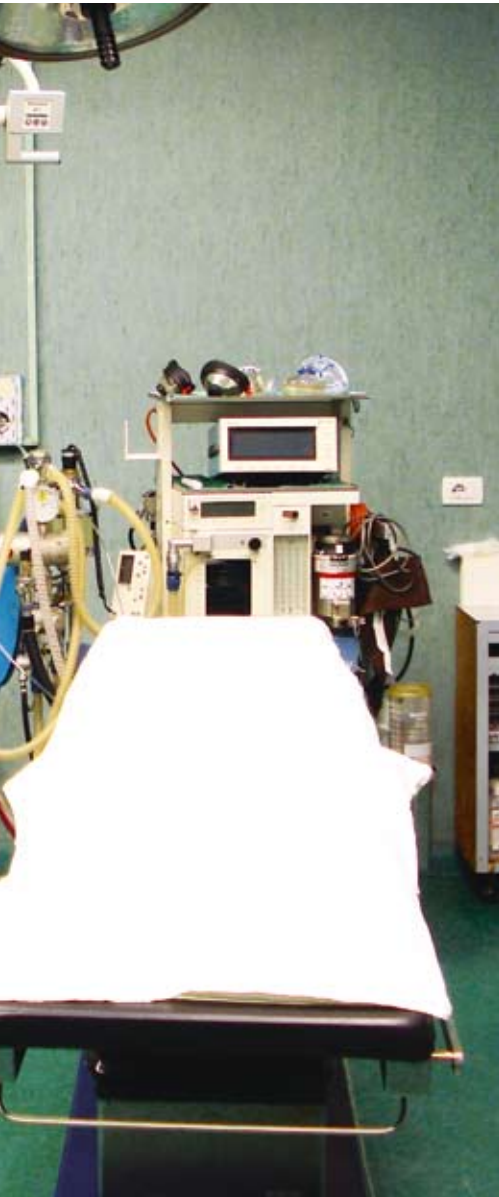


Delivery

The delivery of the goods needs signatures. In the delivery contract the receiving end certifies that the goods will be used only for declared purpose. Members of the Order make occasional controls: we want to make sure that the goods won't be sold off or used for military purpose.



The benefits



Our efforts aim at achieving real progress. We support the education of young children by providing adequate equipment for teaching and learning. Sick people will make a better recovery by lying on proper beds and receiving proper treatments. Our experience has contributed to avoid any feeling of competition with local providers or wrong use in wrong hands.

Our thousand year tradition and our name warrant the best possible outcome.



Contact

Do you wish to know more about us?
Do you have second hand material that you don't need any more?
Or do you want just to help us?

You can reach us:

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We look forward hearing from you!