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Dear Swiss compatriots,
Dear friends of Switzerland

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I extend a warm welcome to all readers of our embassy newsletter.

My 4 year's assignment in Baku has just started at the beginning of October and I am impressed by the richness of the culture, the natural splendor and the warmth of hospitality. In all my contacts up to now I could feel so much sympathy for and interest in Switzerland. Therefore, I will make every effort to take this advantage to further deepen the relations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan in all aspects. Be it on the political level where Switzerland can assist Azerbaijan in finding and implementing a lasting peace; in economic affairs where Swiss companies can contribute to economic diversification, in the area of sustainable development where Switzerland has been a reliable partner financing different projects for almost 25 years; or on cultural grounds where Swiss projects always receive great attention.

And last but not least, I want to foster the people-to-people exchange as well. The culture of dialogue is in the genes of every Swiss. Dialogue stands at the core of Swiss Foreign Policy. Something I will not only live up to, but also want to share here in Azerbaijan. A trustful dialog is never wrong.

I am looking forward to 2024 with great expectations. We stand at the brink of peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia which will have a tremendous impact, even beyond the region. Building peace and reaping its dividends to the benefit of all will be a just but ambitious mission. I am proud to witness this historic change and, in my capacity, humbly contribute to its success.

With COP29, Azerbaijan will host the world's largest international conference in 2024. This will put the country in the spotlight of the international community. As an Embassy, we stand ready to make this event a success.

As the year concludes, I extend my warmest season's greetings to you all. May this festive season bring you joy, peace and cherished moments with loved ones. Let's look forward to another year of mutual understanding and collaboration.

Wishing you and your families a joyous holiday season.

Warm regards,

Thomas Stähli
Ambassador

News

Swiss, Azerbaijani foreign ministers meeting



Cassis and Bayramov in Skopje

High-level meetings are an important pillar of bilateral relations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan. This year the ministers of foreign affairs, Ignazio Cassis and Jeyhun Bayramov met twice to hold wide-ranging discussions. On 20 September, the two met on the margins on the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The next meeting took place on 30 November in Skopje, Northern Macedonia, within the sidelines of the 30th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council. Minister Bayramov wrote on his [X account](#) that “the meeting was very productive and reflected bilateral issues, global foreign policy issues”. Swiss FM also wrote on his [X account](#)

information about the meeting and mentioned that he urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to pursue “constructive dialogue” for peace. Cassis emphasized that “Switzerland is ready to contribute if parties agree”.

Swiss National Bank delegation visits Baku



Swiss National Bank governor meets his Azerbaijani counterpart in Morocco

The Swiss National Bank and Azerbaijan’s Central Bank have close cooperation and intensive contacts. This year, two high-level meetings took place between the two institutions. On 16 November, a delegation from the Swiss National Bank, including Attilio Zanetti, Alternate Board Member and Nicolas Stoffels, Head of International Monetary Cooperation, visited Baku. They met with the management of the Central Bank of Azerbaijan to set-up new projects of cooperation.

On 12 October, Chairman of the Swiss National Bank, Thomas Jordan met his Azerbaijani counterpart Taleh Kazimov in Morocco. Both governors used the opportunity during their working visit to Morocco, to take stock of the cooperation within the IMF where Azerbaijan is member of the Swiss led Constituency.

Switzerland co-hosts reception for Human Rights Day



On 7 December, Ambassador Thomas Stähli participated in the joint reception hosted by the EU Delegation, British, U.S. and Swiss Embassies to mark the International Human Rights Day on 10 December. Close to 100 guests, including the representatives of diplomatic missions, members of civil society and journalists attended the event.

The Swiss Ambassador delivered a speech along with the Head of EU Delegation, British Ambassador and the U.S. Charge d'Affaires. In his speech Ambassador Stähli emphasized that "everyone should stand united against oppression and intolerance, working tirelessly to ensure that every person enjoys the right to live free from fear, persecution and discrimination". He also called to strive together for a society where every individual is treated with

respect and afforded their basic rights: "By fostering understanding, tolerance and open dialogue, we can work towards a better society – in Azerbaijan - in Switzerland — worldwide".

Following the official part, the civil society members and journalists, including former political prisoners shared their views on human rights situation with the heads of diplomatic missions. They called on diplomatic missions to hold serious dialogue with the government of Azerbaijan to support the freedom of expression and media.

Former Swiss president attends Global Baku Forum



Calmy-Rey together with the Swiss Embassy staff

The former President of the Swiss Confederation, Micheline Calmy-Rey attended the 10th Global Baku Forum "The World Today: Challenges and Hopes" held on 9-11 March 2023. She joined a panel discussion entitled "Building stability in a divided world: Its impact on global peace" and delivered a speech. According to Azerbaijan's state news agency Azertac, Calmy-Rey [spoke](#) about finding solutions to peace, as well as the new world order we are facing today.

Chargé d'Affaires Alexander Hoffet and Deputy Head of Mission Alberto Hernandez also attended the Forum. Taking the opportunity of her visit to Baku, the former Swiss president had an exchange with the Embassy staff members, as well.

Swiss business lunch, 23 May 2023



Alexander Hoffet with the Swiss business community

On 23 May 2023, Chargé d'Affaires Alexander Hoffet hosted representatives of Swiss companies in Azerbaijan for a "Swiss Business Lunch" at his residence. It was a welcome opportunity to network and exchange information.

Representatives of the Swiss companies shared their views over post-pandemic business opportunities and achievements in the host country. The participants emphasized that there is potential for expanding business and finding access to regional markets through Azerbaijan.

Swiss International Cooperation

Swiss Advisory Commission for International Cooperation visits Azerbaijan



Members of Advisory Commission at Women Resource Center in Khazar, Baku

As part of their visit to the region, the Swiss Advisory Commission for International Cooperation visited Azerbaijan on 17 April 2023. The commission members, the Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office, as well as representatives of local government and the State Committee for Family, Woman and Child Affairs met beneficiaries of the Swiss-financed regional Women's Economic Empowerment project (implemented by UNDP) at the Women's Resource Center in the Khazar district of Baku.

The group later visited a couple of business sites of beneficiary women. Among them was Sevinc Cahangirli, who together with her husband opened a ceramics store, which is now well known. She was even able to engage an artist who takes care of new ceramic designs.

The commission, joined by the Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Patricia Danzi, visited also the Public Debt and Financial Liabilities Management Agency under the Ministry of Finance. The Agency informed the commission about technical assistance they receive within Swiss-financed projects in the area of government debt management.

Switzerland supports the financial sector reforms in Azerbaijan



The Central Bank of Azerbaijan

Amendments to different laws regulating the financial sector in Azerbaijan, such as the Law on the Central Bank, Law on Banks, Law on Insurance Activity were endorsed in July 2023.

Drafting of the amendments was widely supported by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) financed technical assistance provided by the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC). The changes enhance the regulation and supervision of the financial sector in line with up-to date international standards, as well as improve the financial consumer protection.

Amendments to the Law on Payment Systems further support the financial inclusion in the country, as well as the establishment of fintech. Switzerland will continue to support the institutional developments of the financial sector in Azerbaijan, including the secondary legislation related to the abovementioned amendments.

Finance and Advice for Small Business



With the aim of supporting the development of small and medium enterprises in Azerbaijan, The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) has started financing a project on Finance & Advice for Small Businesses. The project that will run until 2027 envisages to provide the small and medium enterprises in Azerbaijan with advisory and outcome-linked financing. It is implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) via its Small Business Impact Fund (SBIF).

Star Venture initiative is officially launched in Azerbaijan within this project in September 2023. It aims to support the start-ups in the country that are interested in innovative products and solutions and intend to grow their business. Star Venture will provide them access to finance, mentoring and other opportunities.

Switzerland supports Animafilm International Animation Festival in 2023



Switzerland has been supporting Animafilm International Animation Festival for the last two years. On 6 September, Deputy Head of Mission, Alberto Hernandez attended the opening ceremony of the 6th Animafilm International Animation Festival and delivered his opening remarks. Since the festival's topic this year was gender equality, he stressed

the importance of equal rights, the role of art people in delivering social messages and equal development opportunities for everybody in his speech.

Like last year, the festival was a success. Through 6-10 September, during which the festival was held, more than 3,000 people visited it, 63 animation films were screened and 20 foreign guests joined the event. The "Women's Rights Through Animated Films" part of the festival offered training sessions and one-on-one consultations for 5 local women authors by international animation professionals like Swiss director Isabelle Favez and French producer Olivier Catherin. The selected animation projects were presented to the public at the "ANIMAFILM School: Pitching Competition" and evaluated by program judges Ana Chubinidze (Georgia), Tehzeeh Khurana (India), and Nazrin Aghamaliyeva (Azerbaijan).

Culture & Education

Documentary play on art people's problems



On 15 May, a group of young actors staged a documentary play entitled "What does it take to be an art person in Azerbaijan?" at the Salaam Cinema in Baku. This documentary play used documentary material about current challenges and development opportunities and independence of art people, as well as difficulties in obtaining funding for art projects in the country. The play was designed and staged by independent art curators as part of a regional cultural project financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC.

A documentary play is a relatively new concept for people involved in culture in Azerbaijan. It incorporates creativeness of play writers and producers with some documentary materials,

including fragments from real interviews, video demonstration of various documents and other materials right on the stage. Documentary plays allows looking at various issues both creatively and critically at the same time.

Swiss Embassy participated at Christmas Charity Bazaar



On 25 November, the Swiss Embassy participated at this year's Christmas Charity Bazaar. The event took place at the German-Azerbaijan Cultural Association Kapellhaus.

The Embassy offered visitors Swiss chocolate, biscuits, cheese and much more from Switzerland! Everybody had the chance to discover the traditional Swiss cheese "raclette" in a friendly atmosphere and liked it very much.

Also, thanks to some generous sponsors, the Embassy collected more than AZN 3,000 which has been donated to orphanages, to children with disabilities, vulnerable children and to women shelters.

The Annual Christmas Charity Bazaar is organized by the diplomatic community in Baku. The Swiss Embassy participated in the event with the initiative and active involvement of the wife of the Ambassador, Ms. Nadereh Heydarian Stähli.

Switzerland supports women artists from regions of Azerbaijan



The Chargé d’Affaires of Switzerland, Alexander Hoffet, and other representatives of the Embassy joined an exhibition of female artists from different regions of Azerbaijan on 12 May. Seven women from different parts of Azerbaijan exhibited their works in an art gallery in Baku as part of a Swiss-financed project. These women, together with 10 others, had participated in different workshops on various topics, such as digitalization and online marketing.

This Swiss-funded project was implemented by the organization VarYox, which also arranged the art exhibition. VarYox says that the project opened an excellent opportunity for female artists living outside Baku, who usually remain out of attention and face a lot of challenges to exhibit and sell their works.

Switzerland joins global campaign against gender-based violence



On the occasion of the global campaign “16 Days against Gender-based Violence” the Swiss Embassy together with the Latvian Embassy supported a play reading event on 5 December in Barda. The moving play told the story of the life of a woman in her three stages – as a child, as a young girl and as a woman. Finally, it turned out that she was never born due to the wide-spread selective abortion in society.

Three female students from local colleges read out the play that reflected different ages of the woman. Over 100 residents of Barda region attended the event.

The 16 Days against Gender-based Violence global campaign has been held since 1991. Ever since, about 6,000 organizations from 187 countries joined this campaign and organized/participated in different actions. As a donor organization, Switzerland supports women’s economic empowerment and hopes that this will promote women’s rights in Azerbaijan.

Waste into art pieces

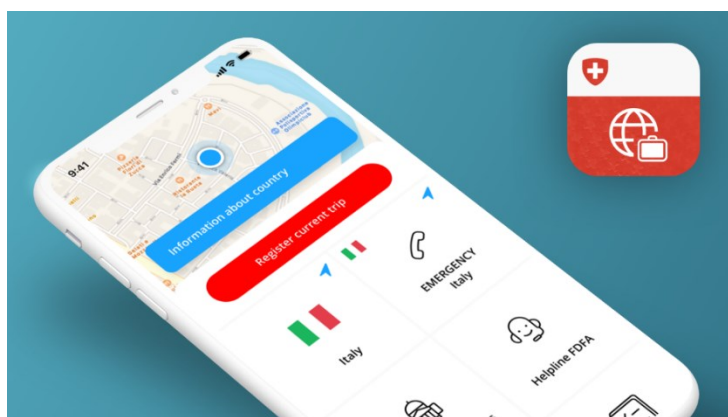


Switzerland supported a group of young environment enthusiasts to implement an art project related to protection of environment. Thirty-five young people from Mingachevir and Baku turned reused waste into pieces of art. Later, these pieces of arts were displayed in art exhibitions in Mingachevir and Baku.

By implementing this project these young people hope that they will attract society's attention to environmental issues, especially in such industrial cities where the project was implemented.

Consular Affairs

Services for Swiss citizens



Travel carefree with Travel Admin

Are you a Swiss citizen living in Azerbaijan and want to travel abroad? Then register your trip abroad in the Travel Admin App!

Travel Admin is an App developed by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Use its customizable checklists to plan the perfect trip. You can attach copies of important travel documents like your passport and insurance policies to the checklists. Once you registered, simply enter your destinations as well as your travel companions and an emergency address directly from your contact list. For more information [click here](#).



Online desk

Are you a Swiss citizen registered with the Embassy and would like to report a change of your civil status or a change of address?

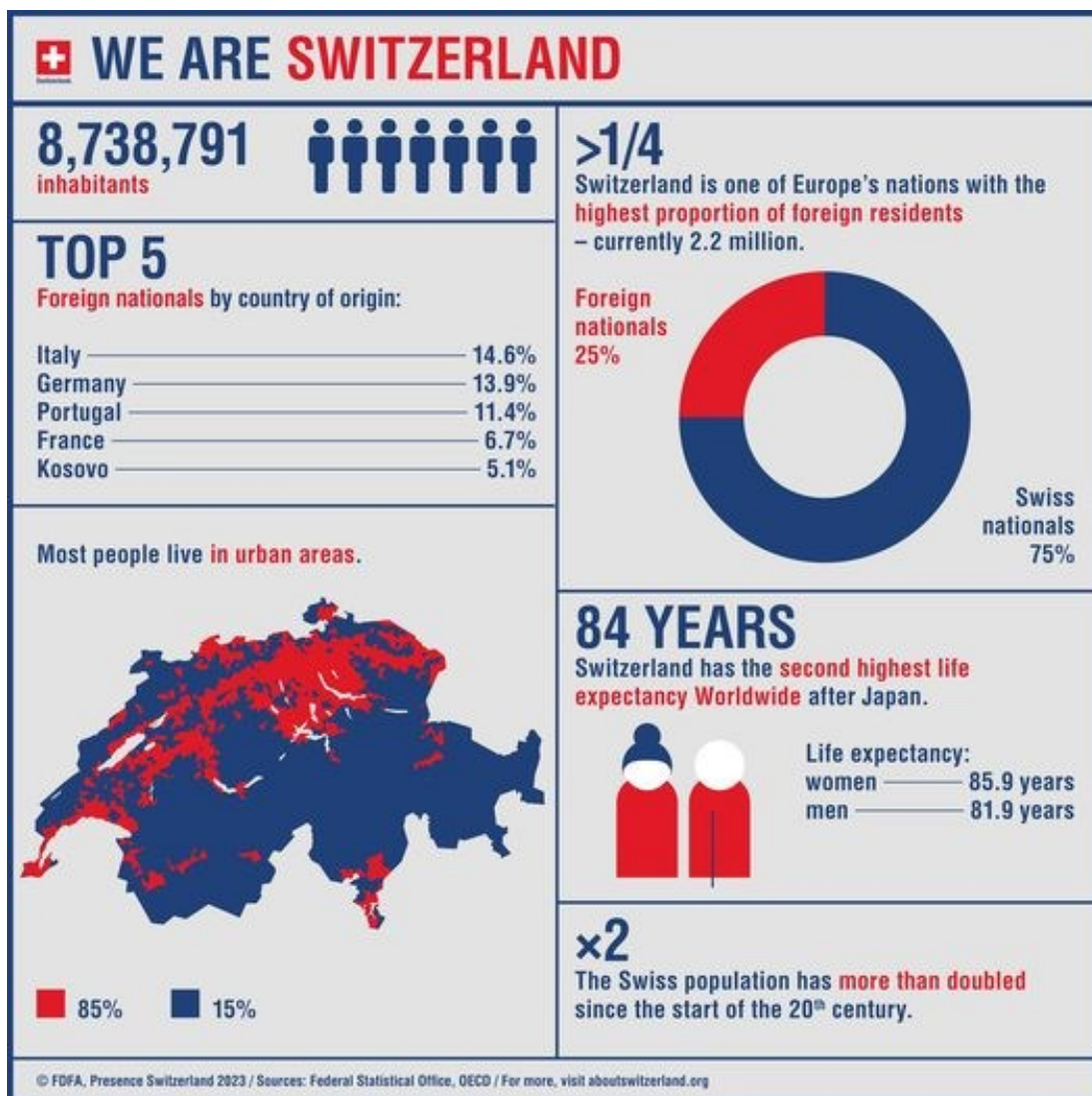
You can use the [online desk](#) to access consular services, such as registration in the Register of the Swiss Abroad Register, notifications of changes of civil status and changes of address.

Quick guide for visa application



Are you living in Azerbaijan and require a visa to travel to Switzerland? Thanks to the [Step by step Quick Guide](#) in English and Azerbaijani you will find the relevant information and guidance for the application process.

Facts & Figures





Merry Christmas and all the best for 2024 from all Staff of the Swiss Embassy!

Useful Swiss links



ch.ch

Swiss authorities online: www.ch.ch



Switzerland.

Discover Switzerland: www.aboutswitzerland.ch



House of Switzerland: www.houseofswitzerland.org



Switzerland Tourism: www.myswitzerland.com



Auslandschweizer-Organisation
Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger
Organizzazione degli Svizzeri all'estero
Organisaziun dals Svizzers a l'ester

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA): www.aso.ch

... and please visit the Embassy's Facebook page to stay informed:

<https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyBaku/>

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