



years of Swiss Engagement in Azerbaijan



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Dear readers, dear friends of Switzerland,

Already six months passed since I took up my duties in Baku in July 2019, and I am very glad to present you with a new issue of the Swiss Embassy's newsletter.

For me, the past months have been extremely busy and marked by many highlights and exciting discoveries while living in Azerbaijan and travelling to Turkmenistan. The presentation of my credentials to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (23 July) and to the Speaker of the Parliament of Turkmenistan (9 August) are, of course, among these highlights.

As already announced in the previous newsletter, throughout 2019, we celebrate 20 years of bilateral technical cooperation with Azerbaijan. This important anniversary was in the focus of this year's reception on the occasion of the Swiss National Day, which was held on 11 July in front of the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, with participation of a youth orchestra from Switzerland. We are very grateful for the positive feed-back which we received from many of our guests.

The official visit to Azerbaijan of the President of the Council of States of Switzerland, Mr Jean-René Fournier, in October 2019 was another highlight and contributed to developing the already friendly and wide-ranging relations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan.

As in 2019 with the European Youth Olympic Festival, which was attended by a large Swiss delegation in July (see article), sports will be in the focus of attention in the coming year. The Swiss national football team will play two matches in Baku in June 2020 in the framework of the UEFA EURO 2020. Let's hope that many Swiss football fans will take this opportunity to discover Azerbaijan and beautiful Baku! The Embassy is looking forward to this exciting event.

I would like to conclude this first editorial by a big "thank you" to the whole team of the Swiss Embassy. When arriving in Baku, I met highly professional and motivated colleagues. Without them, the numerous activities reflected in this newsletter could not have taken place. A special thank goes to Dr Simone Haeberli, Deputy Regional Director of cooperation and Deputy Head of Mission, whose tenure will come to an end this month. She did a great job during the four years she spent in Baku, including as Chargée d'affaires a.i. in May and June 2019, and made an active contribution to the relations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan. I wish Simone and her family, who are going back to Switzerland, all the best!

The Embassy's team is at your disposal for any question which you might have: baku@eda.admin.ch. To stay informed about the Embassy's activities and about Switzerland, don't forget to follow us on Facebook!

I hope to meet as many of you as possible personally in 2020 and, in the meantime, I wish you and your relatives a **Happy New Year!**

Yours sincerely,

Muriel Peneveyre

Politics

New Swiss Ambassador handed over credentials



On 23 July 2019, the newly appointed Ambassador of Switzerland Muriel Peneveyre presented her credentials to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr Ilham Aliyev. Following the presentation ceremony, President Aliyev and Ambassador Peneveyre exchanged views about the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan and the perspectives concerning their future development.

On 2 July, Ambassador Peneveyre had met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Mr Elmar Mammadyarov, to present the copy of her credentials. During the meeting the two parties emphasized the role of high-level reciprocal visits as well as the importance of political dialogue.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_hVLXmCJUk
<https://en.president.az/articles/33886>

President of the Swiss Council of States visits Baku



The President of the Council of States of Switzerland, Mr Jean-René Fournier, paid an official visit to Azerbaijan from 8 to 11 October 2019. During the visit, he met with the President of Azerbaijan, Mr Ilham Aliyev, the Speaker of Parliament, Mr Ogtay Asadov, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Elmar Mammadyarov. Bilateral relations and regional issues were discussed during the meetings.

Mr. Fournier also visited the Baku Khazar Women Resource Centre established by the Swiss-financed project "Women's Economic Empowerment". The Centre has supported several women in establishing new businesses since March

2019. The President of the Council of States also visited the production sites of the Swiss companies Holcim in Garadagh and SIKA in Sumgayit.

<https://www.azernews.az/nation/157026.html>

<https://report.az/en/social-security/president-of-council-of-states-of-swiss-confederation-visits-women-s-r/>

Turkmenistan: First Caspian Economic Forum in Turkmenbashi, Neutrality Day in Ashgabat



Together with a delegation from Switzerland, Ambassador Peneveyre attended the **First Caspian Economic Forum** held in Turkmenbashi (National Tourist Zone "Avaza") on 11-12 August 2019. This forum took place one year after the signing of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.

Before that, on 9 August, Ms Peneveyre had presented her **credentials** to the Speaker of the Parliament of Turkmenistan, Ms Gulshat Mammadova.

A few months later, on the occasion of the **International Day of Neutrality**, Ambassador Peneveyre attended the conference, the flower laying ceremony and the concerts held in Ashgabat on 11 and 12 December to celebrate the 24th anniversary of the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan.

Visit to Nakhchivan



On 12 September 2019, a delegation from the Swiss Embassy led by Ambassador Peneveyre visited the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan (NAR) and had meetings with the Chairman of the Supreme Assembly Vasif Talibov as well as with the Ministers of Finance and Economy of NAR. They discussed the current relations between Switzerland and NAR and the perspectives for their development.

Ambassador Peneveyre and her delegation also visited the production sites of companies active in the automobile, mineral water and furniture sectors as well as the Duzdag salt caves.

The relations between Switzerland and NAR are longstanding and broad. A successful example of technical cooperation is the rehabilitation of 125 "khahriz" between 2001-2011, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). "Khahriz" is a traditional water system providing drinking and irrigation water without using electricity.

Swiss International Cooperation

Azerbaijan and UNCTAD ink deal to professionalize public debt management



Samir Sharifov, the Minister of Finance of Azerbaijan, together with Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary General of UNCTAD, signed an agreement in October 2019 to launch the project "Debt Management and Financial Analysis System" (DMFAS), which will professionalize public debt data management and improve debt transparency in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Financed by the Government of Switzerland through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), with further support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the project aims at improving Azerbaijan's management of public debt and state guarantees over the next three years.

<https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2219>

Swiss Government supports the Central Bank in Azerbaijan

The Swiss Government, through its State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), renews its support to the Central Bank of Azerbaijan through the second phase of the Bilateral Assistance and Capacity Development for Central Banks (BCC 2). Dr. Elman Rustamov, Governor of the Central Bank, and Dr. Simone Haerberli signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 2019.

The project will support macroeconomic stability by strengthening the Central Bank's expertise in the areas of monetary policy, macroeconomic statistics and forecasting as well as reserve management.



<https://www.cbar.az/press-release-2250/central-bank-of-azerbaijan-signs-memorandum-of-understanding-with-the-swiss-state-secretariat-for-economic-affairs?language=en>

Financial infrastructure: Switzerland finalizes one of its successful projects



On September 25, 2019, the closing ceremony of the Azerbaijan and Central Asia Financial Infrastructure Project (ACAFI) was held in Baku. A modern and diversified financial infrastructure is vital for a country's financial sector. In Azerbaijan, Switzerland and its implementing partner International Finance Corporation (IFC) have worked for more than 10 years in the area of Financial Infrastructure.

The project closed in September 2019, after successfully establishing the first ever Private Credit Bureau, which is fully operational and provides crucial credit information to financial institutions. Secondly, the project also led to the establishment of a fully electronic registry for movable

assets that can now be pledged as alternative collaterals when taking a credit. The registry is making access to credit easier for businesses who do not own real estate but other valuable assets.

Investment climate: MoUs with state agencies



The Government of Switzerland, through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), joins efforts with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Government of Azerbaijan to improve the country's investment climate and agribusiness competitiveness.

On 8 May 2019, a total of six documents were signed: with Azerbaijan's Ministries of Economy, Agriculture as well as Labour and Social Protection of Population, further with the Food Safety Agency, the Commission on Business Climate and International Rankings, and the Centre for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication. The signing ceremony was also the official launch of the Azerbaijan Investment Climate and Agribusiness

Competitiveness project, funded by SECO and implemented by IFC.

The project's goal is to make doing business easier and attract investment to Azerbaijan's non-oil economy. It currently focuses on modernizing and simplifying business inspections, facilitating agri-finance and working on a modern investment law.

Switzerland supports natural resources management course



Sharing knowledge about managing natural resources for sustainable development - this is the aim of a certificate course developed with financing from Switzerland and taught by Eurasia Knowledge Hub, which is part of Khazar University in Baku.

Participants from Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia stated that they will use their new knowledge in their positions as government, media and civil society representatives. Switzerland supports the Eurasia Knowledge Hub since 2014. It has since established itself as a regional Center of Excellence for

Extractives Management. Members of the embassy attended each graduation, handed over the certificates and congratulated all participants on their successful completion of the course.

Second Women Resource Center opened in Qusar region



The Qusar Women Resource Center (WRC), which is funded by the Swiss government through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), was inaugurated on 17 October 2019. High-level representatives from the State Committee for Family, Women and Children, the Swiss Embassy, UNWomen and UNDP joined the event. The guests were welcomed by the Executive Authority of Qusar.

This Women Resource Centre started operating in Qusar in January 2019. It has already 140 active members, of whom eleven women started their own businesses and additionally employed two women. The Centre will continue supporting rural women through business training and establishment of small businesses.

Training for women entrepreneurs in Tovuz



Switzerland continues to support women entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan. On Flag Day, 9 November 2019, Dr Simone Haerberli visited the women entrepreneurs in Tovuz, who received extensive training in financial literacy, business development and digital marketing under a Swiss-financed project supporting female-headed vulnerable households.

Many of the women have already opened a new business or improved their existing one. We wish all the courageous women entrepreneurs in Tovuz a lot of success!

Support to women shelter for victims of domestic violence



The International Day to End Violence against Women reminds us that big challenges still need to be overcome. Switzerland is actively committed to the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence.

The empowerment of women is an important pillar of the Swiss international cooperation activities in the South Caucasus. For example, the Swiss Embassy in Baku supports trainings for women currently residing in "Tamiz Dunya" shelter for victims of domestic violence for their rehabilitation and reintegration into the society. They receive training in financial literacy, business plan writing and tailoring.

https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/en/documents/publications/Chancengleichheit/EDA-Strategie-Geschlechtergleichstellung-Frauenrechte_EN.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2cvqeeupk99M5vrBf9_ooiDNt3bkJc1wVSWdEiQ5xn2IMUX2s-iXYQxE

Culture & Education

Swiss National Day and 20 years of Swiss Engagement in Azerbaijan



On 11 July 2019, the celebrations of the Swiss National Day as well as 20 years of bilateral cooperation of Switzerland in Azerbaijan took place in front of the prestigious Heydar Aliyev Center. Around 500 guests, including many project partners and government representatives who were engaged in Swiss international cooperation projects throughout these 20 years, joined the celebration.

15 large-sized posters showing selected projects gave an insight in the work accomplished over the past 20 years.

“Il mosaico”, a prize-awarded and leading Swiss Youth Orchestra, performed together with the talented and young Azerbaijani cellist Orkhan Huseynov on this occasion. After giving a concert in Switzerland on 23 June 2019, they went on tour from 5 to 12 July 2019 in Azerbaijan, where they played at the Baku Music Academy and in the Conventional Center in Gabala, attracting an audience of around 400 people.

European Youth Olympic Festival in Baku



75 Swiss athletes competed in the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF), which took place from 21 to 27 July 2019 in Baku. Over 4000 athletes from more than 50 countries participated. Switzerland won two silver and two bronze medals during the competition.

Ambassador Muriel Peneveyre and the President of Swiss Olympic, Jürg Stahl, visited the Swiss pavilion in the Athletes' Village of the EYOF on 25 July. All pavilions were decorated and run

by pupils of a local school. Each school represented one of the participating countries for the duration of the EYOF. Ahead of the event, they informed themselves in detail about their respective country. The project aimed at promoting multiculturalism.

Swiss Cooperation Office helps young artist to exhibit his works



“Professional artists sometimes lack topics for their drawings, but Tabriz does not. He is full of creativity. I asked his permission to use his motifs in my own art works to enrich them,” says Farhad Yalquzaq, a professional artist who spoke at the exhibition of drawings by Tabriz Nasirov, a young man with Down syndrome. To create this exhibition, Farhad took characters from Tariz’ drawings and translated them into paintings.

This cooperation between Farhad and Tabriz took place as part of a small art and culture project funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office in Baku. Switzerland supports the local art scene to allow art and culture people to independently express themselves.

Gender equal and inclusive coloring book for children



Gender stereotypes are created from childhood as children inherit these stereotypes from us, the adults. Working with children is one of the best ways to achieve better gender equality in our society. With this in mind, the Swiss Cooperation Office supported a project which designed and printed a gender equal and inclusive coloring book for young children.

The book includes pictures showing boys and girls doing things jointly rather than segregated and in traditional spheres only. The project was a success with presentations of the book in different locations in Barda, Ganca and Baku. Children and parents showed a lot of interest. Parents said that they wanted this coloring book to be spread all over the country so that children would be able to get rid of harmful stereotypes.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tE8Gy2kBlxM&fbclid=IwAR0ce_LrU0wuxuj18ljtKYetVh3zPOfluCIVYR_L5AKyBUAiReAZRdaFiXo

Varia

Federal elections



On 20 October 2019, federal parliamentary elections took place in Switzerland to renew the **National Council** and the **Council of States**.

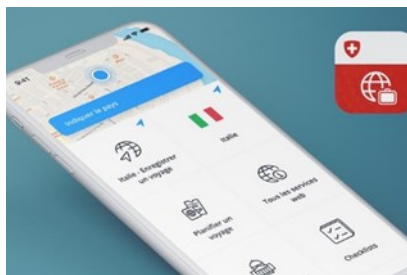
Following this link, you can find an overview of the election results: <https://www.parlament.ch/en/über-das-parlament/elections2019>

The share of women in the parliament jumped from 32% to 42% in the National Council and from 15.2% to 26.1% in the Council of States.

On 2 December 2019, Ms **Isabelle Moret** and Mr **Hans Stöckli** have been appointed President of the National Council and President of the Council of States, respectively.

Furthermore, all seven members of the **Federal Council** have been reelected by the Federal Assembly on 11 December 2019. The President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 2020 will be Ms Simonetta Sommaruga, Head of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications. The new Vice-president of the Federal Council will be Mr Guy Parmelin, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research.

Travel support app for Swiss travelling abroad



Are you planning to travel or reside abroad? Now you have a friend helping you to plan your trip. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has launched an app designed to help Swiss tourists and residents abroad in case of trouble. The “Travel admin” app is meant to help Swiss citizens plan their trip overseas and offers information such as travel advice on every country. Documents like insurance policies and driver’s licence can also be registered on the app. It also contains the addresses of Swiss representations worldwide in case of eventualities like a lost passport or in the event of a natural

disaster. The app can be downloaded free of charge on Google Play or Apple store and is available in German, French and Italian.

Every year the Swiss take over 16 million trips abroad and around 760,000 nationals live abroad. Last year Swiss representations overseas issued 1,700 temporary passports, 1,000 laissez-passer (for lost or stolen passports) and handled over 1,800 consular cases concerning assistance involving accidents, illnesses and other crises.

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/trouble-overseas-_travel-support-app-launched-for-swiss-travelling-abroad/45245752

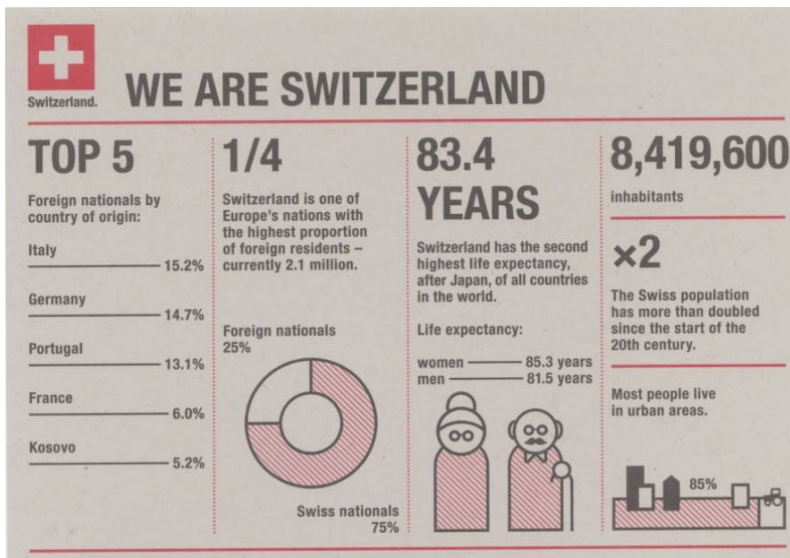
<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/dfa/representations-and-travel-advice/travel-advice/travel-admin-app.html>

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Media

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Facts & Figures



Switzerland is one of Europe's nations with the highest proportion of foreign residents – 2.1 million or 25% of population.

Switzerland has the second highest life expectancy, after Japan, of all countries in the world:

women - 85.3 years
men - 81.5 years

Most people live in urban areas – 85%.

8, 419, 600 inhabitants in Switzerland.

Swiss links



Information about Swiss Administration: www.ch.ch



Discover Switzerland: www.swissworld.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: www.aso.ch

Please regularly check our webpage for news and events: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/baku>

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