

# INFOLETTER 2017



## Dear Swiss Friends in Armenia,

What a year 2017 has been! We think it is high time to share its highlights with you with this 3rd yearly infoletter. The growing Swiss community in Armenia has an important share in what Switzerland has achieved in Armenia, be it in business, culture, development cooperation, academia and other fields of excellence. Thank you, dear friends, for your great support throughout the year!

While both countries celebrated their 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations, this year has also seen a stellar performance in our economic relations. Already in the top ten among Armenia's trade and investments partners, Switzerland has moved still further up in 2017. Our bilateral trade has reached a level never seen before, with both countries exchanging goods for more than CHF 190 Mio. Swiss Francs from January to November 2017. And for the first time in history, Armenia exported more goods to Switzerland than vice-versa.

These figures don't cover the exchange in services, a field in which Armenia also plays an important role, if we think of the manifold Swiss-Armenian partnership in services, such as IT, architecture, and others. As we can easily see, Armenia, being the smallest country in the South Caucasus, is punching above its weight also when it comes to the relations with our country.

2017 was a crucial year for the new role of the Embassy in Armenia. We merged our forces and efforts with the SDC programme office in Armenia. This has led to many synergies and new ways of putting our joint efforts at the service of diplomatic relations as well as the realisation of the Armenian leg of our international cooperation programme in the South Caucasus.

The new year 2018 is already announcing itself most positively, with Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan's participation at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, and President of the Swiss National Council Dominique de Buman's visit to Armenia scheduled for February. Switzerland being an active and proud member of the Francophonie, we also look forward to Armenia's hosting of the 2018 Francophonie Summit in October.

Your team at the Embassy wishes you all a Merry Christmas with your dearest ones, and much happiness, health, and success in 2018.

**Lukas Gasser**

*Ambassador of Switzerland to Armenia*



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia**

## The Voices of Light: Little Singers of Armenia Switzerland tour

Your Embassy started the new year of cultural events with the screening of "Voices of Light", by film director Hrant Vardanyan in Yerevan on 30 January. This beautiful documentary movie tells the story of the 2016 tour to Switzerland of the world-known Little Singers of Armenia Choir. The movie shows Armenia's unique talent in music against the background of a receptive and thankful Switzerland.



Divine voices on screen, with founder Tigran Hekekyan



A new reality in your record: e-reputation

## Francophonie: Conference on E-Reputation, March 2017

During this year's "Saison de la Francophonie", we organized "Challenges of the E-reputation Management and Protection of Enterprises and Individuals", Armenia's first international conference on this important new subject. Switzerland contributed with the Swiss lawyer, former student of the University of Geneva and academic intern at the Embassy, Lucy Miganouche Baghramian. This event took place on 15 March and was organized in partnership with the French University in Armenia (UFAR), the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), and the Embassy of France.



## Francophonie: Retrospective Renato Berta, March 2017

Renato Berta, is one of Europe's great cinematographers. His contribution leaves deep marks in the European auteur movie of the last 50 years, working with film directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer, Robert Guédiguian, Raja Amari and Alain Resnais. We showed a retrospective of four of this great Swiss artist's most successful masterpieces at The Club in Yerevan from 13 to 19 March.

The maker of pictures in French-speaking cinema: Renato Berta

## Francophonie: Swiss Chansons at YSU

Our being part of the French-speaking world also expresses itself in our musical tradition. This year, the Yerevan State University and the Faculty of Romance and German Philology dedicated their traditional yearly concert to Switzerland and its "chansons". This beautiful concert was held on 19 April in presence of the Ambassador of Switzerland.



Stephan Eicher's "Déjeuner en paix" echoing the halls of YSU

## Conferences with Michel Mayor, discoverer of the first extrasolar planet

Prof. Michel Mayor of the University of Geneva, a multiple Nobel Prize nominee, was invited by the Embassy in cooperation with Byurakan Observatory to hold, among others, a lecture and workshop on "Exoplanets and Astrobiology" on 31 May. Prof. Mayor has laid the ground for new progress in this discipline, when, in 1995, he was the first scientist ever to discover a planet which is situated outside of our Solar system. He was the first scientist to be awarded the Victor Hambardzumyan Prize of the RA National Academy of Sciences in 2010.



A Swiss perspective to the Universe: Michel Mayor



## Sharing and teaching the language of Goethe, Kafka and Dürrenmatt

As a consecutive tradition, this year the German teachers' Day was celebrated on 3 June at the Komitas Museum. The Embassy had the pleasure to provide the sponsorship for the cultural programme in the framework of this event, with the concert of Avetik Ghazaryan's Light Band. The performance featured famous pieces of Armenian folk and European music in the band's interpretation. The concert was followed by a reception, during which the invitees had the opportunity to interact with one another over a glass of zesty Swiss wine.

Würdige musikalische Rahmenunterhaltung



## Armenian talent rejuvenates Embassy

Situated in one of the oldest buildings of the capital, your Embassy enjoys one of the best locations in the city. Only, our building is particularly tricky to capture on camera. We have tried ourselves many times, but with nothing more than amateurish results. From that experience came the idea to organize a photo contest, and on 2 June, we were able to award our winners: Hrant Sahakyan, Asatur Yesayants and Gohar Ter-Hakobyan.

See how much better we look now, by visiting our website [www.eda.admin.ch/armenia](http://www.eda.admin.ch/armenia) and our facebook page [www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyYerevan](https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyYerevan).



Our thanks to Armenian photography

## Not afraid of taboos: "Closed Workshop" photo exhibition

We continued our discovery of young talents in Armenia in 2017. Photographer and audiovisual director Erika Badalyan and the Embassy organized the photo exhibition "CLOSED WORKSHOP", which opened in Yerevan on 23 June. The controversial topic of reconstructive surgery was documented unsparingly in her photos. By a happy coincidence, we were able to combine this art event with Dr. Arthur Salibian's post-cancer reconstructive surgeries programme, which the Embassy also supported.



Art meets medicine: Erika Badalyan and Arthur Salibian

## Elisabeth von Capeller visits Armenia

The team of the cooperation office has been honored to welcome H. E. Elisabeth von Capeller, Head of Eastern Cooperation of SDC, and Mrs. Barbara Böni, Head of the Eurasia Division. On June 26, the high ranked guests visited the opening ceremony of the Gorayk Citizen Office, established with the support of SDC. During 2017, six more citizen offices opened throughout Armenia. Being the interface between the citizen and the municipality, those "one-stop-shops" make the public services more accessible than ever.



Gorayk Citizen Office opening ceremony:  
Elisabeth von Capeller

## Swiss-Armenian chamber of commerce launched

Countries can only be as rich and prosperous as their private sector is performing. Both Switzerland and Armenia have entrepreneurship in their blood by tradition. This is why the constitution of the Swiss-Armenian Chamber of Commerce (SACOC) in Zurich on 28 June is of such importance for our relations. In such a short time, SACOC has already become a key partner of the Embassy. The launching event was well-attended by representatives of both countries, including the Member of the National Council Dominique de Buman, who will visit Armenia as President of the Swiss Parliament in February 2018.



And the wine was Armenian, no doubt about that



Shveysarakan panir – what else?

## Swiss cheese at Haybuis Festival in Yenokavan

Some of the best types of Swiss cheese next to various renowned Armenian wines, ever heard of a better combination? On 1 July, the annual “HayBuis” festival took place in Yenokavan for the third time. This year, the Embassy happily continued to participate in the festival, providing four different types of Swiss cheese for the preparation of the world’s biggest sandwich called “brtutch”. This year, visitors had a chance to taste Swiss Tête de moine, Gruyère, Emmental and Sbrinz.

## Sheep Shearing Festival 2017

One of the highlights of the year, for the cooperation office, has been the annual Sheep Shearing Festival. Tatev community of Syunik Region welcomed over two thousand guests from Armenia, as well as from all over the world, at the Syunik Animal Market, established in the framework of an SDC-funded project. Skillful farmers from different communities were competing for the title of the best sheep shearer in the region. Complementary to the main event of the festival, the visitors got the chance to enjoy a wide variety of national foods, got exposed to the unforgettable culture of the region and the country.



Where technique matters the most!

## Shadows of Time

Swiss funded exhibition “Shadows of Time” of the photographer Gagik Harutyunyan shined a spotlight on the overlooked heritage of late-20th century Soviet-Armenian photography. In the Soviet Armenia, photography was not considered to be a serious art form. Gagik Harutyunyan’s input in promoting the Armenian photography’s significance is noticeable in that regard. The curator of the exhibition Vigen Galstyan shared, “The overall challenge was to meet the requirements of the artist, as he is very meticulous towards his art. My work, as the curator, the organizer was to ensure the photographs to be presented in the highest possible quality, which in its turn requires a lot of finances and resources that are hard to be found in Armenia. In this context I am very grateful to SDC for assisting us at a very crucial and deciding stage of the project.”



The central piece.

Erebuni, transformed ...



.. by Felice Varini’s magic eye and hand



## Swiss National Day celebration with Varini’s “Hexagones, disques et trapèzes”

We invited him to Armenia for the first time in May 2016 during the Francophonie Festival, with the hope that he be inspired by places in Armenia where to realise one of his spectacular large-scale interventions – and it worked! Felice Varini, the Swiss painter who transforms urban spaces by using architecture as the canvas for his works of art, realised HEXAGONES, DISQUES ET TRAPÈZES, one of his best masterpieces, at the Railway Station in Yerevan in September 2017. This unique happening was part of the first edition of STANDART, Triennial of Contemporary Art, under the curatorship of Swiss-Armenian impresaria Adelina Cüberyan von Fürstenberg. Around 500 guests came to the exhibition opening on 12 September, with the President of the National Assembly, Ara Babloyan, and the Minister of Transports and Communication, Vahan Martirosyan, among our speakers. Varini’s pictorial intervention quickly became a tourist attraction and was intended to stay on display only until November: Upon demand of many enthusiastic inhabitants and visitors of the capital, your Embassy was able to extend the exhibition’s duration until April 2018.

## Seedstars World Yerevan 2017

The IT sector, and software development in particular, is one of the major, rapidly growing markets in Armenia. This year's Seedstars Yerevan pitching conference welcomed the eleven most promising startups from Armenia to compete for the membership at the global Seedstars Family and a seat at the regional and global Seedstars Summits. It is already the fourth year that your Embassy supports this initiative of Geneva-based company Seedstars, providing IT enthusiasts with opportunities of further growth and development. We congratulate this year's winner, the amazing startup Chessify, which combines Armenia's traditional strength in this discipline with modern technology using Artificial Intelligence.



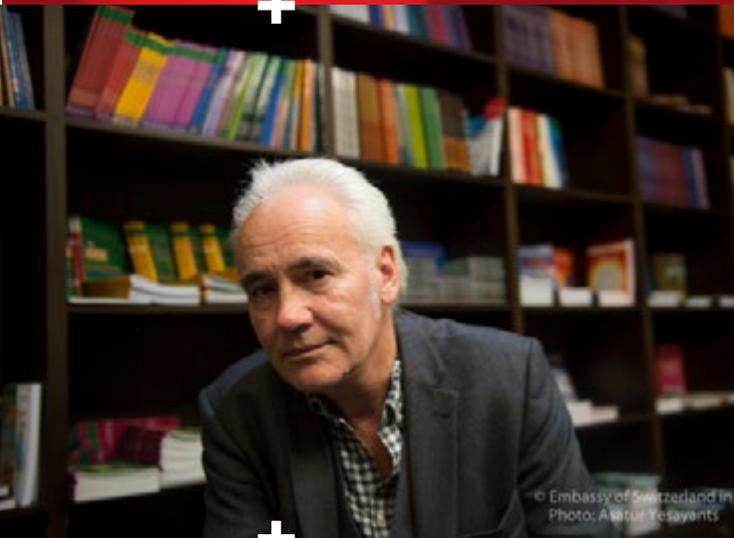
Another way of making Armenian chess talent known worldwide: our 2017 winner, Chessify



Minister of Culture greets the Swiss delegation

## Bilateral Political consultations, September 2017

Our institutionalised yearly bilateral talks between the Ministries of Foreign affairs took place in Yerevan this year. The delegation led by Ambassador Nicolas Brühl was received by Deputy Minister of Foreign Garen Nazarian on 29 September. Ambassador Brühl also visited the exhibition HEXAGONES, DISQUES ET TRAPÈZES at Yerevan Railway Station, joined by Armen Amiryan, RA Minister of Culture. Further stations during this active day in the Armenian capital were a laboratory tour at Swiss company AZAD Pharmaceuticals, and the visit of the Tsitsernakaberd memorial site.



© Embassy of Switzerland in  
Photo: A. V. Te. Savants

Passion for text and travel: Hansjörg Schertenleib

## Գիշերային լողորդը – Hansjörg Schertenleib's novel “Nachtschwimmer” in Armenian

From 4 to 11 October the Embassy had the great honour and pleasure to welcome the famous Swiss writer Hansjörg Schertenleib, accompanied by his wife. His novel written in 2012, “Nachtschwimmer”, was translated into Armenian by Dr. Liana Safaryan and published at Zangak. Several presentations were held in Yerevan and Gyumri by the writer and the translator in the scope of the yearly German language week. Thus, another great Swiss artist discovered our beautiful and always stimulating host country and left thoroughly fascinated and with many new ideas.

## “Jungbürgerfeier” – a Swiss political tradition performed for the first time in Armenia

The 18th birthday of our Swiss community member Gaetano Gmür provided the opportunity to initiate this beautiful Swiss tradition in Armenia. At age 18, Gaetano, like thousands of his Swiss peers worldwide, can enjoy all the rights and duties of a national of our country. These are taken very seriously in Switzerland and are therefore worthy to be officially celebrated. For this first “Jungbürgerfeier” ever to be celebrated in Armenia, the Ambassador invited Gaetano Gmür and his family from Gyumri for a lunch at his residence. Even while living in Armenia, Gaetano can now participate in Swiss political life by e-voting, and this not only for parliamentary elections, but several times a year, on matters of constitutional changes, Swiss federal legislation, and other important questions pertaining to taxation, migration, social and economic life, etc.



Gaetano Gmür, Jungbürger

## La Settimana della lingua italiana

After Francophonie and the German Language Week, end of October is the time of the year to celebrate Italian, our third official language. This year, we organised the Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo (Italian language week) with the State Academy of Fine Arts of RA. The event was called "Sorpresa Felice Varini", and a surprise indeed it was! After a short introduction by the Ambassador, the students were shown a short Swiss Italian documentary on Felice Varini's work, and one of the clips produced by Armenian photographer and audiovisual director Erika Badalyan on his recent intervention in Yerevan. Next, we bussed the audience to the site itself, the Railway Station, where everybody could get a deep eyeful of HEXAGONES, DISQUES ET TRAPÈZES on site. This event was organised in close cooperation with our friends from the Italian Embassy.



Inexhaustible subject: the art of Felice Varini

Synergies of scale: our teambuilding games



Soon to disappear at a valley near you: a thing people used to call garbage



## Small team, ever stronger

On 14 November 2017, the team of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia visited Aghveran, a region with exceptionally beautiful natural surroundings and landscapes. To contribute to the preservation of the region's environment, the team made a joint effort in garbage collection.

The cumulative number of the collected waste from the banks of the Dalar river reached nearly 100 kg. Our teambuilding activities included games, indoors and outdoors, as well as a demanding intellectual quest. The first half of the day was dedicated to our Embassy/SDC integration, where staff members discussed the still ongoing process, identifying created benefits and persisting challenges.



Small teams can deliver: The Prime Minister ...

## A year of numerous high-level contacts with the RA Government

2017 was also particularly intense for our inter-governmental cooperation, where many productive meetings took place at the highest level. Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan was invited, as the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, to participate in the important yearly gathering of the world's elites, the World Economic Forum 2018 in Davos, Switzerland.

These meetings in November 2017 are only two of many during the whole year, where matters of economy, healthcare, transportation, research and education, etc. were discussed at the highest level.



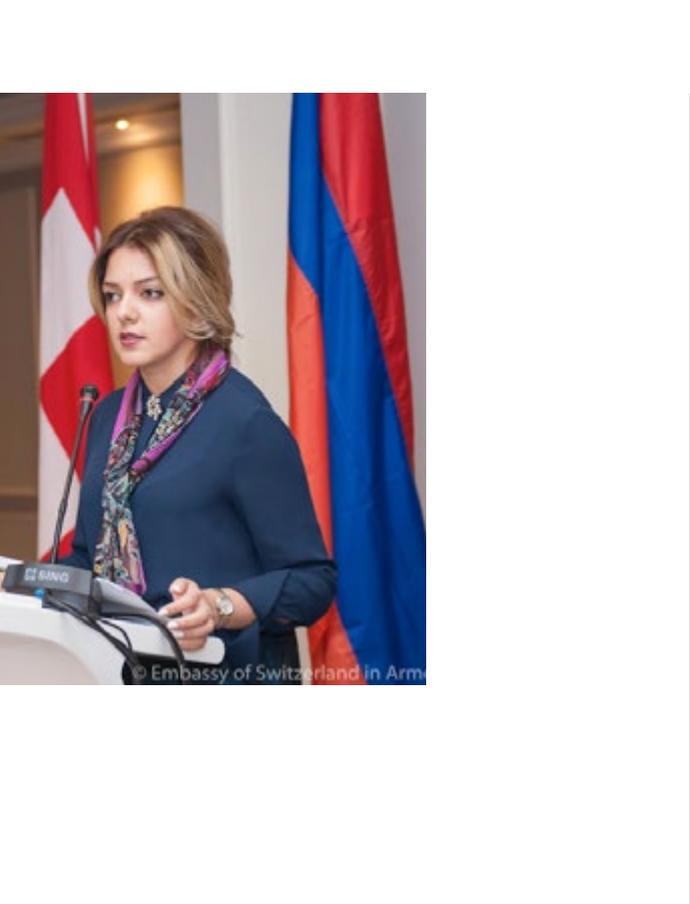
... and the Minister of Transportation welcoming the Embassy team



The Speaker of the National Assembly and the old friend of Switzerland Mr. Babloyan welcoming the Ambassador



SWISS GSP Presentation was delivered by Angela Khachatryan from the Embassy



## First Swiss-Armenian Business Day

Another première this year was our Swiss Armenian Business Day on 29 November. 2017 was an excellent year in terms of economic relations, and this deserves to be put on a more prominent footing.

The conference therefore gathered speakers from the private and governmental sectors from Switzerland and Armenia. The participants shared their experience and expertise on a range of topics, including the state of economic relations between Armenia and Switzerland, governmental reforms, the Swiss generalized system of preferences (GSP) available to Armenian exporters, as well as opportunities and challenges met by companies on the Armenian market, and more.

The RA Government was represented by the Minister of Economic Development and Investments, Suren Karayan, and his First Deputy Minister, Garegin Melkonyan. The private economy participated with sectors such as pharmaceutical, research & development, IT, tourism, finance, winemaking, cosmetics, and others. Our speakers representing Blockchain R&D Hub, AZAD Pharma, switzerland-tour.com, Swiss diaspora investment projects in Armenia, Sylex SARL, Oriflame, Schuler St. JakobsKellerei 1694, Coca-Cola HBC, shared their inspiring stories with the audience.

The Embassy's Head of Finance and Administration Angela Khachatryan, who initiated and organised this successful event, gave an in-depth presentation on Switzerland's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) and its opportunities for Armenian businesses.

## Livestock Expansion to the North

SDC in partnership with the Austrian Development Agency expands its Livestock Development project towards the northern regions of Armenia. Hundred border communities of Gegharkunik, Tavush, Lori and Shirak will benefit from improved agricultural services and market access. On top of that, cross-border networking and linkages with Georgian farmers and service providers will be enhanced.



## Christmas dinner for the Swiss community in Armenia

Armenia As every year, the Ambassador and his family were happy to welcome the ever-growing community of Swiss citizens in Armenia for the traditional annual Christmas dinner at the Ambassador's residence.

The guests enjoyed Swiss wine and a delicious blend of national dishes, prepared according to the unique recipes of the Ambassador's spouse Marilù Gasser. Christmas carols and acquaintances old and new were abounding on this cozy winter evening of 8 December.



Buon Natale, Frohe Weihnachten, Հոկտեմբեր Ծնունդ,  
Bellas festas da Nadal, Joyeux Noël

## Traditional Christmas fondue with the Swiss Alumni network

In what is already becoming a new tradition, your Embassy celebrated Christmas with the Swiss alumni around a real Swiss Fondue on 15 December. What an asset our alumni are for Switzerland! A richness of programmes - ESKAS Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, ASCN - Academic Swiss Caucasus Network, CABIR - Capacity Building in International Relations, GCSP - Geneva Centre for Security Policy - has benefited both Switzerland and Armenia in the win-win adventure that education and research typically are. And not to forget Armenians who have studied and done research in Switzerland by their individual means! And this valuable network is steadily growing. If you have studied or conducted research in Switzerland, join the Swiss Alumni Association now!



United in science and education – Armenia's Swiss Alumni

## Welcome to our new staff members who joined us in 2017!

### **Anna Hovhannisyan**

Anna is our new team assistant and fluent in French, English, Russian and Armenian. She earned a BA in Management from the French University in Armenia (UFAR) and has previously worked in the French IT industry. We are told she is also a great professional dancer so we look forward to seeing her next performance on stage, hopefully soon. Anna joined our team in March, replacing Zara Hakobyan, who left for new horizons (literally!), and whom we thank for her great camaraderie and collaboration.



Anna Hovhannisyan

### **Vardan Janazyan**

Janazyan Vardan joined the Embassy team in February 2017 as a Media and Communication Officer. Initially with Sanovbar Luescher, who left Armenia after the end of their term, Vardan through interesting articles and stories has been drawing attention of the public to various SDC projects and events.



Vardan Janazyan



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# T H E T E A M

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