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FORWARD MESSAGE

Dear fellow citizens,
Dear partners and friends,

It is a privilege for me to welcome you to the Newsletter 2021 in my capacity as the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia!

Despite the continuous challenges and hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-war situation in Armenia, the Swiss Embassy managed to adapt its instruments, functioning in full capacity throughout the year. The bilateral ties between Switzerland and Armenia remained ever-growing.

The year 2021 marked the 10th Anniversary of the Embassy's ceremonial opening in Yerevan. Celebrating the anniversary, the Embassy was proud of the common successes reached between Switzerland and Armenia during the 25 years of bilateral cooperation. Here at the Embassy we are thrilled to see what our extending partnership will bring in the future.

Another celebration which we simply could not miss was, of course, the 730th birthday of Switzerland. Abiding by the rules of the pandemic, the Embassy was flexible, waiting patiently until the sanitary situation allowed a gathering of the Swiss nationals residing in Armenia. "Switzerland in Armenia - Armenia in Switzerland" was the slogan of this year's Swiss National Day.

Throughout the year, the political and economic ties between the two countries have grown closer. An important achievement was the signing of a protocol amending the existing Double Taxation Agreement in relation to company taxation.

2021 was an eventful year for the Swiss Cooperation Office as well. One of the definite highlights was the launch and presentation of the new Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region 2022-2025 with its doubled budget for Armenia. In the frames of the new Regional Programme, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation launched two new long-term projects in the country, further supporting the reform process in Armenia towards a better functioning democracy, strengthened rule of law and improved market economy.

Looking into the year 2022, a new milestone will be reached in the bilateral ties between Switzerland and Armenia – 30 Years of Diplomatic Relations!

While these examples are only a few highlights, you can find more about our activities and events in the short articles below. You can also stay in touch with the Embassy by visiting our website www.eda.admin.ch/armenia, as well as by following us on social media: [Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia](#).

On behalf of the entire team, let me wish you and your families all the best for your personal health and for a peaceful and prosperous New Year 2022.

Sincerely,

Stefan Kloetzi
Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia

POLITICAL COOPERATION

10 Year Anniversary of the Swiss Embassy in Armenia

March 31, 2021, marked the 10th Anniversary of the Swiss Embassy's ceremonial opening in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia. President of the Swiss Confederation Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), inaugurated the Embassy during her official visit to Armenia back in 2011. However, the bilateral ties between the two countries date back even further.

 SWITZERLAND & ARMENIA	
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS 1991 Recognition of Armenia's independence 2011 Swiss Embassy inaugurated in Yerevan	 Charles Aznavour , actor, singer... and Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Switzerland (2009-2018) 
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION  Together, Armenia and Switzerland have improved living conditions and access to public services for Armenians, and strengthened the country's resilience to natural catastrophes.	The number of residents of Armenian origins in Switzerland is estimated to be between 4000 and 6000. 
© FDFA, Presence Switzerland 2021 / Source: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs	

Read more about Switzerland's engagement in Armenia since the Embassy's opening [here](#).

Deputy Head of Mission Werner Thut met Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia



Photo © RA Ministry of Justice

On October 21, upon the invitation of the RA Ministry of Justice, the Deputy Regional Director of Swiss Cooperation for the South Caucasus and equally the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia Werner Thut met with the RA Minister of Justice Karen Andreasyan upon the Ministry's invitation.

During the meeting, Karen Andreasyan thanked the Swiss government for its efforts towards strengthening democracy, rule of law and human rights in Armenia.

Minister Andreasyan also commended the Swiss assistance in the establishment of the leading anti-corruption body of Armenia, the Anti-Corruption Committee. Moving forward, the Minister presented the reform agenda of Armenia's Justice sector.

Swiss Embassy at the Best Apprentice Day 2021 organized at the RA President's Residence



On 14 December, the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia and equally the Deputy Regional Director of Swiss Cooperation South Caucasus Werner Thut participated to the "Best Apprentice" award ceremony, upon invitation of the Presidency.

Mr. Thut announced that the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency has recently launched a large project in Armenia between 2021 and 2030, which focuses on developing and modernizing the country's Vocational Education System in agriculture. With a budget of almost CHF 10 mio between 2021

and 2025, the project will be carried by a unique alliance of international and local development actors, as well as public and private sectors. It aims to improve employment opportunities of youth living in rural areas by means of combining theoretical knowledge with practical training in a selected number of professions.

Read more [here](#).

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

“Doing Business in Armenia” Online Webinar



On April 27, a webinar dedicated to Doing Business in Armenia was organized by the Joint Chamber of Commerce Switzerland. Having a wide geography (Switzerland, Armenia, Russia, France, Germany among others), the webinar has brought together more than 50 participants, representing governments and international organizations, as well as IT, advisory, banking, pharma, machinery, agro business sectors among others.

The webinar was honoured by the presence and participation of the Minister of Economy of Armenia Mr. Vahan Kerobyan as keynote speaker. In his presentation, Ambassador Stefano Lazzarotto spoke about the cooperation between the two countries in the sectors of economy, development cooperation and more.

Read more [here](#).

Innovation Day 2021

“Swiss-Armenian relations are quite expanded in different directions. Economic relations are one of the most developed components of our cooperation. Moreover, we are cooperating quite actively with the government of Armenia in the field of institutional reforms and agriculture development directions. Switzerland is one of Armenia’s main partners in the field of international cooperation”, said Ambassador Stefano Lazzarotto on the sidelines of the Innovation Day conference in Yerevan. The Innovation Day conference was organized on July 26, on the initiative of Switzerland Armenia Chamber of Commerce in close partnership with Enterprise Armenia, with the financial support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia among others.



Photo © Swiss-Armenian Chamber of Commerce

Switzerland and Armenia sign a protocol amending the Double Taxation Agreement

On November 12, 2021, the Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of the Embassy Stefan Kloetzli and the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Armenia Tigran Khachatryan signed a protocol amending the existing Double Taxation Agreement in relation to company taxation. Switzerland supports international efforts to achieve greater transparency and level playing field with regard to the taxation of multinationals.

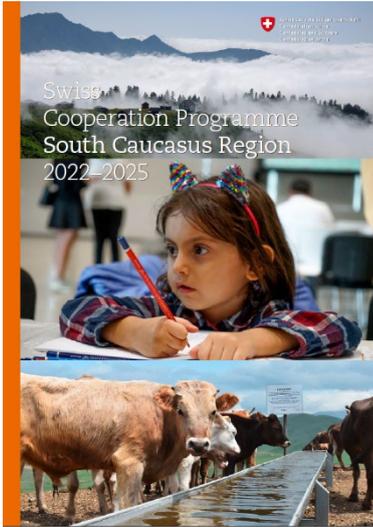


Photo © RA Ministry of Finance

The signing was followed by an exchange of ideas on bilateral matters of economy, finance and cooperation. Both parties agreed that the amendment to the Agreement should further foster investment flows between and as well as will boost economic relations between the two countries, which have great potential for further development.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

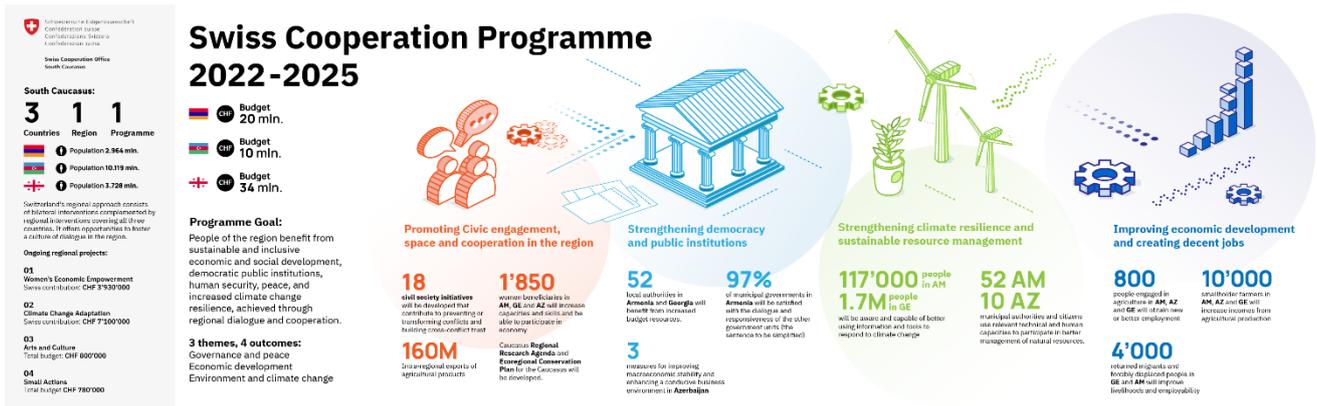
Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region 2022-2025



In 2022, Switzerland kicks off its new Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus to be implemented in 2022-2025. The Programme describes the objectives, which Switzerland's International Cooperation aims to achieve in the South Caucasus. In Armenia, the budget of the new Programme will be doubled, amounting to tentatively over CHF 20 mio over the course of four years.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region 2022-2025 will focus on four key areas: 1) promoting civic engagement and cooperation in the region, 2) strengthening democracy and public institutions, 3) improving economic development and creation of decent jobs, and 4) strengthening climate resilience and sustainable resource management. Poverty reduction will be considered as a key requirement in all Swiss financed projects in the South Caucasus region whenever possible. The programme gives particular attention to regional cooperation.

Programme's Infographic



Click on the Infographic to see in full resolution.

Programme's Presentation Event

Werner Thut, Deputy Regional Director of Swiss Cooperation South Caucasus, presented the new Regional Programme on December 8, at the Congress Hotel, Yerevan. Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials from the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports participated to the event physically and on-line. Moreover, representatives of the international donor community and partner organizations, civil society, and academia participated to the launch event.



The Programme and its Leaflet can be found [here](#) in English and Armenian languages
 The Programme's slideshow can be found on the [Embassy's Facebook page](#)

New Flagship Projects

Living Landscapes for Market Development in Armenia



On April 15, Switzerland launched a new development intervention to assist the Republic of Armenia in its efforts regarding nature conservation and economic development. The Government of Switzerland approved in principle a grant worth of CHF 4'500'000 for the “Living Landscapes for Market Development in Armenia” project. In close cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), this project will be implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) as a part of a broader regional program Eco-Corridor Fund for the Caucasus (ECF).

Read more about the project [here](#).

Modernizing Vocational Education System in Agriculture in Armenia



On December 3, Switzerland launched a long-term development project to assist Armenia in its efforts of modernizing its Vocational Education System in agriculture. The Swiss Development Cooperation approved in principle a support program to Armenia with a total amount of CHF 7'130'000. The project is carried by a unique alliance of international and local development actors, as well as public and private sectors, which will also mobilize additional funds. The reform will be implemented by the Swiss NGO HEKS, the Armenian NGO SDA as well as the German Corporation for International Cooperation GIZ, under the overall coordination of the Government of Armenia.

Read more about the project [here](#).

Swiss Support to Democracy through Fair Elections in Armenia

On June 10, Switzerland decided to assist the Republic of Armenia in further enhancing its electoral system and strengthening democracy, rule of law and human rights in the country. The Government of Switzerland approved a grant worth of CHF 300'000 in view of a project, which will be implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This Swiss intervention is part of a broader UNDP Electoral Support Project in Armenia, which strives to encourage the authorities and participants to ensure that the pre-term parliamentary elections on 20 June meet or exceed the high standards set in 2018.

Read more [here](#).

Article: Syunik Animal Market: transforming lighthouse development project into a social enterprise



The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC transformed one of its development projects in Armenia into a social enterprise. With the completion of the “Livestock Development in Armenia” program, the SDC shifts the ownership of the Syunik Animal Market SAM, giving it a change of function and a business perspective. With an additional contribution amounting to CHF 250'000 of financial support, the SDC renews and confirms the core principles of the SAM.

Read more [here](#).

“Livestock Development in the South of Armenia” project: completion and bridge into the future



On 16 December, the SDC closed its “Livestock Development in the South of Armenia” flagship project, together with its implementing partner organization the Strategic Development Agency SDA NGO. After six years of implementation in the southernmost regions of Armenia, Syunik and Vayots Dzor, the project achieved outstanding results on market, farm and social levels.

Read more [here](#).

CULTURE AND ART

Crossing of two Swiss funded cultural initiatives in Armenia



Reaching its conclusion in January, "The Quarantine Ensemble", established in the frames of an SDC funded Arts and Culture project, performed "Waltz of Cinderella" by Armenian composer Mikhail Kokzhayev. Back in the year 2017, Kokzhayev has composed and dedicated to the Swiss Confederation this 21 minute small symphony ("symphonietta" according to the composer) with the financial support provided by the Embassy.

"The Quarantine Ensemble" emerged as a new musical ensemble in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. The project was a way for the musicians to escape the lockdown, to network and collaborate, and to lighten up the atmosphere with innovative and uplifting compositions. [Click on the photo to watch the full performance.](#)

Turn Plastic Waste into Art



The opening of the exhibition "Turn Plastic Waste into Art" by the Fashion and Design Chamber of Armenia took place on 2 October. It featured conceptual installations made of plastic waste, created by young artists, which highlight environmental issues, raise public awareness and unite the Armenian creative generation to work together in making art objects. The exhibition was financed by the SDC under its regional Arts and Culture program.



Third International Print Biennale



"Winners of today's ceremony are all those artists who brought their works to Yerevan. The winners are also all the people from around the globe that made this competition possible and set up the exchange of visions of our world and our lives today – artists, friends and art critics, the audience," said Werner Thut at the Official Award Ceremony of the Third International Print Biennale, an international exhibition-contests dedicated to the art of printmaking and its techniques.

Following the Official Award Ceremony, which took place on 8 October, a presentation by the Swiss art mediators Pia Lädach and Franz Bruehlhart was held on October 15, in the Museum of the National Centre for Aesthetics. Pia Lädach, who is the Director of the Creaviva Children's Museum (Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern), presented the museum's activities, its main projects, and educational approaches.

The Embassy was happy to have collaborated once again with the Kulturdialog Armenien and the International Print Biennale.



MIRRORED PARALLELS



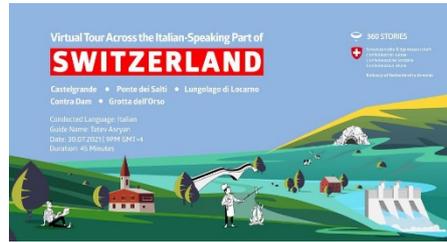
The solo exhibition, **MIRRORED PARALLELS**, by the photographer Berta Martirosyan, took place in August and September, in the cities Gyumri and Yerevan, financed by the SDC.

"Mirrored Parallels" is a photographic manifestation uncovering architectural insights of the city Gyumri. In 1988, the city was severely hit by an earthquake attacking the cultural identity of Gyumri, which within 30 years has passed through various revival stages yet leaving a need for a final recovery.

SWISS NATIONAL DAY



This year, we celebrated the 730th birthday of Switzerland twice! On the occasion of the Swiss National Day, the Embassy organized a series of online virtual guided tours to numerous Swiss landmarks. During the week leading to the 1st of August, we welcomed you to more than 20 touristic locations through virtual tours held in German, French, Italian and English languages.



But we did not stop there. We patiently waited until the epidemiological situation caused by the COVID-19 allowed us to organize a gathering of the Swiss Community in Armenia, with the “Switzerland in Armenia - Armenia in Switzerland” slogan.

The highlight of the evening reached us all the way from Zürich. The founders of the Swiss-Armenian Association Initiative for the Welfare of Armenia VIWA, prepared a series of video addresses, complimentary to the recording of a musical piece by Beethoven, concluding their material with the Swiss National Anthem, which we screened during the celebration.



The event was held at the Residence of the Ambassador, with participation of Swiss Nationals living in Armenia, and the staff members of the Embassy – altogether 43 persons. Precautionary measures related to COVID-19 were strictly followed during the gathering.



COVID-19 New Regulations – entry to Switzerland

New rules on entering Switzerland

From 22 January

-  **Present COVID certificate**
or proof of vaccination, recovery or a negative test* (3G)   
-  **Complete entry form**
upon arrival by plane or coach**  
-  **Foreign nationals:**
Check on travelcheck.admin.ch or www.sem.admin.ch if you are allowed to enter the country.
-  There is currently **no quarantine requirement** when entering Switzerland.

* PCR test (not more than 72 hours old) or a rapid antigen test (not more than 24 hours old). No test requirement for children under the age of 16, people exempted from testing, medical emergencies, professional drivers, people transiting without stopping.

** No entry form required for professional drivers, people transiting without stopping.

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

The Federal Council adjusted the border sanitary measures it had taken to slow down the spread of the Omicron virus variant in Switzerland as far as possible.

The 3G rule (vaccinated, recovered or tested negative) now applies to entry and boarding. This means that the obligation for vaccinated and recovered people to present a negative result of a PCR or an antigen rapid test before entering Switzerland is lifted. In addition, the obligation to carry out a test between the fourth and seventh day after entry is lifted and the recording of contact details (SwissPLF) is now restricted to people who enter Switzerland by plane and long-distance buses.

These changes to the Covid regulation on international passenger transport will come into force on January 22nd, 2022, 00:00.

Everyone entering Switzerland must present a completed entry [form](#) (rare exceptions may apply, please refer to art. 3 <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2021/380/en> of the COVID-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport). It is important to fill out the electronic entry form on a computer or smartphone at the earliest 48 hours before the travel in order to receive a QR code by email. This code needs to be kept at hand for inspection upon arrival in Switzerland. The controlling authority can impose a fine if the entry form is not completed or if the information provided is false.

VOTEinfo



The Federal Chancellery has unveiled a new App for [tablets](#) and [smartphones](#) with official information in French, German and Italian about federal and cantonal votes, and continually updated results from midday on polling days.

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