



# SWISS WITH US



NEWS & VIEWS

*From the Embassy of Switzerland in the U.S.*

February 2024

## From the Ambassador's desk

Dear Friends of Switzerland,

Welcome to our first newsletter of the new year! 2024 is without a doubt going to be an animated year in the nation's capital—and here at the Embassy, we are off to a strong start. Guided by our [new Foreign Policy Strategy](#), we continue to maintain a strong relationship with our partners in the United States and beyond.

This January, after years of preparation, representatives of the Fund for the Afghan People signed an important agreement that formalized the existence of the Fund, which preserves billions of dollars to secure the future of the Afghan people. Switzerland played a crucial role in the development and implementation of this process, and I am very proud of our contributions. Read more about the Afghan Fund below.

You may associate Switzerland with beautiful train rides in the mountains and the countryside. Yet, we take just as much pride in improving the transportation infrastructure within our cities and urban centers. In January, in collaboration with ETH Zurich, one of our leading universities, we hosted an event on sustainable urban mobility. Learn more about international cooperation in urban mobility below.

Mobility is only one of many technological sectors where Switzerland is at the forefront of global innovation. At CES 2024, one of the world's leading consumer electronics trade shows, Swiss start-ups presented their revolutionary ideas to an audience of tens of thousands of industry leaders. Also present: our [SWISS IMPACT campaign](#)! Continue reading to find out how we promoted our technological sector in Las Vegas.

From Las Vegas to Hollywood—almost! At the Solothurn Film Festival, one of the leading showcases for Swiss films, we scouted the best new films produced in Switzerland. In this newsletter, we showcase five highlights from the festival—stay tuned, because we may be showing some of them in our Film Club series this year.

We end this edition of *Swiss with US* with some tips and tricks for Swiss citizens planning to retire abroad—although, of course, I recommend that every retiree spend their new-found freedom in Switzerland.

All joking aside, before I move on to my next posting later this year, I am looking forward to continuing to support the exceptional track that Swiss-U.S. relations are on and spread the word about Swiss excellence. Who knows, [maybe I will produce another viral video before I leave](#).

Sincerely,  
Jacques Pitteloud



Jacques Pitteloud is the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America.

## Strengthening Afghan Aid Efforts: Afghan Fund Agreement Signed at the Swiss Residence

On January 29 2024, representatives of the Fund for the Afghan People (Afghan Fund) signed the [agreement on privileges and immunities](#) at the Swiss residence in Washington, DC—the same place where the idea of creating such a fund in Switzerland emerged in 2021. The agreement on privileges and immunities between the Swiss Federal Council and the Afghan Fund, approved by the Swiss government on 15 December 2023, entered into force on 1 February 2024. The conclusion of this agreement is based on [Switzerland's Host State Act](#) and enables the Afghan Fund's independence and for the functionality of the foundation to be guaranteed and its assets to be protected and preserved.

Established in September 2022 as a foundation under Swiss law, the Afghan Fund is tasked with the secure preservation of assets totaling approximately \$3.6 billion for the benefit of the Afghan people, thereby securing their future prospects. The Fund's board of trustees can authorize specific disbursements for critical imports, such as energy, that meet the Afghan people's basic needs and contribute to the country's macroeconomic stability. The Fund's medium- and long-term aim is to return the remaining assets to the central bank of Afghanistan. Switzerland, as a member of the board of trustees since the establishment of the foundation, plays a key role in ensuring the correct implementation of its objectives.

With this agreement, the Swiss government recognizes the international significance of the Afghan Fund and ensures the protection and preservation of its assets in Switzerland. The signing is the end of a long process to formalize the foundation's existence, but it is also the beginning of the Fund's work in disbursing the assets for the benefit of the Afghan people.



*Representatives from the Afghan Fund, Swiss and American governments met at the Ambassador's Residence to sign the agreement on privileges and immunities.*

## Exploring Ways Towards a Sustainable Urban Mobility

On January 10, the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, DC, hosted an exciting [event on sustainable urban mobility](#) in collaboration with the ETH Zurich Institute for Transport Planning and Systems. Attendees were introduced to a variety of innovative solutions that can steer urban mobility towards a greener future, with concrete examples on micromobility and the transformative impact of e-bikes.

The event featured insightful presentations by two prominent speakers, Horace Dediu, analyst and founder of Asymco, and Kay Axhausen from ETH Zurich. The subsequent discussion, moderated by Kristi Shalla from the Swiss Business Hub USA, spotlighted the imperative of international cooperation and research collaborations in tackling urban mobility challenges.

This event not only facilitated a robust knowledge exchange but also epitomized Switzerland's commitment to innovation and global leadership in shaping a greener, more resilient urban landscape.



*Captivating discussion at the Embassy of Switzerland: Kristi Shalla, Kay Axhausen, and Horace Dediu (from left to right) delved into sustainable urban mobility during an insightful event.*

## Swisstech at CES 2024

Every January, global leaders in the technology industry showcase their new products and innovations at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. CES provides a glimpse at the future of electronics—and Switzerland aims to be a key player in many of the technology revolutions of tomorrow, including in quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Over 30 Swiss start-ups had the opportunity to showcase their revolutionary products at the [Swisstech pavilions](#). With their innovations in fields including health technology, virtual reality, and AI, these companies reached tens of thousands of interested convention attendees and helped solidify Switzerland's reputation as a global leader in innovation.

For the first time, the Embassy was represented with its own [SWISS IMPACT booth](#). Ambassador Jacques Pitteloud and a delegation of Embassy representatives introduced guests to Switzerland's contributions to the United States in fields including trade, science, and culture.



Embassy representatives showcased the SWISS IMPACT campaign at the Swisstech pavillon at CES 2024.

## Spotlight on Swiss Cinema: Highlights from the Solothurn Film Festival

Each year, the Solothurn Film Festival—otherwise known as the *Solothurner Filmtage*, *Journées de Soleure*, or *Giornate di Soletta*—presents the best of Swiss cinema. For eight days in January, the picturesque town of Solothurn is transformed into a film lover's haven as hundreds of Swiss productions are screened for audiences of industry professionals and casual film-goers alike. This year, the Embassy once again had a representative on the ground, and we're happy to share four films from this year's Solothurn Film Festival we look forward to seeing here in the United States.

Interested in watching more Swiss films? Check out our [Swiss Culture from Home](#) newsletter and [social media channels](#) for announcements about our monthly Swiss Film Club! Who knows... you may have the chance to see some of the movies from this list!



### [Elsa Barberis](#)

Documentary, Claudia Quadri

Who was Elsa Barberis? This film examines the life and global influence of the Swiss-Italian fashion designer, who achieved international acclaim in the early 20th century, but has been largely forgotten.



### [The Love Stories of Liv S. \(Les Histoires D'Amour de Liv S.\)](#)

Fiction, Anna Luif

Following an argument with her boyfriend, we follow Liv as she wanders through the city reflecting on her past relationships in this dream-like, funny, and touching film.



### [The Value of Things \(Der Wert der Dinge\)](#)

Documentary, Tobias Luchsinger

This documentary follows three young Swiss “disrupters” using innovative solutions to make their industries (fashion, agriculture, construction) more sustainable, while the film crew simultaneously seeks out a sustainable means of production for the film.



### [Bonjour Switzerland \(Bon Schuur Ticino\)](#)

Fiction, Peter Luisi

A shocking result of a referendum means that Switzerland will now have just one national language, instead of four ... and it's French! A Swiss-German Federal Police officer is sent to monitor an Italian-speaking resistance group in this multilingual comedy.

## Call for Action!

Calling all Romansch and Italian speakers in the DMV area! The Embassy is on the lookout for individuals interested in potential future projects and engagements. If you're passionate about sharing your language skills, [we want to hear from you!](#)

And to all Romansch speakers, happy Romansch Language Week! If you're curious about what the Embassy has planned for this special occasion, be sure to subscribe to our bi-weekly newsletter [Swiss Culture from Home](#). Don't miss our film club section—it's just one of the many highlights awaiting you.

## Preparing Swiss Retirement Abroad: Tips from the FDFA

Even if old age seems a long way off, it is important to ensure you are well prepared for it. Living abroad may mean that government support, along with family and social networks, may not be as readily available as they are in Switzerland. You will find useful information about retirement abroad on the following [webpage](#) of the Consular Direction of the FDFA.



# FASNACHT IN SWITZERLAND

BASEL

MENDRISIO

SOLOTHURN

PAVERNE

LUCERNE

While Switzerland is renowned for its serene landscapes and quiet atmosphere, one yearly event brings raucous fun to our country: Carnival (called *Fasnacht* in the German-speaking areas)! Throughout February, cities across Switzerland host extravagant festivals, parades, and parties, infusing the country with vibrant energy and infectious joy. *Fasnacht* holds deep cultural significance, symbolizing the transition from the darkness of winter to the coming of spring through rituals such as the use of fire. These traditions, rooted in ancient Celtic and Germanic practices, include scary costumes to drive away any associated bad spirits. If you ever find yourself in Switzerland during *Fasnacht*, be prepared to immerse yourself in the festive atmosphere and experience the magic firsthand!



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