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Embassy of Switzerland in the Philippines

# Consular Infoletter

of the Swiss Embassy in Manila

No. 2, July 2020



Dear Swiss Abroad

The positive feedback from you about our first Infoletter has encouraged us to create a second one with hopefully even more useful and entertaining content for you.

We intentionally do not make the COVID-19 pandemic the main topic in this issue, as we have already informed you separately on this topic and will keep the "Questions and Answers" in this Infoletter regularly up to date under the COVID-19 heading.

In the last Infoletter, we reported on the Swiss Abroad Act and the Swiss Citizenship. In this issue we would like to inform you about visas including travel, the apostille according to the Hague Convention and about Swiss succession law. These topics are complex and always lead to questions. We hope that we will succeed in providing useful information to improve understanding and, with suitable Internet links, offer the possibility of reading more deeply into the subject matter if you are interested.

In this issue we would also like to introduce our new Honorary Consul for the Visayas and Mindanao and provide information about the Swiss Benevolent Foundation.

Furthermore, you will also find an updated list of websites which might be of interest to you as Swiss Abroad and again two simple recipes of Swiss specialties.

We would like to ask you to pay special attention to the section "Emergency & Important Addresses" at the end of the Infoletter. This section is intentionally at the end, as we recommend that you print it out and keep it somewhere where you can quickly find it with all the telephone numbers and recommendations.

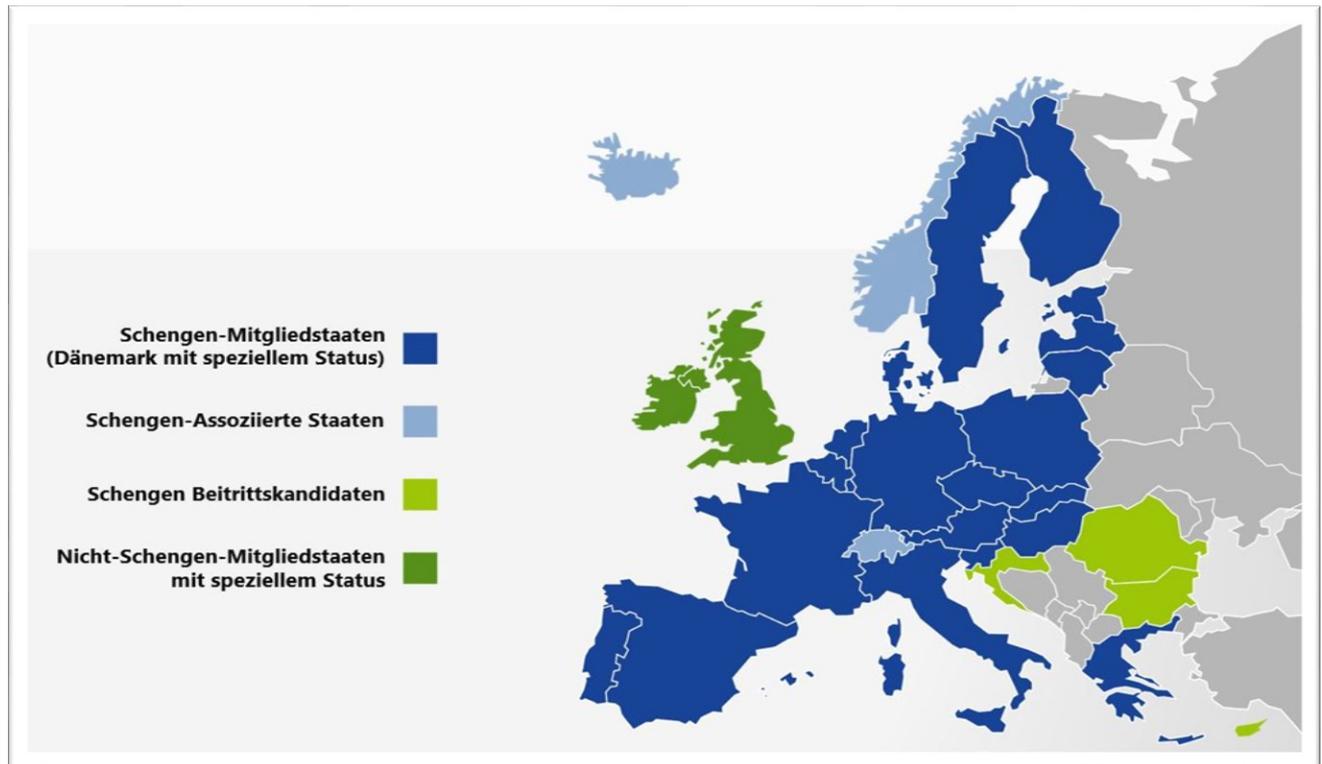


## Visa / Schengen

Figures published by the European Commission show that in 2019, the embassies and consulates of the Schengen countries received almost 17 million applications for short stay visas, a significant increase of 5.9% since 2018, while the three largest countries of origin all recorded solid growth with applications in Russia exceeding 4 million (+ 11.8%). Demand in China reached almost 3 million (+ 5.2%) and applications in India exceeded 1 million for the first time (+ 5.6%). The Philippines is in 18th place out of a total of 167 countries with almost 190,000 applications.

Among the issuing countries, Switzerland ranks 9th with almost 530,000 visas of all Schengen visas issued. France is the leader in this category with over 3.2 million visas. The Swiss Embassy in Manila accepted almost 7,500 applications for short-stay visas and issued 600 vignettes for long-term stays of over 90 days last year.

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy\\_en#stats](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/visa-policy_en#stats)



## Reise, Voyage, Viaggio, Travel, Paglalakbay

A simple word, but one that usually brings back wonderful memories and sometimes even melancholy.

For the Swiss abroad, however, travelling is not just about relaxing, adventurous or intellectually and culturally stimulating stays, but also about connecting with family, relatives and friends who are in Switzerland. Consequently, the current situation is also an obstacle that needs to be overcome in order to once again enjoy a hearty Züri Gschnätzlet with Rösti, Papet Vaudois or Bärner Platte in the local pub at home.

We are therefore looking optimistically into the future, are looking forward to the next trips and we do not have to tell you as Swiss citizens that our country in the heart of Europe is worth a trip at any time of the year.



## Civil status

### Hague Convention – Apostille

The apostille is the form of authentication or legalisation introduced between the Contracting Parties or Member States to the multilateral Convention No. 12 of the Hague Conference on Private International Law in 1961. The simplification of legal transactions which this Convention has made possible is now making a major contribution to the development of globalisation by making international legal procedures quick and unbureaucratic.



The accession of the Philippines to the Hague Convention took place on May 14, 2019. Until that date, the only requirement was that court judgments and additional documents for late birth registration be certified by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

Which documents must be provided with an apostille since 14 May 2019?

All Philippine civil status documents, court decisions and affidavits require an apostille. An apostille can be requested from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). In return, Swiss civil status documents, extracts from criminal records and court decisions must also be provided with an apostille for the Philippine authorities to recognise them (reciprocity).

#### General Information on the Hague Convention

<https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/specialised-sections/apostille>

#### Civil Status Matters Philippines – Switzerland

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/philippines/en/home/services/civil-status.html>



# Law of succession in Switzerland

If a person has passed away, the succession has to be settled. Here are some of the essential points which apply under Swiss law. These are not identical with Philippine law.

Which law is applicable and which country is responsible for the inheritance proceedings are questions of private international law and are regulated in Switzerland in Art. 87 of the Federal Code on Private International Law (CPIL).

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/19870312/index.html#a87>

Therefore, a Philippine expert should definitely be consulted for precise clarification of the legal situation.

## The legal succession in Switzerland

The surviving dependents inherit in an order prescribed by law. According to the legal succession, the surviving spouse, the surviving registered partners and the descendants come first. Unmarried partners are not legal heirs and can only be favoured in a will to a limited extent.

## Compulsory portion

The compulsory portion is a guaranteed share of the inheritance for the legal heirs, which cannot be withdrawn even with a will. Consequently, if wills do not respect the compulsory portions, they are not automatically invalid; they must be contested by the legal heirs by means of legal action.

## Last will and testament

With a will, it is possible to allocate more or less of your assets to individual persons than the law of succession prescribes. Individual items (collections, jewellery, etc.) can be allocated to certain persons as legate/bequests.

If you have no legal heirs, you can bequeath your entire assets to any person or institution in your will.

A will is written, dated and signed by hand from beginning to end. It can be stored in safekeeping at home or with a notary for a fee.

When a new will is drawn up, all previous wills must be revoked.

## The inheritance contract

With an inheritance contract, you as the testator can make contractual arrangements with your heirs during your lifetime. All those involved must be of legal age to do so. To draw up an inheritance contract, a notary must be consulted. Within the framework of an inheritance contract, a person can voluntarily waive his or her compulsory portion.

## Taxation of inheritances

Most cantons levy an inheritance tax which is payable by the persons who inherit the estate. As a rule, spouses and descendants are generally exempt from tax. If a tax is levied, the amount usually depends on the asset value and the degree of kinship with the deceased person. The closer the relatives, the lower the tax rate. Information can be obtained through the cantonal tax office of the last place of residence.

## Gifts

With a gift during your lifetime, you can grant other people an advance on their inheritance. Gifts made during the last five years before the death of the deceased must be compensated to the legal heirs in the event of inheritance, provided that this results in a violation of the compulsory portion. As a rule, spouses and descendants are also exempt from gift tax.

## Taxation of gifts

Gift tax is payable by the person who receives the gift, analogous to the inheritance tax. Most cantons levy a gift tax. This prevents the inheritance tax from being circumvented by means of gifts.

Of course, Swiss inheritance law is much more comprehensive than we describe it in this overview. For persons residing in the Philippines, it is relevant which law is applied when and how. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to clarify this important question with a Philippine expert, as mentioned at the beginning.



## Honorary consulate in Cebu



It is a pleasure to announce that the Swiss Confederation has again been able to open an Honorary Consulate in Cebu with a soft opening due to the current quarantine regulations. The Federal Council has appointed Mr. Mathias Ralf Bergundthal, born on 22 July 1981, citizen of Schüpfen BE, as Honorary Consul in the Visayas and Mindanao with headquarters in Cebu City.

Like you, Mr Bergundthal is a member of the community of the Swiss Abroad. Thanks to his work for a construction project development company with its own hotels, he is predestined for his new duties and has excellent connections with the local authorities. Prior to moving to the Philippines in 2019, Mr. Bergundthal worked for Nestlé in Corporate Affairs / Corporate Social Responsibility. He has a young daughter with his spouse, a Filipino national who also used to work for Nestlé in Switzerland.

Mr. Bergundthal will maintain relations with the local authorities in the Visayas and Mindanao on behalf of the Swiss Confederation. He will also advocate Swiss interests in connection with the business community. An important task will also be to maintain contact with you, i.e. with the Swiss abroad community. If necessary, he will issue the annually recurring life certificates and will be happy to advise you if you have any questions or refer you to the appropriate office for your concerns.

However, consular official acts such as visas, authentications, and civil status matters such as births, marriages and death notifications will continue to be carried out exclusively in Manila at the Embassy.

The address of the Swiss Honorary Consulate is as follows:

Park Centrale Building  
Jose Maria del Mar, St. Apas  
Upper Penthouse, 19th floor  
Cebu I.T. Park, Cebu City 6000  
Tel. 0917 637 89 33  
E-Mail [cebu@honrep.ch](mailto:cebu@honrep.ch)

## Swiss Benevolent Foundation



The Swiss Benevolent Foundation was established by members of the Swiss Club Philippines Inc. (SCI) in 1925. The Swiss Embassy is using this Infoletter to congratulate the SBF on its 95th anniversary and to thank it for its commitment to the Swiss community in the Philippines over the years.

The aim at the time of its foundation was, insofar as the means of the organization allowed it, to alleviate the urgent needs of deserving Swiss citizens. At that time there was no social security system and Swiss citizens could not count on support from their home country. In the 1960s, with the advent of the welfare state, many needs were then met by the Swiss government. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the number of Swiss nationals living in the Philippines increased sharply. In 1999, the Swiss Benevolent Foundation Inc. was finally registered with the local authorities as a separate entity from Swiss Club Philippines Inc.

The SBF continues to offer the same support unchanged to this day. Whether it is with donations to pay medical bills, Christmas gifts for the particularly needy, interest-free loans in case of financial shortages for unforeseen reasons, or support for younger Swiss people in education.

It is impressive that this foundation is still active today and we would like to thank the President Reiner Gloor, the Vice President Hans Brumann and the other Board members for their tireless efforts for the benefit of our community.

If you would like to find out more about the Swiss Benevolent Foundation, please consult the website at the following link. **It also contains a contact form for questions about the Foundation or for possible support.**

<http://sbf.ph/>

### **Social assistance from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA**

In this context, we would like to use the following link to inform you about the criteria for federal social aid. This explains the requirements for support and shows the various support options.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/organisation-fdfa/directorates-divisions/cd/swiss-citizen-services/social-security-swiss-citizens-abroad/swiss-nationals-living-abroad.html>

If you have another nationality, special rules apply. You can submit an application, but you will usually not be supported if you have a foreign citizenship.

Social assistance benefits must be reimbursed in whole or in part if this is reasonable and a reasonable livelihood is assured.

If you have any questions, please contact the Embassy by e-mail.

[manila@eda.admin.ch](mailto:manila@eda.admin.ch)



## Swiss Club

Unfortunately, the traditional 1st August celebration of the Swiss club will not be able to take place this year due to quarantine regulations. The participants of last year's celebration will never forget the performance of Claude Diallo together with Filipino artists.



The regular social activities of the Swiss Club will probably be able to be held again in the first week of August with a first regulars' table.

If you are not already a member of the club and are interested in becoming a member, we would like to encourage you to join the club. The membership can be applied for in the following link.

<https://www.swissclub-philippines.org/>

## Official 1st August celebrations of the Embassy

The official 1st August celebrations of the Embassy will also take place under special conditions this year. The Embassy is planning an online program and will provide information in advance via Facebook page and the homepage of the Embassy.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/philippines>

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

## 1-August badge of Pro Patria

This year's 1-August badges by Pro Patria can be purchased at the embassy in Manila for PHP 250.00 per piece. The Swiss club is offering one badge per person free of charge for participation in the club's upcoming activities (while stocks last).



<https://www.propatria.ch/>



# COVID-19

## Questions and answers

As a registered Swiss citizen, you have been contacted several times by this Embassy by e-mail since March on the subject of COVID-19. During this time we have received many questions from concerned citizens, which is why we provide you with a link from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs with the most frequently asked questions and answers.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/aktuell/newsuebersicht/2020/03/faq-coronavirus.html>

Of course, you can still send individual questions directly to the Swiss Embassy in Manila by e-mail to [manila@eda.admin.ch](mailto:manila@eda.admin.ch).

## Option to get tested with Roche Elecsys Antibody Test

The Centre Médicale Internationale Clinic carries out antibody tests with the Elecsys Antibody Test, a new test developed by the Swiss company Roche. The clinic is located in Bonifacio Global City at the following address: 2F Ore Central 31st St. corner 9th Ave., BGC, Taguig City.

Appointments can be made by e-mail at [experience@cminternationale.com](mailto:experience@cminternationale.com) or by telephone on 0927 931 7194. Further information can be found at <https://cmi.care/>.

## Official links regarding COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov/situation-schweiz-und-international.html>

<http://www.covid19.gov.ph/>

## Return of Swiss tourists

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the Swiss Embassy in Manila has mobilized all resources to support a large number of Swiss travelers in the Philippines in their return to Switzerland. At the end of March, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy organized the first Swiss repatriation flight from Asia to Zurich, which was used by about 250 Swiss nationals and another 100 people from European countries. Since domestic air traffic was completely banned in March throughout the country, the Embassy had to organise several so-called "sweeper flights" as feeder flights to the international airports in Cebu and Manila. The picture shows for example a Dornier 328 with 31 seats, which picked up passengers on a sightseeing flight from Puerto Princesa, Cebu and Caticlan and brought them to Manila.



## Recipes for a potato gratin and for a Valais style rye bread



### Ingredients for a potato gratin for 4 people

- One ovenproof mould of approx. 2 litres capacity
- 800 gr. floury potatoes
- 3 dl milk
- 3 dl cream
- 1 - 2 garlic cloves pressed, salt, pepper, nutmeg
- 50 - 100 gr. grated Gruyère, butter flakes (according to taste)

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 180°C top/bottom heat (hot air/circulating air approx. 160°C). Wash and peel potatoes and cut or slice them into even slices of 2 - 3 mm.
2. Layer potato slices in the form.
3. Mix milk, cream and garlic according to taste, season. Pour over the potatoes. The potatoes should be completely covered, otherwise they will turn brown.
4. Bake on the lowest level of the preheated oven for about 40 - 50 minutes.
5. Increase oven temperature to 220°C/200°C. Spread cheese and butter flakes over the gratin and bake in the upper half of the oven for about 10 minutes, serve hot.

### Ingredients for a Valais style rye bread of about 500 gr.

- Baking paper
- Rye flour for dusting
- 10 gr. yeast, crumbled
- 5 dl lukewarm water
- 250 g rye flour (1)
- 10 gr. yeast, crumbled
- 450 g rye flour (2)
- 50 gr. wholemeal flour
- 2 - 3 teaspoons of salt

### Zubereitung

1. Pre-dough: mix yeast, water and rye flour (1). Cover and leave to rise at room temperature for 12 hours.
2. Dissolve yeast in the predough, add rye flour (2) and salt. Knead to a smooth dough. Cover and leave to rise for 1-2 hours at room temperature until doubled.
3. Form a round bread, place it on the baking tray covered with baking paper, dust with a little rye flour. Leave to rise for another 30 minutes.
4. Preheat oven to 220°C top/bottom heat (hot air/circulating air 200°C)
5. Bake on the second lowest level of the preheated oven for 45 - 50 minutes.

*Bon appetit!!*

## **Website of the Swiss Embassy and other useful links**

The following first link will take you directly to the menu tab on the website of the Swiss Embassy. For example, if you open the Services folder, you will find all services provided by this representation listed alphabetically. By clicking on the desired service, you will be guided directly to the desired topic and, in addition to a wealth of useful information, you will also find the relevant leaflets and/or forms.

The second link takes you to the Facebook page of this Embassy with daily new Swiss related posts and almost 68,000 followers. More followers are most welcome.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/philippines/en/home/representations/embassy.html>

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

### **LIVING AND WORKING IN THE PHILIPPINES**

A guide to planning and living in the Philippines.

[https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/de/documents/publications/AuslandschweizerinnenundAuslandschweizer/dossier-auswandern/leben-und-arbeiten-philippinen\\_DE.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/eda/de/documents/publications/AuslandschweizerinnenundAuslandschweizer/dossier-auswandern/leben-und-arbeiten-philippinen_DE.pdf)

### **ONLINE DESK FOR SWISS NATIONALS RESIDING ABROAD**

Here, you have the opportunity to carry out consular services, such as signing up for the Register of the Swiss Abroad, changing your civil status, changing your address, etc.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/living-abroad/dienstleistungen-schweizer-ausland/online-schalter.html>

### **SwissID**

SwissID creates the legal and technical requirements for electronic business transactions.

<https://www.swissid.ch>

### **SWISS NATIONALS ABROAD**

This link will take you to an Internet page that is tailored specifically to you as Swiss abroad.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/living-abroad/fifth-switzerland.html>

### **THE SWISS ABROAD ACT IN DETAIL**

You can study the entire law here.

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20133127/index.html>

### **ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD (OSA)**

You are the target customers of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). This website provides you with a wealth of information and answers to your questions will be gladly given to you.

<https://www.aso.ch/en>

## **SwissCommunity**

SwissCommunity is a free, high-quality Internet platform aimed at Swiss people around the world.

<https://www.swisscommunity.org/en/homepage>

## **CH.CH**

Here you will find all the useful and official information from the Swiss administrations on federal, cantonal and municipal authorities.

<https://www.ch.ch/en/>

## **EDUCATIONSUISSE**

This page provides detailed information on all educational issues relating to Switzerland.

<https://www.educationsuisse.ch/en/home-en>

## **FOUNDATION FOR YOUNG SWISS ABROAD (FYSA)**

The FYSA enables Swiss children abroad from all over the world to spend holidays in their home country.

<http://sjas.ch/de/>

## **SWISSINFO**

Swiss news in 10 languages.

<http://www.swissinfo.ch/>

## **SWISS RADIO AND TELEVISION**

Join the range of audio, video, news, radio and Swiss radio and television programmes.

<http://www.srf.ch/> (German)

<https://www.rts.ch/> (French)

<https://www.rsi.ch/> (Italian)

## **ZEITUNGEN.CH**

Here you will find an overview of all German language newspapers and magazines.

<http://www.zeitung.ch/>

## **PHILIPPINE SWISS BUSINESS COUNCIL**

The Philippine Swiss Business Council acts as a bridge between Switzerland and the Philippines.

<http://psbc.aralmuna.me/>



## Emergency & Important addresses

*In this issue, we also recommend that you print out this updated page for emergencies, click on the internet links provided and also print out the pages relevant to you.*

### FDFA Helpline

If you are in need of help from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), you can always contact the FDFA **Helpline** under the following numbers:

**0041 800 24 7 365** or **0041 58 465 33 33**

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/kontakt/helpline-eda.html>

### Itineris & Travel Admin App (New)

On Itineris, you and your relatives have the possibility to enter the data of your tourist, visiting and business trips abroad on a portal created for this purpose. You can download the Travel Admin app on your smartphone and enter your data. Itineris enables the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to locate you better and to contact you in case of a crisis.

<https://www.itineris.eda.admin.ch/home>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/living-abroad/dienstleistungen-schweizer-ausland/itineris.html>

### FDFA Travel advice for the Philippines

The FDFA's Travel advices provide information on the security situation in the Philippines. They are always up-to-date and apply not only to travellers but also to Swiss nationals living in the Philippines.

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

### Swiss Embassy in Manila

Embassy of Switzerland Manila  
24/F BDO Equitable Tower  
8751 Paseo de Roxas  
Makati, Metro Manila

Embassy of Switzerland  
P.O. Box 2068  
Makati Central Post Office  
1260 Makati, Metro Manila

+632 8845 45 45 (New)  
+632 8845 45 38 (Fax) (New)  
[manila@eda.admin.ch](mailto:manila@eda.admin.ch)  
[www.eda.admin.ch/manila](http://www.eda.admin.ch/manila)

### National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC)

We recommend that you obtain the contact details of the local NDRRMC representative office in your place of residence and note them on this list.

Phone number NDRRMC: .....

### Emergency Numbers

We recommend that you write down the most important local emergency numbers here.

Police	117 oder .....	Doctor	.....
Ambulance	16911 oder .....	Hospital 1	.....
Fire brigade	.....	Hospital 2	.....

