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Dear Fellow Citizens,
Dear Friends of Switzerland,

It is my pleasure to present you a dense compilation of information about Swiss related events in Azerbaijan from July to December 2018. Our newsletter as well as the Embassy's activities cover many fields - be it related to politics, Switzerland's technical cooperation (which will celebrate its 20th anniversary next year!), business, tourism, education or news about our cultural events.

Despite busy times at the end of the year, I hope that you find some time to have a look at it and should you have any comment or remark, please let us know. Let me also inform our dear readers, friends of Switzerland and compatriots that starting from late December, the Embassy of Switzerland will increase its communication channels and open its own [Facebook account](#).

As we look back on the outgoing year, which from an Embassy's perspective brought us many highlights - among others the visit of a Federal Councillor (Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann in July) and a Secretary of State (Mr. Mauro Dell'Ambrogio in October) to Baku - I take the opportunity to warmly thank you all for your continuing interest and your support.

On behalf of my entire team, let me wish you and your families a Merry Christmas, a peaceful holiday season and all the best for a successful year 2019!

Philipp Stalder

Ambassador of Switzerland

Politics

Bilateral Political consultations



Deputy Secretary of State Krystyna Marti (middle) welcomes Deputy Foreign Minister Khalafov and Azerbaijani Ambassador to Bern, Hanum Ibrahimova

The political consultations between Switzerland and Azerbaijan took place in Bern on 21 September 2018. **Swiss Deputy Secretary of State, Krystyna Marty Lang**, met with her counterpart, **Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov**, to discuss a wide range of bilateral issues. Both sides emphasized the positive dynamic of relations and highly appreciated the outcome of the meeting. The settlement process of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the economic cooperation as well as topics related to the educational sphere were equally discussed.

Furthermore, the sides exchanged views on the significance of the Convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea and arising opportunities created by the East-West transport corridors across the Caspian Sea, as well as international energy projects initiated by Azerbaijan.

Swiss Secretary of State visits Baku



State Secretary Dell'Ambrogio in the meeting with President Aliyev

The **Swiss State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation, Mauro Dell'Ambrogio** paid an official visit to Baku in autumn. His delegation included a representative from the University of Geneva and during the two-day-long visit from 29-30 October various contacts with Azerbaijani universities were established or deepened. The rich program provided by Azerbaijan to Mr. Dell'Ambrogio consisted of a courtesy visit to the President Ilham Aliyev as well as discussions with the Minister of Education Jeyhun Bayramov and the Rector of ADA University, Deputy Foreign Minister Hafiz Pashayev.

Main discussion topics were potential study exchange programs, research collaboration and vocational education & training which is a highly specialized and successful domain of Switzerland.

A joint declaration on intensifying bilateral cooperation in the fields of education, research and innovation was signed during the meeting with Minister Bayramov. Furthermore, Mr. Dell'Ambrogio gave a lecture at the Azerbaijan-French University and visited the Baku Higher Oil School where a Swiss company ABB has set up a laboratory for students. Last but not least, the Swiss Secretary of State visited training facilities of OJSC Holcim (Azerbaijan) where the Swiss cement production company is about to start a promising vocational training centre for masons in Azerbaijan.

<http://asoiu.edu.az/en/news/681-swiss-state-secretary-for-education-research-and-innovation-visited-ufaz>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDYW6jTZ0dM>
<https://vimeo.com/298116012>

OSCE



OSCE Secretary General T. Greminger (left) at ADA University

On 12 September 2018, the **OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger** visited Azerbaijan. Greminger, a former Swiss Ambassador, met with President Ilham Aliyev, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and the speaker of parliament Ogtay Asadov. Cooperation between OSCE and Azerbaijan, regional security, transportation projects, situation with human rights and civil society in the country, as well as the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were on the agenda of discussions.

Besides a breakfast meeting with Swiss Ambassador Philipp Stalder, Secretary General Greminger made a presentation at ADA University where he spoke about the *OSCE as a platform for renewing dialogue and rebuilding trust*.

The presentation followed by Q&A session gave students the opportunity to better understand the facilitating role of OSCE in peace-building processes and, for obvious reasons, the discussion mainly focused on the unsettled conflict with the neighboring country.

<http://ednews.net/en/news/politics/319010-osce-secretary-general-speaks-at-ada-university>

https://azertag.az/de/xeber/Thomas_Greminger_Es_gibt_Moglichkeiten_fur_weitere_Entwicklung_der_Beziehungen_zwischen_Aserbajdschan_und_der_OSZE-1193843

Visit to an IDP family in Ganja



Ambassador Stalder speaks to an IDP family in their apartment

Ambassador Philipp Stalder visited Ganja on 2 October 2018. During the trip to the western province, he visited the IDP settlement constructed in Ganja city for the IDPs from Kelbajar – a province which was occupied in April 1993 and from where thousands of Azerbaijanis were forced to leave their house. Before the outbreak of the conflict, Kelbadjar was famous for its agricultural and cattle breeding.

Governor of Kelbajar district, Agil Mammadov, informed about the settlement for IDPs newly established in 2013. Since then, 1'500 families live in an area of 25 five-storey buildings. The settlement with modern housing facilities hosts a kindergarten for 280 children and a school for 1'200 children. As the Governor informed the Ambassador, more than 70'000 Kelbadjar IDPs live in 100

settlements all over Azerbaijan and hope for a fast return to their homelands. Despite considerable support of the government to SMEs, development of agriculture sector and other special programs, unemployment seem to be a main challenge. Ambassador Stalder mentioned that a strong focus was given to humanitarian aid and assistance to IDPs by Switzerland's cooperation activities in the early 1990s.

The Swiss Ambassador also visited one of the families living in the settlement and got acquainted with the living conditions provided for IDPs. The family reiterated strong will to return to their native lands despite good facilities.

The Swiss model of Direct Democracy



Swiss Professor Wolf Linder at the Khazar University

Professor Emeritus Wolf Linder visited Baku on 24-26 October on invitation of the Embassy. The political scientist, well known to generations of Swiss students, delivered a highly interesting presentation titled “*Many ways to democracy: Why and how Switzerland is different*” at three different universities - **ADA University, the Azerbaijan State Academy of Public Administration and Khazar University.**

With his entertaining skills to explain complex coherences, Professor Linder easily caught the interest of students and faculty members

of the departments of international relations, political and social sciences and law. Around 100 persons attended each lectures and students were not shy to ask the Swiss specialist on direct democracy many questions at the Q&A sessions.

Professor Linder initially conducted research at the University of Konstanz and at ETH Zurich. He then held professorships at the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration in Lausanne (1982-1987) and the University of Bern (1987-2009). In Bern, he served as Director of the Institute of Political Science, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Social Science and, after retiring, became university Ombudsman. For eight years, he was a board member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences and a member of the National Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

www.khazar.org/en/news/article/3570?fbclid=IwAR2WQgmlTi538hq-ePhbkV5-vISKe7T07GkPinswDjgPYYVcJcwQzRv0NyA
<http://www.wolf-linder.ch/>

Swiss Development Cooperation

SECO organized trainings for local judges



The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), in partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Academy of Ministry of Justice, organized a training program on secured transactions for judges and lawyers. The training, which was delivered by local and international experts, was held on 10-13 December 2018. Twenty judges from different courts of Azerbaijan and two from Tajikistan participated in the intense training.

The new law and the now operating collateral registry allow for alternative collaterals when taking a credit from a bank. Previously, banks only accepted real estate or land titles as a collateral. Now a SME can also register its inventory, commodities, intellectual property or other valuable assets as a collateral. One necessary element to make a complex financial reform like this one a success, is the capacity building of the judges, as they will be ruling court decisions on future disputes over these collaterals.

Simone Haerberli, Deputy Regional Director of the Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus and Deputy Head of Mission of the Swiss Embassy, said in her opening remarks: «*We are currently witnessing significant changes in the financial sector of Azerbaijan. Today and as a result of our joint efforts, Azerbaijan has a very modern law on Secured Transactions and a fully functional movable assets registry, accessible*

to all financial institutions and borrowers to register their collaterals. This paves the way to ease financial intermediation in Azerbaijan, namely the issue around loan collaterals. The experience from other countries clearly indicates that such reforms also need to address capacity building and public awareness.»

Swiss funded Gender Assessment Report



On 4 December 2018, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan, the United Nations Population Fund, Women's Association for Rational Development and the Embassy of Switzerland presented and discussed the **Gender Assessment Report "Women in Private Sector in Azerbaijan: Opportunities and Challenges"** together. A research team of international and local experts studied and assessed the participation of women in the private sector in Azerbaijan, by analyzing obstacles and opportunities for both men and women to participate in private sector and formal employment. The report concludes with concrete recommendations on how to enable

greater participation of women in the private sector. The project was funded by the Swiss government through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and received contributions from the two UN agencies.

Ambassador, Mr. Philipp Stalder, delivered a speech and also shared his view on gender inequality being one of the most persisting violations of human rights globally. He highly appreciated the findings and recommendations indicated in the report and referred to the assessment of the report, pointing out that, like in many other countries, there are still many challenges for women's economic participation in Azerbaijan as well.

The goal of the Gender Assessment study is to examine the factors influencing women's participation in the private sector economy and to support the efforts of the national government, private sector actors and civil society organizations working to promote women's economic empowerment and economic participation including formal employment.

For full report please visit <http://www.az.undp.org/content/azerbaijan/en/home/library/UNDP-AZE-Gender-Assessment-report.html>

<https://www.amerikaninsesi.org/a/qad%C4%B1nlar-%C3%BCdm-ni-25-faiz-art%C4%B1ra-bil%C9%99r-4686767.html>

Business women in Khachmaz



Mrs. Haerberli (middle) with the happy participants of the SCO project

“Every employed woman is an asset for a country.” - this is the credo of **Ms. Simone Haerberli, Head of the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) & Deputy Head of Mission.** Through SCO, Switzerland attaches great importance to economic empowerment of women in Azerbaijan. As part of the Swiss Embassy, SCO currently implements a number of women’s economic empowerment projects.

A monitoring visit to project partners and women in Khachmaz district in the north-eastern part of the country was organized in this perspective in November. The project aims at providing **financial literacy and business development training to women** who already have a small business or want to start one. 25 women received training on financial literacy, out of

which 18 were selected for further training on business development. In addition, those with the best business plans received **seed funds** to start or to improve their businesses.

It was encouraging to see the women who received training and seed funds indeed are very active entrepreneurs and eager to further develop their businesses. These women are of different ages and are active in a wide range of different businesses – from arts and paintings and computer training courses to hairdressing and pastry. We really hope that they all become successful business people to contribute to the local economy of the Khachmaz district.

Children affected by the conflict



Children proudly show their handmade puppets

Living near the frontline of an unsettled territorial conflict must be an extremely difficult experience for civilians on both sides of the border in most case. This is even truer for **children fighting with symptoms of stress and psychological trauma** caused by regular exchanges of fire.

Aynur, a young activist and beneficiary from a Swiss funded project, decided to help children in a village in Agdam district close to the Line of Contact. With her project called “**Sunshine Puppet Theater**”, Aynur encouraged some 15 children to create puppets and also prepared them to performances.

The plays executed in October were dedicated to topics related to the protection of the environment and the love and care for animals and nature. One could easily see the joy and happiness on the faces of the young actors during their performances and the project fully reached its goals.

“Different and one of us!”



Chorus concert of talented children

Another performance of an arts & culture project supported by Switzerland was held in Baku, Sumqayit and Quba in October.

“*Different and one of us!*” was the slogan of the **choir concert of children with autism**. These children might be different, but no less talented than others. They may behave and interact differently, but they are an integral part of society.

The project was successfully implemented by the NGO “Together and Healthy”, which is

Business & Tourism

Baku-Geneva flights operational since October!



DHM Simone Haerberli together with Azerbaijani Ambassador Ibrahimova enjoying the direct flight

On 30 October, the first direct flight between Baku and Geneva by Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) was inaugurated. First Deputy Director Executive of AZAL, Mr. Jamil Manizade, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Switzerland, Ms. Hanum Ibrahimova, and Deputy Head of Mission, Ms. Simone Haerberli jointly celebrated the new flight connection on arrival at Geneva airport. At the celebration event in Geneva, SOCAR, Swiss tourism, Geneva tourism and the relevant chambers of commerce were also represented.

The connection is available two times a week, Tuesday and Friday, and offers 52 comfortable seats in three classes: VVIP, Business and Economy. Flight duration is four hours.

In September, Ambassador Stalder met with the President of AZAL, Jahangir Askerov, to discuss how to promote the direct flight in the best way. The Embassy, for example, informs its visa customers about the AZAL flight and also informs other circles like representatives of Swiss companies, our Alumni network or diplomatic missions who could envisage a trip to beautiful Geneva and Switzerland for business or leisure purposes.

Switzerland Tourism signs MoU to boost cooperation



MOU signing ceremony

The Director of **Switzerland Tourism** for Emerging Markets & Special Projects **Federico Sommaruga** visited Baku on 24-26 October 2018 to attend the 6th International Humanitarian Forum.

Within the frame of the visit he met with the representatives of the Tourism Agency and signed a **MoU on cooperation in the field of tourism with the Tourism Board**. According to the agreement, both sides will continue cooperating on the improvement of tourism statistics, sharing experiences and information on services and improving tourism infrastructure, learning the development of the quality of services and etc. Switzerland and Azerbaijan will also envisage the possibility of organizing joint

tourism fares, presentations and other events to promote the tourism potential of both sides.

Mr. Sommaruga also met with the President of Azerbaijan Airlines to discuss the newly opened Baku-Geneva direct flight connection.

Azerbaijani Travel Agencies visit Switzerland



Azerbaijani travel agency representatives say the mission was successful

On invitation of Switzerland Tourism, a group of ten representatives of Azerbaijan's travel agencies visited Switzerland at the end of November 2018. The aim of the visit was to promote the direct flight recently introduced between Baku and Geneva and to provide first-hand information about Switzerland as a touristic destination. Ultimately, the visit should contribute to increase the number of tourists in both directions.

The condensed tour to Switzerland provided the Azerbaijani guests a unique opportunity to visit various cities like Geneva, Zurich, Bern and Lausanne, a famous ski resort (Zermatt), to attend a workshop followed by site inspections in fields of hotel education, medical services and additional business sites. Switzerland Tourism also presented the **E-Learning Program** for Travel Agents. Those who wish to enter the program may study and complete the exams online and receive an online certificate.

One participant, Managing Director of Averta Travel, Ms. Yelena Lyubomirova, lauded the initiative with following words: *"The trip was indeed useful and was full of all necessary information and pleasant communications with our Swiss partners for us to start and increase the selling process. We were shown all parts of Switzerland and it was proved that this successful and rich country is a right choice for each tourist"*.

Link for the online academy: <https://international.switzerlandtravelacademy.ch/>

Safety award for Holcim Azerbaijan



General Director Frederic Guimbald holds the award for the creation of healthy and safe conditions

Injuries and accidents in the construction sector is a topic of concern in Azerbaijan. In this view, the Trade Union Confederation of Azerbaijan (TUC) has awarded the best enterprises of the year “On the creation of Healthy and Safe working conditions”.

Throughout the year, activities of nearly 2000 enterprises and organizations have been monitored and evaluated in terms of **labour safety standards**. **Holcim Azerbaijan Company** has won the competition.

On the subject, the General Director of Holcim Azerbaijan, **Mr. Frederic Guimbald**, said. “We are accountable for our own and our colleagues’

safety. This achievement shows that safe activities have already become our daily lifestyle and a part of our culture. However, we always keep one’s finger on pulse and prevent incidents by assessing risks at the beginning of each working day.”

Holcim Azerbaijan is a member of LafargeHolcim Group which employs 110,000 workers in 90 countries. The Group is one of the world’s leaders in the production and distribution of cement, ready concrete products and aggregates.

The Embassy warmly congratulates our Swiss company for being awarded as the best enterprise in terms of labour safety standards in Azerbaijan.

<https://www.holcim.az/az>

Discussion about customs reform



Chief of the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan Safar Mehdiyev (left)

On 25 September, Ambassador Philipp Stalder met with the **Chairman of the State Customs Committee of Azerbaijan (SCC) Safar Mehdiyev** to discuss the ongoing reforms and potential cooperation areas. Both sides, emphasized the good bilateral relations and the positive role of the regular high-level meetings. The Chairman of SCC stressed the importance of the exchange of experience and knowledge with the Swiss colleagues. Mr. Mehdiyev informed about aims and measures of the government how to improve the level and standards of current customs system.

Ambassador Stalder stressed that he was not aware of major problems the Swiss companies operating business in and with Azerbaijan in regards to custom issues.

http://customs.gov.az/en/faydali/xeberler/2919_/

Culture & Education

Swiss movie about women's suffrage



The audience discusses with Prof. Wolf Linder and Swiss diplomats the movie and the late introduction of woman suffrage in CH in 1971

On 25 October, the Embassy presented “**The Divine Order**” (“*Die Göttliche Ordnung*”) to an enthusiastic audience of about 60 persons at Yarat Contemporary Art Space.

Directed by Petra Volpe in 2017, this comedy deals with the status of women in society. It is based around the life of Swiss housewife Nora living in small conservative town. As the film moves on, the audience sees her active participation in women's suffrage in 1971 referendum and her transformation from a housewife into a change-maker. Despite obstacles and backlashes, Nora becomes a hero as she overthrows the status quo together with antiquated views of that time.

Following the screening, Swiss diplomats together with visiting Professor Wolf Linder shared their views, memories and impressions about the movie and the history

of Swiss women's political rights. In fact, many spectators discovered for themselves the fact that Swiss women were entitled to vote and to be elected to Parliament at federal level only some 45 years ago. The event continued with drinks and discussions.

Don't miss the second opportunity to see “The Divine Order” sometime in 2019 since the movie is a real jewel which brings back the Switzerland of the seventies and how the world changed for which credit mostly goes to women.

http://www.swissfilms.ch/de/events_programmes/news/-/id_news/6043
<https://www.azernews.az/culture/139311.html>

Holcim Academy provides free trainings and seminars



Swiss Secretary of State with the group of masters at Holcim Academy

Within the official visit to Azerbaijan, Swiss Secretary of State, Mauro Dell'Ambrogio, Ambassador Stalder and the Swiss delegation visited the Training, Consulting and Information Centre – the Holcim Academy – 30 October.

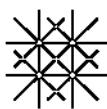
The newly created Holcim Academy provides opportunity for masters in construction sector to increase their profits by increasing professionalism and by using innovative technologies. Along with education, one of the main advantages of the academy is providing practical information about products application of new construction materials.

In addition, **persons with an interest to become a plasterer or a bricklayer can participate in free trainings and seminars** at the Holcim Academy. **Alexander Potaenko, Head of the Holcim Academy**, informed the guests about the activities of the centre and said: *"Our Academy's activity is at an early stage and we already developed program for the next five years. Anyone who wants to engage in plaster and finished concrete materials can benefit from our centre regardless of their experience.*

The daily use of proposed technological equipment in cement application significantly increases the productivity and quality of the masons' work"

<https://www.holcim.az/en/swiss-state-secretary-was-impressed-holcim-project>

ADA University and University of Basel team up for a student exchange program



**University
of Basel**

**Institute for
European Global Studies**

Over the last decades, spending an exchange semester abroad has become increasingly popular. Students from the **School of Public and International Affairs at ADA University** can now benefit from a new bilateral cooperation: In February 2018, their department signed a MoU that includes an exchange agreement with the **Institute for European Global Studies (Europainstitut) at the University of Basel**.

With its interdisciplinary MA program in European Global Studies, which currently boasts more than 130 Master students, the Europainstitut offers a comprehensive scientific approach to the study of European societies. It combines methods and theories of law, economics, history and the social sciences to examine Europe in its global context, especially in its relationships to Africa and Asia. During their stay in Basel, exchange students from ADA University will study Europe as a space of crossed borders and shared identity – a reality they will also experience in everyday life: located on the bend of the Upper Rhine, Basel is the heart of the border triangle of France, Germany and Switzerland. Its spirit of openness and international flair are a key source of inspiration for the academic landscape.

In return, exchange students from Basel have the opportunity to spend a semester in the Caucasus area, a region of utmost geopolitical importance and of greatest interest in the analysis of world politics. As of autumn 2018, the first badge of students from Basel will spend a semester in Baku. Since thinking outside the box and studying Europe from various perspectives is one of the main goals for students of the Europainstitut, the cooperation with ADA University offers them a unique chance to put these principles into practice.



EUROPAINSTITUT
Institute for European Global Studies

More information on the Institute of European Global studies: <https://www.europa.unibas.ch/en/home/>

BAKU Higher Oil School



Ambassador Stalder (3rd from left) with the Rector Gasimov (4th from left) and ABB Managing Director R.Gasimov (1st from left)

Ambassador Philipp Stalder visited Baku Higher Oil School (BHOS) on 22 October 2018. He met with the **Rector, Mr. Elmar Gasimov** and the **Managing Director of ABB Azerbaijan, Mr. Rustam Gasimov**.

Mr. Gasimov introduced BHOS and explained how petroleum engineering specialists are trained not only in theory but also with an on-the-job training and a two-month internship at SOCAR and other transnational companies.

Following the presentation, a visit to the laboratory-training center gave the Swiss Ambassador the possibility to see the equipment provided by Swiss company ABB to BHOS students.

<https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/society/2972430.html>
<http://abc.az/en/news/19170>

Swiss Alumni event in 2018



Young alumnis enjoy wonderful view from the terrace of the residence

The Embassy gathered **Azerbaijani students and graduates from the Swiss universities and schools** at a reception given at the Swiss Residence. This year's Alumni Networking Event took place on 7 September and dozens of young people enjoyed their attendance at the roof terrace in beautiful Icheri Sheher. For the first time, the **CEO's of Swiss companies operating in Azerbaijan** were also invited. This created an opportunity for students to expand their networking and even seek for job opportunities.

In his welcome speech, Ambassador Philipp Stalder expressed his hope that this event would provide a useful platform for Azerbaijani people with similar background to exchange experiences and ideas and to get in contact with representatives of the Swiss private sector in Azerbaijan. The host furtherly informed the participants about recent and upcoming activities of the Embassy and mentioned some key points of the bilateral relations.

As a special guest, Mr. Rasim Garaja – the well-known writer, journalist and the founder of the magazine and printing house “Alatoran” – was introduced to the audience. Mr. Garaja translated Max Frisch’s “*Homo Faber*” from German to Azerbaijani language and announced his project to translate another book of Max Frisch (“*Stiller*”) to the local language.

A funny video clip followed by a quiz about Switzerland concluded the program - not to forget, of course, to mention that Swiss flavor was further added to the pleasant summer event with delicious Raclette - one of the famous Swiss cheese dishes - and tasty Swiss wines.

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/azerbaijan/en/home/news/news.html/content/countries/azerbaijan/en/meta/news/2018/september/alumni-event>

Presentation at Khazar University



 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra Embassy of Switzerland in Azerbaijan

«Landsgemeinde» Swiss Direct Democracy in action

- One of the oldest forms of direct democracy
- Open-air people's assembly
- Glarus and Appenzell Inner-Rhodes
- Examples:
 - Determination of the tax rate
 - Approval of major investments by the canton



An introduction to Switzerland 15

On 26 October 2018, our **academic intern Keivan Mohasseb** held a presentation at the Political Science and International Relations Department of Khazar University. The presentation was given during a course focusing on globalization, that overlooks the impact of the global economy on domestic politics and examines globalization in all its diverse forms of world-wide interconnection.

The presentation included remarks about Switzerland's relationship with the EU and focused on Switzerland as one of the most globalized countries. Particular emphasis was placed on the globalization in economic terms, which plays an important role in the "export nation" Switzerland.

Despite a high degree of globalization, Switzerland has succeeded in preserving its particularities and traditions. Particularly highlighted were Federalism and Direct Democracy, which both play a central role. The "*Landsgemeinde*" was chosen as an illustrative example. This is one of the oldest forms of direct democracy in which a vote is made by raising hands at an open-air people's assembly.

Finally the students could practice and repeat the acquired knowledge in a quiz. The best participants had the opportunity to win a prize related to Switzerland.

Consular & Personnel Affairs

Change of Staff at the Embassy



Ms. Aytekin Maharramova

On 1 November, the Embassy welcomed **Ms. Aytekin Maharramova as the new Executive Assistant to the Ambassador**. She replaces outgoing Ms. Lalnur Fuadsoy, who finished successful work after five years.

Ms. Maharramova graduated from the Azerbaijan State University of Languages with a degree in Simultaneous Translation and Interpretation. She was awarded a DAAD scholarship program for scientific training in simultaneous interpretation at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz.

Aytekin has significant work experience within various diplomatic missions in Baku as a Press and Information Officer, a Press and Political Assistant and a Social Media Coordinator. She also worked for German-Azerbaijani Chamber of Commerce (AHK) and the private sector

Team building event - learn and entertain



Having an annual team event and excursion has become a tradition for employees of the Swiss Embassy. The idea behind it is not only to improve the team's spirit, but also to have fun together. Visiting the Open-Air Historical and Ethnographic Museum and the Exposition "From waste to art" in Gala village was also a perfect choice to learn more about the ancient history and art of Azerbaijan

There, our team enjoyed baking bread in a common oven in an old traditional way, weaving a carpet or feeding camels. The team stepped a few meters to find himself in the Furthermore, we discovered the exposition titled "From waste to art". Later on and after a nice lunch in Gala Bazar restaurant, the Embassy visited the Elite Horse and Polo Club where team members could enjoy the horse riding.

Congress of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad



The State Secretary Roberto Balzaretto with the group of youth © OSA

Once a year during summer, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) holds a congress for Swiss citizen living all around the world. This event has become very popular among the members of the "Fifth Switzerland". The subjects are picked to match the interests of Swiss people living abroad.

Every year a different region of Switzerland hosts the congress. This year the **96th Congress** was held from 10 to 12 August 2018 in Visp, a commune in the Rhône valley in the canton of Valais. It was focused on the subject "Switzerland without Europe – Europe without Switzerland". Several questions have been discussed related to the importance of the bilateral relations and it was focused on the needs of Swiss people living in EU countries. Around 11% of the

Swiss population lives abroad. Of the 751,800 Swiss nationals who were residing abroad at the end of 2017, 62% were living in Europe.

You can find further information on www.aso.ch.

Varia

Environment project in Lahic



Schoolchildren cleaning up the village from waste

Lakes, mountains and clean air are associated with Switzerland's quality of life. As beautiful nature is an integral part of Switzerland's identity, the government actively promotes the protection of the environmental heritage throughout of the globe.

As part of this policy, the Embassy supported a project called “*Environmental Education Project*” in October. In Lahij town, volunteers from Azerbaijan scouts and the founder of EcoBaku Mrs. Nicola Beale delivered daily lectures, art and **cleanup activities with the schoolchildren in Lahij town.**

The idea of the project was to improve the understanding of proper utilization of waste and importance of the clean environment. The schoolchildren, volunteers cleaned up some areas

from the waste together with Swiss **Consul Jürg Neuenschwander**. Children were given bags provided by the financial support of the Embassy. The officials of the town highly appreciated the presentations and workshops with the schoolchildren. Mrs. Beale said this is the beginning of efforts to inspire, empower and educate local children and raise awareness for a clean environment. There is also an idea to make Lahij the first town in Azerbaijan free from plastic use.

Embassy helps Santa Claus in remote villages of Azerbaijan



Booth of Bakou Francophones at TISA

The annual winter fair was organized at the International School of Azerbaijan (TISA) on 1 December. The Swiss Embassy participated at it in the frame of the organization **Bakou Francophones** together with other Embassies from French speaking countries (Belgium and Romania). Money from the sale of items were given to the **Camping Azerbaijan** and the NGO will buy toys for children living in remote mountainous villages. The project called “*Santa Claus in remote villages*”, will start from 22 December and continues until 1 January 2019.

Over the course of the project, the Santa Claus team will travel 200 km through mountainous areas, delivering gifts to more than 900 children in 35 villages in the Quba and Qusar districts. The project was successfully launched two years ago.

https://www.facebook.com/campingazerbaijan2014/?eid=ARCQIbzeYVihccrggFvFQj_hkJVDiZJT943-DcWsGGi1D0wQdisAkyt7R1vEn4E-x4GzZ_8QNOB3rK35

<https://www.facebook.com/bakou.francophones>

Media

Information related to the Embassy:

Interview of Ambassador Philipp Stalder: <http://azeriobserver.az/2018/09/12/the-secret-of-swiss-happiness/>

Interview of DhM, Ms. Simone Haerberli: <http://vergiler.az/art-view/7493>

Interview of DhM, Ms. Simone Haerberli:

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Facts & Figures

SWITZERLAND AND THE WORLD

NEUTRAL
As a neutral country, Switzerland does not take part in armed conflicts or military alliances. This neutrality is an important pillar of Swiss foreign policy.

Switzerland acts as a protective power for third countries that have broken off relations with another country. Switzerland currently fulfils 6 diplomatic mandates of this type.

Switzerland is a member of seven international organisations. EFTA, Council of Europe, OSCE, OECD, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, UN.

HUMANITARIAN TRADITION
as host country to the International Committee of the Red Cross and depositary state of the Geneva Conventions of 1949:

- Emergency and reconstruction assistance in the event of natural disasters and armed conflicts
- Development assistance in countries and regions in need
- Supporting countries in their transition to democracy and the market economy
- Asylum for victims of political persecution

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The neutrality is an important pillar of Swiss Foreign policy

To date, Switzerland has represented the diplomatic interests of 35 countries as part of protective power mandates.

International Geneva is home to some 350 NGOs, 175 representations of foreign states and many other organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Switzerland joined the United Nations (UN) in 2002

Agenda

- ❖
- ❖ **Exhibition of the Swiss photographer Cedrik Merkli, 23 January – 5 February 2019, Modern Art Museum, Baku.** *For more information, please check our website or contact the Embassy.*
- ❖ **Swiss activities in the frame of the Francophonie in the first half of April 2019.** *For more information, please check our website or contact the Embassy.*

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
Organizaziun 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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