



NEWSLETTER 2023



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FORWARD MESSAGE



Dear fellow citizens and friends.

I am happy to present to you our newsletter 2023, reporting on key events of last year.

Probably the most important topic for Armenian politics and public attention in 2023 was the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. It began with the blockade in December 2022 and culminated in the Azerbaijani intervention in September 2023. As a result, Armenia had to take in around 100,000 refugees in less than a week, in addition to the approximately 27,000 refugees from the 2020 war. Switzerland has contributed a sum of 1.5 Mio. CHF in support of hosting these refugees, in addition to the ongoing Swiss projects of bilateral cooperation with Armenia.

With regards to development cooperation, we have decided this year to establish a separate SDC newsletter exclusively dedicated to this subject ([link](#)), allowing us to go into greater detail and intended mainly for our cooperation partners. The newsletter you are reading here is intended mainly for our fellow Swiss citizens.

The political, economic and cultural cooperation between our two countries has further expanded last year. The visit of the head of SDC signaled incessant commitment to support Armenia in the areas Switzerland holds thematic expertise.

For further activities, projects and initiatives that we have embarked on, follow us on the following social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#).

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 2024.

Sincerely,

Lukas Rosenkranz
Ambassador of Switzerland in Armenia

OFFICIAL MEETINGS AND VISITS

Meetings of the Foreign Ministers of Switzerland and Armenia



On November 30, on the sidelines of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation. As a continuation of the meeting held in New York in September, the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Switzerland discussed issues on the security situation in the South Caucasus.

Minister Mirzoyan briefed his counterpart on the steps undertaken by the Government of Armenia in order to properly address the needs and rights of the more than 100,000 Armenian population forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Touching upon bilateral cooperation, Ararat Mirzoyan appreciated the effective cooperation with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the support for the implementation of various programs in Armenia.

Development Cooperation Advisory Commission of Swiss Government and SDC Director General visit Armenia



On 20-22 April, the Advisory Commission for Swiss International Cooperation paid a working visit to the three countries in the South Caucasus region accompanied by Ambassador Patricia Danzi, Director General of the SDC. The members of the delegation deepened their understanding on Switzerland's cooperation efforts in Armenia and on the current geopolitical situation of the country. The mission reaffirmed Switzerland's readiness to support Armenia in its reform agenda as well as to support efforts of all players to promote peace at a regional level through international cooperation.

Ambassador Rosenkranz met heads of political parties of the RA NA

In April 2023, Ambassador Rosenkranz did a tour of official meetings with the heads of political parties represented in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.



Through this series of meetings, Ambassador Rosenkranz aimed to better understand the current political situation in Armenia, based on the analysis of the factions' members, as well as their visions of Armenia's future.

The list of interlocutors included the Head of the RA NA Civil Contract Faction Hayk Konjoryan, the Head of the RA NA Armenia Faction Seyran Ohanyan and The Head of RA NA Faction Pativ Unem (With Honor) Hayk Mamujanyan.

Ambassador Rosenkranz visited several universities in Armenia

To discuss existing and potential scientific and educational cooperation between the two countries Ambassador Rosenkranz visited several universities in Armenia throughout the year. The list of universities included the

Yerevan State University, Politechnical and Medical Universities, Brusov State University, as well as the American, French, and Russian-Armenian Slavonic Universities in Armenia.



Additionally, Ambassador Rosenkranz described the activities of the Swiss Embassy in Armenia, with a specific focus on what we do in the field of education, as well as about the postgraduate Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships offered by the Confederation to the Armenian students on yearly basis.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Switzerland remains an important trade partner for Armenia!

On May 31 the Embassy organized a roundtable discussion with the Swiss business community in Armenia. For the Embassy this is a highly valued platform to discuss and exchange information on the current trends, challenges and opportunities of doing business in Armenia with representatives of firms that link Switzerland to Armenia.



Chairing the discussion, Ambassador Rosenkranz said in his opening remarks, “The main goal of today’s event is to listen to the partners and understand what their priorities are, and to discuss in which instances the Embassy can provide support and assistance”.

Firms participating at the roundtable represented various sectors, such as banking, watchmaking, winemaking, consultancy and more. The extended list of participants also included the Swiss-Armenian Chamber of Commerce, which is an important partner of the Embassy.

“Business Promotion and Innovation Day 2023”



On October 2, the third edition of the Business Promotion and Innovation Day took place at the Vanadzor Technology Center supported by the Embassy. Organized by the Switzerland-Armenia Chamber of Commerce and the National Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship of the Ministry of Economy of Armenia (NCIE), this event connected Swiss experts, Armenian innovators, and entrepreneurs who are ready to export their products and services to European markets.

15 selected companies made presentation of their products, which was video recorded to be included into the digital catalogue of Armenian entrepreneurs managed by the Chamber.

Ambassador Rosenkranz emphasized the significance of the event, while Mr. Mike Baronian, the President of the Chamber highlighted the importance of Armenia-Switzerland-EU cooperation. Mr. Hayk Margarian, the CEO of the NCIE discussed the potential of Armenian products in Swiss and European markets.

Export Promotion tools: Swiss Generalized System of Preferences GSP for Armenian exporters



This awareness raising event took place on July 12 at the Ministry of Economy of Armenia. The event was organized by the Embassy and the Ministry of Economy of Armenia with the support of the European Business Association Armenia, to further promote and foster economic growth, trade opportunities, and bilateral cooperation between Switzerland and Armenia.

“I see particular potential for the Swiss-Armenian economic relations in the trade in services, as well as in research and innovation. All in all, I am optimistic about the future of our bilateral economic relations,” said Ambassador Rosenkranz.

The list of distinguished speakers and business community members who delivered insightful speeches and presentations included Rafayel Gevorgyan, Deputy Minister of Economy of the Republic of Armenia, Marianna Poghosyan, Head of EU Affairs Division of the RA Ministry of Economy, Angela Khachatryan, representative of the embassy for trade related affairs between Switzerland and Armenia, as well as representatives of different chambers and others who shared their valuable perspectives, insights and tools on various aspects of trade promotion and economic cooperation between our countries.



One of the highly anticipated sessions focused on the Swiss GSP in practice. Representatives from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and from the Federal Office of Customs and Border Security of Switzerland joined remotely and shared insights on the practical implementation of the Swiss GSP and provided valuable information on customs procedures and platforms related to the GSP.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



In 2023, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) continued its efforts to implement the Armenian component of the 2022-2025 Program for the South Caucasus Region. Approximately CHF 5.35 million (equivalent to around USD 6 million) was allocated for bilateral and multilateral aid in Armenia during this period.

By the conclusion of 2023 and midway through the 2022-2025 strategic framework, the Armenian SDC team successfully revamped and modernized its country portfolio, addressing challenges innovatively. The year highlighted the necessity for adaptability and prompt responses at both regional and country levels.

The featured photograph captures a railroad in Vardenis, Eastern Armenia. This image powerfully represents ways to economic growth, regional connectivity, and international stability based on common interests.

For more detailed information on specific events and portfolio advancements, readers are encouraged to refer to the comprehensive [SDC newsletter for 2023](#). Notably, 2023 witnessed the initiation of new, long-term SDC initiatives to enhance Armenian democracy and address the impact of climate change on Armenian forests. Humanitarian aid for incoming refugees was promptly increased, accompanied by efforts to facilitate their long-term socio-economic integration.

CULTURE AND ART

Francophonie 2023

"The political component of Francophonie prioritizes strengthening peace, human rights and democracy, as well as freedom of press. I hope that these events will allow the Armenian society to have an understanding about the cultural wealth of Francophonie," said the Ambassador Rosenkranz during a press conference.

Being the president of the association of Francophone ambassadors, Ambassador Rosenkranz also described the International Organization of La Francophonie as a unique platform that develops cultural, educational and economic relations between member countries through common language.



Photo © ArmenPress

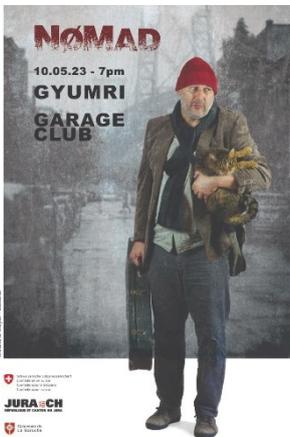
Francophone Movie Screenings



Celebrating the days of Francophonie 2023 in Armenia, the Embassy was delighted to be a part of the 6th edition of the Festival du cinéma francophone.

Alongside with the Embassies of France, Canada, Belgium as well as the Institute Français and the Moscow Cinema, we co-organized a series of francophone movie screenings, which included the Swiss francophone movie "Last Dance".

Swiss musician Christophe Meyer in Armenia



In the framework of Francophonie 2023, the Embassy was excited to invite its guests to exceptional musical journeys guided by the Swiss musician and author Christophe Meyer with his project NøMad and a group of young Armenian musicians. The concerts took place in the cities Sevan Gyumri and Yerevan throughout the month of May.



Fourth International Print Biennale Yerevan 2023

In 2023, we were delighted to share the success of "The Fourth International Print Biennale, Yerevan 2023," which took place at the Aznavour Centre from September 8 to December 8. Co-funded by the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia, the Biennale was organized by KulturDialog Armenien and the Yerevan International Print Biennale Organizing Committee. Ambassador Rosenkranz actively engaged in launching the initiative, highlighting the significant presence of Swiss art printing industry representatives at the Biennale.



The International Print Biennale, Yerevan, plays a pivotal role in fostering educational and cultural programs in Armenia. The initiative includes meetings, masterclasses, presentations, and professional workshops aimed at encouraging young Armenian printmakers and providing continuous inspiration for the creative process. Dr. Alexandra Stäheli, Head of Atelier Mondial - International Arts Exchange Program Basel, Mulhouse, and Freiburg, served as an international jury member, contributing valuable insights and strengthening Swiss-Armenian cultural relations.

SWISS NATIONAL DAY



For the 732nd birthday of Switzerland the Embassy was proud to welcome its guests to the Swiss National Day celebration. We thank our partners from the Government of Armenia, the Armenian Civil Society, and International Organizations for the invaluable collaboration. Big thanks also to our sponsors Dufry-Armenia, SGS-Armenia and Coca-Cola HBC Armenia for their generous support to the organization of this unforgettable event.



German Teachers in Armenia hosted by Ambassador Rosenkranz

On June 9, on the occasion of German Teacher's Day 2023 in Yerevan, Ambassador Rosenkranz organized a reception with the support of the Director of the Austrian Library in Armenia, Professor Liana Safaryan. Ambassador Rosenkranz expressed deep appreciation for the invaluable contributions of these educators and their commitment to promoting cultural exchange and language education.

The event was attended by the German Ambassador, H.E. Viktor Richter and Austrian Ambassador, H.E. Thomas Mühlemann, along with esteemed guests such as Davit Gyurjinyan the Rector of the Brusov State University, Dr. Marina Petkova from the Zürich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW, representatives of the Goethe-Zentrum Eriwan, and others.



CONSULAR MATTERS

On the consular side, important steps were again taken in 2023 to optimize and further develop consular services.

One example is the [Ageing Abroad project](#), to have comprehensive and attractive information and prevention material to raise awareness of the issue of retirement abroad among the Swiss community.

SwissInTouch application updated



The new version of our [SwissInTouch](#) app keeps you connected with the authorities in Switzerland and your local Swiss representation where information and events in Georgia are published

VOTEinfo application provides live voting results



The [VoteInfo](#) application developed by the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Statistical Office and the Statistical Office of the Canton of Zurich allows users to follow the results of the vote in near real time on voting Sundays. From midday onwards, VoteInfo users have access to the results for their municipality, their canton and the whole of Switzerland. The FSO continuously updates the results of the votes automatically delivered by the cantons.

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