



Q&A

Swiss OSCE Chairmanship 2014 and OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel in December 2014

General questions about the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship 2014

www.fdfa.admin.ch/osce_2014

What is the OSCE and what does it do?

With 57 participating states in North America, Europe and Asia, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the world's largest regional security organization. It works to ensure peace, democracy and stability for more than a billion people. The OSCE defines security in a comprehensive way under three dimensions: the politico-military dimension (including arms control, combating terrorism, conflict prevention and resolution), the economic and environmental dimension (including the promotion of economic development and environmental protection), and the human dimension (including protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and election monitoring). → Please also refer to the OSCE website at www.osce.org/.

Why is Switzerland in the OSCE?

One of Switzerland's foreign policy priorities is a commitment to peace and security in Europe, its neighboring regions and the rest of the world. In line with the Federal Council's foreign policy strategy 2012–2015 this commitment is based on international co-operation on the one hand, and on activities to promote peace, human rights, the rule of law and international security on the other. For Switzerland therefore, the OSCE is a major platform for debate in the European-transatlantic co-operation framework, where it holds discussions on security policy issues with all European and Central Asian countries, the United States and Canada. Switzerland actively participates in conferences and meetings, and supports OSCE projects in the field of politico-military and human security. Switzerland also provides specialists – election monitors, police advisers, or experts in constitutional law, mediation, the rule of law and human rights – for short-term civilian peace projects on a needs basis. → Please also refer to the factsheet at www.fdfa.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/recent/dossie.Par.0007.File.tmp/Factsheet%20OSZE%20EN.pdf



Critics claim that the OSCE has lost a great deal of significance since the end of the Cold War. How does Switzerland rate the OSCE in Europe today?

Since its establishment with the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the OSCE has been a central platform for political dialogue amongst a growing number of states covering a broad geographical, social, cultural and political spectrum. Maintaining dialogue between these numerous and very different states in an increasingly complex world is an exceedingly challenging task. The OSCE continues to provide the framework for this. Government representatives from 57 states – practically the entire northern hemisphere – meet once a week in Vienna to discuss and make decisions collectively. This close-knit contact is unique and helps foster trust. However, it is also clear that the OSCE must focus its activities on the challenges of the 21st century more than before. That is why reform processes – in particular the “Helsinki +40” process which has been initiated with a view to the Organization’s 40th anniversary in 2015 – are essential.

What are Switzerland's priorities for its Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014?

Switzerland's leitmotif for its Chairmanship is "creating a security community for the benefit of everyone". In the Euro-Atlantic Eurasian region, Switzerland aims to foster security and stability, improve people's lives and strengthen the OSCE's capacity to act. These three overarching goals are based on the fundamental values of security, freedom and responsibility.

In concrete terms, this means that Switzerland aims to resolve conflicts and normalize relations between conflicting parties in the long term – such as in the Western Balkans and South Caucasus – through dialogue and confidence-building measures. To improve people's lives in OSCE participating states, Switzerland places priority on strengthening the protection of human rights by advocating that the numerous political commitments undertaken by the participating states in the last 40 years actually be implemented. To strengthen the OSCE's capacity to act, Switzerland seeks to further develop the institution and to carry forward the reform process “Helsinki +40”, so that the OSCE can better react to the challenges of the 21st century. Furthermore, Switzerland aims to enhance mediation capacities within the OSCE. → Please also refer to the factsheet at www.eda.admin.ch/etc/medialib/downloads/edazen/recent/dossie.Par.0012.File.tmp/Factsheet%20OSZE%20Schwerpunkte%20EN.pdf

How will Switzerland benefit from the 2014 OSCE Chairmanship?

Given that Switzerland belongs neither to the EU nor to NATO, the OSCE is an even more important forum for dialogue and international co-operation. Chairing the OSCE is in keeping with the strategic priorities of Swiss foreign policy, namely a commitment to stability in Europe and the world, and the underlying principles of Swiss security policy: security through co-operation. As a neutral country, it is in Switzerland's interests to ensure a stable and secure future for Europe and its neighbors. In its role chairing the OSCE, Switzerland can demonstrate its willingness and ability to contribute to fostering security and co-operation in Europe.

In so doing, Switzerland is also underlining the high importance it attaches to transatlantic and European co-operation. In general, the Chairmanship gives Switzerland the chance to strengthen its ties with the numerous states involved in the OSCE, including four of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, seven of the G8 countries and the EU, which also has a role to play in the OSCE. Serbia is a case in point. Switzerland and Serbia made a joint application for the OSCE Chairmanship 2014 and 2015. They are coordinating the goals and focal points of their consecutive Chairmanships and are also working closely together on implementation. This puts bilateral relations between Serbia and Switzerland on a new footing and will create greater scope for Swiss activities in South East Europe.

Who is responsible for the OSCE Chairmanship at the federal level?

In his capacity as foreign minister, President of the Confederation Didier Burkhalter is OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in 2014. A Task Force charged with preparing and supporting Switzerland's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014 has been created within the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). It consists of a team of twenty diplomats and other FDFA staff. The OSCE Task Force works closely together with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE in Vienna, the DDPS and other federal agencies involved.

How much will Switzerland's Chairmanship of the OSCE cost in total?

A key obligation of the chairing state is to organize the annual meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, which during the Swiss Chairmanship will take place in Basel in December 2014. The Confederation earmarked a sum of CHF 10.77 million to hold the Ministerial Council meeting in 2014.

On 28 August 2013, the Federal Council adopted a dispatch for Parliament on security measures to be taken at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting (please also refer to the press release at www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=49999). Expenses for the security measures at this major political event will total CHF 7.4 million, with the Confederation covering CHF 5.4 million and the canton of Basel-Stadt CHF 2 million.

Staff costs pertaining to the OSCE Chairmanship will be compensated internally within the FDFA.

Questions on the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel, 4 to 5 December 2014

What is the OSCE Ministerial Council?

The Ministerial Council is the central decision-making management board of the OSCE, where each participating state is represented through its foreign minister. It meets once a year, usually in December.

Why is the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting taking place in Basel in 2014?

One of the regular obligations of the OSCE chairing state is to organise and hold the annual meeting of the Ministerial Council. In September 2012, the Federal Council voted to hold the Ministerial Council meeting in Basel (please also refer to the press release at www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/recent/media/single.html?id=46071). Basel is bordered by three countries and has an international airport as well as ideal facilities to hold major events in the city's Congress Centre. The Basel authorities have given their full support to the Confederation so that Switzerland can also cement its image as a host country for major international conferences.

Last but not least, Basel has a tradition as a 'city of peace'. Various events have taken place in Basel such as the Ecumenical Assembly 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' (1989), the 100th anniversary of the Zionist Congress (1997) and the Basel Peace Congress (2012). Looking even further back, the role played by Mayor Wettstein during the Peace of Westphalia, by the humanists in Basel, the 1897 Zionist Congress and the 1912 Peace Congress are also noteworthy.

Does Basel have the know-how to hold such a major event?

Basel regularly hosts top-quality international events, such as the world fairs "Art Basel" and "Baselworld", and further demonstrated its abilities as a host city during the 2008 European Football Championship, where it was Switzerland's main venue during the event. The organization and holding of the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting will also draw on these experiences.

How will Basel benefit from the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting?

The OSCE Ministerial Council meeting will generate international coverage and media attention, which is expected to raise Basel's global profile and to position it as an ideal location for international events and congresses, as well as an attractive cultural city. In hosting the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, Basel can also actively contribute to promoting democracy, human rights, the rule of law, security and peace internationally, which will have a positive impact on its global image. Basel can also expect a return on investment in material terms. Consumption in the form of accommodation, food, transport etc. by the up to 2,000 delegates and journalists expected in Basel is estimated in the area of CHF 2-3 million.

How will the project be organized in Basel?

The project is anchored at government level. The steering committee is composed of Guy Morin (head of the cantonal government), Baschi Dürri (head of security), Gerhard Lips (chief of police), Barbara Schüpbach (head of the cantonal chancellery), as well as a project management team specializing in security, location / host marketing, side events for the general public and communications. Basel Tourism, the Congress Centre and EuroAirport are also involved in the project.

Who has jurisdiction for security issues and how are the responsibilities divided?

The canton of Basel-Stadt has overall jurisdiction for the implementation of security measures during the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting. A subsidiary security project will be headed by the Basel-Stadt cantonal police and reinforced with additional police forces (agreement on police co-operation in Northwestern Switzerland) pursuant to the IKAPOL agreement on inter-cantonal policing operations.

The Confederation is responsible for safeguarding matters of internal security falling under its jurisdiction (border control, national security, international obligations and specific law-enforcement competencies). Together with the cantonal and city police units, the Federal Office of Police (fedpol) is responsible for combating terrorism and extremist violence as well as security measures for people afforded protection under international law. The Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports (VBS) runs the National Intelligence Centre and the national joint intelligence service. Responsibility for operations lies with the civilian authorities of the canton of Basel-Stadt. (Please also refer to the 'Dispatch on the federal decree relating to security at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Basel in December 2014' at www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=49999).

Will Basel turn into a 'fortress' during the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting?

Basel is not going to become a 'fortress': the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting is one of the largest political events to take place in Basel to date and undoubtedly a challenge in terms of logistics and security. There will, therefore, be certain short-term restrictions on site at the Basel world fairs but these will only be made if necessary and proportional. Security measures will be implemented as discreetly as possible.

Why are there side events for the general public?

On behalf of the FDFA, *swisspeace* is organizing a parallel NGO conference to take place in Basel during the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting. Further public events will take place in Basel throughout the duration of Switzerland's Chairmanship of the OSCE, for which the Basel-Stadt canton has earmarked CHF 200,000. Basel is historically a city of peace and hopes to showcase this with these various exhibitions. These events should also ensure that the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting does not take place in a 'glass palace'.

Does Basel have enough hotels to accommodate all the delegates?

Yes. Basel Tourism has reserved 2,000 hotel rooms for participants of the meeting in and around Basel with 1,600 rooms in the city itself and a further 400 in the region. All hotels are located in Switzerland.

How much will the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting cost in total and who is covering the expenses?

The Confederation earmarked a sum of CHF 10.77 million to hold the Ministerial Council meeting. The funds will be used for expenses relating to preparing, planning and organizing the event, mainly covering infrastructural and logistical measures and installations. Costs for security measures are not included in this sum.

On 28 August 2013, the Federal Council adopted a dispatch for Parliament on security measures to be taken at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting (please also refer to the press release at www.news.admin.ch/message/index.html?lang=en&msg-id=49999). Expenses for the security measures at this major political event will total CHF 7.4 million, with the Confederation covering CHF 5.4 million and the canton of Basel-Stadt CHF 2 million.

The National Council passed the bill on 27 November 2013. The Council of States will make a decision on security measures to be taken at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in the spring 2014 parliamentary session.