



CONTENT

Ambassador's Foreword (p. 2)

Economy (p. 3):

- Conference on the EFTA-Georgia free trade agreement
- Georgia and Switzerland sign an agreement on the protection of geographical indications and indications of source
- Stadler Rail AG to open a regional factory in Georgia

Development Cooperation (p. 4)

- SDC's Director General visits Georgia
- A new vision of decentralisation
- Opening of the first ever Museum of Photography and Multimedia

Culture (p. 5)

Consular Affairs (p. 6)

Other (p.6)

AMBASSADOR'S FOREWORD

Dear fellow citizens, partners and friends

In line with a well-established tradition, the Swiss National Day reception on 1st of August 2018 was a major annual landmark event – not only for the Swiss community in Georgia, but also for Swiss-Georgian relations and beyond. We counted more than 400 guests, including many high officials, who visibly enjoyed the party. In particular, we were honoured by the participation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of Economy and Sustainable Development, and of Reconciliation and Civic Equity. A significant media presence contributed to publicize the occasion, as illustrated by this article in “Georgia Today”: <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/11662>

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, most of which are members of the Georgian-Swiss Business Association (GSBA), our guests spent an exciting summer evening together; but our sponsors equally deserve praise for their valuable contributions to Georgia's economy.

Visit and like our Embassy's "[Happy Birthday Switzerland](#)" Album!

As we are more than half way through the year 2018, we can already anticipate an excellent “vintage” for Swiss-Georgian relations. In order to find out why, check our mid-year review of major activities, events and visits on the following pages.

More bilateral highlights are in view in the coming months. In particular, thanks to an initiative of the new president of GSBA, Georgia is set to be a guest of honour at this year's “Expovina”, Switzerland's leading wine fair. This will constitute a great opportunity to further strengthen the close ties between our countries.

In the meantime, I wish you a pleasant summer break!

Kind regards

Lukas Beglinger

Conference on the EFTA-Georgia free trade agreement



The EFTA-Georgia free trade agreement that entered into force on 1st May, 2018, will have a considerable impact on bilateral trade between Georgia and the EFTA member countries (Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Iceland).

The EFTA Secretariat, the Georgian Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, the Georgian-Swiss Business Association (GSBA) and the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia organized a conference in Tbilisi on 7 June, 2018. The conference

brought together experts from EFTA countries and representatives of the private and public sector of Georgia.

More on the conference is available [here](#).

For an overview of the programme and keynote presenters, click [here](#).

[Conference Photos](#)

Georgia and Switzerland sign an agreement on the protection of geographical indications and indications of source



Signed on 31 May, 2018, in Bern, the bilateral Agreement on the protection of geographical indications and indications of source is yet another evidence of the dynamic bilateral relations between Switzerland and Georgia.

The agreement protects important geographical indications and indications of source from both countries. For Switzerland, it covers indications such as Emmentaler, Gruyère, Swiss chocolate and Swiss watches. The designation Switzerland, the Swiss cross and the names of the Swiss cantons are also protected. For Georgia, the agreement includes designations for specialties such as Kakheti (wine), Sulguni and Borjomi.

For more information, read our [article](#).

Stadler Rail AG to open a maintenance and production facility in Georgia



In February 2018, Mr. Peter Spuhler, Chairman of the Board of Stadler Rail AG, accompanied by Ambassador Lukas Beglinger, met with then Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze to announce his intention to establish a maintenance and production facility for rolling stock in the vicinity of Tbilisi. The intention was

recently sealed through an agreement between Stadler Rail, Georgian Railway and Tbilisi City Hall. The agreement marks the beginning of negotiations about another Swiss investment in Georgia that will offer job opportunities and contribute to economic growth.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

SDC's Director General visits Georgia



The Swiss Cooperation Office hosted in May the visit of Manuel Sager, Director General of the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency. The Swiss delegation comprising H.E. Lukas Beglinger, Swiss Ambassador to Georgia, Olivier Bürki, Regional Director of Cooperation, and Claudio Tognola, Head of SDC's Eurasian Department, met with the Georgian Minister of Education and Science and with the First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Environment Protection to explore the perspectives

of cooperation within the SDC-funded programs. The working visit included field meetings with implementing partners - UNDP, UN FAO, and Mercy Corps.

For more information about the visit, please check our [website](#).
[Photo Gallery](#).

A new vision of decentralisation



On 5 March, the Government and Parliament of Georgia presented a new vision of decentralization and local self-governance. The ambitious undertaking envisages fiscal decentralization and a delegation of competences that go hand in hand with raising professional capacity of local civil servants.

“Let me emphasize that Georgia can count on Switzerland’s continued help in its endeavor to build up credible, competent, accountable, transparent and results-oriented local self-governments which are also able to effectively support local economic

development,” Ambassador Lukas Beglinger pointed out as he referred to Switzerland’s support since 2012.

The presentation was well attended by representatives of the public sector, civil society and media.

Opening of the first ever Museum of Photography and Multimedia



Soon, Tbilisi will have its own first ever Museum of Photography and Multimedia. The Museum will house a wide collection of multimedia projects accumulated over 10 years of the Tbilisi Photo Festival. For the interim, an agreement on allocation of a space at the Stamba premises was signed between the Photography and Multimedia Museum and the Stamba hotel of the Ajara Group on 31 May.

The Museum opening is part of a larger regional Swiss-sponsored Arts and Culture Programme.

More on this on [Georgia Today](#).

Francophonie

Like in previous years, the Embassy joined the celebration of Francophonie and the month of the German Language.

The launch of Francophonie 2018 was traditionally marked by a press conference where the Ambassadors of Switzerland, France and Romania presented to the media the diverse programs of the respective Embassies. The Swiss program included a video competition that challenged school children to identify similarities between Georgia and Switzerland. If you have not yet watched the best video clip, here is the [link](#).

The program included the presentation of the translation of Daniel Maggetti's "La Veuve à l'enfant" and the screening of the animated movie "Ma vie de Courgette". The latter turned out to be compelling to kids and parents alike. The Embassy extended its programme reaching out to the villages and the town of Kutaisi, where the French language is highly regarded. The Deputy Head of the Mission met with professors and students of the Kutaisi State University's French language faculty, attended performances at secondary schools and concluded a busy day with the movie screening. The visit and welcome exceeded expectations leaving the audience overwhelmed with positive emotions.

Photo Gallery: Alvaro Borghi, Deputy Head of the Mission, gives [a lecture on Swiss federalism](#).

Photo Gallery: [Swiss souvenirs went like hot cakes](#).

A highlight of the 2018 Francophonie Festival was the wine tasting event hosted by the Ambassadors of Switzerland and France at the Swiss Residence in Tbilisi. This year, some distinguished wine producers, who specialize in wines made from native grape varieties, introduced to the invited guests a number of **Qvevri-style wines produced in Georgia, France and Switzerland**. On this occasion, the Swiss wine producer Amédée Mathier presented his experience in producing Qvevri-style wines in Valais, Switzerland. The honorary guests, including the Georgian Minister of Agriculture and Environment, Ambassadors, international wine experts and sommeliers, enjoyed a unique opportunity to taste some premium wines based on traditional Georgian technology.

Photo Gallery: [Wine tasting event](#).

Month of the German language

The Month of the German language was equally diverse and intense in terms of the program. This year, the opening was particularly creative, marked by the performance of the prominent Swiss artist Alexandra Prusa in the music-theater show "Abrazo – Tango of Survival". The story of a young Swiss girl migrating to Buenos Aires and her struggle to survive resonated well with Georgia's current migration challenges. More on this [here](#) and [here](#).

Another significant event was the presentation of the Georgian translation of Max Frisch's novel "Stiller". The former Minister of Foreign Affairs and translator Maia Panjikidze talked about the complexity of the text, while her sister, a psychologist and co-host of the evening, analysed the complexity of the main character of "Stiller".

The pictures captured key moments from the evening, spare some time to look at them. [Photo Gallery](#).

The Swiss embassy also co-organized two quiz events, with questions about Switzerland and the other German-speaking countries. A joint closing event took place on 17th June on the occasion of two World Cup games played by Germany and Switzerland.

CONSULAR

If you are a Swiss citizen living abroad, you might be interested that 96th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place on 10–12 August 2018 in Visp.

You will find more information [here](#).

OTHER

Constructive Journalism

Access to information is a basic human right and corollary to media freedom. While media in Georgia are free and so is access to information, the question remains what kind of information the population receives. Many European news corporations turned to a more constructive, solution-oriented reporting. In support of a “solution reporting”, the Embassy of Switzerland offered to the national TV stations a two-day specially crafted course on constructive journalism which was conducted by BBC and Al-Jazeera journalists. 15 newsroom journalists from all national TV companies participated in the training.

Read the article [here](#).

GCSP Alumni Network

The Embassy of Switzerland hosted the inauguration of the GCSP (Geneva Centre for Security Policy) Alumni Network. Georgian alumni joined the international network only recently and we wish them all the best and success!

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