

# I N F O L E T T E R 2 0 1 6



Joyeux Noël, Frohe Weihnachten, Buon Natale, Bella Festa daz Natal!

## Dear Compatriots,

Another eventful year draws to its end, and we are happy to give you this overview with the 2nd Infoletter from your team at the Embassy of Switzerland. Please visit also our website [www.eda.admin.ch/armenia](http://www.eda.admin.ch/armenia) and leave your likes and comments on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/embassyofswitzerlandinarmenia/>

2016 has been very diverse for Switzerland in Armenia: On a very positive vein, this year has been marked by intensifying relations between our countries on various fields. On the other hand, it was also been a year of letting-go and saying farewell to two beloved members of our community.

The Swiss community in Armenia has developed, with new arrivals and others moving on to new horizons. However small it may still be, Switzerland in Armenia is dynamic, and looks positively into a common future.

As a sign of Armenia moving on to realize its enormous potential and standing on its own feet, Switzerland has closed its long-standing Humanitarian aid program, which reached back to the earthquake in 1988 and lasted full 28 years.

Dear fellow Swiss nationals, I would like to thank you for your precious support and valued cooperation. May this Christmas be a time of joy and recollection, and 2017 bring to all of you peace and happiness.

## Lukas Gasser

*Ambassador of Switzerland to Armenia*



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia**

## Switzerland and Armenia sign visa facilitation agreement

During their meeting in Geneva on February 29, 2016, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter and RA Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian signed a bilateral Visa facilitation agreement. The agreement, which entered into force in August 2016, provides for numerous facilitations in the Swiss visa regime for Armenian nationals. The Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Yerevan will continue to issue Swiss Schengen visas for Armenian nationals and persons residing in the Republic of Armenia.



Agreement eases visa requirements for Switzerland



Parliamentary diplomacy – an important asset in our relations

## Deputy Speaker of Switzerland visits Armenia

Parliamentary diplomacy between Armenia and Switzerland is ever intensifying. Dominique de Buman, who most probably will be the President of the Swiss General Assembly (Parliament) in 2018, visited Armenia in June 2016, when he met with Minister of Economy Artsvik Minasyan and his counterparts in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. Dominique de Buman is also the President of the Swiss-Armenian Parliamentary Friendship Group.



## Swiss Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) – an opportunity for Armenian exports

Minister of Economy Artsvik Minasyan and Ambassador Lukas Gasser on May 20, 2016, jointly organized the first workshop on the Swiss GSP in Armenia. Armenian manufacturing, commodities and agricultural products are still little known in Switzerland. On the other hands, few producers in Armenia know that their goods can be sold in Switzerland on a more advantageous basis, thanks to the facilitations of the Swiss GSP system. The event was attended by many Armenian companies and, not least thanks to this better perspective, Armenia's exports to Switzerland have already increased by more than 50% in the current year.

Increased trade thanks to Swiss GSP

## Armenia better prepared for Nano safety

Switzerland concluded a series on workshops on the safety of Nanotechnology in Yerevan on July 29, 2016. This workshop was organized with the special expertise of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and brought together leading Armenian specialists in the field of nanotechnology. Ambassador Lukas Gasser and RA Deputy Minister for Nature Protection Simon Papyan opened this productive meeting. By implementing a Nano safety roadmap, Armenia can play a leading role in the region and on the international stage.



The Ambassador Lukas Gasser with the participants of the workshop

## 725 years of independence

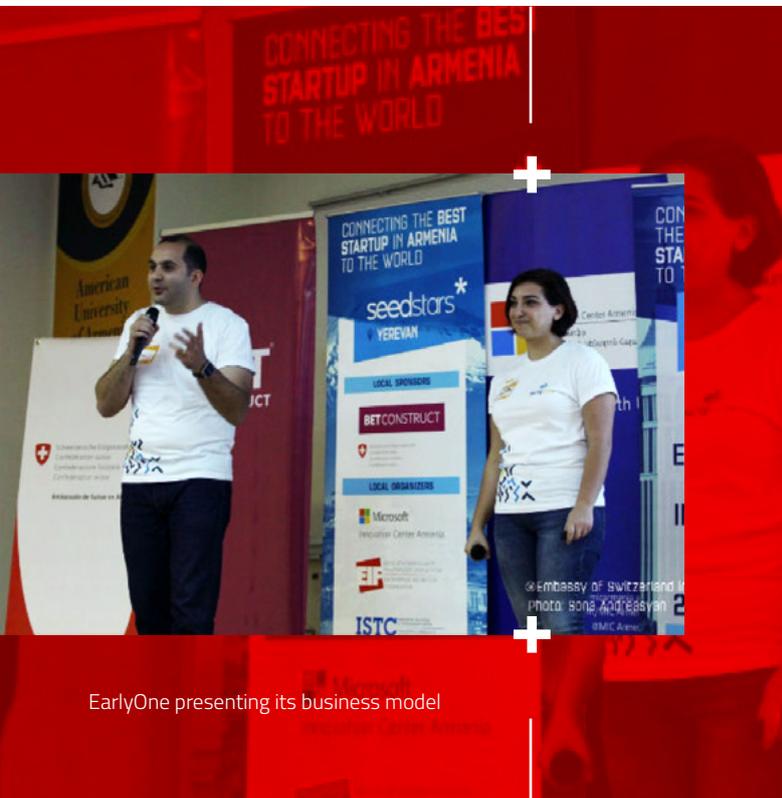
This year, our independence day was celebrated on the very date of the commemoration: 1st August. The weather turned out to be quite Swiss for this occasion – the right environment for enjoying the excellent Raclette brought directly from Switzerland. Despite the peaking summer break, 250 distinguished guests graced this beautiful gathering



The team of the Embassy at the National Day celebrations

## Seedstars World 2016 competition: "And the winner is: EarlyOne!"

For the third time in Armenia the Embassy of Switzerland partnered with Geneva-based Seedstars World for the local startup competition. The event was held on June 25, 2016. Seedstars World is an exclusive startup supporting network. The ten best startups from Armenia were invited to pitch in front of an investment panel. This year's winner EarlyOne has devised a queuing system to help its users save precious time instead of wasting it while standing in lines. Good luck to EarlyOne at the global Seedstars Summit in 2017 in Switzerland!



EarlyOne presenting its business model

## New Embassy team member

Angela Khachatryan is our new colleague as the Embassy Head of Finance and Administration since June 2016. A repatriate to Armenia, she took over from Gor Galstyan, who left us for the Pacific rim, after a much appreciated tenure at the Swiss representation. Young Armenian mobility! Welcome to Angela and thanks already for an amazing flying start!



Angela Khachatryan



Marriott's long-standing chef de cuisine:  
Rolf Graber

## The last farewell to two unforgettable community members

2016 brought us the sad and unexpectedly premature departures of two most estimated members of our small community. Toros Sagherian passed away in 4th of March, 2016 and Rolf Graber in 13th of July, 2016. Toros Sagherian had retired in Armenia after a long and distinguished career in jewelry in Switzerland. For many years, Rolf Graber was the Armenia Marriott's chef de cuisine. We miss both of them and will remember them for what they were: excellent friends, great helpers and exquisite professionals.

## Fête de la Francophonie 2016

The traditional French culture fest in Armenia took place with a varied Swiss program. Swiss writer Raphaël Aubert visited Armenia for the first time and presented his novels in Yerevan and Gyumri on April 5 and 8. Aubert's books bring the flavor of the big world to Armenia, a country which has won over one more personality of Swiss culture.

Raphaël Aubert reads at KASA  
Espaces Youth Centre, Yerevan



Much of the rest of our Francophonie 2016 contribution in Armenia was dedicated to urbanism, architecture and visual arts. The National University of Architecture and Construction teamed up with the Embassy to explore the early contacts of Le Corbusier with Armenian architects of Iran and the Soviet Union. The ramifications of modern architecture throughout Europe and the Middle East were discussed by Prof. Armen Minassian on April 22nd. His lecture presented the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (C.I.A.M.), an influential movement which originated in Switzerland in the late twenties of the 20th century.



Prof. Armen Minassian

A conference on the technological, economic and social aspects of how to make a city "smart" was held in teamwork with Impact Hub Yerevan on April 15. Experts and practitioners from Switzerland and France explained how urban services are improved in their cities thanks to information and communication technology. Yerevan, Vanadzor, Kapan or Dilijan? The potential is all here!



The Swiss way of making cities smart

Architecture also figured prominently in the movie "Le paysage intérieur", which relates the fascinating story about how one of the most futuristic and innovative buildings in today's Switzerland was realized. The Rolex Learning Center at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) was designed and built by the Japanese architecture firm SANAA. Architecture and design aficionados were present at the movie screening at TUMO and Mirzoyan Library on March 24 and 31.



The Francophonie programme closed on May 3 with Swiss Artist Felice Varini's documentary exhibition at Hay Art Gallery. 15 large-scale artistic photos documented the artist's installations in cities and places around the world. Felice Varini explained his artistic concept and technique during two captivating presentations at TUMO and Mirzoyan library on May 2 and 4. The exhibition at Hay Art Gallery was also graced by the presence of RA Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan. The Embassy is presently working to bring Felice Varini for a large-scale installation to Yerevan in 2017.



Quinze points de vue – Felice Varini

## “Hovnan” – Muscular theatre with Swiss scenography

Armenian-Swiss artist Viktoria Riedo studied scenography at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHDK). In one of her first productions after returning to Armenia, she collaborated with local artists to stage “Hovnan”. Jonas' travails from the Old Testament were set for the stage by playwright and director Narine Grigoryan and performed at the Yerevan State Puppet Theatre during the months of March and April. Riedo's scenography provided the stringy setting for the performance.

## First Armenian-Turkish literary contest

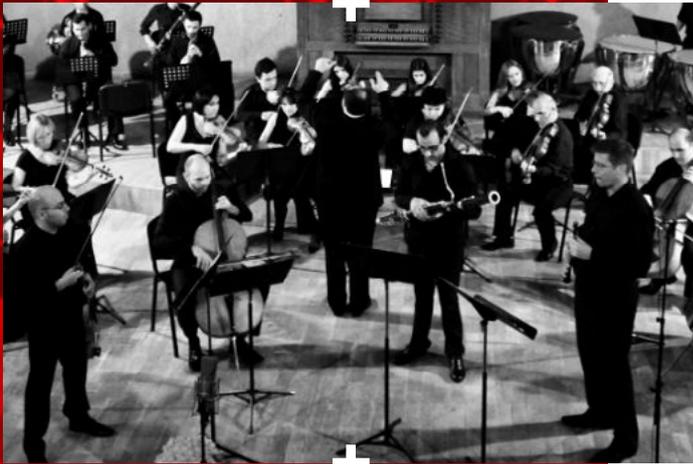
Metin Arditi, who visited Armenia as a writer in 2015, endowed the first Armenian-Turkish literary contest. Two young students meet at Geneva University ten years from now. One is a Turk, the other Armenian. What are they talking about, how are their relations developing, what happens between them? This was the initial situation which nearly two hundred young participants from Turkey and Armenia had to develop in a highly innovative literary contest between five universities from the two countries. The final and awarding ceremony took place at the American University of Armenia on June 30. The winning stories came from Ani Baghumyan from Yerevan and Baki Karakaya from Istanbul.



Metin Arditi congratulating the Armenian winner, Ani Baghumyan

## Young Swiss Musicians in Armenia

Cellist Lukas Raaflaub, pianist François-Xavier Poizat, oboe player Edmund Worsfold Vidal and violinist Mikayel Zakaryan, all of these young Swiss musicians were invited to perform in Yerevan with National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia conducted by Vahan Martirosyan. The concert on June 30 took place at the Komitas Chamber Music Hall in Yerevan and presented masterpieces of Haydn, Mozart and Bach.



Young Swiss Musicians in Armenia

## Josette Tamarcaz exhibition at Yerevan Modern Art Museum

"Déracinés" (uprooted) was the title of Valais artist Josette Tamarcaz exhibition which opened on September 1 at the Yerevan Modern Art Museum. "Déracinés" is the portrait of the family history of Hrant Margaryan. The empathic installation was set in ochre, yellow, brown and red tones so typical of the Armenian landscape. Hrant Margaryan, whose family fell victim to the Genocide, was also present at the exhibition opening.



## The concerto for cello of Othmar Schoeck for the first time in Armenia

The Armenian National Chamber Orchestra invited us on the 29th of September 2016 to a musical evening dedicated to the Swiss composer Othmar Schoeck. On this occasion, the world renowned Ukrainian-Swiss violoncellist Alexander Kaganovsky was especially invited to play Schoeck's concerto for cello (op. 61) for the first time in Armenia. For the first part, Mendelssohn's double concerto in D minor for violin and piano was played by the Chamber Orchestra, accompanied by the soloists Astghik Vardanyan (violin) and Vahan Mardirossian (conductor and pianist).



Alexander Kaganovsky, Vahan Mardirossian,  
29 Septembre, 2016

## "Heidi" the book and "Heidi" the movie

Sharing languages with your neighbours is also a cultural commitment. This year, the Embassies of the German-speaking countries celebrated their language in Armenia for the first time. Switzerland's contribution to the first German Language days in Armenia was doubly "Heidi". Johanna Spyri's world-famous novel was translated for the first time into Armenian and published by Zangak. The Embassy organized a series of readings by translator Liana Safaryan in Yerevan (Goethe-Institut, October 2), Gyumri (Berlin Art Hotel, 4 November 2016) and Chambarak (November 22). Swiss director Alain Gsponer's award-winning movie was presented in the Swiss-German original with subtitles in Armenian during the book presentations. Additional screenings took place on October 2 at the German Embassy, on November 17 in Koti (Tavush province) and at the Cinema City in Yerevan on December 22.

## Settimana della lingua italiana 2016 presents Mendrisio Academy of Architecture

Next to German and French, another world language we share with our neighbours is, of course Italian. The "Settimana della lingua italiana" is celebrated worldwide in October, and this year, the Embassy of Switzerland was given the opportunity to present the world-class architecture originating in Ticino during the last five decades in Armenia. Swiss architect Julien Kisa held two lectures about his Alma Mater Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio and on the Ticino school of architecture which was made known around the world by Mario Botta, Livio Vacchini, Luigi Snozzi and Aurelio Galfetti at Brjusov University (October 21) and at the Alexander Tamanyan National Museum-Institute of Architecture (October 22) in Yerevan.



## “There Will Be no Slow Motion or Still Life” – Silas Heizmann continues artist-in-residence programme

The second part of the artist-in-residence programme funded by the Christoph Merian Foundation, KulturDialog and the Embassy saw young Swiss artist Silas Heizmann creating in Yerevan from July until December. On November 29, Silas Heizmann presented at NPAK Art Centre his most intriguing video installations providing an artistic impression of the July 2016 standoff in Yerevan. The title is taken from a song by American rap precursor Gil Scott-Heron. We look forward to the continuation of this artistic exchange programme in 2017.

## Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler (1707-1789) at last available in Armenian

Ankyunacar publishing took the initiative to translate the first serious endeavour to popularize science. Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler’s “Letters to a German Princess” were published and presented at the Fizmat School in Yerevan on November 30 by Khachik Grigoryan, owner of Ankyunacar and translator of the book. Fizmat’s students not only showed their talent at mathematics, but surprised the guests with a baroque costume staging of Euler’s correspondence with the Princess. Copies of the book were donated by the Embassy to eight more schools across Armenia.



A baroque setting for popular science



## Barseghyan exhibit marks completion of 28 years' Swiss humanitarian action in Armenia

Since the earthquake of 1988, the Swiss Confederation has assisted Armenia with an extensive humanitarian aid programme. After 28 years, with the establishing of full response capacities to react effectively in case of disasters, this programme has reached its successful completion.

With a solid basis created by the Swiss contribution, the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations successfully passed the United Nations' INSARAG external classification in 2015. Armenian rescue capacity now stands on its own feet, local rescue forces can be deployed abroad, assisting people wherever disaster help is needed.

"Armenia today is a better country than it was 25 - 20 - 15 years ago. Switzerland is proud to have been and still be Armenia's partner on that way of progress." said Ambassador Lukas Gasser during the completion ceremony in Yerevan on 5 December 2016.

To mark this important moment, the Embassy of Switzerland and the Swiss Cooperation Office of the South Caucasus invited all stakeholders to an exhibition of Karen Barseghyan's paintings. This talented painter and his family had been affected by the earthquake.

## The best municipal eSolution

During 2016, seven more citizen offices opened throughout Armenia, offering all municipal services in a „one-stop-shop“, and thereby simplifying access of citizens to public services. The Municipal Management and Information System (MMIS) used by all these offices won „The best regional municipal eSolution“ award in the Regional Cyber Security and Innovation Conference in Tbilisi.



## Farm Service Centre Opens in Meghri

In June, 2016 a new Farm Service Centre opened in Meghri, in the southernmost region of Armenia. The new Center will support the development of the agricultural sector in the region and will promote advanced techniques and practices in farm business. It will serve more than 1800 local farmers from 13 communities. Visit [Ishkhan's Fruit Garden](#) to learn more about the „Markets for Meghri“ project.



## Agricultural Investment Guide

A new agricultural investment guide has been developed by the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia with the support of SDC. It gives an overview of all branches of Armenian agriculture from fruit growing to animal breeding and describes perspectives for investors. View guide [here](#).

## Armenian Youth Competes for Social Innovation Grants

The SDC-funded "Women in Local Democracy" project gathered young people and experts in Jermuk to develop their creative community development ideas into real projects. As a result, #ConnectZaritap – a tool for encouraging women and residents' engagement in decision-making in the enlarged Zaritap community, "The Dialogue Park" project in Sisian, and B`Comm mobile app for engaging youth in decision-making won funds for implementation.

See also "**I am the Community**".



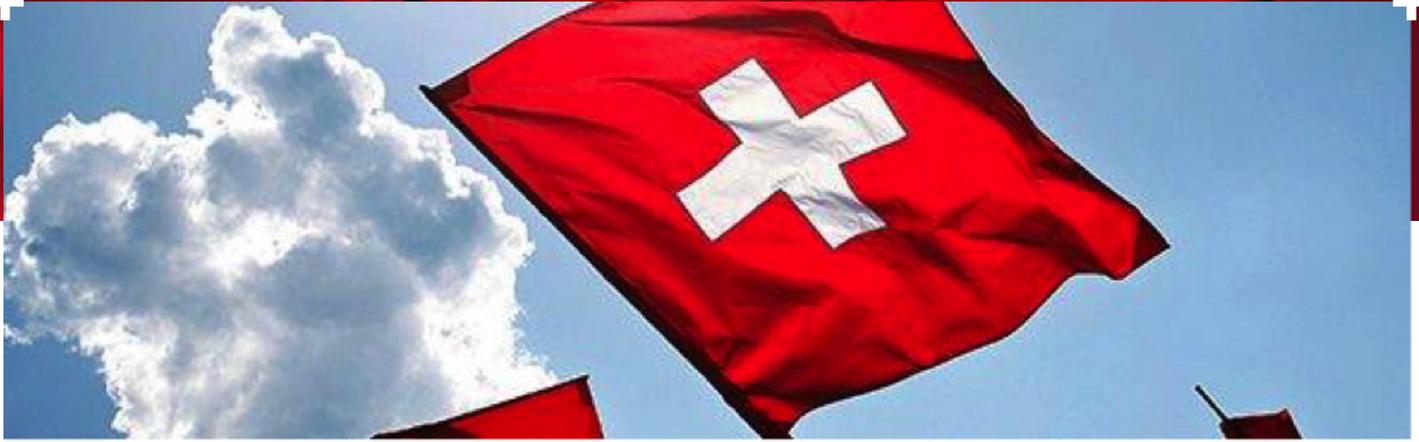
## Development Mosaics

"Development Mosaics" is a film about the lives of farmers in beautiful but remote Syunik Marz of Armenia. It illustrates more than a decade of support of the SDC-financed „Livestock Development" project to farmers and service providers in improving milk and meat production, veterinary services, animal breeding, and a lot more. Watch the **film**

## Armenia Fights Brucellosis

A Swiss Veterinary project developed the first strategy to fight and prevent animals from brucellosis. Brucellosis is an animal disease, which is transferred from animals to humans through infected milk and meat. Every year it causes lots of damage to human health as well as economic losses. As a result of this pilot project, all livestock in the region of Syunik has been vaccinated against the disease and the capacity of the relevant veterinary structures to fight brucellosis has increased.





## New: Online desk for Swiss nationals residing abroad

It is our pleasure to inform you that the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is providing Swiss nationals residing abroad with an online desk for consular services **as of now**.

With the online desk you can enter your own data yourself at any time or place. You can also view your data at any time, order consular services and pay for them by credit card via ePayment.

The desk can be accessed on the FDFA website **[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)** under 'Online desk' and on the websites of the Swiss representations.

You can register with the online desk in two ways that ensure protection of client data:

a) Two-factor-authentication via SMS to a mobile telephone number

b) SuisseID

You can register with a digital identity card.

Information on Suisse ID is available on **[www.suisseid.ch](http://www.suisseid.ch)**

The online desk has a responsive web design and can be used with a PC and all mobile devices (laptops, tablets and smartphones).

We plan to expand the services offered via the online desk on a ongoing basis and hope that with this innovation Swiss nationals residing abroad will be able to communicate even more easily with the Swiss representations abroad.

If you have any questions concerning the online desk, please contact the representation responsible for you.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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**Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia**