

Newsletter

of the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom

June 2010

Introduction

Farewell message from Ambassador Alexis P. Lautenberg

It is said that “to everything there is a season,” and after many springs, summers, autumns and winters spent here at the Swiss Embassy in London it is now time for this Ambassador to bid farewell.

“I will be leaving after six memorable years during which time it has been my privilege to travel the length and breadth of the United Kingdom and meet the extraordinarily diverse and dynamic Swiss communities who live here.

The bond between Switzerland and the UK is deep, long-lasting and greatly valued on both sides. Thanks in no small part to the valuable work of the many Swiss clubs and societies based here, I can leave my post confident in the knowledge that the ties that bind us will only strengthen in the years to come.

For this, I offer you all my thanks, respect and admiration.

I am leaving at a time when change is in the air all around us. The UK is coming to terms with its first coalition government for a long time. In Switzerland, such power-sharing is the cornerstone of our political stability and we have seen how British politicians, academics and journalists are ever more interested in our system of government.

This is just one example of how dialogue between two countries can lead to stimulating and profitable solutions for both sides. The Embassy has been at the forefront of such undertakings – from our “Positive Agenda” on financial matters, to thought-provoking seminars on transport, environmental policy and sustainable development.

This dialogue will of course remain in place when my successor **Anton Thalmann** takes up his post. Indeed, continuity and change are two sides of the same coin, especially as Anton is concerned, as his father Ernesto served in the very same post from 1976 to 1979! So you can rest assured that the new Ambassador already has a great familiarity with this country and the importance of Swiss-British relations.

Gabrielle and I, meanwhile, will be leaving these shores with many wonderful



www.swissembassy.org.uk

www.swissworld.org



Switzerland.

memories. Britain's Victorian Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli wrote that "London is a roost for any bird," and we have been most fortunate to have found a splendid roost here, surrounded by all the vibrancy of this great city but also sustained by the support of the Swiss community.

Britain is of course no longer really an island thanks to the miracles of modern transport and engineering. So I am sure that we need not bid "adieu" but rather "au revoir" – or, in the words of Vera Lynn's famous song, "we'll meet again".

Consular Information

Important passport information

Since 1 March 2010 the Embassy of Switzerland has issued biometric passports (Model 10) only, containing one picture of the face and two digital fingerprints which are electronically registered. The Swiss Parliament took this decision during the summer session 2008.

This means that applicants for a biometric passport have to come to the Embassy in London to have their picture, signature and fingerprints taken. The data in the passport is based on the data recorded in the Swiss civil registers.

Before submitting an application for a biometric passport, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the civil status is registered and processed well in advance in order to avoid inconvenient delays in the issuing of a new passport. Updating personal data entries in Swiss civil registers may take several months.

As of 1 March 2010 it is mandatory for all Swiss nationals wishing to apply for a Swiss passport and/or identity card to make an appointment prior to visiting the Embassy. This can be done [online](#) or, alternatively, by ringing the Embassy on 020 7616 6000, ext. 6. All applicants must appear in person. At present it can take up to six weeks to get an appointment.

Payments for the new Swiss document can only be made in cash or by cheque (no credit/debit cards are accepted). Moreover for children, both parents must give their written consent to the issuing of the new document. If only one of the parents has parental responsibility for the child, the original court order must be



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brought to the appointment.

Please note that current passports 03 (machine readable) or 06 (biometric) remain valid until their expiry date. However, please be aware that entry regulations may vary from country to country.

For more information regarding the new biometric passport please visit the website of the Federal Department of Justice and Police: www.schweizerpass.ch (dt / fr / it)

Advice for Swiss Abroad

We would like to draw your attention to the “**Ratgeber für Auslandschweizer / Aide-mémoire pour les Suisses de l'étranger / Guida per gli Svizzeri all'estero**“. The publication – published by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Berne - is available in [French](#), [German](#) and [Italian](#) as a download or in print.

Orders

Online: www.bundespublikationen.ch

Tel.: + 41 (0)31 322 31 53

Price: free

Staff Changes

At the end of August **Denis Charrière**, Head of the Public Diplomacy and Culture Section, will be leaving London for Paris where he will take over a similar position. He writes:

“With the extraordinary developments in recent decades, the UK as a whole has become a magnet for artists of all nations and all fields of activity. The many festivals and local events, community projects and urban developments have become platforms for cultural exchange with a resonance well beyond the metropolis of London. So it was a great pleasure for me to work with our British and Swiss partners from public and private backgrounds over these past four years to promote the Swiss cultural scene within this very favourable context.



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My thanks go to all those who, through their support, their expertise and their dynamism, were instrumental in this process, and of course to the artists for their inspiring and exhilarating work throughout a series of magnificent projects.

Here in the UK the Embassy can rely on a unique tool, the Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain, to assist it in its cultural activities, and I would like to invite everyone who might be interested in helping us to pursue this exciting adventure to visit our website www.scfb.org.uk.”

Franziska Heimgartner Trilling spent six years in Berlin as Swiss Cultural Attachée, and four years in Madrid working in the cultural field. She is currently responsible for cultural projects with foreign policy implications at the Centre for Cultural Foreign Policy at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Berne. In September she will join the Embassy with responsibility for its cultural policy.



Also joining the Embassy in the autumn will be **Susanne Hemund**. As Head of the Consular and Visa Service she will be responsible for the 28,000 Swiss nationals resident in the UK. She is currently Head of Chancery at the Swiss Consulate General in Mumbai.



She will take over from **Ruth Zumbühl** who will be leaving London in the autumn after four years to take up her new position as Head of Chancery at the Swiss Embassy in Teheran.

We would like to thank the following members of staff who are also leaving the Embassy, and to wish them all the best for the future: **Max Schnellmann**, Counsellor Economic Affairs and Commodities; **Sylvianne Maudonnet**, Vice Consul; **Rudolf Hösli**, Vice Consul; **Barbara Tschann**, PA to the Deputy Head of Mission, and **Claudia Häberli**, PA to the Defence Attaché.

Embassy Highlights - Upcoming



1 July 2010

Swiss Architecture & Design Event: "A Swiss-UK Dialogue"

The [Swiss Business Hub UK](#) will be hosting a high-level afternoon seminar which will explore the benefits of Swiss sustainable architecture, design and products and potential opportunities in the UK. Leading Swiss architects and product manufacturers will speak on cutting edge architectural design and innovative products, while Swiss sustainable development standards relating to energy conservation will be explained. This afternoon seminar will conclude with a discussion which will look at the lessons to be learned by both sides, from experiences in the field of sustainable architecture & design. The seminar will be followed by a networking reception linked to the launch of the [Holcim Foundation Sustainability Awards](#).



17 July 2010

1st August – Swiss National Day

Join the Swiss Community in London and its friends to celebrate the Swiss national day with food, music, activities for children, tombola and much more.

www.swissnationalday.co.uk



© Swiss Air Force

17 and 18 July 2010

Patrouille Suisse at the Royal International Air Tattoo

Switzerland's daredevil aerobatic team, the Patrouille Suisse, will reach for the skies at the annual Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, on 17 and 18 July 2010. The elite display team will be one of the highlights at Fairford, which is the world's largest military airshow and enjoys a well-earned reputation as one of the UK's top outdoor family events.

www.airtattoo.com/airshow



Photo by Marco Borggreve

26 – 28 October 2010

Swiss Ambassador's Award Concert

This year's Swiss Ambassador's Award Concert - organized by the [Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain](#) and the Embassy in collaboration with the Swiss Consulates – will go on tour with [Francesco Piemontesi](#), an acclaimed young pianist from Switzerland. Piemontesi first came to international prominence as a prize winner in the 2007 Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels and has since performed at many of the world's most prestigious concert halls and festivals. In 2009, he received a Fellowship from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, and was also selected as a BBC New Generation Artist.

Venues: Wigmore Hall, **London**; Manchester Cathedral, **Manchester**; St Cecilia's Hall, **Edinburgh** / Tickets: www.scfb.org.uk/tickets

Embassy Highlights – Recent Events

Mayor of Zürich attends launch of urban sustainability report

“Cities are tangible laboratories for sustainable innovation”. This was the message that the Mayor of Zürich, **Corine Mauch**, shared with experts from Switzerland and the UK at a high-level conference on Thursday 17 June focused on urban sustainability.

Mauch shared a platform with **Sir Simon Milton**, Deputy Mayor of London, who also stressed the importance that sustainability and energy efficiency plays in the capital's strategic planning. “Be lean, be clean, be green,” was his message as cities across the globe evaluate strategies to cope with climate change and make best use of energy and natural resources.

The conference, “Innovative Solutions Towards Sustainable Urban Development: Visions from Switzerland and the UK” was organised by the Embassy of Switzerland in the United Kingdom and opened by **Ambassador Alexis P. Lautenberg**.



© Swiss Embassy

Corine Mauch and Sir Simon Milton

“Switzerland is, contrary to the general perception abroad, a highly urbanised nation,” he said. Thus Switzerland and the UK have a lot to learn from each other so both nations can achieve a sustainable model that protects the environment and secures urban wellbeing.

Panelists debated a wide range of topics under the overarching concept of urban sustainability – planning, transport, housing, architecture, regulation and the environmental and economic realities of climate change.

The conference also saw the launch of a special publication produced by the Embassy of Switzerland dedicated to investigating these issues through a Swiss-UK Dialogue.

[“Urban Sustainability – a Contradiction in Terms?”](#) brings together academics, experts, artists and philosophers to explore all aspects of urban development with the aim of fostering a sustainable future for all.

The closing of the conference coincided with the opening of the exhibition [“Exploring Swiss design, life and style”](#) at the A Foundation in London. The exhibition will be open to the public until 1 July 2010.

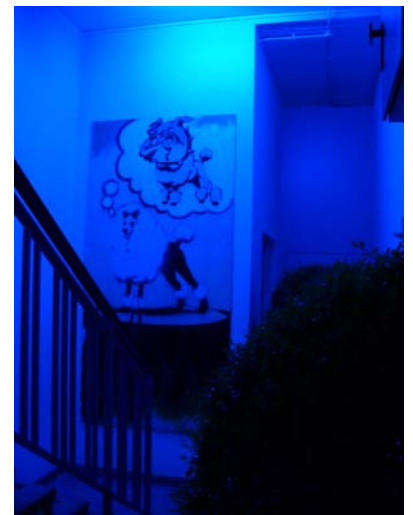
Switzerland and the Arts

Ambassador Lautenberg welcomed the great and the good of London’s art scene to his residence on 5 May for a high-level debate on Switzerland’s role in the art world, which also shed light on some of the more esoteric exhibits within the Embassy’s own collection.

The discussion on “Switzerland and the Arts” was chaired by Time Out art critic Ossian Ward. Debate focused on Switzerland’s cultural heritage and global reach, as well as its past, current and future role within the art world.

Panellists included Iwan Wirth, President of Hauser & Wirth; Marc Spiegler and Annette Schönholzer, Co-Directors of the internationally renowned Art Basel fair; Theodora Vischer, Museum Curator; artwork and artist agent Tim Steiner; and artist Elodie Pong.

Following the discussion, the Ambassador invited his guests to a rather unorthodox venue for a drinks reception - the garage! For this underground space is actually home to the Embassy’s most remarkable cultural artifacts in



© Swiss Embassy

the form of original graffiti artworks by the (in)famous Banksy.

The arresting images proved fascinating for the distinguished guests and showed that there really is “more than meets the eye” when it comes to Switzerland and the arts.

The event was supported by the [Swiss Cultural Fund in Britain](#) and the [Outset Contemporary Art Fund](#).

Swiss Pavilion at Ecobuild

From Alpine chalets to cutting-edge condos, timber housing is an integral part of the Swiss tradition for quality and durability and has long been an inspiration to builders who wanted to work in harmony with their environment. These age-old techniques have now been updated to make Switzerland a leader in timber technology designs in contemporary styles.

In March 2010, for the first time ever, five companies showcased their products at the “Swiss Pavilion” at Ecobuild, organised by [OSEC](#) in partnership with the [Swiss Business Hub UK](#). Visitors to the largest UK building & construction show had the opportunity to encounter a new range of products from sustainably managed forests.

For further information regarding the “Swiss Pavilion” at Ecobuild 2011 contact: sbhuk@lon.rep.admin.ch



SBHUK © FDFA:

Swiss Pavilion

Tax Round Table Discussion: “Cooperation in Tax Matters – State of Play in Europe”

Tax issues remain high on the political agenda and recent developments have seen Switzerland moving ahead to revise its double taxation agreements with a view to including exchange of tax information upon request in accordance with the 2005 OECD standards.

In order to clarify the general context as far as possible, eliminate doubts and answer questions with regard to this complex topic, the Embassy of Switzerland organised and held a second Tax Information Seminar for a select group of representatives of Family Offices and Accountancy and Law Firms with a Swiss



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Desk as a follow-up event to the successful Round Table Discussion held in July 2009. The programme in March included a brief introduction by Ambassador Lautenberg; presentations by Mr Jean Russotto, Steptoe & Johnson LLP, Brussels (EU developments); Mr Simon Airey, DLA Piper, Director, National Tax Investigations, London (UK developments); and Prof. Xavier Oberson, University of Geneva, Switzerland (Swiss perspective); and a Q&A discussion followed by conclusions by the Ambassador and a buffet lunch at the Residence.

There was wide interest in attending this Round Table and the feedback from the attendees during and after the event was excellent.

Swiss Alumni Events in the UK

The Embassy is working with various alumni organisations of Swiss universities who are establishing alumni chapters in the UK. The aim is to ensure good communication between the Embassy and Swiss university alumni and to identify joint activities where alumni could play a part in raising Switzerland's visibility as a country with excellent universities. In addition to existing associations from Swiss business schools (IMD, St Gallen), new alumni chapters of ETH Zurich, EPF Lausanne and the HEC at the University of Lausanne were set up in early 2010 and it is hoped that others may follow in due course.

Alumni of Swiss universities who are not part of an organised chapter are welcome to contact the Embassy's Science & Technology Attaché, [Dr Lutz-Peter Berg](#), to register their interest in alumni activities.



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ETHZ and EPFL alumni network in the Swiss Embassy at the launch of their UK chapters in February 2010

Keep in Touch

If you would like to be regularly informed about Embassy activities and Swiss-related events around the country, then please sign up to our web-based [ePLUS](#).

To find out about any upcoming Swiss events in the UK, please go to the [events calendar](#) on our website.

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