

Soirée Suisse

Swiss National Day 2023

15.06.2023, Garden of the Swiss Residence

Speech by the Ambassador of Switzerland, H.E. Stefan Estermann

Dear Deputy Minister

Dear Head of Protocol

Dear Greek Partners and Friends

Dear Swiss Compatriots

Excellencies and Colleagues

Good evening to everyone. Welcome to our Swiss Evening / soirée suisse, edition 2024 ! Willkommen, bienvenue, benvenuti, bainvegni, καλώς ήρθατε!

Με μεγάλη ευχαρίστηση γιορτάζουμε απόψε μαζί σας τη φιλία και τη συνεργασία μεταξύ της Ελβετίας και της Ελλάδας, εδώ στον κήπο μας. Χαίρομαι που βλέπω τόσους πολλούς από τους εξαιρετικούς εταίρους μας!

(It is a great pleasure to celebrate tonight together with you the friendship and cooperation between Switzerland and Greece, here in our garden. I am happy to see so many of our phantastic partners!)

Απόψε, γιορτάζουμε επίσης την Εθνική μας Γιορτή, την ίδρυση της ελβετικής κρατικής οντότητας την 1η Αυγούστου 1291, πριν από 733

χρόνια. Ακούστε τους εθνικούς ύμνους της Ελβετίας και της Ελλάδας, που ερμηνεύει η σοπράνο, Δάφνη Πανουργιά.

(Tonight, we are at the same time celebrating our National Day, the emergence of Swiss Statehood on 1 August 1291, 733 years ago. Please listen to the Swiss and Greek national anthems, performed by Daphne Panourgia, soprano.)

(National Anthems)

Ladies and Gentlemen

Swiss-Greek relations have developed in a very dynamic way over the past year. As one of the major investors, Switzerland remained loyal to Greece during the past crisis and our companies are now excited about the new, positive growth prospects. We made headway towards our goal of creating a Swiss-Hellenic Business Association.

We continued to be on the side of Greece to deal with the challenges of migration, implementing the Swiss-Greek Cooperation Programme in this area.

We recently celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the Swiss School for Archeology in Greece. It was them who discovered the Artemis Sanctuary in Evvia some years ago and they are now leading the excavations of this major site.

Among the many visitors we received, I would like to highlight the four-day visit of Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, our Minister for economic affairs, education and research last month, which was highly successful and gave an additional impetus to our relations.

We continue to have exciting cultural exchanges in a great variety of fields. Philhellenism continues to be a strong bond: We have celebrated the incredible history of the Spierer Family from Geneva in Northern Greece who saved thousands of lives during World War I. And a few weeks ago, I was invited to Korfu for the inauguration of a square named after the Swiss General Guillaume Henri Dufour, a civil engineer who contributed to the construction of the fortifications of Kerkyra and later became one of the founders of the ICRC.

Another subject is very close to my heart: Railway. We are working together with Greek partners to promote the idea of a step-by-step reactivation of the historic narrow-gauge railway on Peloponnese, bringing together Greek stakeholders and Swiss experts. The idea is to link the unique sites of Peloponnese by train to promote sustainable tourism and bringing a unique cultural heritage back to life. A beautiful vision, and we will give it a follow-up.

Thank you to all of our partners and supporters who helped us along the way. I can promise: There is much more in the pipeline, and I am excited to embrace the second half of my tenure here in Greece.

Dear Guests

This festive moment would not have been possible without the sponsors of today's evening. As leaders in quality and innovation, these companies represent the Swiss economy at its best. In alphabetical order:

- ABB SA Greece
- Accelleron / Turbocharging Greece
- Adecco Group Greece

- Curaprox / Swiss Premium Oral Care
- Emil Frey representing Mercedes Benz
- Heracles Group of Companies, a member of Holcim Group
- Korpí Mineral Water
- Mövenpick Ice Cream
- Nespresso Professional Coffee
- Roche Hellas
- Sika Hellas and
- Syngenta Hellas

Thank you to these wonderful partners and sponsors, all present here tonight.

I also would like to thank my phantastic and dedicated Embassy team who did a great job to organize this evening. And last but not least, I would like to say good-bye to my Deputy Marc Bruchez and his wife Luiza, who will leave Athens after five years to go to Warsaw in a few weeks. Marc and Luiza are an incredible couple and they have been of invaluable support. I wish them all the best.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

The buffet is now open. Don't forget to taste the Swiss wine at the drinks bar, the Swiss raclette, prepared in the tent over-there, the Swiss sausages (Bratwürste) from the grill in the back of the garden, the Ice Cream as well as Coffee at the two stands over-here.

Cheers, and have a wonderful evening!