



SWISS WITH US



NEWS & VIEWS

From the Embassy of Switzerland in the U.S.

October 2024

From the Ambassador's desk

Dear Friends of Switzerland,

It has been less than two months since I started my tenure as Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America and my welcome has been engaging and fruitful. This is a fascinating moment in American history and it is a true privilege to represent Switzerland's interests in the United States at this point in time.

Since early September, I have traveled to several states, spoken to countless members of the U.S. and Swiss communities, and reacclimated myself to my new home in Washington, D.C. A lot has changed since my last posting here in the early 2000s, but the kindness with which I was received here has remained the same.

I am sincerely looking forward to engaging with you all and highlight the positive impact that Switzerland has in the United States during my time here. In this newsletter, my colleagues and I would like to share some of our recent successful engagements with you. Since my arrival, I had the honor to meet with President Joseph R. Biden and presented my credentials to him. You can read more about our meeting below. We were also excited to welcome my colleague Ambassador Benedikt Wechsler, Head of the Digital Division at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, during his trip to Pennsylvania. Additionally, we have had positive engagements with our partners in the F-35 program, and engaged in a deep dive into the U.S. agricultural sector.

I am very proud of our ThinkSwiss scholarship program, which promotes research opportunities in Switzerland for North American students. For more information on how to apply for this scholarship, continue reading below. Lastly, Swiss culture and our four national languages are dear to my heart. In this newsletter, we provide an overview of film screenings we recently hosted in the D.C. area and showcase our activities promoting Italian language as part of *Settimana della lingua italiana*, the week of Italian language in the world.

This newsletter is an opportunity for me to share stories of the successful partnership between our two countries with you – but it is not a one-way street. I am looking forward to hearing your feedback in the replies. Thank you for your continued interest in Switzerland and for accompanying me on my journey as our new ambassador in Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,
Ralf Heckner



Dr. Ralf Heckner is the Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America.

Ambassador Heckner Meets President Biden

On Wednesday, September 18, 2024, Ambassador Ralf Heckner presented his diplomatic credentials to U.S. President Joseph R. Biden during a formal ceremony held in the White House. This event marked the official beginning of Ambassador Heckner's tenure as Switzerland's envoy to the United States of America. Ambassador Heckner expressed his gratitude for the strong and long-standing partnership between Switzerland and the United States and looks forward to further deepening and expanding the cooperation between both countries. Read more about the meeting and about Ambassador Heckner's career on [SWISS IMPACT](#).



Swiss Digital Ambassador Travels to Pittsburgh, PA

From September 25 to 27, Ambassador Benedikt Wechsler traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, on an invitation from the Carnegie Mellon Institute for Strategy & Technology (CMIST). Ambassador Wechsler is the Head of the Division for Digitalization (DIGI) at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. In Pittsburgh, he spoke at a panel discussion on the topic

Digital Diplomacy: Building Solidarity in Cyberspace” together with US Tech Ambassador Nate Fick and Costa Rican Minister Paula Bogantes Zamora.

In addition to the panel discussion, Ambassador Wechsler had a bilateral consultation with Ambassador Fick focused on the value and need for continuing cooperation on digital, cybersecurity, and tech issues as well as Switzerland’s role as a hub for international digital governance. Ambassador Wechsler also visited organizations from the Pittsburgh tech ecosystem that are global leaders, such as the National Robotics Engineering Center, to discuss common interests and identify opportunities for increased collaboration with Switzerland. He ended his trip with a short stint at Duolingo, the world’s largest language-learning app, which is based in Pittsburgh, and which has a Swiss co-founder, Severin Hacker, who is also the recent recipient of the [Swiss Impact Award 2024](#).



From left to right: Ambassador Benedikt Wechsler, Audrey Cronin (Director of the CMIST), Costa Rican Minister Paula Bogantes Zamora, and Ambassador Nate Fick.

ThinkSwiss & Fulbright Alumni Reception 2024

On October 4, the Embassy of Switzerland hosted its 2024 ThinkSwiss & Fulbright Alumni Reception. In addition to the ThinkSwiss and Fulbright network, the event also welcomed Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) postdoctoral fellows as well as Swiss professors and scientists based in the United States. Furthermore, and for the first time, the Science Section was delighted to welcome a group of administrators from Swiss universities of applied sciences and arts, who were embarking on a U.S. study tour in Washington D.C.

The [ThinkSwiss](#) scholarship aims to promote research opportunities in Switzerland for U.S. and Canadian students and to foster exchange between Swiss, U.S., and Canadian universities and research institutions. It offers a unique chance to gain valuable research experience in Switzerland for a period of two to three months in a broad variety of research fields. The call for applications for the 2025 scholarship is now open! Have a look at our [website](#) and [promotional video](#).



Consular Information

Reminder to Swiss citizens: Keep your contact details up to date.

Please provide your new e-mail address so that this Embassy can continue to keep you informed. Please also inform us immediately of any changes to your civil status, address or telephone number. Our [Online desk for Swiss nationals residing abroad](#) gives you more information about how to proceed.



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Cultural Events

From October 14 to 18, the Swiss Embassy in Washington, D.C. celebrated the annual Settimana della lingua Italiana – the Week of Italian Language in the World. Italian is officially spoken in two cantons of Switzerland, Ticino and Graubünden, and about 8% of the Swiss population speaks Italian as their primary language. As one of our four national languages, it significantly contributes to Switzerland's cultural identity and heritage. A notable figure from this linguistic background is the renowned artist Alberto Giacometti (1901-1966), originally from the canton of Graubünden, or Grigioni, whose works are displayed in museums around the world. Giacometti remains an inspiration for the art world with his unique process and fresh perspective on the human form. To honor the Swiss sculptor, painter, and graphic artist, the Embassy of Switzerland hosted a series of events celebrating his enduring influence.

[In collaboration with the Hirshhorn Museum, the Embassy organized](#) two guided tours, one of which was in Italian, of the exhibit *Revolutions*, showcasing several of Giacometti's works and creating cultural connections to Switzerland for American audiences. Additionally, a screening of the documentary *The Giacomettis* by Swiss director Susanna Fanzun gave art enthusiasts the chance to learn more about the artist's origins, inspirations, and family.

Over the past month, the Embassy has organized a number of public film screenings. The Swiss films *Becoming a Black Woman* (Je Suis Noires) (which offers an exploration of identity and belonging among women of color) and *Becoming Giulia* (which takes viewers behind the scenes of the Zurich Opera Ballet through the eyes of a dancer returning from maternity leave) were both shown here in Washington, D.C., followed by Q&A sessions featuring films' the respective directors, Rachel M'Bon and Laura Kaehr. The discussion of the film *Becoming Giulia* also included two professional ballet dancers from The Washington Ballet, Nicole Graniero and Tamako Miyazaki, who discussed the issues around gender equality and parenthood raised in the film. Through projects like these, the Embassy aims to promote Swiss filmmaking in the United States. After the screenings and discussions in the nation's capital, both directors continued with tours of their films throughout the U.S., introducing their work to a broader American audience.



Dr. Ralf Heckner, Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States of America (right), Susanna Fanzun, Director of The Giacomettis (left), & Betsy Johnson, Curator of the exhibit (center) at the Hirshhorn Museum © Embassy of Switzerland in the United States.

Connecting with Farmers in the Midwest

In September 2024, the Embassy's trade attaché participated in a tour from Indianapolis to Chicago with a group of 20 international agricultural attachés posted in Washington, D.C. The trip led to in-depth discussions with agricultural policymakers at the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), food companies, academics and, most importantly, farmers. Indiana is one of the U.S.'s top agricultural states and a major producer of corn and soybeans as well as eggs and poultry.

The U.S. agricultural sector is deeply integrated into global markets and substantially contributes to food security throughout the world. It can make a big contribution to more sustainable food systems by embracing best practices such as regenerative agriculture. Switzerland recognizes the importance of the US food and agricultural industry and is happy to share knowledge gleaned from its own experience with [agricultural innovation systems](#). U.S. companies have been involved in agri-food innovation hubs in Switzerland.



F-35 JPMR Conference Social Event

On October 8, the Ambassador of Switzerland hosted a social event that brought together actors from government, armed forces, and industry as they concluded the first day of the Joint Program Management Review (JPMR), a conference at which the F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) was meeting with representatives from 11 countries procuring the F-35 Lightning II. The evening was dedicated to the celebration of a community of shared values and strong relationships. In their remarks, Swiss Ambassador Dr. Ralf Heckner, Swiss Defense Attaché Major General Marco Schmidlin, and F-35 Program Executive Officer Lieutenant General Michael J. Schmidt underlined the importance of continuous mutual learning and of international cooperation, which are more relevant than ever in today's fast-changing and challenging world.

The F-35 is a 5th generation fighter jet and is widely considered to be the most advanced combat aircraft in the world.

Switzerland having ordered 36 F-35A, this aircraft is destined to form the foundation of the nation's air power, while also paving the way for increased collaboration. In fact, Switzerland's acquisition of the F-35 is an occasion to intensify an already strong relationship with the U.S. Department of Defense and foster lasting connections between both countries' defense industrial bases. Read more on [SWISS IMPACT](#).



Lieutenant General Michael J. Schmidt (left), Ambassador Ralf Heckner (center), Major General Marco Schmidlin (right). © Embassy of Switzerland in the United States.

Heidi Goes AI – Call for Submissions

The Consulate General of Switzerland in San Francisco and the Heidiseum (owner of the UNESCO's Heidi Archive) are thrilled to announce that the Call for Submissions of AI-generated art for the upcoming exhibition "Heidi Goes AI" is now open.

Heidi is the protagonist of the novel written by the Swiss writer Johanna Spyri. Published between 1880 and 1881, Heidi became one of the most successful children's books of all times. This beloved character has since inspired numerous literary adaptations, film, television, theater, and even computer games, captivating audiences across generations with her timeless story, and reaching countries across the globe! This cultural icon was inscribed in 2023 on UNESCO's "International Memory of the World Register", testifying to the recognition of the global significance of its Heidi archive.

In the age of AI and generative technologies, how would you imagine Heidi?

We invite artists, professionals, and aficionados from all backgrounds from the United States and Switzerland to showcase your interpretation of Heidi using AI!

Unleash your creativity and experiment with various AI techniques, prompts, and software to breathe the new life into cultural heritage. If selected by our international jury, your Artwork could win **USD 3'000 (first place)**, **USD 2'000 (second place)**, or **USD 1'000 (third place)**. Further selected artworks will be part of an exhibition and discussed during panels, where topics such as AI, art, and copyright will be debated.

Make sure to submit your application on [SWISS IMPACT](#) by December 16, 2024!



P.S. from Switzerland

From October 14 to October 20, 2024, the Embassy of Switzerland in the United States took part in the celebrations of the *Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo* – the Week of Italian Language in the World.

Italian is a national language in Switzerland. But did you know that Italian speakers in Switzerland and in Italy sometimes use different words for the same concept? Here are some examples!

If you say

“C’è colonna in autostrada”,

this is what Italian speakers in Switzerland and Italy would understand:

	
	
Switzerland: a traffic jam	Italy: a pillar on the highway

If you say

“C’è il pollo in azione”,

this is what Italian speakers in Switzerland
and in Italy would understand:



Switzerland:

the chicken is on sale

Italy:

the chicken is
fighting in a battle

If you say

“Ho preso una brutta nota”,

this is what Italian speakers in Switzerland
and in Italy would understand:



Switzerland:

I got a bad grade at
school

Italy:

I was singing
off key



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