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New Consular Directorate at the FDFA

The Federal Council approved the revised FDFA Organisational Ordinance in spring 2011, establishing the legal basis for the foundation of a new Consular Directorate (CD).

The creation of the new FDFA directorate is the last step in a long process. It officially began its activities on 16 May 2011 under the management of Ambassador Gerhard Brügger. A highly motivated team has since been endeavouring to ensure constant improvement in public service in the field of consular affairs. The new "FDFA Helpline", which handles over 1,000 enquiries from citizens every month and which has been available seven days a week since October 2011, plays a key role in the improvement of services for Swiss people at home and abroad. The next step is to upgrade the helpline to a 24-hour operation over the next few months.

Consular services have always been one of the FDFA's key mandates. The requirements that Swiss representations abroad have to meet in the field of consular affairs as a whole have increased significantly over recent years. This is explained, in particular, by the growing mobility of the Swiss. This trend is confirmed not just by travel statistics but also by the constant growth in the Swiss community abroad, which will soon reach the 700,000 mark. In order to meet future challenges, the FDFA has been focusing intensively over the past two years on bringing consular services into line with the requirements, travel behaviour and lifestyles of the Swiss in the 21st century.

Two divisions at the FDFA, from the Directorate for Resources (DR) and the Directorate of Political Affairs, managed consular services previously. However, the distribution of responsibilities to various organisational units proved increasingly disadvantageous. This is why Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey decided to transfer the former divisions to a new directorate, thus strengthening consular services and making better use of synergies. Thanks to this reorganisation, which has now been completed, the Swiss representations abroad receive support from a single, highly efficient directorate at head

office for the handling of demanding consular tasks. This directorate provides them with assistance, advice and relief with all matters concerning consular affairs. The bundling of consular activities also facilitates contact between citizens and the department, whereby all parties concerned should benefit from a significant improvement in public service.

The new directorate contains three divisions:

■ The Relations with the Swiss Abroad division, which is run by the FDFA Delegate for Relations with the Swiss Abroad. This division serves to represent the interests of the Swiss community abroad within the federal administration. In addition to supporting and promoting these

SCHENGEN REPRESENTATIONS ESTABLISHED

Member State (MS)	Switzerland represents MS in	Switzerland is represented by MS in
Austria	Santo Domingo (Dom. Rep)	
	Pristina (Kosovo)	
	Tiflis (Georgia)	Sofia (Bulgaria)
		Tirana (Albania)
		Zagreb (Croatia)
Hungary	Bogotá (Columbia)	Minsk (Belarus)
	Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)	Chisinau (Moldova)
	Santiago de Chile (Chile)	
	São Paulo (Brazil)	
	Sydney (Australia)	
Sweden	Manila (Philippines)	
Belgium	Accra (Ghana)	
France	Pristina (Kosovo)	Kingston (Jamaica)
Slovenia	Quito (Ecuador)	
	Montevideo (Uruguay)	
	Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)	
Estonia	Ramallah (Palestine)	
Norway	Antananarivo (Madagascar)	



interests, the delegate's responsibilities include implementing the policy of comprehensive information on issues specific to the Swiss abroad. The delegate and his team work closely with institutional players – such as the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Nationals Abroad (Soliswiss) – which deal with matters concerning the Swiss abroad. He is also responsible for helping to shape and to implement policy on the Swiss abroad that ensures a good balance between the interests of all Swiss people. The management of legislative projects and parliamentary business relating to issues concerning the Swiss abroad and the vision of a single point of contact at federal level for all matters relating to the Swiss abroad should be mentioned in this respect.

■ The Citizens' Service Centre, which supports the network of Swiss representations abroad with all consular matters. It provides efficient consular services and ensures coordination between representations abroad and organisations, authorities and individuals in Switzerland. It contains the two sections Consular Protection and Citizens' Service and Representation Support. While the experts at the Consular Protection section provide support for Swiss citizens abroad in emergency situations, the Citizens' Service and Representation Support section operates the new FDFA Helpline, the central point of contact for all matters and information concerning the consular services. This key service can be contacted on telephone number +41 (0)800 24 7 365, via the e-mail address helpline@eda.admin.ch or by post.

■ The Consular Strategies, Development and Agreements division, which deals with the expansion of eGovernment solutions, among other issues. The setup of an online contact point through which the Swiss abroad will, in the future, be able to process various consular transactions independently (ID cards, changes of address, changes of marital status, etc.) is one key project. This will meet the demand from citizens for simplification in their dealings with Switzerland's representations abroad and the administration within the country.

This division is also responsible for the development and provision of tools to enable Swiss representations abroad to perform consular services for Swiss citizens abroad, travellers and foreign customers worldwide. The division devises solutions for the modernisation and optimisation of consular services and represents consular interests in major projects at federal and cantonal level, particularly vis-à-vis the Federal Office for Migration with regard to Schengen, visas, entry and borders.

The division is also responsible for ensuring a regular exchange of information and experiences between Switzerland and the other Schengen Member States, and it develops and concludes cooperation agreements with selected partners. Such agreements represent a priority for the division as well as for the Consular Directorate. The legal basis of the Schengen agreement enables Member States to represent one another in the issuing of Schengen visas. Switzerland has so far concluded such agreements with eight Member States (see table on page 27) and is in negotiation with others. Switzerland currently represents other Schengen states in 16 countries while it is itself represented in six cases. Further Schengen representation agreements are to be concluded in the future, primarily for locations where Switzerland has no representation or places and countries where Switzerland is no longer represented as a result of the reorganisation of the representation network.

The employees of the Consular Directorate, in cooperation with the entire FDFA, look forward to tackling interesting challenges on behalf of their fellow citizens travelling or living abroad and will endeavour to provide outstanding service on a daily basis.

+41 (0)800 24-7-365



The FDFA Helpline is available 7 days a week, 365 days a year from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Intense efforts are being made to provide a 24-hour operation.

The FDFA Helpline is the central point of contact for all matters relating to consular services. However, the embassies and general consulates remain the first point of contact for the Swiss abroad.

Federal Council announcement on 07.09.2011 concerning the retirement of Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey

On Wednesday, 7 September 2011, the Federal Council acknowledged the decision by Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey to step down from the Federal Council at the end of this year. The President of the Confederation informed the Federal Council of her decision not to stand at the complete re-election of the government on 14 December.

Since her election to the Federal Council on 4 December 2002, Micheline Calmy-Rey has held the office of head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for nine years.

During this period, Ms Calmy-Rey has shown tremendous commitment to Switzerland, its people and its institutions. She has conducted Swiss diplomacy with great tenacity and dedication. She has made great efforts to raise Switzerland's profile on the international stage. She has also focused heavily on ensuring that Switzerland actively participates in political dialogue and in the search for solutions to the great challenges of our age. She has always regarded international cooperation as a priority. At the same time, Ms Calmy-Rey has strengthened Switzerland's relations with the international community.

In domestic politics, Ms Calmy-Rey has implemented important reforms in her department, assisting greatly with the work on government reform.

During her two years as President of the Confederation in 2007 and 2011, Ms Calmy-Rey has placed much empha-

sis on the importance of the principle of collegiality and the constant search for compromise. She has always defended our nation's institutions and democratic values.

The Federal Council will remember Micheline Calmy-Rey as an extremely dedicated politician and a much-valued colleague. It would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to her and to wish her and her family well for the future.

Warning issued by the Swiss Federal Tax Administration (FTA): Phishing

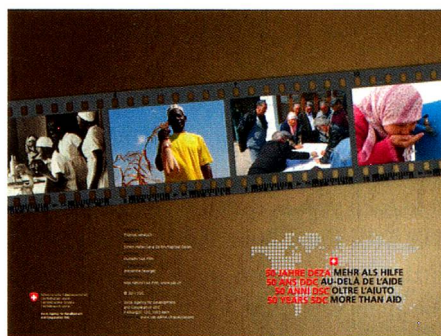
Fraudsters try on various occasions to obtain information concerning accounts and credit cards, as well as copies of taxpayers' passports, by sending e-mails. These e-mails use false sender addresses. Consequently, the Federal Tax Administration (FTA) has been improperly listed as the sender in several of these e-mails. The FTA is now issuing a warning not to respond to these e-mails or ones of a similar nature.

Any FTA claims are sent to taxpayers solely by letter and indicate the dossier number. The FTA never makes enquiries about taxpayers' confidential information via e-mail.

Should you receive fraudulent e-mails, please report this to the FTA and forward the e-mails to the following address: kommunikation@estv.admin.ch

Thank you.

Publications



Video: 50 Years SDC – More than aid

Since it was established in 1961, Swiss development cooperation has experienced many changes and has been forced to tackle new challenges on the thematic, methodological and geographical levels (see pages 8 to 11). Using interviews with contemporaries and archive material, this film recounts the history of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) from its early days to the present.

See video: http://www.deza.admin.ch/en/Dossiers/50_years_SDC/History/Videos

The SDC also published a special edition of its magazine "Eine Welt" at the

start of 2011 to mark its 50th anniversary. It can be ordered via the SDC website. The SDC's full list of publications can be found under the following link: <http://www.deza.admin.ch/de/Home/Dokumentation/Publikationen>

Elections and referenda

The next date for a federal referendum will be 11 March 2012. The Federal Council will decide later which proposals will be put to the people on this date.

Important:

Please do not forget to inform your Swiss representation of your current postal and e-mail address. We also recommend that you notify the embassy or consulate of your mobile telephone number in countries exposed to natural disasters or political instability.

Please register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletter, etc.) from your representation.

The current edition of "Swiss Review" as well as previous editions can be read and/or printed out at www.revue.ch.

POPULAR INITIATIVES:

By the time of going to press, the following popular initiatives had been launched since the last edition of "Swiss Review" (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Federal popular initiative "Kernkraftwerke sind abzuschalten" (Decommission nuclear power stations) (19.01.2013)
- "Millionen-Erbschaften besteuern für unsere AHV" (Tax on inherited millions to fund old age and survivors' insurance) (inheritance tax reform) (16.02.2013)

The complete list can be found in German on the Federal Chancellery's website, www.bk.admin.ch, under Themen > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen.

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