

Newsletter

of the Swiss Embassy in Mexico

March 2017

Ambassador's Welcoming Words

Dear Fellow Citizens,

It is my pleasure and my honour to address to you these words as Ambassador of Switzerland in Mexico and in Belize. It is now three years that I started my assignment in Mexico City. My wife and I feel very welcome each time we have the opportunity to travel to Belize.

My wife and I continue to enjoy our life in such a wonderful region full of culture and history. During our seven visits to Belize so far, I worked on strengthening the bilateral relations between Belize and Switzerland with a special focus on development cooperation and human rights projects, political bilateral issues and justice. We also take the opportunity to discover the beauties of the country and managed so far to stay at Caye Caulker in 2014, Ambergris Caye in 2015, Placencia in 2016 and 2017.

The Embassy's Newsletter intends to establish a link between the Swiss citizens living in Belize and the Embassy. In this regards, you are kindly invited, if you so wish, to make comments or suggestions anytime by addressing them to the Embassy's mailbox (mex.vertretung@eda.admin.ch). I assure you that I will pay due attention to them.

In this third edition, the Newsletter contents a report on my visits to Belize from March 6 to 13, 2016 and from January 29 to February 5, 2017 as well as the participation of my deputy to the celebrations of the independence day of Belize last September. You will then get information on the introduction of the automatic exchange of data on tax issues and the likely consequences for the Swiss citizens living abroad, as well as on the electronic vote and virtual window for the Swiss abroad. Finally, we will remind you what are the Swiss Review and swissinfo and how to get them.

With my best regards,

Louis-José Touron



Mr. Louis-José Touron
Swiss Ambassador
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Bilateral Relations Switzerland – Belize

Celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Independence of Belize

The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Switzerland paid a visit to Belize from September 17 to 21, 2016. Accompanied by John Searle, the Honorary General Consul of Switzerland, Mr. Daniel Zulauf participated in the various independence ceremonies and celebrations in Belize City as well as in Belmopan and met the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his CEO, the Chief of Justice, heads of foreign missions, representatives of international organisations and NGOs. The visit allowed for an overview on the current political and economic panorama of Belize and the discussion of bilateral issues.

Business Trips to Belize

The Ambassador of Switzerland paid a visit to Belize from March 6 to 13, 2016 and from January 29 to February 5, 2017. During the first visit, he met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Justice, heads of foreign missions and representatives of international organisations based in Belize as well of the civil society. Because the Embassy was in a position to provide support for development cooperation and human rights projects thanks to its small action funds, the Ambassador visited the offices of non-governmental organisations which have been selected. The three projects finally supported in 2016 were touching upon education, human rights and environment protection. With John Searle, the Honorary General Consul of Switzerland, the Ambassador met twenty members of the Swiss community on March 8 in the Aguada Hotel in San Ignacio. He was happy to learn that almost all families felt good about living in Belize. He was struck once more by the variety of origins and competences one can find among Swiss citizens living abroad.

The second visit was primarily focussed on meeting with government representatives. Therefore, the Ambassador had discussions with the Prime-Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize, the Attorney General and the Chief of Justice as well as the permanent representative of Belize to CARICOM. He also met heads of foreign missions and representatives of international organisations as well as of NGOs. With the latter, he discussed the Embassy's potential support for development and human rights projects. The deadline of the call for small actions ended on February 28, 2017. The Embassy is currently selecting and retaining between one and four of the NGO's proposals for financial support. It should be done before the end of March.

Thanks to the permanent support of John Searle, the Honorary General Consul of Switzerland and Linda, his wife, the Ambassador of Switzerland managed to get and meet all these appointments throughout the country.



Tobacco Island
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Marine Station
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Introduction of the Automatic Exchange of Data on Tax Issues between Switzerland and Belize

Cross-border tax evasion should be prevented with the help of the new global standard for the automatic exchange of information (AEOI). The standard makes provision for the mutual exchange of information on financial accounts between states that have agreed to the AEOI. Aside from Switzerland, almost 100 states, including all major financial centres, have declared their intention to adopt the standard.



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On 2 February 2017, the Federal Department of Finance (FDF) initiated the consultation on introducing the AEOI in tax matters with additional countries that include Belize. Following the approval by the Swiss Parliament, the implementation of the AEOI is planned for 1 January 2018 so that the first exchange of information will take place in 2019.

The introduction of the AEOI with these states and territories confirms Switzerland's international commitment to implementing the AEOI standard. It is thereby reaffirming its intention to introduce the automatic exchange of information with states and territories that meet the requirements of the international AEOI standard, which has a positive impact on the integrity and competitiveness of Switzerland's financial centre. The vast majority of the countries committed to the application of the AEOI, and in particular the other international financial centres, have also included these states and territories in their lists of AEOI partner states.

From a legal viewpoint, the AEOI with the aforementioned states and territories will be implemented based on the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement on the Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information (MCAA). The MCAA is based on the international standard for the exchange of information developed by the OECD.

We recommend that the Swiss citizens residing in Belize who are not yet in full conformity with the Belizean legislation do their utmost possible to completely fulfill the Belizean legal requirements until the end of 2017 at the latest and to look for advice by specialized lawyers if they judge it necessary. The Embassy will not be able to provide support.

Daniel Zulauf, Deputy Chief of Mission

Electronic Voting

At the end of 2015, the Federal Chancellery announced that it was no longer able to grant the cantons of the “Consortium Vote électronique” the authorization to conduct “e(lectronic)-voting” for security reasons. This led to the fact that 9 additional cantons were equally no longer able to offer e-voting. Since then, the Canton of Fribourg has resumed the electronic-voting channel by introducing a new solution. As a result, 6 cantons currently dispose of e-voting: Geneva, Neuchâtel, Fribourg, Lucerne, Basel-Stadt and Bern. The Cantons of Argovia, Saint-Gallen and Zurich are currently working intensively on a new solution. The other former Consortium cantons are closely observing the progress of the pertaining development. Although the Federal Chancellery cooperates closely with the cantons and actively promotes e-voting, a wide-ranging e-voting-offer, covering the totality of the cantons, is not likely to be engaged soon.



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For the communication to the Swiss abroad you can also refer to the newsletter of the Federal Chancellery (see supplement) as well as to the website of the Federal Chancellery:

www.bk.admin.ch/themen/pore/evoting/index.html?lang=de

However, even if the electronic-vote was to be introduced, the possibility of using the time-taking postal delivery would not change, since the voting ballots still remain to be sent by post. An electronic dispatch, even if technically possible, is not planned due to security reasons. This inavoidability has been recognized and considerations are under way as to how this type of delivery could be made secure, but a solution is not currently in sight.

Ulrich Haug, Consul, Swiss Consul

The Virtual Consular Counter for Swiss and Swiss Citizen Abroad

In 2007, the Swiss Federal Council adopted an e-government-strategy to modernize administrative processes, in particular through a secured electronic communication. It has also raised the possibility for the population to be connected to the authorities via the Internet in order to manage important issues.

With the aim of fulfilling this mandate, the DFAE has developed a computerized management system, completely modernized, so that the Swiss people living abroad may be able to carry out their administrative endeavors by means of a unique counter. In addition to the modernized computer architecture, this new system offers Swiss citizen abroad a number of online services based on four principles: interaction between the customer and the authorities; access to information; online payments; and interconnection with parallel systems (social insurance, municipalities, etc.). Thus, since the beginning of October 2016, a new Internet portal allows any Swiss abroad to benefit from a whole range of online services: registration and de-registration on arrival or departure to or from abroad; Implementation of administrative processes; direct communication with consulates, change of address, etc.

This portal is easily accessible through the general site of the DFAE (www.dfae.admin.ch) or the competent Swiss representations.

The screenshot shows the DFAE website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Le Conseil fédéral, DFAE, La Suisse dans le monde, Enregistrement Guichet en ligne (highlighted with a red box), Helpline, Emplois, Médias, Contact, and a language dropdown set to Français. Below this is the DFAE logo and the text 'Département fédéral des affaires étrangères DFAE'. A search bar is also present.

The main content area features a horizontal menu with categories: Actualité, Politique extérieure, Représentations et conseils aux voyageurs, Vivre à l'étranger, Entrée et séjour en Suisse, Services et publications, and Le DFAE.

The featured article is titled «Crise des réfugiés: la Suisse œuvre à l'éradication des causes de l'exil». It includes a photo of Didier Burkhalter and text stating: 'Zurich, 29.11.2016 – Didier Burkhalter participe au panel «Les déplacements forcés, le défi planétaire du XXI^e siècle?» organisé à l'Université de Zurich.' Below the article are four smaller news snippets: 'Le haut-commissaire aux droits de l'homme de l'ONU à Berne', 'Dank Rüstungskontrolle mehr Sicherheit und Vertrauen (de)', and 'En Slovénie pour tracer les voies de la coopération à l'avenir'.

On the right side, there is a section for 'Actualités' with a list of recent news items, including 'Conférence internationale pour la Tunisie – La Suisse représentée par Samuel Schmid' and 'La visite du président de la Confédération au Koweït souligne l'intensification des relations'.

At the bottom left, there is a link for 'Autres actualités' and at the bottom right, a profile for 'Didier Burkhalter'.

The main challenge regarding the access to the virtual window lies in the identification of the users. Since this identification is classified as being personal data, its confidentiality must be ensured at all times. For this end, two processes of access have been defined: direct access for holders of a Swiss identity card or access through a two-level-identification (name and password + code received by SMS). Detailed information on this can be found on the virtual window's website.

Like all DFAE web pages, the virtual window can be used from all types of fixed and portable computers, as well as tablets and smartphones, according to the principles of responsive design.

A dynamic approach: In order to promote the users' interest in an online service, it is important that it is used on a regular basis. Only then, the users could be able to manage the system adequately. At the same time, regular use requires the range of services offered by the eVERA virtual counter to remain attractive, which is the reason why it will be expanded soon. Innovations are already scheduled in areas such as change of address, online payment for certificates to be issued, announcements on civil status or crisis management situations.

Thus, the DFAE is pleased to extend the benefits offered to the Swiss citizens abroad, not only in a more efficient manner, but also with an eco-friendly approach that reduces the utilization of paper through the implementation of virtual transactions.

Ulrich Haug, Consul, Swiss Consul

Useful Links for Swiss Abroad

Many times people are in search of urgent information and call this Embassy by telephone or establish a contact by e-mail in order to get answers. Often, however, it would be easier to click on the appropriate link to access the information needed. Therefore, we herewith feature some electronic links of great utility that could be beneficial for you and aim towards a more concrete and accessible solution-finding.

Thereafter, you will find some of the proposed links:

Of General Utility

The Law for the Swiss Abroad, which contains the rights and obligations of the Swiss outside their homeland (Auslandschweizergesetz ASG):

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20133127/index.html>

Emigration: For Swiss considering emigrating or returning to Switzerland

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/de/services/consulate/Auslandschweizer-Information%20und%20-Institutionen/Swissemigration>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/leben-im-ausland/auswandern.html>

Information and Advice for Independent Travelers by Country

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise.html>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise/belize/reisehinweise-fuerbelize.html>

Taxes and Legal Information

(For questions about the requisition of taxes):

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/leben-im-ausland/auswandern/ruhestand-im-ausland/steuern.html>

<https://www.sif.admin.ch/sif/de/home/themen/internationale-steuerpolitik/doppelbesteuerung-und-amtshilfe.html>

Journeys

Itineris: Online platform for Swiss who want to register in order to assign their location and contact for the purpose of maintaining a communication with their relatives in case of incidents during the trip

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/de/services/consulate/Reisen%20und%20Hilfeleistungen%20im%20Ausland/Itineris>

Military Service

Families and young Swiss who are interested in knowing details about military service in Switzerland

<http://www.vtg.admin.ch/de/mein-militaerdienst/allgemeines-zum-militaerdienst/doppelbuerger.html>

In Economic or Other Difficulty?

Compatriots who are in a difficult situation and who require assistance

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/schweizer-in-not.html>

Consular Questions / Consular Register / Civil Status

If any particular questions regarding the registration of civil status events taking place in Belize, and the legalization of such documents by the Embassy of Switzerland in Mexico (for the purpose of transmitting them to the authorities in Switzerland) arise, please do not hesitate to contact the following e-mail address: mex.vertretung@eda.admin.ch. The following links give an answer to the specific situations:

Compatriots who change directions or move to another country:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/immatrikulation-adressaenderung.html>

Swiss citizens who need to apply for a passport or an identity card:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/pass-id.html>

Swiss citizens who want to register the birth of a child or another person:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/geburt.html>

Swiss citizens who want to register a marriage or a legal partnership:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/heirat-eingetragene-partnerschaft.html>

Swiss citizens who need to register a divorce:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/scheidung.html>

Swiss citizens who need to register the death of a family member:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/todesfall.html>

Swiss citizens who need to request a Swiss Civil Status document, a certificate of origin or an excerpt of the family register:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/zivilstandsdokumente.html>

Legalizations, Attestations

Swiss citizens who need information about the definition and possibilities of a legalization:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/beglaubigung.html>

Swiss citizens who need information on the definition and possibilities of an attestation:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/bestaetigung-bescheinigung.html>

For Swiss citizens who want to be linked to the "Online Schalter" for Swiss abroad:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/dienstleistungenundpublikationen/dienstleistungen-schweizer-ausland/online-schalter.html>

Vehicles

For Swiss citizens who need to obtain a driver's license, obtain number plates or require information about the importation of vehicles:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/fuehrerausweis-fahrzeug.html>

Social Insurance

For compatriots who want to find out about Swiss social insurance matters:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/sozialversicherung.html>

www.ahv.ch

www.soliswiss.ch

Economy

For Swiss citizens who are interested in the promotion of the economy:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/bilaterale-beziehungen/wirtschaft-export.html>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise/belize/bilatereale-beziehungenschweizbelize.html>

Ulrich Haug, Consul, Swiss Consul

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Switzerland. get natural.
Snowshoeing in the sunset at the Passwang, Ramiswil.

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