SWISS WITH US

NEWS & VIEWS

From the Embassy of Switzerland in the U.S.

March 2026

From the Ambassador's desk

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

Dear Friends of Switzerland,

The first months of this year have once again demonstrated the depth and diversity of the Swiss–U.S. partnership. Against a backdrop of heightened geopolitical tensions and evolving global dynamics, our cooperation remains forward-looking, built on a strong foundation of longstanding ties.

This year, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This milestone offers an opportunity not only to reflect on history, but also to recognize how closely our two countries have grown together over time. For much of the United States' history, Switzerland has been a partner, contributing through economic exchange, scientific collaboration, diplomacy, and people-to-people connections.

At the same time, the bilateral relationship has entered a new phase. The past year has required adjustment, shaped by evolving U.S. priorities, including industrial renewal, technological leadership, and efforts to strengthen the resilience of critical supply chains. In this environment, the Swiss–U.S. partnership continues to demonstrate its strength through adaptability, pragmatism, and a shared focus on long-term outcomes.

Our engagement across the United States reflects this approach. Exchanges with policymakers at the national and subnational level, as well as with business leaders, scientists, and cultural contributors, demonstrate the importance of collaboration across all levels. Growing interest in Swiss-style apprenticeships further illustrates a shared commitment to equipping the next generation with the skills required in a rapidly evolving economy. These efforts show that while policies are shaped at the national and international level, their impact is felt locally, in jobs created, in research advanced, in innovation driven, and in livelihoods supported. This, too, is diplomacy in practice.

Dialogue in security, law, and innovation also remains strong. Engagement with academic institutions and recognition of Swiss leadership in international forums highlight the role of knowledge

reliable and solution-oriented partner.

Equally important are the connections built through culture, sports, and community. These moments create space for exchange that goes beyond formal dialogue and reinforce that strong bilateral relationships are ultimately built between people. Looking ahead, major shared moments such as the FIFA World Cup 2026, to be hosted across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, will provide further opportunities to bring people together and strengthen transatlantic ties through sport and shared experience.

In a time of change, one constant remains. The United States continues to be unmatched in its scale, innovation, and opportunity, and it remains a central partner for Switzerland. We are a country that learned long ago that stability is not the absence of change, but the ability to manage it.

Let me close by reiterating that, for generations, Switzerland has engaged with the United States as a close partner and friend. This tradition continues today. I remain confident that our relationship will continue to generate opportunity, deliver impact, and support shared prosperity in both countries. Every exchange, every collaboration, and every connection strengthens the ties between our two nations.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter, and I thank you for your continued interest in Switzerland's engagement in the United States.

With best wishes,

Ralf Heckner
Ambassador of Switzerland to the United States

Swiss Parliamentary EFTA/EU Delegation Visits the U.S.

From February 23 to 27, the EFTA/EU Delegation of the Swiss Federal Assembly conducted a working visit to the United States, starting in the nation's capital and then heading to Indianapolis and Chicago. The delegation was led by **State Councilor Damian Müller** and included **National Councilors Elisabeth Schneider-Schneiter** and **Christine Badertscher**, as well as **State Councilor Hannes Germann.**

In Washington, DC, the delegation met with **Congresswoman Claudia Tenney** (R-NY) and **Congressman Ron Estes** (R-KS) as well as representatives of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), policy experts, and private-sector stakeholders, including member companies of the National Association of Manufacturers with business relations with Switzerland. Discussions were focused on the transatlantic business climate and ongoing trade negotiations. The delegation underscored Switzerland's strong economic ties with the United States, highlighting its investments and how these investments have created high-skilled jobs across all 50 U.S. states.

In Indianapolis, the delegation met with **Governor Mike Braun**, **Secretary of Commerce David Adams**, and **Secretary of Education Katie Jenner**. Talks centered on Indiana's collaboration with

Subscribe to our email list.

apprenticeship model as a workforce development strategy was a key focus. The delegation also participated in a biosciences roundtable, met with local chambers of commerce, and visited the Roche Diagnostics campus.

The visit concluded in Chicago with a meeting with Swiss business representatives.

Learn more about the Swiss Parliamentary EFTA/EU Delegations Visit on SWISS IMPACT.

Local Leadership, Global Partnership: NACo Reception at the Residence of the Ambassador

On January 15, **Ambassador Ralf Heckner** hosted a reception at the Swiss Residence for representatives of the National Association of Counties (NACo). Around 85 participants from more than 35 U.S. states attended, including elected officials and executive directors of state associations.

In his remarks, Ambassador Heckner highlighted the essential role of local and regional governments as the level of governance closest to citizens. He noted the significance of the year, marking the 250th anniversary of the United States, and recalled the enduring ties between Switzerland and the United States, describing the Swiss–U.S. Friendship Treaty as a symbol of shared values, trust, and cooperation. He also emphasized Switzerland's strong engagement across U.S. communities and reaffirmed its commitment to deepening partnerships at the subnational level.

NACo President **J.D. Clark** (Wise County, Texas) underscored the importance of counties in meeting citizens' needs and highlighted the value of international exchange in strengthening governance.

The event brought together NACo leadership, including CEO and Executive Director **Matthew Chase**, **First Vice President George Dunlap** (Mecklenburg County, North Carolina), **Second Vice**

Subscribe to our email list.

Association of Counties.

The reception provided an opportunity for informal exchanges, reinforcing the importance of subnational engagement in Swiss–U.S. relations and setting a positive tone for the year ahead.

Learn more about the NACo Reception on SWISS IMPACT.

Guest Lecture on Comparative Law at Georgetown University

On March 18, the Legal Section of the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, DC, visited the Georgetown University Law Center to lead a special class for 20 talented J.D. students in the prestigious Global Law Scholars program. This selective program prepares future lawyers for international and transnational practice, where they regularly navigate issues across multiple legal systems—including complex questions of international law.

Simon Kürsener, Head of the Legal Section, and **Nicola Mussio**, Academic Associate, provided an insightful overview of the key differences between the American common law system and the Swiss civil law tradition.

While common law prioritizes the development of legal principles through judicial decisions, civil law starts with a focus on applicable statutes. Precedents hold significant persuasive authority in common law, serving as binding precedent in similar cases, whereas in civil law, they are considered to fill legislative gaps, but are not binding to the same extent. In common law systems, judges play a central role in shaping the law, while in civil law systems, their function is more confined to applying and interpreting legislation passed by the legislature.

The second half of the session was interactive. Students worked in groups and acted as counsel in

Subscribe to our email list.

American common law perspectives, presenting on behalf of both the plaintiff and the defendant. Fellow students serving as “judges” asked sharp, probing questions, sparking lively, creative, and very thoughtful debates!

The Embassy of Switzerland remains committed to promoting an understanding of the Swiss legal system. Switzerland’s long-standing political neutrality, stability, and highly developed legal tradition make it a trusted and attractive choice for governing international contracts.

This annual comparative law exercise has become a valued tradition, made possible by the Embassy’s longstanding and fruitful collaboration with Georgetown Law, particularly with **Professor Mary DeRosa**. The Embassy is grateful for this opportunity and looks forward to many more engaging and inspiring sessions to come.

State Secretary Markus Mäder inducted into International Fellows Hall of Fame at NDU

On February 24, the International Study, Missions, & Outreach (ISMO) program at the National Defense University (NDU) welcomed **State Secretary Markus Mäder**, alumnus of the National War College (’16), back to Fort McNair to induct him into the International Fellows Hall of Fame. Hosted by Rear Admiral **Chase D. Patrick**, Commandant of the National War College, the ceremony recognized the career of the Swiss State Secretary for Security Policy and celebrated his ongoing contribution to international peace and security. The event was attended by U.S. and Swiss representatives and provided Dr. Mäder the opportunity to reconnect with former professors and classmates from his time as an International Fellow.

Following four years of service as Swiss Defense Attaché in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, Dr. Mäder attended the National War College at the NDU from 2015 to 2016, where he earned a Master of Science in National Security Strategy. He was subsequently appointed Director International Relations Defense for the Swiss Armed Forces. Since 2024, he has been leading the State Secretariat for Security Policy (SEPOS) in Bern, where he coordinates Switzerland's security policy and cooperation with international partners.

His induction into the NDU’s International Fellows Hall of Fame underscores the importance of international dialogue and professional exchange. It also reaffirms the value of the lasting relationships established through the International Fellow Program and the role of education in promoting long-term collaboration among security leaders from different countries.

“Educating, Developing and Inspiring National Security Leaders” is the vision and mission of the National Defense University: a goal perfectly embodied by the career of State Secretary Markus Mäder!

Subscribe to our email list.

High-level Talk on Apprenticeships in Davos

On January 20, the House of Switzerland hosted a high-level session at the World Economic Forum in Davos titled “Transatlantic Talent Strategies: Swiss Insights for America’s Re-Skilling Moment.”

Organized by Jobs for the Future along with Aon, a leading U.S. tech company, and featuring the Swiss Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI), the session focused on how Switzerland’s talent development system, which is widely recognized as a global gold standard, has propelled the country’s economic dynamism and prepared its workforce for an AI-driven economy. The discussion built on earlier exchanges, including the American Swiss Foundation’s Innovation Summit in Boston (October 2025) and **State Secretary Martina Hirayama’s** participation in the National Youth Apprenticeship Summit in Arlington, VA (December 2025).

Maria Flynn, CEO of Jobs for the Future, opened the session, followed by an overview of the Swiss apprenticeship model by **Dr. Katie Caves**, Director of CEMETS. A panel moderated by Flynn, with **Bridget Gainer** (Aon) and **Sarah Steinberg** (LinkedIn), examined labor market shifts and the need for more agile workforce development approaches, including Swiss-style apprenticeships.
Special guests included **Ambassador Ralf Heckner**, Swiss Ambassador to the United States; **Ambassador Callista Gingrich**, U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland; and State Secretary Martina Hirayama (SERI).

The discussion highlighted Switzerland’s dual vocational education and training (VET) model, which combines company-based apprenticeships with classroom instruction, and emphasized its strong outcomes in workforce readiness, mobility, and equality. Swiss and U.S. companies are increasingly implementing apprenticeship programs in the United States, supported by the renewal in 2024 of the bilateral Memorandum of Understanding, which was first established in 2015.

Learn more about the session on SWISS IMPACT.

Subscribe to our email list.

The Governors Youth Apprenticeship Program: An Initiative Inspired by Switzerland

Inspired by Switzerland's globally recognized dual-education system, Oklahoma **Governor Kevin Stitt**, Chair of the National Governors Association (NGA), has launched a new initiative to strengthen public-sector talent pipelines across the United States. The landmark initiative, called the "Governors Youth Apprenticeship Program," was launched during the opening session of the NGA meeting in Washington, DC, and is a central piece of the Chair's stated aim to reignite the American Dream. The program was jointly developed by the National Governors Association, Western Governors University, and CareerWise. "The project was inspired by Gov. Stitt's bipartisan delegation to Switzerland to study the world-renowned Swiss apprenticeship model," the NGA's press release from February 21 stated.

The program places recent high school graduates in governors' offices and executive agencies as Government Policy Specialists. Apprentices gain hands-on experience in public policy, operations, and project management while earning flexible, stackable college credits that can lead to a bachelor's degree. The model combines structured academic learning with practical, on-the-job training.

NGA will convene governors and senior officials to support coordination across states, while CareerWise provides implementation support and Western Governors University delivers competency-based online coursework aligned with workplace needs. The initiative aims to address workforce shortages, modernize public-sector recruitment, and create a scalable, employer-driven pathway into public service.

The program reflects key principles of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Switzerland, where apprenticeships are widely established in the public sector. The Swiss Federal Administration alone trains over 1,000 apprentices, and around 5,300 enter public administration

Subscribe to our email list.

Learn more about the Governors Youth Apprenticeship Program on SWISS IMPACT.

Christian Vonarburg: Systems, Structure, and the Experience of Abstraction

The Swiss Embassy, in partnership with gallerist **Dr. Andrew Ritcheson** (Colloquia Art) and Swiss artist **Christian Vonarburg**, hosted an evening exploring contemporary Swiss art and the logic of abstraction.

Vonarburg's work combines precise geometric systems with controlled variations in color and pattern. Built on grids derived from divided polygons, his compositions balance structure and dynamism. Drawing on Swiss traditions of technical precision and geometric influences from multiple cultures, his practice brings together artistic intuition, computational thinking, and material discipline. Ritcheson situated the work within a broader international context, emphasizing the increasingly global nature of contemporary artistic dialogue.

In a moderated conversation, Vonarburg and Ritcheson discussed how concepts such as geological time, accumulation, and transformation can be expressed visually. In his remarks, **Ambassador Ralf Heckner** reflected on how the exhibition resonates with a broader Swiss approach of "progress built patiently, layer by layer." Just as "Strata" translates geological time into structured visual forms, Switzerland's engagement with the U.S. develops through long-term collaboration in investment, innovation, peace, and cultural exchange.

The program concluded with a Q&A and reception, offering guests the opportunity to engage directly with the artist. Bringing together participants from art, academia, diplomacy, and business, the evening fostered dialogue across disciplines.

Learn more about the event on SWISS IMPACT.

Subscribe to our email list.

Swiss Night at D.C. United

Did you know that D.C. United's head coach is Swiss? In July 2025, **René Weiler**, a former player from Winterthur, was appointed to lead DC's Major League Soccer club.

To celebrate this connection, the Embassy of Switzerland in the United States partnered with D.C. United to host a Swiss Night on February 21 during the club's first home match of the season. At Audi Field, the Embassy welcomed fans at a Swiss-themed booth, offering hand warmers and a soccer trivia game.

The festivities also included students from a D.C. Public School participating in the Embassy Adoption Program. In the weeks leading up to the match, they visited Audi Field for a behind-the-scenes tour and an introduction to Swiss soccer. On match day, they returned to meet players and Coach Weiler before kickoff.

Ambassador Ralf Heckner and Embassy staff attended the game and met Coach Weiler afterward for an exchange on soccer and life in Washington. Fans also saw Swiss defender **Silvan Hefti**, recently signed from Hamburg SV, take the field.

The evening ended on a high note with a 1–0 victory for D.C. United over the Philadelphia Union, marking a successful start to the season and to this growing partnership.

Learn more about the Swiss Night at D.C. United on SWISS IMPACT.

Subscribe to our email list.

Stay in touch with the Embassy of Switzerland. Follow us on our social media channels and subscribe to our events newsletter.

Manage your preferences | Opt Out using TrueRemove™
Got this as a forward? Sign up to receive our future emails.
View this email online.

2900 Cathedral Avenue | Washington , DC 20008 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

emma

Subscribe to our email list.