



Türkiyede İsviçre Ticaret Odası Demeği
Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Turkey
Die Schweizer Handelskammer in der Türkei

e-Bulletin September 2013

Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Turkey



Interviews

Ahmet Lütfü Bilgen	3
Zeynep Tuncer	5

Events

Swiss National Day	12
Event Calendar	15

News

Members	8-10
Culture & Art	11
Announcements	13-14
Swiss News	16

PLATINUM PATRONS



GOLDEN PATRONS

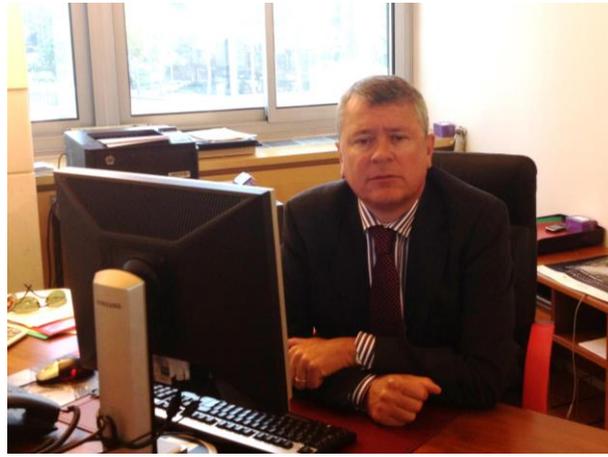


SILVER PATRONS



EVENT PATRONS





Editorial

Deputy Consul General of Switzerland

John Ruhoff

Dear Reader,

I felt honored when the Swiss Chamber of Commerce asked me to write an editorial for this edition of their newsletter, and accepted willingly. My passion for commercial diplomacy, particularly looking after and following bilateral trade issues between Switzerland and other countries, has developed over the last decade in my work at three Swiss Embassies on two continents.

Furthermore, becoming a founding member of the Abu Dhabi Swiss Business Council, during my 2002 posting to the United Arab Emirates, provided me with an excellent basis for my subsequent assignment as the Commercial Attaché to the Embassy of Switzerland in Rome. There, in "The Eternal City," I worked closely for over three years with the current Consul General in Istanbul, Ms. Monika Schmutz Kirgöz.

After Italy, I moved to Albania's capital city Tirana where I spent five years as Deputy Head of Mission. In Tirana I had the privilege of supporting a pipeline project "Trans Adriatic Pipeline," whose major shareholder was the Swiss energy company Axpo. The pipeline will bring natural gas from Azerbaijan to the most attractive markets in Europe via the South-

ern Corridor; its route running through Greece and Albania, across the bottom of the Adriatic Sea and ending in Italy. However, it will be supplied by Turkey's "Trans-Anatolian-Pipeline" at the Greek-Turkish border town of Kipoi.

Albania is a country strongly influenced by the Ottoman Empire's 500 year rule and since Turkey's traditions and history have always fascinated me it seems only natural that the post of Deputy Consul General on the shores of the Bosphorus was top of my transfer wish list. Apart from the obvious attractions of sun, sea, history and magic that Turkey and especially Istanbul have to offer, it is also one of the most staggeringly dynamic and booming places in the world. Any diplomat would feel privileged to serve here and I quite openly admit that I am very fortunate, not least for the opportunity to team up with Monika Schmutz Kirgöz once again as her Deputy. This newly created position at the General Consulate underlines the importance Switzerland attaches to Istanbul as an international cultural, political and commercial hub.

I shall also be working closely with our new Antenna of Switzerland Global Enterprise, and look forward to liaise on joint initiatives

with our vast network which includes the economic section of our Embassy in Ankara, the Honorary Consulates, your Chamber of Commerce as well as other relevant stakeholders. By using all our available synergies and cross-connecting the fields of culture, education, trade and research, I am convinced that we will "grow together", increasing Switzerland's presence on the map of Istanbul. In short, the Consulate General firmly believes in the significant economic, cultural and trade potential for both our countries.

I look forward to meeting you on one of the many upcoming occasions and remain

Yours faithfully,

John Ruhoff

"We are number one among our competitors in terms of the number of service people and trying to support our customers."



Interview with...

Ahmet Lütfü Bilgen

Company: Endress+Hauser

Position title: Managing Director

Date of Birth: 8.10.1957

Place of Birth: Edirne

Marital status: Married

University: Middle East Technical University, Industrial Engineering

Mr Bilgen, tell us a little bit about your background.

After I have graduated, I worked in a small company representing mining equipment producers, until my military service. The beauty of selling captured my heart during those times. When I completed military service, I worked in Turkish Airlines and designed management information systems, then in Profilo and designed production assembly line, then Unilever in various management positions. So, I experienced different disciplines of industrial engineering. Finally, I joined Intek, the company who was representing Endress+Hauser in Turkey and since then I have been selling E+H products, services and solutions.

What is your impression of Turkey and the Turkish market so far?

Endress+Hauser is one of the world leaders in process automation and is a Swiss based family owned company established in 1953. We are very happy to celebrate our 60th anniversary this

year. E+H has 19 production centres in 11 different countries, more than 40 sales centres and 70 representatives around the world. In 1984, E+H has started the activities in Turkey with Intek, who represented successfully for 24 years. When E+H has decided to establish its own entity, the operation was done in harmony and all the people in Intek, including myself changed to Endress+Hauser sales office in 2007. Since then we continued our growth in sales, marketing and services with an increasing slope. Today, we have one branch office in Adana and one branch office in Izmir will be opening on 23rd October. So, we are not new in Turkish market and acting since 1984. We have very large installed base and serving almost in every industry. Therefore, after sales services are also very important for us. Some of our products can be commissioned easily by our customers without any support, but some of them need technical service support. As of today, we are number one among our competitors in terms of the number of service people

and trying to support our customers for commissioning, maintenance, maintenance contracts, spare parts, repair and calibration services in entire country.

Name us three extraordinary things about your company?

One of the extraordinary things is to be a family owned company. In today's business environment, many growing companies have been purchased by big players and number of family owned companies is very few. We always feel the privilege of to be a family member and trying to keep the same spirit also in our Sales Center Turkey. Second, our company always promotes innovation. Innovative products which generate additional benefits for the customer are crucial for Endress+Hauser's success. In 2012, we applied for 230 patents at patent offices around the world and almost 5300 patents and patent applications protect our intellectual property. We spent around 7% of our net sales on research and development. For example, the

first vibrating level switches has been launched to the market by E+H. This has brought a big success and now, vibrating level switches become a standard product on the market. We have many more examples like that.

Third one, with over 60 years of experience at field instrumentation, we have very large product basket of level, flow, pressure, temperature, liquid analysis measurement systems and solutions, serving almost in every industry and a lot of knowledge and application expertise. Working from the field level up, and consulting with our customers throughout, we are able to transfer the process knowledge we have obtained into the products we produce. The resulting technologies match the requirements of our customers, better addressing the daily challenges they face and returning value which has been co-created. Our comprehensive range ensures we are always able to select a device which has been designed with our customers' needs in mind.

What is the biggest challenge Endress+Hauser is facing in Turkey?

Political turmoil within Turkey's neighborhood like Iraq, Syria and Egypt may influence the growth of the country and makes difficult to carry future estimations.

Engineering and service support is expected to be free of charge according to most of our customers. Nevertheless,

we continue to employ a large service team in order to support our customers. Our credo states "first serve then earn".

What are the gains?

Our company continues to grow ever since establishment. Even the growth has continued in 2009 which was the year of economic crisis. In Turkey and in general Endress+Hauser World, years of 2010, 2011 and 2012 were the best years in terms of growing sales figures and number of employees. We increased our net sales to 1.7 billion Euro in 2012. Number of employees exceeded more than 10.000.

What future plans does your company hold and what are your upcoming projects?

As Turkish Sales Office, for this year our target industries are chemical, oil & gas, food, environment and primaries & metal. We have conducted activities regarding to these industries. This year we attended Petroleum 2013 and ICCI 2013 exhibitions and we have done customer seminars and launched our new products into Turkish Market. Since 2011, we are selling our economical products from stock via catalogue and web page under the name of e-direct service. In future, we would like to establish new branch offices in order to be closer to our customers and give the best sales and service support throughout Turkey.

Is there anything else you would like to add that would be of interest to our SCCT Bulletin readers?

Our country is one of the fastest growing countries. In order to have a sustainable growth, we have to increase our manufacturing capabilities and improve productivity. Automation or measurement and control is the key for this. Therefore, I recommend to increase the usage of instruments and solutions, and of course preferably with our products.

What role does the Chamber of Commerce play in your business life?

Being a member of a Swiss family owned company and being a member of Chamber of Commerce is completing the link. I have benefit a lot from the seminars and conferences held until now. Of course, the biggest gain is the relations and friendship I realized in the Chamber.



Endress+Hauser



Memories from a Swiss Education

Name: Zeynep Tuncer

Company:
Erdem & Erdem Law Office

School:
Université de Lausanne
(2007 -2008)

During which time period have you gone to school in Switzerland?

I studied in Switzerland between September 2007 and June 2008. I did a Master of Advanced Studies in European Law and International Economic Law ("MAS"), which was a master program both in French and in English languages prepared in collaboration with four Universities of Switzerland: The University of Geneva, the University of Lausanne, the University of Fribourg and the University of Neuchâtel.

Even though the bigger part of the lessons was given at the University of Lausanne, we had also lessons in the other universities. For instance, arbitration lessons were given at the University of Geneva and private contracts law lessons at the University of Fribourg.

Do you have any special memories?

Impossible not to have any special memories of that year!

Imagine that you are between twenty-five persons, who are from nine different countries and who are between 22 and 64 years old...

Imagine that you are studying with lawyers, students, housewives, retirees and research assistants...

Imagine that you are living in four different cities and studying in four different universities in a week...

I imagine that you are in a multicultural city full of social activities (concerts, festivals, sports, etc.)...

All my year is full of memories! Just as example, I

woke up very early to spend time at the cafeteria of the University to see my friends, talk to them and laugh with them before lessons! I could not sleep the nights because I burst into laughter after the day I had at the University! I watched excellent and unforgettable concerts and matches of football! I enjoyed preparing memories or presentations for lessons by using the incredible books, articles and thesis in the different libraries of the Universities!

Please give us a brief insight on your personal experiences during that time.

During the time I was in Switzerland, I had two lives in one. On the one hand, I had a very active life with the University, the friends and the social activities. I could go for instance to Zurich or France (Lyon, Strasbourg, etc.) with my friends, taste different foods and wines! I could meet everywhere different people due to the multicultural characteristic of the country or I could participate to very interesting international conferences.

But on the other hand, I had a very calm life where I could take a walk in parks, mountains and admire the beauty of the nature, the Lake Léman and profit from the snow! I could visit small cities comparable to postal cards such as Lucerne or Thoun and felt at peace or experience the magic of some moments such as Christmas time. In short, it was a year full of activities but free of stress.

Describe briefly the Swiss education system in comparison to the Turkish one.

I studied law at the University of Galatasaray in Istanbul, which is a university with an education system based both on Turkish and French systems. I received a bilateral education based on theory and practice during my studies at the University of Ga-

I can say that the same system was also applied in Switzerland. The lessons were both practical and theoretical. For instance, we learnt arbitration from the books and then we participated in moot courts organized by our professors.

The only real difference that I could observe was the system of examination. Although the exams were principally in written in Turkey, they were principally oral in Switzerland. This is of course certainly due to the level of the studies and the low number of students. However, having oral exams permits me an easier adaptation to business life since I learn to command the conversation, which is crucial for law.

What is so special about Swiss education?

There is no doubt that Switzerland is the heart of the law!

Professors are prestigious and reputable, there are incredible libraries with all kinds of books, articles, thesis and almost all international institutions are in Switzerland.

In addition, the education is based on research. We learn to make research, to compare different systems and to finally form our own opinion, which influences in a positive way all our future professional and private life.

What would you recommend Turkish parents who want to send their children to a Swiss boarding school?

I can recommend them to prepare all their applications (for the university, obtainment of residence permit, etc.) in full conformity with the relevant legislations in order not to face any problem once they will be in Switzerland.

Then, I can recommend them to be sure that their children have a good knowledge of at least one of the official languages of Switzerland.





The Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Turkey is a supporter of UNICEF



WORKING FOR CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

UNICEF is the largest global organisation working specifically for children and their rights.

UNICEF works with families, communities and governments in more than 190 countries worldwide to help every child reach their full potential through long-term and emergency work on health care, education and protection for children at risk.

UNICEF raises funds through donations from individuals, organisations and companies.

UNICEF Turkish National Committee is a registered NGO raising funds and awareness to support UNICEF's work in the fields of child health, education and protection worldwide and in Turkey, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF Turkish National Committee focuses its work mainly in Pre-School Education and Primary Education.

WE NEED YOU IN HELPING CHILDREN!

It is possible to give every child a good start in life. UNICEF can ensure that every child grows and develops to their full, human potential.

If you would like more information about UNICEF projects & fundraising opportunities please contact **Mrs Safer Taşkent** 0212 252 52 22 or mail to staskent@unicefturk.org so that UNICEF can come and visit you in your office.

News from Members



MPS - Metal Plastik Sanayi A.Ş.

Founded in 1999, MPS Metal Plastik Sanayi A.Ş. is a leading manufacturer and distributor of industrial packaging products in Turkey. MPS produces high quality packaging straps in steel and different plastic materials and exports its products to more than 40 different countries. MPS administration and production functions are ISO 9001 certified.

In 2008, MPS entered a Joint Venture agreement with its licensor Signode by selling 50% of the company's shares. Signode is the worldwide leading manufacturer and supplier of protective packaging systems with revenues over \$2.5bn. MPS manufactures its consumables under Signode brand name and supplies companies in a large variety of industries such as metals, appliances, lumber and panel, beverage, logistics, fiber, glass, tobacco, corrugated etc.

MPS also distributes manual and automatic strapping and wrapping systems manufactured by Signode and provides customized engineering services to fulfill customers' specific packaging needs. In today's competitive business environment, MPS helps its customers to ensure protection of their products, improve safety of their workers and lower their manufacturing costs by supplying them with quality packaging products, high-tech systems and expert service.

Cem, what is your background and your position in MPS?

I graduated from Lycée Saint Joseph in Istanbul in 1989. I then continued my studies in the US and graduated from Tufts University with a BS in Mechanical Engineering in 1993. After a 3-year working period in a trading firm in New York, I finished my MBA in NYU Stern School of Business in 1998. Following my studies, I worked at Deutsche Bank in their Corporate Finance Department in New York. In 2001, I decided to return to Turkey and join the family business in MPS.

My first position in MPS was the Product Development Manager. With our production team, we designed production lines and started manufacture of a specialty packaging strap made out of polyester cords, for the first time in Turkey. Those products are registered under the trade name of Lifex®. Since 2005, I serve as the General Manager and Managing Director of the Company. In 2008, we decided to join forces with our licensor Signode and formed a 50/50 JV. Today we continue our activities in our factory located in Dilovası, Kocaeli.

For more information please visit www.mpsmetal.com.tr, www.lifexstrap.com, www.signode.com

What is your relationship to Switzerland?

Our partners are based in Chicago, US but their headquarters in Europe are located in Zurich. I, therefore, travel frequently to Switzerland for work. Most importantly, however, my wife was born in Bern to a Turkish mother and a Swiss father. My wife and two children are Swiss citizens.



Cem Örs

MPS
Managing Director, Partner

News from Members



ŞENGEL CONSTRUCTION

Şengel Construction company is a family owned business which was founded in 1969, with the leadership of Reşit Şengel, and his sons Mehmet Şengel & Sabri Şengel. It has shown a major growth while preserving family values inspired by the founders. It continues to improve her experience with third generations leadership; Ahmet M. Şengel.

While offering a wide range of construction services infrastructure - superstructure projects, residential and workplace buildings, she gained herself a leader position in the field of urban renewal and she keeps continue to her successes.

Having a progressive approach in all her studies and by always hugging the change, Şengel Construction continues to offer her services by Ankara Headoffice, Kuşadası and Kuwait office.

We certified our quality confidence with ISO 9001:14001 and OHSAS 18001 certificate in 2008

While designing our projects in order to be able to decrease the damages we may give to the environment, we show diligence to the correct management of natural sources. In order to increase our environmental performance we train our employees continuously.

As the return of the importance we give to time in each project we designed and to deliver it will all its details as it is planned, we have been awarded many times for our works both in public and in private field. We continue to be awarded with the continuous interest shown in our projects.

ŞENGEL CONSTRUCTION

Contact: Ahmet M. Şengel
Address: Turgut Özal Bulvarı Murat Sitesi A Blok No 1
Kuşadası AYDIN
Tel: 0256 618 1895
Fax: 0256 618 1910
Sector: Construction/Tourism
Web: <http://www.sengel.com.tr>
Email: info@sengel.com.tr



Ahmet M. Şengel
General Manager
Şengel Construction



News from Members

STAIGER, SCHWALD & PARTNER
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW

STAIGER, SCHWALD & PARTNER

Attorneys-at-Law

DRIVEN BY PERSONALITY AND COMMITMENT.

Founded in 1964, Staiger, Schwald & Partner is a solution-driven, full-service law firm, covering all areas of civil and commercial law. Over the past decades, we have assisted our top-ranking national and international clients, ranging from individuals to small and medium-size businesses as well as global enterprises, in implementing their complex tasks.

We value a long-lasting relationship with our clients. We strive to provide quality legal services on the basis of mutual confidence and trust, and to serve our clients' interests in a cost-efficient, timely and transparent manner. Personal commitment on the part of the professional in charge helps our clients reach their goals more effectively. Continuity with our partners and associates results in an effective, purpose-driven team.

Located in Switzerland's business centres, Zurich, Basle and Berne, we keep abreast of the country's political and economic developments, while a worldwide network of first-rate correspondent attorneys allows us to maintain our high standards while serving all our clients, wherever they may require legal assistance.

Our attorneys are members of several national and international professional organizations.

Practice Areas:

- Banking / Finance / Capital Markets
- Construction and Real Estate Law
- Corporate and Commercial / Mergers & Acquisitions
- Energy Law
- Insolvency / Restructuring
- Insurance
- Intellectual Property
- Litigation
- Mediation
- Notary Services
- Private Clients
- Tax

Contact Details:

YASEMIN VAREL, lic.iur.

Attorney-at-Law

E-Mail: yasemin.varel@ssplaw.ch

Telephone: +41 58 387 80 00



STAIGER, SCHWALD & PARTNER Ltd.
Attorneys-at-Law

Genferstrasse 24
P.O. Box 2012
CH-8002 Zurich
Telephone +41 58 387 80 00
Telefax +41 58 387 80 99

Thunstrasse 7
P.O. Box 281
CH-3000 Berne 6
Telephone +41 58 387 88 00
Telefax +41 58 387 88 99

Heuberg 7
P.O. Box 2032
CH-4001 Basel
Telephone +41 58 387 95 00
Telefax: +41 58 387 95 99

Culture & Art

In the course of the **“Italian Language Week”** the Italian Cultural Center in Istanbul will present on 25th October 2013 the Swiss-Italian film

Giochi d'estate/ Jeux d'été / Sommerspiele

Switzerland/Italy, September 2011, Coproduction with Swiss director

Plot: Midsummer by the sea in the Maremma in Tuscany. Vincenzo and Adriana, trapped in emotional dependency, make one last desperate attempt to save their marriage. Their 12-year-old son Nic processes the trauma from his father's violent outbursts in games with other children. Although he is well integrated in his group of friends, he finds it extremely difficult to express what he feels for Marie, who is the same age and suffers from her own relationship with her father. A film about the first steps towards a life of one's own.

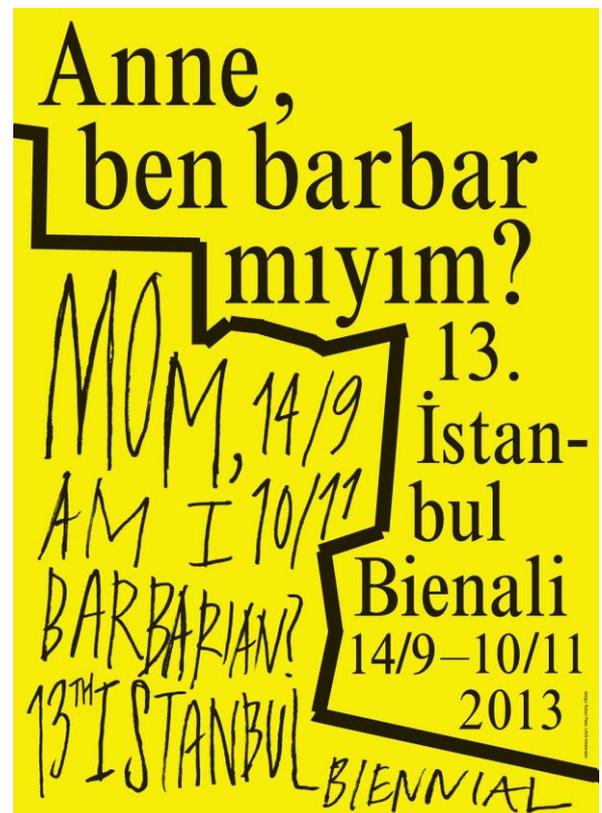
Source: swissfilms.ch



13th Istanbul Biennial

13th Istanbul Biennial, realised under the title “Mom, am I barbarian?” and curated by Fulya Erdemci, can be visited between 14 September and 20 October 2013, at Antrepo No.3, Galata Greek Primary School, ARTER, SALT Beyoğlu and 5533.

Source: iksv.org





Swiss National Day

Date: 1 August 2013

Location: Swissôtel The Bosphorus, Sultan Park



The Consulate General of Switzerland celebrated the Swiss National Day with distinguished guests and friends at Swissôtel The Bosphorus. The Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Turkey was one of the sponsors.

Photos:

Consulate General of Switzerland and Habertürk

Announcement

Launch of the “Red Carpet” business visa facilitation program

In order to further encourage bilateral trade relations between Switzerland and Turkey, the Consulate General of Switzerland in Istanbul is pleased to announce the launch of the “Red Carpet” business visa facilitation program. Under this program, executives and employees of companies recommended by our Trade Department, and registered both in Switzerland and Turkey, will be able to benefit from the following far-reaching and substantial visa facilitation measures:

- **Quick buildup of long term multiple entry visa**
- **Fast-track appointment and handling of the application (next day pick up of passport)**
- **Few supporting documents needed**

A visa can be issued for a maximum period of five years, depending on the validity of the applicant’s passport and the applicant’s track record regarding visa application. Please be advised that the final decision remains with the Consulate General.

The companies have to be recommended by the Trade Department and registered both in Switzerland and Turkey. Applicants who didn’t use their “Red Carpet” visa for travelling to Switzerland (at least once), may have to be asked to apply at a different Schengen state for their next visa.

If you would like to know how to apply for the “Red Carpet” program, please contact the Consul, Head of Visa Section, Ralph Steinegger , by email ralph.steinegger@eda.admin.ch or telephone +90 212 283 12 93. He will be happy to answer all your questions.

Welcome, Baby Nilda!

The Swiss Chamber of Commerce is overly happy to welcome its cutest member Nilda Hoşceylan.

We wish SCCT Director and proud mother Eda Hoşceylan all the best with her new family member.



Announcement

TURKEY – SWITZERLAND EUREKA R&D COLLABORATION EVENT DRAFT AGENDA

Date: 5 November 2013

Venue: Zurich Technopark - Switzerland

Who should attend?	Representatives of Turkish respectively Swiss companies, universities or research institutes interested in finding new partners & funding for R&D projects within the fields of ICT and Manufacturing
What is it about?	1-day conference with company/academia presentations and matchmaking sessions
What is the benefit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Network with entrepreneurs and researchers ➤ Find potential partners for joint R&D projects ➤ Get information about potential public project funding through the EUREKA and EUROSTARS initiatives (more information: Turkey: www.eureka.org.tr; Switzerland: www.sbf.admin.ch/eureka and www.sbf.admin.ch/eurostars)

Time	Agenda item
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:10	Opening Remarks
09:10 – 09:40	Introduction Eureka and Eurostars (presentation of the mechanisms of the two programs from a Turkish and a Swiss point of view)
09:40 – 10:40	Company Presentations from Turkey (Only companies having project ideas and looking for partners can make presentation)
10:40 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:00	Company / Academia Presentations from Switzerland (Only companies/academia having project ideas and looking for partners can make presentation)
12:00 – 13:00	Networking Lunch
13:00 – 15:50	One-to-One Matchmaking Meetings
15:50 – 16:00	Conclusions and Closing
16:00 – 18:00	Guided visit to Zurich Technopark

For more information please click here:

<http://www.eureka.org.tr/home.do;jsessionid=40C39E974255727E0780AF4BE57E7F96?ot=5&rt=&sid=0&pid=0&cid=26092> or www.sbf.admin.ch/eureka

Event Calendar 2013

Month	Date	Subject	Organizer	Type
August	1 August, Wednesday	Swiss National Day	Consulate General	Sponsorship
September	12 September	CRUS Swiss University Event	Consulate General	Event
	13 September, Friday	Jansen AG event: Mr Doğan Taşkent will give a presentation in Oberriet	Jansen AG	Speeches & Interviews
	14 September, Friday	Opening Istanbul Biennial	IKSV	Social Event
	17 September, Tuesday	Köksal Attorney Partnership Seminar: "Impacts of amendments made in labour safety and union legislation over business life"	SCCT	Business Seminars
	not confirmed	Luncheon with Cem Mansur Chief of "Türkiye Gençlik Filarmoni Orkestrası"	SCCT	Social Event
October	22 October, Tuesday	Swiss Arbitration Seminar and Cocktail in Ankara	SCCT	Swiss Expertise Series
	29 October, Tuesday	Double Taxation Seminar with Ernst & Young	SG-E	Swiss Expertise Series
	24-31 October	Swiss Festival by Viatrans	VIATRANS	Social Event
	30 October, Thursday	DHL Switzerland: Mr Doğan Taşkent will give a presentation in Zurich	DHL Schweiz	Speeches & Interviews
November	not confirmed	Vocational Learning (working with TE-PAV)	SCCT	Swiss Innovation Series
	not confirmed	Swiss Event with S-GE	SG-E	Business Seminars
	17 November, Sunday	Eurasiamarathon		Social Event
	18 November, Monday	Event with ZKB (Gaziantep)	SCCT	Swiss Expertise Series
December	not confirmed	Luncheon with UBS	SCCT	Swiss Expertise Series
	10 December, Tuesday	9th Swiss Turkish Economic Forum	SCCT	Forum
	not confirmed	End of the Year Cocktail Reception	SCCT	Social Event
Board Meetings	17 January, Wednesday	Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul		
	11 March, Monday	Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul		
	28 May, Tuesday	Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul		
	September	Mövenpick Hotel Istanbul		
	October			
	November			
	December			

News from Switzerland

Immigration leads to a healthier state

Contrary to common perceptions, immigrants to Switzerland are net contributors to the country's tax coffers rather than a drain, according to a recent international study. This owes much to the robust Swiss economy, say experts.

The research, carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), showed that the fiscal impact of immigration is almost neutral in most cases, with Luxembourg and Switzerland proving to be positive exceptions.

The 2013 International Migration Outlook estimated that migrants boosted Swiss tax coffers by CHF6.5 billion (\$6.85 billion), equivalent to 1.9 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Only Luxembourg recorded a better result, with two per cent.

These two countries also recorded the highest immigration rates in 2011.

"If you look broadly at the picture of immigration to Switzerland, you can pretty much call it a success story," said Thomas Liebig, an OECD migration specialist and one of the study's authors. "It has a lot of labour-related migration, which helps explain the favorable fiscal impact."

Etienne Piguet, geography professor at the University of Neuchâtel, agrees.

"Switzerland's economic migration policy has focused on attracting highly qualified workers from outside the EU as well as the best people from the EU, thanks to its dynamic work market," he told swissinfo.ch. "This is what has happened so far, so it's not surprising that these migrants are net contributors to the economy and state budget."

According to Liebig, recent immigrants, in particular from the European Union, are very well integrated into the labour market and contribute far more in terms of taxes and social security contributions than they are taking out of the system.

"Foreign-born households receive more social benefits than native-born households, but at the same time they pay taxes that more than compensate," he added. "Immigrants also contribute to the funding of state duties such as public administration, defence, infrastructure and so forth."

Source: swissinfo.ch