



Swiss Newsletter



Dear Swiss citizens and friends of Switzerland,

Switzerland has a broad footprint in Southern Africa. Most of the well-known Swiss or Swiss based companies operate in the Region and employ thousands of people. Southern African households eat Swiss chocolate, cheese, drink Swiss milk and Swiss produced coffee every day to only mention a few examples. The region furthermore attracts every year an increasing number of Swiss tourists who enjoy the incredible beauty of Southern Africa with its fascinating wildlife, breathing landscapes and warm and welcoming people. Many Swiss have also decided to make the region their home. At the Swiss Regional Consular Centre and at the Swiss Consulate General in Cape Town roughly 10'000 Swiss citizens of all walks of life have registered. Most of them live in South Africa and quite a considerable number have also taken up domicile on the island of Mauritius. However, you will also find a reduced number of Swiss compatriots living in – from a European perspective – more exotic locations such as Lesotho or Swaziland.

Welcome to this first ever newsletter by the Embassy of Pretoria. Swiss lawmakers have asked Embassies across the world to engage with the Swiss communities by publishing at least once a year a newsletter. My team and I have taken up this new mandate with a lot of enthusiasm. In this first edition you will find a bouquet of information on legislation which might be affecting you and your family. The article on the planned refactoring of South African street lights in order to save energy gives you an insight into the activities of the Embassy's economic development team *seco*. The Science and Technology collaboration between Switzerland and South Africa started 10 years ago. The in its kind unique international Research Project by the name of ACE (Antarctic Circumnavigation Expedition) by the Swiss Polar Institute is living proof of what can happen if a vibrant ecosystem is in place. ACE departed and returned to Cape Town and was for us an excellent platform to showcase Swiss excellence.

The Swiss Embassy in Pretoria promotes Swiss interests in Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. The Regional Consular Centre provides additionally consular services to Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, all in all a territory 90 times of the size of Switzerland. We could not function effectively without the valuable support of our Honorary Consuls. It is therefore with great pleasure that I introduce to you the newly appointed Honorary Consul in Durban/South Africa, Mrs. Carine Riederer. Mrs. Riederer took over from Mr. Hanspeter Graber who assumed the function up to his retirement for nearly 20 years. I wish to thank Hanspeter for his outstanding service to the Swiss community in Kwazulu Natal and all the best to Mrs. Riederer for the time of her mandate.

Helene Budliger Artieda
Ambassador of Switzerland to South Africa, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Swaziland

New Honorary Consul Durban



The Embassy of Switzerland is pleased to announce the nomination of the new Honorary Consul in Durban and to present Mrs Carin Riederer to the Swiss community in the province of Kwazulu-Natal.

Miss Riederer is a Swiss citizen, born in South Africa. After studying law, she completed her articles of clerkship and within 4 years of being a qualified attorney, she opened up her own law firm and now practices under the name and style of Riederer Attorneys.

She is also a member of the Natal Swiss Club. Miss Riederer looks forward to her new function and to help the Swiss residents.

The new details of the honorary consulate are as follows:

111 Helen Joseph Road, Glenwood, Durban

Tel: 031 201 7113 / 083 767 2832

Email: Durban@honrep.ch

We wish her success in her new function.

Swiss week in Mauritius

The Consulate general and the Embassy in Pretoria in collaboration with the Club Suisse de Maurice and the Labourdonnais Waterfront hotel organized a Swiss week from the 4th to the 12th of August 2017 at the Caudan Waterfront. It will be the first time ever that such an event will take place in Mauritius and various events will enlighten this week.

The Program of the Swiss week will be as follows:

04.08.2017 - The inauguration ceremony will be in presence of her Excellency, Mrs Helene Budliger Artieda, Ambassador

06.08.2017 - A Swiss brunch will be followed by a performance of Swiss alphorn Artiste Eliana Burki

07.08.2017 - A Swiss movie evening

09.08.2017 - A jazz evening with Moncef Genoud

10.08.2017 - A conference on innovation

Lastly, the hotel Labourdonnais Waterfrond is proposing a Swiss food festival from the 4th to the 12th and we are looking forward to welcoming the Swiss residents!

New Swiss Citizenship Act

On 20 June 2016, the Swiss Parliament voted on the new Swiss Citizenship Act, which will come into force together with the relevant Ordinance on 1 January 2018. The main aim

of the new law is to naturalize foreign nationals with close ties to Switzerland. More information can be found on:

<http://www.revue.ch/en/editions/2017/01/detail/news/detail/News/obtaining-swiss-citizenship-abroad/>

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/buergerrecht/faq.html>

https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/themen/buergerrecht/faq_neues_recht.html

Switzerland at the forefront of Polar Research

The Embassy of Switzerland in South Africa has teamed up with the Swiss Polar Institute for the Antarctic Circumnavigation Expedition (ACE), which started from Cape Town on the 20th of December of last year and returned three month later to its port of departure.

The ACE project which ran under the motto "Science has no borders" offered teams of distinguished scientists from more than 30 countries an outstanding and unique opportunity to study the marine and terrestrial environment of the sub-Antarctic ecosystem.

It was the first expedition of the newly established Swiss Polar Institute (SPI), which specially chartered the research vessel and icebreaker *Akademik Treshnikov* for this occasion. The SPI, is a consortium consisting of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), [ETH Zurich](#), the [University of Bern](#) and the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research ([WSL](#)) and was cofounded with [Editions Paulsen](#).

While it will take years to the different teams of researchers to fully analyse the gathered data, the expedition can already be labelled as a great success. ACE will definitely contribute to a better understanding of the climate change in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. The Polar Regions are affected by climate change more than any other region on Earth and they play a key role as climate factors by providing oceans with strong underwater streams from the poles to the equator.

Together with the Consulate General in Cape Town, the Swiss Polar Institute and Presence Switzerland, the Swiss Embassy lead an information campaign in Cape Town about the relevance of polar research in general, the excellence of Swiss polar research and the ACE project in particular. While the "House of Switzerland", located in the midst of the V&A Waterfront hosted an exhibition on ACE and polar research, the Embassy organised different events on and around the ACE ship for VIPs, underprivileged youths and the broad public. A modern blend of Alphorn music performed by Eliana Burki and live shows presented by Swiss TV moderator Monika Schärer added bright colors to the festivities preliminary to the departure of the *Akademik Treshnikov* into rougher and icier water than the sunny Capetonian harbors.



Switzerland and South Africa: Automatic Exchange of Information on financial matters

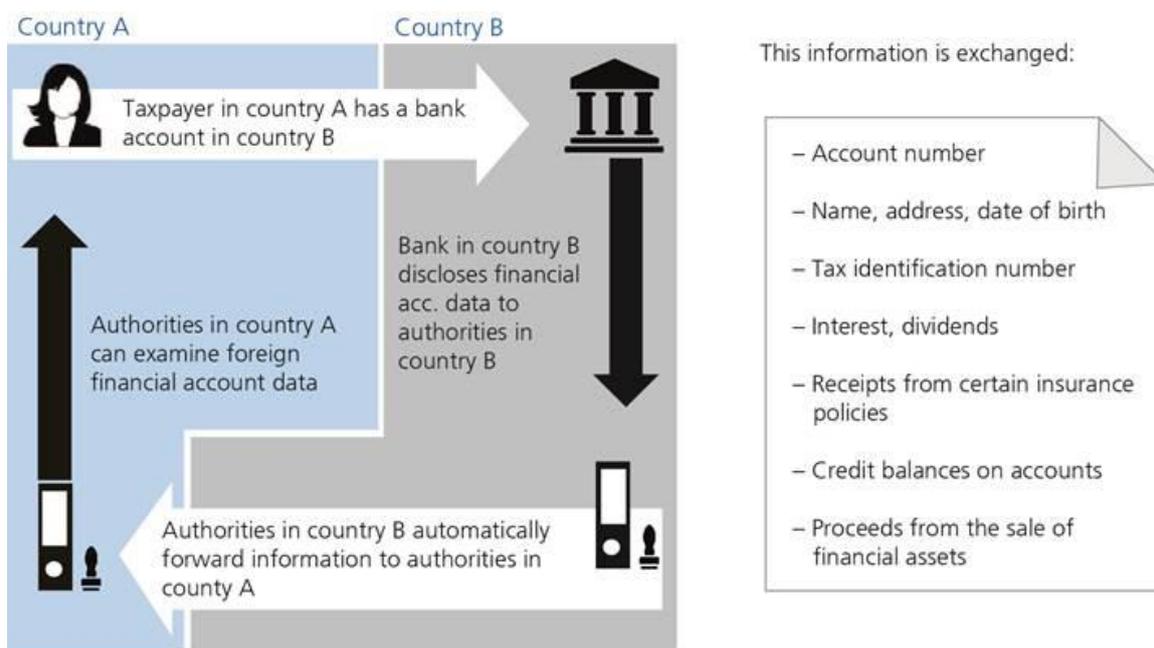
Switzerland and South Africa signed a joint declaration on the introduction of the automatic exchange of information (AEOI) in tax matters on a reciprocal basis. Both countries intend to start collecting data in accordance with the global AEOI standard in 2018 and to exchange it from 2019 onwards.

Cross-border tax evasion should be prevented with the help of the new global standard for the automatic exchange of information (AEOI). To date, approximately 100 countries, including Switzerland, have committed themselves to introducing this global standard. The signing of the joint declaration by the Swiss Ambassador in South Africa and the South African finance minister confirms Switzerland's international commitment to implementing the AEOI standard. Switzerland is thus strengthening its network of AEOI partner states. South Africa meets in particular the high demands in terms of adherence to the principle of speciality and the safeguarding of confidentiality for the data delivered, which are prerequisites for the introduction of the AEOI.

The AEOI standard applies for both natural persons and legal entities. The actual beneficial owners of the account have to be identified in application of the OECD standard and the FATF recommendations. The information to be transmitted includes account and tax identification numbers, as well as the names, addresses and dates of birth of taxpayers abroad with an account in a country other than the country of origin, all types of income and account balances.

From a legal viewpoint, the automatic exchange of information with South Africa will be implemented based on the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement on the Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information. The Federal Council has authorised the Federal Department of Finance (FDF) to conduct a consultation for the introduction of the AEOI with South Africa and other countries. Thereafter, the corresponding federal decrees will be submitted to Parliament for approval.

How the Automatic Exchange of Information works:



Further information:

<https://www.efd.admin.ch/efd/en/home/themen/wirtschaft--waehrung--finanzplatz/finanzmarktpolitik/automatic-exchange-of-information--aeoi-.html>

Address for general enquiries:

<https://www.efd.admin.ch/efd/en/home/das-efd/contact.html>

Making street lighting more energy efficient



South Africa faces a constant rise in electricity demand and a lack of additional power generation capacity, which both led to electricity shortages and resultant load shedding in the past. Debates in the country have very much focused on the need to improve the efficient use of available energy on the one side, and on the other, the need for more renewable energies in the energy mix. Municipalities in the country spend approximately two thirds of their electricity consumption on street lighting. From all energy efficiency interventions currently available, retrofitting street lights has the potential to contribute to the reduction in electricity consumption, CO₂ emissions and immediate financial relief.

Technologies currently in use across South Africa consist mainly of outdated mercury-vapour or sodium lamps. These light bulbs typically a lifetime of approximately 12,000 – 24,000 hours. However, many lessons learnt from Switzerland, Germany and other countries throughout the world show that these outdated street lights can be replaced easily with energy efficient light-emitting diodes (LED), with a lifetime reaching 100,000 hours, realizing energy savings of up to 70% and payback periods of less than five years.

To promote the increased retrofitting of street lights, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) has entered into a EUR 5.2 million partnership with the South African Department of Energy and the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on an innovative project called the Energy Efficient Street Lighting Retrofit Project (EESTLRP). The project will demonstrate both technical and energy saving potential of LED technology in especially high mast street lighting, which is generally used in South Africa's township areas. The project addresses various lighting systems for public spaces ranging from high masts, major/minor roads, public transport corridors and in bus stops. The lights have an added advantage of enhancing public security perception as it increases visibility and coverage in both commercial and residential areas. The project is also investigating options to enhance available technologies by applying new features of luminaire control, such as tele-management, dimming, live metering (smart meter) and light depreciation measurements.

The project will be implemented in five selected municipalities, which will be determined during negotiations with the Department of Energy. However, initial technology testing will be done in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality and the Local Municipality of Matjhabeng in the Free State Province. The possibility of establishing an LED Street Light Walkway at the Innovation Hub in Pretoria is being considered to afford private sector suppliers the opportunity to showcase their products. With this project, the various pilot municipalities will provide a platform to test different technologies in different geographical and weather conditions.

According to Ms Davorka Shepherd, Head of SECO's Coordination Office in Pretoria, the partnership with the Department of Energy will furthermore provide an innovative way for municipalities to access national and international street lighting technology by assisting them with the specifications, processes and systems to procure these technologies in an efficient and transparent manner.

For more information on the activities of SECO, please visit <https://www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch/secocoop/en/home.html>