

Summary

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Swiss Public Diplomacy in the Swiss-Turkish 100 years Friendship Year.

Guillaume SCHEURER - Ambassador of Switzerland to Türkiye

A Centenary Rooted in History

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Far from being a mere anniversary, this moment of Public Diplomacy offers both countries the opportunity to reflect on a rich history of cooperation and to renew their shared commitment to building a future grounded in mutual respect, peace, innovation, and cultural dialogue. For Switzerland, this centenary marks a diplomatic window to highlight its soft power and strategic contributions in the region, while reinforcing its image as a neutral and reliable actor in a shifting geopolitical landscape. Switzerland and Türkiye have common values. Among these, peace with neighbors, good governance and diplomacy come to the fore.

Demography of Switzerland

When “Switzerland” is mentioned, associations such as “chocolate, the Alps, cheese and the Swiss Army knife” come to mind. Since the 16th century, Switzerland - with unchanged borders since 1515- is surrounded by powerful neighbors such as Italy, Germany, France, Austria and Liechtenstein, and is in the middle of Europe.

With a surface area of 41,000 square kilometers, which is about 1/15 of the size of Türkiye it can be considered quite small. Especially during the Cold War, European countries were not as divided as they are today, and Switzerland was considered one of the smaller countries on the continent. However, today, Switzerland can be considered a medium-sized power. With a population of approximately 9 million, Switzerland is a densely populated and urbanized country. Approximately one-third of the country's population consists of foreigners. The country's main cities extend from west to east, with Geneva in the southwest and cities such as Bern, Zurich and St. Gallen to the east, with Zurich as the largest city.

A Unique Political Identity

Switzerland, often associated with its iconic landscapes, neutrality, and high-quality products, is also a model of political cohesion and democratic engagement. With four national languages, a population of around nine million, and a federal structure comprising 26 cantons, Switzerland embodies diversity and subsidiarity. Switzerland is a very special and unique country in terms of its history, cosmopolitan structure and political organization. Its direct democracy—allowing citizens to vote on legislative matters several times a year—is not only a democratic mechanism, but also a fundamental aspect of its national identity. These institutions foster public trust and accountability, enabling a stable political environment and a high degree of civic participation. The beauty and power of Switzerland lies in the extreme importance it attaches to the protection of the identities and rights of minorities. Another important element specific to Switzerland is its political system. Switzerland is a federal state.

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This is one of the most basic concepts in understanding the country. The official name of the country is "Swiss Confederation (Confederatio Helvetica)". The abbreviation for Switzerland, "CH", comes from the Latin expression "Confederatio Helvetica". Although officially referred to as a confederation, in practice Switzerland is not a confederation but a federal state.

Geneva: Capital of Peace

Switzerland's global role is deeply intertwined with its capital of peace: Geneva. Geneva, which is at the center of Europe, hosts more meetings and organizations than New York. In this respect, Geneva is a vibrant center for international relations. Hosting more than 6'000 international conferences per year, Geneva is home to hundreds of international organizations, including the United Nations, the ICRC, and many humanitarian and development agencies. This diplomatic density is a testament to Switzerland's capacity to foster dialogue, mediate conflicts, and anticipate global transformations.

Public Diplomacy: Between Tradition and Innovation

Public diplomacy is an important pillar of Swiss foreign policy. The main objective of public diplomacy is to further reinforce the positive and powerful symbols and concepts that first come to mind when Switzerland is mentioned. It goes beyond state-to-state relations to engage directly with foreign publics, fostering understanding of Switzerland's values, institutions, scientific achievements, and creative sectors. In this context, instruments such as Swissnex (for science diplomacy), SGE (Switzerland Global Enterprise), and GESDA (Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator) contribute to shaping a coherent, innovative and inclusive Swiss international image. From innovation pavilions at Expo Osaka to science leadership programmes in Türkiye, Switzerland leverages technology, education, and culture as soft power tools. Public Diplomacy aims to promote the modern, dynamic and contemporary face of Switzerland as well as the traditional side of its country profile. In line with the principle of universality, Switzerland maintains bilateral relations with all countries of the world. Associated with being neutral, reliable and managing its international relations without a hidden agenda, Switzerland is a country that attracts the attention of many nations who are interested in deepening bilateral cooperation. To support this, public diplomacy aims to present a complete and inclusive country profile while preserving traditional images.

A Multifaceted Bilateral Relationship

The relationship with Türkiye reflects this multifaceted

approach. Over the past century, bilateral relations have developed steadily across diplomacy, trade, education, migration, and humanitarian cooperation. The Treaty of Lausanne and the Montreux Convention symbolize the historical ties between Türkiye and Switzerland. The legacy of these two major treaties signed on Swiss soil, which shaped modern Türkiye and regional stability, remains a cornerstone of this relationship. Switzerland's role as a facilitator and neutral partner has continued through multilateral platforms such as the OSCE, where it will assume the presidency in 2026, while Türkiye holds the Secretary General position since 2024.

Strong Economic Partnership

Economic ties are another central pillar. Although there are large multinational companies in Switzerland, 95% of the country's economy is based on Small and Midsize Enterprises (SMEs). More importantly, SMEs are a main driving force in job creation and vocational training keeping the level of expertise, know-how and quality very high. Switzerland is a significant foreign direct investor. It ranks as the sixth largest direct investor in Türkiye with CHF 4 billion in FDI and over 300 companies employing more than 21'000 people. Total trade between the two countries exceeded USD 10.0 billion in 2024. Turkish investment in Switzerland has also grown significantly, exceeding USD 900 million. These figures reflect a dynamic, long-term partnership built on mutual interest and openness. Events like the Swiss-Turkish Economic Forum, co-organized with the Swiss Business Hub and the Chamber of Commerce, showcase Swiss strengths in cleantech, infrastructure, and sustainable innovation. Switzerland Global Enterprise, having its headquarter in Zurich, focuses on export promotion of Swiss companies and start-ups. Switzerland works together in the public sector, private sector, diplomacy and education and thus achieves the best results.

Innovation and Education as Pillars

Education and innovation further strengthen bilateral cooperation. Switzerland has awarded 196 excellence scholarships to Turkish researchers since 1961. Innovation is of great importance in Switzerland and is encouraged from top to bottom by the state. Switzerland allocates a large portion of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Research and Development (R&D). To give another very impressive figure, Switzerland has been chosen as the most innovative country in the world for 14 consecutive years. It is a great achievement to lead this ranking continuously for so many years -because being innovative is not easy. Academic exchanges with institutions like ETH Zurich, EPFL, and Empa, combined with Türkiye's vibrant academic landscape,

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nurture joint research in cutting-edge fields such as AI, quantum science, and sustainable energy.

Vocational education is another area of convergence. This system is very well thought out and of vital importance for the Swiss economy. There is a strong partnership between the private and public sectors, and the system works very well. One of the three best systems in the world in vocational training is in Switzerland. The private sector and the education system are very harmoniously connected. In addition, students who decide to leave public school at the age of 15, young workers are offered the opportunity to have a profession at a very young age and to transfer to university at a later stage. This system provides a flexible transition opportunity by opening different educational paths.

Swiss institutions such as the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) work closely with Turkish partners like the Istanbul Chamber of Industry to promote youth employability and bridge skills gaps. Collaboration in these areas supports Swiss objectives in boosting economic resilience and enhancing Switzerland's reputation as a global innovation hub.

Science Diplomacy and Anticipation

Science diplomacy is embodied in initiatives like the Global Curriculum for Anticipatory Leadership (GCAL), launched by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis during the GESDA Summit in 2024. Türkiye, selected as one of five pilot countries, will host an Anticipation Event in Istanbul in October 2025. These programs strengthen both countries' capacities to engage with global scientific challenges through anticipatory governance and cross-sector dialogue. Switzerland's leadership in this field reinforces its image as a forward-thinking, collaborative partner.

Cultural Diplomacy and Heritage

Cultural diplomacy plays a vital role in Swiss public diplomacy in Türkiye. The exhibition "Swiss Traces in Ankara" shown in 2025 at the Arts- and Sculpture Museum in Ankara and at the EU Heritage Days, showcases the photography and travel writings of Annemarie Schwarzenbach. It revisits the architectural and urban development of Türkiye's capital during the Republican era. Concerts such as the concert "Crossed Modernities" curated for the visit of Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis to Ankara in April 2025—feature works by Turkish and Swiss composers and highlight a shared aesthetic and literary sensibility.

Regarding the protection of cultural heritage and in fulfillment

of its commitment within UNESCO, Switzerland is taking a proactive stance in the return of cultural heritage artifacts. Since 2023 a bilateral agreement that Switzerland and Türkiye have signed for the return of such goods is in force. Both countries work closely on these issues. After the earthquakes in 2023, Türkiye has received financial support from the Swiss Ministry for Culture for a project to restore the Hatay Archaeological Museum. The return of 37 cultural artefacts from Switzerland to Türkiye in 2025, demonstrates Switzerland's commitment to preserving cultural heritage through cooperation and solidarity. These efforts align with Türkiye's national priorities and reinforce Switzerland's credibility in protecting global heritage.

Diaspora and Social Ties

Diaspora ties also enrich bilateral relations. With over 140,000 people of Turkish origin residing in Switzerland and around 5,000 Swiss citizens living in Türkiye, human connections reinforce institutional ones. These communities serve as bridges of trust, innovation, and cultural understanding, contributing to the resilience and richness of the partnership.

Conclusion

A centenary year, such as the 100 years of friendship with Türkiye in 2025 is not only a celebration, but a strategic moment for Public Diplomacy. Switzerland, which is very proud to have hosted the Treaty of Lausanne and the Montreux Convention, and many other international organizations, continues to cooperate with Türkiye within the UN. 100 years of friendship reflect a relationship anchored in shared values—peaceful coexistence, human rights, innovation—and directed toward common futures. For this centenary of friendship Swiss Public Diplomacy aimed to illustrate our dynamic and thriving bilateral relations through exhibitions, concerts, forums, scientific partnerships and high-level visits, and to show how a century-old friendship can continue to evolve, inspire, and build bridges in a changing world.

12 June 2025**About the Author**

Guillaume SCHEURER - *Ambassador of Switzerland to Türkiye*

Guillaume Scheurer was born in Neuchâtel in 1963, originally from Dombresson/NE and Seedorf/BE. He holds a law degree from the University of Neuchâtel and is a registered lawyer in the same canton.

He joined the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in 1992 after working in the private sector, and did his diplomatic internship in Bern, South Africa and Geneva, where he obtained a diploma in international security policy from the Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in 1994. That same year, he worked in the Policy and Research Section of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) before joining the OSCE Coordination Staff in 1995 for the Swiss Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1996. In 1997, he was appointed Deputy Head of the OSCE and Partnership for Peace Section in the Political Directorate. He was then transferred in 1998 to Vienna to the Swiss Delegation to the OSCE. In 2001, as first collaborator at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran. Returning to Headquarters in 2005, he held the position of Deputy Head of the Political Division for Human Security.

In 2009, he was appointed Deputy Ambassador at the Swiss Embassy in Washington. In 2013, he returned to Vienna as Deputy Head of the Swiss Delegation to the OSCE in anticipation of the Swiss Chairmanship of this Organization in 2014. In October 2015, Mr. Scheurer was appointed Ambassador to Ukraine and Moldova, with residence in Kyiv. From September 2019 to August 2024, he was Ambassador of Switzerland in Rabat.

Since August 2024 he is the Ambassador of Switzerland to Türkiye.

In the Swiss Army, Mr. Scheurer is a first lieutenant of artillery.

Mr. Guillaume Scheurer is married to Ms. Farin Scheurer and father of a son.

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Throughout history, shaping the perceptions of societies has been one of the most fundamental elements of domestic and foreign policy. As the nation-state structure became widespread and nation-states emerged as the main actors in international relations, public diplomacy along with traditional diplomacy began to play a crucial role in shaping these relations.

Diplomatic relations between states are conducted by diplomats, including ambassadors and consuls. These diplomats also engage in public diplomacy, which serves a vital function in interstate relations. Public diplomacy activities have a significant impact not only on the citizens of a state but also on its leaders. Public diplomacy plays a pivotal role in shaping the relations between states alongside other diplomatic activities.

The aim of the project Public Diplomacy in Foreign Policy conducted in collaboration with Cappadocia University and Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) is to discuss the principles for implementing public diplomacy, identify key activities and highlight public diplomacy efforts undertaken by foreign diplomats in Türkiye. The ultimate goal is to contribute to shaping Turkish Foreign Policy and influencing decision-making processes.

For detailed information about the project;
<https://commonhorizon.kapadokya.edu.tr/> You can reach us from the address.

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ became an Associate Professor in 2019 and a full Professor in 2024. He retired in 2021 after 23 years of service in the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). During his time there, he also worked for the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His expertise lies in Weapons of Mass Destruction, Terrorism (WMD), International Security, International Organizations and Peace and Conflict Studies. Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ currently serves as the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences at Cappadocia University. He is fluent in English and German.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL graduated from the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University (BU) in 1993. After completing his Master's Degree at BU in 1995, he was accepted to the PhD program at BU in the same year. After completing his PhD at Ankara University in 2005, Prof. Erol became an Associate Professor in 2009 in the field of "International Relations" and a full Professor in 2014. His areas of expertise are "Geopolitics", "Crisis Management", "Security", "Turkish Foreign Policy" and "Central Asia".

Prof. Erol has published numerous scientific articles and books on these subjects. He is the author and editor of various journals such as Eurasia File, Black Sea Studies, Gazi Akademik Overview, Journal of Regional Studies, International Crisis and Political Studies and contributor for national radio-television programs such as TRT, A HABER, TV NET, CNN TÜRK and HABERTÜRK.

Prof. Erol, whose opinions have been published in Turkey's leading magazines and newspapers has been deemed worthy of many awards, including Writers and Artists Foundation of the Turkic World (TÜRKSAY) in 2007, "Turkish World Service Award" in 2015 and Writers' Union of Turkey (TYB) "Press-Intellectual Award".

Prof. Erol has lectured at Ufuk, Ankara and Gazi Universities. As a faculty member in the Department of Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, he served as an expert, coordinator and founder president in Türkiye's leading think tanks (ASAM, SDE, GSAM, USGAM). He has been the founding chairman of Ankara Crisis and Politics Research Center (ANKASAM) since 2016.