

Notes from parliament

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The HB-SIA on a flight above Zermatt

“An idea born in Switzerland”

The solar powered aircraft designed by aviation pioneers Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg is the best advertisement for Switzerland as a global leader in innovation. This solar aircraft, registration code HB-SIA, therefore officially represents a modern Switzerland that has more to offer than cheese and chocolate. The pilots wear the Swiss crest on their jackets and systematically highlight the project's Swiss origins when making public appearances.

The latest stage of the project – Solar Impulse's “Across America Mission” stretched from San Francisco (California) via Phoenix (Arizona), Dallas (Texas) and other stops along the way to Washington D.C. and New York City. The slogan used was, “An idea born in Switzerland”. Presence Switzerland took advantage of the opportunity to promote its interests and conducted an information campaign during the “Across America Mission” together with the Swiss representations in the USA.

Feat of technical ingenuity

With its enormous wingspan, which at 63.40 metres equates to that of an Airbus A340, and its relatively light weight, equivalent to that of a mid-size car, the solar aircraft possesses unparalleled design and aerodynamic properties. The aircraft, which is fitted with 11,628 photovoltaic cells, is designed for day and night flights at an average speed of 70 kmph. The objective behind the Solar Impulse project is to make a contribution to research and innovation in the field of renewable energies and to highlight how clean technologies can reduce the consumption of natural resources and dependence on fossil fuels.

Following its maiden flight at the end of 2009, the first 26-hour night-time flight took place in July 2010. The first intercontinental flight was made between Europe and Africa two years later, in June 2012, when Solar Impulse flew to the Moroccan capital of Rabat with a stopover in Madrid. The vision of flying over long distances without fossil fuel had thus become a reality. The long-term objective is to fly around the world in 2015 with the second prototype aircraft HB-SIB.

Federal government actively supports the project

In line with the 2012–2015 strategic objectives for national communication, the Federal Council aims to use the project's international media coverage to highlight Switzerland's prowess in the fields of innovation, science and education. Presence Switzerland has therefore concluded a contract with Solar Impulse on behalf of the Federal Council. The federal government has supported Solar Impulse technically, administratively, logistically and financially since the launch of the project. In collaboration with the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, this support also includes the use of hangars at the military air bases in Dübendorf and Payerne. Solar Impulse is constructing the second prototype of the solar aircraft in Dübendorf, and test flights will be carried out in Payerne.

Images of the “Across America Mission” and full information on the pilots and Solar Impulse can be found at <http://solarimpulse.com>

Press release on the collaboration between federal government and Solar Impulse <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/recent-media/single.html?id=47752>

A new directorate at the FDFA

The Directorate for European Affairs (DEA) was established at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of 2013. However, the new directorate does not mean that the FDFA will be undertaking any additional new tasks – the DEA is actually the new name for the former Integration Office, the federal government's centre of expertise for European policy issues. Only the name and its organisational integration have changed; the DEA is no longer attached to two departments (FDFA/FDEA) as the Integration Office was, but is instead completely integrated into the FDFA.

The cantons, as well as offices and organisational units throughout the entire federal administration, maintain contact with EU bodies and institutions based on their field of expertise. These are key contact partners in foreign and economic policy for Switzerland as a non-member state because neighbouring states have fully or partially transferred powers to the EU or because pan-European affairs are coordinated by the EU. The DEA's main responsibilities include bringing these strands together, coordinating relations and conducting negotiations in conjunction with other federal offices. It ensures clarity and coherence in Swiss policy on Europe. It also provides the public with information on Switzerland's European policy and the European integration process.

Consolidation and development

One of the DEA's main tasks is the systematic and efficient implementation and application of existing bilateral agreements. The Directorate also conducts negotiations on new bilateral agreements with the EU together with the offices responsible. Negotiations are currently taking place in the fields of electricity and emissions tra-

ding. Negotiations are also being conducted regarding collaboration with the EU on chemical safety. Swiss involvement in various EU programmes will also have to be renewed shortly in the areas of education and research and the MEDIA film promotion programme.

A further important aspect of the relations between Switzerland and the EU are the so-called institutional issues. These include the adoption of EU law for existing bilateral market access agreements as well as their monitoring and the resolution of any potential disputes between the EU and Switzerland. Both sides are seeking a solution to these issues in order to renew the bilateral approach. Initial exploratory talks have been held, and a joint report is set to follow. On the basis of this report, the Federal Council and the EU will decide, independently of one another, on the initiation of negotiations on this matter.

From Integration Office to DEA

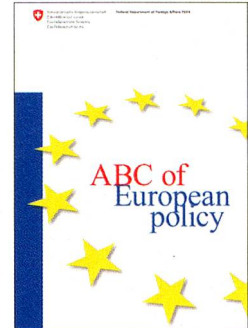
The DEA was founded in 1961 as the FDFA/FDEA Integration Office to coordinate relations with the then European Economic Community (EEC). A tightly-knit set of treaties has been developed with the EU over the years. Milestones include the 1972 free trade agreement between Switzerland and the EU's predecessor organisation, the EEC, and bilateral agreements I and II of 1999 and 2004.

Even though economic and monetary union remains the key focus of EU activities, these also today include matters such as the free movement of persons, Schengen/Dublin, education and research, air and land transport, and peace-building efforts. The Integration Office's remit has therefore expanded. As a result, the Federal Council adopted a resolution during the 2011 administrative reform to integrate it entirely into the FDFA as the DEA.

Information on Swiss policy on the European Union: www.europa.admin.ch/index.html?lang=en

ABC OF EUROPEAN POLICY

The "ABC of European policy" is now available as part of the FDFA's ABC series. With a keyword-based glossary, the publi-



cation explains the most important terms in European policy and provides an overview of political and economic relations between Switzerland and the EU.

It can be ordered free of charge in German, French, Italian and English at www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch or from BBL, Verkauf Bundespublikationen, CH-3003 Berne.

All publications in the ABC series can be found at www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi.html

Publications



Who sits in Parliament? How is legislation drawn up? What does the Federal Council do? Where do federal government's 38,000 employees work? What are the Federal Supreme Court's responsibilities? Answers to

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these and other questions can be found in "The Swiss Confederation – A Brief Guide", a brochure published by the Federal Chancellery. It is aimed at everyone interested in the Swiss system of government.

"The Swiss Confederation – A Brief Guide 2013" can be ordered free of charge in German, French, Italian, Romansh and English at www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch or from BBL, Verkauf Bundespublikationen, 3003 Berne, Switzerland.

Important notices:

Passports from 2003 expire this year

Remember to renew your Swiss passport early at the embassy or consulate general where you are registered. Once you have submitted your passport application, you can book an appointment to record your biometric data at a suitably equipped representation abroad or at a passport office in Switzerland.

PLEASE NOTE: Embassies, consulates general and the passport offices in Switzerland have already recorded a sharp rise in passport applications – up to 40% more applications than usual in some cases – with longer waiting times. Your Swiss representation will be happy to inform you about the procedure and the estimated amount of time that you should allow for the issuing of a new passport.

Address

Inform your embassy or consulate general of your email address and mobile phone number or of any changes to them. Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your

representation, etc.). The latest "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (and "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent elec-

tronically (via email or as an app for iPad and Android Tablet PCs) or as a printed edition free of charge to all households of Swiss citizens abroad who are registered with an embassy or consulate general.

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The proposals for the federal referendum on 22 September 2013 had not been announced by the time of going to press.

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlet, committees, party information, e-voting, etc.) can be found at www.ch.ch/abstimmungen. The final referendum date in 2013 is 24 November.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following federal popular initiatives were launched in the first few months of 2013 (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Lebensschutz stopft Milliardenloch (Protection of life to plug the billion-franc hole) (26.08.2014)
- Für eine faire Verkehrsfinanzierung (For fair financing of transport) (05.09.2014)
- AHVplus: für eine starke AHV (AHVplus: for a strong old-age and survivors' insurance system) (12.09.2014)
- Mehr Ausbildungsplätze in der Humanmedizin – Stopp dem drohenden Ärztemangel! (More training places in human medicine – stop the impending shortage of doctors!) (09.10.2014)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found at: www.bk.admin.ch under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

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