

# 1

## 100 Years of Embassy of Switzerland in Poland

### 1921: Switzerland's first Ambassador to Poland

The first Swiss Ambassador\* to Poland arrived in Warsaw in 1921. The two countries had established diplomatic relations in 1919, following Poland's regained independence. As a high-ranking military officer with a Polish wife, Ambassador Hans Pfyffer von Altshofen was a natural pick for the position.



Swiss Ambassador Pfyffer von Altshofen (Swiss Federal Archives).



Marshal Piłsudski (Wielkopolska Digital Library).

He also had a strong economic background, which was important, as both countries were eager to grow their economies and strengthen their business ties. On 22 October 1921, Swiss Ambassador Pfyffer von Altshofen finally presented his credentials to Marshal Piłsudski. This happened one week later than originally planned, because the Polish military orchestra insisted on playing the Swiss national anthem perfectly and asked for more time to practise.

*\*Until 1958, the Ambassador was still called an Envoy and the Embassy had the status of a Legation, but their roles and responsibilities were essentially the same as today.*

## The Swiss Embassy from 1921 to today

 **100**   
Przyjaźń na okrągło

**1** The Embassy of Switzerland in Poland was first established in the offices of the Swiss Consulate at Hoża 48. The Consulate had been created in 1875 to support Swiss citizens and companies in Warsaw.



Corner of Marszałkowska and Hoża (1937, State Archive in Warsaw). Hoża 48 was not rebuilt after World War II in order to allow for an enlargement of Marszałkowska.

**2** **Roaring Twenties:** In 1922, the Swiss Confederation bought a larger building at Smolna 25, which offered sufficient space for both the diplomatic and consular services. After those in Berlin, Paris and Rome, the Embassy in Warsaw was only the fourth building the Swiss Government had ever bought (rather than rented) abroad.



View of the Smolna 25 building from Aleja Trzeciego Maja (1930s, State Archive in Warsaw).

**World War II:** The Swiss Embassy staff followed the Polish Government into exile soon after the outbreak of World War II. The abandoned Smolna 25 building was destroyed in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and by the end of the war only debris and the remains of the walls were left.



The destroyed Embassy at Smolna 25 (1944, Swiss Federal Archives).

**3** When the Embassy staff returned to Warsaw in 1945, office space had to be rented in the Hotel Polonia Palace at Jerozolimskie 45 together with many other Embassies.



Hotel Polonia Palace (1945, fotopolska.eu).

**4** By 1946 the Hotel Polonia Palace had become too crowded and the Embassy temporarily moved into vacant offices of the Swiss pharmaceutical company Hoffmann-La Roche at Rakowiecka 19.



Rakowiecka 19 (1947, Stołca Illustrated Weekly, Polish National Library).

**5** It was not until 1950 that the Embassy of Switzerland arrived at Ujazdowskie 27. The city of Warsaw had asked to exchange the Embassy's former property at Smolna 25, which is now a public square with a small park, for the heavily damaged property at the current location.



The destroyed Ujazdowskie 27 building (1945, A. Rudziewska, Warsaw University of Technology Main Library).



**The Embassy building today.**

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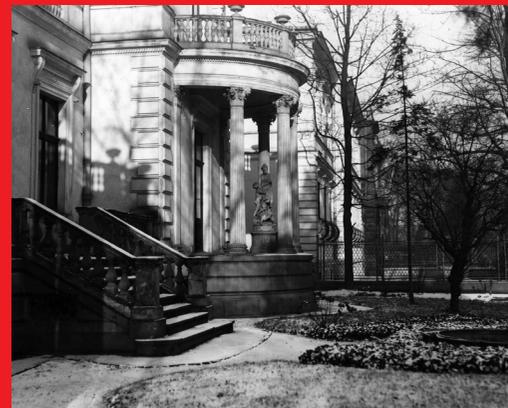
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# 2

## The History of the Embassy Building



The Embassy building at the beginning of the 20th century  
(Z. Kalinowski, Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences).



The Embassy gardens before World War II  
(Polish National Digital Archives).



Observation post for militiamen with the Embassy in the background (1958, Polish National Digital Archives).

Wilhelm Ellis Rau was a well-known industrialist from Warsaw and co-founder of the metal company Lilpop, Rau & Loewenstein. He bought the piece of land at Ujazdowskie 27 in 1865, on which stood a residence of unknown origin. Rau hired the Italian architect Leandro Marconi to renovate the residence in the Italian Renaissance style, and eventually turned it into what became known as the Rau Palace.

The renovation was completed in 1868 and gave the building a modern look. Leandro Marconi and Andrzej Pruszyński each created two statues for the roof of the Palace, representing architecture, sculpture, painting and engineering. They also produced eight antique busts decorating the residence facade. Finally, Ludwik Kucharzewski designed a fountain and sculptures for the garden.

In 1906, Countess Maria Branicka became the new owner of the Rau Palace. At her request, the residence was extended, with the addition of two small wings. In 1922, the property was inherited by Duchess Izabella Radziwiłłowa who, from 1930 onwards, rented the Palace as a private residence to the Polish Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Szembek.

In 1947, the City of Warsaw allocated the heavily destroyed Rau Palace to the Embassy of Switzerland, in exchange for its former property at Smolna 25. Hans Schmidt, a Swiss architect from Basel, and his Polish colleague, Szymon Syrkus, were commissioned to rebuild the Palace. The reconstruction lasted four years and proved to be very challenging: finding skilled workers and building materials in a city where everything had to be rebuilt at once was a real challenge.



The Embassy building seen from Piękna in 1939 (State Archive in Warsaw) and in 2021.



The Embassy building seen from Ujazdowskie before World War II (H. Poddębski, Warsaw University of Technology Main Library) and in 2021.

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# 3

## The Swiss Residence Today

After its reconstruction between 1947 and 1950, the Rau Palace, which had previously been a private residence, became a fully functional Embassy building. The ground floor was turned into office space and the first floor into the Ambassador's Residence. The Residence is where the Ambassador lives, receives guests and hosts events on behalf of Switzerland.

From the original building only the facade along Aleje Ujazdowskie remained intact. In 1990, the whole facade was restored for a second time, together with the original stuccowork and stonemasonry elements. Because of the high cost, the sculptures that decorated the original roof corners, the antique busts on the residence facade, and the vases that once stood on the balcony balustrades were not reconstructed.

The dining room seats up to 20 guests and is used for formal luncheons and dinners.



The large salon is used to host larger groups and for cultural events. When the Embassy hosted a fashion show, this is where the catwalk was located.



 **100**   
Przyjaźń na okrągło

While the gardens on the western side of the building had to make way for the garage, the ones on the eastern side are particularly splendid in the summer.

The small salon is used to host smaller groups. If you are ever invited to coffee by the Ambassador, this is likely where you will be received.



The hallway features a picture of the Swiss Matterhorn with the largest ever projection of the Polish flag. This was an initiative of the village of Zermatt as a sign of solidarity during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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# 4

## The Embassy of Switzerland in Poland

The Embassy of Switzerland in Poland has a staff of 23 people to support bilateral relations between Switzerland and Poland, administer the 1000 Swiss citizens in Poland and support around 200 Swiss businesses.

### The mission of the Embassy of Switzerland in Poland is to:

- Represent Switzerland in Poland;
- Protect the interests and values of Switzerland, Swiss citizens, Swiss companies and Swiss organisations in Poland;
- Negotiate on behalf of the Swiss Government with the Polish Government;
- Analyse the developments in Poland, and report them to the Swiss Government;
- Promote friendly relations between Switzerland and Poland; and
- Develop economic, cultural and scientific relations between both countries.



Ambassador Jürg Burri is the Head of Mission and represents Switzerland in Poland.



The Diplomatic Division is responsible for representing Switzerland's interests in the areas of political, legal, economic, financial, environmental, scientific and cultural affairs. It supports cooperation and organises projects in these areas.



The Chancery provides consular services to Swiss and Liechtenstein citizens living in Poland, as well as to Polish residents for administrative matters related to Switzerland. The Chancery staff is also responsible for the Embassy's operations management.



Defence Attaché Colonel Markus Widmer is based in Berlin and represents Switzerland's military and security policy interests in Poland.



The Swiss Business Hub Central Europe represents the Zurich-based international trade and investment promotion agency Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE). It is responsible for implementing Swiss export strategies in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.



The Switzerland Tourism Office promotes Switzerland as a destination for holidays, travel and business conferences (P. Pfeiffer, SBB). **Find out more under the QR-code.**



While not a part of the Embassy, the Polish-Swiss Chamber of Commerce collaborates closely with the Embassy. It is a private association of mostly Swiss companies operating in Poland that seeks to establish favourable conditions for the development of Polish-Swiss economic relations. **Find out more under the QR-code.**



# 5

## What You Need to Know about Switzerland

### History

**1291**

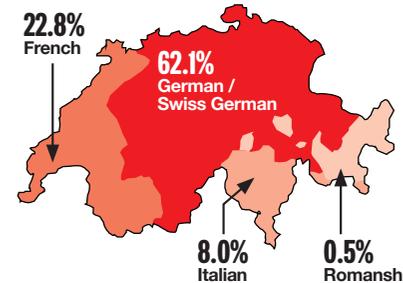
Switzerland traces its roots to an alliance that was formed in 1291 between three cantons.

**1848**

It became a federal state in 1848.

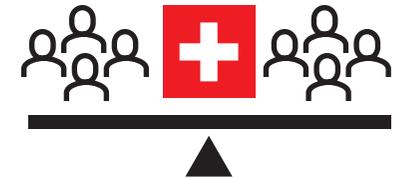
### Languages

The Swiss national languages are German (the main language of 62.1% of the population), French (22.8%), Italian (8.0%) and Romansh (0.5%), while 7.9% of the population has another main language.



### Multilateralism

As a neutral state, Switzerland has a longstanding humanitarian tradition and hosts one of the leading global centres of multilateral cooperation in Geneva, together with many other international organisations all over the country.



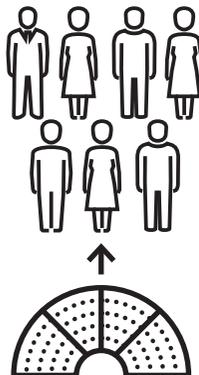
### Government

Switzerland is famous for its direct democracy and decentralised federal system, which gives a lot of political power to regional and local authorities.

**4/1959**

Its government is headed by seven ministers, called Federal Councillors, who are elected by Parliament and currently represent the four biggest political parties (the same four parties since 1959).

Each year, a different one of the seven ministers becomes the President of the Swiss Confederation.



### Innovation

**20** Thanks to centuries of relative peace and stability, Switzerland has become a leading global innovation hub and boasts the world's 20th largest economy.



The country is well known for its apprenticeships: two thirds of Switzerland's 16-year-olds enrol in vocational education and training, instead of going to university. Thanks to this practice-oriented system, Switzerland can count on one of the world's most highly skilled, innovative and best paid workforces.

### European Union

Although not a member of the European Union, Switzerland works very closely with the EU. More than 120 bilateral treaties regulate Switzerland's access to the EU single market and all other areas of cooperation.

**120+**  ↔ 

**1 BILLION** Trade volume is more than CHF 1 billion per work day.

**315 000+** Over 315,000 people commute from EU member states to work in Switzerland.

Thanks to Switzerland's participation in EU programmes, researchers and universities also benefit from the win-win relationship between Switzerland and the EU.

### Sustainability

 Switzerland is proud to be a global leader in sustainability.

The Swiss cherish their beautiful landscapes of mountains and lakes, and are taking numerous measures to protect the environment and the climate.



Switzerland is committed to implementing its 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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# 6

## The Bilateral Relations between Switzerland and Poland

The bilateral relations between Switzerland and Poland are excellent. With the introduction of the free movement of persons, more than 50,000 Poles have found a new home in Switzerland over the last two decades.

Bilateral trade has increased by 1100% since 1990. Switzerland is now the 8th largest foreign investor in Poland, where Swiss companies have created more than 65,000 jobs.

### 19th and 20th century

The strong bonds between Switzerland and Poland are already centuries old. During the Polish independence struggle from the 19th century onwards, Switzerland was a refuge for many Polish patriots, such as Tadeusz Kościuszko, Władysław Broel-Plater, Gabriel Narutowicz, Antoni Patek and Ignacy Paderewski.

During World War II, more than 13,000 soldiers of the 2nd Polish Rifle Division were interned in Switzerland, where they had the opportunity to pursue an education and helped build major infrastructure projects.



Interned soldiers from the 2nd Polish Rifle Division (1942, Polish Museum Rapperswil).



Ignacy Paderewski lived for almost 40 years at Riond-Bosson, a property he bought in western Switzerland in 1889 (Polish National Library).



Count Władysław Broel-Plater founded a Polish Museum in Rapperswil Castle in 1870 (Rapperswil Lake Zurich Tourism).

### 21st century

Bilateral relations between Switzerland and Poland remain lively, with numerous political and business contacts.

Between 2007 and 2017, Poland was the largest partner country for Switzerland's contribution to the enlarged EU. Fifty-eight projects were successfully implemented for a total of CHF 464.6 million (PLN 1940 million in current prices). The funds were used for a variety of initiatives, including promoting renewable energy, strengthening joint academic research, investing in local railway transport, supporting SMEs and start-ups, and protecting biodiversity.



The results of the Swiss Contribution are still visible today across Poland.



Swiss President Ueli Maurer visited Polish President Andrzej Duda to celebrate 100 years of diplomatic relations in 2019 (K. Sitkowski, KPRP).

Both countries also have a lively exchange in culture and sports. Follow our social media to find out about the friendly events happening almost every week.

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