

REGIONAL EDITION

UNITED KINGDOM | IRELAND

Editorial

Dear Readers,

As the summer break draws to a close, we return with the start of a new social year – and a look back at a lively few months. This summer, Swiss National Day was celebrated with warmth right across the UK and Ireland. You will find reports from many of our clubs and societies in the pages that follow.

In Brunnen, the SwissCommunity Days brought together delegates from around the world, and our UK delegates report back on the key developments for the

Swiss abroad – from the Swiss-EU relationship and e-voting to consular services.

This issue also brings a special encounter: an interview with the internationally renowned Swiss pianist Francesco Piemontesi, who has just released his latest album, devoted to Brahms. He speaks about his Swiss roots, his bond with the composer, and music as a space for reflection. Read an extract here, or the full conversation online (scan the QR code) or in the magazine's PDF edition.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and look forward to the season ahead.



GIOIA PALMIERI,
«UK & IRELAND PAGES»

Movetia Experience:

Katelyn finds her roots through teaching in Switzerland

Katelyn Grealish is Programme Ambassador for the Language Assistantship Programme run by Movetia, Switzerland's national agency for educational exchange and mobility, which helps students and young professionals gain international experience and language skills.

For Katelyn, joining the programme was more than a job – it was a way to connect with her Swiss roots. Growing up in the United States, her family stayed close to Swiss culture, but visits were rare. 'I wanted a chance to immerse myself in Swiss life, interact with

students and teachers, and see the country my family comes from,' she says.

Teaching has sharpened her skills in lesson planning, collaboration and managing diverse classrooms, while the friendships formed with other assistants and the chance to explore Switzerland and beyond have been invaluable.

One of the biggest contrasts with the U.S. is accessibility. 'Here, even the smallest villages have bus or tram connections, and trains make travel effortless,' she explains. She also admires the Swiss commitment to outdoor life, which students experience through school ski camps and regular activities – a focus largely absent in U.S. public schools.

She enjoys witnessing students grow in confidence in English. 'Our conversations cover culture, politics and philosophy,' she says. 'Having a native speaker provides motivation and a fresh perspective,

and being closer in age makes me more relatable.'

Starting with little teaching experience, she relied on the strong community of assistants for support, sharing lesson plans and advice. Her host school staff also played a key role, offering guidance while encouraging creative freedom, and informal chats and social events helped her feel part of the school community from the very start.

Reflecting on the experience, she sees it as a crucial step in her career. 'It has strengthened my communication and intercultural skills while giving me valuable teaching experience,' she notes. 'This assistantship has been a meaningful way to connect with my heritage, learn from a new culture, and grow professionally.'



About Movetia:

Switzerland's national agency for education exchange and mobility. Info: www.movetia.ch

SwissCommunity Days 2026: EU ties, e-voting and citizens' rights on the agenda

The Council of the Swiss Abroad met in Brunnen on 20–22 August, with UK delegates Toby Matthiesen, Franz Muheim and Lakshmi Sundaram representing the interests of the Swiss in the UK.

We were delighted to hear the new structure of Swiss Community UK praised by the Council's president, and pleased to see the Swiss Centre UK approved as a new official Swiss club.



From left: OSA delegates Muheim, Sundaram and Matthiesen.

Relationship with the European Union. With around 60% of Swiss citizens abroad living in the EU, the Swiss-EU relationship is of particular interest to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. The new package of agreements (Bilaterals III¹) is currently under review by Parliament, with a popular vote likely to be tight.²

Consular services. Ambassador Marianne Jenni, representing the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), emphasised Switzerland's dedication to maintaining strong ties with its diaspora and ensuring our concerns are heard. She outlined the FDFA's ongoing work to support a growing number of Swiss citizens abroad, including through the SwissInTouch app.³

ETIAS. A new entry requirement will apply to non-EU nationals from 59 visa-exempt countries (including the UK)

travelling to 30 European countries (including Switzerland). Ambassador Jenni stressed that dual nationals will need to travel with both valid passports once the system is in place. We highlighted practical issues that have already emerged with the UK's ETA system and urged the FDFA to track concerns proactively.



A yodelling performance for the audience in Brunnen.

E-voting. The Council continues to press for the right of the Swiss Abroad to vote electronically. Those registered in SG, TG and GR can currently vote online, with a few more cantons set to join later this year. Progress remains slow, however, and the Council continues to lobby cantons to adopt these tools.

Image of the Swiss Abroad. In recent years the Swiss Abroad have at times been used as a scapegoat in political debate – for example around the 13th AVS payment – and much work is needed to counter misinformation and highlight their positive contributions. To this end, the Council of States has mandated a review of the Swiss Abroad Act,⁴ which came into force a decade ago.

A full recording of the discussions held on Friday 21 August is available online.⁵

LAKSHMI SUNDARAM, UK DELEGATE TO THE CSA

Webinars: For the Swiss Abroad

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (SwissCommunity), together with the FDFA, Soliswiss and other specialists, holds regular webinars on topics of interest to Swiss citizens living abroad.

Next webinar – 17 November 2026: Offers for young Swiss abroad. Are you a young Swiss national living abroad?

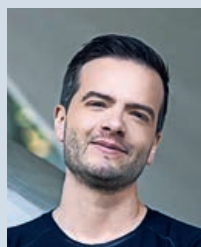
The session covers your rights and responsibilities, study and employment opportunities in Switzerland, and advice on staying connected – or preparing for a possible return.

Topics may be subject to change. Info: swisscommunity.org/en/offers-events/webinars

Links:

1. Bilaterals III: europa.admin.ch (see 'Package Switzerland–EU')
2. Swiss-EU relations: swisscommunity.org (Swiss Review section)
3. SwissInTouch app: swissintouch.ch
4. Swiss Abroad Act: fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2015/653/en
5. Recording (21 August): youtu.be/vdVDSlnQWro

Meet Francesco Piemontesi: The Swiss pianist behind a new Brahms recording



Born in Locarno, in Italian-speaking Switzerland, Francesco Piemontesi is one of today's most admired interpreters of the German classical and Romantic repertoire. A former BBC New Generation Artist who studied with Alfred Brendel and Cécile Ousset, among others,

he now performs with many of the world's leading orchestras. Brahms holds a special place in his musical life, and his latest album for Pentatone pairs the composer's First Piano Concerto – recorded live in Leipzig with the Gewandhausorchester under Manfred Honeck – with the late Six Piano Pieces, Op. 118. We spoke to him around its release.

Swiss Review: How much did growing up in Ticino shape you as a musician?

Francesco Piemontesi: I started at a music school and then went on to the conservatoire. Alexis Weissenberg lived in Ticino. It was also there that I met Cécile Ousset, whom I later studied with. So yes, the place has played a huge role.

For one thing, there is the inspiration of Ticino's landscape, which is truly extraordinary – and not just for me. It has inspired many composers. Franz Liszt, for example, came through Ticino and apparently visited the Madonna del Sasso during his year of travelling around Switzerland. Then there was Bartók, and pianists such as Benedetti-Michelangeli and Ashkenazy. They all passed through those places. They leave a mark on you.

And then there is the advantage of being between two cultures. On the one hand, you have the Italian tradition of bel canto; on the other, German culture, with its extraordinary emphasis on music. I think that gave me a greater sense of formal rigour, and a deeper interest in the repertoire. Being able to draw from both traditions has been an extraordinary privilege.

Piemontesi with conductor Manfred Honeck at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig
Photo © Patrick Wack.



Piemontesi performing with the Gewandhausorchester.
Photo © Patrick Wack.

SR: What did you take from such different teachers?

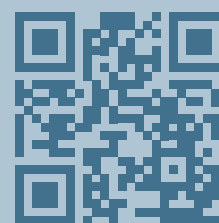
FP: It was hugely important. Going on stage is an incredibly complex thing; you have to master so many different elements, and there is so much to learn from every teacher. Each one has their own experience and tries to guide you according to their own sensibility. But in the end, everything comes down to what happens the moment you perform – and once you are there, you are on your own.

That is when what you have been taught really becomes yours. And with that comes your own interpretation, as well as the ability to be on stage and carry an entire performance.

SR: A documentary was made about your approach to playing. What did you hope to share through it?

FP: With Jan Schmidt-Garre we tried to get at everything that lies beyond technique: how a sound comes into being, how you breathe, how you use the body as you play, where inspiration comes from, the inner images we carry around with us. We wanted to speak to people who wonder about these things – perhaps music lovers who play for pleasure and want to understand what it means to go beyond simply reading the notes and really enter the heart of a piece. I think that's what makes the documentary worthwhile.

Find out why Brahms still speaks to him – and what music offers in an age of noise. Read the full interview online at www.revue.link/fp



Swiss National Day London: A capital celebration of Swiss community spirit

On 1 August 2026, some 300 members of the Swiss community travelled from London and beyond to The Crypt in Farringdon for an afternoon of music, food, culture and shared company. A lantern-making workshop set the tone beforehand, the children decorating theirs with evident delight.

The programme was as varied as it was warmly received. Fabienne Ambuel & Co and singer Alessia took to the stage – Alessia accompanied on saxophone by Nat Cartier – while alphorn player Frances and Nat joined forces for an unusual saxophone-and-alphorn duet. A musician and painter both, Nat also led a painting activity through the afternoon, one of the finished works later presented to Switzerland Tourism.

Something
for adults
and families
to enjoy.



Volunteers at the Swiss National Day celebration.



Ambassador Dominique Paravicini offered a warm welcome, dwelling on the strength of the community and the close ties between the two countries. 'I am delighted to report that Swiss-UK relations are flourishing,' he said. 'The United Kingdom is home to a vibrant and diverse Swiss community that contributes greatly to British society.'

The event's Chair, Margrit Wachnicka, thanked all those whose generosity made the day possible – in particular the sixteen companies that donated raffle prizes and those who provided food, among them Emmi and Today Bread – alongside the thirty volunteers and the Swiss Embassy.

More than a celebration, the afternoon was a reminder of all that binds the Swiss community in the UK – a day of shared roots, familiar flavours and new friendships, carried home until next year.

SND LONDON TEAM
PHOTOS © MATTEO PATOCCHI

A fond farewell: Margrit Wachnicka looks back on years of celebration



After three years at the helm of London's Swiss National Day, *Margrit Wachnicka* is stepping down. She looks back on what made the celebration such a success.

Swiss Review: What made these events so successful?

Margrit Wachnicka: A combination of things. Over the years I built up many contacts and nurtured them with small gestures – a thank-you note, a copy of the programme. Having organised events for

up to 1,000 people in my career, I knew how important it was to get the essentials right: the right venue – I discovered the Crypt and loved it at once – careful budgeting and thoughtful marketing. On the day, I was fortunate to have an excellent team of hand-picked volunteers whom I could motivate and bring together. Above all, I put a great deal of love into it, because I truly wanted it to succeed – and I believe that made the difference.

SR: What is needed to carry it forward?

MW: MW: It would sit best under an established organisation, or perhaps

continue as a smaller event involving less work. I shall do my utmost to find someone to take it on.

SR: Your favourite memory?

MW: Quite simply, seeing Swiss people gather on that special day and enjoy themselves – meeting fellow Swiss, sharing Swiss food and being entertained by Swiss musicians. I would add that the events have been a financial success too, and the funds raised will be donated to a Swiss organisation – so watch this space.

GIOIA PALMIERI
PHOTO © MATTEO PATOCCHI

Bridging Switzerland and Ireland: A National Day of connection – and a new Swiss-built train

On 23 July, around 500 guests gathered at the Swiss Residence in Dublin for the annual Swiss National Day reception. The Embassy of Switzerland welcomed members of the Swiss community, partners and friends of Switzerland, with Minister of State at the Department of Transport Seán Canney and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Daryl Barron, among the guests of honour, for an evening celebrating the close ties between Switzerland and Ireland.

This year's reception was held under the theme 'Connectivity'. In her address, Ambassador Piaget highlighted the many links between the two countries and the shared values that underpin their

relationship. Political dialogue, trade, innovation and, above all, people-to-people exchanges continue to bring Switzerland and Ireland closer together. Minister Canney illustrated this close partnership with a recent example: Swiss train manufacturer Stadler's selection to deliver the new fleet for the Dublin–Belfast Enterprise service, a major investment in the future of connectivity on the island of Ireland. Fittingly, Stadler was also among the sponsors of this year's Swiss National Day reception.

The evening offered our guests a taste of Switzerland, with traditional raclette, Swiss chocolate by Lindt & Sprüngli and coffee from Nespresso. Live music from



A toast to Swiss National Day.



A moment of attention during Ambassador Piaget's speech.

the 'Swing Cats' added to the festive atmosphere.

Together, we celebrated not only Switzerland's National Day, but also the friendship and the many connections that continue to bring our two countries closer together.

EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND IN IRELAND

CREDITS: JOHN MCELROY, MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Swiss Centre UK: From Westminster to Bern – making Swiss voices heard

When Swiss Centre UK was introduced in the last edition of Swiss Review, we set out an ambition: to turn the ideas of Swiss citizens in Britain into constructive engagement with decision-makers.

In August, that took an important step forward: Swiss Centre UK was formally recognised by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA/SwissCommunity) during the Swiss Community Days.

Recognition, however, is only useful if something is done with it. In June, we joined the 3million's Mass Lobby at Westminster, where citizens affected by the UK's post-Brexit immigration system met MPs to discuss the problems they face, from digital immigration status to the need for greater legal certainty. One such discussion went on to prompt parliamentary questions.

Our next step is the Swiss Barometer, exploring the priorities of Swiss citizens across the UK, from pensions and healthcare to citizens' rights and political participation. With founding member Franziska Hewitt, former Honorary Consul in Northern Ireland, we also intend to reach beyond London.

What issues matter to you? We want to hear them, because effective representation starts with listening. Email: info@swisscentre.uk



Staff changes: At the Embassy and the Regional Consular Centre

Consul General Sandra Grendelmeier took up her position as the Embassy's Head of Operations and Swiss club and community liaison in August, transferring from Abuja.

She succeeds Consul General Thomas Wagner. Consul Manuela Mäder assumed her duties as Head of the Regional Consular Centre (RCC), following her transfer from Frankfurt, and succeeds Consul Laurent Vuillemez, who is retiring after 39 years of service with the FDFA. Daniela Ziliotto joined the RCC in July as Deputy Head, succeeding Paola Giacometti.

We thank Laurent for his commitment in London and wish him all the best in his retirement. We extend a warm welcome to Sandra, Manuela and Daniela and wish them all the best in their new roles.



More info: newhelveticociety.org.uk

Coming up: The New Helvetic Society's Fête de l'Escalade in London

The New Helvetic Society (NSH) has enjoyed a lively spring and summer, bringing together Swiss citizens, friends of Switzerland and newcomers to London through a varied programme of social and cultural activities.

In spring, members left London behind for walks through the English countryside, discovering rolling landscapes and bluebell woods – a chance to see a different side of Britain in good company.

The 2026 World Cup brought another memorable occasion, as almost 300 people gathered to watch the final and support the Nati at 2am in a crowded pub near St Paul's Cathedral. Swiss flags filled the venue, creating a strong sense of community and pride.

The NSH also holds an informal gathering on the last Wednesday of every month – a simple way to catch up, welcome new members and keep Swiss connections alive.

The coming months bring a wine-tasting evening at the Swiss Embassy for members and an autumn programme marking the Society's 110th anniversary and the Fête de l'Escalade in November.

Whether to celebrate Swiss traditions or enjoy a good evening out, the Society remains a welcoming hub for the Swiss community in London.



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To stay updated on Swiss clubs and community life in the UK and to contact OSA UK delegates, visit **swisscommunity.uk**



1: Unione Ticinese

Scholarships awarded. To mark its 150th Jubilee, the Unione Ticinese launched a scholarship programme for Ticinese students in higher education in London, and this year's awards have now been granted. It was the most competitive year yet, with candidates spanning music, journalism, mathematics and engineering – warm congratulations to the recipients.

1 August. The club joined the Swiss National Day celebrations in London with a dedicated stall and a popular raffle of UT-donated prizes, thanks to members Thomas and Ekaterina Waelchli.

The season ahead. Coming up: the much-loved Castagnata in November, a Christmas concert in December, and a pub gathering for scholarship recipients. Dates to follow online.

UNIONE TICINESE UTPRESIDENT1854@GMAIL.COM

2: Swiss Club Edinburgh

The Swiss Club Edinburgh enjoyed a wonderful afternoon celebrating Switzerland's birthday on 2 August 2026.

The event brought together over 40 regular and new members for an afternoon of delicious food, sunshine and great company.

A much-loved highlight was the annual rendition of the Swiss National Anthem, beautifully played on the bagpipes by Honorary Consul Peter Müller-McDougall.

A special mention goes to the wonderful fresh Swiss bread, lovingly baked in Edinburgh by Nici Goetschel from Fudi Bakery.

BETTINA MUMENTHALER SWISSCLUB.EDINBURGH@GMX.CO.UK

3: Southwest Swiss Club

The Southwest Swiss Club celebrated Swiss National Day with grilled sausages and a delicious spread of salads and desserts.

As ever, there was never quite enough time to catch up with everyone on all the news and stories. The next opportunity comes on 3 December, when the club meets for its traditional Raclette – newcomers are very welcome to join in.

Warm thanks go to Marianne and Howard for making everyone feel so welcome.

MARIA ATKINSON MARCOLS.ATKINSON@GMAIL.COM

4: Southern Area Swiss Club

The Southern Area Swiss Club celebrated Swiss National Day on Saturday 25 July 2026.

Twenty-four members enjoyed a wonderful evening of chatting and catching up, delicious food and the club's famous raffle. During the evening, the club also presented its outgoing treasurer, John Williamson, with a small gift in recognition of his hard work and dedication to the club over many years.

BERNI CURTRESS BCURTRESS@GMAIL.COM



The club joined the SNDay in London.



The UT-donated prizes raffle.



Celebrating SND in the sunshine.



National Day grill and a warm welcome.



A convivial evening for Switzerland's birthday.

Swiss opera in Edinburgh: Zurich's 'A Masked Ball' opens at the International Festival

On 26 August 2026, Switzerland and Scotland came together through opera as the Opernhaus Zürich production of Verdi's *A Masked Ball* received its UK premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Part of the Festival's 2026 programme, the staging marked a special collaboration between one of Europe's leading opera houses and one of the world's great arts festivals.

The evening, hosted by Ambassador Dominique Paravicini, brought together artists, cultural leaders, partners and guests from across Switzerland and the United Kingdom – a celebration of the enduring value of international cultural exchange.



Opernhaus Zürich production.

The MASI Lugano Podcast: A cultural flight through the arts



Nabila Dolfini, a Swiss actress living in London, is the voice of the MASI Lugano Podcast, produced in English by the Museum of Art of Lugano.

could say I'm their sound hostess for a cultural flight through the arts.

SR: Which conversation or guest has stayed with you the most?

ND: The words of Chus Martínez, artistic director of the Ljubljana Biennale, who explains in a beautifully practical way the role art plays in moving society forward, and how it helps us grasp both the real and the abstract

through the senses. At the pace of modern life, she reminds us, we rarely live consciously through our senses – yet they nourish the very intensity of being alive.

SR: Where can readers listen?

ND: Entirely in English, it's on Spotify and Apple Podcasts – and do visit an exhibition at MASI to discover new artists in person.

Swiss Review: What is the podcast, and what does your role involve?

Nabila Dolfini: It features in-depth conversations with artists, curators and cultural figures, often tied to an exhibition at MASI. As its voice, I imagine a particular listener at home – often my grandmother, a friend, or an imaginary person – and, through tone and sound, create a warm atmosphere to introduce our guests. You

To learn more about Nabila's work as a voice artist and actress, visit: nabiladolfini.com



MASI Lugano, a home for art and culture.

IMPRESSUM

HOW TO CONTACT THE EDITOR: Reports of Swiss society activities, news, coming events, correspondence, articles and advertising for the 'Switzerland in the UK & Ireland' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor:

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