



30th October 2017

## **President of the Swiss Confederation Doris Leuthard Pays an Official Visit to Bulgaria**

*Swiss and Bulgarian Presidents will participate in a public discussion  
on the digital future of Europe*

**On the invitation of President Rumen Radev, the President of the Swiss Confederation, H.E. Doris Leuthard, will pay an official visit to Bulgaria on 2 November 2017. This is the second official visit of a Swiss President to Sofia in the history of Bulgarian-Swiss relations, the last presidential visit to Bulgaria taking place in 2003.**

President Leuthard will confer with President Radev, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov, Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva and Minister of Bulgaria's EU Council Presidency Lilyana Pavlova. Both presidents will have a public lecture and panel discussions on the topic *"Europe – on the road to a digital future"* in Sofia University. Together with Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev and Minister of Education and Science Krassimir Valchev, President Leuthard will attend the closing session of the *Forum on Dual Education* under the Swiss Cooperation project DOMINO.

In addition to bilateral issues, the talks will focus primarily on the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2018 and other topics on the European agenda such as Switzerland's policy towards the European Union, migration issues and UK's withdrawal from the EU. The talks are expected to cover aspects of bilateral relations between Switzerland and Bulgaria, such as economic relations and cooperation as part of Switzerland's enlargement contribution and are also likely to address regional neighbourhood and security policy.

**Switzerland and Bulgaria enjoy good and friendly relations which have further deepened in recent years. Marking in 2016 the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations, Switzerland and Bulgaria have intensified political dialogue and bilateral cooperation in the past:** then Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov and President of the National Assembly Tsetska Tsacheva paid official visits to Switzerland between 2014 and 2016. In 2016 the President of the Swiss Federal Assembly Christa Markwalder and Secretary of State for Economic Affairs of the Swiss Confederation Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch visited Bulgaria.

**For the last couple of years Switzerland has been in the Top 10 of the largest investors in Bulgaria,** as several of the world's most famous Swiss companies have been long active here. Last year Switzerland was Bulgaria's tenth-largest source of foreign direct investments. In recent years also small and medium-sized enterprises started to discover the Bulgarian market. In total, Swiss firms invested around 469 million euros in the period 1996-2016 in Bulgaria and employed around 8,900 people in 2015.



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**Since 2007 when Bulgaria joined the European Union, the Swiss–Bulgarian trade grew manifold and steadily.** According to latest data of the Swiss Customs Administration, Bulgaria is the 43rd most important trade partner of Switzerland. In 2016 Bulgaria's exports to Switzerland totalled 261 million francs, while Swiss exports to Bulgaria were worth a record high 360 million francs. Investments, business cooperation and bilateral trade have a big potential, as well as tourism. Last year more than 34,000 Swiss tourists visited Bulgaria which is an increase of 10% compared to 2015.

**Within its Contribution to the enlarged EU, [Switzerland supports Bulgaria](#) with 76 million Swiss francs** in key areas such as environment, security, civil society, social inclusion of vulnerable groups, research and education. With a total budget of 3.5 million Swiss francs, the [DOMINO Project](#) supports the reform of the vocational education system in Bulgaria by developing up-to-date public and private partnerships in education based on the needs of the labour market. Relying on Bulgarian educational traditions, DOMINO introduces the best Swiss and international practices in the Bulgarian education system. Around 800 students in 32 vocational schools in 19 towns across Bulgaria are currently studying in the dual form of education under the Swiss model “learning by working” with an opportunity to gain labour experience in over 170 leading Bulgarian and foreign companies.

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### **Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation**

In December 2016, Doris Leuthard was elected by the United Federal Assembly (National Council and Council of States) as President of the Swiss Confederation for 2017. This is her second term as president after 2010.

Since 1 November 2010 Ms. Leuthard has been Head of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications. From 2006 to 2010 Ms. Leuthard was head of the Federal Department of Economy in charge of Trade, Economy, Labour, Innovation, Vocational Education and Agriculture.

Ms. Leuthard has studied law at the University of Zurich. From 1999 to 2006 she was member of the National Council for the Canton of Aargau. From 2004 to 2006 Ms. Leuthard was president of the Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland.

### **Note for the media:**

*The public lectures and panel discussion “Europe – on the road to a digital future” is on 2 November, Thursday, from 16 to 17 hrs. in Aula Magna of Sofia University.*

### **For further information:**

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