



Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann to travel to China on economic and scientific mission

Bern, 03.09.2018 - Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann will pay a visit to China from 5 to 9 September. He will be accompanied on the journey by a 50-strong delegation consisting of representatives from business, politics and the education, research and innovation sector. The delegation will be heading to Beijing and Shanghai. The aim is to establish and foster contacts with the newly formed Chinese government, and to explore new priorities for cooperation, particularly in the fields of education and research, and in connection with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The federal councillor will also attend an event marking the 10th anniversary of swissnex China.

The head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) will meet with various members of the Chinese government, including the vice premier of the state council and the ministers for science and technology, and industry and trade. Topics on the agenda are set to include bilateral economic relations and cooperation in the field of education, research and innovation.

The mission should also provide an opportunity to hold exchanges with observers on China's development and private sector players, as well as with representatives from China's education, research and innovation sector. One such opportunity will be the Sino-Swiss Economic Forum organised by the Swiss-Chinese Chamber of Commerce SwissCham in Beijing on 6 September.

A further highlight of the visit will be the Sino-Swiss Drone Night in Shanghai on 7 September to mark the 10th anniversary of swissnex China. Swissnex China is one of five offices in Switzerland's network around the world which supports Swiss players to connect internationally in the field of education, research and innovation, and encourages them to be actively involved in the global exchange of knowledge, ideas and

talent.

China is Switzerland's most important economic partner in Asia. In 2017, the volume of trade amounted to CHF 37 billion (including trade in precious metals), exceeded only by trade with the EU and the USA. In addition to precious metals, Switzerland primarily exports pharmaceutical products, machinery and watches to China, while it also imports machinery, as well as electronic and textiles. With foreign direct investment capital stocks amounting to over CHF 21 billion, China is also the leading investment location for Swiss firms in Asia. The legal framework for mutual trade and investment is assured by agreements on the avoidance of double taxation, investment protection, and, since 2014, by a bilateral free trade agreement.

China also plays an important role in bilateral cooperation on education and research. The bilateral scientific cooperation programme launched jointly by the two countries has supported almost 300 projects over the last ten years.

In addition to cooperation at governmental level, many Swiss researchers and research institutions encourage exchanges with their Chinese partners making China one of the main scientific partners in Asia.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was the main theme of Mr Schneider-Amman's economic mission to Central Asia in July. The visit to China provides a further opportunity to find out more about the initiative. Swiss businesses have specialised know-how, which they can flow into BRI-related projects.

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