

PRESS RELEASE

UNESCO recognizes major historical documents preserved in Switzerland

Bern, 11.04.2025 – UNESCO has just added a range of documents and archive collections preserved in Switzerland to the Memory of the World international register, highlighting their special significance for the collective memory of humankind.

This year's entries include the:

- **Geneva Conventions**

These key documents laying down the foundations of international humanitarian law are more relevant than ever and have governed civilian protection in armed conflict to this day.

The Geneva Conventions are kept at the Swiss Federal Archives in Bern.

- **Annemarie Schwarzenbach and Ella Maillart archives**

Two pioneers of 20th century literature and photojournalism, whose works left an indelible mark on the era through their bold vision, commitment and exploration of the world.

The registered collections are housed at the Swiss National Library in Bern, the Photo Elysée in Lausanne and the Bibliothèque de Genève.

- **Treaty of Fribourg**

Joint entry with France.

Historic agreement signed in 1516 attesting to everlasting peace between France and the Swiss Confederation.

The German version of the document is stored at the State Archives of Fribourg; the Latin version is housed at the National Archives of France.

- **Friedrich Nietzsche's literary archive**

Joint entry with Germany.

Archives of the philosopher, poet and composer whose influence was both interdisciplinary and global.

This nomination brings together four collections, three of which are held in Switzerland at the Basel University Library, Basel-City State Archives, and Foundation Nietzsche House in Sils Maria.

- **Children's drawings and writings from wartime Europe (1914–50)**

Joint entry with Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Poland, Spain and UK. Documenting children's direct experiences of war through visual testimonies, providing a unique insight into the impact of armed conflicts.

The nomination brings together 17 collections, three of which are held in Switzerland: the 'Buchenwald children' collection (1945–6) at the Swiss Archives of Contemporary History (ETH Zurich), teacher Jakob Weidmann's collection of children's drawings (1939–44) kept at the Pestalozzianum foundation in Zurich, and the Pestalozzi Children's Village magazine (1950) kept at the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation in Trogen.

These entries bear witness to the diversity and wealth of Switzerland's documentary heritage, ranging from milestone international humanitarian law documents and diplomatic archives, which mark the history of interstate relations, to the literary and photographic records of key 20th century figures. These documents also show the importance of safeguarding collective memory, whether personal accounts, correspondence or visual testimonies capturing the impact of conflict on individuals and societies.

UNESCO created **the Memory of the World Programme** in 1992 in order to protect, enhance and make accessible documentary heritage, which plays a key role in understanding human history and culture. The international register is one of the programme's flagship initiatives, listing documents of universal importance, such as manuscripts, archives, films and sound recordings.

The Swiss Commission for UNESCO is responsible for coordinating and implementing the programme in Switzerland. It selects and submits Switzerland's entries for inclusion in UNESCO's international register and assists the institutions housing the documents, collections and holdings put forward in the nomination process. The commission is supported by a group of specialists and ensures that the relevant eligibility criteria are met and that proposals are selected strategically.

Quotes:

Member of Swiss Commission for UNESCO Nicolas Ducimetière: *"These entries enhance the visibility of Swiss documentary heritage and illustrate Switzerland's commitment to preserving the world's memory. We welcome this recognition and the work accomplished by the institutions housing the nominated collections."*

Member of Swiss Commission for UNESCO Cécile Vilas: *"These entries shine a light on historical records which are still relevant and significant today. Their preservation is essential so that future generations can continue to benefit from these memories, which are crucial for understanding our contemporary world."*

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