



The CCIG: a catalyst for growth

160 years of effective, loyal services

Text Claude Hervé-Bazin

Founded 160 years ago, the Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services (CCIG) plays a crucial role in the Canton of Geneva's economy by supporting entrepreneurship and working to foster an environment that's beneficial for business. Director General Vincent Subilia joins *helvet* for an interview.

Photos MezPhotographie (Florence & Maxime Ezanno)

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Can you tell us about the CCIG? The Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services is a private institution that was created in 1865 by banker Ernest Pictet, with the mission to defend and promote the economic fabric of Geneva while supporting our 2,600 member companies. The Chamber has always been closely associated with the Canton's development and the many parts of its ecosystem, from the business schools to the free ports and the Léman Express rail network. We also act as an interface between local and international organisations, public and private. And while we are politically independent, we do actively collaborate with government and, when necessary, offer constructive criticism. Our headquarters at the Maison de l'Économie is also home to several other institutions with whom the CCIG collaborates, including the Swiss Arbitration Centre – as a cofounder and shareholder – and the Chambers' House, which unites bilateral chambers of commerce (notably AmCham, the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, which just joined).

160 years in existence: how will you celebrate this anniversary? There will be numerous special events to mark the occasion, in addition to the 120 or so events already organised by the Chamber every year. Our 160th General Assembly will unite a record number of economic and political decisionmakers around an anniversary lunch. It's an opportunity to shine a spotlight on key moments of historical growth for this beautiful organisation, while also highlighting our various members. The Maison de l'Économie also just finished thorough renovations and recently hosted its first "Open House".

How did you become the leader of the CCIG? I'm a lawyer by training who joined the CCIG ten years ago, after having worked for many years in the banking industry. I was born in Vaud but am a "half-order of fries" – as my friends called me in school – thanks to my Belgian mother. I studied and worked in Switzerland, London, Brussels, New York, Beijing and Singapore... before adopting the Republic and Canton of Geneva as my home, having been drawn to Geneva's uniquely international spirit and perspective – which is a fundamental part of CCIG's innate DNA.

What is your role as Head of the Chamber? I became Deputy Director in 2015, when I was responsible for arbi-



Vincent Subilla is a lawyer by training, with years of experience in the banking industry, and has been the Managing Director of the CCIG for more than a decade.

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As the face of the CCIG, Vincent Subilia attends all major CCIG events: here during the inauguration of the local Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, accompanied by Rahul Saghal and Isabelle Harsch (left), and State Secretary Helene Budliger Artieda (right).

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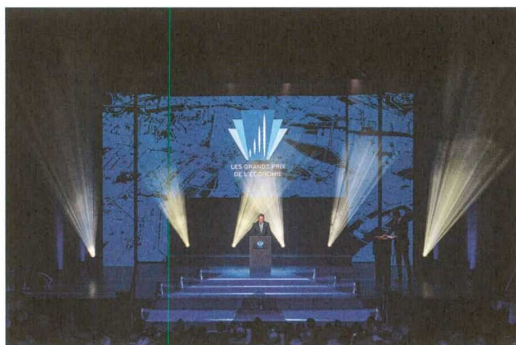
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Every year, the Grands Prix de l'Économie recognizes local companies for having a positive impact in the Canton of Geneva. On the right, Geneva's State Councillor Delphine Bachmann at the CCIG.



tration and international affairs, became Deputy Managing Director in 2017 and I've had the pleasure of being Managing Director since 2019. While my duties include delivering the Chamber's messages and often acting as the face of the organisation, I have a reliable team of around 30 exceptional colleagues who make it all possible. I'm working with a very trustworthy Leadership Committee, chaired by Isabelle Harsch, and our Economic Council – both for policy and strategy – composed of extremely qualified and engaged entrepreneurs who represent the very diverse excellence of the Genevan economy. Every individual within the Chamber is committed to one mission: to fight daily in support of our member companies and the Genevan economy at large!

What do you think about the state of business in Geneva today? Our economy is currently being confronted with a major challenge: how, amongst fierce competition, do we maintain our area's attractiveness and prosperity, which was built on an openness towards the world, while the very opposite approach is being emphasized by the current White House Administration? International Geneva is the birthplace and bastion of multilateralism, representing 5 billion

in annual business, and our approach – which is founded on the rule of law and its values of cooperation – is now on the verge of being seen as an obstacle by the current American President – it's the polar opposite of Trumpism doctrines. The United States' contribution to the United Nations makes up about 25% of certain budgets, so the dramatic cuts that are being planned will most certainly have a major impact. On a positive note, a crisis of that nature could become an opportunity for us to reinforce Geneva's position as the spearhead of a world that thrives on multilateralism and a beacon of international dialogue.

What are some current economic drivers? Beyond the international public sector, the international private sector is also driving systemic importance in Geneva; particularly when it comes to distributors of raw materials, who contribute significantly to Geneva's GDP, so it's important we foster that integration. Geneva also greatly benefits from the globally understood reliability that comes with the "Swiss Made" label. It's essential that we continue to cultivate these competitive advantages, especially in relation to taxation.

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