

LIVING AND WORKING IN SWITZERLAND



+ COUNTRY + HISTORY + POLITICAL SYSTEM +
+ POPULATION + STAY + RIGHTS + PERMITS +

+ SWITZERLAND +

THE COUNTRY

The official name of Switzerland, Swiss Confederation, is derived from Latin (Confoederatio Helvetica), whence the country abbreviation CH. Switzerland lies in the centre of Europe, adjoining five countries: Italy to the south, Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein to the east, Germany to the north and France to the west. A landlocked country, Switzerland has no direct access to the sea. Total area: approx. 41,300 km².

From an economic point of view, the country is highly competitive. Switzerland owes its prosperity to the industrial sector with its top-level technology, the chemical-pharmaceutical industry as well as to the service sector, which is characterised by a highly-developed banking and insurance sector.



THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

Switzerland is a federal state composed of sovereign member states, or cantons. The «Everlasting Confederation» was entered into by the three ancient cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden in 1291, which is considered as the birth of Switzerland. Berne is the administrative capital of the Swiss Confederation.

According to the Federal Constitution, sovereignty and thus the highest political authority lies with the electorate in Switzerland. The people elect parliament, which in its turn elects the seven members of the government, the Federal Council. The legislative organ is the Federal Assembly, composed of two chambers vested with the same powers: the Council of States (46 representatives of the cantons) and the National Council (200 members allocated according to the strength of the parties).

Each of 26 cantons has its own constitution, parliament, government and courts. The division of competence be-

tween the Federal Government and the cantons is regulated by the Federal Constitution. Switzerland does not belong to the European Union (EU), but is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In 1992 the Swiss electorate rejected accession to the European Economic Area (EEA). Switzerland has, however, negotiated agreements with the EU, which came into force in mid-2002.

POPULATION

Switzerland is not only a multi-cultural country because several languages are spoken here but also owing to the long-established traditions and special characteristics of the local population in the numerous Alpine valleys.

At the end of 2008 Switzerland's resident population amounted to over 7.7 million persons, more than 20% of whom were foreign nationals. In addition, some 200,000 border-crossing commuters work in Switzerland; they mainly live in the Swiss border regions. There is a high proportion of foreign residents in the large cities. In Geneva,

Zurich and Berne there are nationals from over a hundred different countries.

There are four official languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. Around 70% of the population speak one of the many Swiss-German dialects (above all in northern, central and eastern Switzerland). 20% speak French. This part of the population lives in Western Switzerland, called the «Romandie». The population in Ticino on the southern side of the Alps speaks Italian. A part of the population there also speaks Italian dialects. Romansh is only spoken in some valleys of Canton Graubünden.

In Switzerland social integration mostly takes place at work. The Swiss have a reputation for being hard-working, conscientious and punctual.

CURRENCY

Switzerland does not belong to the Euro-zone. Its currency is the Swiss franc (CHF).

Bank notes:

CHF 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 1000

Coins:

5, 10, 20 and 50 centimes as well as CHF 1, 2, 5

In addition to Swiss francs, the euro is gaining more and more acceptance in the shops. Many shops even mark the prices in Swiss francs and euros.



«Switzerland is an open country, that's why I feel at home here.»

Ruzena Vojacek-Dermek, hairdresser, Czech Republic

+ STAYING IN SWITZERLAND +

WHAT PERMITS DO EU NATIONALS NEED TO BE ABLE TO WORK AND STAY IN SWITZERLAND?

EU-17¹, EU-8 AND EFTA² NATIONALS

Nationals from the old EU-15, EU-8 and EFTA countries as well as from Malta and Cyprus benefit from full freedom of movement: they are allowed to stay and pursue gainful employment in Switzerland for three months without a permit. They merely have to report to the competent authorities. If their gainful employment lasts more than three months, they have to report to the local authorities and apply for a residence permit.³

EU-8⁴ NATIONALS

Nationals from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary are allowed to exercise salaried employment in Switzerland under the following interim provisions:

- Priority of national manpower (national priority)
- Control of wage and working conditions
- Quotas for permanent and short-term residence permits

These admission restrictions apply until 30 April 2011 and only on first-time admission. After this date nationals from the following countries may settle and work freely – an employment relationship entitles nationals from these countries to a residence permit. The exercise of a self-employed occupation does not come under these provisions.

1 Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom, Cyprus and Malta

2 Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

3 In order to obtain a residence permit, the following documents must be presented to the competent authorities: a valid identity card, the employment contract, a copy of the rental contract, a photograph in passport format.

4 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hungary



«I came to Switzerland as an archaeology student in 1995. I met my future husband at the university. We now have three children – four good reasons never to leave this country again.»

Carmen Defferrard-Buda, archaeologist, Romania

NATIONALS

FROM BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

For nationals from Bulgaria and Romania, the exercise of a salaried occupation in Switzerland is authorised under the following interim provisions:

- Priority of national manpower (national priority)
- Control of wage and working conditions
- Quotas for permanent and short-term residence permits

These admission restrictions may be upheld until 2016.

RESIDENCE PERMITS

SHORT-TERM RESIDENCE PERMITS

(EC/EFTA Permit L): The term of validity of this permit is determined by the length of the employment contract. It may be issued for a total duration of 12 months and is granted to persons whose limited employment relationship lasts less than one year. Jobseekers also receive an EC/EFTA Permit L after three months. The place of residence and work may be changed freely.

INITIAL RESIDENCE PERMIT

(EC/EFTA Permit B): This initial residence permit is granted to persons submitting an employment declaration issued by the employer or a confirmation of employment for an unlimited employment relationship or one lasting at least 12 months. The initial residence permit has a term of validity of five years. It is extended by five years without any further formalities.

PERMANENT RESIDENCE PERMIT

(EC/EFTA Permit C): Nationals from EU-17 and EFTA countries receive this unlimited residence permit after a regular and uninterrupted stay of five years in Switzerland. Nationals from the other EU countries may, as a rule, only be granted a permanent residence permit after a regular and uninterrupted stay of ten years. The cantons have the authority to issue permits.

WWW

Stay in Switzerland:

www.bfm.admin.ch

> Topics



Cantonal migration authorities:

www.bfm.admin.ch

› The FOM › Contact addresses

BORDER-CROSSING COMMUTERS FROM EU-17 AND EFTA COUNTRIES

Border zones have been abolished for nationals from the old EU-15, the EFTA countries as well as from Cyprus and Malta. These nationals may take up a salaried or self-employed occupation anywhere in Switzerland (full geographical and professional mobility) while retaining their main domicile in any EU/EFTA country. The possibility of residing in Switzerland during the week remains. The person concerned must, however, report to the local authorities. Employment relationships lasting under three months are permit-free and merely have to be reported to the competent authorities.

Gainful employment exceeding 3 months is still subject to a permit for border-crossing commuters (EC/EFTA Permit G). These persons must accordingly apply for a permit at the migra-

tion authorities in their place of work. They will need a valid identity card or a valid passport for the submission of their application.

BORDER-CROSSING COMMUTERS FROM EU-8 COUNTRIES

Nationals from EU-8 countries whose domicile is in a foreign border zone and who work in a neighbouring Swiss border zone may file an application for a border-crossing commuter's EC/EFTA Permit G. The permit they receive is, however, only valid for Switzerland's border zone.

BORDER-CROSSING COMMUTERS FROM BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

Nationals from Bulgaria and Romania whose domicile is in a foreign border zone and who work in a neighbouring Swiss border zone may file an application for a border-crossing commuter's EC/EFTA Permit G. The permit they receive is, however, only valid for Switzerland's border zone.

The following interim provisions apply for border-crossing commuters:

- priority of national manpower (national priority)
- control of wage and working conditions
- quotas for permanent and short-term residence permits

These admission restrictions may be upheld until 2016.

SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM EU-17, EU-8 AND EFTA COUNTRIES

Nationals from EU-17, EU-8 and EFTA countries are entitled to provide permit-free services for up to 90 working days per person and calendar year. There is, however, an obligation to report to the authorities. As a rule, this may be done online.

Note: Until April 30th, 2011, EU-8 nationals who would like to work in one of the four following branches require a short-term residence permit. This must be requested from the competent migration authorities:

- Main and subsidiary construction sectors
- Plants and horticulture

- Industrial and company cleaning
- Surveillance and security services

The relevant short-term residence permit is required from the first working day. These persons must therefore report to the competent authorities beforehand.

SERVICE PROVIDERS FROM BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

Nationals from Bulgaria and Romania are entitled to provide permit-free services for up to 90 working days per person and calendar year. There is, however, an obligation to report to the authorities, which may be done online. Note: Nationals from Bulgaria and Romania who would like to work in one of the four following branches require a short-term residence permit from the first working day. This must be requested from the competent migration authorities:

- Main and subsidiary construction sectors
- Plants and horticulture
- Industrial and company cleaning
- Surveillance and security services



«I've met very many believers
in Switzerland. Something I'd
never have expected.»

Jean-Pierre Réchal, clergyman, France

These admission restrictions may be upheld until 2016.



Registration procedure:

www.bfm.admin.ch

> Topics > Free movement of persons: Switzerland – EU/EFTA

SELF-EMPLOYMENT

EU-17/EU-8 and EFTA nationals are entitled to exercise a self-employed occupation in Switzerland. In order to do so, they must report to the local authorities and apply for a residence permit for self-employed persons. If they can prove that they actually intend to exercise a self-employed occupation which enables them to cover their own needs, they will be granted a residence permit for five years.

Note: Self-employed persons who are no longer able to cover their own needs and apply for welfare assistance lose their entitlement to residence. Thus applies to all self-employed persons from EU/EFTA countries.

SELF-EMPLOYED PERSONS FROM BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

Romanians and Bulgarians are entitled to exercise a self-employed occupation. In order to do so, they must report to the local authorities and apply for a residence permit. If they can prove that they actually intend to exercise a self-employed occupation which enables them to cover their own needs, they will be granted a residence permit for five years. There are only a restricted number of permanent and short-term residence permits available for self-employed persons until 2011. This number may not be exhausted.



Cantonal migration authorities:

www.bfm.admin.ch

> The FOM > Contact addresses



The cantons online:

www.ch.ch

> List of authorities



«I love working with the Swiss in Switzerland: the working conditions are excellent and I appreciate the importance they attach to work, the constructive atmosphere and the team spirit.»

Magdalena Zajac, communications specialist, Poland



«I met the love of my life in
Switzerland.»

Giovannti Ascione, chef de rang, Italy



SME Portal:
www.kmu.admin.ch
> List of authorities



Illegal employment:
www.seco.admin.ch
> Topics > Work
> Illegal employment

WORKING WITHOUT A PERMIT

You are forbidden to exercise gainful employment in Switzerland without a permit. Do not therefore accept a job before you are sure of receiving a work permit. You may be fined if you work without a permit. And don't forget that you will not receive any welfare benefits without a permit!

Your employer must also comply with the regulations of the Federal Act on Measures to Combat Illegal Employment – he may also be punished.

FAMILY REUNION

EU/EFTA nationals who have been granted the right to stay in Switzerland are allowed to send for the members of their family in a direct line and for whom they provide maintenance.

Important addresses

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

Labour Directorate
Effingerstrasse 31
3003 Berne/Switzerland
eures@jobarea.ch
www.job-area.ch
www.eures.ch

Federal Office for Migration (FOM)
Emigration and Trainees
Quellenweg 6
3003 Berne-Wabern/Switzerland
euresinfo@bfm.admin.ch
www.bfm.admin.ch



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

«Switzerland's cultural
diversity reflects its position
in the heart of Europe.»

Dr. Peter Elford, biologist, United Kingdom