

A Handbook for Investors

# SWITZERLAND AS A BUSINESS LOCATION



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Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Lausanne

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# Welcome



**Johann N. Schneider-Ammann**  
President of the Swiss Confederation

Dear reader,

The success of any company is dependent on a number of different factors, innovation and productivity being just two examples. Providing a favorable framework of conditions for businesses is just as important.

This is precisely what Switzerland offers as a business and company location: a highly qualified workforce, close cooperation between universities and businesses, outstanding infrastructure, and a moderate tax burden. These and many other locational advantages ensure that local companies spanning a wide range of industries continue to successfully develop.

Another major contributing factor is the business-friendly climate permeating the entire political system. As a member of the national government, I am committed to consolidating and expanding our excellent framework of conditions, for this is what fuels Switzerland's strength and resilience as a business location. By working to our strengths, we foster the ideal environment for successful companies, as well as a diversified mix of industries and attractive job prospects for qualified and motivated employees.

As a former businessman, the importance of choosing the right location is something I understand from experience. It's a decision requiring careful evaluation and consideration of all available information. This investor handbook, with its wealth of information and data on the key locational advantages Switzerland has to offer, serves as a valuable starting point.

Both personalized and confidential advice are also indispensable to the evaluation process. Thanks to its close collaboration with its federal and cantonal clients, Switzerland Global Enterprise can help guide you towards doing business in Switzerland via the Swiss Business Hub located in your country. Cantonal and regional economic development agencies, along with a whole range of experts, are at hand to help you in word and deed. This book provides all the essential contact information you'll require.

Together we can help you bring your business plans to life.  
We look forward to welcoming you to Switzerland!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Johann N. Schneider-Ammann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Johann N. Schneider-Ammann  
President of the Swiss Confederation

## Investment Promotion

As part of its remit from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO and the cantons, Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) provides potential foreign investors with information about the particular strengths and operating conditions of Switzerland as a business location. Its services for foreign companies include assessing the potential of their projects before they are presented to the cantons. S-GE assists the cantons with the relocation of foreign companies, providing market and trend analyses and coordinating the activities of all the bodies involved in the promotion of Switzerland as a business location.



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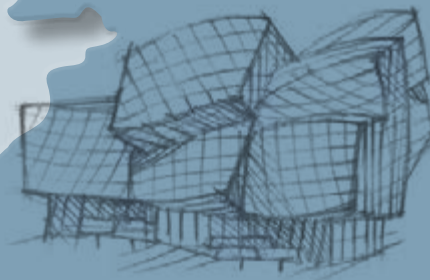
# SWITZERLAND – YOUR BUSINESS LOCATION

Switzerland is the most competitive business location in the world. There are numerous good reasons to locate a business in Switzerland: innovation and technology, a liberal economic system, political stability, close links with foreign markets, excellent education and healthcare systems, an outstanding infrastructure, a high standard of living, and a competitive tax system.



Leading industry clusters:

- MEM
- ICT
- Life sciences
- Cleantech



Strong dual education system

## INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY



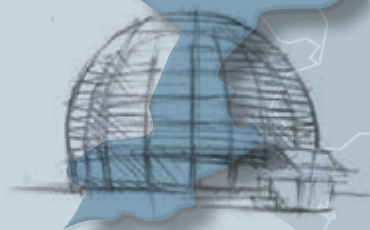
World's most innovative country



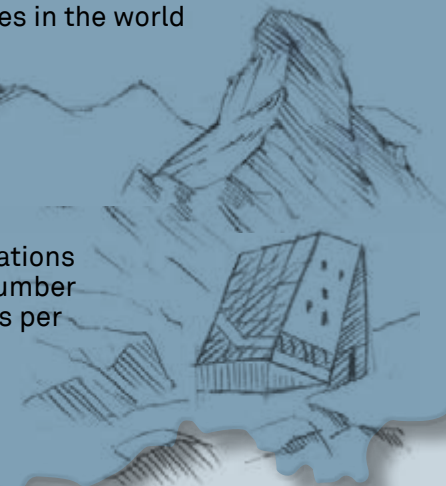
3 Swiss firms are among the 20 most valuable companies in the world




Happiest nation in the world




Among the top 3 nations with the highest number of Nobel laureates per capita








Motivated workforce:  
No general strikes  
for almost 100 years




Most attractive country  
for highly qualified foreign  
workers


## SECURITY + TRUST




Employees with  
significant international  
experience



World's highest  
purchasing power




World's best  
working conditions




Multilingual  
employees with 4  
national languages  
plus English


## ENVIRONMENT + LIFE



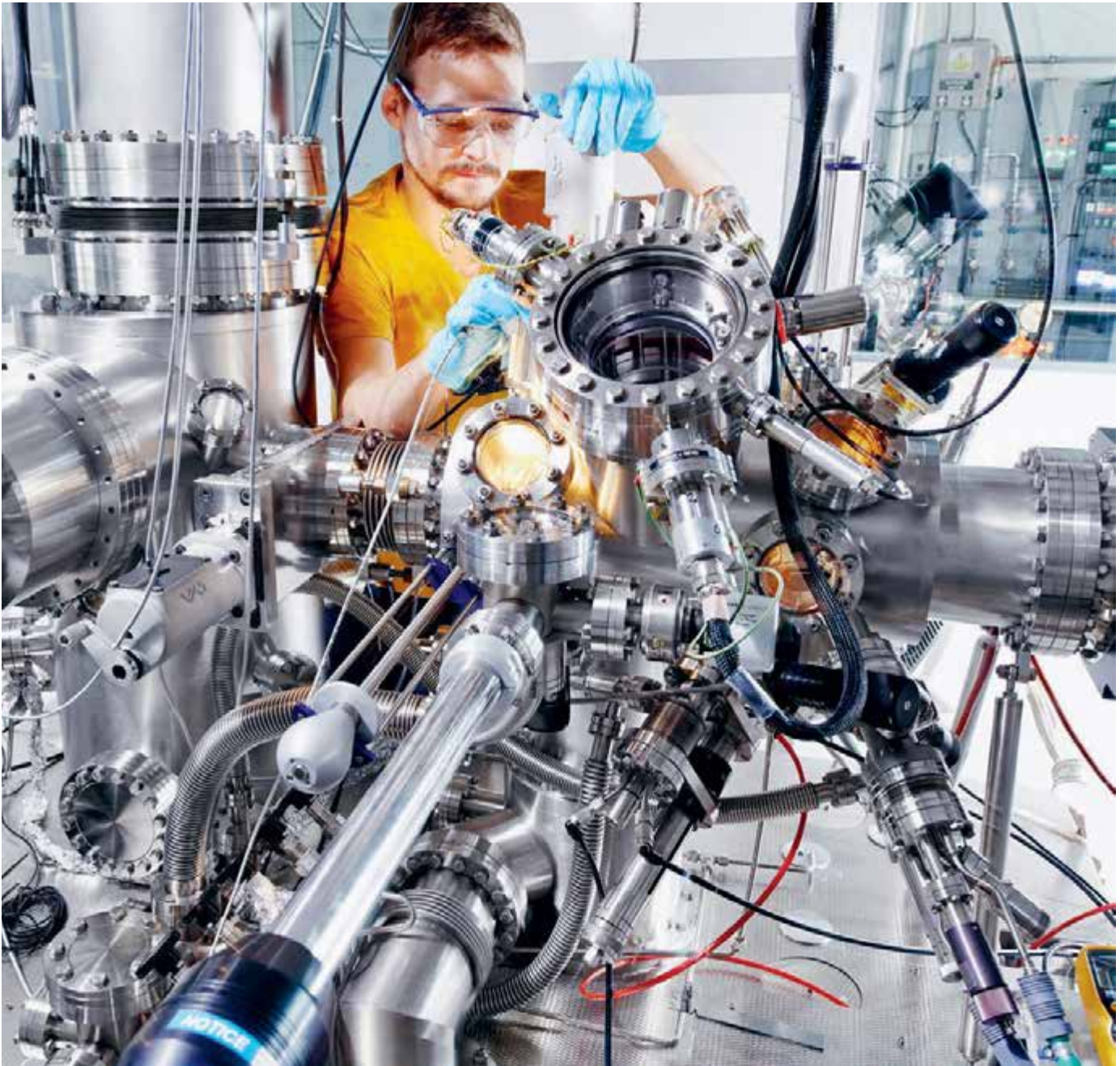
World's third-highest  
life expectancy



Among the top 10 most  
popular country for  
expatriates



3 in the top 15:  
Swiss cities  
offer a very high  
standard of living



# INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Switzerland's three key strengths are its capacity for innovation, its highly educated workforce, and its first-class scientific research institutions. Cutting-edge technologies and a business-friendly climate also contribute to the country's productivity.



## Research and Development Hub

**Image**  
Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials  
Science and Technology (EMPA), St. Gallen

### **WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH**

Switzerland invests nearly 3% of its GDP in research and development, placing it among the world leaders. The country boasts no fewer than 60 higher education institutions, which have close links with the international research community. They participate in scientific partnerships, collaborate with industry through knowledge and technology transfer, fund innovative start-ups, and found high-performing spin-offs. Organizations and companies from Switzerland and abroad value the country's excellent research platform and its role as an international innovation hub. No wonder so many major names have chosen to set up home here, from pharmaceutical giants Roche and Novartis to the research centers of Disney and Google.

Almost half of Swiss workers are engaged in knowledge-intensive industries. High-tech products form an important pillar of the country's economic success and excellent reputation. Around a quarter of all high-tech products are exported, underlining the innovation potential of the Swiss economy, which ranks fourth in the world. Intellectual property is effectively protected through patent, trademark, design, and copyright law. In 2014 nearly 8,000 patents were registered in Switzerland, the eighth highest figure in the world, the fourth highest in Europe, and the highest worldwide per head of population. Switzerland is also top in terms of Nobel Prize laureates per capita - another sign of the country's world-leading research.

### **CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION**

As an important center of research, Switzerland attracts highly qualified foreign researchers. A number of world-class institutions are based in Switzerland, for example the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI). CERN is considered one of the most important centers of fundamental physics research in the world. It was here, in the late 1980s, that the World Wide Web was developed.

The Swiss research community actively participates in the cross-border exchange of knowledge. It is well integrated in the cooperation networks of major European nations and covers a wide spectrum of research fields. Albert Einstein once studied and taught at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ). And he's not alone. ETHZ has always welcomed foreign researchers and lecturers; indeed half of its professors are non-Swiss.



## Leading Industry Clusters

Image  
Mikron SA, Agno

- MEM (machinery, electrical engineering, metals)
- ICT (information and communications technology)
- Life sciences (chemicals, pharma, medtech, biotech)
- Cleantech

### A STRONG LOCATION FOR STRONG BUSINESSES

Major industry clusters choose to locate in Switzerland because it offers a solid foundation: an excellent environment for research and development, an efficient registration and certification system, and a highly educated workforce. Three Swiss companies – Roche, Nestlé, and Novartis – are among the 20 most valuable companies in the world. Switzerland is also a popular, neutral location for European headquarters: Over 1,000 multinational firms have their regional or global headquarters here, including major names such as eBay, Google, and Unilever.

### A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

Northwest Switzerland is home to a unique life sciences cluster. In addition to chemical and pharmaceutical firms like Novartis, Roche, and Syngenta, it encompasses a dense network of medtech, biotech, and nanotech companies.

In the industrial sector, key roles are played by the machinery, electrical engineering, and metals industry. International companies such as ABB, Alstom, Bombardier, Saurer, and Schindler all have a presence in Switzerland. In the region between Geneva and Schaffhausen, a “precision cluster” has developed on the basis of the traditional watchmaking industry. Apart from its watches and clocks, Switzerland is also world-renowned for its financial services industry: Zurich and Geneva are among the world’s top 15 financial centers.

Switzerland is also growing in importance as a center of the information and communications industry. International corporations such as IBM, Google, Microsoft, Siemens, Disney, and HP have set up home near Swiss universities and research institutes. In the cleantech sector, Switzerland is particularly strong in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions and recycling. Although it has few natural resources of its own, it has become one of the world’s biggest trading platforms for commodities. Geneva, Lugano, and Zug are the key trading hubs for grains, crude oil products, and mining products. Switzerland’s three largest companies – Vitol, Glencore, and Cargill – are commodities trading firms.



## Strong Education System

Image  
University of St. Gallen (HSG), St. Gallen

### HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE

Excellent primary education focused on essential life skills, renowned private and boarding schools, and world-class higher education – these are the ingredients of Switzerland’s excellent education system and factors from which business profits in the long term. In Switzerland there is no difficulty in finding well-educated, multilingual, motivated, and loyal employees. It is hardly surprising that Google and Novartis – two of the world’s most attractive employers – have chosen to locate in Switzerland. Large multinationals work in close partnership with regional universities and recruit large numbers of highly educated employees from this quality pool.

The Swiss education system combines high-quality vocational training with outstanding university education. This dual system fuels the country’s capacity for innovation and creativity. Low unemployment rates, even among young people, testify to the strength of the Swiss education system.

### WORLD-CLASS STATE AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

State schools in Switzerland enjoy an excellent reputation, and rightly so: students regularly achieve very good results in the international PISA tests. In mathematics they outperform their peers in all EU countries. Swiss universities regularly occupy top places in international university rankings. Four Swiss universities rank among the world’s top 100: ETHZ in Zurich, EPFL in Lausanne, and the universities of Geneva and Zurich. The first two are in fact classed among the 20 best universities in the world.

The state school system is complemented by around 240 private and boarding schools. Internationally oriented families will find that the education system is tailor-made for them. Many employees of foreign companies only live in Switzerland on a temporary basis, and their children can be taught in their native language or receive an international education at one of the many international schools. Here they are well prepared for school-leaving exams in their home country, be it the Abitur, the Baccalauréat or the admission requirements for a U.S. university.



# SECURITY AND TRUST

The Swiss economy is one of the most liberal and competitive economies in the world. Low capital costs, a stable currency, strong purchasing power, moderate taxation, a federal state system, and economic and political stability guarantee a high level of security for investments in Switzerland.



Image  
Bundesplatz, Berne

## Reliable Governance

### **POLITICAL STABILITY: FERTILE GROUND FOR BUSINESS**

Switzerland's federal structures create strong links between government, business, and civil society. The government is lean, consisting of the seven members of the Federal Council. Each member is appointed Federal President for one year on a rotational basis. The constituent states of the Swiss Confederation, the 26 cantons, enjoy a large degree of autonomy, particularly in healthcare, education, and culture. The same goes for the 2,500 municipalities, each of which has independent tax-raising powers. Swiss citizens can participate directly in the political process through referendums, initiatives, and plebiscites. The stable political situation guarantees a high degree of dependability for business and practical decisions that are well supported by the population.

### **INDEPENDENCE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE**

By air, Switzerland is just one to two hours away from Europe's major economic centers. The multilingual country is situated in the heart of Europe, not just geographically but at the intersection of different cultures and is an important transport hub between north and south, east and west. Switzerland shares a border with three of the four largest European markets: Germany, France, and Italy. Their languages are also national languages of Switzerland, spoken by many Swiss in addition to English.

There are close economic relations between Switzerland and Europe. The European Union is Switzerland's most important trade partner, with almost half of Swiss exports going to the EU and two thirds of all Swiss imports originating from the EU. A comprehensive free trade agreement and bilateral agreements enable the free movement of goods and services even without EU membership. Through this agreement Switzerland is fully integrated in the EU market, with its 500 million consumers, while remaining politically independent. Switzerland has over 28 free trade agreements with 38 partners, supplementing the EFTA convention and the free trade agreement with the EU. Swiss free trade policy creates the optimum framework for trading goods and services with important partners. Agreements with all important industrial nations ensure that companies are only taxed in one country.



## Liberal Labor Market

Image  
Recruitment situation, studio shot

### **EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES: A STRONG PARTNERSHIP**

Swiss labor law is very liberal and the labor market is subject to very few regulations. This is one of the factors that has made the Swiss economy one of the most productive in the world. Unemployment has remained below 4 % for the past 10 years – extremely low in comparison with other countries. There is an active social partnership between employers and trade unions, conflicts being resolved around the negotiating table. Strikes are very rare in Switzerland; the last general strike occurred nearly 100 years ago.

Swiss workers are generally well educated and multilingual with above-average international experience. They are motivated, reliable, and dedicated employees. Switzerland is an attractive place to work for many foreign workers. A dual system applies to the employment market: most EU citizens and all EFTA citizens enjoy the same rights as Swiss workers. Citizens of other countries require a work permit.

### **A MODEL SOCIAL INSURANCE SYSTEM**

Switzerland has a large network of social insurance providers that offer extensive protection against risks with financial consequences to people who live and work in the country, as well as their families. Provision for retirement is based on three pillars: state, employer, and individual contributions. The individual shoulders a high degree of personal responsibility, so contributions for companies and insured parties are correspondingly moderate.





## Sound Financial and Capital Market

Image  
Rues Basses, Geneva

### EXCELLENT STABILITY AND PURCHASING POWER

Switzerland is among the countries with the highest purchasing power in the world. The stable Swiss franc forms a pillar of national economic policy. In Zurich, consumers can buy more for their pay than anywhere else in the world. Switzerland's economic and monetary stability is proverbial. Prices change so moderately that the Swiss franc has become one of the most sought-after currencies for reserve and diversification purposes.

SIX Swiss Exchange gives companies access to an international circle of investors. Those seeking capital will find committed long-term backers offering fair conditions. The state also plays a role in promoting an investment-friendly climate, for example through tax relief for venture capital financing. Healthy competition in the banking sector testifies to the functioning Swiss money market, which also greatly benefits business.

### THE SECURITY AND KNOW-HOW OF A LEADING FINANCIAL CENTER

Geneva and Zurich are two of the most important financial centers in the world – a success due to a stable framework. Swiss companies like UBS, Credit Suisse, Swiss Re, and Zurich Financial Services enjoy an excellent reputation around the globe in their core competencies of private banking, asset management, and insurance. Private and business customers benefit in equal measure from the wide range of financial and insurance products and services.

SIX Swiss Exchange exerts a powerful attraction for both Swiss and foreign companies, with the highest proportion of international firms in Europe. Globally in-demand blue chips in corporations such as ABB, CS Group, Nestlé, Novartis, and UBS are traded here.



## Attractive Taxes

### AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPETITIVE TAX SITUATION

Switzerland's federal tax system is a model of success, with taxes being set and levied by the federal government, cantons, and municipalities. Domestic tax competition plays a significant role in the very low rates of taxation. A debt brake introduced in 2003 obliges the government to maintain a balance between revenue and expenditure. The most attractive cantons in tax terms are international leaders with regard to both corporate taxes and the tax imposed on highly skilled workers.

Image  
Online tax declaration, studio shot

### MODERATE TAXES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

At federal level businesses pay corporate income tax of just 8.5%. This is in addition to cantonal and municipal profit taxes. If a company creates jobs in Switzerland with an investment project, it may even be granted a full or partial tax exemption. Double taxation in Switzerland and another country only occurs in rare cases. This very attractive location factor is due to agreements with all key trading partners including the USA, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and many other countries.

The relationship between taxpayers and the tax authorities is constructive and pragmatic, and earns praise from respected tax consultants and auditors.



## Easy Start-Up Process

Image  
Business plan, studio shot

### **SET UP YOUR BUSINESS WITHOUT THE RED TAPE**

Companies and individuals can set up a new business quickly and easily. In most cases it only takes two to four weeks to legally establish a company and the cost is usually no more than CHF 5,000.

International founders are very welcome and enjoy wide-ranging support; in 2013 around 1 in 3 founders of new companies were non-Swiss. Under the principle of freedom of trade, any person in Switzerland can run a business, set up a company, or own a share in a company. The only requirement is that the authorized signatory is domiciled in Switzerland.

### **EASY TO MOVE IN**

Switzerland Global Enterprise offers invaluable support, providing potential foreign investors with information about the general framework, what Switzerland has to offer as a business location, and the procedure for setting up a company in the country. Once you have decided to locate your business in Switzerland, the economic development agency in the relevant canton will help to coordinate the project at local level. Banks, consultants, trust companies, and specialized lawyers can all provide assistance on specific issues. Extensive support is also available online, from tips on writing a business plan to registering a company in the commercial register.

Companies that relocate to Switzerland usually choose the legal form of an incorporated company, either an Aktiengesellschaft (stock corporation) or a Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (limited liability company). It is possible to set up a Swiss subsidiary as a sole proprietorship, general partnership, or limited partnership online.



# ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE

Switzerland inspires talented individuals to create and achieve. It's a country where work, innovation, creativity, leisure time, family, and recreation are optimally balanced. With a vibrant cultural life, beautiful scenery, and high-quality real estate, Switzerland offers a high standard of living.



## Unique Quality of Life

Image  
Swimming in the Rhine, Basel

### **SPORT, LEISURE, RECREATION, AND CULTURE**

From the High Alps to the fertile central plateau and the Mediterranean ambiance of Ticino, Switzerland has a richly diverse landscape that inspires both residents and visitors, all packed into a small area – 220 kilometers from north to south and 348 kilometers from west to east. In the summer you can swim in crystal-clear lakes and rivers and enjoy the fresh air. Yet the nearest town is never far away, because with the short distances you can reach any destination quickly and comfortably, whether by rail, bus, car, or boat. Switzerland's major cities, including Zurich, Geneva, and Berne, are ranked as some of the most attractive cities in the world in the Mercer quality of living survey. No wonder Switzerland has been found to be the world's happiest nation.

It's the perfect place for people who love sports and the outdoors. Summer or winter, the legendary Swiss mountains invite you to enjoy the stunning surroundings. The cultural life is characterized by diversity in a multilingual, cosmopolitan environment. Museums, foundations, galleries, festivals, and independent bodies promote both Swiss and international art and artists. Switzerland hosts numerous cultural events with international appeal: the Montreux Jazz Festival, Art Basel, Festival del film in Locarno, and the Zurich Film Festival, to name just a few.

### **FIRST-CLASS VENUES FOR SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES**

First-class hotels with excellent facilities attract both those seeking relaxation and wellbeing as well as seminar and conference organizers. There is a good reason why the World Economic Forum (WEF), attended by leading business and political figures, is held every year in the paradise resort of Davos. By choosing to hold a business event in Switzerland, organizers are opting for variety and authenticity. And thanks to the short distances, there is never far to travel for things to see and do.



## International Environment

Image  
United Nations (UN), Geneva

### **COSMOPOLITANISM AND TOLERANCE**

Foreign workers and companies value the international outlook of the Swiss, who are characterized by their tolerance and linguistic and cultural diversity. Switzerland is one of the most popular destinations for expatriates. Conversely, foreign workers and companies make an important contribution to Switzerland's prosperity.

Switzerland is an open country. For visits of up to three months a valid travel document is usually sufficient. Citizens of some countries require a visa, which can be obtained from the Swiss representation in their country. Residence and permanent residence permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices. You require a permit to work in Switzerland for more than three months. However, almost all EU and EFTA citizens have the same rights as Swiss workers and do not require a work permit. For citizens of other countries, the Swiss employer will usually take care of the necessary formalities.

### **NEUTRALITY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Diplomacy, humanitarian engagement, and international networking are at the heart of Switzerland's policy of neutrality. Switzerland has been a member of the United Nations since 2002 and has been actively involved in UN specialized agencies for much longer. The country also participates in economic organizations such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). In addition, it represents the interests of countries that do not maintain diplomatic relations with certain third countries.

As neutral territory, Switzerland is the ideal location for politically sensitive meetings and conferences. It is for this reason that so many international organizations, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations, have their headquarters in Switzerland. Geneva is one of the most important centers of international cooperation in the world. It is also the headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO) - the legal and institutional foundation of the multilateral trading system and the only organization to regulate trade relations between states at global level. Switzerland is also home to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), UEFA, FIFA, and more than 60 other international sports organizations, in most cases the global or European headquarters.



Image  
Rail network, Grandvaux

## Reliable Infrastructure

### MOBILITY AND SECURITY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

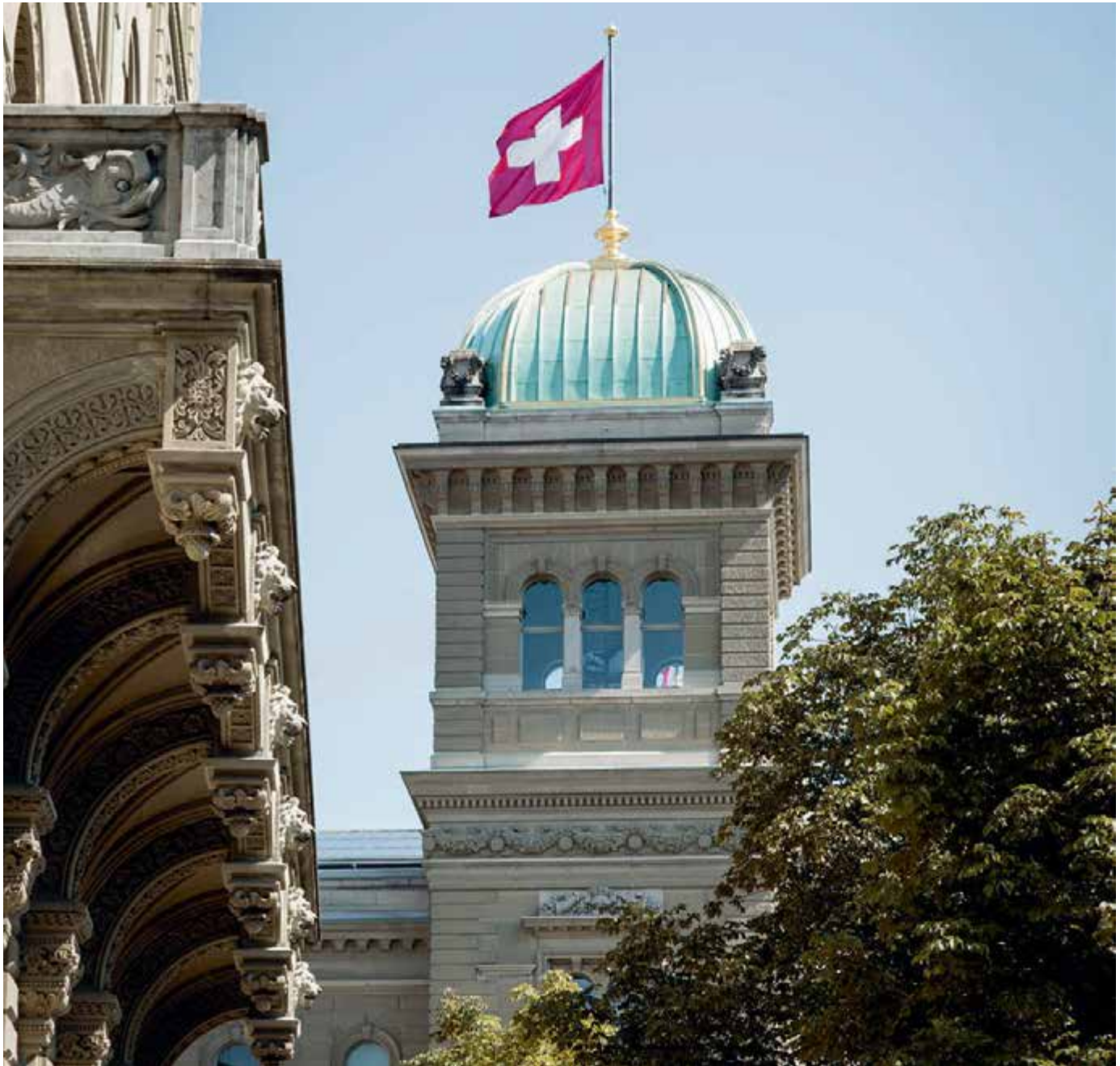
Three international airports in Zurich, Geneva, and Basel provide direct flights to all major destinations in Europe and overseas. Switzerland's excellent road network is one of the most dense in the world and is seamlessly linked to Europe's major routes. Urban and rural areas are connected by reliable rail and bus services. The famous yellow post buses travel to the remotest Alpine valleys. The rail network operated by Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) and the various regional transport companies totals around 5,100 kilometers. Every day around 1 million passengers travel for work or leisure on up to 9,000 trains. The Swiss are world experts in railroad operation. Freight transport also functions very efficiently, with some 230,000 tons of freight being transported across Switzerland to Europe every day by Swiss and foreign companies.

Whether you are seeking a private building for your business, a technology park or serviced offices, there is an enormous choice of high-quality, attractive commercial real estate. The regulations governing the purchase of real estate by foreigners have been much relaxed in recent years.

### RELIABILITY AND COMPLETE COVERAGE

A well developed infrastructure meets the requirements of even the most demanding users in the information age. Leading IT companies such as IBM, Google, and Disney have chosen to locate in Switzerland and depend on the security and reliability of Swiss infrastructure and data technology. Switzerland also boasts a stable energy and water supply network that covers the entire country. As the 'reservoir of Europe', the country makes significant use of renewable hydropower.

The Swiss healthcare system is among the best in the world. Complete medical care of the highest standard is provided by highly trained staff in medical practices, state-funded hospitals, and numerous private and specialist clinics. The Swiss have one of the longest life expectancies in the world at an average of 82.9 years.



# SWITZERLAND – FACTS AND FIGURES



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Nestled between the Alps and the Jura mountains, Switzerland is a communications and transport center between northern and southern Europe where European cultures and languages meet. No other country offers such great variety in so small an area. The Swiss economy's high degree of development exists thanks to a liberal economic system, political stability, and close integration with the economies of other countries. The state creates the necessary framework and only intervenes when this serves the interests of society at large. The high-quality education system and outstanding infrastructure form the basis for the competitiveness of the Swiss economy.

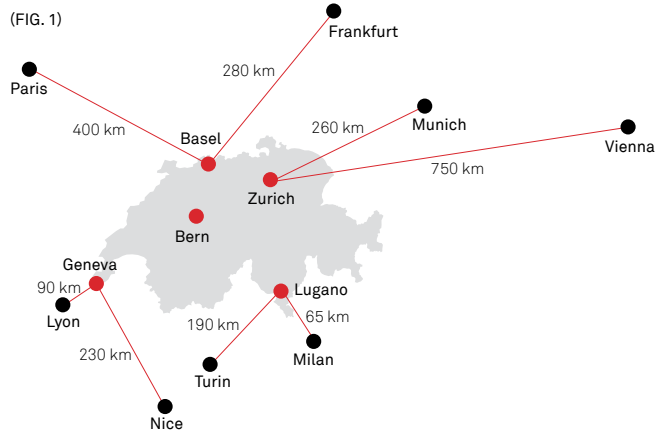
## 1.1 GEOGRAPHY

The total area of Switzerland is 41,285 square kilometers. Characterized by mountain and hill ranges, rivers and lakes, Switzerland offers a wide variety of landscapes in a small area – 220 kilometers from north to south, and 348 kilometers from west to east. The Swiss Alps, the hilly Mittelland region, which stretches from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva, and the Swiss Jura, a long range of fold mountains, form the three main geographical areas of the country. Due to its central location, Switzerland is a place where different cultures intersect and, at the same time, a communications and transportation hub between northern and southern Europe.

6% of Europe's fresh water is stored in the Swiss Alps, which is why Switzerland is also known as the "reservoir of Europe". Switzerland has numerous rivers and over 1,500 lakes, the two largest being shared with neighboring countries: Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) in the southwest is shared with France and Lake Constance in the northeast with Germany and Austria.

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org)  
 Switzerland – Facts and Figures  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

### Reference Map



Source: Compiled by the author

## 1.2 CLIMATE

Switzerland's climate is strongly influenced by the nearby Atlantic Ocean. The prevailing westerly winds bring moist, mild sea air. Cooling in the summer and warming in the winter, they also bring regular precipitation all year round in most areas. The Alps act as a clear climatic divider between northern and southern Switzerland; as its weather comes primarily from the direction of the Mediterranean, the south enjoys much milder winters than the north. Temperatures in Switzerland depend primarily on height above sea level. In the northern lowlands, the average temperature in January is around 1 °C, and in July around 17 °C, whereas on the southern plateau the corresponding average temperatures are 2 °C – 3 °C higher.

[www.meteoschweiz.ch](http://www.meteoschweiz.ch)  
 Weather and Climate  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 1.3 POLITICAL SYSTEM

### 1.3.1 Federal Structure

Switzerland is a nation created of its own will and formed from several ethnic groups with different languages and religions. The modern Swiss state was founded in 1848. Before this time, Switzerland consisted of a loose association of independent cantons. The abbreviation CH for Switzerland, as found in Internet addresses, for example, dates back to the official Latin name “Confoederatio Helvetica”.

The state has a federal structure and is divided into three political levels: municipal, cantonal and federal. The federal government is responsible for everything assigned to it under the constitution, such as foreign and security policy, customs and excise, the monetary system, national legislation, and defense. By global comparison, the 26 cantons have a high degree of control. Healthcare, education and culture are among the political areas in which they have a great deal of influence. As small and flexible political entities, the cantons also compete with each other in various areas. The proximity of politics to the business community and citizens is achieved through the federal structure, in which many public functions are executed at cantonal or municipal level. These in turn have a certain amount of autonomy and can thus implement solutions which are designed to meet local requirements.

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch)  
Online information from the federal, cantonal, and municipal administrations  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 1.3.2 Separation of Powers at Federal Level

In accordance with the federal constitution, the Swiss people are the “sovereign” of the country – in other words, the highest political body, responsible for electing parliament. Every citizen with voting rights also has the right to participate in the shaping of the constitution and the law by means of referendum or initiative.

The legislative body at federal level is the parliament, which consists of two chambers: the National Council, representing the people with 200 members, and the Council of States, representing the 26 cantons with a total of 46 members. The National Council is elected directly by the people every four years; each canton forms one constituency. Cantonal representation is based on population, although each canton is entitled to at least one representative.

The federal government is known as the Federal Council, and it operates as a collegial body. Each of its seven members, who are elected by the Federal Assembly comprising the members of both chambers, heads one of the seven departments (ministries). The presidency of the government rotates between the Federal Councillors on an annual basis.

The highest jurisdiction in Switzerland is enforced by the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne. There is also the Federal Insurance Court in Lucerne, the Federal Criminal Court in Bellinzona, and the Federal Administrative Court in St. Gallen.

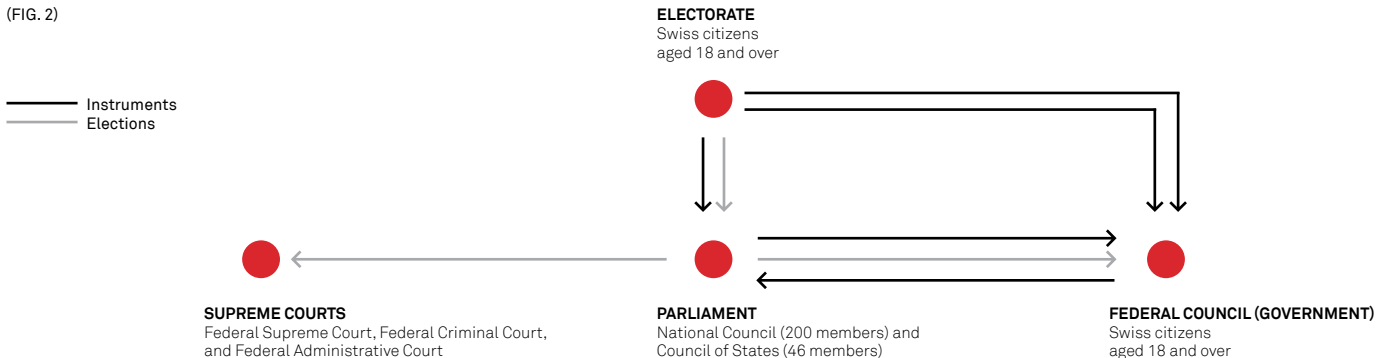
[www.bger.ch](http://www.bger.ch)  
Federal Supreme Court / Federal Insurance Court  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.bstger.ch](http://www.bstger.ch)  
Federal Criminal Court  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.bvger.ch](http://www.bvger.ch)  
Federal Administrative Court  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## The Swiss Political System

(FIG. 2)



### 1.3.3 Direct Democracy and the Concordance System

There is hardly any other country where the electorate has such wide-ranging rights as it does in Switzerland. Citizens can request that a change or addition be made to the constitution by means of a popular initiative, or they may decide on parliamentary resolutions after the event by means of a referendum. Switzerland's long tradition of democracy, its relatively small size and population, high level of literacy and a wide variety of media are all factors which are key to the functioning of this special form of government. As a rule, the electorate is called upon to vote on federal bills four times a year.

A unique feature of Swiss politics is the concordance system. For decades, the most important political parties have put forward the seven Federal Councillors in a kind of coalition. Equally, not only those who win the elections have a seat in parliament; all parties are represented proportionally by number of votes. Resolutions are reached with varying majorities, depending on respective interests. Thus, as many groups as possible have the opportunity to express their opinions on a topic and contribute to achieving a broad-based compromise. This striving for consensus on the basis of the principles of collegiality and concordance contributes significantly to Switzerland's political stability.

### 1.3.4 Political Stability and Social Harmony

Studies on personal security and prosperity, social coherence and political stability have shown that Switzerland regularly leads all international comparisons in this regard (Fig. 3). The Swiss attach great importance to their independence. Despite the close proximity of different cultures and language groups, domestic stability is considerable. There is a high degree of tolerance and personal freedom. The relationship between employers and employees or their representatives is generally cooperative. Both sides are committed to resolving issues by means of negotiation. Thanks to this social harmony, the general level of prosperity in Switzerland has been rising for decades.

[www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Authorities  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**“In Switzerland there is a high degree of tolerance and personal freedom.”**

#### Political Stability, 2015

Stable = 10, unstable = 0

(FIG. 3)

1	Norway	9.50
2	New Zealand	9.43
3	Canada	9.40
4	Denmark	9.37
<b>5</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>9.16</b>
7	Singapore	8.63
8	Netherlands	8.63
9	Germany	8.53
10	USA	8.30
15	Ireland	7.51
16	Japan	7.50
18	United Kingdom	7.36
19	China	7.35
20	India	7.21
21	France	7.13
26	Belgium	6.50
34	Hong Kong SAR	5.84
41	Italy	4.83
48	Russia	4.46
54	Brazil	3.28

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

## 1.4 PUBLIC FINANCE

Switzerland lives up to its reputation as a stable country. The rate of inflation lies well below that in the EU states and the most important industrialized nations. This is also true for unemployment, with the unemployment rate regularly below 4%. Interest rates in Switzerland are also traditionally low, while the savings rate is high (national savings as a percentage of gross household income in 2012: 34.4%).

The public spending ratio measures expenditure by public administrations as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP). It includes spending by public authorities and the mandatory social insurances. In Switzerland, this ratio is at 31.4% (2012). Most European countries have a ratio of well above 50%.

The country is in a healthy financial situation. This applies to the financial budget of the central state, the federal government, and the cantons and municipalities. The average surplus ratio in the past five years (2009–2013) was 0.26% at state level.

**“National debt is far below that of most countries in Europe.”**

National debt is also below that of most countries in Europe. Total public sector debt amounts to 34.5% of GDP (2014). Compared to the average national debt ratio of the EU-27 (86.8%), Switzerland's ratio is relatively low. Most European countries have much higher levels (2014: Italy 132.3%, France 95.6%, Germany 74.9%).

[www.efv.admin.ch](http://www.efv.admin.ch)  
Federal Finance Administration (EFV)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 1.5 NEUTRALITY

In terms of foreign policy, Switzerland acts in accordance with the principle of neutrality. However, this does not in any way mean that it is an outsider on the world stage: Switzerland has been a member of the UN since 2002 and also plays an important role in the UN's specialized agencies. Furthermore, Switzerland has always played and still plays an active part in important economic organizations, such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

Switzerland has been neutral since 1515, which was also acknowledged by the great European powers after the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. No other country in Europe can look back on such a long tradition of neutrality. Since the end of the Cold War, Switzerland has relaxed its definition of neutrality. As the role of NATO changed and it started to perform more peacekeeping missions, Switzerland signed up to the NATO Partnership for Peace in 1996. Thanks to its neutrality, Switzerland often acts as a mediator. In some cases, Swiss diplomats also represent the interests of countries which have no official contact with each other. Switzerland offers its neutral territory as a location for meetings and conferences of particular political delicacy.

[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 1.6 POPULATION

The permanent resident population of Switzerland is around eight million. The proportion of those aged between 20 and 39 is 26.7%, with 17.8% aged 65 and over, and 20.2% aged under 20. Life expectancy is one of the highest in the world: 80.7 years for men and 85 years for women. The settlement structure is relatively decentralized and therefore not overly crowded: more than two thirds of the population lives in the five largest cities (Zurich, Geneva, Basel, Bern and Lausanne) and their greater metropolitan areas.

There are four official national languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansh. In northern, eastern and central Switzerland, the prevailing language is German, with the Swiss German dialect being used in everyday conversation. French is spoken in the western part of the country, as well as some parts of the Mittelland; Italian is spoken in the south (Ticino), and Romansh in certain parts of the canton of Grisons.

24.3% of the population is of foreign nationality (as of 2014). Although in the past most people who migrated to Switzerland were more socially disadvantaged, today the country increasingly attracts better educated foreign nationals, particularly highly skilled workers from Germany.

www.statistik.admin.ch  
Federal Statistical Office (BFS)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 1.7 COSMOPOLITANISM AND INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

### 1.7.1 Languages and Origins

Most Swiss nationals speak at least one foreign language, which they learn in elementary school. English is also increasingly included in the curriculum at an early stage. Due to the country's openness – including in terms of immigration – the range of languages actually spoken and used for communication is wide. In international business, English is very much in evidence alongside the national languages, and is used by many managers.

The co-existence of various language groups and different religions, and the large proportion of foreign residents result in a high degree of openness and tolerance. The Ernst & Young Globalization Index places Switzerland in the top five most cosmopolitan economies (Fig. 4). This makes it easier for foreign companies to conduct business from Switzerland. Although Europe is Switzerland's most important business partner, it also has very close relationships with other markets, particularly the U.S. and Asia. The financial centers of Zurich and Geneva in particular are melting pots of diverse cultures. In terms of culture, too, Switzerland has a tradition of tolerance and openness. Its neutrality means it has access to all countries, and it also welcomes reciprocal contact. This diversity has made it easy for both global companies and numerous international organizations to settle in Switzerland.

### 1.7.2 International Organizations

Because of its political independence and conscious commitment, also to international understanding, Switzerland serves as a platform for many international organizations including the UN with its headquarters in Geneva. Around 250 NGOs in consultative status with the UN also have their headquarters in Switzerland.

## Most Cosmopolitan Economies, 2012

(FIG. 4)

INDIVIDUAL RANKINGS						
Overall Rank		Capital	Labor	Technology	Culture	Trade
1	Hong Kong SAR	1	18	1	1	2
2	Singapore	3	19	2	3	1
3	Ireland	4	2	22	2	6
4	Belgium	2	3	5	7	5
<b>5</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>
6	Netherlands	6	10	3	9	10
8	Denmark	7	14	6	11	16
10	United Kingdom	12	15	13	13	14
11	Germany	15	35	14	16	4
14	France	17	21	11	12	29
25	USA	16	40	23	22	34
30	Italy	36	22	31	15	27
43	Japan	34	59	24	56	40
44	China	44	53	34	51	36
45	Brazil	30	57	49	39	47
48	Russia	52	50	38	57	38
54	India	48	42	60	52	50

Source: Ernst & Young, Globalization Index 2012

## International Organizations and Major Non-Governmental Organizations Based in Switzerland

(FIG. 5)

TRADE AND COMMERCE			
<b>AITIC</b>	Agency For International Trade, Information and Cooperation	Geneva	<a href="http://www.acici.org">www.acici.org</a>
<b>BITH</b>	International Office for Textiles and Clothing	Geneva	-
<b>BIS</b>	Bank for International Settlements	Basel	<a href="http://www.bis.org">www.bis.org</a>
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association	Geneva	<a href="http://www.efta.int">www.efta.int</a>
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum	Geneva	<a href="http://www.weforum.org">www.weforum.org</a>
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.wto.org">www.wto.org</a>
LAW			
<b>ACWL</b>	Advisory Centre on WTO Law	Geneva	<a href="http://www.acwl.ch">www.acwl.ch</a>
<b>Court OSCE</b>	OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration	Geneva	<a href="http://www.osce.org/cca">www.osce.org/cca</a>
<b>ISO</b>	International Organization for Standardization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.iso.org">www.iso.org</a>
<b>WIPO</b>	World Intellectual Property Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.wipo.int">www.wipo.int</a>
EDUCATION AND RESEARCH			
<b>CERN</b>	European Organization for Nuclear Research	Geneva	<a href="http://www.cern.ch">www.cern.ch</a>
<b>ISSI</b>	International Space Science Institute	Bern	<a href="http://www.issibern.ch">www.issibern.ch</a>
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.wmo.int">www.wmo.int</a>
SOCIETY AND CULTURE			
<b>IBE/UNESCO</b>	International Bureau of Education / United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.ibe.unesco.org">www.ibe.unesco.org</a>
<b>EBU</b>	European Broadcasting Union	Geneva	<a href="http://www.ebu.ch">www.ebu.ch</a>
<b>GFATM</b>	The Global Fund To Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	Geneva	<a href="http://www.theglobalfund.org">www.theglobalfund.org</a>
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Geneva	<a href="http://www.ifrc.org">www.ifrc.org</a>
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross	Geneva	<a href="http://www.icrc.org">www.icrc.org</a>
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.ilo.org">www.ilo.org</a>
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	Geneva	<a href="http://www.iom.int">www.iom.int</a>
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union	Geneva	<a href="http://www.ipu.org">www.ipu.org</a>
<b>IRU</b>	International Road Transport Union	Geneva	<a href="http://www.iru.org">www.iru.org</a>
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Union	Geneva	<a href="http://www.itu.int">www.itu.int</a>
<b>OTIF</b>	Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail	Bern	<a href="http://www.otif.org">www.otif.org</a>
<b>UNHCR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	Geneva	<a href="http://www.unhcr.org">www.unhcr.org</a>
<b>UNOG</b>	The United Nations Office at Geneva	Geneva	<a href="http://www.unog.ch">www.unog.ch</a>
<b>UPOV</b>	International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants	Geneva	<a href="http://www.upov.int">www.upov.int</a>
<b>UPU</b>	Universal Postal Union	Bern	<a href="http://www.upu.int">www.upu.int</a>
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization	Geneva	<a href="http://www.who.int">www.who.int</a>
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature	Gland	<a href="http://www.wwf.org">www.wwf.org</a>
SPORTS			
<b>FIFA</b>	Fédération Internationale de Football Association	Zurich	<a href="http://www.fifa.com">www.fifa.com</a>
<b>FIS</b>	International Ski Federation	Thun	<a href="http://www.fis-ski.com">www.fis-ski.com</a>
<b>IIHF</b>	International Ice Hockey Federation	Zurich	<a href="http://www.iihf.com">www.iihf.com</a>
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic Committee	Lausanne	<a href="http://www.olympic.org">www.olympic.org</a>
<b>UCI</b>	Union Cycliste Internationale	Aigle	<a href="http://www.uci.ch">www.uci.ch</a>
<b>UEFA</b>	Union of European Football Associations	Nyon	<a href="http://www.uefa.com">www.uefa.com</a>
<b>WADA</b>	World Anti-Doping Agency	Lausanne	<a href="http://www.wada-ama.org">www.wada-ama.org</a>

Source: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA), own research

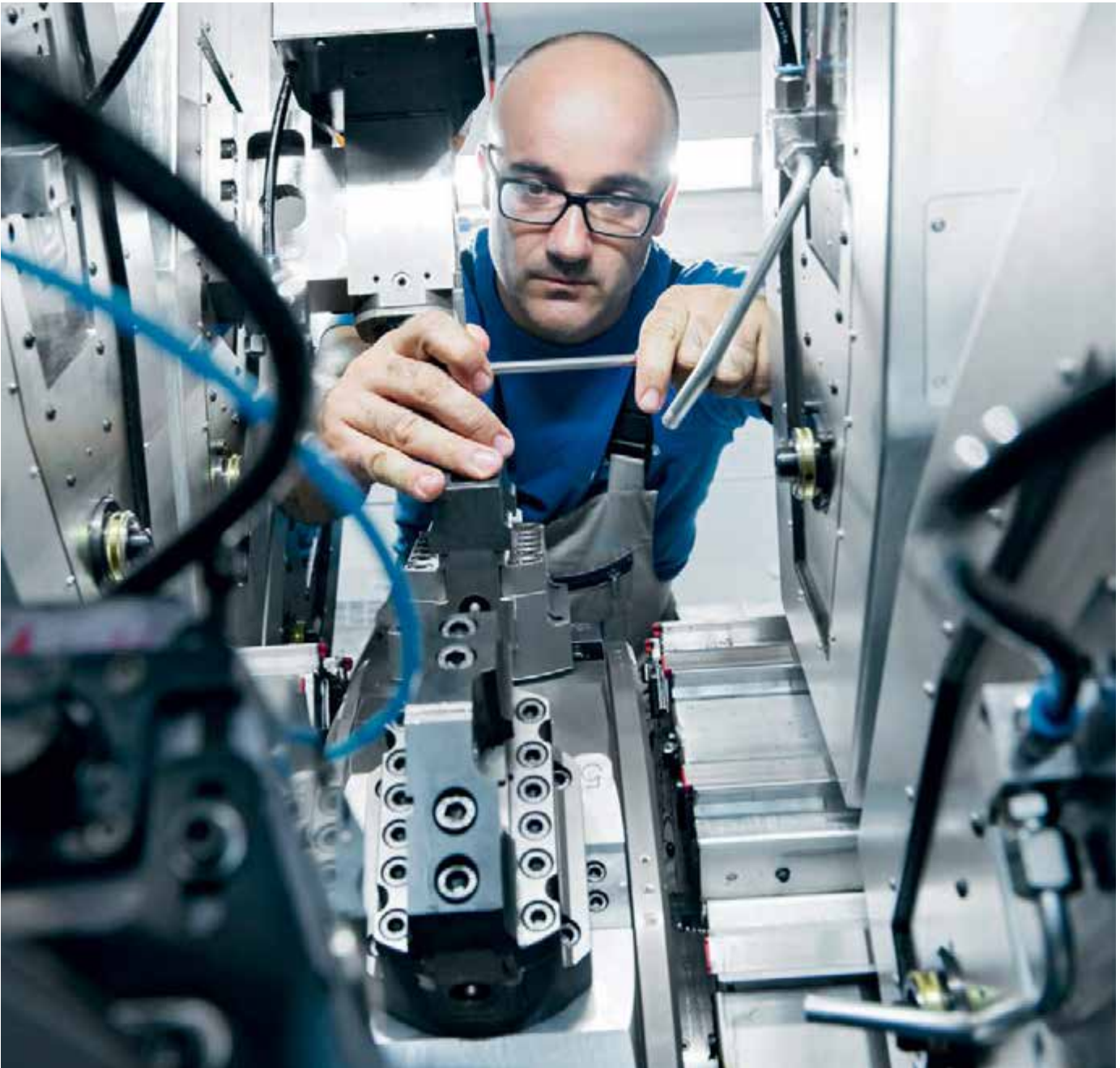
## 1.8 SWITZERLAND IN FIGURES

### Switzerland in Figures

(FIG. 6)

<b>GENERAL</b>		<b>Life expectancy at birth (years)</b>	
Currency	Swiss franc	Men	80.7
Time zone	CET = UTC + 1	Women	85
International country code	+41	<b>Religion</b>	
National Day	August 1	Roman Catholic	38.0%
<b>ECONOMY</b>		Evangelical Reformed	26.1%
Gross domestic product (nominal) (billions CHF)	642.3	Other	35.9%
National income per capita (CHF)	61,469	<b>Languages</b>	
GDP growth	1.2%	German	64.5%
Inflation rate	0.0%	French	22.6%
Unemployment rate	3.2%	Italian	8.3%
Imports (billions CHF) (goods and services)	252.5	Romansh	0.5%
Exports (billions CHF) (goods and services)	285.2	Other	4.1%
Deficit/surplus ratio as % of GDP+	-0.1	<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	
Debt ratio as % of GDP	34.5	Area (in km <sup>2</sup> )	41,285
Fiscal ratio as % of GDP	26.9	Border (km)	1,881
<b>Direct investments (millions CHF)</b>		Number of lakes	1,484
Capital stock in other countries	1,072,809	Highest mountain (m): Dufourspitze, Valais	4,634
Capital stock in Switzerland	688,084	Largest glacier: Aletsch, Valais	117 km <sup>2</sup> /24 km
Capital exports to other countries	31,508	Largest lake (km <sup>2</sup> ): Lake Geneva	582
Capital imports into Switzerland	610	Second largest lake (km <sup>2</sup> ): Lake Constance	539
<b>POPULATION</b>		Capital:	Bern
Permanent resident population (1,000)	8,237.7	<b>Largest metropolitan areas (1,000s of inhabitants)</b>	
Inhabitants per km <sup>2</sup>	206	Zurich	1,315.7
<b>Age groups (%)</b>		Geneva	570.2
0 – 19 years	20.2	Basel	537.1
20 – 39 years	26.7	Bern	406.9
40 – 64 years	35.3	Lausanne	402.9
65 – 79 years	12.8	<b>POLITICS</b>	
80 years and over	5.0	Form of government	Parliamentary federal state since 1848, direct democracy
Proportion of foreign nationals	24.3	Cantons	26 (20 full cantons, 6 half-cantons)
Average number of children per woman	1.54	Municipalities	2,397

Sources: Federal Statistical Office (BFS); Swiss National Bank (SNB); Federal Finance Administration (EFV); State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO); BAKBASEL



# ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

# 2

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One of the most liberal and competitive economies in the world, Switzerland has always maintained close economic ties with other countries. A secure legal system and long-term stable fundamentals for investors, relatively little regulation, and the proximity to research institutions make it the location of choice in Europe for businesses offering high-quality products and services.

## 2.1 GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

Switzerland's per capita gross domestic product is the fourth largest in the world (Fig 7). In 2014, per capita GDP was far above the EU average at CHF 86,895. Switzerland outranks France by 101%, and Germany and the UK by 83% and 90%, respectively. The service sector generates some 70% of the gross domestic product. Comprising 25% of GDP, the industrial sector is also an important mainstay of the economy, with the key sectors being chemicals, capital goods, and banking. The Swiss economy is strongly geared towards exports – as a percentage of GDP, its foreign trade is among the highest in the world. The EU plays a key role here, accounting for 45% of exports and 66% of imports. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate the Swiss economic landscape. More than 99% of companies have fewer than 250 full-time employees. But Switzerland is also home to multinational companies that account for around one third of GDP. They employ 1.29 million people, with the result that one in three jobs is in a multinational concern. Employees are highly motivated, possess a keen sense of responsibility, and are very loyal to their company. These typical Swiss characteristics are responsible for the quality and service ethos in both the industrial and service sectors.

### Gross Domestic Product Per Capita (Nominal), 2014 (US\$)

(FIG. 7)

1	Luxembourg	114,234
2	Norway	96,994
3	Qatar	95,585
4	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>86,894</b>
5	Australia	60,930
6	Denmark	60,770
8	Singapore	56,287
9	USA	54,597
10	Ireland	53,361
12	Netherlands	51,491
16	Belgium	47,648
17	Germany	47,504
18	United Kingdom	45,695
21	France	43,204
22	Hong Kong SAR	39,992
24	Japan	36,265
25	Italy	35,274
42	Russia	12,948
45	Brazil	11,571
52	China	7,574
61	India	1,632

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Online 2015

Around 75% of the Swiss workforce is engaged in the service sector. The figure for the industrial sector is just under 25% (Fig. 8). Although the industrial sector is increasingly diminishing in importance in advanced industrialized countries, in Switzerland the absolute number of people working in the secondary sector has remained stable for nearly 20 years.

### Industry Structure and Shares of Workforce, 2015

(FIG. 8)

INDUSTRY	WORKFORCE (2ND QUARTER 2015)	
	(1,000s)	(%)
<b>Total (not including agriculture and forestry)</b>	<b>4,244.30</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sector II Total</b>	<b>1,040.4</b>	<b>24.51%</b>
Mining and mineral extraction	4.8	0.11%
Processing and manufacturing	658.6	15.52%
Energy	27.0	0.64%
Water supply and purification	16.3	0.38%
Construction	333.7	7.86%
<b>Sector III Total</b>	<b>3,203.9</b>	<b>75.49%</b>
Vehicle trading, maintenance and repair	627.6	14.79%
Transport and warehousing	216.0	5.09%
Hospitality	208.6	4.91%
Information and communication	145.6	3.43%
Financial and insurance services	231.0	5.44%
Real estate and housing	33.5	0.79%
Professional, scientific and technical occupations	343.3	8.09%
Other economic services	178.1	4.20%
Public administration	186.0	4.38%
Education	295.4	6.96%
Healthcare and social services	583.5	13.75%
Arts, entertainment and leisure	53.0	1.25%
Other services	102.2	2.41%

Source: Federal Statistical Office (BFS), Job Statistics (JOBSTAT)

In international competitiveness indexes, Switzerland has occupied one of the top spots for many years. In 2015 it took first place in the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranking for the seventh consecutive year (Fig. 9). Switzerland receives top scores for innovation, labor market efficiency, and transparency of public institutions.

### International Competitiveness Ranking, 2015

Overall score 1–7

(FIG. 9)

<b>1</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>5.76</b>
2	Singapore	5.68
3	USA	5.61
4	Germany	5.53
5	Netherlands	5.50
6	Japan	5.47
7	Hong Kong SAR	5.46
8	Finland	5.45
9	Sweden	5.43
10	United Kingdom	5.43
19	Belgium	5.20
20	Luxembourg	5.20
22	France	5.13
24	Ireland	5.11
28	China	4.89
43	Italy	4.46
45	Russia	4.44
55	India	4.31
75	Brazil	4.08

Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016

Switzerland is also one of the world's leading innovators. In 2015 it was ranked as the world's most innovative country for the fifth consecutive year, leading the Global Innovation Index (Fig. 10).

### Global Innovation Index, 2015

Overall score 0-100

(FIG. 10)

<b>1</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>68.3</b>
2	United Kingdom	62.4
3	Sweden	62.4
4	Netherlands	61.6
5	USA	60.1
6	Finland	60.0
7	Singapore	59.4
8	Ireland	59.1
9	Luxembourg	59.0
10	Denmark	57.7
11	Hong Kong SAR	57.2
12	Germany	57.1
19	Japan	54.0
21	France	53.6
25	Belgium	50.9
29	China	47.5
31	Italy	46.4
48	Russia	39.3
70	Brazil	35.0
81	India	31.7

Source: INSEAD, The Global Innovation Index 2015

“Switzerland is the most innovative country in the world. It boasts outstanding innovation output, provides an ideal environment for innovation, and offers a high degree of market and economic maturity.”

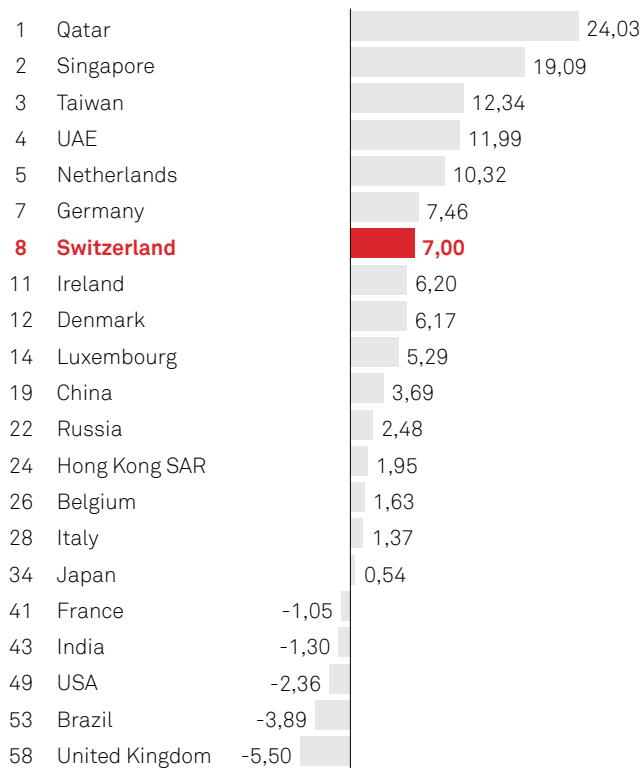
## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

As the Swiss domestic market is small and the country is lacking in natural resources (apart from water), since the advent of industrial production Swiss companies have been forced to seek and cultivate abroad what are often their key markets. Thanks to this necessity to open the country to the outside, Switzerland is an important player in world trade. Exports make up around 35% of GDP. As a result, Switzerland has taken a leading role among the important exporters in world trade, with regard to both goods and services.

### Balance of Trade

% of GDP, 2014

(FIG. 11)



Source: IMD World Competitiveness Online 2015

### 2.2.1 Goods and Services Trade

Europe is by far Switzerland's most important trade partner (2014). Two thirds of all imports and almost half of all exports are traded with the EU. Germany has traditionally been Switzerland's most important buyer and also supplier, while France and Italy are its second and third most important suppliers. The U.S. is Switzerland's second largest trade partner, followed by Italy and France. Newly industrialized and developing nations account for 15% of exports, and 8% of imports.

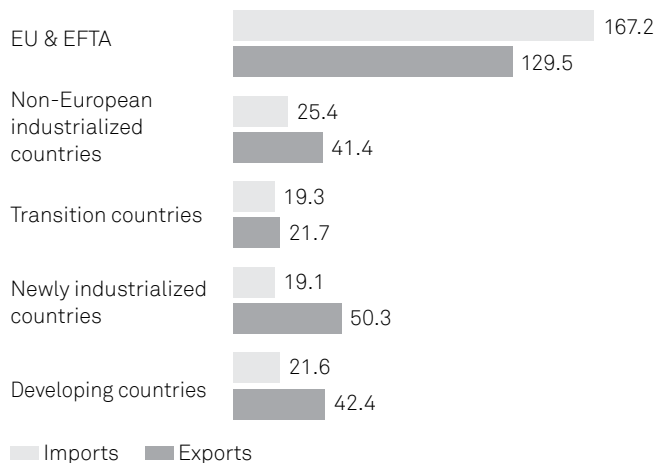
The classic example of a successful export-oriented branch of industry is what is known as Switzerland's 'secret automobile and aircraft industry': a little known network of highly specialized manufacturing companies and problem-solvers providing components for a range of areas, from precision and micro-mechanics to materials technology, plastics, and textiles. As technology and innovation leaders, these Swiss companies have been able to position themselves as reliable suppliers of quality and precision products.

Switzerland is a co-signatory of the WTO Agreement, and has continually championed market liberalization through free trade agreements, as a member of EFTA, and through bilateral agreements with the EU. As a result of its consistent market liberalization policy, Switzerland has become an efficient trading center and a market of economic significance - not only relative to its market size.

### Foreign Trade by Economic Area, 2014

Imports and exports (billions CHF)

(FIG. 12)



Source: Swiss Customs Administration (EZV)

## 2.2.2 Direct Investments

Switzerland's exposure to global markets is among the strongest of any country. In 2013, direct investments abroad totaled CHF 1,073 billion, or 167% of GDP. In comparison, in the Netherlands, direct investments abroad in the same year amounted to 121% and in the UK 70%. Swiss companies with direct investments abroad employ around 3 million people in their foreign subsidiaries and operating units, and they are also important employers in Switzerland. Switzerland is among the top ten largest direct investors in the world. Switzerland is also the eighth biggest foreign investor in the USA; in 2013, 17.6% of all Swiss direct investments or CHF 189,039 million were made in the USA.

Switzerland is also an attractive location for foreign investors, in particular from the EU (81.7% or CHF 562,047 million) and the USA. The capital stock of U.S. investors in Switzerland is 12.6% or CHF 88,060 million.

**“Switzerland is an attractive location for foreign investors. In 2013 foreign direct investments amounted to CHF 688 billion.”**

## Direct Investments: Capital Stock, 2013

(FIG. 13)

CAPITAL STOCK AT YEAR END, 2013	SWISS DIRECT INVESTMENTS ABROAD		FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS IN SWITZERLAND	
	CHF (millions)	(%)	CHF (millions)	(%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,072,809</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>688,084</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>464,537</b>	<b>43.3%</b>	<b>562,047</b>	<b>81.7%</b>
United Kingdom	78,720	7.3%	21,300	3.1%
Germany	51,420	4.8%	25,593	3.7%
Netherlands	60,984	5.7%	189,982	27.6%
Luxembourg	96,905	9.0%	144,270	21.0%
France	30,491	2.8%	38,421	5.6%
Italy	26,802	2.5%	3,946	0.6%
Spain	15,751	1.5%	10,671	1.6%
Austria	10,806	1.0%	59,896	8.7%
<b>Rest of Europe</b>	<b>57,562</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>20,976</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
Offshore financial centers	31,575	2.9%	n.a.	n.a.
Russian Federation	15,025	1.4%	n.a.	n.a.
<b>North America</b>	<b>233,042</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>88,060</b>	<b>12.8%</b>
USA	189,039	17.6%	86,804	12.6%
Canada	44,003	4.1%	417	0.1%
<b>Central and South America</b>	<b>174,949</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>6,791</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Brazil	21,182	2.0%	n.a.	n.a.
Offshore financial centers	121,603	11.3%	14,916	2.2%
<b>Asia, Africa, Oceania</b>	<b>142,621</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>10,211</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Japan	11,532	1.1%	3,162	0.5%
Singapore	22,090	2.1%	n.a.	n.a.
China	17,039	1.6%	n.a.	n.a.
Hong Kong SAR	7,390	0.7%	n.a.	n.a.
Taiwan	2,814	0.3%	n.a.	n.a.
India	6,820	0.6%	n.a.	n.a.
Australia	18,989	1.8%	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Swiss National Bank (SNB), direct investments 2013

## 2.3 KEY INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

From an economic perspective, clusters can be defined as networks of manufacturers, suppliers, research facilities (e.g. universities), service providers (e.g. designers and engineers), and related institutions (e.g. chambers of commerce) that have a certain regional proximity to one another and which are formed via a common relationship based on trade along a value chain (e.g. automotive manufacturing). The members of these clusters are connected by supply, competition, or common interests. These networks are referred to as clusters only if there is a large group of companies near to one another whose activities complement or are related to another along one or more value chains. Only then can a growth pool be formed which also attracts suppliers and specialized service providers and creates competitive advantages for all companies involved.

Switzerland has several of these industry clusters, which are also important on an international scale. The key industry clusters in Switzerland will be briefly described over the next few pages. The figures provided are for reference purposes only, as the clusters sometimes overlap.

### 2.3.1 Life Sciences: Chemicals / Pharmaceuticals, Biotech, Medtech

Extremely successful global conglomerates such as Novartis, Roche, Syngenta, and smaller companies form a unique industrial cluster in north-western Switzerland, making the city of Basel and the surrounding region the national and international location of choice for pharmaceutical and chemical companies. The Swiss chemical-pharmaceutical industry is virtually exclusively active in specialty chemicals and is very internationally orientated. Approximately three quarters of the product portfolio covers life science products, i.e. products which intervene in the metabolic processes of living organisms, and 98% of sales are generated abroad. Chemical-pharmaceutical products are Switzerland's most important export goods, accounting for 41% of goods exports. Companies in the Swiss chemical-pharmaceutical industry have a leading worldwide position in many market sectors and employ around 70,000 people. The industry represents 4% of GDP. Only the metal and mechanical engineering industry is larger in Switzerland.

Owing to the ripple effect of pharmaceutical giants Novartis and Roche, as well as recent investments by international businesses such as CSL Behring, UCB Farchim, Glenmark and Biogen Idec, unique biotech clusters have formed in the regions of Basel, Bern-Freiburg-Neuenburg and around Lake Geneva. At the end of 2014, the industry counted 207 biotech development companies and 57 biotech supplier companies with around 14,500 employees. Such a concentration of biotechnology companies is not to be found anywhere else in the world. Over half of Swiss biotech firms are small companies with less than 20 employees. They profit from the geographical proximity to large companies both in Switzerland and in its neighboring countries. Some well-known global players headquartered in Switzerland and which are industry leaders in Europe include Actelion, Amgen, Biogen Idec, Crucell, and Merck Serono.

The concentration of medical technology companies in Switzerland is also unusually high. The medtech sector consists of approximately 350 manufacturers, 500 suppliers, over 260 distribution and sales companies and 330 specialized service providers, which are mainly located in the Lake Geneva area, the Bern-Biel area, the Basel area, and the Zurich metropolitan area. 63% of all products manufactured in Switzerland are then exported, which makes up 5.2% of all Swiss exports. Sales in 2013 amounted to around CHF 14 billion. Investment in research and development, growth rates, and profitability are all above average. In total around 52,000 people are employed in the medical technology sector. At 1.1% relative to the working population this is more than any other country (Germany: 0.4%, UK/EU/USA: 0.2%). The largest employer is Synthes, ahead of the diagnostics division of Roche and Johnson & Johnson Medical. Other global Swiss companies are Ypsomed, Sonova (hearing aids), and Straumann (dental implants). Some major foreign corporations worth mentioning are Zimmer, Medtronic, B. Braun, and Stryker.

[www.s-ge.com/invest-lifesciences](http://www.s-ge.com/invest-lifesciences)

Facts and figures on Switzerland as a life sciences location

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.scienceindustries.ch](http://www.scienceindustries.ch)

Swiss industry association for chemicals, pharma, biotech

Languages: German, English, French

[www.medical-cluster.ch](http://www.medical-cluster.ch)

Network of medical technology companies

Languages: German, English

[www.fasmed.ch](http://www.fasmed.ch)

Network of medical technology companies

Languages: German, French

### 2.3.2 Mechanical, Electrical Engineering and Metals Industry

The mechanical, electrical engineering and metals industry (MEM) represents the largest industrial sector and holds a key position in the Swiss economy with 330,000 employees. In 2014 the MEM industry's share of added value amounted to about 9%.

Countless companies of the Swiss MEM industry have a leading international role in their sub-sectors. Around 80% of products from the MEM industry are exported, and the industry contributes 32% to total Swiss exports.

Large companies in the metal and mechanical engineering industry well-known names such as OC Oerlikon, Rieter, Schindler, and ABB are present in almost every canton. Particularly in the cantons of Zurich, Aargau, Ticino, and Valais, in the Rhine Valley and in central Switzerland, growth is among the strongest in the world. Most companies focus on innovation and quality in order to compete with cheaper locations and maintain and expand their global market position. Today, this branch of industry is able to compete on the international stage, thanks to well-advanced restructuring and the use of new technologies.

The Swiss watch industry is primarily located in the Jura region stretching from Geneva to Schaffhausen (called the 'watchmaker belt'). There are also individual sites in Mittelland, Ticino and Valais; Geneva, Biel and La Chaux-de-Fonds are three watchmaking centers. Companies such as the Swatch Group, IWC Schaffhausen, Rolex SA, Richemont SA, and the LVMH Group are headquartered here. The Swiss watch industry makes products whose high degree of mechanization makes a strongly demarcated division of labor possible. As a result, the sector generally comprises small and medium-sized businesses, averaging just under 70 employees per company. Around 560 companies employ 59,000 people (as of 2014). 95% of all employees and businesses are located in the nine cantons of the Jura region, resulting in a watch industry cluster. Particularly in the luxury segment, the world market position of Swiss watchmakers is excellent. 95% of all watches are exported; the total value of Swiss watch exports in 2014 was CHF 24 billion.

The availability of highly qualified staff with professional know-how has resulted in the relocation to this area of more and more companies outside the watchmaking industry which require similar technology for their production. In particular, this 'precision cluster' includes medical technology, which has significantly expanded its presence in the region in recent years. A cluster strongly orientated to micromechanics and optics has also formed in eastern Switzerland and the Bern region.

[www.s-ge.com/invest-mem](http://www.s-ge.com/invest-mem)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as an MEM location  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.swissmem.ch](http://www.swissmem.ch)  
Association of the Swiss mechanical, electrical engineering and metal industry  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 2.3.3 Information and Communications Technology

Switzerland occupies a leading position with regard to the development of infrastructure for the information society. According to the OECD, 48% of the population has a fixed high-speed Internet connection, putting Switzerland in first place worldwide ahead of the Netherlands and Denmark. More than 85% of over-14s use the Internet. The World Economic Forum Networked Readiness Index 2015 placed Switzerland in sixth position behind Singapore, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway. According to official statistics, the information and communications technology (ICT) sector in Switzerland comprises just over 18,000 companies, which corresponds to 3% of the total number of all companies. More than 145,000 people, or nearly 4% of the workforce, are active in the ICT sector.

In the Zurich-Lake Constance area, well-known companies from the IT sector - including IBM, Google, and Microsoft - have settled around the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, its research facilities, and the University of Zurich. Proximity to these universities was a key factor in their choice of location. Other IT centers have emerged in Bern and Lucerne. Swiss IT companies such as Noser Engineering and Coresystems AG are leaders in their markets. Some of the largest employers in the sector are foreign companies such as Siemens, Dell, HP, and Reuters. One important criterion encouraging foreign IT firms to settle in Switzerland is the extremely well educated, technically experienced and often multilingual workforce.

[www.s-ge.com/invest-ict](http://www.s-ge.com/invest-ict)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as an ICT location  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.s-ge.com/data-centers](http://www.s-ge.com/data-centers)  
Facts and figures on data centers in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)  
Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.ictswitzerland.ch](http://www.ictswitzerland.ch)  
Umbrella organization for the information and telecommunications sector  
Languages: German, French

### 2.3.4 Cleantech

Cleantech comprises technologies, processes, goods and services, which have the aim of reducing environmental pollution and allowing the sustainable use of natural resources and systems. Cleantech is applied in all sectors of the economy and affects the whole value-added chain. As a small country with limited resources, Switzerland has been concerned with environmental protection from an early stage. Waste collection, Minergie standards, connection to sewage treatment plants, the energy recovery of all waste, and other measures are a matter of course for the Swiss population. Legislation and regulations at a high level have forced industrial solutions and led to many years of valuable experience. This constantly yields new and innovative developments. Nowadays the work of an estimated 160,000 employees is associated with the cleantech sector, 4.5% of all jobs. The estimated gross value added is CHF 18 – 20 billion and corresponds to 3.5% of GDP. 38% of Swiss cleantech companies export products and services. The sector is characterized by a heterogeneous corporate landscape, ranging from start-up/spin-off companies to large multinational groups.

[www.cleantech.admin.ch](http://www.cleantech.admin.ch)

Official information about cleantech  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.cleantech-switzerland.com](http://www.cleantech-switzerland.com)

Export platform for the cleantech industry  
Languages: English, Chinese

[www.swisscleantech.ch](http://www.swisscleantech.ch)

Association of the Swiss cleantech industry  
Languages: German, French

### 2.3.5 Company Headquarters

Switzerland is a vital center for the global and regional headquarters of foreign companies. While European firms have their global headquarters in Switzerland, U.S. companies tend to open their regional headquarters here. The number of companies that have moved their headquarters to Switzerland has risen in recent years. According to an analysis by the consultancy company Arthur D. Little, more than 300 headquarters have been relocated to Switzerland from 2003 to the middle of 2011. 53% of these companies come from the USA, 31% from Europe and 11% from Asia. Prominent examples such as eBay, Bombardier, General Motors, Nissan, Sony, Google, IBM, and Kraft show the attractiveness of Switzerland as a location for company headquarters.

Some key criteria in the choice of location include the favorable tax environment, the availability of qualified staff, a high standard of living, and the advantageous geographical location. Neutrality in an economic sense is also important – all the major European markets are comfortable with a Swiss main office. Switzerland also scores highly in stability, legal certainty, and the safety of people and the environment. Companies also value the high standard of living and the quality of the education system. Other advantages include proximity to research facilities and clients and reliable double-taxation agreements. Switzerland is also perfectly suited as a test market because it offers the widest possible variety in a small area.

**“Between 2003 and 2011 over 300 companies relocated their headquarters to Switzerland.”**



### 2.3.6 Financial Services

The Swiss financial center is an important element of the economy as well as a world-class cluster. In Switzerland there are some 300 banks, 200 insurance companies, and 2,000 pension funds. The majority of the financial institutions are located in Zurich, Geneva, Basel and Lugano. In 2014, the direct value added by banks and insurance companies amounted to around CHF 61 billion, with banks contributing CHF 34 billion and insurance companies CHF 27 billion. This corresponds to about 10% of the entire Swiss GDP. 230,000 people are employed in the financial sector, which is about 5.4% of all wage earners in Switzerland. Of this number, 120,000 work in banks, 50,000 at insurance companies and the rest at other financial sector companies. The importance of the financial industry is also reflected in the courses offered by universities. The Swiss Finance Institute – a collaborative effort between financial institutions and leading Swiss universities – ensures the delivery of education and financial research.

From an international perspective, the Swiss banking center is regarded very highly and is extremely competitive. Its core competency is asset management for private clients. In addition to the two major globally active banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, there are numerous regional and specialized institutions. There are some 120 foreign banks in the country, and 54% of the securities managed in Switzerland come from foreign clients.

The key factors for success and the basic conditions for the insurance industry include: a high per capita income, a strong need for security, a solidly structured old-age pension system, an open and internationally networked insurance center, a credible regulatory environment, and international know-how in the reinsurance business.

For more information and links relating to banking, see page 100 onward.

#### [www.s-ge.com/financial-center](http://www.s-ge.com/financial-center)

Facts and figures on Switzerland as a financial center  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

#### [www.svv.ch](http://www.svv.ch)

Swiss Insurance Association  
Languages: German, English, French

### 2.3.7 Trading and Resources

Switzerland is one of the world's most important commodities trading platforms. Around one third of global trade in crude oil products is transacted via Geneva. Regarding the trade in grain, oilseeds, and cotton, Geneva is the world number 1, and in sugar trading the number 1 in Europe. Zug is a hub for trade in mining products. At first glance, such a prominent position may seem surprising because Switzerland is a landlocked country with very few natural resources. But because of its central location, it has been a major crossroads for various trade routes since the early days of international trade in coffee and cotton. Later, the Swiss financial center became a hub for international trade due to its traditional locational advantages. In addition to comparatively low taxes, trading companies value its central location, good infrastructure, and connections with other countries.

Also important for the Swiss economy are the numerous commodities-related services based here, such as insurance, law firms, consulting companies, trust and fiduciary companies, freight and security businesses. Major Swiss banks and cantonal banks as well as various foreign banks have specialized in financing commodities trading in the regional hubs. They finance the purchase of raw materials, guarantee the seamless processing of transactions, and offer protection against operational and credit risks. All in all, commodities trading amounts to 3% of Switzerland's GDP.

In recent years trade in commodities has continually risen in importance. On the list of the 1,000 largest Swiss companies (2014) there are six commodities companies in the top 20: Vitol (1<sup>st</sup> place), Cargill International (3<sup>rd</sup>), Mercuria Energy Trading (4<sup>th</sup>), and Gunvor (7<sup>th</sup>) are Geneva-based trading firms. Glencore (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Trafigura (4<sup>th</sup>) are based in central Switzerland.

#### [www.vsig.ch](http://www.vsig.ch)

Umbrella organization of Swiss trading companies  
Languages: German, English, French

#### [www.gtsa.ch](http://www.gtsa.ch)

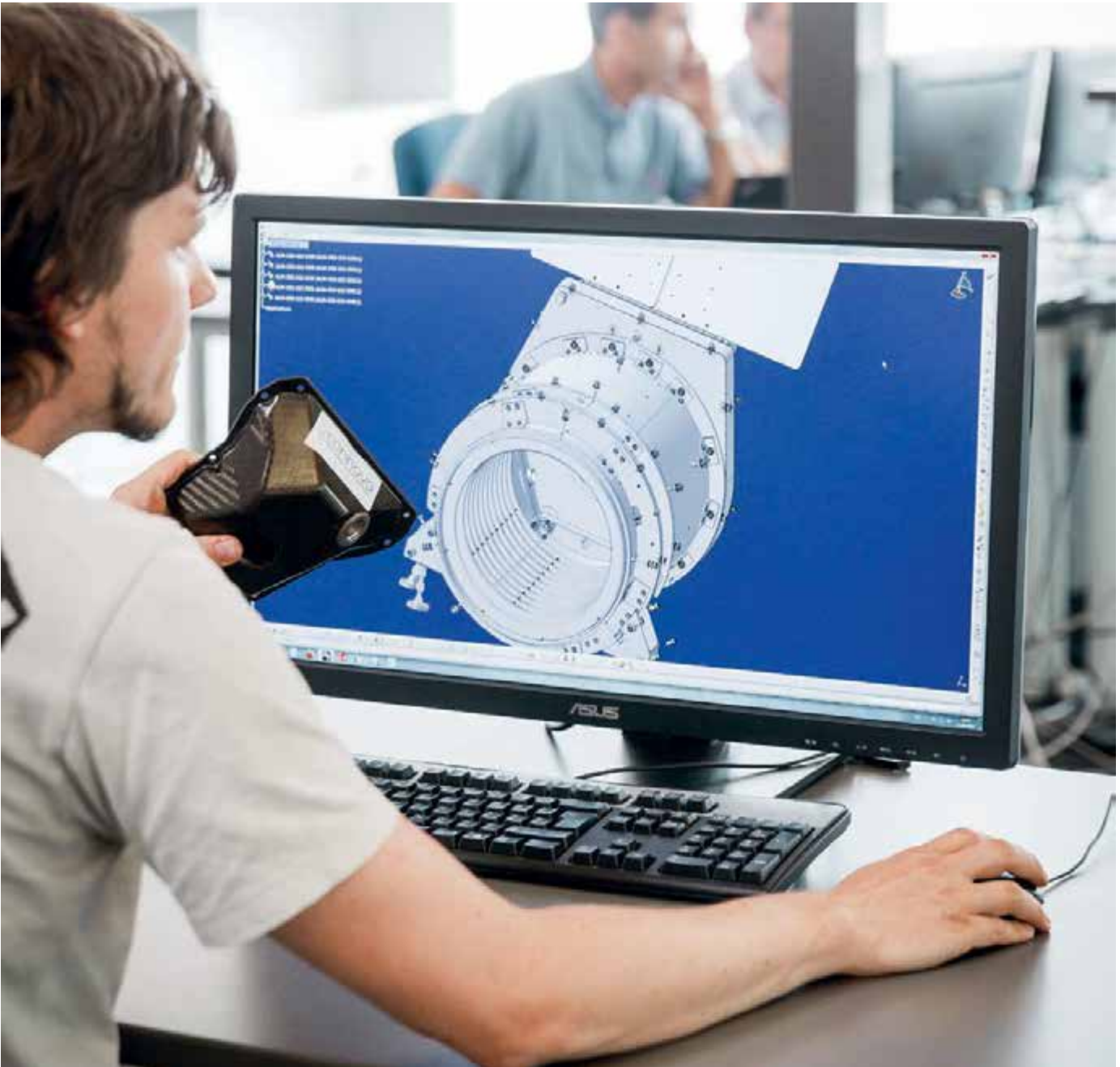
Geneva Trading & Shipping Association (GTSA)  
Language: English

#### [www.lcta.ch](http://www.lcta.ch)

Lugano Commodity Trading Association  
Languages: German, Italian

#### [www.zugcommodity.ch](http://www.zugcommodity.ch)

Zug Commodity Association (ZCA)  
Language: English



# ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

# 3

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Free competition and trade and the protection of intellectual property are the cornerstones of economic success and make Switzerland attractive to both domestic and foreign companies. Efficiently organized administrative processes guarantee security for planning and day-to-day operations, while progressive environmental laws promote sustainability.

Switzerland is an extremely attractive location for global companies. The main reason for this is its liberal economic environment and an economic policy based on the free market.

Switzerland offers the greatest economic freedom of any country in Europe and ranks fourth in the world in this respect. This is according to the annual report Economic Freedom of the World (Fig. 14), which measures the economic freedom of a country in five areas: extent of government activity, legal structure and security of property rights, currency stability, freedom to trade internationally, and level of regulation.

### Economic Freedom, 2013

Overall score 0-10

(FIG. 14)

1	Hong Kong SAR	8.97
2	Singapore	8.52
3	New Zealand	8.19
<b>4</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.16</b>
5	United Arab Emirates	8.15
6	Mauritius	8.08
7	Jordan	7.93
8	Ireland	7.90
9	Canada	7.89
10	United Kingdom	7.87
12	Georgia	7.83
12	Australia	7.83
13	Qatar	7.77
16	USA	7.73
19	Finland	7.61
22	Denmark	7.58
29	Germany	7.50
30	Netherlands	7.48
52	Belgium	7.26
68	Italy	7.13
70	France	7.12
99	Russia	6.69
111	China	6.44
114	India	6.43
118	Brazil	6.34

Source: Fraser Institute, Economic Freedom of the World: 2015 Annual Report

### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The Swiss economy is characterized by a high degree of international integration, with half of the country's GDP generated abroad. This is only possible thanks to the highly effective cross-border movement of goods and people.

#### 3.1.1 Free Trade Agreements, WTO, and Elimination of Trade Restrictions

In addition to the EFTA Convention and the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (EU), Switzerland currently has a network of 28 free trade agreements with 38 partners outside the EU and is also a member of the WTO. It applies the most-favored-nation clause in trade with all WTO member states and is generally committed to eliminating trade restrictions worldwide.

In joining the WTO, Switzerland has also undertaken to convert most non-tariff trade barriers into customs duties. Apart from a few exceptions (primarily agricultural products), domestic products are not protected against international competition. There is no actual anti-dumping law. There are essentially no volume restrictions on the importation of processed products. Imports and exports of industrial goods basically enjoy full duty and quota exemption on the European markets thanks to the free trade agreements with the EU and EFTA. Duty and quota exemption does not mean that customs clearance is not necessary, but this is not an obstacle. Thanks to PCs and the Internet it is now a largely automated process conducted via the IT applications e-dec and NCTS.

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Foreign trade  
Free trade agreements (WTO)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 3.1.2 Customs and Excise

Although Switzerland has been a member of the Schengen Area since the end of 2008, it is not part of the European Customs Union and the common market. As a result, customs controls remain in place. The most important document for customs clearance is the customs declaration, which must be accompanied by the exporter's invoice (indicating the weight) and proof of origin, where necessary. A certificate of origin is required in order to benefit from preferential duty rates within the scope of free trade agreements or the Generalized System of Preferences (developing countries) or if the goods are to be re-exported and the origin is to be passed on.

Unlike most other countries Switzerland uses a system of customs clearance based on gross weight. This so-called specific customs duty is therefore levied on products for which no exemption from duty is granted. Swiss customs duties are usually lower than those of other countries. This system favors the import of high-quality technical components, which weigh very little but are extremely valuable.

In line with other countries Switzerland levies taxes and duties at its borders, such as the automobile tax, tobacco and beer tax, mineral oil tax, the CO<sub>2</sub> levy, the VOC incentive tax, and the mileage-related heavy vehicle toll (MRHVT). At a standard rate of 8%, VAT is much lower than in neighboring countries (Germany: 19%, France: 20%, Austria: 20%, Italy: 22%).

Goods that are only intended to be held temporarily in Switzerland in intermediate storage can be stored without customs clearance and duty unpaid in bonded warehouses. The goods are therefore in transit between the border and the bonded warehouse. The subsequent exportation of the goods is then subject to the customs tariff of the importing country. The goods so stored may not be processed, or they become liable for normal customs clearance. Bonded warehouses are public facilities. They are operated by private warehousing companies and are open to all interested parties. Open bonded warehouses, meanwhile, are used for storing goods that have not been cleared through customs on a company's own premises, but separately from domestic goods. They are usually operated by shipping companies and are becoming increasingly important.

Used household effects of people moving to Switzerland that are intended for their continued personal use are exempt from customs duty. At the time of importation, the completed official form must be submitted to the Swiss customs office. Clearance of household effects must take place during customs office opening hours (see chapter 13.2.1).

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Foreign trade  
Information about foreign trade  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.zoll.admin.ch](http://www.zoll.admin.ch)  
Information about customs  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.s-ge.com/exporthelp](http://www.s-ge.com/exporthelp)  
Information about exports and customs tariffs worldwide  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 3.1.3 Rules of Origin

Raw materials and component parts that are imported from third countries can acquire Swiss-origin status and consequently be delivered tax-free to countries which have signed the free trade agreement (e.g. the agreement with the EU), if they have been sufficiently processed in Switzerland within the scope of the relevant free trade agreement. In many situations this is the case if the added value created in Switzerland is between 60% and 80% of the finished product's selling price (depending on the product).

This regulation is of interest because high-quality products often have a low weight but a high product value. They can therefore be imported cheaply into Switzerland, be processed and then be exported to countries with tariff preference, with which there is a free trade agreement. If, for example, goods are imported in this way from a country outside the EU/EFTA area and transformed in Switzerland in such a manner that they acquire Swiss-origin status, no duty is normally payable when the goods are exported to an EU/EFTA country.

[www.zoll.admin.ch](http://www.zoll.admin.ch) > Information companies > Exemptions > Exportation  
Information about origin  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 3.2 PROTECTION OF FREE COMPETITION

Switzerland's economic system is based on the principles of the free market. Free and fair competition is strengthened by the Cartel Act, which has been largely harmonized with EU regulations since 1995, under which cartels are not illegal but abuses are prosecuted. The Internal Market Act ensures greater competition and the elimination of protectionist regulations at cantonal and municipal level. The Competition Commission can intervene if there are grounds for suspecting unacceptable restrictions on competition. It also investigates whether mergers have negative effects on free competition and supplies the authorities with recommendations on promoting effective competition.

**“With 7,890 patent applications in 2014, Switzerland outstrips any other country in terms of the number of applications per inhabitant.”**

### 3.3 PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The protection of intellectual property rights is well developed in Switzerland. A comprehensive system of patent, trademark, design and copyright protection guarantees that the results of innovation and creativity are protected at national and international level. Patent applications and trademark or design registrations can be submitted to the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (Eidgenössisches Institut für Geistiges Eigentum, IGE) in Bern.

The IGE, the agency responsible for commercial property rights and copyrights, is a center of competence for all aspects of patents, trademarks, designs, topographies of semiconductor products, copyrights, and other related property rights. Initial information about property rights registered in Switzerland can be accessed via the IGE's own electronic property rights register. As a member of the WTO, Switzerland implements the provisions of the WTO/TRIPS Agreement.

The IGE makes information from the trademark, patent, and design register and on protected topographies available free of charge in the Swissreg database. Swissreg contains Swiss trademarks and applications for registration, but not international trademarks that could also lead to protective consequences in Switzerland. These international trademarks are registered with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva.

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch)  
Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IGE)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.kmu.ige.ch](http://www.kmu.ige.ch)  
Information specifically for SMEs  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch) > Service  
Information for innovators and creative individuals  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.swissreg.ch](http://www.swissreg.ch)  
Database of Swiss protective titles  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.wipo.int](http://www.wipo.int)  
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)  
Languages: German, English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic

#### 3.3.1 Patents

Switzerland is one of the most active countries in terms of patent applications. In 2014 it ranked eighth in the world and came in fourth place in Europe with 7,890 applications. In terms of the number of applications per inhabitant, it outstrips any other country.

Inventions that solve a technical problem by technical means can be protected with a patent. To be eligible for a patent, the invention must fulfill three basic criteria:

- Industrial applicability: The invention must be commercially usable, actually realizable and repeatable.
- Novelty: An invention is considered novel when it is not already state-of-the-art.
- Non-obviousness: The invention must not be obvious to someone with knowledge and experience in the subject.

Ideas, lottery or accounting systems, diagnostic, therapeutic or surgical procedures on humans or animals, animal species and plant varieties, among other things, cannot be patented. Furthermore, inventions which violate public policy or morality (e.g. certain biotechnological inventions) cannot be patented.

There are three ways to protect an invention with a patent application effective in Switzerland:

- Swiss patent: With national registration, the patent protection extends to Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein. National applications can be submitted to the IGE in any language. A translation in German, French or Italian must, however, be submitted within a deadline, if the application is not made in one of these three languages.
- European patent: The European Patent Convention (EPC) enables applicants to obtain protection in the member states of the EPC, including Switzerland, through a standardized patent investigation and granting procedure.
- International patent: The Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), which Switzerland has ratified, enables inventors to submit an international application which then has the same effect as a national application in all named member states. International applications can be submitted to the IGE in English.

It takes an average of three to five years between the filing of a national application and the granting of the patent. An accelerated process is possible upon request. Patents expire after a maximum of 20 years.

A patent costs CHF 200 for the application and CHF 500 for the patent check. Annual renewal fees are payable starting five years after the date of filing.

As the IGE does not check the criteria regarding novelty and non-obviousness, it is recommended to engage a specialist (e.g. a patent lawyer) before applying for a patent. Both criteria can also be checked after the patent application through optional research into the current state of the art.

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch)  
Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.epo.org](http://www.epo.org)  
European Patent Office  
Languages: German, English, French

## Property Rights at a Glance

(FIG. 15)

	TRADEMARKS	PATENTS	DESIGNS	COPYRIGHT <sup>2</sup>
<b>What is protected?</b>	Registered trademark protected against misuse by third parties	Invention, i.e. technical solution to a technical problem	The form and external design of an object	Literary and artistic works (including computer programs)
<b>How is protection obtained?</b>	Trademark entered in trademark register	Patent of invention is issued	Design entered in design register	Automatically when the object is created
<b>Minimum requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does not infringe older third-party rights</li> <li>- Distinctive</li> <li>- Non-descriptive</li> <li>- Does not violate public policy or morality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Novelty</li> <li>- Industrial applicability</li> <li>- Non-obviousness</li> <li>- Disclosure of invention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Novelty</li> <li>- Overall visual appearance must be significantly different from existing designs</li> <li>- Does not violate public policy or morality</li> </ul>	Intellectual creations of literature and art with an individual character
<b>Not available for</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simple symbols</li> <li>- Acronyms</li> <li>- Factual statements or descriptions</li> <li>- Emblems</li> <li>- and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Animal species, plant varieties</li> <li>- Diagnostic, therapeutic or surgical procedures on humans or animals</li> <li>- Use does not violate public policy or morality</li> <li>- Some biotech inventions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exclusively technical functions</li> <li>- Ideas, concepts</li> <li>- Anything that violates federal law (e.g. emblem law) or treaties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Content (ideas, concepts)</li> <li>- Laws, official decrees</li> <li>- Decisions of public authorities</li> <li>- Means of payment</li> <li>- Patent specifications</li> </ul>
<b>Excluded from protection</b>	When mark is not used as a trademark	Private use, research, and teaching		Private use, quotations, backup copies, reporting
<b>Scope of protection</b>	Defined by the mark and the Goods and Services List	Defined by patent claims	Defined by the illustration	Defined by the actual work
<b>Duration of protection</b>	10 years (unlimited extensions possible)	Max. 20 years	5 years (4 x 5-year extensions possible): max. 25 years	70 years after death of creator (50 years for computer programs)
<b>Common symbols or indications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ® for registered trademark</li> <li>- TM for trademark</li> <li>Use is optional</li> <li>Misuse is punishable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+pat+; pat. pend. (patent applied for)</li> <li>Use is optional</li> <li>Misuse is punishable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mod. dép.</li> <li>Use is optional</li> <li>Misuse is punishable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>©, "Copyright", "Alle Rechte vorbehalten", "Tous droits réservés" or similar formulations</li> <li>Use is optional</li> </ul>
<b>Application fee (CH)<sup>1</sup></b>	CHF 550	CHF 200 (application) CHF 500 (optional search) CHF 500 (check)	CHF 200 (basic fee) including publication of an illustration	None
<b>Extension (CH)<sup>1</sup></b>	CHF 700 (10 years)	CHF 100 for the 4th year, then the fee increases by CHF 50 each year (CHF 150 for the 5th year etc.)	CHF 200 (5 years)	None
<b>Additional information</b>	No check of older property rights carried out in Switzerland (trademark search recommended)	No check of novelty and non-obviousness carried out in Switzerland (patent search recommended)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publication may be delayed for 30 months</li> <li>- No check of novelty carried out in Switzerland</li> </ul>	Collecting societies: SUISA, SUISSIMAGE, ProLitteris, SSA, SWISSPERFORM

<sup>1</sup> Excludes costs of engaging a specialist.

<sup>2</sup> Copyright law also governs related rights of artists, manufacturers of audiovisual media, and broadcasting companies.

Correct at: September 2014. Subject to change. Please refer to [www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch) for the most up-to-date information.

Source: Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IGE)

### 3.3.2 Trademarks

Trademarks are symbols which allow the products of one company to be differentiated on the market from those of other companies, thereby allowing consumers to find a product they regard highly among the mass of products on offer. A symbol can be registered as a trademark if

- it is recognized by the public as referring to a company and its registration does not restrict competitors in their economic development to an unreasonable degree
- it does not feign characteristics the product does not have
- it does not violate public policy, morality, or applicable legislation

The IGE investigates, within the scope of the application process, whether these requirements have been met. It does not check whether other symbols, which it could be mistaken with, have already been entered into the register, or whether any third-party rights exist, which could be violated by the trademark application. It is therefore recommended that a search be performed with the IGE or a private provider before registering a trademark. The registration with IGE only applies to Switzerland. The following options are available for protecting the trademark abroad:

- The national registration of the trademark in the relevant countries
- The registration of the trademark as an (EU) Community Trade Mark with protection in all member states of the EU
- International registration under the Madrid system: on the basis of a national trademark, the trademark owner can register its trademark in individual signatory countries of its choice, with a single application to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in Geneva, the assessment of protectability being carried out by the registration authorities in the respective countries.

In Switzerland, trademark applications can be submitted electronically. The registration fee is CHF 550 (plus any class fees). If the symbol meets the protection requirements, it is normally registered within a maximum of six months. The ten-year trademark protection resulting from the registration can be extended by paying an extension fee as many times as desired every ten years.

[www.ip-search.ch](http://www.ip-search.ch)  
Trademark search  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.e-trademark.ige.ch](http://www.e-trademark.ige.ch)  
Trademark registration  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.ige.ch/ma-berater](http://www.ige.ch/ma-berater)  
Trademark consultants  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 3.3.3 Design

Design appeals to the senses, triggers emotions, and creates identification and distinction. As a result design has also become a decisive market factor and forgeries are correspondingly common. New, commercially manufactured two-dimensional or three-dimensional designs of an aesthetic nature can be protected by means of registration. The registration process for a design is simple, fast and cheap. A design can be protected for a maximum of 25 years (comprising five 5-year periods). Based on the Hague Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Industrial Designs, designs and models can also be registered internationally. Because Switzerland has ratified this agreement, the registrant can acquire protection for Switzerland as well.

[www.s-ge.com/ip-product-design](http://www.s-ge.com/ip-product-design)  
Facts and figures on product and industry design in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch) > Designs > Protection in Switzerland  
Protection of designs  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 3.3.4 Copyright

Intellectual creations of literature and art with an individual character can be protected by means of copyright. This includes literature, music, pictures, sculptures, films, operas, ballets, and mimes, as well as computer programs. A work is protected by copyright as soon as it is created. There is no requirement to apply for protection or register the work, and no register exists. In Switzerland, copyright protection expires 70 years after the death of the creator, except for computer programs, which are only protected for 50 years.



### 3.4 PRODUCT REGULATIONS AND PRODUCT LIABILITY

For reasons of health and safety, environmental and consumer protection and to comply with international and national standards, medicines, cosmetics, cleaning agents, electrical appliances, measuring and weighing equipment, heating systems, pressure containers, and motorcycles, as well as other products, are subject to certain regulations when imported into and sold in Switzerland.

The law regulates which particular conformity assessment procedures shall apply, depending on the product's hazard potential. The procedures range from self-checks (e.g. for machines) to assessments by officially approved independent conformity assessment centers (e.g. for pressure containers) to government licensing (e.g. for medicines).

Nowadays most countries impose a wide range of technical regulations and very few products are not subject to them. In Switzerland, these regulations are contained in more than 30 laws and more than 160 ordinances at the federal level. In addition, some technical regulations still exist at cantonal level.

Mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) are an important policy tool for removing technical trade barriers in the state-regulated sector and are recognized by the World Trade Organization. If the product regulations in two states are of a comparable standard, a conformity assessment conducted under the exporting country's regulations is sufficient to allow the product to be distributed in the other country. Switzerland's MRA with the European Union is the most economically important example (CE marking [Conformité Européenne]).

The health and safety requirements are determined by laws and ordinances. With regard to product safety, Switzerland has largely adopted the regulations of the European Union (EU), so that no major market barriers exist in this area for exports and imports to and from the EU.

In addition, since July 1, 2010, the so-called Cassis de Dijon principle has applied to the EU. According to this principle, many products from the EU/EEA, which previously had to be produced, repacked or relabeled solely for the Swiss market, can now be imported more easily and without technical obstacles. The condition for this is that the products meet the regulations of the relevant EU or EEA country and were circulated there lawfully.

Swiss product liability regulations largely correspond to those in the EU – the manufacturer is liable for damage caused by defective goods, irrespective of whether the manufacturer itself is at fault. In Switzerland, this liability applies to all products put into circulation from 1994 onwards.

The following sections give further details on the regulations relating to a number of important product categories. However, due to the large number of laws and ordinances in existence, it is essential to seek detailed information in specific cases.

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Employment > Product safety  
Product safety regulations  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Foreign trade  
Technical trade barriers  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.snv.ch](http://www.snv.ch) > Services > Switec Infocenter  
Standards: switec – Swiss information center for technical regulations  
Languages: German, English, French

[www.seco.admin.ch/sas](http://www.seco.admin.ch/sas)  
Accreditation: Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 3.4.1 Foodstuffs

The Swiss Ordinance on the Identification and Pricing of Foodstuffs (LKV) contains strict regulations on the information that must be declared. All ingredients must be named and listed on the packaging or labels of pre-packed foodstuffs in descending order of quantity. Foodstuffs which are not defined in a federal ordinance must be approved by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). FOPH approval is mandatory for foodstuffs, additives, and processing agents which are genetically modified organisms (GMOs), contain such or have been obtained from such, and which are intended for offering to consumers. The presence of GMOs is tolerated if they do not constitute more than 0.9% of an ingredient. All other products require approval. Nutritional values and health-related information must comply with legal requirements as per the Foodstuffs Identification Ordinance (LKV). It is forbidden to market foodstuffs as having a therapeutic effect. Products with a therapeutic effect are medicines and must be approved by Swissmedic (see section 3.4.2).

For foodstuffs, parliament has passed a special resolution relating to the Cassis de Dijon principle: foreign foodstuffs that do not fully satisfy Swiss technical regulations must be approved by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH).

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics  
Information from the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.slmb.bag.admin.ch](http://www.slmb.bag.admin.ch)  
Swiss Food Manual (SLMB)  
Languages: German, French

### 3.4.2 Pharmaceutical Products

The manufacture and sale of medicines is subject to mandatory licensing in Switzerland. It takes around 11 months to license a new pharmaceutical product with Swissmedic, the Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products (excluding the company's internal processing time), making Switzerland's registration process one of the fastest in the world. Normal evaluation of a license application for a human medicine with a new active ingredient costs CHF 70,000 (CHF 105,000 with the fast-track process).

The licensing requirements largely correspond to those in the EU, which makes it easier to apply for licensing in Switzerland and the EU simultaneously. Swiss registration enjoys high international standing, thanks to the country's exceptional scientific reputation, its strict criteria, and the large number of renowned hospitals for clinical testing. The fast-track process enables fast licensing decisions to be made (within 140 days, excluding the company's internal processing time) for vital medicines (e.g. to treat AIDS or Alzheimer's), despite rigorous testing.

[www.swissmedic.ch](http://www.swissmedic.ch)  
Swiss Agency for Therapeutic Products  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 3.4.3 Medical Devices

In Switzerland the regulation of medical devices is mainly based on the Federal Law on Medical Products and Medical Devices (HMG), the Medical Devices Ordinance (MepV) and the Ordinance on Clinical Tests with Therapeutic Products (VKlin). The same regulations for medical devices apply in Switzerland as in the EU. Bilateral contracts thereby enable free trade in medical devices produced by Swiss manufacturers within the European Union, EFTA member states, and Turkey. A medical equipment supplier that wishes to sell its product in Switzerland must be able to prove to the authorities that the product meets the fundamental requirements of EU directives and has undergone a suitable conformity assessment procedure in accordance with EU directives.

Medical devices bearing the CE mark from a recognized European test center are also deemed to comply with Swiss law, provided all the product information is provided in three languages (German, French and Italian). A manufacturer in Switzerland may use the CE mark on its medical devices and sell them on the Swiss market or export them to the EU, EFTA or Turkey. Some of these states also demand the registration of certain medical devices and their manufacturers with national authorities, in addition to the CE marking. Some non-EU states demand export certificates from the country of origin for medical devices. Swiss companies can order these certificates from Swissmedic.

[www.swissmedic.ch](http://www.swissmedic.ch) > Medical devices > Guide  
Guide to medical device regulation  
Languages: German, English, French

**“With regard to product safety, Switzerland has largely adopted the regulations of the EU, so that no major market barriers exist in this area for exports and imports to and from the EU.”**

## 3.5 LAND USE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### 3.5.1 Building and Zoning

Thanks to progressive legislation on land use planning and environmental protection, densely populated economic areas can exist in harmony with rural and agricultural land. The high population density has always promoted both environmental awareness and building development. Service and industrial buildings are erected in special zones. Building and zoning regulations are governed by cantonal law, and a building permit must be obtained. The duration and scope of this process depend on the type of investment being planned. In the interests of occupational safety, industrial buildings, for example, require both planning consent and an operating license.

For straightforward building projects, such as commercial/ industrial projects with no particular level of difficulty or requirement for supplementary investigations or special approvals, the process usually takes two to three months. This assumes that there are no grounds for appeal or protests. The process may vary from canton to canton.

The cantonal economic development agencies (see section 15.2) provide information on commercial land development and available commercial buildings, as well as on the necessary administrative steps. They can also initiate and, where necessary, coordinate these steps.

[www.are.admin.ch](http://www.are.admin.ch)  
Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 3.5.2 Environment

Swiss environmental legislation largely conforms to EU rules. Environmental law and the protective measures this gives rise to are based on the principle of cooperation. In cooperation with the business community, solutions are developed to meet both economic and environmental considerations. The measures initiated are seen as exemplary around the world. When erecting and operating industrial and commercial sites, there are a variety of federal and cantonal decrees to consider. The federal laws on the protection of the environment, controlling water pollution, and natural and cultural heritage are especially important. The Federal Environmental Protection Act sets out regulations on air and soil contamination, noise, non-ionizing radiation, waste, and environmentally harmful substances. Based on the principles of “precaution” and “polluter pays,” this act requires environmental damage to be kept to a minimum and the costs of preventing damage to be borne by the polluter. Emissions are limited by means of thresholds and regulations on building, equipment, transport, and operations, although the technology to be employed is not prescribed. Companies are granted a specific period of time to undertake remedial action, thereby allowing them to determine how and when they make the necessary investments.

Environmental impact assessments (EIA) are conducted for projects involving the planning, erection or modification of installations that could have a serious impact on the environment. Although these assessments are a tool for protecting the environment, they only apply to specific projects as part of the regular building and planning consent process. Projects that require an environmental impact assessment are listed in the relevant legislation. Such projects include transport systems, power generating plants, and high-polluting industrial plants.

[www.bafu.admin.ch](http://www.bafu.admin.ch)  
Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bafu.admin.ch/uvp](http://www.bafu.admin.ch/uvp)  
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian



# SWITZERLAND AND EUROPE

# 4

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**Image**  
European Union delegation for  
Switzerland and the Principality of  
Liechtenstein, Bern

Culturally and geographically, Switzerland lies at the heart of Europe. Although it is not a member of the European Union, it shares close economic and political ties with its European neighbors. Various bilateral agreements and a dynamic European policy form the basis for a deep-rooted political partnership and a substantial amount of economic integration, which benefit both the Swiss economy and the financial center, as well as the EU.

#### 4.1 TRADE AND DIRECT INVESTMENTS

Switzerland and Europe share close economic ties. As the destination for 45% of Swiss exports and with a share of 66% of Swiss imports (as per 2014), the EU is by far Switzerland's most important trading partner. For its part, Switzerland was the EU's third-largest customer in 2014 (8.2% of all exports) after the USA and China, and the fourth largest supplier of goods (5.7% of all imports). In 2013, 38% of Swiss direct investments were made in the EU.

With the exception of agricultural and food products, there are no restrictions on trade between Switzerland and the members of the EU. Goods with a certificate of origin from one of the 32 member states of the EU and EFTA (Switzerland belongs to the latter, along with Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) can circulate freely without quotas and customs barriers.

[www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat)  
Eurostat (European statistics office)  
Languages: German, English, French

#### 4.2 POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

For numerous Swiss companies, including branches of foreign firms, the European market is very important. Various agreements to liberalize the market create almost equal access to the European common market. These agreements make it easier for companies from Switzerland to tap into a market of almost 500 million consumers. With the extension of these agreements to the new EU member states, Switzerland also has access to the growth markets of eastern Europe.

The bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU have been broadly expanded. Various barriers to market access were eliminated by the Free Trade Agreement of 1972 and the Bilateral Agreements I of 1999. Bilateral I includes agreements covering technical barriers to trade, public procurement, the free movement of persons, agriculture, research, and overland and air transport. Bilateral II, the second round of more extensive agreements of 2004, brought additional economic advantages as well as cross-border cooperation in other political areas. The following sections explain the most important agreements and their significance.

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch)  
Swiss Directorate for European Affairs  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 4.2.1 Free Movement of Persons

With the Swiss-EU Freedom of Movement Agreement (FZA), the basic rules for the free movement of persons, as they are applied in the EU, were gradually introduced in Switzerland vis-à-vis the EU. These same rules will be applied to new EU member states within a period of 9 to 12 years. Citizens of Switzerland and the EU states have the right to choose their place of work and residence within the territory of the contractual partners. The prerequisite is that they have a valid employment contract, are self-employed or – if they do not work – can provide evidence that they have adequate financial resources and have comprehensive medical insurance. The agreement also liberalizes the cross-border performance of services by individuals for up to 90 days per calendar year. Service providers can therefore perform their service in a guest country for a maximum of 90 working days. This freedom of movement of persons is reinforced by the mutual recognition of vocational qualifications and the coordination of the national social insurance systems. The agreement makes it easier for Swiss businesses to recruit employees in the EU region, in areas where the Swiss economy is lacking, and take advantage of education and training opportunities there. This boosts the efficiency of the labor market and promotes the availability of highly qualified employees. The free movement of people also, of course, works in the other direction: Swiss nationals can work and take up residence freely in the EU, as well. At the moment around 445,000 Swiss people live in the EU, around 60% of all Swiss abroad.

The agreement specifies transition periods. During these periods the immigration restrictions, such as priority for Swiss nationals and advance examinations of the wage and employment conditions, can be maintained and the number of residence permits can be limited (through quotas). After the expiry of the quota regulation the agreement also allows, based on a safeguard clause, the number of residence permits to be limited again for a period of time, if there is an undesirably large, above-average level of immigration. The transition regulations guarantee a gradual and controlled opening of the labor markets, while the accompanying measures to counter wage and social dumping also apply.

- The quota regulations for the 15 “old” EU states (the EU-15) and Malta and Cyprus, as well as for the eight eastern European countries (EU-8) who joined in 2004, were lifted in June 2007 and on May 1, 2011, respectively.
- For Bulgaria and Romania, who joined in 2007, the option of imposing immigration restrictions has been stipulated until May 31, 2016, at the latest. After the lifting of these restrictions a safeguard clause also applies to these two countries until May 31, 2019, at the latest.
- For Croatia, which joined the EU in 2013, special quotas apply, which are independent of third-country quotas. Negotiations with Croatia on the implementation of the free movement of persons have been abandoned for the time being due to the mass immigration initiative.

For more information about residence and employment for EU/EFTA citizens, see section 6.4.2

[www.swissemigration.ch](http://www.swissemigration.ch) > Emigrating > Working abroad > Mobility in Europe  
Employment mobility in Europe  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### Information about the Mass Immigration Initiative

On February 9, 2014, the Swiss electorate accepted the popular initiative “Against mass immigration”, opposing the freedom of movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU/EFTA and supporting a change in Swiss migration policy. The new constitutional text obliges the Federal Council and the parliament to introduce a new permit system for all foreign nationals within three years that limits the number of migrants by means of maximum levels and quotas.

The Federal Council immediately began working to implement the new constitutional provisions relating to migration. On June 20, 2014 the concept for the implementation of the new migration policy was presented. The Federal Council has also commenced exploratory talks with the European Union.

Until the corresponding legislation comes into force, the free movement of people will continue to apply between EU and EFTA member states and Switzerland. Nationals of third countries are not affected by the popular initiative and remain subject to the same regulations as before.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Free movement of persons Switzerland – EU/EFTA and  
[www.ejpd.admin.ch](http://www.ejpd.admin.ch) > Topics > Migration > Implementation of the new constitutional provisions on migration  
Up-to-date information about free movement of persons

**“The acceptance of the mass immigration initiative on February 9, 2014, does not jeopardize support for research in Switzerland.”**

#### **4.2.2 Schengen Agreement**

The Schengen cooperation has made travel easier by abolishing identity checks at the borders between Schengen countries (internal borders). At the same time a range of measures have improved international cooperation between courts and the police in the fight against crime. This cooperation includes security measures such as strengthened controls on the Schengen external borders, increased cross-border police cooperation, for example through the European search system SIS, and more efficient cooperation between judicial authorities. The Schengen visa is also valid for Switzerland. Tourists from India, China, Russia or other countries that require a visa no longer need an additional Swiss visa for a short visit to Switzerland while traveling in Europe, which increases Switzerland’s attractiveness as a vacation destination.

#### **4.2.3 Elimination of Technical Barriers to Trade**

For most industrial products, conformity evaluations – such as tests, certificates, and product approvals – are mutually recognized. Re-certification upon export to the EU is no longer necessary because product inspections by Swiss testing institutes recognized by the EU are sufficient. Accordingly, double inspection according to Swiss and EU requirements is eliminated. In areas where EU and Swiss regulations differ and two conformity certificates are still required, both can be issued by the Swiss testing institute. This process simplifies administrative procedures, reduces costs, and strengthens the competitive position of the export industry.

#### **4.2.4 Research**

Since 2004, bilateral agreements have enabled Swiss research institutes, universities, companies, and individuals to participate in the EU’s framework research programs on an equal footing with EU research institutions.

A similar agreement is to be negotiated with the EU for the eighth such program, Horizon 2020. Negotiations have been suspended for the time being due to the acceptance of the mass immigration initiative on February 9, 2014. At present, Switzerland therefore has third-country status in Horizon 2020. However, with some exceptions researchers in Switzerland can still participate in the funding instruments of the framework program and submit project proposals.

[www.euresearch.ch](http://www.euresearch.ch) > **Swiss Participation in Horizon 2020**  
Up-to-date information on Switzerland’s status in Horizon 2020  
Language: English

This does not jeopardize support for research in Switzerland. The Temporary Backup Schemes of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) provide researchers with a temporary substitute for the funding instruments of the European Research Council (ERC). The Federal Council aims to ensure that Swiss researchers can once again participate in EU framework research programs.

#### **4.2.5 Rail, Road, and Air Transport**

The land transport agreement between Switzerland and the EU has regulated the mutual opening of passenger and freight transport by road and rail. Charges based on the “polluter pays” principle were introduced at the same time. Network access in the EU is increasing the competitiveness of the railways and opening up new market opportunities for Swiss transport companies. Swiss airlines have access to the liberalized European air transport market, on the basis of reciprocity, putting them on a more or less equal footing with their European counterparts. Duty-free sales at Swiss airports or on flights to and from Switzerland are still available.

#### 4.2.6 Public Procurement

In accordance with the GPA, the multilateral agreement on public procurement between the 45 current member states of the World Trade Organization (WTO), certain clients must make an international request for a proposal for the procurement of goods and services and construction projects over a certain amount – termed the threshold value – in order to promote transparency and competition within public procurement. On the basis of the GPA, the scope of application of the WTO rules has been extended. This now comprises procurement by districts and communities, procurement by public and private clients in the rail transport, gas and water supply sectors, and procurement by private companies that operate on the basis of a special or exclusive right granted by an authority in the sectors of drinking water and power supply, municipal transportation, airports, or river and maritime shipping.

The agreement provides for the option of removing procurement or contracting in certain sectors, in which there is verifiable competition, from the scope of application. Accordingly, the telecommunication sector was removed in 2002.

The rules for contracting are based on three principles:

- Equal treatment of all providers (non-discrimination)
- Transparency of the process
- Right of recourse against decisions within the scope of the tender and awarding process (above certain threshold values).

The public sector and affected companies are obliged to issue and carry out tenders for contracts and orders that exceed a certain threshold level in accordance with WTO regulations. In principle the most economical or best value offer must be selected, as long as the offered goods or services are of a comparable quality level. The selection criteria can, however, also be the lead times, the quality of service or environment-friendliness. The client can also define requirements for the observance of regional or sector-wide wage and working conditions. Public tenders by the federal government and cantons are posted on an electronic information system. With regard to the considerable public expenditure in the EU and Switzerland, this further opening of the procurement market creates opportunities for the export industry (e.g. mechanical engineering) and the services sector (e.g. engineering and architecture companies). Furthermore, the increased competition among providers leads to reduced prices and thus considerable savings for the public bodies placing the contracts.

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch) > Topics > Bilateral agreements > Public procurement markets

Public procurement in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.simap.ch](http://www.simap.ch)

Information-sharing platform for public contract awarding bodies and providers  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 4.2.7 Trade in Agricultural Products

The agreement on processed agricultural products governs trade in products from the foodstuffs industry (e.g. chocolate, cookies, and pasta). The EU does not impose import or export duties on trade with Switzerland. In response, Switzerland has reduced its import and export duties accordingly. There is free trade of sugar and of products which do not contain any raw materials besides sugar, which are relevant to agricultural policy. The simplification of technical regulations is beneficial to consumers and increases opportunities for exporting quality agricultural products. A comprehensive agreement on the agricultural and foodstuffs sector, intended to fully open the markets for agricultural products and foodstuffs for both sides, is still being negotiated. The agreement would lift both tariff barriers to trade (such as duties and quotas) as well as non-tariff barriers (such as various product regulations and import requirements). This opening-up of the market will confront the agriculture sector with considerable challenges. To ensure that the new market opportunities can be utilized and the affected businesses supported in the new market situation, free trade would be introduced gradually and supported by accompanying measures.



#### 4.2.8 Taxation of Savings Income

Switzerland supports the EU system of taxing cross-border interest payments to individuals under the Savings Tax Agreement. Swiss banks operate a system of tax retention (similar to Swiss withholding tax) which is deducted at a rate of 35% interest income earned in Switzerland by persons subject to EU taxation. This system of tax retention ensures that the EU interest taxation system cannot be evaded by switching to Switzerland, while at the same time ensuring that Swiss laws and banking secrecy are upheld. Related companies with their principal base in Switzerland, as well as subsidiaries in EU member states, no longer pay withholding tax on payments of dividends, interest, and license fees. This increases Switzerland's appeal as a business location.

The EU has approved a negotiating mandate for the amendment of the agreement of May 14, 2013. A negotiating mandate has also been approved by the Federal Council.

[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch) > Topics > Taxes > Taxation of savings agreement  
Up-to-date information about tax on savings  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 4.3 THE EURO

Even though the official currency of Switzerland is the Swiss franc, the euro is an accepted form of payment at practically all hotels and in many businesses. Swiss banks offer euro accounts, and cash withdrawals in euros are possible at most ATMs. The Swiss financial center is set up to conduct all bank transactions in euros. Public telephones also accept euros. Due to its location in the heart of the European Monetary Union and the fact that the EU is its largest trading partner, the euro is extremely important for Switzerland. This is particularly the case in the tourism sector and for companies active in the import/export business.



# ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING A COMPANY

# 5

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**Establishing a company can be done quickly and easily. Numerous official and private organizations assist entrepreneurs in selecting the appropriate legal form for their company and can provide advice and support. The federal government's various websites offer a wide range of information on all aspects of the company formation process – from business plan to official registration.**

## **5.1 CORPORATE STRUCTURES**

Economic freedom, which is guaranteed under the Swiss Constitution, allows anyone, including foreign nationals, to operate a business in Switzerland, to form a company or to hold an interest in one. No approval by the authorities, no membership of chambers of commerce or professional associations, and no annual reporting of operating figures are required to establish a business. However, foreign nationals must have both work and residence permits in order to conduct a business personally on a permanent basis.

Swiss law distinguishes between the following types of business entities: partnership-type unincorporated companies (sole proprietorship, limited partnership or general partnership) and capital-based incorporated companies (stock corporation or AG, limited liability company or GmbH). The “limited partnership for collective investment” (KKK) corresponds to the “limited partnership” form common in English-speaking countries. The legal form referred to as GmbH & Co. KG, which is common in Germany and Austria, does not exist in Switzerland. The appropriate form of business entity for a foreign company establishing a location in Switzerland depends on many factors, including the nature and time horizon of the business, general legal and tax conditions, and the strategic goals of management (headquarters, production facility, sales office, financial or service company, etc.). Companies and private individuals from foreign countries are allowed to determine the legal form that is right for their business. This requires careful evaluation, in which tax considerations play a crucial role. It is therefore advisable to engage an advisor or consultant familiar with the Swiss legal and tax system at an early stage in the process.

The following basic options are available for establishing a business in Switzerland:

- Forming an unincorporated or incorporated company
- Setting up a branch office
- Acquiring an existing company in Switzerland (either unincorporated or incorporated)
- Formation of a joint venture (unincorporated or incorporated company)
- Forming a strategic alliance with or without an equity interest

The most common choices for a foreign company located in Switzerland are subsidiaries (in the form of a stock corporation or limited liability company, i. e. an AG or GmbH) and branch offices. The newly created limited partnership for collective investment is also an attractive option for risk capital.

The following criteria are crucial when selecting the right form of business entity:

- Capital: organization or incorporation expenses, capital needed and minimum capital required
- Risk / liability: the higher the entrepreneurial risk or financial investment, the more advisable it is to select a limited liability form of company
- Independence: freedom of action may be restricted depending on the corporate structure
- Taxes: the business income and assets of the company and the owner are taxed either separately or together, depending on the corporate structure
- Social security: certain social insurance plans are obligatory, voluntary or non-existent, depending on the legal form

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch)  
Official portal for SMEs  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 5.1.1 Stock Corporation (AG)

The stock corporation – Aktiengesellschaft (AG) in German, is the most important and most common type of corporate structure in Switzerland. In addition, it is often chosen by foreign companies as the legal form for their Swiss subsidiaries. The AG is a distinct legal entity (with its own legal personality), and its liability is limited to company assets. The share capital is determined in advance and subdivided into shares. The AG is an appropriate legal form not just for large companies but also for small and medium-sized businesses. It is the customary legal form for holding companies and financial enterprises.

A stock corporation can be founded by one or more individuals or legal entities; at least one person has to be a shareholder. The share capital must be at least CHF 100,000. In order to found a stock corporation at least CHF 50,000 must have been paid in, while the increase in stock capital to at least CHF 100,000 has to be paid in fully at a later date.

The AG's supreme body is the board of directors. It consists of one or more members, who are not required to be shareholders. There are no requirements regarding the nationality or legal residence of the directors. At least one member (of the board of directors or the executive board) authorized to represent the company must reside in Switzerland. The compensation paid to the members of an AG's board of directors varies widely depending on the industry, size of the company and sales revenue. The average fee in Switzerland for a member of the board of directors in companies with up to 1,000 employees is about CHF 25,500 per annum. The most common forms of compensation are annual lump-sum payments and reimbursement of expenses. On average the board of directors in this type of company consists of 3.6 people.

### 5.1.2 Limited Liability Company (GmbH)

A limited liability company (GmbH) is a separate business entity with its own legal personality. It can be formed by one or more individuals or commercial companies, and its stated capital (nominal capital) is specified in advance. Each shareholder has an interest in the nominal capital in the form of one or more nominal shares having a nominal value of at least CHF 100. The nominal capital must total at least CHF 20,000 and must be fully paid in. A nominal share can be easily transferred in writing. The owner of the invested capital must, however, be entered in the commercial register. Essentially all shareholders are entitled to joint management of the company; at least one of them must have their place of residence in Switzerland.

The GmbH is an attractive alternative to the stock corporation, in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises. Due to the fact that a board of directors is not required, the structural costs of a GmbH can be kept comparatively low. On the other hand this means that full responsibility is concentrated on the managing director. Depending on the size, there is only a limited auditing obligation. In addition the GmbH has the advantage of less share capital compared to an AG, but the disadvantage of the lack of anonymity: all shareholders, including those who join the company at a later date, are disclosed.

### 5.1.3 Branch Office

Instead of founding a subsidiary in Switzerland, a foreign company can also set up a branch office (which is the third most common corporate structure for foreign companies in Switzerland). These branch offices have a certain organizational and financial independence from the parent company. From a legal point of view the branch office is a part of the foreign company, although it can conclude contracts on its own behalf, perform transactions and also appear in court at its place of business as a plaintiff and defendant. As soon as a branch office is formed, it must be registered in the commercial register. As far as licensing, registration, taxation, and accounting records are concerned, a branch is treated like any Swiss company. In order for a foreign company to establish a branch office in Switzerland, it must have an authorized representative whose legal residence is in Switzerland.

### 5.1.4 Limited Partnership for Collective Investment

The limited partnership for collective investment (abbreviated as KkK in German) corresponds to the limited liability partnership (LLP) common in English-speaking countries. As an instrument for risk capital investment, this form of company is reserved exclusively for qualified investors. In contrast to the provisions of the Swiss Code of Obligations regarding limited partnerships, according to which the partner with unlimited liability must be an individual, the liable partner in a limited partnership for collective investment must be a corporation.

This legal form has existed in Switzerland since 2006. For investors and limited partners who want to establish a form of LLP it is an alternative to setting up their company in Luxembourg, Ireland or the Channel Islands (specifically Jersey and Guernsey). This has strengthened Switzerland's status as a financial center and created the conditions for an increase in professional services for specialized risk capital, private equity, and hedge fund managers in Switzerland.

## Legal Forms at a Glance

(FIG. 16)

	SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP	GENERAL PARTNERSHIP	AG	GMBH	BRANCH OFFICE
<b>Establishment/formation requirements</b>	Commencement of independent economic activity with the aim of ongoing profit	Signing of a partnership agreement (no particular form). If no business activity is yet being carried out, the company comes into being when it is entered in the commercial register	Public authentication of formation, approval of the statutes, selection of the board of directors and (in the absence of dispensation under OR 727a II) the auditors, entry in commercial register	Public authentication of formation, approval of the statutes, if applicable appointment of management, representatives, and (in the absence of dispensation under OR 727a II) auditors, entry in commercial register	Entry in commercial register
<b>Purpose</b>	Small business, personal activity (e.g. artist)	Smaller, ongoing, mainly personal businesses	Suitable for almost all types of profit-oriented business	-Smaller, mainly personal businesses	Operation that is legally part of a larger company but has a certain amount of economic autonomy
<b>Name</b>	- Owner's last name (with or without first name) - Possible additions: type of activity, invented name	- Last name of at least one shareholder with wording indicating the partnership status - Possible additions: type of activity, invented name	- Any name (personal name, type of activity, invented name) - The legal form must be indicated in the company name	- Any name (personal name, type of activity, invented name) - The legal form must be indicated in the company name	- Same name as main company - Special additions permitted - If the main company is foreign: location of main company, location of branch office - Indication of legal form
<b>Legal nature</b>	Sole property of company owner	Unincorporated company	Legal entity	Legal entity	Legal entity
<b>Entry in the commercial register</b>	Commercial operations must be registered (otherwise registration is possible but not mandatory)	Commercial operations must be registered	Comes into existence upon entry in commercial register	Comes into existence upon entry in commercial register	Mandatory entry in commercial register
<b>Founder</b>	An individual is the sole proprietor	Two or more individuals	At least one shareholder (individual or legal entity)	At least one partner (individual or legal entity)	Main company
<b>Bodies</b>	None	Partners	- General shareholders' meeting - Board of directors (at least 1 member)	- General partners' meeting - Executive board (at least 1 member)	- Bodies of main company - Managed by own executives; authorized representative resident in Switzerland
<b>Auditor</b>	May be used	May be used	Yes, in the absence of dispensation under OR 727a II, depending on size – attainment of two of the three following parameters in two successive fiscal years: - total assets of CHF 20 million - sales of CHF 40 million - average headcount over the year of 250 employees or more		
<b>Liability</b>	- Unlimited liability of owner with personal assets	- Primary liability of company assets; subsidiary unlimited and joint liability of each partner with personal assets	- Sole liability of company assets; only obligation of shareholders to full payment of share capital	- Sole liability of company assets; facultative limited obligation to pay additional contributions as per statutes; liability only for additional contributions tied to own nominal shares	- Main company

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Swiss Code of Obligations (OR)

	SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP	GENERAL PARTNERSHIP	AG	GMBH	BRANCH OFFICE
<b>Minimum capital</b>	- No requirements	- No requirements	- Minimum CHF 100,000, minimum partial payment CHF 50,000	- Minimum CHF 20,000, fully paid	- No capital required (endowment capital of foreign parent company is sufficient)
<b>Costs of consulting, establishment, notary</b>	- CHF 700–1,200	- CHF 2,400–4,400	- From CHF 1,900 (electronic) - From CHF 7,000 (traditional) (see 5.4.3)	- From CHF 1,800 (electronic) - From CHF 7,000 (traditional) - (see 5.4.3)	- From CHF 1,000
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simple and low-cost formation process</li> <li>- Few formal requirements</li> <li>- Proprietor/partners can perform roles of corporate bodies</li> <li>- Double taxation of profit is avoided (only the proprietor's/partners' income is taxed because the company is not a legal entity)</li> <li>- Suitable for very small businesses</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited liability and risk capital</li> <li>- Easier transferability of shares</li> <li>- Regulated representation rights</li> <li>- Foreigners can own all shares / nominal shares (but there must be at least one person resident in Switzerland who can handle all legal business)</li> <li>- Easy access to the capital market</li> <li>- Suitable for businesses with more capital</li> <li>- Swiss character of company</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No separate capital required</li> <li>- Simpler and cheaper to set up than an incorporated company (no stamp duty or withholding tax on profit transfer)</li> <li>- Parent company can exert direct influence</li> <li>- Low tax burden</li> <li>- Tax exemption for Swiss profits in parent company's country under numerous double taxation agreements</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unlimited liability of proprietor/partners</li> <li>- Ownership interests difficult to transfer</li> <li>- Lack of anonymity; proprietor/partners must be listed by name in the commercial register</li> <li>- More difficult access to the capital market</li> <li>- Social insurance obligation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In some cases, double tax burden (taxation of company profit and dividends)</li> <li>- More complex and expensive formation process, professional advice recommended</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foreign parent company shares liability for branch office</li> <li>- Changing to a subsidiary later difficult from a tax point of view</li> <li>- No Swiss character</li> </ul>
			- Amount of share capital	- Lower minimum capital	
				- No shareholder anonymity	

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Swiss Code of Obligations (OR)

**“Establishing a company in Switzerland can be done quickly and easily.”**

### 5.1.5 Sole Proprietorship

The individually owned enterprise – sole proprietorship or single-owner company – is the most popular corporate structure for small businesses. It exists legally whenever an individual conducts commercial activities alone or, in other words, operates a business or a company. The owner of the sole proprietorship bears the entrepreneurial risk and is liable for that risk with his or her entire private and business assets. On the other hand, the owner also has the sole power to determine business policy. If the business is successful, it can be easily transformed into a corporation. If it fails, liquidation is easier than for other legal forms. The sole proprietorship does not need to be registered in the commercial register unless annual sales exceed CHF 100,000.

### 5.1.6 General Partnership

If two or more individuals come together to operate a business under a joint name in accordance with standard commercial practice, this type of operation is called a general partnership. A general partnership is created by a partnership agreement between the participants. Since it (like a sole proprietorship) is not a distinct legal entity, it is not required to pay taxes. Taxes are paid by the individual partners. The partners have unlimited joint liability for any business debts or obligations of the partnership to the extent of their own assets. Entry in the commercial register is required.

### 5.1.7 Joint Venture

The joint venture is becoming more and more important as a form of partnership. It is not regulated by law and is an appropriate form for a joint activity with a Swiss partner. A joint venture is often operated as a joint investment in a newly formed corporation (a foreign supplier, for example, establishes a manufacturing or sales company together with the Swiss seller). Joint ventures can also be operated as an ordinary partnership in the case of small projects (e.g. a research project for a limited time period).

### 5.1.8 Ordinary Partnership

The ordinary partnership is a contractual association of several individuals or legal entities for a business purpose that is not required to be entered in the commercial register. Anonymity is preserved but each partner is jointly and personally liable for the joint project.

## 5.2 ACCOUNTING

The general accounting regulations in Switzerland are brief and to the point. The accounts required for the type and scope of business must be kept in an orderly manner and allow identification of business assets and of receivables and payables associated with business operations as well as operating results (profit or loss) in each business year. The law requires that the income statement (profit and loss account) and the balance sheet be drawn up annually according to generally accepted accounting principles and that they be complete, clear and easily understood. This means that the accounting system can be based on any internationally accepted standards (such as US-GAAP, IFRS or Swiss GAAP FER).

Corporations (AGs) must meet detailed minimum requirements concerning the structure of the annual financial statements in order to increase transparency. They must include, as a minimum, a balance sheet and an income statement with previous-year comparisons and explanatory notes. The annual financial statements of group companies must be consolidated in a single set of group financial statements if two of the following parameters are present in two successive fiscal years:

- Total assets of CHF 10 million
- Annual sales of CHF 20 million
- An average headcount over the year of 200 employees

## 5.3 AUDITING

Annual financial statements are audited for correctness and accuracy by people and companies, which have the required state license. Normally they are fiduciaries, fiduciary companies or auditing companies. The auditing obligation depends on the size and economic importance of the corporation (AG) or limited liability company (GmbH). Regular audits apply to companies that are required to prepare consolidated financial statements, or if two of the three parameters below are present in two successive fiscal years:

- Total assets of CHF 20 million
- Annual sales of CHF 40 million
- An average headcount over the year of 250 employees or more

If these conditions are not met, then the annual financial statements are only subject to a limited audit (questioning of management, appropriate detailed checks, analytical audit procedures, etc.). The audit may also be dispensed with entirely, subject to the approval of the shareholders, if the company has no more than an average of ten full-time positions over the year.

[www.treuhandsuisse.ch](http://www.treuhandsuisse.ch)  
Swiss Fiduciary Association  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.treuhand-kammer.ch](http://www.treuhand-kammer.ch)  
Fiduciary Chamber  
Languages: German, French

## 5.4 ESTABLISHING A COMPANY

### 5.4.1 Process

Parties who intend to establish a company in Switzerland can move more quickly from the planning stage to implementation if a clear and concrete business strategy has been worked out in advance. Once the decision to locate in Switzerland has been made, the economic development agency of the selected canton can help to coordinate the project locally until the start of operations. Banks, consulting companies, fiduciary companies and attorneys specializing in company law are also available to answer specific questions.

The formation of a company takes two to four weeks from the submission of required documents to the date when the company is considered legally established (when it has legal effect with respect to third parties). The time required can be less in simple cases and depending on the canton.

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs provides an online desk for founding companies called “StartBiz”. With this eGovernment solution, sole proprietorships, limited liability companies, stock corporations, general partnerships and limited partnerships can register with OASI offices, VAT authorities and accident insurance companies.

It is also possible for sole proprietorships, general partnerships, and limited partnerships to be entered into the commercial register, so that the complete foundation of these companies can be carried out via “StartBiz”. Normally foreign companies in Switzerland are founded with the legal form of an incorporated company (GmbH or AG). Furthermore, the foundation of a stock corporation or a limited liability company (AG or GmbH) requires entry in the commercial register, which has to be done by a public notary (this can also be done online).

#### [www.s-ge.com/company-foundation](http://www.s-ge.com/company-foundation)

Facts and figures on founding a company in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

#### [www.startbiz.ch](http://www.startbiz.ch)

Electronic registration and creation of new companies  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### [www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical knowledge > Creation of SMEs

Online public notary service for establishment of new companies (AG/GmbH)  
Languages: German, French, Italian

#### [www.startups.ch](http://www.startups.ch)

Private platform for establishment of new companies  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### Process of Establishing a Company (AG, GmbH)

(FIG. 17)

STEP	TIME REQUIRED IN WEEKS					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Preliminary examination, registration, and approval of company (name)	■					
Preparation of necessary documents: corporate charter or articles of incorporation, statutes, application, etc.		■				
Payment of the company capital into a specified bank The payer must prove their identity. For foreigners it may be worth bringing references from Swiss partners			■	■		
Establishment and preparation of corporate charter or articles of association: statutes, auditor's declaration of acceptance, confirmation of a recognized bank that the share capital has been paid in and is at the free disposal of the company; if the company does not have its own offices after being formed: declaration of adoption of domicile			■	■		
Publication in official journal of the canton					■	
Entry of responsible person(s)/entities in the appropriate registers (commercial register, land register)						■
Registration as company liable to tax						■



### 5.4.2 Entry in the Commercial Register

The commercial register includes all commercial enterprises doing business in Switzerland. It specifies each company's extent of liability and its authorized representatives. Its central focus is its public disclosure role. Accordingly, the Central Business Names Index, Zefix, which is maintained online by the Federal Commercial Registry Office, is open to anyone for consultation and can also respond to inquiries as to whether a company name is available. All entries in and deletions from the commercial register are published in the Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce.

As a rule, any trading, manufacturing or other form of commercial enterprise is required to be registered in the commercial register. Registration guarantees that the company name is protected. It is only after registration in the commercial register that legal entities receive their own legal personality and status. The company or business name under which a commercial enterprise is operated can be freely chosen, as long as it complies with legal regulations. Stock corporations (AGs) and limited liability companies (GmbHs) must specify the legal form as part of the company name. If the company name of a general partnership does not list all partners by name, it must contain the last name of at least one partner along with wording that indicates the relationship between partners. The company name of a sole proprietorship must include the owner's last name but may not contain any additional wording indicating a relationship between partners or associates. Application for registration in the commercial register can be done electronically via the company formation portal for all legal company forms, provided that the applicable requirements are met.

[www.zefix.ch](http://www.zefix.ch)  
Central Business Names Index  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.shab.ch](http://www.shab.ch)  
Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 5.4.3 Costs of Forming a Company

The costs for forming a stock corporation (for a limited liability company the fees and consulting costs are slightly lower) comprise various fees, the costs varying depending on whether the process is carried out traditionally or via an electronic platform operated by the SECO (see 5.4.1).

The purpose of the securities issue tax is the non-gratuitous or free foundation and increasing of the nominal value of participation rights. The tax is levied at 1% of the amount accruing to the company as consideration for the participation rights but at least 1% of the nominal value, with an exemption for the first CHF 1 million. This exemption applies generally to the formation of corporations and to capital increases up to CHF 1 million. Existing companies may therefore increase their capital to CHF 1 million without owing any securities issue tax.

Excluding the securities issue tax, the fixed formation costs therefore total CHF 6,000 to CHF 8,000 for the traditional process and approximately CHF 2,000 for the electronic process. For a small business that does not need to provide extensive documentation, the costs of formation are a maximum of CHF 2,000. The total costs for forming a company, including professional consulting fees, vary depending on the share capital. Establishing a corporation is more time-consuming and generally costs more than forming a partnership.

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical knowledge > Creation of SMEs > Legal form  
Costs of forming a company with different legal forms  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### Costs of Forming A Stock Corporation (AG)

(CHF)

(FIG. 18)

COSTS	TRADITIONAL	ELECTRONIC
Share capital	100,000	100,000
Consulting services (corporate charter or articles of association, taxes, commercial register, share certificates, establishment documents, founding assembly, etc.)	5,000 – 7,000	300 – 850
Commercial register fee	1,000	1,000
Certification fees	1,000	600
Securities issue tax	–	–
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>7,000 – 9,000</b>	<b>1,900 – 2,450</b>

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

### Costs of Forming A Limited Liability Company (GmbH)

(CHF)

(FIG. 19)

COSTS	TRADITIONAL	ELECTRONIC
Nominal capital	20,000	20,000
Consulting services (corporate charter or articles of association, taxes, commercial register, share certificates, establishment documents, founding assembly, etc. – depending on complexity)	4,000 – 6,000	200 – 550
Commercial register fee	1,000	1,000
Certification fees	1,000	600
Stamp duty	–	–
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>6,000 – 8,000</b>	<b>1,800 – 2,150</b>

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)



# VISAS, RESIDENCE PERMITS, AND WORK PERMITS

# 6

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Switzerland's prosperity is partly due to the immigration of foreign workers. Not only do they boost the economy, they also enrich the culture. Residence in Switzerland is now easier for EU/EFTA citizens thanks to bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU. In the labor market they have the same rights as Swiss workers. For people from other countries who wish to live and work in Switzerland, certain provisions apply.

## 6.1 ENTRY AND VISAS

To enter Switzerland for up to 90 days in a 180-day period, you require a valid travel document that is recognized in Switzerland. In some cases a visa and letter of invitation are also required. A visa is generally required for longer stays. The Federal Office for Migration publishes the current requirements on its website.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch)  
Federal Office for Migration (BFM)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 6.1.1 Visa Requirements

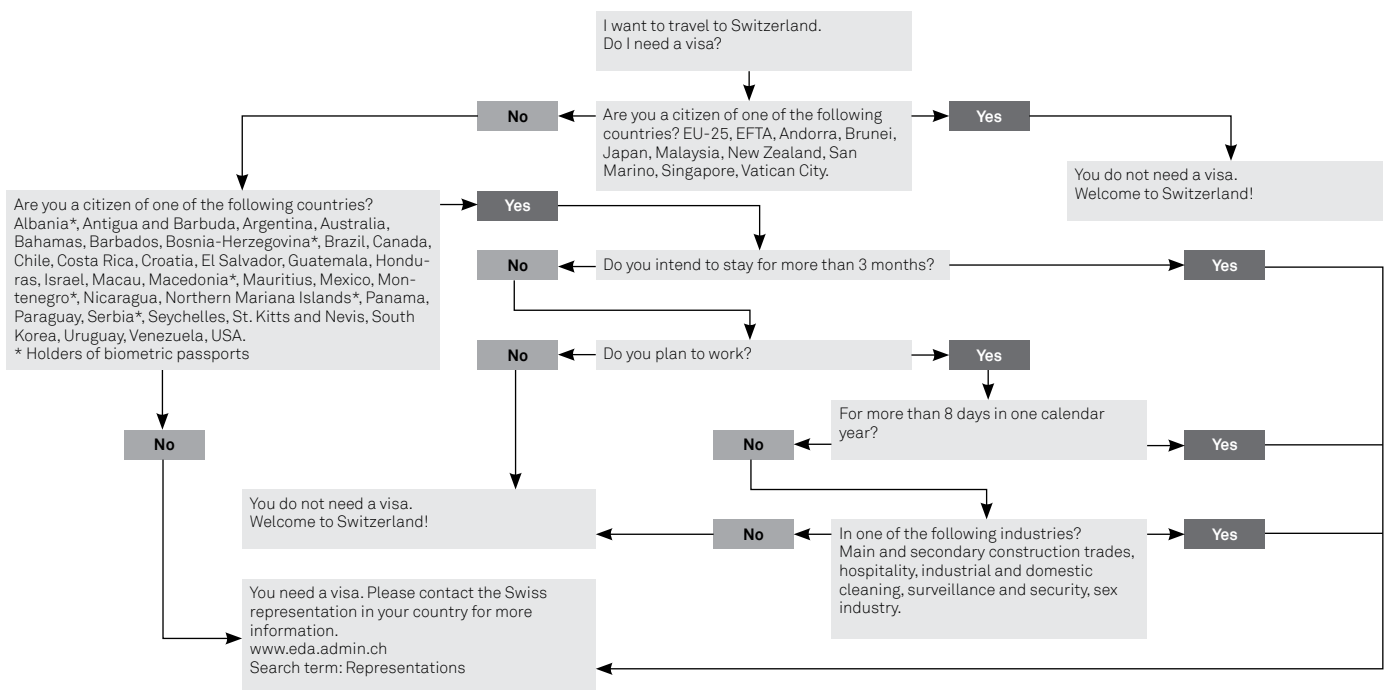
Foreigners who require a visa must submit an entry application from the Swiss representation where they live before they enter Switzerland. The Swiss representation abroad can only issue the visa if it has been authorized to issue visas by the responsible federal or cantonal office in Switzerland. The type of visa and the documents required depend on the purpose of the visit. One of the visa requirements is that applicants must prove that they have enough funds available or can legally obtain them to pay for living expenses during their trip through or stay in Switzerland. The Swiss representation may require the submission of a declaration of sponsorship before it issues the visa if the applicant does not have sufficient financial funds or if there is some doubt on this point. The relevant authorities will require that travel insurance be taken out regardless of whether a declaration of sponsorship has been submitted. The minimum insurance cover is EUR 30,000.

[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)  
Swiss representations abroad  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Entry  
Information about entering Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## Do I need a visa?\*

(FIG. 20)



\* Information is for guidance only; please also consult the responsible Swiss representation.

## Visa Requirements for Different Countries

(FIG. 21)

COUNTRY	VISA RE-REQUIRED FOR STAY OF UP TO 3 MONTHS	VISA RE-REQUIRED FOR STAY OF MORE THAN 3 MONTHS		EXCEPTIONS/REMARKS
<b>Brazil</b>	No (V1)	Yes	V1	<p>Visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– in main and secondary construction trades, hospitality, industrial and domestic cleaning, surveillance and security, sex industry</li> <li>– of another kind if for more than 8 days in one calendar year</li> </ul> <p>No visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– holders of a long-term residence permit issued by a Schengen member state if they possess a valid travel document</li> </ul>
<b>PR China</b>	Yes (V)	Yes	V	Nationals of third countries with a valid permanent residence title from a Schengen member state and a recognized travel document do not require a visa.
<b>EU-25/EFTA</b>	No	No		
<b>India</b>	Yes (V)	Yes	V	Nationals of third countries with a valid permanent residence title from a Schengen member state and a recognized travel document do not require a visa.
<b>Japan</b>	No	No		
<b>Canada</b>	No (V1)	Yes	V1	<p>Visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– in main and secondary construction trades, hospitality, industrial and domestic cleaning, surveillance and security, sex industry</li> <li>– of another kind if for more than 8 days in one calendar year</li> </ul> <p>No visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– holders of a long-term residence permit issued by a Schengen member state if they possess a valid travel document</li> </ul>
<b>Russia</b>	Yes (V) (M: D)	Yes	V  M: D	<p>Nationals of third countries with a valid permanent residence title from a Schengen member state and a recognized travel document do not require a visa.</p> <p>Holders of diplomatic passports do not require a visa if travelling to Switzerland on an official mission.</p>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	Yes (V) (M: D)	Yes	V  M: D	<p>Nationals of third countries with a valid permanent residence title from a Schengen member state and a recognized travel document do not require a visa.</p> <p>Holders of diplomatic passports do not require a visa if travelling to Switzerland on an official mission.</p>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	No (V1)	Yes	V1	<p>Visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– in main and secondary construction trades, hospitality, industrial and domestic cleaning, surveillance and security, sex industry</li> <li>– of another kind if for more than 8 days in one calendar year</li> </ul> <p>No visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– holders of a long-term residence permit issued by a Schengen member state if they possess a valid travel document</li> </ul> <p>The following documents are accepted for entry into Switzerland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Hong Kong Special Administrative Region People's Republic of China passport (HKSAR passport); visa exemption (V1)</li> <li>– Hong Kong British National Overseas Passport (BNO passport); visa exemption (V1)</li> <li>– Hong Kong Certificate of Identity; visa required (V)</li> <li>– Document of Identity for Visa Purposes with entry "Chinese" under "Nationality". In this case the document is a Chinese passport (it is not accepted for entry unless the nationality of the holder is stated); visa required (V); (the Hong Kong British Dependent Territories Citizens Passport is no longer accepted).</li> <li>– Macau SAR; visa exemption (V1)</li> </ul>

Source: Federal Office for Migration (BFM), 2015

COUNTRY	VISA RE-REQUIRED FOR STAY OF UP TO 3 MONTHS	VISA RE-REQUIRED FOR STAY OF MORE THAN 3 MONTHS		EXCEPTIONS/REMARKS
<b>USA</b>	No (V1)	Yes	V1	<p>Visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– in main and secondary construction trades, hospitality, industrial and domestic cleaning, surveillance and security, sex industry</li> <li>– of another kind if for more than 8 days in one calendar year</li> </ul> <p>No visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– holders of a long-term residence permit issued by a Schengen member state if they possess a valid travel document</li> </ul>
<b>Taiwan</b>	No (V14)	Yes	V14	<p>A visa is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– for holders of a passport without a personal identification number (see V)</li> <li>– for employment (even if for less than 8 days in one calendar year)</li> </ul> <p>No visa required for employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– holders of a long-term residence permit issued by a Schengen member state or a valid category D visa if they possess a valid travel document</li> </ul>
<b>Ukraine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Yes (V)</li> <li>– (M: D, S)</li> </ul>	– Yes (F: D, S, SP)	M: D, S  F: D, S, SP	<p>Holders of diplomatic and service passports do not require a visa for the following travel purposes: official mission and other reasons for travel, without employment.</p> <p>Holders of diplomatic, service, and special passports traveling to Switzerland for work-related purposes do not require a visa.</p>

Source: Federal Office for Migration (BFM), 2015

**“The type of visa and the documents required depend on the purpose of the visit.”**

### 6.1.2 How to Obtain a Visa

1. Persons requiring a visa must submit a visa application to the Swiss representation responsible for their place of residence. Travel documents and any other requested documents which explain the reason for the journey must be submitted along with the application. The representation's website will provide detailed information about the required documents and the relevant application forms. All documents, letters or certificates that are not in German, French, Italian or English must be submitted with a translation.
2. If the representation requires a declaration of sponsorship, the foreign visitor must complete the relevant form and submit it to the sponsor.
3. The sponsor completes and signs the form and submits it along with the required documents to the relevant cantonal or municipal authorities.
4. The declaration of sponsorship is checked by the relevant cantonal or municipal authorities and is entered into the Central Migration Information System.
5. The result of the check is communicated without delay to the representation abroad, which decides whether or not to issue the visa.

If the visa is denied, the applicant may, for a fee, request a decision from the Federal Office for Migration and submit an appeal to the Federal Administrative Court in Bern within 30 days after notification.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Entry  
 Visa application form  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Turkish, Serbian, Albanian, Indonesian

### 6.2 TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Residence and permanent residence permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices. Stays of up to three months do not require a permit, while stays of over three months do require one. It may be possible to work depending on the type of permit issued. Foreigners who reside in Switzerland receive a residence permit indicating which type of authorization has been granted (Fig. 22).

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > The BFM > Contact  
 Cantonal migration and labor market authorities  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Foreign nationals in Switzerland  
 Information for foreign nationals in Switzerland  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Residence  
 Information about residence  
 Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### Types of Permit

(FIG. 22)

<b>Permit B</b> Residence permit	For temporary residents (foreigners visiting Switzerland for a specific purpose for a longer period with or without employment).
<b>Permit C</b> Permanent residence permit	For permanent residents (foreigners who have been granted permanent residence after living in Switzerland for 5 or 10 years. Unlimited right to stay in Switzerland).
<b>Permit Ci</b> Residence permit with employment	This document is issued by the cantonal authorities for the employed spouses and children of employees of foreign representations or intergovernmental organizations (IO).
<b>Permit G</b> Cross-border commuter permit	For cross-border commuters (foreigners who live in the border zone of a neighboring country and work in the adjacent border zone in Switzerland).
<b>Permit L</b> Short-term residence permit	For short-term employment and other short stays.
<b>Permit F</b> Provisionally admitted foreigners	For provisionally admitted foreigners. This permit is issued by the cantonal authorities on the instruction of the Federal Office for Migration.
<b>Permit N</b> (asylum seekers)	For asylum seekers. This permit is issued by the cantonal authorities following a decision by the Federal Office for Migration.
<b>Permit S</b> (persons in need of protection)	For persons in need of protection. This permit is issued by the cantonal authorities following a decision by the Federal Office for Migration.

### 6.2.1 Family Reunification

Citizens of Switzerland and EU/EFTA citizens with a residence permit or a short-term EU/EFTA residence permit are allowed to have their families join them, regardless of their nationality. The following are classified as family:

- Spouses and children who have not yet reached the age of 21, or who are entitled to maintenance
- Parents and parents of the spouse, who are provided with maintenance

Students are only allowed to be joined by their spouses and children who are entitled to maintenance.

People from third countries with permanent residence permits (permit C) have the right to allow their children and husband/wife to join them. People with residence permits (permit B) have no legal right to this. The cantonal migration authorities can, however, permit the move, if people from third countries can prove that they have a suitable place to live, sufficient income, and an established residence (a residence which has not caused any complaints). Husbands, wives and children of Swiss nationals and people with permanent residence permits or residence permits can take up self-employed or employed work all over Switzerland.

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Foreign nationals in Switzerland  
Family reunification - third countries  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.ejpd.admin.ch](http://www.ejpd.admin.ch) > Topics > Migration > Implementation of the new constitutional provisions on migration  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**“Residence and permanent residence permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices.”**

## 6.3 RESIDING IN SWITZERLAND WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT

### 6.3.1 Stays of up to 3 Months

Switzerland has been an associate member of the Schengen Agreement, and thus part of the Schengen Area, since December 12, 2008. The provisions of the Schengen Agreement govern entry into Switzerland and stays of up to three months that do not require a permit.

Generally, staying in Switzerland without employment (e.g. for a visit, tourism) for up to three months does not require a permit. However, a visa is necessary for nationals of certain countries. Foreigners may stay in Switzerland for no more than three months within a six-month period calculated from the first time of entry. Persons requiring a visa must comply with the amount of time they are permitted to stay as stipulated on their visa.

To enter the country, foreigners must have a valid travel document that is recognized by Switzerland. For persons requiring a visa, Switzerland issues Schengen visas, which are generally valid for the entire Schengen Area, for stays of up to three months.

### 6.3.2 Longer Stays

Stays of more than three months also require a permit for persons who are not gainfully employed (retirees, students, job seekers, and others). Permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices. A distinction is made between short stays (less than one year), temporary stays (of limited duration) and permanent stays (of unlimited duration).

Non-EU/EFTA nationals must submit the application for a residence permit (together with the visa application) to the relevant Swiss representation before entering Switzerland. Different documents will be required depending on the purpose of the stay (studying, retirement, medical purposes, etc.). If the conditions for a permit are fulfilled, then either a short-term permit will be issued (for a stay of less than one year) or a residence permit (permit B) valid for one year if the applicant is to stay longer than one year. After entering the country, the permit holder must register with the relevant municipality.

EU/EFTA nationals who are not gainfully employed are granted the right to stay in Switzerland based on the free movement of persons agreement. After arrival, a residence permit must be applied for in the municipality at the same time as registration and will be granted if the following requirements are met:

- The unemployed person must have sufficient financial funds to prevent them from becoming dependent on state aid so they do not become a burden on their new country of residence.
- They must have health insurance that covers all risks (including accidents).

The EU/EFTA residence permit is valid throughout Switzerland for five years and is automatically extended by the relevant authorities if the above-mentioned requirements continue to be met. Unemployed persons may be joined at a later date by their families if they have sufficient financial funds to maintain them.

### 6.3.3 Special Case: Students

The procedure described in 6.3.2 also applies to students. The following conditions also apply:

Students who are citizens of EU or EFTA states, the U.S., Canada, Australia or New Zealand must generally provide credible proof that they will not become a welfare case during stays of more than three months (at the relevant Swiss representation or municipality upon registration). Students must also prove that they are enrolled at a recognized educational institution in Switzerland and will be attending a course of general, vocational or professional education. If these requirements are met, the student will receive a residence permit for the duration of their studies or for the period of one year if their studies last longer than one year. The permit will be extended until the student has completed their studies if the requirements for the permit continue to be met.

Students who are not citizens of EU or EFTA member states, the U.S., Canada, Australia or New Zealand must also include the following documents together with their personal entry application, which they submit to the relevant Swiss representation:

- Letter of acceptance from the institution
- Proof of payment of tuition fees
- Proof of sufficient financial funding for living expenses for the duration of the course of study
- Diplomas / school certificates
- Written agreement to leave Switzerland after completion of studies
- Additional sheet documenting language proficiency. Language proficiency is judged based on a short interview at the consulate or other representation.

The Swiss representation sends the entry application, including documentation and assessment of language proficiency, to the relevant cantonal migration authorities for their approval.

### 6.4 RESIDING IN SWITZERLAND WITH EMPLOYMENT

People working in Switzerland during their stay in the country or people staying for more than three months need a permit from the cantonal migration office. A distinction is made between short stays (less than one year), temporary stays (of limited duration) and permanent stays (of unlimited duration).

The employer is responsible for obtaining a work permit from the cantonal migration office.

Since the bilateral agreements on the free movement of persons and the revised EFTA convention entered into force, different conditions have applied to EU-25/EFTA citizens than to people from other countries. EU-25/EFTA citizens are on an equal footing with Swiss employees. Other countries, Croatia, and until May 31, 2016, at the latest Romania and Bulgaria, are subject to immigration restrictions and the rule of priority for Swiss nationals. Foreign asylum seekers may stay in Switzerland in accordance with the provisions of asylum legislation.

The cantons are responsible for deciding on whether foreigners may stay and reside in the country. However, the federal government has the right of veto. The cantonal migration authorities are responsible for the control of aliens. Foreigners must register with the Residents Registration Office in the municipality in which they reside within one week.

For anyone intending to relocate to Switzerland, it can be advantageous to bundle the permit applications and to discuss them beforehand. The cantonal economic development agencies provide advice on how to proceed and how long the process takes.

#### 6.4.1 Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

Certain professions, particularly in the healthcare, education, and technical sectors and in the administration of justice, are regulated. To practice these professions it is necessary to possess a qualification, certificate or certificate of competence. Foreign qualifications have to be recognized by the responsible authorities. Different authorities may be responsible for recognition, depending on the profession. Normally the authorities which regulate training for a particular profession are also responsible for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Within the scope of the agreement on the free movement of persons, Switzerland works closely with the EU and participates in the European qualification recognition system. People from third countries also have the opportunity to have their qualifications recognized in Switzerland.

[www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch) > Topics

Regulated professions / recognition of foreign qualifications  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch) > Recognition / Swiss ENIC > Regulated Professions

Regulated professions / recognition of foreign qualifications  
Languages: German, English, French



## Work and Residence Permits: Rules and Procedures

(FIG. 23)

RULES FOR EU/EFTA CITIZENS		RULES FOR CITIZENS OF NON-EU/EFTA COUNTRIES
EU-25	EU-2: ROMANIA AND BULGARIA	
<p><b>Short-term residence permit</b> (Permit L-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Entitlement as long as proof is provided of employment in Switzerland lasting between 3 months and 1 year (for employment of less than 3 months in one calendar year: registration only).</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term residence permit</b> (Permit L-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Entitlement as long as proof is provided of employment lasting up to 1 year. Renewal after 1 year if secure employment is obtained, subject to quota.</li> <li>– Annual quota of 9,090 permits (2014/2015), then 11,664 permits (2015/2016).</li> <li>– Priority for Swiss workers, inspection of remuneration and working conditions.</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term residence permit</b> (Permit L)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For key positions (forming a company, training of new employees, specialists working for international companies): 12 months, can be extended to 24 months.</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> <li>– Annual quota of 5,000 permits.</li> <li>– Trainees / interns: valid for 12–18 months, no provision for family reunification.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross-border commuter permit</b> (Permit G-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unrestricted geographical mobility.</li> <li>– Holder must return to main residence in an EU/EFTA country every week.</li> <li>– Self-employment possible.</li> <li>– Period of validity depends on employment contract, but 5 years maximum, with possibility of extension.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cross-border commuter permit</b> (Permit G-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Geographical mobility within all Swiss border zones.</li> <li>– Priority for Swiss workers, inspection of remuneration and working conditions.</li> <li>– Otherwise as EU-25.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cross-border commuter permit</b> (Permit G)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Valid for 12 months for border zone of canton in which permit issued; annual renewal required. Applicant has been resident for at least 6 months with permanent residence permit in border zone of a neighboring country.</li> <li>– Weekly return to this place of residence.</li> <li>– Change of job or place of work possible with permission.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Residence permit</b> (Permit B-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Valid for 5 years, after presentation of a certificate of employment with duration of 1 year or more or unlimited duration.</li> <li>– Full-time residence for specific purpose with main residence in Switzerland.</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> <li>– Entitlement to work in self-employed capacity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Residence permit</b> (Permit B-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Annual quota of 1,046 permits (2014/2015), then 1,207 (2015/2016) permits.</li> <li>– Permission required to become an employee.</li> <li>– Priority for Swiss workers, inspection of remuneration and working conditions.</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> <li>– Otherwise as EU-25.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Residence permit</b> (Permit B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Full-time residence in Switzerland for work purposes with main residence in Switzerland.</li> <li>– Priority for Swiss workers, inspection of remuneration and working conditions.</li> <li>– Family reunification possible.</li> <li>– Annual renewal of permit is a formality.</li> <li>– Annual quota of 3,500 permits.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Permanent residence permit</b> (Permit C-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Normally issued on the basis of permanent residence agreements or agreements based on reciprocal rights once a person has resided in Switzerland for 5 years.</li> <li>– Holders have the same rights as Swiss workers on the labor market.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Permanent residence permit</b> (Permit C-EU/EFTA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– As EU-25.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Permanent residence permit</b> (Permit C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Can usually be applied for after 10 years' uninterrupted residence in Switzerland (5 years for U.S. citizens).</li> <li>– Holders are no longer subject to employment restrictions. Entitlement to work in self-employed capacity.</li> </ul>

Source: Federal Office for Migration (BFM), 2015

### 6.4.2 Residence and Employment for EU/EFTA Citizens

EU/EFTA nationals are treated the same as Swiss nationals in the labor market as a result of the free movement of persons agreement. Job seekers may remain in Switzerland for three months without a permit. Citizens of the EU-25 member states already enjoy completely free movement; citizens of Romania and Bulgaria are still subject to restrictions for the duration of the transition period, which ends on May 31, 2016 (priority of Swiss nationals, controls, quotas). These permits can be extended if needed. Quotas also apply to Croatia, but negotiations on the implementation of the free movement agreement with Croatia have been abandoned for the time being due to the mass immigration initiative.

Anyone who enjoys full freedom of movement (EU-25) no longer requires a work permit but is still required to obtain a residence permit. This will be issued by the cantonal migration authorities upon presentation of an employment contract and/or confirmation of employment. No permit is needed for stays of less than 90 days, but registration is still required. Self-employed service providers based in the EU or EFTA region no longer require a license for activities in Switzerland lasting less than 90 days per calendar year. They simply need to register, which can be done via the Internet. Exceptions to this are Romanian and Bulgarian providers in the fields of construction, landscaping, cleaning, and surveillance/security, which still require a license.

The introduction of the free movement of persons is being accompanied by a series of measures designed to prevent wage and social dumping, as well as by the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and the coordination of social insurance issues. This simplifies the recruitment of employees from EU/EFTA countries and the attendance and use of educational institutions in these countries, which boosts the efficiency of the labor market and increases the availability of highly qualified workers.

For more information about the free movement of persons, see 4.2.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics

Free movement of persons between Switzerland and EU/EFTA  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch) > Services > Publications

Brochure: "European Nationals in Switzerland"  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 6.4.3 Residence and Employment for Non-EU/EFTA Citizens

Citizens from countries outside the EU/EFTA require a work and a residence permit. Holders of a long-term residence permit are free to change jobs and place of employment, and to be self-employed anywhere in the country without requiring special permission. In important cases, holders of a short-term residence permit may also work for an employer in another canton.

Priority is given to highly qualified and specialized professionals, as well as to entrepreneurs and executives, recognized scientists and key persons involved in cultural affairs, employees of internationally active corporations and people with international business relations. This approach aims to promote economic, scientific, and cultural exchanges and to support the transfer of decision-makers and specialists of international companies. In particular, it is designed to give qualified scientists the opportunity to continue working in Switzerland after completing their studies. It is ultimately in the interest of the Swiss economy that foreigners temporarily working in Switzerland be permitted to bring their family to Switzerland, and that partners and children of holders of a long-term residence permit have the right to be employed or self-employed in Switzerland.

Key regulations:

- Residence permit B: generally valid for one year. Option to change jobs and cantons with permission, tax at source, quotas. (Some exceptions: e.g. spouses of Swiss citizens have the same rights as Swiss citizens.)
- Permanent residence permit C: same rights as Swiss nationals in labor market, no tax at source.
- Cross-border commuter permit: possible to change jobs with permission, not possible to change cantons, tax at source.
- Short-term residence permit L: not possible to change jobs or cantons, tax at source.
- Trainee permit: maximum of 18 months, only for training purposes for young professionals.
- Asylum seekers: work permit one month following submission of application for asylum. Possible to change jobs with permission, not possible to change cantons. Tax at source, 10% of salary is retained as security.
- Transfer of managerial staff: Essential management staff may reside in Switzerland for three years in accordance with the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The permit can be extended for one year.

The employer is responsible for checks and due diligence, which includes ensuring that a foreign employee has permission to assume the position. In order to obtain an entry visa, the employer must prove that it was not possible to find a suitable candidate in Switzerland and that the training of a suitable employee within a reasonable period was not possible.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Labour / work permits

Employment for non-EU/EFTA citizens  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 6.4.4 Trainees / Interns

Switzerland has negotiated agreements with numerous countries on the exchange of trainees / interns. These agreements make it easier to obtain residence and work permits of limited duration. Trainees or interns from countries which have no special agreement with Switzerland must follow the normal application procedure for work and residence permits.

Trainees / interns are defined as people who can provide evidence of being engaged in professional training or a course of study. The age limit is 35 years (exceptions: Australia, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, and Hungary: 30 years). The job must be in the profession learned or in the area of study / training and may last no more than 18 months. Canadian students who would like to complete an internship as part of their education are also admitted, while for Japanese students only university graduates are permitted. There are special quotas for trainees / interns, and national legislation giving priority to Swiss nationals does not apply. There is no provision for trainees / interns to bring their families with them.

As a result of the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU, nationals of the EU-25 and EFTA states no longer require work or trainee permits. Anyone who intends to work in Switzerland for more than four months must formally register with the cantonal labor market authorities.

[www.swissemigration.ch](http://www.swissemigration.ch) provides a guide for foreign trainees / interns and potential employers, as well as addresses, a standard employment contract, and an application form.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics > Labor / work permits > Young professionals (trainees)  
Guide for foreign trainees / interns and Swiss employers  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 6.5 NATURALIZATION

The naturalization process consists of three stages. It is possible to apply for Swiss citizenship in your municipality or canton. Each municipality and canton has its own requirements for naturalization in addition to those imposed by the federal government (see below).

The following requirements must be met to become a naturalized Swiss:

- Resident for 12 years in Switzerland (years of residence between ages 10 and 20 count double)
- Integration into Swiss life
- Familiarity with the Swiss lifestyle, customs and traditions
- Observance of Swiss laws
- No threat to the domestic or international security of Switzerland

Foreign spouses of Swiss citizens benefit from a simplified naturalization process (after five years of residence in Switzerland and after three years of marriage), as do children of a Swiss parent who are not yet Swiss citizens.

[www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch) > Topics  
Swiss citizenship / naturalization  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Foreign nationals in Switzerland  
Naturalization: information  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian



# REAL ESTATE

# 7

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Although Switzerland has many different types of real estate available for commercial purposes, there is a shortage of residential real estate, especially in city centers, much like in other international cities. People looking for suitable properties to rent or buy will find the Internet and newspapers very useful. Even individuals resident in foreign countries can purchase commercial real estate in Switzerland without prior authorization. When it comes to residential property, however, they are subject to certain restrictions.

## 7.1 LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT PROPERTY

### 7.1.1 Residential and Commercial Real Estate

The Internet and newspapers are the most important sources of information when you are searching for a suitable property. Local acquaintances can also be a big help. The range of real estate on offer includes apartments, single-family and multi-family residences, offices and commercial properties, and even parking lots and garages – for renting or buying.

Another good source of information are the websites of real estate fiduciary agencies. You can find them through real estate search portals or via the website of the Swiss Real Estate Association SVIT, for example. Municipalities' websites are also useful: Many of them now include information about future building projects, including both rental properties and properties for sale.

The cantonal economic development agencies support investors in all administrative matters and offer assistance in finding construction sites or other real estate.

**www.svit.ch**  
Swiss Real Estate Association (SVIT)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**www.alle-immobilien.ch**  
**www.homegate.ch**  
**www.immoscout24.ch**  
**www.comparis.ch > Property**  
Residential properties  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**www.s-ge.com/realestate**  
Commercial properties (in cooperation with Swiss Circle)  
Languages: German, English

### 7.1.2 Temporary Accommodation / Furnished Apartments

The range of available hotels and vacation accommodation in every price category is very broad in Switzerland, due to the fact that Switzerland is a tourist destination. The best starting point for anyone searching for appropriate accommodation is again the Internet. The Switzerland Tourism website "MySwitzerland.com" gives you a good overview.

Furnished and serviced apartments are expensive. There are real estate providers and firms specializing in expatriate services that can offer assistance. There is no nationwide overview of all providers, so it is a good idea to search online using keywords such as serviced apartments, furnished, studio, apartments, temporary housing, or holiday or vacation apartments.

**www.myswitzerland.com > Accommodation**  
Hotels and vacation apartments  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

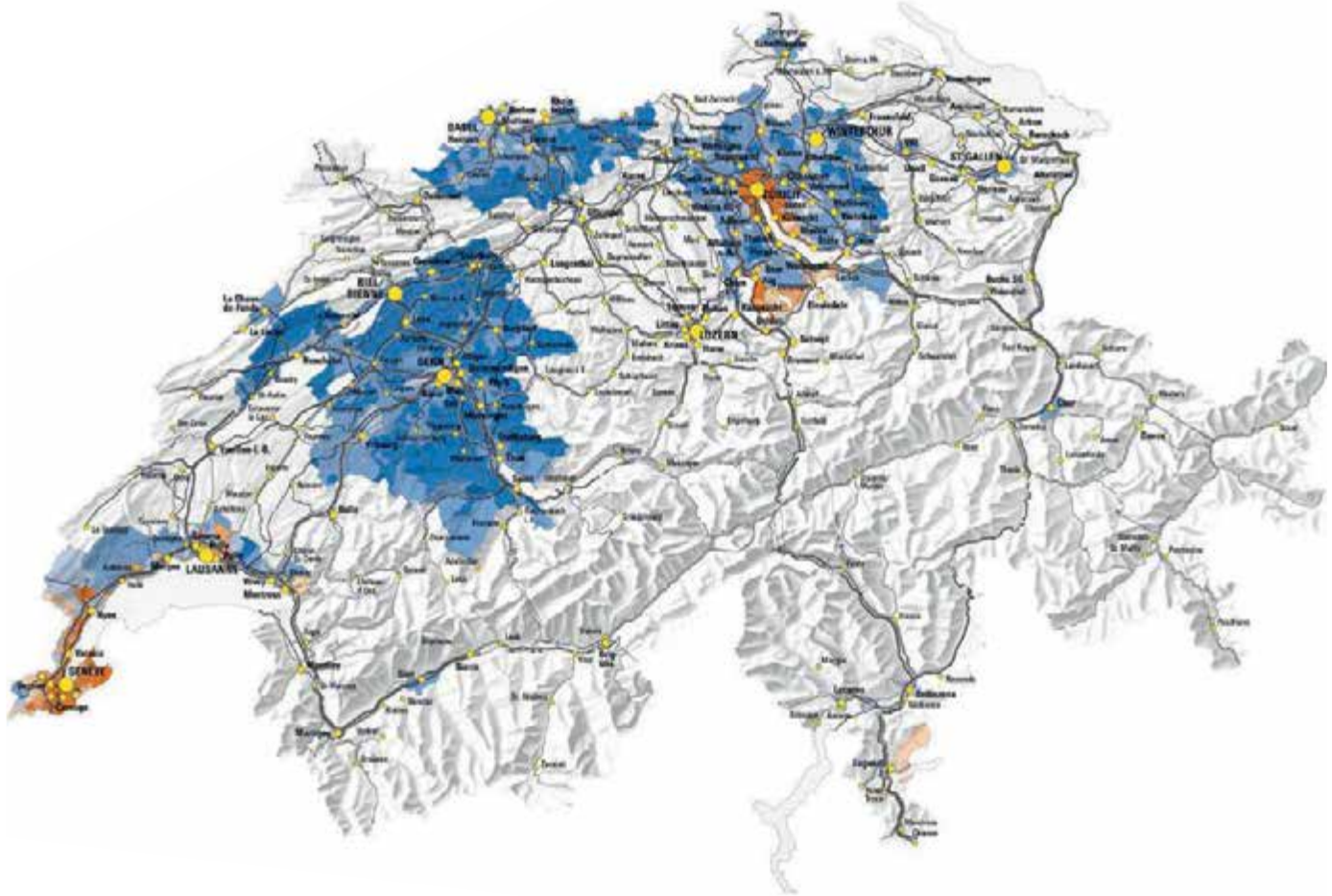
**www.xpatxchange.ch > Moving**  
Relocation agencies, providers of furnished and serviced apartments  
Language: English

## 7.2 COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

### 7.2.1 Renting

#### Market Prices for Office Space, 4th Quarter 2013

(FIG. 24)



Source: Wüest & Partner AG

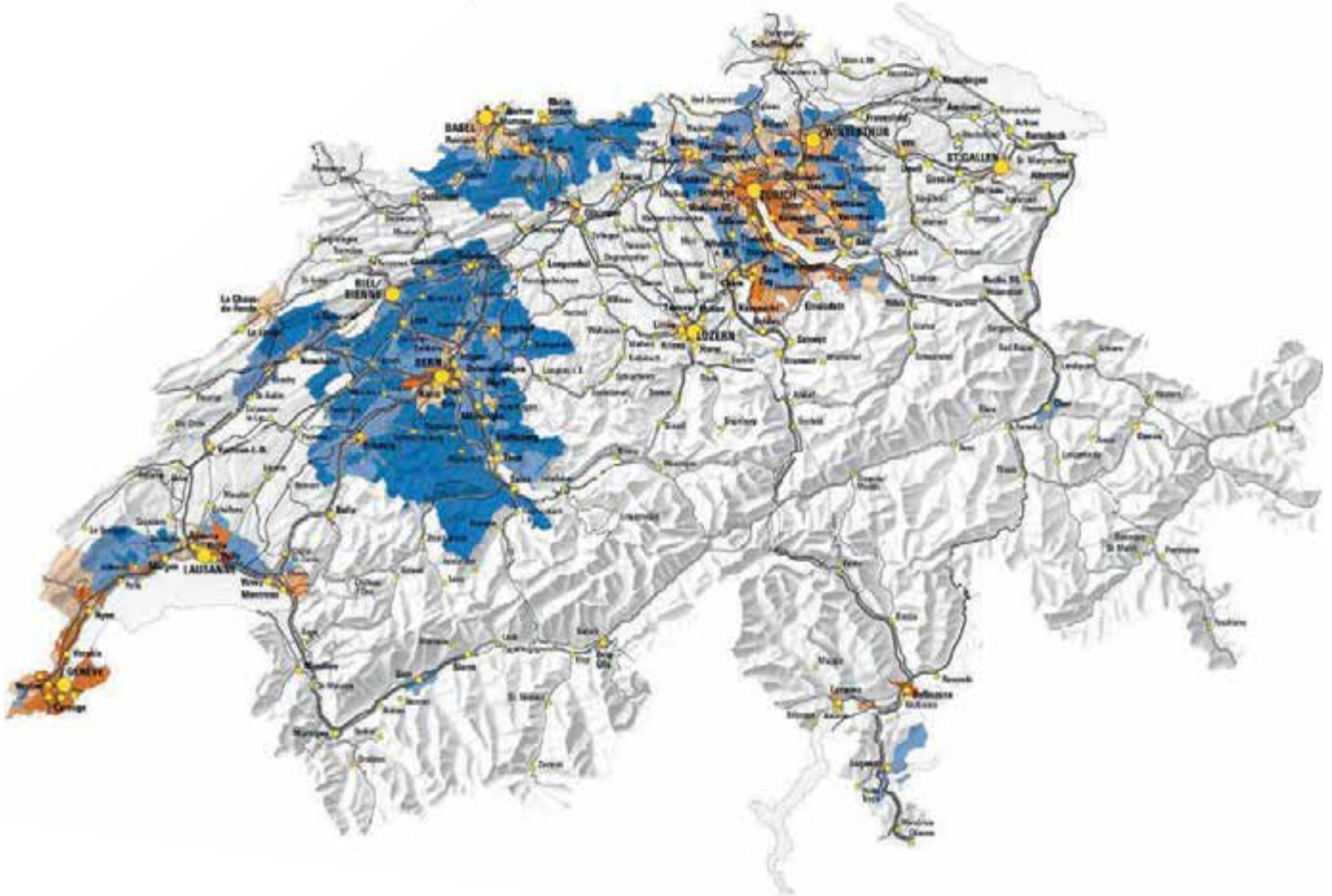
Net rent (CHF) per square meter of useful space and year (median)

Cities: Data for whole city

- Over 320
- 280 to 320
- 250 to 280
- 200 to 250
- 150 to 200
- Under 150

**Building Land: Market Prices for Commercial Property,  
4th Quarter 2013**

(FIG. 25)



Source: Wüest & Partner AG

In CHF per square meter  
(average location, undeveloped, with roads and services)

- Over 1,500
- 1,000 to 1,500
- 500 to 1,000
- 250 to 500
- 150 to 250
- Under 150

**7.2.2 Buying**

Individuals residing in other countries may purchase commercial real estate in Switzerland. EU/EFTA citizens who are resident in Switzerland have the same rights as Swiss nationals in terms of the purchase of real estate and do not require permission. Nationals of third countries and persons who are resident abroad may purchase real estate with some restrictions.

## A Purchase Transaction

(FIG. 26)

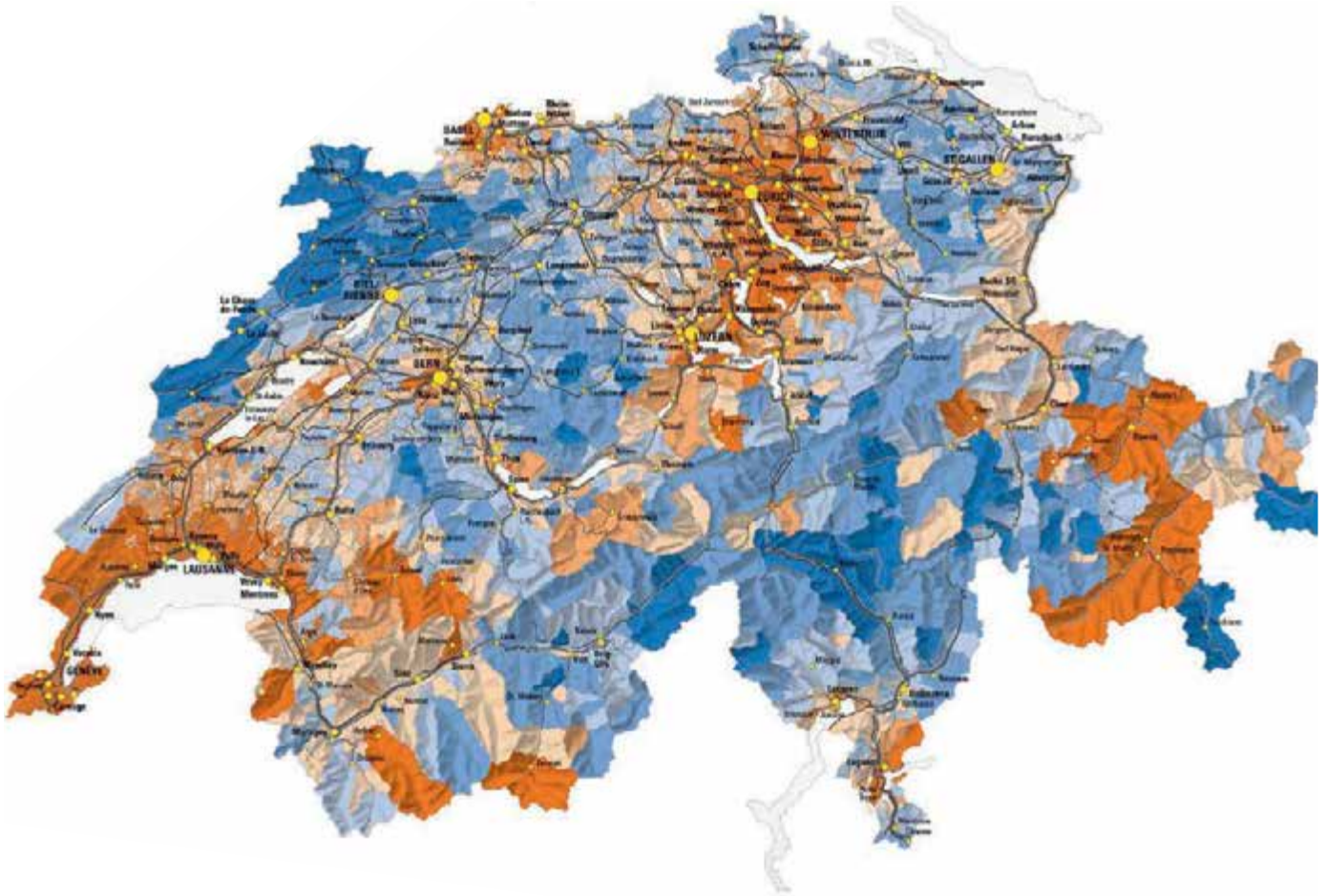
<b>Preliminary assessment: legal circumstances (public and private law)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Legal situation</li><li>- Statistical analysis</li><li>- Cadastre of polluted sites</li><li>- Road projects</li><li>- Trade licenses</li><li>- Air action plan</li><li>- Noise sensitivity level</li><li>- Taxes</li><li>- Examination of all land register entries (easements, reservations, notes)</li><li>- Cadastral map</li><li>- Building insurance</li><li>- Valuation</li><li>- Finance</li><li>- Personal check of seller</li><li>- Letting and leasing arrangements</li></ul>
<b>Completion of sale negotiations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Precise definition of property for sale</li><li>- Determination of price</li><li>- Taking possession</li><li>- Specification of finance</li><li>- Financial securities</li></ul>
<b>Notarization at the relevant location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Signing of contract in the presence of a notary</li><li>- Payment of financial securities if applicable</li></ul>
<b>Official completion in the relevant land register district</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Exchange: handover of property against payment</li><li>- (Signing of land register entry)</li></ul>

Source: Buying and selling real estate. Bürgi Nägeli Rechtsanwälte, [www.schweizerische-immobilien.ch](http://www.schweizerische-immobilien.ch)



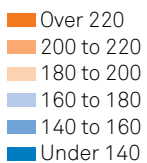
## Market Prices for Rented Accommodation, 4th Quarter 2013

(FIG. 27)



Source: Wüest & Partner AG

Net rent (CHF) per square meter  
of main useful space and year (median)



### 7.3 RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

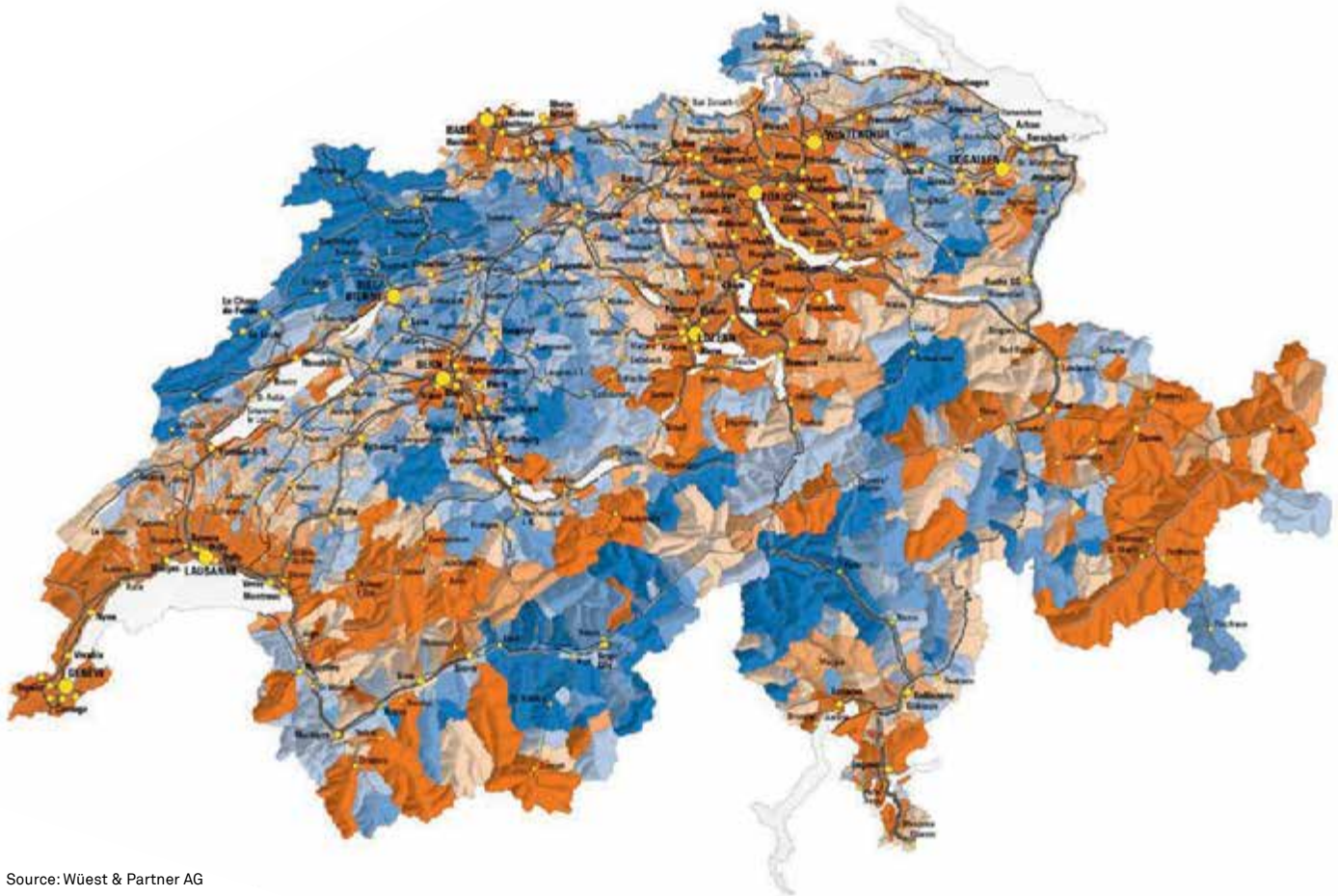
#### 7.3.1 Renting

Two out of three people in Switzerland live in rented accommodation. Demand is high and availability scarce, especially in cities and large urban areas. Since 2003, the vacancy rate has been varying around the 1% mark (2013: 0.96%). It therefore takes some patience and luck to find the right place to live.

A number of factors can affect rents. The cantons with the highest rents are usually prime locations within reach of major urban centers. Another factor that explains high rents is a low tax burden.

## Market Prices for Owner-Occupied Accommodation, 4th Quarter 2013

(FIG. 28)



Source: Wüest & Partner AG

In CHF per square meter  
(average location, undeveloped, with roads and services)

- Over 5,500
- 5,000 to 5,500
- 4,500 to 5,000
- 4,000 to 4,500
- 3,500 to 4,000
- Under 3,500

### 7.3.2 Buying

The acquisition of residential property by individuals resident abroad is subject to certain legal restrictions (see 7.5). In 2012, the home ownership rate in Switzerland was about 37.2%. It is especially high among families with children, older people, and people with higher incomes.

Once the right property has been found, the next step is to sign a contract of sale. This contract forms the basis for any real estate acquisition and must be drawn up and notarized by a notary. It obliges the seller to transfer the property and the buyer to pay the agreed purchase price. The contract also describes the property and stipulates the date on which the property will be handed over and the securing of any capital gains tax on the property.

Before signing the contract, it is advisable to check the land register to see whether any rights and encumbrances are associated with the land on which the property stands or will be built. By providing proof of interest, you can obtain detailed information in the form of an extract from the land register, for which there is a fee. The information recorded in the land register can be complex. Although a right-of-way is easy for the layperson to understand, the situation is much more complicated when it involves building law or regulations applying to condominiums. In these cases, it may be advisable to consult an expert. The notary who handles the sale can also provide further information. The contract of sale, which must always be publicly notarized, represents the actual underlying transaction and is required for subsequent registration in the local land register. Ownership actually passes to the buyer when the land register entry is made. There is no centralized land register for all of Switzerland; each canton maintains its own register under the supervision of the Federal Office of Justice.

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > [Buying a house or an apartment](#) > [Finding out about building ground or plots of ground](#)  
Information about the land register  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.grundbuchverwalter.ch](http://www.grundbuchverwalter.ch)  
Swiss Land Register Administrators Association  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.hausinfo.ch](http://www.hausinfo.ch) > [Finance and taxes](#) > [Buying and selling](#)  
Additional costs for condominiums  
Languages: German, French

#### 7.4 LEGAL ASPECTS: BUILDING PERMIT

Buildings and structures may only be erected or altered with the consent of the appropriate authorities. The construction project must first comply with the municipality's zone use plan, and then must also meet other requirements based on planning law and environmental regulations (water, air, waste, and noise) or requirements in the interests of public health and safety.

The building permit process takes an average of three months. Submitting a planning application (application for a building permit) is basically a standardized process. In addition to the project plans, a number of other forms and types of evidence must be submitted, depending on the particular project. It is in the owner's interest to obtain a legal building permit as quickly as possible since the owner must bear the financing costs during the planning and building permit phases. The typical building permit process has four stages:

- a) Notification of the authorities, consultation
- b) Submission of planning application, preliminary examination, additional investigation (environmental impact assessments, historic preservation, etc.)
- c) Examination of the application, public notification (publishing a notice and staking out the extent of the structure), issue of the building permit (including conditions and deadlines)
- d) Period in which objections to the project can be submitted; construction approval

The purchase of land for residential construction is subject to the provisions described in 7.5.

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > [Homeownership](#) > [Planning application and building permit](#)  
Planning applications and building permits  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 7.5 LEGAL ASPECTS: PURCHASE OF REAL ESTATE BY PERSONS ABROAD

The acquisition of real estate in Switzerland by persons abroad is restricted by law and may require a permit. However, the permit requirement basically applies only to the purchase of vacation homes and residential property that will not be used directly by the party in question. As such, foreign nationals actually resident in Switzerland may purchase both residential and commercial properties.

### 7.5.1 No Permit Required

No permit is required for real estate that is used for the pursuit of a business activity, i.e. a professional, commercial or industrial activity (with the exception of land for the construction, trade or letting of housing). The concept of business activity is very broad. It applies not only to the classic forms of trade, industry, and commerce but also to the financial and services sector. It therefore covers self-employed professionals such as IT specialists or hotel owners, as well as the operation of a trade or service center and even industrial production. The acquisition of an interest in real estate companies engaged in the buying and selling of such properties is also possible. Residential property can also be acquired under the “business establishment” heading if it is necessary for business purposes (such as accommodation for caretakers or technicians whose permanent on-site presence is required) or if separation from the business property would be impractical or unreasonable.

### 7.5.2 Permit Required

A permit is required for the purchase of non-commercial real estate by the following groups:

- Foreign nationals resident outside Switzerland
- Non-EU/non-EFTA nationals resident in Switzerland who do not have a permanent residence permit
- Companies with their head office outside Switzerland (even if the owner is a Swiss citizen)
- Companies that have their legally registered and actual head office in Switzerland but are controlled by non-Swiss nationals resident outside Switzerland. This is the case if foreign nationals hold more than one third of the company capital, have more than one third of the voting rights or have provided significant loans.
- Buyers who purchase a piece of property for the account of a person abroad (fiduciary transaction)

The permit requirements apply not only to the transfer of real estate ownership requiring land register entries but also to any legal transaction that gives a non-resident actual control over any real estate for which a permit is required. For this reason, these groups are not allowed to invest directly in the housing market or conduct real estate dealings involving residential properties.

## Permit Requirements For Different Groups

(FIG. 29)

GROUP	NO PERMIT REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE OF...
<b>All persons</b>	<b>Commercial properties</b>
Citizens of member states of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) whose main residence is in Switzerland (usually with EU/EFTA B residence permit or EU/EFTA C permanent residence permit)	All types of real estate and property
Non-EU or non-EFTA citizens who have the right to permanently reside in Switzerland (with a C permit)	All types of real estate and property
Non-EU or non-EFTA citizens whose main residence is in Switzerland, who do not yet have the right to permanently reside in Switzerland (usually with a B permit)	Main residence
Companies headquartered in Switzerland controlled by persons who do not require a permit	All types of real estate and property
EU and EFTA cross-border commuters (with EU/EFTA G permit)	Second home in the area of employment

### 7.5.3 Reasons for Permit

Permission for the acquisition of properties for which a permit is required may be granted in the following cases on the grounds provided for by law:

- Banks and insurance companies licensed in Switzerland for acquiring real estate in compulsory enforcements and liquidation proceedings if the real estate is encumbered with a mortgage in their favor
- Insurance companies for actuarial reserves for domestic business
- The real estate acquisition is used by a Swiss company for the purposes of retirement plans for employees working in Switzerland
- The property will be used specifically for a charitable purpose
- Heirs or legatees must sell the property within two years (unless there are close ties with the property meriting protection)
- Hardship: a permit may be granted for a vacation home or a hotel condominium unit if the seller is in financial difficulty and has offered the property without success to individuals who are not required to obtain a permit
- Certain cantons only: the acquisition of a vacation home by an individual abroad in a tourist resort
- Certain cantons only: an individual not resident in Switzerland may receive a permit to purchase a second home in a location with which he/she has close economic, scientific/academic or cultural ties
- Certain cantons only: acquisition of real estate for the construction of subsidized housing

### 7.5.4 Enforcement

Enforcement of the law is primarily the responsibility of the canton in which the real estate is located. The authority designated by the canton decides whether or not a transaction requires a permit and whether or not a permit should be granted. Under certain conditions, persons abroad can also be permitted to purchase a vacation home. However, ownership of real estate in Switzerland does not entitle a foreign owner to a residence permit.

**“Foreign nationals resident in Switzerland may purchase both residential and commercial properties.”**



# LABOR MARKET AND LABOR LAW

# 8

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Switzerland has one of the most productive workforces of any national economy. Its labor market is characterized by liberal legislation, light-touch regulation and exceptional social stability. Labor disputes are solved by the social partners. Strikes are rare. The social insurance system for workers is based on the principles of solidarity and personal responsibility. High salaries attract qualified workers, and employers benefit from competitive unit labor costs thanks to low social security contributions.

## 8.1 EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Switzerland has about 4.6 million employed people (as at Q2 2013), about 2.1 million of whom are women. The labor force participation rate (people in or seeking work as a percentage of the population aged 15 and over) is 68.6%, one of the highest in the whole of Europe. Foreigners account for almost 25% of the employed population. 37% of employed people work part-time. 60% of women work part-time, compared to just 16% of men. Switzerland has consistently had low unemployment, which has remained between 1% and 4% over the past ten years (2014: 3.2%).

The Swiss workforce is highly qualified, about 40% having undergone tertiary training. Swiss employees are famous world-wide for their multilingualism, and Swiss managers have above-average international experience. Switzerland was placed second in the 2015 IMD ranking.

### International Experience by Managers, 2015

1 = Low, 10 = High

(FIG. 30)

1	Luxembourg	7.87
<b>2</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7.82</b>
3	Hong Kong SAR	7.69
4	United Arab Emirates	7.21
5	Qatar	7.01
6	Singapore	6.88
7	Netherlands	6.86
10	Belgium	6.59
12	Ireland	6.49
14	Germany	6.30
16	Denmark	5.97
31	United Kingdom	5.39
35	United States	5.06
41	India	4.83
46	France	4.60
51	China	4.36
53	Brazil	4.33
56	Russia	4.23
58	Italy	4.12
61	Japan	2.89

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

In terms of motivation to work, the Swiss are in the top spot worldwide (Fig. 31). Swiss employees identify very strongly with their companies, partly because most companies are small or medium-sized.

### International Comparison of Motivation to Work, 2015

1 = Low, 10 = High

(ABB. 31)

<b>1</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7.68</b>
2	Denmark	7.66
3	Norway	7.46
4	Ireland	7.40
5	Luxembourg	7.38
6	Germany	7.37
7	Hong Kong SAR	7.29
8	Netherlands	7.27
11	Japan	7.06
16	USA	6.71
21	Singapore	6.36
23	Belgium	6.27
25	China	6.12
26	United Kingdom	6.04
42	India	5.35
48	France	4.95
50	Brazil	4.80
52	Italy	4.79
53	Russia	4.77

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

## 8.2 COST OF LABOR

### 8.2.1 Wages

Salaries are relatively high in Switzerland, reflecting the country's high levels of prosperity and output. Generous salaries are a symbol of success and make the country attractive to qualified workers. Compared to other cities (in 2015), gross wages in Zurich and Geneva are highest overall, ahead of those paid in Luxembourg and New York (Fig. 32). Due to the lower deductions (taxes, social insurance) compared to other countries, Switzerland also holds first place when it comes to net income.

Regular official surveys of wage levels and structures show considerable differences both within and between the individual sectors.

[www.lohnrechner.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.lohnrechner.bfs.admin.ch)  
Individual salary calculator  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Topics > Work and income  
Salaries and wages  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### International Comparison of Salaries, 2015

Gross pay, New York City = Index 100

(FIG. 32)

<b>Zurich</b>	<b>131.3</b>
<b>Geneva</b>	<b>130.1</b>
Luxembourg	106.4
New York	100
Miami	92.4
Copenhagen	92.2
Sydney	89.8
Los Angeles	87.5
London	75.5
Brussels	72.8
Tokyo	70.1
Dublin	68.8
Helsinki	67.8
Berlin	64.0
Paris	62.8
Rome	60.0
Hong Kong SAR	49.4
São Paulo	34.7
Moscow	21.3
Shanghai	18.1
Peking	13.4

Source: UBS 2015 study of prices and salaries



## Monthly Gross Salaries (Median Value) by Economic Sector and Major Region, 2012

(in CHF)

(FIG. 33)

ECONOMIC SECTOR	SWITZER- LAND	LAKE GENEVA REGION	MITTELLAND REGION	NORTH- WESTERN SWITZER- LAND	ZURICH	EAST SWITZER- LAND	CENTRAL SWITZER- LAND	TICINO
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,118</b>	<b>6,190</b>	<b>6,026</b>	<b>6,440</b>	<b>6,451</b>	<b>5,720</b>	<b>6,080</b>	<b>5,091</b>
<b>Sector 2: Production</b>	<b>6,224</b>	<b>6,426</b>	<b>6,047</b>	<b>6,912</b>	<b>6,474</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,306</b>	<b>5,062</b>
Mining, extraction of stones/soils	6,009	5,945	6,237	6,231	5,840	6,095	6,260	5,570
Processing industry; industry	6,348	6,765	6,053	7,396	6,586	5,965	6,525	4,333
Energy and water supply	6,733	6,450	6,954	7,142	6,932	6,382	6,963	5,356
Building trade	6,024	6,134	5,928	6,034	6,334	5,918	5,973	5,708
<b>Sector 3: Services</b>	<b>6,025</b>	<b>6,025</b>	<b>6,008</b>	<b>6,087</b>	<b>6,444</b>	<b>5,427</b>	<b>5,858</b>	<b>5,108</b>
Trade, repair	5,334	5,365	5,157	5,553	5,403	5,142	5,711	4,769
Hotel and catering	4,236	4,085	4,261	4,365	4,411	4,141	4,240	3,945
Transport and storage	6,067	5,421	7,067	5,885	5,949	5,327	5,304	5,200
Financial and insurance services	9,270	9,708	7,375	8,508	9,960	7,858	7,512	7,664
IT and communication	8,374	8,101	8,547	8,156	8,834	7,137	8,148	6,508
Education and training	7,225	6,953	7,243	7,364	7,272	7,259	8,232	5,768
Healthcare and social services	6,000	5,990	5,995	6,114	6,319	5,763	5,850	5,577
Misc. public & pers. services	5,714	6,353	6,055	5,078	5,571	5,012	5,357	4,078

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), survey of Swiss salary structures

## Gross Income from Employment (Median Value) per Annum by Professional Group, 2014

(excluding self-employed, in CHF)

(FIG. 34)

FULL-TIME (90% OR MORE), WOMEN AND MEN		FULL-TIME (90% OR MORE), WOMEN AND MEN	
Employees		Self-employed	
Managers	120,000	Managers	94,500
Academic professions	104,000	Academic professions	119,600
Technicians and professions of equal rank	88,400	Technicians and professions of equal rank	84,900
Office and commercial employees	74,300	Office and commercial employees	65,000
Service and sales professions	60,200	Service and sales professions	57,200
Agricultural specialists	65,000	Agricultural specialists	59,800
Handicraft and allied professions	70,200	Handicraft and allied professions	75,000
Plant and machinery operators	70,200	Plant and machinery operators	72,000
Elementary occupations	59,000	Elementary occupations	52,600
No answer/don't know	77,200	No answer/don't know	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,900</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>80,000</b>

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Swiss Labor Force Survey

### 8.2.2 Non-Wage Labor Costs

The deciding factor for employers is not the salaries that they pay, but rather the unit labor cost. Although salaries are high in Switzerland, the non-wage labor costs that employers must bear in addition to gross salaries (employer's social security contributions) add only about 15%. Coupled with high productivity, modest taxes and low capital costs, this means that at the end of the day many employers pay less than in other European countries.

### Payroll Accounting: Employee and Employer's Contributions; Example: Employee with Two Children

(FIG. 35)

EMPLOYEE	(IN %)	(IN CHF)
<b>Gross salary</b>		<b>10,000.00</b>
State social welfare (OASI/DI/EO)	5.15%	515.00
State unemployment insurance (ALV)	1.1%	110.00
Accident insurance (NBU)	2%	200.00
Pension fund (BVG)	6.5%	650.00
Daily sickness insurance <sup>3</sup>	0.62%	62.00
<b>Social security contributions</b>		<b>-1,537.00</b>
Child/family allowances <sup>4</sup>		200.00 400.00
<b>Net salary</b>		<b>8,863.00</b>

EMPLOYER	(IN %)	(IN CHF)
<b>Gross salary</b>		<b>10,000.00</b>
State social welfare (OASI/DI/EO)	5.15%	515.00
Administration fees (OASI/DI/EO)	0.3%	30.30
State unemployment insurance (ALV)	1.1%	110.00
Occupational illness (BU) <sup>1</sup>	0.5%	50.00
Pension fund (BVG)	6.5%	650.00
Daily sickness insurance <sup>3</sup>	0.62%	62.00
Child/family allowances <sup>4</sup>	2.00%	200.00
<b>Employer's contributions</b>		<b>-1,617.30</b>
<b>Total personnel costs</b>		<b>11,617.30</b>

<sup>1</sup> Depends on sector and operating risk

<sup>2</sup> Approach varies depending on age of insured person

<sup>3</sup> Voluntary insurance

<sup>4</sup> Varies depending on family compensation fund and canton

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Swiss Code of Obligations (OR)

### 8.2.3 Productivity

Productivity is another important aspect of labor. In international comparisons this is usually measured in terms of gross domestic product per hour worked. By this standard, Switzerland is one of the world's most productive countries.

### GDP per Hour Worked, 2015

(nominal, in US dollars)

(FIG. 36)

1	Norway	128.77
2	Luxembourg	112.47
3	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>91.87</b>
4	Denmark	86.53
6	Belgium	74.70
8	Netherlands	71.02
9	Ireland	70.62
10	France	70.52
11	USA	66.76
13	Germany	66.68
16	United Kingdom	57.51
18	Italy	50.99
22	Singapore	41.62
23	Japan	40.99
25	Hong Kong SAR	34.81
45	Russia	12.90
49	Brazil	11.97
59	China	5.76

Source: The Conference Board 2015

### 8.3 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS AND EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION

The Swiss labor market is generally considered one of the world's most liberal (Fig. 37). Swiss labor law specifies the rights and obligations of employees and employers alike. It contains considerably fewer provisions than the legislations in the EU states and is set out in several laws – the Swiss Code of Obligations (individual employment contracts, collective bargaining agreements, normal employment contracts), the Labor Act (general health and safety, working and rest times, young people, pregnant women and new mothers) as well as the Accident Prevention Law (occupational safety).

The mandatory law of the Swiss Confederation and the cantons has precedence over the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement, although different provisions can be specified to the benefit of the employee, provided nothing else is stated in the compulsory law. If, on the other hand, the legal provisions are not mandatory, agreements made between the parties have precedence. Some labor law regulations can be amended by collective agreement, but they cannot be amended by an individual employment contract.

Salaries are negotiated either directly between the employer and employee, or within the scope of collective bargaining agreements. Here too the legislator refrains from strict regulations in accordance with the liberal economic system. This allows a certain amount of room for direct agreements between the social partners.

#### 8.3.1 Individual Employment Contract

Employers are required to provide employees with the key points of the employment contract in writing by no later than one month after the employee starts work.

In larger companies, it is recommended to have an employee handbook containing the most important employment provisions, as the employment contract itself only contains provisions on wages, the notice period and special terms (e.g. a non-competition clause). Employment contracts and employee handbooks must conform to the mandatory provisions of the Swiss Code of Obligations and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements, where applicable. Employee handbooks should not be confused with agreements between the employer and the works council, as practiced in EU countries (and which do not exist in this form in Switzerland). However, industrial companies are required to establish “work rules”. These work rules must state the regulations on occupational health and safety and accident prevention. Employees or their representatives must be consulted before the rules come into force.

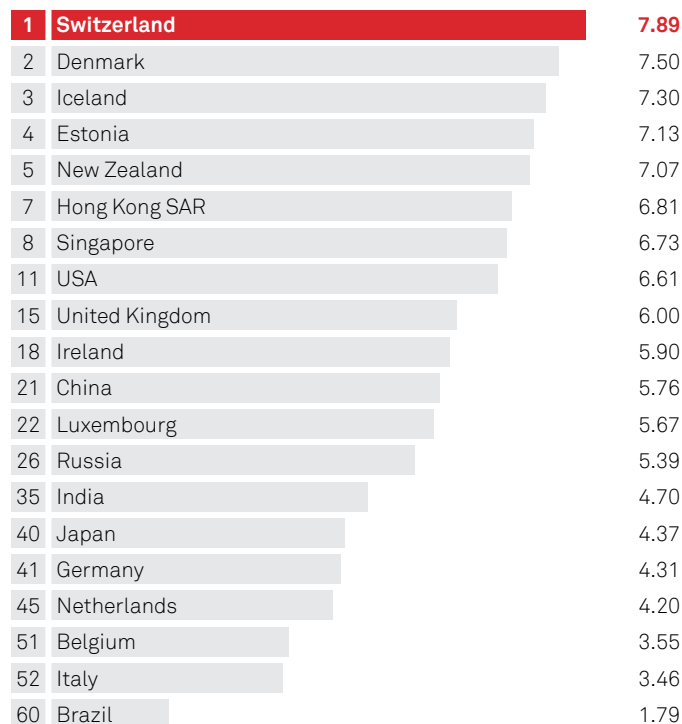
Companies may include in the employment contract a non-competition clause both for the duration of the employment with the company and beyond. Through a non-competition clause, the employer prevents employees who leave the company from using special knowledge that they gained while working there in a way that provides competition for their former employer. In practice, demanding requirements are imposed on the wording and enforcement of such clauses. There is no mandatory provision

### Deregulation of the Labor Market, 2015

Hinders entrepreneurial activity

1 = Greatly, 10 = Not at all

(FIG. 37)



Source: IMD World Competitiveness Online 2015

**“The Swiss labor market is considered one of the world’s most liberal.”**

for compensating employees for agreeing to such non-competition clauses. Non-competition clauses must

- be written
- be clearly defined (location, area, client group); general restrictions do not suffice
- specify the duration; in general no longer than three years.

### 8.3.2 Collective Employment Contracts

Collective bargaining agreements are concluded between employers' and employee associations. By doing so, these parties define the minimum conditions (e.g. minimum salaries, holiday entitlement, working hours, periods of notice or pension age) that individual employment contracts cannot go below. A collective bargaining agreement is normally agreed for a set term. During the term, both sides have an obligation to maintain industrial peace.

With the declarations of general applicability, the scope of a collective bargaining agreement is extended to all employees and employers in a particular sector. Minimum wages which have been negotiated within the scope of a collective bargaining agreement of this kind have to be observed by all employers. The approximately 590 (2012) non-binding collective bargaining agreements must be observed only if the contractual parties are members of the respective associations. In Switzerland there are 41 generally binding collective bargaining agreements that have been issued by the federal government and 52 issued by the cantons (November 2015).

If there are differences of opinion between an employer and the workforce, an amicable solution is sought, often internally. This fundamental approach dates back to the 1937 "peace agreement" between Swiss employers' and employee organizations. In accordance with this mutual agreement to maintain peace, workers and management seek to resolve conflicts through negotiation. Solution-oriented employer-employee relations are the norm in Switzerland (cf. Fig. 38).

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Labor > Labor law  
 Declaration on the general applicability of collective bargaining agreements.  
 Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.3.3 Co-Determination and Employee Representation

The Co-Determination Act governs the participation of employees in a company and applies to all private companies with employees in Switzerland, regardless of their size. Participation consists mainly of informing and listening to employees. In the areas listed below, the employer must inform employees of all significant circumstances, new developments and/or changes. Employees have the right to take their questions and/or comments to their employer and make suggestions. The act also governs the election of employee representation committees. Employees are entitled to representation in all companies with 50 or more employees. Employers need only inform or consult the employee representative or the affected employees in the following instances:

- In all matters relating to occupational safety and worker protection
- On the transfer of operations
- In the event of mass layoffs
- When linking with a professional pension scheme

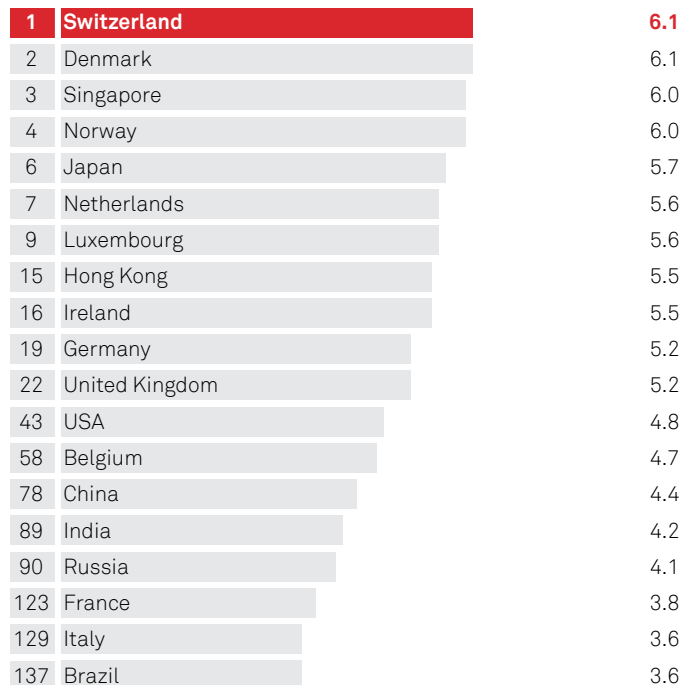
In addition, the employer must inform the employees at least once a year about the impact the course of business is having on employment and the staff.

### Unanimity among employers and employees, 2015

1 = Total confrontation, 7 = Total cooperation

Average: 4.33

(FIG. 38)



Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016

Works councils in the EU have far greater powers than employee representation committees under Swiss law. The major difference is that, in contrast to works councils, Swiss employee representative committees are not able to push through their own views or to force a decision. Their rights are limited to being informed, having their views heard and providing decision-making input.

## 8.4 WORKING HOURS AND HOLIDAYS

### 8.4.1 Normal Working Hours, Maximum Working Hours and Working Time Models

Employment contracts or collective bargaining agreements generally stipulate that normal working hours for employees in Switzerland are 40 to 44 hours per week. The legal maximum working time in Switzerland has remained stable over many decades. The maximum number of working hours per week is 45 hours for industrial companies (this also applies to office staff and technical employees and sales personnel in large retail stores). For commercial operations, the maximum is 50 hours per week. This differentiation between normal and maximum working hours is important for the definition of and excess hours.

In practice, there are many ways of adapting working hours to the needs of a business, for example flex-time, the range model, two/multiple-shift operation or continuous operation (24 hours x 365 days) are all possibilities. In particular, in the case of the need for continuous operation, the daily and weekly maximum hours can be extended and break times can be distributed differently.

### 8.4.2 Overtime and Excess Hours

Overtime is defined as any work undertaken beyond normal working hours and up to the permitted maximum. Employees are obliged to perform such overtime to the extent that they are able to do so and which they may be reasonably expected to perform. By law, overtime must be paid at a premium of 25%. It is possible, however, for the premium to be waived in writing. Instead of overtime pay, employees may be compensated through time in lieu of at least the same duration provided the employer and employee agree to this. Employees in managerial positions can also be compensated for overtime in general through their normal salary.

If the weekly maximum number of working hours is exceeded, this is referred to as excess hours. Under the Labor Act, excess hours may not exceed two hours per day for an individual employee. In total, excess hours may not exceed 170 hours per year for employees with a weekly maximum working time of 45 hours, or 140 hours for employees with a weekly maximum working time of 50 hours. Unless compensated by time in lieu within a reasonable timeframe, excess hours must be paid at a premium of 25%.

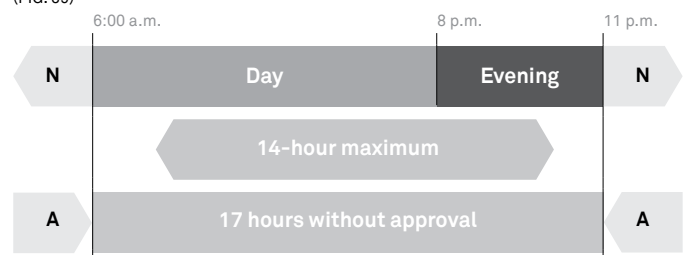
In contrast to many European countries, the consent of the employee representative committee is not necessary in Switzerland for overtime or excess hours. Neither is it necessary to obtain official approval, provided the above limits are not exceeded.

### 8.4.3 Daytime and Evening Work

Working hours from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. are considered day work. Work undertaken between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. constitutes evening work. Day and evening work do not require approval. However, evening work may be introduced only after consultation with the employee representative committee or, if there is none, after consultation with the affected employees. This rule allows the introduction of two-shift operation without official approval. The working time of an individual employee, including breaks and excess hours, must not exceed 14 hours.

#### Daytime, Evening and Nighttime Periods

N = Night-time period, A = Approval required  
(FIG. 39)



Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

“There are many ways to adapt working hours to the needs of a business.”

#### 8.4.4 Night Work, Working on Sundays and Public Holidays

Approval from the authorities is generally required if night work is needed (apart from companies where special conditions apply). For temporary night work, a premium of 25% must be paid. For permanent or regularly recurring night work, employees are entitled to paid leave of 10% of the time worked during night hours. This leave must be granted within one year. There is no entitlement for compensation in the form of paid leave if the average shift time, including breaks, does not exceed seven hours, or if the person working at night is employed for only four nights per week.

Sunday is defined as the time between 11 p.m. on Saturday and 11 p.m. on Sunday. Except where special regulations apply to certain sectors, approval from the relevant authority is also needed for work on such days. Only one holiday – August 1 (Swiss National Day) – is treated as equivalent to a Sunday throughout the country. The cantons may declare up to eight additional holidays as equivalent to a Sunday. They must be differentiated from the legally recognized public holidays: Although the same rules generally apply to these days as to holidays treated as Sundays, the legal basis for this is defined by the canton or municipality and so may differ in detail from the provisions regarding Sundays.

#### 8.4.5 Leave and Public Holidays

All employees in Switzerland are entitled to at least four weeks' paid leave per year (young people under the age of 20 are entitled to five weeks), at least two of which must be taken consecutively. Part-time employees are also entitled to paid leave in proportion to the percentage of standard hours they work. Leave must be taken, and may not be compensated through payment. There are no further statutory leave entitlements. However, longer entitlements are customary in collective bargaining agreements, and 25 days per year are usually granted to employees over the age of 50. During paid leave, salaries are paid in exactly the same manner as during regular working time. Additional vacation pay, as frequently encountered in tariff agreements in the EU, is unknown in Switzerland.

In addition, employees normally have time off on nine legally-stipulated public holidays. As cantons may stipulate their own public holidays, some cantons may have more public holidays. Only August 1, New Year's Day, Ascension Day and Christmas Day are holidays throughout Switzerland. All other public holidays vary from canton to canton. Employees also receive time off for weddings, funerals, moving, dental appointments, etc. The law does not stipulate how much time may be taken off.

[www.feiertagskalender.ch](http://www.feiertagskalender.ch)  
Holiday calendar  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 8.5 TERMINATION AND SHORT-TIME WORK

An employment contract can be terminated in writing or verbally at any time by either party and without valid reason. Under Swiss law, the employee representative committee does not have a say in this type of termination. Only in the case of mass layoffs does the employee representative committee have the right to be consulted by the employees. The employee representative committee must be given an opportunity to submit proposals about how the layoffs can be avoided or the number of layoffs can be limited and how the effects can be alleviated. Essentially, the recipient of the notice of termination has the right to demand that the reason for termination be stated in writing. There is no investigation of whether or not the termination is socially unjustified, i.e. whether the reasons are related to performance or other characteristics of the employee or whether difficult business considerations made the layoff necessary. An employment contract can be ended through:

- Termination
- Termination due to change of contract (conclusion of a new employment contract with altered conditions)
- Agreement to terminate employment (mutual cancellation of the employment contract)
- Termination on a specific date (for fixed-term contracts)
- Retirement
- Death of the employee

### 8.5.1 Notice Periods and Termination Protection

In general, the notice period is defined in the employment contract, in the standard employment contract, by the relevant profession or in the collective bargaining agreement. If there is no contract or regulation, then the provisions of the Swiss Code of Obligations apply:

- During the probationary period (max. 3 months): 7 days
- In the first year of service: 1 month
- In the second to ninth year of service: 2 months
- From the tenth year of service onward: 3 months

The notice period can be changed in writing but may not be shorter than one month (except under a collective bargaining agreement during the first year of service). For employees in managerial positions, notice periods of up to six months are often fixed from the very outset of employment. After the probationary period, notice of termination may be given only to the end of the month. In order for the termination notice to be legally valid, the person to be dismissed must receive it before the notice period begins. Even in the case of summary dismissal, the employee's salary must continue to be paid out until the end of the notice period.

An employment contract can be terminated summarily only in serious exceptional circumstances, such as fraud, refusal to work or competition with the employer. In practice, summary dismissals are very difficult to carry out, as the reason for termination is often open to interpretation.

It is improper to dismiss an employee on the grounds of their age, skin color or religion, for example. Nor may a person be dismissed because of their political affiliation or membership in a trade union. Improper dismissals can be appealed against,

## Flexibility in Hiring and Firing, 2015

1 = Hindered by regulations,  
7 = Flexible and at the employer's discretion

(FIG. 40)

1	Hong Kong SAR	5.7
<b>2</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>5.7</b>
3	Iceland	5.5
4	Singapore	5.4
5	Denmark	5.4
8	United Arab Emirates	4.8
10	USA	5.0
11	United Kingdom	4.8
17	China	4.6
19	Ireland	4.6
25	India	4.4
42	Russia	4.2
67	Luxembourg	3.8
89	Netherlands	3.6
107	Germany	3.4
123	Japan	3.0
125	Belgium	3.0
127	France	2.9
132	Italy	2.7
137	Brazil	2.3

Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016

and may give rise to claims for compensation. There are certain times when it is not possible to dismiss an employee, such as when the employee is sick, has suffered an accident, is pregnant or serving in the military, civil defense, civilian service or aid campaigns abroad. Dismissal in these situations is not valid, and referred to as termination during barred periods.

Compared with other countries, Switzerland has highly investor-friendly labor market provisions. It is relatively easy for companies to hire employees and then dismiss them again to react flexibly to economic change.

## 8.5.2 Short-Time Work and Mass Layoffs

A company may be forced to take measures to lower staff costs in the event of a deterioration in the order situation or for other reasons. Overcapacity may be alleviated through a temporary reduction in or complete halt in production. In order to maintain jobs, an employer that applies for short-time working receives 80% of the lost income of his employees through his unemployment insurance for a specific period. This is done to prevent dismissal as a result of a temporary and unavoidable lack of work. However, employees have the right to reject the short-term work compensation and to continue to receive the full salary. By doing so, however, they risk being dismissed. This is because dismissals are the last means that a company can resort to when utilization levels fluctuate. In the event of mass layoffs, Articles 335d-g of the Swiss Code of Obligations stipulate that the employer must

- consult the employees and
- inform the cantonal labor office in writing.

[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch) > For employers > Insurance benefits

Short-time work: Brochures, forms and addresses

Languages: German, French, Italian

## Overview of Obligatory Social Insurance Contributions 2016

(FIG. 41)

INSURANCE	EMPLOYEE	EMPLOYER	SELF-EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED
<b>Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance (OASI)</b>	4.2% of salary	4.2% of salary	Max. 7.8%	Min. CHF 392 Max. CHF 19,600
<b>Disability Insurance (DI)</b>	0.7% of salary	0.7% of salary	Max. 1.4%	Min. CHF 65 Max. CHF 3,250
<b>Compensation for loss of income and maternity benefits</b>	0.225% of salary	0.225% of salary	Max. 0.45%	Min. CHF 21 Max. CHF 1,050
<b>Occupational accidents</b>	None	0.74% (premium rates according to risk)	Insured through the mandatory health insurance scheme	-
<b>Non-occupational accidents</b>	1.35% (from 8 hours/week)	None	Insured through the mandatory health insurance scheme	-
<b>Health insurance</b>	per capita	None (voluntary contributions may be possible)	per capita	per capita
<b>Unemployment insurance</b>	1.1% for income components up to CHF 148,200; 1.0% for salary components of more than CHF 148,200	1.1% for income components up to CHF 148,200; 1.0% for salary components of more than CHF 148,200	(Non-insurable)	-
<b>Occupational pension schemes</b>	7.73% (calculated in % of insured salary (max. CHF 824,400)) Size depends on insurance regulations	7.73% (calculated in % of insured salary (max. CHF 824,400)) Size depends on insurance regulations	Voluntary	-
<b>Family allowances</b>	Canton of Valais only (0.3% of total income)	0.3-3.63% of total income (depending on family compensation fund)	0.3%-3.4%	-

Source: Federal Social Insurance Office, October 2015



## 8.6 SOCIAL INSURANCE

The Swiss social insurance system is based on three coordinated pillars: State-sponsored, employer-sponsored and personal plans. Personal responsibility is a key factor in this system. As a result, the overall tax and contribution burden remains modest by international standards.

The three pillars of Swiss social security are as follows:

**Pillar 1:** This first level meets the basic needs of the insured or beneficiary through the government-sponsored old age and survivors' pension (OASI), as well as long-term disability insurance (DI). Both are compulsory and funded jointly through contributions (percentage of salary) by the employer, the employee and taxes.

**Pillar 2:** Occupational pension plans (BVG), which supplement the first pillar, enable people to maintain their accustomed standard of living after retirement. All persons working in Switzerland must be insured. The plans are funded through contributions (percentage of salary) by the employer and the employee.

**Pillar 3:** Personal voluntary retirement plans for employees and self-employed individuals cover additional personal needs, mainly through bank and insurance savings. Contributions to individual retirement plans enjoy preferential treatment under tax laws to some extent.

These three pillars of social insurance are supplemented by unemployment insurance, the compensation system for loss of income due to military service or civil protection, maternity benefits and family allowances, which are governed by cantonal law.

[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch)

Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch) > Practice > SMEs/companies

SME guide to social insurance  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical information > Personnel > Personnel management

Social insurance for SMEs  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.6.1 Old Age and Survivors' Insurance

OASI provides old-age benefits (a retirement pension) or benefits to dependents (widows' and orphans' pensions). The benefits depend on the amount of previous income and the amount of time for which contributions were made. OASI insurance is mandatory for everyone who lives or works in Switzerland. All men and women who work in Switzerland are required to contribute, with the employer paying half of the contribution and the employee the other half. The non-active population, such as students, disabled people, pensioners or housewives that live in Switzerland, also pay a contribution. The insurance is based on the pay-as-you-go process: The current economically-active generation finances today's pensioners.

### 8.6.2 Disability Insurance

The aim of disability insurance is to help integrate or reintegrate persons who are disabled due to birth defects, illness or accidents into the workforce. A pension is paid only if the person is unable to take up employment or return to his/her job. Contributions are mandatory and levied together with OASI contributions.

### 8.6.3 Accident Insurance

Accident insurance covers all persons employed in Switzerland against accidents at the workplace, occupational illnesses and non-occupational accidents. Healthcare and ancillary needs (treatment, required medical aid, travel and transport costs) and payments (daily benefits allowance, disability pensions, lump-sum compensation and perpetual care benefits and survivors' benefits) are all covered. The employer funds the premiums for occupational accidents and illness, while the employee pays the premiums for non-occupational accidents. The employer must finance the entire premium amount, but part of this amount is deducted from the employee's salary. The amount is based on the employee's insured salary. The maximum insured salary is CHF 126,000 per year.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics > Accident and military insurance

Swiss Office of Public Health (FOPH) information on accident insurance  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 8.6.4 Health Insurance and Daily Sickness Insurance

Mandatory health insurance offers coverage for illness, pregnancy and accidents which are not covered by accident insurance. Employees are free to choose their policy. Everyone has the right to basic insurance, regardless of their health or age. In addition, voluntary supplementary policies can be taken out (generally requiring a health check). Premiums are charged per person, not based on income. The amount of the premium depends, amongst other things, on the amount of the division of costs (CHF 0–2,500) of the selected model and the municipality. Employers do not generally make health insurance contributions.

In Switzerland there is no legal obligation for employers to conclude daily sickness insurance for their employees. If group insurance is not arranged for employees, employers are obliged to pay employees their full salary for a certain period (depending on years of service) if they are unable to work through no fault of their own. The same applies to pregnant women who cannot attend work for health reasons.

That is why many employers take out daily sickness insurance for their employees. The costs depend on the scope of coverage (illness, maternity, accident). Maternity benefits as per the Compensation for Loss of Earnings Act have precedence over daily sickness benefits. If at all, daily sickness benefits are paid to supplement maternity benefits, provided there is no over-compensation.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics > Health insurance  
Swiss Office of Public Health (FOPH) information on health insurance  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.priminfo.ch](http://www.priminfo.ch)  
Comparison of health insurance premiums (FOPH)  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.6.5 Compensation for Loss of Income and Maternity Benefits

The Ordinance on Compensation for Loss of Income compensates people who have lost part of their income due to military service or civil defense. The ordinance also covers loss of income during pregnancy (maternity benefits). Insurance is mandatory, and must be paid by everyone who makes OASI contributions must pay it (half is met by the employer, half by the employee).

Employed pregnant women receive 80% of their average salary before delivery, up to a maximum of CHF 196 per day, for fourteen weeks. The only conditions are that they had mandatory OASI cover for the nine months immediately before birth, worked for at least five months during pregnancy and were still deemed able to work at the time of delivery. It is not possible to dismiss women while they are pregnant or for 16 weeks after delivery. Employed mothers are forbidden from working for up to eight weeks after delivery.

[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch) > Topics > Loss of income / maternity  
FISO information on compensation for loss of income  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.6.6 Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment insurance (ALV) continues to pay a partial salary upon unemployment for a limited amount of time and promotes the re-entry of the unemployed person into the job market. It is mandatory for employees. All workers who are not self-employed must make contributions. Unemployment insurance is financed equally by the employer and the employees (each pays 1.1%). It is not possible for self-employed persons to insure themselves against unemployment, even voluntarily. In order to receive unemployment benefits, employees must be able to demonstrate payment of at least 12 monthly contributions within the last two years, to prove that they have worked. For EU/EFTA citizens, contributions made in their home country also count if employment requiring contributions was carried out in Switzerland after arrival. Another requirement is that the person must be in a position to take up work, which means that he/she is ready, able and permitted to take on appropriate work and participate in integration measures. Regular application for jobs is mandatory. Compensation generally amounts to 70% of the salary subject to OASI (average of the last six contribution months or, if more advantageous, the last twelve prior to unemployment) or 80% for children requiring support, in the case of disability or for those with income of less than CHF 3,797. The maximum insured salary is CHF 10,500 a month. As a rule, a maximum of 520 daily allowances may be drawn within a two-year period.

[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch) > Unemployed - what now?  
Information for the unemployed  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.6.7 Occupational Pension Funds

Occupational pension funds serve to ensure that an employee's accustomed standard of living can be maintained after retirement. They are based on the Federal Act on Occupational Pensions, which since 1985 has provided mandatory insurance for all employed persons from the age of 18 (against risks) and from the age of 25 (savings plan). A person must currently earn a minimum of CHF 21,060 to participate (2011). The maximum mandatorily insured salary is CHF 84,240. The employer contributes at least as high a premium as the employee. Some employers choose to pay more. Premiums can vary between 7% and 18% of income, based on age and sex (the older the person, the higher the premium). The payment of the pension is based on a legally-determined conversion rate, which constitutes the statutory minimum (6.8%; conversion rate as per 2014). Pension funds are foundations, cooperatives or public law institutions that are monitored by cantonal and federal supervisory authorities. Smaller companies often join a collective pension foundation or association.

[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch) > Topics > Occupational pension fund and 3rd pillar  
Swiss Office of Public Health (FOPH) information on occupational pension funds  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.6.8 Family Allowances

Family allowances partially compensate the costs of raising children. The support, which to date has been limited to just employees, was extended to cover self-employed people on January 1, 2013. In some cantons, entitlement is income-dependent. Normally, people who are not gainfully employed only have a claim if their annual income does not exceed CHF 42,300. Special regulations apply to agriculture. Only one allowance is available for each child.

Family allowances include child and education allowances, as well as birth and adoption allowances mandated by the individual cantons. All cantons provide the following minimum allowances per child per month:

- A child allowance of CHF 200 for children up to the age of 16
- An education allowance of CHF 250 for children between the ages of 16 and 25

Family allowances are financed almost exclusively by the employer, except in Valais (where they are partially financed by the employee).

[www.kinderzulagen-rechner.ch](http://www.kinderzulagen-rechner.ch)  
Calculation of family allowances by canton  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## 8.7 RECRUITMENT

There are many options for recruiting external candidates:

1. Ads in newspapers or specialist journals
2. Online ads
3. Contact with universities and colleges  
(Internet platforms/trade fairs)
4. External consultants
5. Headhunters
6. Regional employment centers
7. Third parties

Each employer's choice depends on its needs and budget.

### 8.7.1 Public Employment Service

The regional employment centers (RAV) are public service providers that specialize in advising and placing job-seekers. About 130 RAVs offer employers personal assistance with their recruitment through a personnel consultant. There are many well-qualified job seekers registered with RAV who are immediately available for permanent or temporary positions. On request, RAVs can screen applicants according to the employer's criteria, thus making the selection process easier. RAVs can also advertise open positions in the internal job market on its Website and/or on teletext. The employment service Website is the largest job exchange in Switzerland. One advantage is that all RAV services are free.

[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch) > For employers  
Regional employment centers (RAV)  
Languages: German, French, Italian

### 8.7.2 Private Employment Agencies

It may be worth using an employment agency to find a highly qualified specialist or manager. These agencies do most of the legwork: designing job ads, planning media use and selecting applicants. It also makes sense to work with an employment agency if the name of the company is to be kept confidential due to sector-specific or internal reasons. However, this method is expensive, as it may cost one or more months' salary for the position to be filled.

### 8.7.3 Headhunters

Headhunters, or executive search consultants, act as a bridge between a company's need for highly-qualified specialists and managers and the desire of such individuals to find challenging and attractive positions. Headhunters specialize in recruiting through direct contacts and work on a mandate basis. They range from companies specialized in certain industries to large international firms with household names and boutique companies especially suited to generalist tasks, complex jobs or unconventional solutions. Hiring a headhunter is always beneficial if the usual paths of internal recruitment or ads on Websites and in newspapers fail to produce results.

### 8.7.4 Staffing/Temporary Employment Agencies

Hiring staff for a limited amount of time through temporary employment agencies is useful if there is a temporary surge of orders or if staff need replacing at short notice. An hourly wage is agreed between the agency and the client, which is usually 1.4 to 2 times the normal hourly rate. However, only the hours worked must be paid, and all ancillary costs are included. The agency remunerates temporary staff as their employer and is responsible for all social contributions and insurance. The same labor law protections apply as with "traditional" forms of employment.

Temporary employment agencies require a cantonal license in order to operate. They are also required to set aside a significant deposit to cover the claims of their employees. A federal license and a higher deposit are also required to operate abroad.

[www.sgp.ch](http://www.sgp.ch)  
HR Swiss: Swiss Association for Human Resources Management  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.swissstaffing.ch](http://www.swissstaffing.ch)  
Employment services trade association  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian



# FINANCIAL CENTER AND CAPITAL MARKET

# 9

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Accounting for 10% of GDP and employing around 230,000 people (5.4% of the employed population in Switzerland), the Swiss financial sector is of key economic importance. The main areas of expertise are private banking, asset management, and insurance. Switzerland's long tradition of economic and financial stability is reflected in low inflation, low interest rates, and the significant international role that the Swiss franc plays, particularly in asset management and issue underwriting business.

## 9.1 BANKS

### 9.1.1 Structure and General Conditions

In Switzerland there are some 300 banks, 200 insurance companies, and 2,000 pension funds. Apart from the two major global banks, UBS and Credit Suisse Group, which together hold approximately 50% of total assets, the cantonal, regional, and savings banks also play an important role. In addition, there are many smaller financial institutions and private banks, some of which offer highly specialized services such as commodity trade finance. The group of 24 cantonal banks, which are either entirely or partially under state ownership and which offer a government guarantee, have a domestic market share of about one-third. Their share of total assets for all banks domiciled in Switzerland was approximately 17% in 2014. Another 120 foreign-owned banks with a share of 11.6% of the total assets can be added to this number. Switzerland is a center for professional asset management for private clients and institutional investors. With a market share of 27.6% in 2015, it is the world leader in the cross-border asset management business. Overall Swiss banks managed assets totaling CHF 6,656 billion in 2014.

Switzerland's success as a financial center is thanks to the combined effect of many different factors. Its political and macroeconomic stability are the basic foundation upon which the trust of clients is built – trust which is so important in the financial business. The Swiss franc, with its status as an important international reserve and diversification currency, also contributes to this. Strong global integration and an efficient financial infrastructure allow market players to manage assets and risks profitably and diversify them internationally. Switzerland enjoys a good reputation abroad as a financial center, and it is an attractive location for businesses and an international clientele.

### Global Financial Centers, 2015

Overall score from 1 to 1,000

(FIG. 42)

1	London	796
2	New York	788
3	Hong Kong SAR	755
4	Singapore	750
5	Tokyo	725
6	Seoul	724
<b>7</b>	<b>Zurich</b>	<b>715</b>
10	Washington DC	711
<b>13</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>707</b>
14	Frankfurt	706

Source: The Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 18), 2015

In comparison with other countries, the regulatory obstacles and burdens in the Swiss banking system are relatively low. A permit is required to open a bank, trade professionally in securities, manage a fund, and in some cases to operate as an asset manager. The Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA), currently supervising over 550 financial institutions, can provide detailed information about specific requirements. The umbrella organization for the banking industry is the Swiss Bankers Association.

[www.swissbanking.org](http://www.swissbanking.org)  
Swiss Bankers Association (SBA)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 9.1.2 Supervision

As an independent supervisory authority, FINMA protects financial market clients, namely creditors, investors, and insured persons, thus strengthening public trust in Switzerland as a functioning, reliable, and competitive financial center. In addition, self-regulation has proved itself as an alternative form of regulation for the Swiss financial market. FINMA is required by the legislature to support self-regulation and to provide it with the necessary space. Corresponding regulations are proposed, for example, by the Swiss Bankers Association and are approved and implemented by FINMA.

All banks operating in Switzerland require a license. The supervisory standards applied in Switzerland not only govern the capital resources and adequacy of the banks but also include the whole range of prudential rules and codes of conduct. As an additional safety cushion, Swiss law specifies higher capital requirements than the Basel Capital Accord (Basel I-III).

[www.finma.ch](http://www.finma.ch)  
Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 9.1.3 Services

Banks in Switzerland offer a vast range of financial products and services for both private and corporate clients. As the Swiss banking system is based on the universal bank principle, all banks can offer all banking services, such as:

- Credit or lending business
- Asset management and investment advice
- Payment transactions
- Deposit business (savings accounts, etc.)
- Securities business (stock market trading)
- Issue and underwriting business (bond underwriting)
- Financial analysis

Despite this, very different groups of banks and areas of specialization have developed.

Generally speaking, any adult may open a bank account in Switzerland. However, the banks reserve the right to refuse to accept a client. For example, a bank may refuse to enter into a business relationship with “politically exposed persons,” as such clients could represent a reputational risk for the bank. The same applies to companies, irrespective of whether they are domiciled in Switzerland or not. Most Swiss banks do not require a minimum deposit for normal savings or current accounts. Many banks offer accounts in euros, US dollars, or other currencies, in addition to Swiss francs.

If clients have a specific complaint against a bank that is domiciled in Switzerland, they may approach the Swiss Banking Ombudsman, who provides neutral, free information and mediation.

[www.kantonalbank.ch](http://www.kantonalbank.ch)  
Cantonal banks  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.foreignbanks.ch](http://www.foreignbanks.ch)  
Association of Foreign Banks in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.abps.ch](http://www.abps.ch)  
Association of Swiss Private Banks  
Languages: German, English, French

[www.bankingombudsman.ch](http://www.bankingombudsman.ch)  
Swiss Banking Ombudsman  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**“Switzerland’s financial center and the country’s appeal as a location make the SIX Swiss Exchange very attractive to domestic and foreign businesses.”**

#### 9.1.4 Protection of Deposits

Deposits with Swiss financial institutions are protected up to CHF 100,000 per depositor. If the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA initiates protective measures or forced liquidation proceedings against a bank or securities dealer in Switzerland, the members of the Swiss Banks' and Securities Dealers' Depositor Protection Association provide funds so that the deposits deemed preferential under the Banking Act can be paid out as quickly as possible to depositors. All banks and securities dealers with a branch in Switzerland and which receive privileged deposits are members of the association. However, the maximum amount that members may be required to contribute is capped at CHF 6 billion. By guaranteeing preferential deposits, the association plays an important role in protecting creditors and makes a key contribution to the reputation and stability of Switzerland as a financial center.

[www.einlagensicherung.ch](http://www.einlagensicherung.ch)  
Deposit Protection of Banks and Securities Dealers  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 9.1.5 Taxation of Savings Income

Switzerland supports the EU system of taxing cross-border interest payments to individuals under the Savings Tax Agreement. Swiss banks operate a system of tax retention (similar to Swiss withholding tax) which is deducted at a rate of 35% on interest income earned in Switzerland by persons subject to EU taxation. This system of tax retention ensures that the EU interest taxation system cannot be evaded by switching to Switzerland, while at the same time ensuring that Swiss laws and banking secrecy are upheld. A mandate for negotiating the agreement was approved by the EU on May 14, 2013. A negotiating mandate has also been approved by the Federal Council.

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch) > Topics > Bilateral agreements Switzerland-EU  
[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch) > Topics > Taxes > Taxation of savings agreement  
Taxation of savings income  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 9.2 SWISS STOCK MARKET: SIX SWISS EXCHANGE

SIX Swiss Exchange is one of the leading regulated stock exchanges in Europe and the most important European stock exchange in the life science area. As a key pillar of the Swiss financial center infrastructure, it provides the best possible trading conditions and links investors, issuers, and participants from all over the world.

The strength of the Swiss financial center, its position as a world leader in cross-border private asset management, and the associated high level of financing and placement power enjoyed by its banks, plus the general attractiveness of Switzerland as a location, make the SIX Swiss Exchange extremely appealing for both domestic and foreign companies.

Public placement and listing on the SIX Swiss Exchange give a company access to an experienced, financially powerful group of international investors. Every company on the SIX Swiss Exchange benefits from a high level of visibility and attention from investors, analysts, and journalists. At the same time, investors in Switzerland have many years of experience with international sector-oriented investment strategies. Given Switzerland's economic structure, the banking and insurance sectors, the food sector, pharmaceuticals, biotech, medtech, cleantech, as well as the microtechnology and nanotechnology sectors are particularly popular with investors.

In addition, the regulatory provisions of the SIX Swiss Exchange reflect market realities and thus simplify the capital raising process. Under Swiss legislation, the SIX Swiss Exchange has powers of self-regulation and is thus ideally equipped to combine high levels of investor protection with a regulatory environment that is reasonable from a company perspective.

An extensive range of indices includes the SMI® (Swiss Market Index), Switzerland's most important stock market index, as well as other benchmarks such as the SLI® (Swiss Leader Index), the SPI® (Swiss Performance Index) and bond, segment, sector and customer indices. The stock exchange provides its raw data in real time to financial information providers via SIX Exfeed. With investments in Scoach Schweiz, STOXX, Swiss Fund Data, and Indexium, SIX Swiss Exchange runs successful joint ventures to the benefit of all financial market players.

The SIX Swiss Exchange is a company of the SIX Group, which offers services in the area of trading and processing as well as financial information and payment transactions. In addition to its broad product range, the "Swiss Value Chain," the fully integrated and completely automated trading, clearing, and settlement system, is especially impressive.

[www.six-swiss-exchange.com](http://www.six-swiss-exchange.com)  
SIX Swiss Exchange  
Languages: German, English, French

“From 2004 to 2012, venture capital companies invested over CHF 13.5 billion in innovative new companies in Switzerland.”

### 9.3 BUSINESS LENDING AND REAL ESTATE FINANCING

Establishing a business is generally a medium to long-term objective. As a rule, significant up-front investments and project financing are needed. Swiss banks place great emphasis on thorough market analysis and professional management.

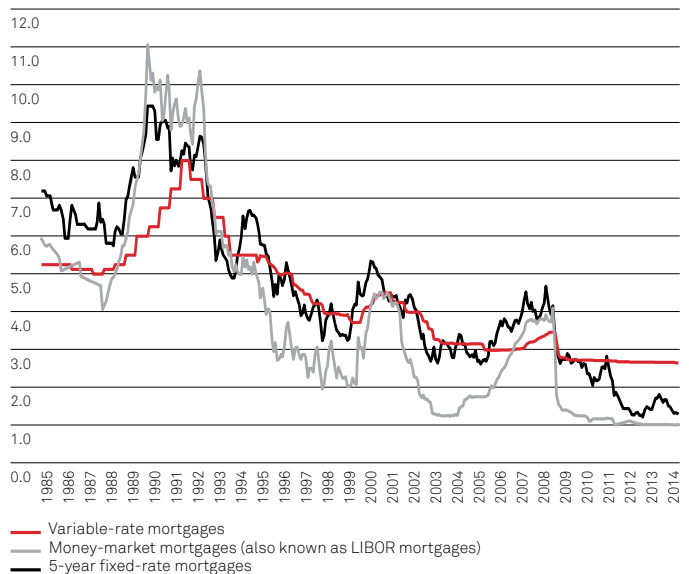
#### 9.3.1 Financing of Current Business Activity

To finance current business activities, banks grant various types of short-term loans. These can take the form of unsecured loans or loans secured by collateral. The amount of the loan granted depends on the trustworthiness and the future prospects of the company. Aside from the usual forms of bank lending, lease financing and forfeiting are also gaining importance. For rapidly growing young enterprises and start-ups deciding on a location, it is important to know what financing possibilities exist for the start-up phase and the second step. The sheer range and quality of financial service providers in Switzerland means that a variety of attractive solutions are available, such as sureties, convertible loans, and equity capital financing by business angels, venture capital and private equity investors.

When a new business is established in Switzerland, financing in Swiss francs should be preferred because of currency considerations. As a rule, it is also more economical than financing in foreign currencies.

#### Mortgage Rates, 1985–2013

(FIG. 43)



Source: VZ Vermögenszentrum



### 9.3.2 Mortgages

If the acquisition of real estate or the building of a production facility accompanies the foundation or establishment of a business, mortgages can be an important credit instrument. There are three main types of mortgage in Switzerland: fixed-rate, variable-rate, and money-market mortgages. While the interest rate for a variable-rate mortgage is continually adjusted to the prevailing capital market rate, the interest rate on a fixed-rate mortgage is typically fixed for three to five years. The interest rate on a money-market mortgage is based on the Libor rate for the euro money market. Providers add a margin on top of this rate, which depends on the creditworthiness of the borrower. Up to 80% of the property's market value may be borrowed; up to 65% of this is taken as a first mortgage, which does not need to be amortized as is usual in other countries; any amount in excess of this is borrowed under a second mortgage, which must be amortized. The bank checks the quality of the property and the creditworthiness of the borrower on the basis of its guidelines. Generally speaking, a minimum requirement is that purchasers should provide at least 20% of the purchase price from their own assets. Secondly, the annual cost of the purchase (interest, repayments, and maintenance) should not total more than one-third of the purchaser's gross income. Interest rates are negotiable, so it is worthwhile requesting offers from a number of lenders.

For commercial property, the collateral value depends increasingly on the earning-power value. For industrial projects, normally 50% of the overall value – market value or construction cost, including machinery and equipment – can be financed against real estate pledges at very attractive rates. For office and service buildings, the loan-to-value ratio is normally around 70%, but it also depends on the (property-specific) risks. Interest rates and terms generally applied to business investments today depend on the creditworthiness of the company and the rating it is given by the lending bank. Recognition of the risk and future prospects therefore play a key role.

Owners of residential property must pay federal and cantonal taxes on their property as notional income. The rule of thumb for federal tax is an imputed rental value of at least 70% of average market rental, and for cantonal and communal taxes an imputed rental value of at least 60%. In return, homeowners may deduct mortgage interest and maintenance costs. This is the reason why the first mortgage is rarely ever amortized.

[www.hausinfo.ch](http://www.hausinfo.ch) > Finances & taxes  
Financial aspects of home ownership  
Languages: German, French

[www.hypothekenrechner.ch](http://www.hypothekenrechner.ch)  
Financial feasibility calculator  
Language: German

## 9.4 RISK CAPITAL

From 2004 to 2012, venture capital companies invested almost CHF 13.5 billion in innovative new companies, thereby generating 10 to 20 jobs per company. Alongside the state development programs and loans from business banks, venture capital (VC) is an important pillar of innovation in Switzerland with between 80 to 150 transactions per annum. The federal authorities also support the creation of venture capital through the Federal Act on Venture Capital Companies (RKG), which provides two tax incentives:

- Recognized venture capital companies are exempt from securities issue tax on their capital at the time the company is founded, or for any subsequent capital increase. With respect to direct federal tax, they also have a lower threshold value for claiming the equity participation deduction.
- Private individuals who assist in the foundation and development of new companies as business angels are entitled to relief from direct federal tax if they grant subordinated loans for the formation of start-up companies from their private assets.

The availability of venture capital and similar financing may fluctuate and therefore lacks transparency. Universities, consultants, and the business community jointly provide a number of platforms, some of them online, to bring entrepreneurs and investors together.

[www.swissbanking.org](http://www.swissbanking.org) > SME > What do I need to know about financing?  
Information on financing for SMEs  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.seca.ch](http://www.seca.ch)  
Swiss Private Equity & Corporate Finance Association (SECA)  
Languages: German, English, French

### 9.4.1 Venture Capital

Some financial companies specialize in providing risk capital or venture capital. Venture capital companies contribute to the share capital of a company, with the aim of making large profits if it flourishes or goes public. They provide financial resources without requiring the traditional forms of security. Only fast-growing young companies which are likely to generate significant revenue in a short period of time and have sales potential and a capital requirement of several million Swiss francs are normally considered for this kind of financing. Venture capitalists consider themselves to be guides during the development phase of the financing project. After their job is done, they withdraw and sell their investment on to the company founder or other investors.

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical information > Financial > Financing > Equity  
Start-up help from venture capital companies  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.swiss-venture-club.ch](http://www.swiss-venture-club.ch)  
Information platform, network for businesses  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## State Support Schemes

(FIG. 44)

INSTRUMENT	BENEFICIARY	REGIONS	MEASURES
Neue Regionalpolitik NRP	Industry, production-related services	Economic regeneration areas	Tax relief in respect of direct federal tax
Commercial guarantees	SMEs, commercial undertakings	All of Switzerland	Bank loan guarantees (max. CHF 500,000)
Guarantees for mountain regions	SMEs, commercial undertakings	Mountain regions	Bank loan guarantees (max. CHF 500,000) Interest cost subsidies
Hotel credit	Hotel industry	Tourist and mountain regions	Direct loans Guarantees Interest cost subsidies (partial)
Measures to support independent professional activities	Unemployed	All of Switzerland	Daily benefit (max. 90 days for planning phase) Bank loan guarantees (max. CHF 500,000)
Commission for Technology and Innovation CTI	Projects for research collaboration at universities and businesses	All of Switzerland	Payment of researchers' salaries

Source: Various federal government agencies, information collated by Generis 2014

### 9.4.2 Business Angels

During their start-up phase, many promising young companies need seed financing of less than CHF 2 million. Although risk capital is increasingly available these days, the minimum size of financing transactions has risen correspondingly for both risk capital providers and investment companies. Very few professional risk capital providers consider financing deals of less than CHF 2 million. More and more often it is so-called “business angels” – individual investors – who finance start-ups. Typical business angels have experience and connections in addition to capital, which ideally they have acquired as an entrepreneur, which is why they are often also consultants and mentors to young entrepreneurs. Business angels generally invest twice or even three times over in the companies: they invest their capital, experience, and time, which gives young entrepreneurs their “smart money.” Essentially business angels also follow clear return prospects just like venture capital investors. The aim is to start, develop, and establish new companies and to make them attractive for later investors. Consequently, young entrepreneurs are usually closely supported by business angels, who also demand corresponding access to the business plans.

[www.businessangels.ch](http://www.businessangels.ch)  
Business Angels Switzerland  
Languages: German, French

### 9.4.3 State Support

Although there is relatively little direct financial assistance available in Switzerland, where the state mainly restricts itself to creating favorable operating conditions, the country does offer a wide variety of tools to support companies, ranging from administrative assistance and tax relief to guarantees.

The cantonal economic development agencies also tend not to take direct stakes in companies, although they can offer assistance in finding affordable construction sites or can provide tax relief during the start-up phase or during a planned expansion.

One rare exception is the Swiss Federal Foundation for the Promotion of the Swiss Economy (Eidgenössische Stiftung zur Förderung schweizerischer Volkswirtschaft), which grants interest-free loans and, in exceptional cases, may even provide a share of the risk capital subject to a personal financial commitment on the part of the company founder.

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical information > Financial > Financing > Equity  
State support on financing  
Languages: German, French, Italian

Addresses: page 138f.  
Cantonal economic development agencies

## 9.5 CAPITAL COSTS AND INTEREST

Switzerland is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in the world and is regarded as a “safe haven” (Fig. 45). The country is in a healthy financial situation. This applies to the finances of the central state – at the federal level – as well as the cantons and municipalities. The budget deficit in 2011 of 0.7% of GDP was significantly below the average of EU and OECD member states. Total public sector debt (federal, cantonal, and municipal) amounted to 36.4% of GDP in 2012.

### Credit Rating: Top Ten Most Secure Countries, 2014

Maximum = 100 points

(FIG. 45)

1	Norway	89.79
2	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>88.51</b>
3	Singapore	87.76
4	Luxembourg	84.23
5	Finland	83.21
6	Denmark	83.19
7	Sweden	82.94
8	Netherlands	81.71
9	Canada	81.62
10	Germany	81.32

Source: Euromoney, March 2014

The high credit rating, together with the high savings rate and large inflows of foreign money, leads to low interest rates. Financing conditions for business and investment are thus comparatively favorable. In recent years, the average spread in the money-market and capital-market interest rates in Swiss francs and euros has ranged between 1.5% and 2%. Interest rates and terms may vary widely depending on the creditworthiness of the client. The IMD management institute in Lausanne also highlights the positive effect of capital costs on economic development, with Switzerland coming out in first place in its ranking (Fig. 46).

[www.lik.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.lik.bfs.admin.ch)  
Consumer Price Index (CPI)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.efv.admin.ch](http://www.efv.admin.ch)  
Federal Finance Administration (FFA)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## 9.6 INFLATION

Switzerland has always lived up to its reputation as a stable country. The rate of inflation, as measured using the Swiss Consumer Price Index, has consistently remained well below those of the EU, the major industrialized nations and the ASEAN-5 countries in recent years.

## Capital Costs, 2014

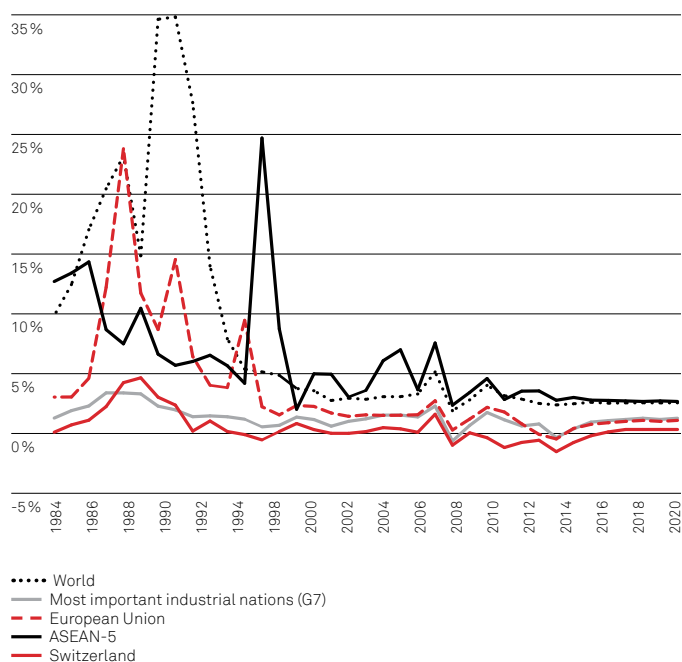
1 = hamper economic development  
10 = promote economic development  
(FIG. 46)

1	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.14</b>
2	Germany	7.68
3	Finland	7.22
4	Hong Kong SAR	7.17
5	Malaysia	7.10
7	USA	6.93
9	United Kingdom	6.52
12	Japan	6.39
13	Singapore	6.36
17	Luxembourg	6.15
20	Denmark	5.93
21	Ireland	5.88
28	Netherlands	5.67
32	France	5.15
36	Belgium	5.11
45	India	4.00
49	Russia	3.51
50	Italy	3.44
51	China	3.43
57	Brazil	2.33

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Online 2015

## Inflation, 2015

(ABB. 47)



Source: IMF WEO Report, October 2015



# OVERVIEW OF THE SWISS TAX SYSTEM

# 10

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The Swiss tax system mirrors Switzerland's federal structure, which consists of 26 sovereign cantons with 2,352 independent municipalities. Based on the constitution, all cantons have full right of taxation except for those taxes that are exclusively reserved for the federal government. As a consequence, Switzerland has two levels of taxation: the federal and the cantonal/municipal level.

The reform of the income tax system implemented in recent years provided for harmonization of the formal aspects of the various cantonal tax laws, for example, determination of taxable income, deductions, tax periods, and assessment procedures. The cantons and municipalities still have significant autonomy for the quantitative aspects of taxation, however, particularly with respect to determining the applicable tax rates. Consequently, the tax burden varies considerably between cantons/municipalities.

## 10.1 TAXATION OF CORPORATE TAXPAYERS

### 10.1.1 Corporate Income Tax – Federal Level

The Swiss federal government levies corporate income tax at a flat rate of 8.5% on profit after tax of corporations and cooperatives. For associations, foundations, and other legal entities as well as investment trusts, a flat rate of 4.25% applies. At the federal level, no capital tax is levied.

#### Taxable Persons

Taxable persons include Swiss resident legal entities, i.e., Swiss corporations, limited liability companies, and corporations with unlimited partners, cooperatives, foundations and investment trusts with direct ownership of immovable property. As partnerships are transparent for tax purposes, the partners are taxed individually. Companies which have their registered office or place of effective management in Switzerland are considered resident.

#### Taxable Income

Resident companies are subject to corporate income tax on their worldwide income with the exception of income attributable to foreign permanent establishments or foreign real estate (immovable property). Such income is excluded from the Swiss tax base and is only taken into account for rate progression purposes in cantons that still apply progressive tax rates.

Non-resident companies are subject to tax only on Swiss source income, i.e., income and capital gains derived from Swiss business, permanent establishments or immovable property, whereas income from immovable property includes income from trading in immovable property.

As a matter of principle, the statutory accounts of a Swiss company and – in the case of a foreign company – the branch accounts form the basis for determining taxable income. Apart from the participation exemption for dividend and capital gains income, various adjustments required by tax law and the use of existing loss carryforwards (the loss carryforward period is seven years), there are very few differences between statutory profit and taxable profit. The most common deductions allowed are depreciation, tax expense, interest expense, and management and service fees/royalties. The last two are deductible to the extent that they are in accordance with the arm's-length principle.

**“Switzerland offers a modern tax system geared to the needs of business and the economy.”**

### **Thin Capitalization Rules**

The Swiss Federal Tax Administration has issued safe harbor rules for thin capitalization purposes that apply to related party debt. Third-party financing is not affected by these rules. Specifically speaking, a unique asset-based test is used to determine whether a company is adequately financed. The thin capitalization rules require that each asset class must be underpinned by a certain equity portion (generally expressed as a percent of the fair market value but often the lower book values suffice).

Related-party debt exceeding the allowable debt as calculated according to the percentages provided from the Tax Administration is reclassified as equity and added back to the taxable capital for purposes of the cantonal/communal annual capital tax, unless it can be proven that in this particular case the debt terms applied are more appropriate. Moreover, the allowable interest deductibility on debt can be determined by multiplying the allowable debt by the safe harbor interest rates. If interest payments to related parties exceed the amount which can be paid based on the allowable debt, they are added back to taxable profit. Furthermore, such interest is considered to be a hidden dividend distribution (subject to withholding tax of 35%).

### **Group Consolidation**

Separate entity taxation applies in Switzerland for income tax purposes. It is not anticipated that group consolidation will be introduced anytime in the near future.

### **Group Reorganizations**

Group reorganizations are governed by the Swiss merger law, which also comprises tax standards alongside the legal standards as a supplement to the applicable tax laws.

Provided certain prerequisites are met, reorganizations are possible on a tax-neutral basis, as long as the applicable tax accounting values of assets and liabilities remain unaltered and the assets remain in Switzerland.

### **10.1.2 Corporate Income Tax – Cantonal and Municipal Level**

Given the tax harmonization at cantonal/municipal level, most tax rules are identical or very similar to the rules on the federal level set out above (e.g. participation exemption, loss carryforward rules, and, in most cases, thin capitalization rules).

### **Special Tax Regimes**

In contrast to the Swiss federal tax law, all cantonal tax laws provide special tax regimes, which may be obtained provided that the conditions of the tax harmonization law are met. Corporate Tax Reform III is expected to replace the special tax regimes set out below with new measures aimed at underpinning and increasing Switzerland’s attractiveness as a location (see section 10.8).

Up-to-date information on Corporate Tax Reform III can be found on our website:

[www.s-ge.com/corporate-taxation](http://www.s-ge.com/corporate-taxation)

Facts and figures on Corporate Tax Reform III in Switzerland

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

### **A) Holding Company**

The holding company tax status is available to Swiss companies (or permanent establishments of a foreign company) whose primary purpose according to the by-laws is to hold and manage long-term equity investments in affiliated companies. Furthermore, either the participations or participation income (dividends or capital gains) must represent at least two thirds of the company’s total assets or income over the long term.

A holding company which meets one of these requirements is exempt from all cantonal/communal income taxes, with the exception of income from Swiss real estate. As a rule, the effective tax rate of a holding company is 7.83% (i.e., federal income tax rate) prior to participation relief for qualifying dividends and capital gains. A reduced capital tax on cantonal/communal tax level applies.

## B) Mixed Trading Company

This has been given different names by the cantons, however in an international context, the tax status is most often referred to as the “mixed trading company” tax status.

A mixed company may be engaged in limited commercial business activity in Switzerland. As a general rule, at least 80% of the income from commercial activities must derive from non-Swiss sources (i.e., a maximum of 20% of income may be linked to Swiss sources). Many cantons additionally require that at least 80% of costs must be related to activities undertaken abroad.

If a company meets the above criteria, it may apply for tax treatment in accordance with the following rules:

- Qualifying income from participations (including dividends, capital gains, and revaluation gains) is exempt for cantonal and communal tax purposes.
- Other income from Swiss sources is taxed at the normal rate.
- A portion of foreign source income is subject to cantonal/municipal income taxes depending on the degree of business activity carried out in Switzerland.
- Expenditure that is justified for business purposes and is related economically to certain income and revenues is deductible. In particular, losses from participations can only be offset against taxable income from participations (i.e., income that is not obtained tax-free).
- Reduced capital tax rates are applicable.

### 10.1.3 Capital Tax

Annual capital tax is only levied at cantonal/communal level. The basis for the calculation of capital tax is in principle the company’s net equity (i.e. share capital, paid-in surplus, legal reserves, other reserves, retained earnings). The taxable base of companies also includes any provisions disallowed as deductions for tax purposes, any other undisclosed reserves, as well as debt that economically has the character of equity under the Swiss thin capitalization rules. Some cantons even provide for crediting the cantonal corporate income tax against capital tax.

The tax rates vary from canton to canton and depend on the tax status of the company. In 2014, this ranged from 0.0010% to 0.5250% for companies subject to ordinary taxation, and from 0.0010% to 0.4010% for companies eligible for a special tax regime.

### 10.1.4 Tax Relief

Tax relief can be granted at cantonal and communal level and in explicitly defined regions at federal level for qualified new investments for up to 10 years.

#### Federal Level

The federal government has defined less centralized and/or economically weaker regions which are entitled to grant business incentives including partial or full corporate income tax breaks for up to 10 years (see section 14.2.2).

Tax breaks are available for investment projects that fulfill certain conditions, for example, creation of new production-related jobs, non-competition with existing businesses, etc.

#### Cantonal and Municipal Level

Most cantons offer partial or full tax breaks for cantonal/communal tax purposes for up to 10 years on a case-by-case basis. In particular, incentives may be obtained for creating a new presence or for an expansion project with particular economic relevance for the canton. Most importantly, however, business incentives are generally granted in connection with the creation of new jobs locally, i.e. requirement of at least 10 to 20 jobs in most cantons.

## 10.2 TAX RATE IN AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

The international comparison of the total tax rate (TTR) shows that Switzerland has a tax system which is consistently extremely competitive compared with other highly developed industrial countries. The total tax rate (TTR) measures the amount of all taxes and mandatory contributions borne by businesses and is expressed as a percentage of commercial profits. The 2014 and 2015 annual reports reflect the TTR for the fiscal years 2012 and 2013 (1 January to 31 December, 2012 and 2013). The total amount of taxes borne is the sum of all the different taxes and contributions payable after accounting for deductions and exemptions.

The taxes and contributions included can be divided into the following categories:

- Profit or corporate income taxes
- Social contributions and payroll taxes paid by the employer (for which all mandatory contributions are included, even if paid to a private entity such as a pension fund)
- Wealth tax
- Sales taxes (and cascading sales taxes as well as other consumption taxes such as irrecoverable VAT)
- Other taxes (such as municipal duties and vehicle and fuel taxes)

It should further be noted that the Swiss tax system is not only attractive for corporate taxpayers but also for individual taxpayers as it provides for a modest tax burden in international comparison as well.

[www.s-ge.com/taxtool](http://www.s-ge.com/taxtool)

Tax comparison of international locations (in cooperation with BAK Basel)  
Available in English

## Total Tax Rate, 2012/2013

(FIG. 48)



Source: Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2015



## 10.3 TAXATION OF INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYERS

### 10.3.1 Personal Income Tax

#### Taxable Persons

Individuals are subject to taxation at federal and cantonal/ municipal level if they have their permanent or temporary residence in Switzerland. Temporary residence is given provided the individual, regardless of any temporary interruptions, stays in Switzerland for a) at least 30 days carrying out a professional activity or b) for 90 days or more without pursuing any professional activity. According to the Swiss tax system, partnerships are transparent; hence each partner is taxed individually.

The income of married couples is aggregated and taxed according to the principle of family taxation. The same applies to any registered civil partnerships. Any income of a minor child is added to the income of the adults, with the exception of the child's earned income derived from gainful employment, which is assessed separately.

The federal as well as cantonal/communal income taxes are levied and collected by the cantonal tax authorities and are assessed for a period of one year (calendar year) on the basis of a tax return to be filed by the taxpayer.

Individuals who do not set up a place of residency in Switzerland are only obliged to pay tax on their income in Switzerland.

#### Taxable Income

Resident individuals are subject to tax on their worldwide income. However, revenues derived from business conducted abroad, from permanent establishments, and from immovable property situated abroad are exempt and are taken into account only for the determination of the applicable tax rate (exemption with progression). The total income includes income derived through gainful activities, both as an employee and self-employed, income from compensatory or subsidiary payments, and income from movable and immovable property. Taxable income also includes the notional rent value of property that the resident lives in.

Certain types of income such as inheritance, gifts, matrimonial property rights, subsidies paid from private or public sources, etc. are by law excluded from taxation. Moreover, the individual may deduct earning costs from gross income including, for example, travel costs between home and their place of work, social security contributions, and contributions to approved savings plans. Additional deductions may be claimed for dependent children and insurance premiums as well as for married and double income couples. However, the extent of deductions allowed may vary greatly from canton to canton. In addition, interest payments on loans, mortgages, etc. for business purposes are fully deductible. The deductibility of interest for private purposes related to private assets is, however, limited to an aggregate income from movable and immovable assets plus CHF 50,000. Furthermore, value-preserving property expenses can be deducted, or an all-inclusive deduction can be applied instead.

Individual tax rates are typically progressive, whereas a maximum tax rate of 11.5% applies at the federal level. The cantons may set their own tax rates. The maximum applicable cantonal tax rate varies significantly from canton to canton (around 12% to 30% in cantonal capitals). A special family rate was introduced for the 2011 fiscal year at the federal level. This is based on the rate for married couples, but provides for an additional tax deduction per child.

#### Capital Gains

Depending on whether a capital gain is realized on personal or business property or on movable or immovable property, such gain is taxed differently. Gains on movable personal property are exempt from taxation whereas gains realized on movable business property are attributed to ordinary income. For taxation of immovable property, please see section 10.3.2.

#### Losses

Contrary to personal losses, business losses are tax deductible and may be carried forward for seven years.

#### Distribution of Capital Contributions

Since January 1, 2011, the distribution of qualified capital contributions is tax free. They are subject to neither withholding tax (chapter 10.4) nor income tax on the part of the receiving individual. While this already applied to the repayment of share capital prior to January 1, 2011, it now also applies to repayments on investments, premiums, and assignments of joint stock companies made after December 31, 1996, as tax-free distributions.

### **Tax at Source**

Foreign employees who do not possess a residence permit are taxed for their earned income by a tax deduction at source. If the source-taxed income exceeds CHF 120,000 (CHF 500,000 in Geneva) per annum, a tax declaration has to be submitted. In other cases, the tax at source is definitive. The employee can, however, assert a special deduction in a separate process.

Employees who have retained their residence abroad are taxed on their earned income at the source, regardless of their nationality, and in general cannot submit a tax declaration.

The legislation governing tax at source is in the process of being revised. There are plans for a reduction in the income threshold for a tax declaration. The issues being looked at primarily involve questions of procedure, in particular as regards persons who have no residence in Switzerland but have almost exclusively income from Swiss sources.

### **10.3.2 Wealth Tax**

Net wealth tax is only levied at cantonal/communal level in accordance with the respective cantonal tax laws and rates. The tax is based on the balance of the gross assets including but not limited to immovable property, movable assets such as securities and bank deposits, cash redemption value of life insurance, cars, shares of non-distributed inheritances, etc. Taxes are also levied on assets not yielding any income. Shareholdings in foreign businesses and plants are not subject to wealth tax, nor are properties abroad. These assets are, however, taken into account for the calculation of the applicable wealth tax rate, if it is a progressive rate (tax exemption with progression). Individuals can deduct debts from the gross assets, as well as tax exemptions, which vary from canton to canton and according to marital status and whether the person in question has children.

The wealth tax is progressive in most cantons, whereby the cantons can set their own tax rates. The tax burden therefore varies considerably and ranges from 0.0010% to 1%. The federal government does not charge wealth tax.

### **10.3.3 Expatriates**

Qualifying expatriates are foreign managers and certain specialists (e.g. IT specialists) seconded to Switzerland on a temporary basis for a period of up to five years, i.e. the (assignment) contract has to be limited in time for a maximum of five years. Expatriates may claim tax relief on expenses incurred due to their stay in Switzerland.

The following expenses incurred by expatriates are deductible:  
i) Relocation costs including travel costs to and from Switzerland,  
ii) reasonable accommodation costs in Switzerland if the residence abroad is still maintained, iii) costs for children of school-going age attending a private school if local state-funded schools cannot offer adequate educational provisions. Instead of identifying the actual costs for relocation and accommodation, the taxpayer may claim a monthly lump-sum deduction which may vary from canton to canton. Any reimbursement from the employer of work-related costs incurred by the expatriate must be declared in the employee's payslip.

The entitlement to benefit from expatriate status for tax purposes ceases once temporary employment is replaced or superseded by a permanent position.

The federal government is currently reviewing its Expatriates Ordinance. The proposed changes envisage a restriction with regard to the group of entitled persons and more stringent requirements for the application of deductions.

### **10.3.4 Cross-Border Commuters**

Cross-border commuters are those people who live abroad (e.g. Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Austria) and work in Switzerland and who commute from home to work and back each day.

The Swiss taxation of such individuals differs, depending on their place of work and domicile (home country/country of residence). The double tax treaty with Germany, for example, provides for an apportionment of the taxation right between the two countries. The country of work is limited to a flat-rate withholding tax of 4.5% of the gross salary of the cross-border commuter. Such partial taxation of cross-border commuters in the country of work does not relieve the commuter from taxation of the earned income at the place of residence (e.g. taxation with credit). The cross-border commuter status is abandoned if the employee cannot return to his/her domicile abroad on more than 60 working days per year for business reasons. Cantonal agreements vary for cross-border commuters from France.

### 10.3.5 Lump-Sum Taxation

Both federal and most cantonal tax regulations provide for the possibility to make use of a special tax arrangement often referred to as lump-sum taxation. Under this, qualifying taxpayers resident in Switzerland are taxed on the basis of expenditure and living costs in Switzerland instead of on the more customary basis of total income and total assets.

Qualifying taxpayers who may apply for lump-sum taxation are individuals who take up temporary or permanent residence in Switzerland for the first time or after an absence of at least ten years and who do not carry out any gainful occupation in Switzerland. While Swiss nationals may only apply for this arrangement in the tax period of taking up residency, foreigners are allowed to apply for an indefinite period, provided that the conditions are fulfilled. The lump-sum taxation provisions are tailored to financially independent persons who are not seeking to work in Switzerland.

In case of spouses moving to Switzerland, the requirements for benefiting from lump-sum taxation must be satisfied by both spouses. As a rule, it is not possible for one spouse to be taxed on a lump-sum basis while the other spouse is taxed on an ordinary basis.

The basis of taxation is calculated annually based on expenses incurred by the taxpayer in Switzerland and abroad. The calculation not only considers the expenses of the taxpayer but also those of the spouse and dependent children as long as they live in Switzerland. Expenses usually taken into account are food, clothing and accommodation, education, leisure activities, and all other expenses linked with the standard of living. The exact calculation is determined together with the relevant tax authorities of the canton in which the person wishes to become a resident. In any case, the minimum base must correspond either with a) at least five times (with direct federal tax from January 1, 2016, seven times) the rent paid on rental property or the imputed income attributable to homeowners or b) two times (with direct federal tax from January 1, 2016, three times) the annual costs of lodging if the taxpayer lives in a hotel or similar accommodation. In the event that the taxpayer owns or rents more than one property, the most expensive will be taken into account. A minimum taxable income of CHF 400,000 will apply for direct federal tax from January 1, 2016.

Generally, individuals who apply for lump-sum taxation are considered Swiss residents and may also apply for treaty relief on their foreign-source income. Some treaties, however, allow for treaty benefits only if all income from the source country is subject to ordinary taxation in Switzerland.

In 2009, a referendum in the canton of Zurich called for the abolition of lump-sum taxation at the cantonal/communal level. Since the population of the canton of Zurich accepted the draft, the special tax arrangement has no longer been available in Zurich since January 1, 2010. Since then, the cantons of Schaffhausen, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Basel-Land and Basel-Stadt have also eliminated lump-sum taxation. Other cantons may follow.

### 10.3.6 Inheritance and Gift Tax

Inheritance and gift taxes are not harmonized. Consequently, the cantons are free to levy such tax and the various cantonal laws differ considerably in almost every respect. With the exception of the canton of Schwyz, all cantons levy inheritance and/or gift taxes for certain asset transfers if the deceased or donor had been resident of the respective canton or if real estate located in the canton is transferred.

Inheritance and gift tax rates are mostly progressive and are usually based on the degree of relationship between the deceased or donor and the beneficiary and/or the amount received by the beneficiary. In all cantons, spouses are exempt from inheritance and gift taxes; most cantons also exempt direct descendants.

## 10.4 WITHHOLDING TAX

A federal withholding tax is levied at source on the gross amount of dividend distributions by Swiss companies, on income from bonds and similar indebtedness by Swiss issuers, as well as on certain distributions of income by Swiss investment funds, and interest payments on deposits with Swiss banking establishments.

Since the capital contribution principle came into effect on January 1, 2011, repayments of capital contributions made by the shareholder after December 31, 1996, and declared and accounted for correctly are now treated the same as repayments of nominal capital. With regard to withholding tax, these repayments are in general tax-free. The repayment of capital contributions for individuals (if shares are held as private assets) now no longer represents taxable income (see section 10.3.1).

Lottery winnings are also subject to withholding tax (money won in excess of CHF 1,000, valid from 2013), as are insurance benefits.

Generally, the debtor is liable for the tax and is required to withhold the amount due, irrespective of whether the recipient is entitled to a full or partial refund. A refund is only possible provided that the respective earnings are properly declared for the purposes of income taxation. The aim is to prevent tax evasion. For Swiss resident corporate taxpayers, withholding tax is reimbursed by way of a refund, whereas for individuals the tax is credited against total tax liability through the regular taxation procedure.

For non-resident taxpayers, the withholding tax generally represents a final tax burden. However, a partial or total refund may be granted based on an international double tax treaty or a bilateral agreement concluded by Switzerland with the country in which the recipient of the earnings is residing.

It should further be noted that a reporting procedure may be applied for certain qualifying dividend distributions, replacing the withholding and refund procedure.

**“Thanks to a number of double tax treaties and bilateral agreements, taxpayers resident outside of Switzerland can be reimbursed for all or part of their withholding tax.”**

### 10.4.1 Domestic Rates

The tax rate applied on dividend distributions including deemed profit distributions and interest payments relating to bonds and bond-like debt instruments as well as on interest payments made by banks or bank-like institutions to non-banks is 35%. There is no withholding tax on interest payments relating to qualifying ordinary company loan agreements. Provided that royalties, licenses, service and similar fees payable by Swiss individuals or corporations are at arm's length, no withholding tax is levied.

### 10.4.2 Treaty Rates

Most treaties provide for a reduction of the normal 35% rate on dividends. The reduced rate is usually 15% for portfolio investors and 0%, 5%, or 10% for substantial corporate owners. Some treaties require the taxation of Swiss-source income in the recipient's country of residence. Otherwise no relief will be granted. With regard to interest income, most treaties allow for a reduction as well, typically up to 10%. In some treaties a full refund is granted.

However, a reduction is only possible if the person applying for treaty benefits is actually entitled to claim the treaty.

### 10.4.3 Bilateral Agreements with the EU

In May 2004, Switzerland and the European Union (EU) concluded eight bilateral agreements (“Bilateral Agreements II”) in addition to the seven existing bilateral agreements (“Bilateral Agreements I,” in force since June 1, 2002).

One of the agreements is the Savings Tax Agreement providing for measures equivalent to those laid down in the EU Savings Tax Directive. To entice Switzerland to enter into the Savings Tax Agreement, the same agreement also incorporated language which was practically identical to the version of the EU Parent/Subsidiary Directive and the EU Interest/Royalty Directive in effect at that time. Switzerland has therefore had de facto access to the respective EU directives since July 1, 2005, whereas future changes to the EU directives will not automatically apply to Switzerland.

Accordingly, dividend, royalty, and interest payments between Switzerland and the member states of the EU will not be subject to withholding tax, provided various conditions such as minimum shareholding and holding period are fulfilled.

In general, the bilateral agreements, including the Savings Tax Agreement, will also apply to new EU member states joining the EU after July 1, 2005 (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania). However, with some countries transitional arrangements must be considered.

The application of the above-mentioned benefits from the Savings Tax Agreement can be denied in cases of abuse or fraud. This is because of the explicit reservation made in the Savings Tax Agreement as to the use of domestic or agreement-based provisions for the prevention of fraud or abuse, both by Switzerland by the individual EU member states.

Double tax treaties between Switzerland and EU member states with more favorable tax treatment of dividend, interest, and royalty payments remain unaffected.

## 10.5 VALUE ADDED TAX

Although Switzerland is not an EU member state, its value added tax (VAT) system was structured in accordance with the sixth EU VAT Directive (“Sixth Council Directive on the harmonization of the laws of the Member States relating to turnover taxes” whereby turnover refers to revenue) as a non-cumulative, multi-stage tax that provides for deduction of input tax. As a result, Swiss VAT is levied as an indirect tax on most goods and services at the federal level only and applies to each stage of the production and distribution chain. It is designed as a tax owed by the supplier of goods or services (i.e., the tax liability is based on the payment by the recipient of the goods or services).

### 10.5.1 Taxable Persons

Any legal entity, establishment, partnership or association without legal capacity, institution, etc. that operates an enterprise (obtains revenues through business or professional activity for a long period of time, regardless of whether there is an intention to make money) is liable for tax. There is a registration obligation if the taxable revenue in Switzerland exceeds CHF 100,000 per year. All permanent domestic establishments of a Swiss parent company form one taxable entity together with the parent company. All domestic establishments of a foreign parent company are also classed as a taxable entity. On the other hand, the domestic establishments and the foreign parent company are each considered a separate taxable entity.

If the revenues of a taxpayer (revenue from taxable supplies of goods and services) are less than CHF 100,000 per year (or less than CHF 150,000 for sports clubs and non-profit institutions), then the entity is exempt from tax liability. However, any such entity may also waive exemption from tax liability. Upon registration with the Federal Tax Administration, the taxpayer receives a VAT number based on the company identification number. The VAT number is added to the company identification number (e.g. CHE-123.456.789 VAT). Since January 31, 2014, the only valid number has been the VAT number based on the company identification number, which has replaced the former six-digit reference number.

A special regulation exists for holding companies. In general the acquisition, holding, and selling of shareholdings is a commercial activity within the meaning Swiss VAT legislation. Shares of capital in companies of over 10% are classed as shareholdings which are held with the intention of long-term investment and have a considerable influence. The qualification of the holding activity as a commercial activity means that the holding company can be voluntarily registered due to the waiving of the exemption from tax. The advantage of the registration is that pre-tax which is due within the scope of the holding activities can be claimed, although the sale of shareholdings essentially represents income exempt from tax (normally, however, a pre-tax correction is necessary due to interest income).

### 10.5.2 Taxable Supplies

VAT is levied on the following types of services: 1) delivery of goods in Switzerland (including Liechtenstein); 2) purchases of services in Switzerland (including Liechtenstein), 3) purchase of services (and certain goods deliveries in Switzerland) from enterprises with their registered office in another country if the value of goods or services exceeds CHF 10,000 per year; and 4) import of goods.

Certain services provided to foreign recipients (as well as the export of goods and the delivery of goods abroad) are not taxed or are zero-rated with full input tax recovery. The delivery of goods for the purposes of VAT is not limited to goods deliveries as defined by Swiss commercial law. The VAT law provides for a number of business transactions (such as the maintenance of machinery, rental or lease of goods, trade in electricity, etc.) that are deemed to be supplies of goods for VAT purposes.

### 10.5.3 Taxable Amount

The basis for the calculation of the taxable amount for the supply of goods and services is the agreed upon or the collected gross remuneration (in cash or in kind). Input tax, i.e., the tax paid on purchases of goods and services, can be deducted. Consequently, only the value added is taxed (net all-phase principle).

### 10.5.4 Tax Rates

Since January 1, 2011, the standard rate has been 8% on all taxable supplies of goods or services. A reduced rate of 3.8% is applicable for accommodation. A reduced rate of 2.5% applies on certain categories of goods and services for certain basic needs such as water supply, food and non-alcoholic beverages, cattle, poultry, fish, cereals and grain, books and newspapers, services of non-commercial radio and TV broadcasts, etc.

The Federal Tax Administration offers further simplified VAT accounting for small businesses with revenue of below CHF 5.02 million (incl. VAT) and a tax liability of CHF 109,000 (calculated according to the applicable net tax rate) or less per year. These small businesses may opt to submit VAT based on a balanced tax rate which is lower than the standard rate of 8% if they, in return, waive the standard procedure for input VAT accounting, which would otherwise be deducted from the VAT levied on revenue (input VAT deduction). This simplified taxation method must be maintained for at least one year, and VAT returns need to be filed twice a year only (in contrast to the normal quarterly calculations).

### 10.5.5 Exemptions

The law differentiates between VAT-exempt and VAT-excluded revenue from VAT. No VAT is levied in either case, but a distinction is made regarding the input VAT deduction.

In cases of exclusions, there is no input tax deduction possible for the taxes paid in generating the revenue excluded from VAT. Excluded activities are the healthcare sector, education, culture, sport, social care, most banking and insurance activities, rental and sale of real estate, as well as gambling and lotteries. For most of these categories, however, the taxpayer may opt for taxation voluntarily, except in the case of banking and insurance revenue, as well as the renting of real estate exclusively for residential use. In contrast to activities excluded from VAT, exempt activities allow for an input VAT deduction for all taxes paid in generating the revenue in question (true exemption). An example of an activity exempt from tax is the export of goods (see also section 10.5.7).

Business activities abroad are not subject to Swiss VAT. These types of revenue are generally the result of international business models. A typical example is a Swiss trading company that buys products from a foreign manufacturing company and sells them to customers in a third country, shipping the products directly to those customers. Activities involving the supply of goods or services abroad only entitle the taxpayer to deduct input tax if the revenue does not qualify as VAT exempt.

### 10.5.6 Deduction of Input Taxes

An enterprise registered for VAT is liable for VAT on all supplies (sales tax) and will incur VAT on purchases for the business (input tax). In most cases, input taxes may be deducted from the amount of output taxes due, and so do not generally represent an additional burden for a business. VAT is a genuine expense only for the end-consumer or for a business involved in transactions for which no input tax can be recovered (businesses with excluded income such as banks and insurance companies).

### 10.5.7 Exports

In addition to exported goods, certain services – if rendered to a recipient domiciled abroad – are also exempt from Swiss VAT (with credit).

However, the Swiss VAT law includes a list of services that are either taxable where the service provider is domiciled or are subject to special provisions according to the list (e.g., services in connection with real estate, hotel and restaurant services; services in relation to culture, sports and the arts, passenger transport, etc.). Services not included in this list that are provided to a foreign recipient are not subject to Swiss VAT (a catch-all provision – the “place of supply is where the recipient is established” – is applied).

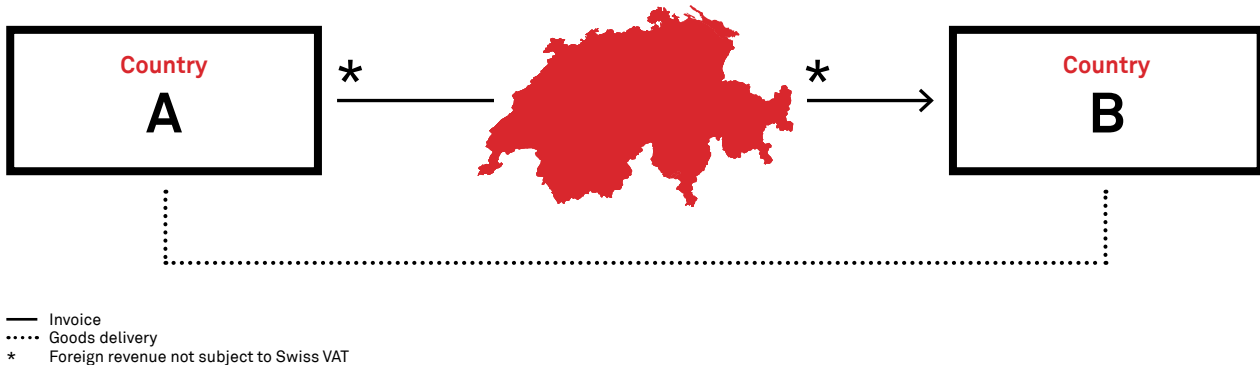
However, the VAT exempt nature of such services has to be proven by the underlying documents such as invoices, agreements, etc. Under all circumstances, it is very important that the documentation be issued in compliance with the requirements according to Swiss VAT law. The same applies to export shipments, where a customs export/import certificate is required for tax exemption.

### 10.5.8 International Business Activity

The basic VAT rules described above have the following effect in the case of a Swiss trading company that buys products from a foreign manufacturing company and sells them to customers in a third country, shipping the products directly to those customers:

#### International Business Activity

(FIG. 49)



Source: Compiled by the author

### 10.5.9 Non-Resident Enterprises

Foreign businesses supplying goods or certain services to or within Switzerland wishing to waive the exemption from tax liability or with corresponding sales revenues in excess of the threshold stated in section 10.5.1 are generally required to appoint an authorized VAT representative based in Switzerland. Such entrepreneurs may claim input VAT directly. Foreign companies which exclusively provide services subject to tax to taxable persons are exempt from the VAT obligation; these are supplies in Switzerland, provided these supplies are not subject to import tax, and services based on the principle “the place of supply is where the recipient is established” (exception: telecommunication and electronic services to non-taxable recipients).

Non-resident entrepreneurs without taxable activities in Switzerland are entitled to a refund of Swiss VAT if their foreign activities would qualify as taxable revenue under Swiss VAT law and if the country of residence grants reciprocal treatment to Swiss entrepreneurs (VAT refund).

**“At 8%, Switzerland has the lowest rate of VAT in Europe.”**

## 10.6 OTHER TAXES

### 10.6.1 Stamp Taxes

Generally, the tax liability arises on special legal transactions such as the issuance of shares (issuance stamp tax also known as capital duty) or the trading of securities (securities transfer stamp tax).

The tax on the issuance and the increase of equity of Swiss corporations is 1% on the fair market value of the amount contributed, with an exemption on the first CHF 1 million of capital paid in, whether it is made in an initial or subsequent contribution.

The transfer of Swiss and foreign securities in which a Swiss securities dealer participates as a contracting party or as an intermediary is subject to Swiss securities transfer stamp tax (often called “securities turnover tax” whereby turnover refers to revenue). Depending on the issuer’s residence (Switzerland or foreign country), the tax rate is 0.15% or 0.3% and is calculated on the consideration of the securities traded.

Swiss securities dealers are defined as any persons professionally engaged in buying or selling securities for their own account or for another person, including Swiss banks and other Swiss bank-like institutions. Furthermore, companies holding taxable securities whose book values exceed CHF 10 million and remote members of a Swiss stock exchange with regard to Swiss titles which are quoted on the Swiss stock exchange are considered Swiss securities dealers.

### 10.6.2 Real Estate Taxes

Capital gains on Swiss immovable property are either subject to a special cantonal real estate gains tax or to ordinary corporate income tax depending on the system that is applied in the canton where the immovable property is located. The right to tax such gains is reserved to the cantons and communes.

Furthermore, in most cantons the transfer of real estate is subject to a conveyance tax, whereas on the federal level no taxes of such kind are levied. As a general rule, conveyance tax is assessed on the purchase price or the taxable value of the real estate and is typically paid by the purchaser of the real estate. Depending on the canton, the applicable tax rate varies between 1% and 3%.

Moreover, about half of the cantons levy a special wealth tax on real estate. This tax is due every year in addition to the general wealth tax. The tax is levied at the place where the property is situated and is assessed on the market or taxable value of the real estate without allowing for deduction of debts. The tax rates applied range between 0.035% and 0.3%.



## 10.7 DOUBLE TAX TREATIES

To minimize the effect of double taxation in Switzerland and abroad, Switzerland has concluded tax treaties covering direct income taxes with all major industrial countries and many other countries. Most of these treaties are patterned on the principles of the OECD model convention, which defines where the income or the assets are to be taxed and also describes the method for the elimination of double taxation. Switzerland adopted the tax exemption method, exempting income allocable to a foreign country from taxation in Switzerland. The respective income and assets are only considered for the calculation of the applicable tax rate (progression). On certain income streams (dividend, interest, and license fees) both states, the state in which the income is earned and the state of the recipient's residence, are entitled to tax them. However, the double tax treaty limits the right of taxation of the source state, and the source tax can be credited against the tax levied in the recipient's state of residence. To date, more than 80 tax treaties are in effect, plus also the EU bilateral agreements as of July 1, 2005. As Swiss tax treaties are treated as international conventions, they generally supersede federal as well as cantonal/municipal tax rules.

Swiss double tax treaties apply to persons (individuals or companies) who are resident in one or both of the contracting states. As already mentioned in section 10.3.5, Swiss residents applying for lump-sum taxation generally qualify for treaty relief as well. However, some treaties provide for special conditions to be met in order to benefit from the treaty applied.

Apart from the tax treaties covering direct income taxes, Switzerland also concluded a few tax treaties in the area of inheritance and estate tax. Switzerland has not negotiated any double tax treaties concerning gift taxes so far. Furthermore, there are some special treaties relating to cross-border commuters, taxation of international air and transport services, and the tax situation of international organizations and their staff.

## 10.8 CORPORATE TAX REFORM III

Switzerland is currently in the process of modernizing its corporate tax system. The aim of Corporate Tax Reform III (CTR III) is to put in place an attractive system of corporate taxation that is in line with the EU and OECD's internationally accepted tax rules.

Accordingly, the cantonal tax regimes for holding, management, and mixed companies and the federal principal allocation and Swiss finance branch regimes are to be replaced with various measures, including license boxes for intellectual property and taxation of surplus equity exceeding a core capital.

CTR III is intended to increase the tax appeal of Switzerland as a location on a lasting basis.

Up-to-date information on Corporate Tax Reform III can be found on our website:

[www.s-ge.com/corporate-taxation](http://www.s-ge.com/corporate-taxation)

Facts and figures on Corporate Taxation in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

## 10.9 TRANSFER PRICING RULES

According to Swiss tax law, transactions between group companies must be at arm's length. Switzerland does not have separate transfer pricing legislation and does not plan to introduce such legislation in the near future. Instead, the Swiss tax authorities follow the transfer pricing guidelines of the OECD to determine if a transaction between related parties is at arm's length. In Switzerland, no specific documentation requirements for transfer pricing purposes must be observed. A company doing business in Switzerland should however have the appropriate documentation on file verifying the arm's-length nature of transactions with related parties.

[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch)

Federal Department of Finance (FDF)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian



# INFRASTRUCTURE

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Switzerland is closely integrated into the European transportation infrastructure thanks to a dense network of road, rail and air connections. Frequent and reliable connections guarantee the smooth and efficient transport of passengers and goods. The supply of energy, water, communication services and postal services is guaranteed at all times. A well-developed healthcare system ensures that the population has access to medical care without having to travel long distances.

### Infrastructure Quality, 2015

1 = Underdeveloped, 7 = Extensive and efficient (FIG. 50)

1	Switzerland	6.5
2	United Arab Emirates	6.4
3	Hong Kong SAR	6.4
4	Singapore	6.4
5	Netherlands	6.3
6	Finland	6.2
7	Japan	6.2
10	France	5.9
11	Germany	5.9
13	USA	5.8
17	Luxembourg	5.6
22	Belgium	5.4
24	United Kingdom	5.3
32	Ireland	4.9
51	China	4.5
64	Russia	4.1
66	Italy	4.1
74	India	4.0
123	Brazil	2.9

Source: World Economic Forum, The Global Competitiveness Report 2015–2016

[www.uvek.admin.ch](http://www.uvek.admin.ch)

Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 11.1 TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

The Swiss economy is supported by an excellent distribution infrastructure for supplying goods and services. With 1.7 kilometers of roads per square kilometer, Switzerland is one of the continent's most densely developed countries for motorized transport. Nevertheless, Switzerland is rightly known as a railway country, particularly as the national railway network has a length three times that of the freeway network.

The Swiss government's transport policy is primarily aimed at improving the country's attractiveness as a business location and managing increasing mobility in an environmentally compatible manner.

### 11.1.1 Road Traffic

Switzerland's highway network is one of the densest in the world. There are currently 1,810 km (1,131 miles) of national highways in operation, providing access to all parts of the country. The high proportion of tunnels is remarkable: Today 227 tunnels are in operation, running a total length of 233 kilometers (about 145 miles). One in every eight kilometers runs underground. When finished, the currently planned national road network should extend for a total of 1,892.5 kilometers (1,175 miles) and include more than 270 tunnels with a combined length of 290 km (180 miles). At least three-quarters of the Swiss highway system consist of four-lane divided freeways. The national highways are also major international transport routes. The connection between Germany and Italy through the Gotthard Tunnel is of critical importance in Europe.

In order to use Switzerland's freeways (Autobahnen), every domestic and foreign motor vehicle weighing up to 3.5 metric tons must have a special freeway sticker or "vignette" (currently CHF 40). The sticker is valid for a calendar year and can be purchased at customs and post offices, gas stations and freeway rest stops. No special tunnel fees are charged for using the Gotthard and San Bernardino transalpine tunnels.

A performance-related vehicle fee (LSVA) is levied on domestic and foreign trucks (motorized vehicles intended for goods transportation with a total weight of more than 3.5 metric tons). In addition to the total weight, the fee depends on the relevant emission category (Euro 0 - II) and the kilometers driven in Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein. For the most-used transit routes from the German to Italian border (about 300 km [186 miles] from Basel to Chiasso), 40-ton trucks pay a fee of CHF 270 - 370 depending on the emission category. In addition, a night-time (10:00 p.m. - 5:00 a.m.) and Sunday driving ban applies to trucks.

[www.astra.admin.ch](http://www.astra.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Roads Office (FEDRO)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.strassenverkehrsamt.ch](http://www.strassenverkehrsamt.ch)  
Cantonal traffic offices  
Languages: Depends on canton

[www.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch) > Information companies > Taxes and duties  
Performance-related and lump-sum heavy vehicle charges  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 11.1.2 Rail

Because of the punctuality and reliability of their public transport systems, the Swiss are the most frequent rail travelers in all of Europe. Every day, some 9,000 trains run on the 3,000-kilometer (1,865-mile) rail network operated by SBB (Swiss Federal Railways). In addition to SBB, there are a number of private railway companies in Switzerland that operate on tracks covering somewhat more than 2,000 kilometers (almost 1,250 miles). In spite of the fact that this rail network has the highest capacity utilization in Europe, the trains are very punctual. In 2014, 88% of passenger trains reached their destination within three minutes of the scheduled arrival time. In order to protect the population and the environment, more and more freight traffic will be moved from road to rail in the future.

Three major rail projects now underway will provide important benefits to Switzerland and Europe in the medium and long term. They will increase transport capacities, reduce passenger and freight traffic on roads and highways, and help protect and preserve the ecologically sensitive Alpine region:

- ZEB: The "Future Development of the Rail Infrastructure" (ZEB) project was approved by parliament in 2008 and is due to be completed by 2025. The more than 100 authorized ZEB sub-projects are worth a combined CHF 5.4 billion and include measures to improve both the frequency and capacity of the rail network. The ZEB project is currently in its third phase, in which various rail lines, especially feeder lines for the Gotthard Base Tunnel, are being made twin-track at a cost of about CHF 300 million. The Federal Council is also discussing adding further sub-projects worth about CHF 3.4 billion.
- AlpTransit or NRLA Project: The new Lötschberg and Gotthard transalpine lines are designed to provide new, fast north-south connections and facilitate substantial expansion of capacity and services. Every day, 42 passenger trains pass through the 34-kilometer (21-mile) Lötschberg base tunnel, which was completed in 2007, at speeds of up to 250 km/h (155 mph). This brings both Valais as well as northern Italy closer to the center of Switzerland. You can now get to Milan from Bern in less than 2¾ hours. As for freight transport, the new Lötschberg base route helps meet a key goal of Swiss transport policy, which aims to transfer transalpine freight traffic from road to rail. The route enables transport capacities to be increased substantially, while the larger tunnel cross-sections enable heavier freight trains to pass through (shuttle profile). The AlpTransit or NRLA (New Rail Link through the Alps) project is being built in stages. The Gotthard base tunnel, which is expected to be opened in 2016, will be the longest tunnel in the world at 57 kilometers (more than 35 miles).

- Link to the European high-speed rail network: Connection to the European high-speed rail network (TGV and ICE) will make Switzerland the most important hub in Europe's future high-speed network. The Swiss government will invest a total of CHF 992 million (2013 prices) in the rail network by the end of 2020 to provide better connections with the European high-speed network. This will shorten travel times from Switzerland to Paris, Lyon, Munich, Ulm and Stuttgart.

[www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch)  
Swiss national railway operator SBB  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bav.admin.ch](http://www.bav.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Office of Transport (FOT)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 11.1.3 Shipping and Navigation

When the train and the car were invented, over a century ago, ships and boats were already navigating Swiss waters on a regular basis. Nevertheless, success of cars and trains had a negative impact on shipping and navigation, and the transportation of people and goods on Switzerland's rivers and lakes declined continuously. However, shipping and navigation remain an important part of tourism and international trade.

The River Rhine quickly developed into one of Europe's most important waterways. This was favored by the revised Rhine Navigation Treaty of October 17, 1868, also known as the Mannheim Treaty. Thanks to this agreement, Switzerland has legally guaranteed access to the North Sea. Switzerland also has a deep-sea fishing fleet as well as a (fictitious) deep-sea port in Basel. To this day, shipping is important for Switzerland's trade in goods. Every year, Switzerland's Rhine ports process about 7 million metric tons of goods and about 100,000 containers. Indeed more than 10% of all Swiss foreign trade passes along the Rhine. That's still a sizable proportion, particularly when compared to air freight, which accounts for less than 1% of foreign trade. However as a mode of transport, ships really only play a role in tourism and for day trips. Some 13 million passengers a year are transported along and across Switzerland's waterways.

[www.port-of-switzerland.ch](http://www.port-of-switzerland.ch)  
Swiss Rhine port  
Languages: German, English, French

### 11.1.4 Air Travel

Zurich Airport is one of the most important transport hubs in Europe. Passengers appreciate the excellent standard of service at this airport. This is confirmed by its high ranking in the annual airport rankings. For example, in 2015 it received the World Travel Award as Europe's leading airport for the twelfth time for its user-friendliness and quality standards. Zurich Airport received the Eco-Innovation Award for the first time in 2011 for its extensive and systematic environmental management system. It was also the first airport to introduce emission-dependent landing fees.

Some 25.5 million passengers used the airport in 2014. The freight volume totaled 429,830 metric tons that year. The airport currently serves 186 destinations in 62 countries on four continents. Most of the flights (88%) connect Switzerland with the rest of Europe, while 12% are intercontinental. The intercontinental flights connect Zurich with 52 cities in 26 countries in North and South America, the Middle East, the Far East and Africa.

Switzerland's two other international airports – Geneva and EuroAirport Basel – also have many connections to key European business centers and holiday destinations and a number of direct flights to overseas destinations. Geneva handled over 15 million passengers and 72,500 metric tons of freight in 2014. In the same year, Basel processed 6.5 million passengers and 42,410 metric tons of freight.

The fact that the three international airports are located in border areas only a short distance away from neighboring countries facilitates international trade to and from the EU through Switzerland. Airfreight is an important freight transport option for exporting companies in the areas around their airports. The most important export products include specialty chemical and pharmaceutical products, high-tech products, automotive components and perishable goods.

Just over three-quarters of Swiss airfreight is processed at the cargo hub in Zurich. But the two other international airports, Geneva and EuroAirport Basel, are also becoming increasingly important freight support points, particularly for express and courier services. The volumes handled by the world's leading express, package and courier services are growing.

The regional airports in Bern, Lugano and St. Gallen-Altenrhein also offer attractive scheduled flights to European destinations on a daily basis. Sion and St. Moritz-Samedan have seasonal business connections that are not only important for tourism but also save time for the entire service sector.

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Economy > Transport > Air travel  
Overview of aviation  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

## Direct Intercontinental Flight Connections from Zurich (ZRH) and Geneva (GVA), 2014

(FIG. 51)



Source: Swiss International Air Lines, own information S-GE

### [www.bazl.admin.ch](http://www.bazl.admin.ch)

Swiss Federal Office for Civil Aviation (BAZL)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### [www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)

Swiss International Air Lines  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### [www.flughafen-zuerich.ch](http://www.flughafen-zuerich.ch)

Zurich Airport  
Languages: German, English, French

### [www.gva.ch](http://www.gva.ch)

Geneva Airport  
Languages: German, English, French

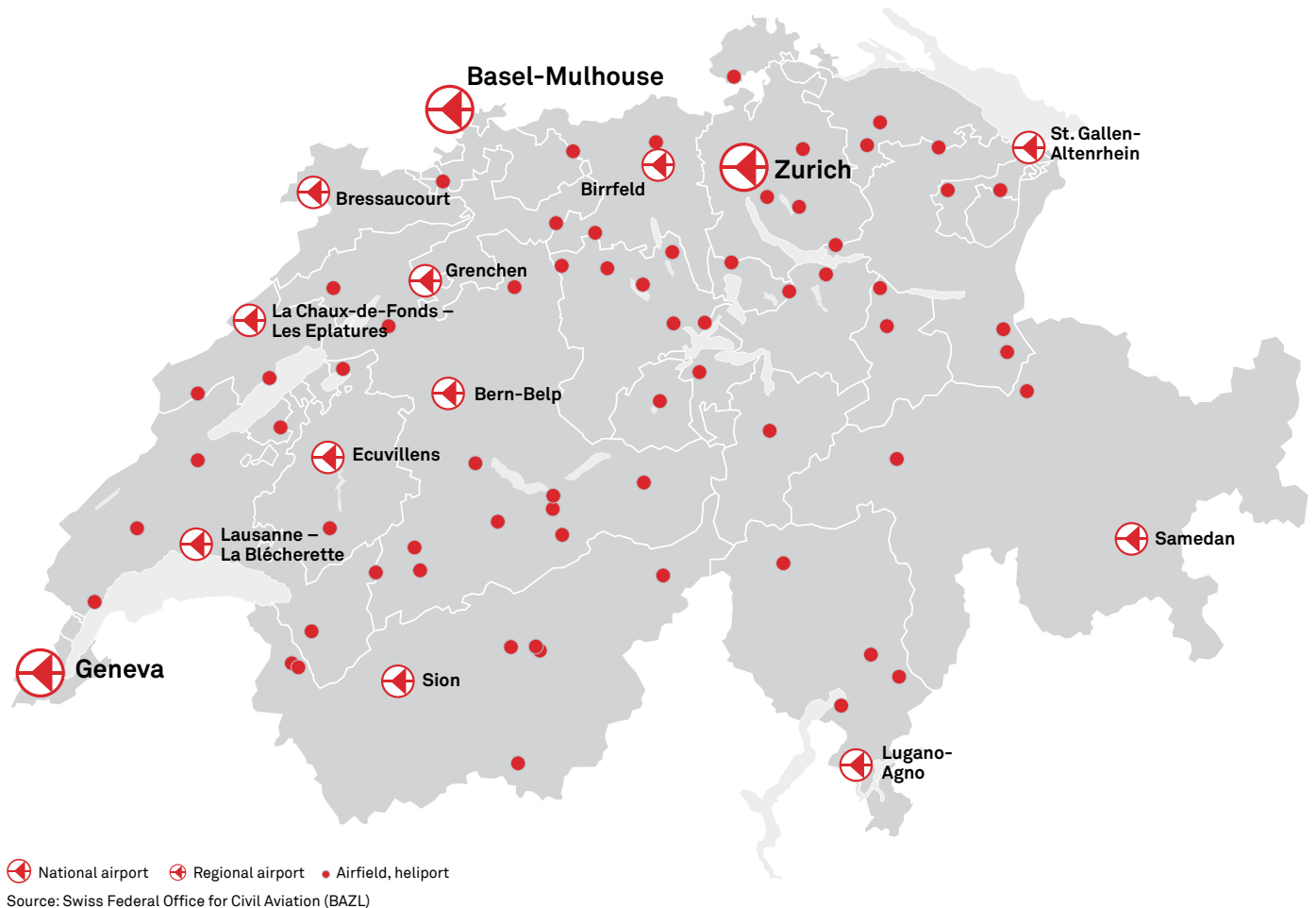
### [www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com)

EuroAirport Basel  
Languages: German, English, French

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Montreal<br>(GVA: 1; 8:05 hrs.; ZRH: 1; 8:10 hrs.)        | 12 Los Angeles<br>(ZRH: 1; 12:30 hrs.)                      | 23 Beirut<br>(GVA: 1; 3:50 hrs.)                   |
| 2 Toronto<br>(GVA: 1; 11:05 hrs.; ZRH: 2; 8:50 hrs.)        | 13 São Paulo<br>(ZRH: winter 11/7, summer 1;<br>12:00 hrs.) | 24 Abu Dhabi<br>(GVA: 1; 6:25 hrs.)                |
| 3 Chicago<br>(ZRH: winter 1, summer 12/7;<br>9:40 hrs.)     | 14 Johannesburg<br>(ZRH: 1; 10:25 hrs.)                     | 25 Dubai<br>(GVA: 1; 4:00 hrs.; ZRH: 3; 6:05 hrs.) |
| 4 Philadelphia<br>(ZRH: 1; 9:05 hrs.)                       | 15 Casablanca<br>(GVA: 1; 2:50 hrs.)                        | 26 Muscat<br>(ZRH: 1; 7:50 hrs.)                   |
| 5 New York Newark<br>(GVA: 1; 8:45 hrs.; ZRH: 2; 9:05 hrs.) | 16 Dar es Salaam<br>(ZRH: 1; 9:40 hrs.)                     | 27 Delhi<br>(ZRH: 1; 7:45 hrs.)                    |
| 6 New York JFK<br>(GVA: 1; 8:35 hrs.; ZRH: 3; 8:40 hrs.)    | 17 Nairobi<br>(ZRH: 1; 7:40 hrs.)                           | 28 Mumbai<br>(ZRH: 1; 8:15 hrs.)                   |
| 7 Boston<br>(ZRH: 1; 8:15 hrs.)                             | 18 Cairo<br>(GVA: 1; 4:05 hrs.; ZRH: 1; 3:55 hrs.)          | 29 Bangkok<br>(ZRH: 2; 11:00 hrs.)                 |
| 8 Washington<br>(GVA: 1; 9:12 hrs.; ZRH: 1; 9:10 hrs.)      | 19 Marrakesh<br>(GVA: 1; 3:15 hrs.)                         | 30 Singapore<br>(ZRH: 2; 12:05 hrs.)               |
| 9 Atlanta<br>(ZRH: 1; 10:25 hrs.)                           | 20 Tunis<br>(GVA: 1; 1:55 hrs.; ZRH: 1; 1:05 hrs.)          | 31 Hong Kong<br>(ZRH: 1; 11:55 hrs.)               |
| 10 Miami<br>(ZRH: winter 2, summer 1;<br>10:25 hrs.)        | 21 Tel Aviv<br>(GVA: 1; 4:00 hrs.; ZRH: 2; 3:50 hrs.)       | 32 Shanghai<br>(ZRH: 1; 11:30 hrs.)                |
| 11 San Francisco<br>(ZRH: 1; 12:15 hrs.)                    | 22 Doha<br>(GVA: 1; 6:10 hrs.; ZRH: 1; 6:00 hrs.)           | 33 Tokyo<br>(ZRH: 1; 11:50 hrs.)                   |
|   |   | 34 Beijing<br>(ZRH: 1; 10:00 hrs.)                 |

## Switzerland's National and Regional Airports, 2014

(FIG. 52)



For international corporations, the ability to schedule business flights at short notice is becoming more and more critical. In addition to the national airports, there are also regional airports throughout the country set up to handle business aviation, and most of them are suitable for smaller jets. The modern infrastructure of these airports is designed for business travelers, offering either customs clearance or allowing authorized cross-border travel by persons from the areas covered by the Schengen Agreement (the Schengen Area). In Switzerland there are countless providers of business flights which have their own offices at larger airports and airfields. The offers range from charter planes to the use of pooled planes.

[www.aerosuisse.ch](http://www.aerosuisse.ch)  
Umbrella association of the Swiss aerospace industry  
Languages: German, French

[www.aopa.ch](http://www.aopa.ch)  
Aircraft Owners' and Pilots' Association  
Languages: German, French

## 11.2 COMMUNICATION

Switzerland has outstanding access to ICT infrastructure. According to the latest study by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the country ranks second worldwide. In 2014 almost 50% of Switzerland's inhabitants were subscribed to fixed-line broadband Internet access. That puts Switzerland significantly above the average for OECD countries (28%) and among the leading nations worldwide (Fig. 53). To ensure that the further development of Internet services and applications is possible, the speed and performance of the network has to be constantly increased. Consequently, the coordinated implementation of a national optical fiber network – to which all residential and commercial buildings are connected – is being intensively promoted (Fiber to the Home).

With 135 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, Switzerland was in the middle of the OECD comparison in 2014, though ahead of Canada, the US and France. Since the introduction of third-generation mobile technology (3G: UMTS/HSPA/HSPA+), the number of people accessing the Internet via mobile phone has risen strongly. In 2014, more than 75% of all mobile phone subscribers were already actively taking advantage of this

opportunity. The mobile phone network has therefore been expanded accordingly, and 98% of the population can now benefit from 3G coverage in their area. The arrival of the fourth generation of wireless telephone technology (4G: LTE) and the associated improvements in mobile Internet access will undoubtedly bring further increases in use. Depending on the provider, 4G coverage is already up to 98%.

This continually strong increase in the number of mobile phone users as well as advances in Internet technology have an effect on the development of infrastructure. In particular, for example, landline connections are increasingly being replaced by mobile phone connections and – albeit to a modest extent up to now – by VoIP phones.

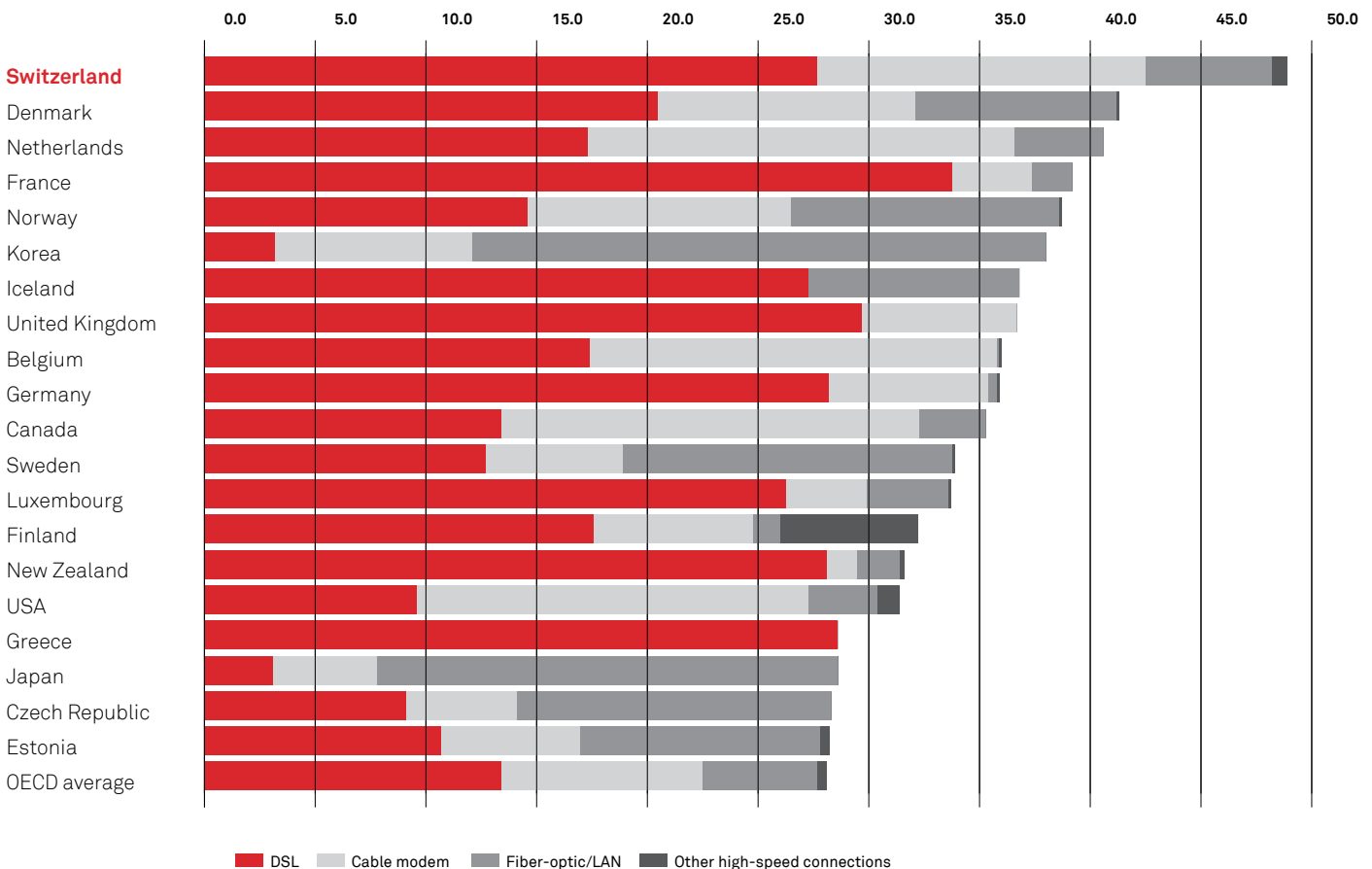
[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Topics > Culture, media, information society, sports  
Information society indicators  
Languages: German, French

[www.nic.ch](http://www.nic.ch)  
Swiss Internet domain name registry (.ch, .li)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### Internet Access Subscribers, 2014

Subscribers to high-speed Internet connections per 100 inhabitants  
(FIG. 53)



Source: OECD, 2015



### 11.3 ENERGY

Switzerland has a reliable and secure nationwide energy supply system. Petroleum products accounted for 41.7% of gross energy consumption in Switzerland in 2014. Nuclear power plants supplied 26% of the nation's energy, and 12.8% were produced using hydroelectric power. Gas also plays a relatively significant role, supplying 10.1% of the energy requirements. In 2014, electricity accounted for 25.1% of final consumption and was generated for the most part in Switzerland. By comparison with its neighbors, Switzerland has a practically CO<sub>2</sub>-free production mix. The most important power suppliers in Switzerland are hydroelectric power plants (2014: 57.7%) and atomic power plants (2014: 36.3%). Compared to other countries, Switzerland thereby has an attractive energy mix at relatively low production costs, which are not directly linked to the price of oil and natural gas.

Switzerland's integration into the interconnected European energy system ensures that the entire country is supplied with electricity, even during periods of particularly high power consumption. This also applies to the other forms of energy, such as natural gas and petroleum. An extensive network of almost 3,600 gas stations provides fuel for motor vehicles. Within the scope of Swiss environmental policy, mineral oil taxes are levied on gasoline and diesel (approx. CHF 0.75 per liter), revenues which are appropriated specially and mainly flow back into road-building (steering tax). To promote environmentally-friendly fuels, fuels from renewable sources (such as biogas, bioethanol, biodiesel, vegetable and animal oils) are partially or fully exempt from the mineral oil tax. The taxation of natural and liquid gas used as fuels is also reduced. In addition there are voluntary private measures, such as the climate charges on fuels, with which reduction measures are financed domestically and abroad. Nevertheless, the price of gasoline, which averaged at CHF 1.52 per liter in 2015, is comparatively moderate.

The Swiss electric power market is highly fragmented. Approximately 700 utility companies supply the country with electricity, including eight associated companies and numerous small producers. Thanks to the partial liberalization of the market in 2009, major consumers (i.e. those requiring more than 100,000 kWh per year) can now choose their supplier. A federal statute is required to introduce the complete opening up of the market, which can then be challenged in a referendum.

[www.bfe.admin.ch](http://www.bfe.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Office of Energy (SFOE)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.stromkunden.ch](http://www.stromkunden.ch)  
Group of major electricity consumers  
Language: German

### 11.4 WATER

Switzerland is a water-rich country. Six percent of Europe's fresh water is stored in the Swiss Alps. The Gotthard massif in the center of the Swiss Alps forms a continental divide as far as Europe's water is concerned. From there the Rhine flows to the North Sea, the Rhone to the western Mediterranean, the Ticino (Po) to the Adriatic Sea, and the Inn (Danube) to the Black Sea.

[www.bafu.admin.ch](http://www.bafu.admin.ch) > Topics > Water  
Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN): Water  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

#### 11.4.1 Drinking Water

The water that flows through all the water pipes in Switzerland is so fresh and pure that it meets the purity requirements for mineral water, even though it is a thousand times cheaper. Even the water in public fountains can be drunk without concern. Only 2% of annual precipitation is utilized for the drinking water supply. The Swiss population consumes about 309 liters of water per capita per day in homes, industry and commercial operations. On average, household consumption accounts for 160 liters of this. Drinking water from water pipes costs an average of about CHF 2 per thousand liters in Switzerland. At a cost of CHF 0.30 per person per day, the cost is just under CHF 0.90 per day for a 3-person household. Groundwater from wells and springs accounts for 80% of consumption, and the rest comes primarily from lakes.

[www.trinkwasser.ch](http://www.trinkwasser.ch)  
Drinking water  
Languages: German, French, Italian

#### 11.4.2 Waste Water Disposal and Water Pollution Control

Because of its role as the “water reservoir” of Europe, Switzerland is obliged to make special efforts in water pollution control. Purification of waste water is a necessary requirement for maintaining and preserving water ecosystems over the long term. Thanks to modern waste water purification technology, there is no health risk associated with swimming in Switzerland’s many lakes and rivers. The waste water from households, industry, business and agriculture is piped to purification systems through sewage pipes running a total length of 40,000 – 50,000 kilometers (about 25,000 – 31,000 miles). Today, 97% of all Swiss households are connected to one of the country’s approx. 900 waste water treatment plants.

### 11.5 POSTAL SYSTEM

Swiss Post serves the entire country (universal nationwide service). It is a byword for reliability, breaking European records again and again.

In recent years, the postal market has undergone fundamental changes. In addition to the state-run postal system, numerous private companies are now offering postal delivery services in certain areas in which competition is allowed. The package delivery market (for packages over 1kg) was liberalized in 2004. Since April 2006, letters weighing more than 100g can be handled by private postal services, provided that they have the required license. Swiss Post has maintained its monopoly only on the delivery of domestic letters and letters from abroad weighing 50g or less. Further liberalization will not take place for the time being, although full liberalization continues to be discussed.

With more than 2,200 branches and agencies, the post office network is very dense. In an international comparison with seven other European countries, Switzerland, had the highest density of post office branches per area and the shortest average distance to the nearest post office branch. In addition, Swiss Post offers total logistics solutions ranging from procurement through warehousing to information logistics, including cross-border service.

[www.post.ch](http://www.post.ch)  
Swiss Post  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 11.6 HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

#### 11.6.1 Medical Care

Highly trained medical professionals, famous hospitals and top medical institutions help make the Swiss healthcare system among the best in the world. In 2011, approximately 11% of the Swiss gross domestic product was spent on healthcare. A dense network of hospitals, pharmacies, medical and dental practices ensures universal access to out-patient and in-patient care. In addition to 116 general hospitals there are 181 specialized clinics (as of 2012). Emergency medical care on the road (emergency services of hospitals) and by air (Swiss air-rescue service Rega or TCS) is well developed and functions professionally. An organization called Spitex provides medical care at home.

The life expectancy at birth has almost doubled in Switzerland since 1900. According to an OECD study, the Swiss people have the world’s third-highest life expectancy, at an average of 82.9 years.

#### 11.6.2 Health Insurance

The basic health insurance that all persons residing in Switzerland are required to carry guarantees access to good medical care. This covers medical treatment in the event of illness or accidents if treatment is not covered by accident insurance (even in foreign countries in some cases). The system is not state-run, but offered through 94 private health insurance companies. Optional supplementary policies can also be taken out.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics > Health insurance  
Overview of health insurance  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

**“At an average of 82.9 years, the Swiss people have the world’s third-highest life expectancy.”**

## Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970 and 2013

(FIG. 54)



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2015

- www.bag.admin.ch**  
Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian
- www.redcross.ch**  
Swiss Red Cross  
Languages: German, French
- www.hplus.ch**  
Hospitals in Switzerland  
Languages: German, French, Italian
- www.fmh.ch**  
Swiss Medical Association (FMH)  
Languages: German, French, Italian
- www.doctorfmh.ch**  
List of FMH doctors  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian
- www.rega.ch**  
Swiss air-rescue service (Rega)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian
- www.spitex.ch**  
Spitex association, Switzerland  
Languages: German, French



# EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

# 12

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For a country like Switzerland with few natural resources, a well-educated workforce and constant innovation are its most important capital. Swiss education and research policy is designed accordingly. Switzerland's public schools, universities, postgraduate studies and international private and boarding schools are famous worldwide for their quality. The country's federal structure also ensures both high quality and proximity of the business world and research institutions to the educational system. One special feature of Swiss education is the dual training system: Students have a choice between the traditional educational path at high schools and universities or, on the other hand, industrial vocations and careers in the service sector, where they receive hands-on training on the job.

## 12.1 EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Switzerland's dual vocational training system is unique worldwide and provides the country with a highly-qualified and innovative workforce and thus a leading position in the global economy.

Under the Swiss system, the cantons are responsible for the quality and type of education (basic education, universities, universities of applied sciences) within their territory. Only the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (ETH/EPFL) are under federal direction. Various coordinatory bodies ensure that the educational and training plans are harmonized between cantons.

[www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch)  
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.educa.ch](http://www.educa.ch)  
Swiss education server  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

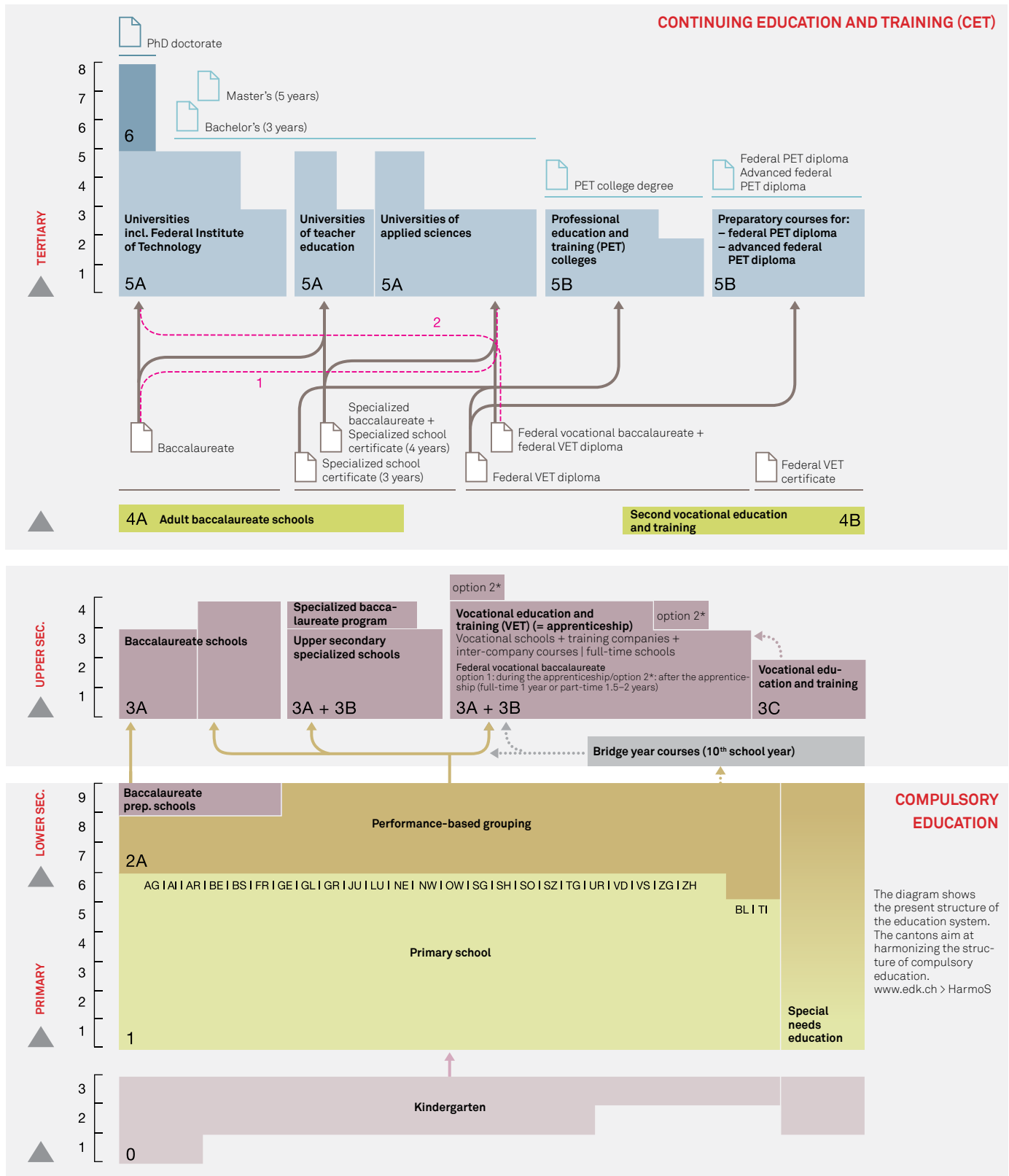
[www.bildungssystem.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bildungssystem.bfs.admin.ch)  
Education statistics  
Languages: German, French

### 12.1.1 Basic and Further Education

Education begins at the kindergarten level at age five or six. Primary school starts at age seven and runs through to grades four to six, followed by a lower secondary school which corresponds to their personal ability. The name and curriculum of the educational levels varies from canton to canton. Once they have completed lower secondary school, students have finished their compulsory nine years' schooling. They can then either begin vocational training or attend high school to prepare them for university studies. Aside from apprenticeship and high school, students can continue their education beyond the statutory minimum by attending an intermediate diploma school to earn a specialized diploma.

# The Swiss Education System

(FIG. 55)



ISCED: The diagram contains a link to the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education [www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org)). The ISCED assigns an internationally defined code (ISCED 0 to ISCED 6) to each educational level. This ensures international comparability of educational levels.

### Quality of the Education System, 2015

1 = Completely fails to meet the economy's needs,  
10 = Meets the economy's needs

(FIG. 56)

<b>1</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.74</b>
2	Finland	8.56
3	Singapore	8.27
4	Canada	8.20
5	Germany	7.84
6	Netherlands	7.82
7	Belgium	7.78
8	Denmark	7.50
9	Ireland	7.45
15	Hong Kong SAR	6.71
18	United Kingdom	6.41
19	USA	6.37
21	Luxembourg	6.13
26	France	5.70
33	India	5.37
34	Italy	5.30
36	Japan	5.27
40	China	4.59
45	Russia	4.04
61	Brazil	1.88

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

94% of students finish their mandatory education at a local state school. Only 6% attend private schools. Public schools enjoy a good reputation. In the 2012 OECD Program for International Student Assessments (PISA), Swiss students scored higher than the average in OECD states, with public schools achieving slightly higher scores than private ones. Within Europe, Switzerland is in second place overall behind the Principality of Liechtenstein. The IMD management institute has also confirmed that Switzerland has a high-quality education system that meets the economy's needs (Fig. 56).

Switzerland's public schools not only provide an education, they also fulfill an important integration function: Children with different social, linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds all attend the same schools. For Switzerland, a country with four national languages, multilingual skills are extremely important. In addition to their mother tongue, children are taught a second national language and English from primary school onward.

In 2012, public-sector spending on education in Switzerland was just under CHF 35 billion. That's 5.5% of the gross domestic product. On a per-capita basis, this level of spending puts Switzerland in first place worldwide.

[www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org)  
PISA study  
Languages: German, English, French, Spanish

### Public Per Capita Spending on Education, 2013

(in US dollars)

(FIG. 57)

1	Luxembourg	6,272
<b>2</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>5,091</b>
3	Norway	5,027
4	Denmark	4,448
5	Sweden	3,975
6	Australia	3,575
10	United States	3,052
11	Belgium	3,011
12	Netherlands	2,815
14	Ireland	2,398
16	France	2,360
17	United Kingdom	2,281
19	Germany	1,838
20	Singapore	1,723
21	Japan	1,650
24	Italy	1,439
25	Hong Kong SAR	1,370
35	Brazil	674
40	Russia	633
51	China	261
59	India	58

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

### 12.1.2 Vocational Training

Basic vocational training begins after the completion of compulsory education. Great importance is placed on practical on-the-job training. More than three-quarters of all young people complete a work-and-training-based apprenticeship lasting three to four years and consisting of practical work in a company coupled with study of the accompanying theory at a vocational school for the relevant sector. In addition, students are eligible to obtain professional certification, which entitles them to enter a university of applied sciences where they can earn a Bachelor's or, in some cases, a Master's degree. Universities of applied sciences provide a tertiary level of education. 86% of Swiss students continue their education once they have completed compulsory schooling, placing Switzerland near the top of all OECD countries with regard to further education.

This dual system ensures that businesses have a choice of well-qualified and practically-trained employees ready to enter the relevant sector. The unemployment rate among young people is approximately a third as high as in Sweden, and half that in the United States. It is important to note that the practical aspect of vocational training in no way reduces the importance of in-depth teaching in school.

Professional education and training play an important role in Switzerland. Higher specialist and professional training courses are conducted with the approval of the federal authorities and professional associations. Successful completion of these courses leads to the attainment of a Swiss federal vocational certificate or diploma. In Switzerland there are nearly 150 federally recognized schools offering professional college degree programs, the majority of which are engineering colleges. These schools teach qualifications that are often learned only at universities in other countries. Vocational degrees are mutually recognized through bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU. The plethora of Switzerland's vocational training courses is made easier to understand and compare by the National Qualification Framework for Swiss Vocational and Professional Education and Training (NQF VPET) as well as explanations about certificates and diploma supplements.

[www.s-ge.com/education](http://www.s-ge.com/education)

Facts and figures on professional training in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch)

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.wbf.admin.ch](http://www.wbf.admin.ch) > Topics > Education, research and innovation

Information issued by the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Education

Education in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.berufsberatung.ch](http://www.berufsberatung.ch)

Advice on choosing a profession, higher education course and career  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## 12.2 CONTINUING TRAINING

Continuing training plays an important role in Switzerland. Public institutions such as universities and universities of applied sciences offer not only postgraduate programs but also courses on various specialized topics which are open to everyone, not just graduates. Non-students can also register to sit in on regular courses. Adult education courses are publicly subsidized and open to everyone. There is also a wide variety of courses offered by private educational establishments, from language courses to yoga and managerial courses.

[www.weiterbildung.ch](http://www.weiterbildung.ch)

[www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch](http://www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch)

[www.seminare.ch](http://www.seminare.ch)

Overview of continuing training (providers and courses)

Language: German

[www.up-vhs.ch](http://www.up-vhs.ch)

Swiss Adult Education Association

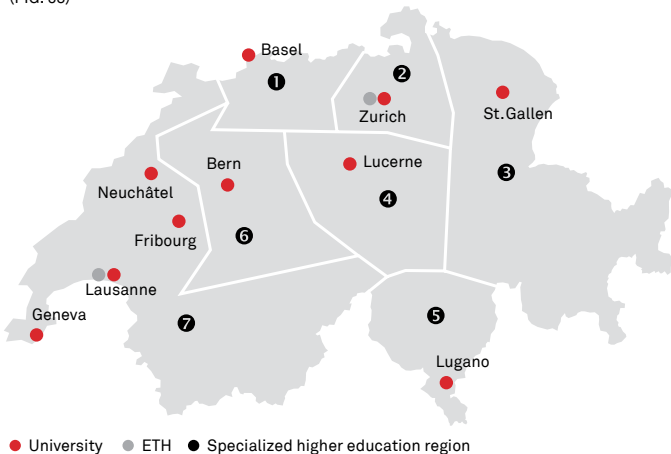
Languages: German, English, French

## 12.3 UNIVERSITIES/COLLEGES

### 12.3.1 Universities and Technical Colleges

#### Universities and Technical Colleges

(FIG. 58)



#### Specialized higher education regions

- 1 University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland
- 2 Zurich University of Applied Sciences
- 3 University of Applied Sciences Eastern Switzerland
- 4 University of Applied Sciences Central Switzerland
- 5 University of Applied Sciences Southern Switzerland
- 6 Bern University of Applied Sciences
- 7 University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland

Source: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)



## Annual Tuition Fees, 2014/2015

(in CHF)

(FIG. 59)

	EPF LAUSANNE	ETH ZURICH	UNIVER- SITY OF BASEL	UNIVER- SITY OF BERN	UNIVER- SITY OF FRIBOURG	UNIVER- SITY OF GENEVA	UNIVER- SITY OF LAUSANNE	UNIVER- SITY OF LUCERNE	UNIVER- SITY OF NEUCHÂTEL	UNIVER- SITY OF ST. GALLEN	UNIVER- SITY OF ZURICH	USI (LUGANO MENDRISIO)
Domestic students	1,266	1,288	1,700	1,568	1,310	1,000	1,160	1,620	1,030	2,452	1,538	4,000
Supplementary fees for international students					300			600	550	3,800	1,000	4,000
Total for international students	1,266	1,288	1,700	1,568	1,610	1,000	1,160	2,220	1,580	6,252	2,538	8,000

Source: [berufsberatung.ch](http://berufsberatung.ch)

In Switzerland there are ten cantonal universities at which the main language of instruction is either German (Basel, Bern, Zurich, Lucerne, St. Gallen), French (Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchâtel), Italian (Lugano) or German and French (Fribourg). There is a Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (French) and one in Zurich (German). In the fall semester 2014/2105, a total of 144,000 students were enrolled at Switzerland's twelve universities and colleges. Of these students, 50% were female and 29.5% foreign students. This is one of the highest percentages of international students worldwide. At 50% (2014), the number of foreign professors is also comparatively high, and has been rising since 2002, underlining the international aspect of Swiss universities.

The range of subjects offered for study at Swiss universities is very wide. With the exception of medicine, there are no specific restrictions on admission. For a Bachelor's/Master's degree, foreign students must meet the language requirements and some universities require students to pass an admissions exam. Tuition fees for international students are also very reasonable. In addition to tuition, between CHF 18,000 and CHF 28,000 a year are required for living expenses, depending on the city and personal needs. As a result of the Bologna Accords, which aim to create a European higher education area, all Swiss universities have converted all courses of study to the Bachelor's/Master's system. Within the scope of this reform, courses of study are increasingly offered either partially or fully in English (esp. Master's courses). Switzerland participates in international student exchange programs such as ISEP, which enable foreign students to study at a Swiss university for a semester.

Swiss universities have earned high praise worldwide for their curricula and fields of research in certain areas of specialization in various degree subjects. The two Federal Institutes of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ) and Lausanne (EPFL) work together with the international research community to conduct cutting-edge research. They strive to attract world-renowned scientists. Swiss universities regularly rank among the top 100 universities worldwide and even higher in Europe, while some institutes are part of the world elite. Swiss colleges and universities are also involved in international research programs and offer postgraduate studies (e.g. in cooperation with foreign academic institutions).

### [www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Studying at a university

Information on studying in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### [www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch)

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### [www.universityrankings.ch](http://www.universityrankings.ch)

University rankings  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### [www.swissuni.ch](http://www.swissuni.ch)

Swiss university continuing training association  
Languages: German, English, French

### [www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch)

Information for foreign students  
Language: English

### [www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch)

Studying in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

## Executive MBAs: The Most Important Providers

(FIG. 60)

PROVIDER	CAMPUSES	HOME PAGE
International Institute for Management Development (IMD)	Lausanne (Switzerland), Europe (Ireland, Romania), Shanghai (China), Silicon Valley (United States)	www.imd.ch/programs/emba English
Omnium Alliance (University of St. Gallen, University of Toronto, partner schools)	Brazil, China, India, Canada, Switzerland, Hungary, Argentina, Turkey, United Arab Emirates	www.omniumgemba.com, www.gemba.unisg.ch English
University of St. Gallen	St. Gallen (Switzerland), Germany, UK, Brazil, Argentina	www.emba.unisg.ch German/English
University of Zurich	Zurich (Switzerland), Yale (United States), Shanghai (China), Hyderabad (India)	www.executive-mba.ch English
Rochester-Bern (University of Bern, University of Rochester)	Bern (Switzerland), Rochester (United States), Shanghai (China)	www.lorange.org German/English
Lorange	Zurich (Switzerland)	www.lorange.org German/English
ZfU International Business School	Zurich (Switzerland), Boston (United States)	www.zfu.ch/weiterbildung/master German

Source: Collated internally

### 12.3.2 Universities of Applied Sciences

Universities of applied sciences offer practical training at the Bachelor's and Master's level for professionals, most of whom have professional certification and have already gathered professional experience. In addition to normal teaching, these universities carry out research and development projects with private companies, particularly SMEs, and provide advanced training courses to local enterprises.

[www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch) > Topics > Higher education > Universities of Applied Sciences  
Overview of universities of applied sciences  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

As a result, universities of applied sciences have partial responsibility for regional science and technology transfer and therefore continuously interact with industry. They have a large pool of teaching, research, development and services skills which are strongly geared to clients, markets and practice. In their role as research institutes, they are supported at the national level by the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) and work together with the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology and universities.

**“In Switzerland, 100,000 children at 240 private schools are taught in German, French, Italian or English (and in some cases in other languages).”**

### 12.3.3 Executive MBA (EMBA) Programs

A special type of further education is the Executive MBA program, which is aimed at managers with many years' managerial experience under their belt. Generally, EMBA courses are work-study programs that are based on a modular system. Most of the degree programs also include time studying abroad in addition to the courses in Switzerland. IMD in Lausanne is a prime example of a top Swiss school whose EMBA program is regularly ranked as one of the best in the world. The program at the University of St. Gallen is also in the top 30 in Europe.

[www.find-mba.com](http://www.find-mba.com) > Europe > Switzerland  
MBA/EMBA programs in Switzerland  
Language: English

[www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch](http://www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch)  
Swiss continuing training portal  
Language: German

[www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch)  
Programs at Swiss universities  
Language: English

[www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com) > Business & Finance > Which MBA?  
Economist rankings  
Language: English

[www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com) > Management > Business Education  
Financial Times rankings  
Language: English

## Cost of Private International Schools, 2014

(in US dollars)

(FIG. 61)

City	ENGLISH SCHOOL		FRENCH SCHOOL		GERMAN SCHOOL	
	Annual fees for primary school	Annual fees for secondary school	Annual fees for primary school	Annual fees for secondary school	Annual fees for primary school	Annual fees for secondary school
Amsterdam	19,448	20,680	6,936	10,914	9,551	9,551
Brussels	33,156	40,388	6,787	8,228	12,962	14,600
Budapest	19,568	20,518	6,136	7,261	5,117	5,117
Dublin	16,889*	20,238*	5,047	7,507	6,290	5,935
Frankfurt	20,589*	22,391*	4,844	5,908	Not available	Not available
Geneva	24,568	Not available	16,807	18,985	13,233	13,233
London	22,884	24,194	7,481	9,129	10,069	10,069
Milan	17,492	19,935	5,645	7,000	7,573	7,573
New York	39,650	39,650	22,760	25,950	18,875	18,875
Paris	28,214	32,758	6,734	6,754	10,506	10,506
Singapore	23,613	28,551	14,995	16,810	12,975	14,971
Vienna	17,514*	22,235*	7,944	8,061	Not available	Not available

\* No English school available. Information is based on the international school.

Source: Mercer, Cost-of-Living Report, March 2014

## 12.4 INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE AND BOARDING SCHOOLS

The Swiss education system also includes private schools. The more than 240 private schools teach courses in one of the three national languages – German, French and Italian – or in English (and some also offer other languages) to about 100,000 students. International schools are primarily important for employees of foreign companies who often remain in Switzerland for only a short time. During their stay, the children receive a suitable education in their native language or an international education and are prepared for the school-leaving certificates valid in their home country, such as the German Abitur, French baccalauréat or the admission requirements of a US university. Suitable establishments can be found in every region and all cities. The school fees are average compared to other countries.

Swiss boarding schools are known not only for their high level of education, but also for their strict discipline and international student body. Often they have very selective acceptance criteria and are known for their elite standing in the world.

[www.swissprivateschoolregister.com](http://www.swissprivateschoolregister.com)

Register of private schools in Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.swiss-schools.ch](http://www.swiss-schools.ch)

Swiss Federation of Private Schools (SFPS)  
Languages: German, English, French, Spanish, Italian

[www.sgischools.com](http://www.sgischools.com)

Swiss Group of International Schools  
Language: English

## 12.5 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

### 12.5.1 Conducting Research in Switzerland

The faster the pace of technological change, the greater the role that research and development play in a country's economy. Switzerland is one of the world's most research-intensive countries. In 2012 it spent more than 3% of its GDP on research and development. Since 1996, the real rate of change has been 4.1% as an annual average and thereby higher than the average annual economic growth during the same period (2.9%). All relevant indicators put Switzerland in the top ranks in international comparisons.

Of the CHF 17.8 billion spent on research and development in 2012, 88% (approx. CHF 15.7 billion) was financed by the private sector. The pharmaceutical industry (CHF 5.1 billion) and the mechanical engineering industry (CHF 1.7 billion) have the highest expenditure. The combined R&D expenses of all universities and research institutes amounted to CHF 213 million in 2012, 1.2% of total Swiss expenditure. In 2012, more than 53,000 people worked in research, nearly 52,000 of them in the private sector.

Relative to its population, Switzerland has the world's second-highest proportion of Nobel laureates (Fig. 63). Since 1901, 24 Swiss citizens have had the honor of receiving the world's highest scientific accolade.

## Overall per Capita Spending on Research and Development 2013

(in US dollars)

(FIG. 62)

1	Switzerland	2,481.50
2	Sweden	1,983.80
3	Denmark	1,832.20
8	USA	1,442.60
10	Germany	1,350.40
11	Japan	1,343.00
12	Luxembourg	1,293.50
13	Singapore	1,119.90
15	Belgium	1,073.40
16	Netherlands	1,006.90
17	France	955.60
20	Ireland	791.90
21	United Kingdom	679.20
26	Italy	443.30
31	Hong Kong SAR	280.10
36	Russia	164.30
37	Brazil	155.20
40	China	140.50
57	India	13.80

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

## Nobel Laureates per Million Inhabitants, 2014

(FIG. 63)

1	Norway	1.55
2	Switzerland	1.47
3	Israel	0.96
4	United Kingdom	0.95
5	Sweden	0.92
6	United States	0.89
7	Denmark	0.71
8	Netherlands	0.47
10	Germany	0.39
11	Belgium	0.36
14	France	0.30
15	Ireland	0.22
18	Hong Kong SAR	0.14
19	Japan	0.12
21	Italy	0.08
22	Russia	0.07
25	China	0.00
26	India	0.00
27	Brazil	0.00
27	Luxembourg	0.00
27	Singapore	0.00

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

Publishing articles in scientific journals (whether printed or digital) is the most important way to distribute research findings and knowledge. The “impact factor” shows how often articles in one journal are cited in another. Across all scientific disciplines, Switzerland is in second place overall behind the US on this scale. Switzerland leads the world in the category “technical sciences, engineering and computing” (Fig. 64). The impact of Swiss publications has been increasing continuously since the 1980s and is now 17% higher than the global average. If the number of publications is compared to the size of the population, Switzerland is currently the world’s most productive nation, with 3.6 publications per 1,000 inhabitants.

Government funding is provided principally for basic research. The private sector and the scientific community work closely together. Each institute at university and college level has a coordination office for cooperation with the private sector. The Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) can make significant financial contributions to research and development projects in which companies cooperate with non-profit research organizations.

[www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Topics > Research + innovation  
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.kti-cti.ch](http://www.kti-cti.ch)  
Swiss Commission for Technology and Innovation  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch)  
Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.myscience.ch](http://www.myscience.ch)  
Swiss research and innovation portal  
Languages: German, English, French

### 12.5.2 International Collaborative Research

The Swiss private sector has a keen interest in research cooperation with partners abroad, particularly from the EU. Research and development cooperation with innovative foreign partners also gives smaller companies access to know-how from which they can benefit. Bilateral agreements with the EU create even more favorable conditions for this type of cooperation.

Further information on international collaborative research can be found in Section 4.2.4.

[www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch) > The SNF > Research policies > International co-operation  
International research and development cooperation  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Topics > International cooperation in research and innovation  
International cooperation on education, science and research  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 12.6 SWITZERLAND INNOVATION

Switzerland Innovation offers domestic and foreign business in Switzerland first-class locations for developing innovative ideas into marketable products. As a collective instrument of the Federal Government, Cantons, science and industry, Switzerland Innovation strengthens Switzerland’s innovative capacity in international competition. Switzerland Innovation creates a platform for making connections between Swiss universities and innovative enterprises.

Large sites suitable for development in the vicinity of leading universities are made available to internationally operating businesses for setting up research and development facilities.

## Impact Factor, 2007–2009

Based on the number of citations per published article

(FIG. 64)

RANK	TECHNICAL SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, IT	PHYSICS, CHEMISTRY AND GEOSCIENCE	AGRICULTURE, BIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE	LIFE SCIENCES	CLINICAL MEDICINE	SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE	HUMANITIES AND ART
1	Switzerland	USA	United Kingdom	USA	USA	USA	Netherlands
2	Denmark	Switzerland	Switzerland	United Kingdom	Belgium	Switzerland	United Kingdom
3	Netherlands	Netherlands	Netherlands	Switzerland	Canada	Netherlands	Australia
4	Belgium	Italy	Belgium	Netherlands	Denmark	Belgium	Italy
5	USA	United Kingdom	USA	Belgium	Switzerland	United Kingdom	USA
6	Australia	Denmark	Germany	Ireland	Netherlands	Denmark	Israel
7	Germany	Germany	Sweden	Denmark	United Kingdom	Germany	South Africa
8	Singapore	Canada	Denmark	Germany	France	Canada	Canada
9	United Kingdom	Ireland	Australia	Canada	Australia	France	Belgium
10	Spain	Norway	France	Australia	Norway	Finland	France

Source: State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), 2015

## Research Establishments in Switzerland

(FIG. 65)

INSTITUTION		LOCATION	HOMEPAGE
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research	Geneva	www.cern.ch English, French
EAWAG	Aquatic research institute of the ETH	Dübendorf (ZH), Kastanienbaum (LU)	www.eawag.ch German, English, French
EMPA	Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science & Technology	Thun (BE), Dübendorf (ZH), St. Gallen	www.empa.ch German, English, French
PSI	Paul Scherrer Institute	Villigen (AG)	www.psi.ch German, English, French
SLF	WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research	Davos (GR)	www.slf.ch German, English, French, Italian
The Graduate Institute	The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies	Geneva	www.graduateinstitute.ch English, French
WSL	Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research	Birmensdorf (ZH), Bellinzona (IT), Davos (GR), Lausanne (VD), Sion (VS)	www.wsl.ch German, English, French, Italian

Source: Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

The proximity to universities inspires research and training and places Switzerland among the leading knowledge and innovation-driven economies.

Switzerland Innovation consists of five locations and a national foundation:

- Park Zurich in Dübendorf
- Park Network West EPFL in Lausanne
- Park Basel Area in Allschwil near Basel
- Park innovAARE in Villigen in the Canton of Aargau
- Park Biel/Bienne

Switzerland Innovation Foundation coordinates international marketing and guarantees interconnectedness across the five sites.

[www.switzerland-innovation.com](http://www.switzerland-innovation.com)  
Switzerland Innovation Foundation  
Languages: German, English, French



# LIVING IN SWITZERLAND

# 13

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Image  
Lakeside promenade, Lugano

Thanks to the excellent quality of life and the safe environment, life expectancy in Switzerland is among the highest in the world. The unspoiled natural surroundings and highly diverse cultural and recreational opportunities attract not only many tourists but also qualified foreign employees. Swiss households have an average monthly earned income of CHF 7,618, of which about 70 % remains as disposable income for consumption after deduction of social security contributions and taxes. Switzerland therefore has the highest purchasing power in the world, despite relatively high prices.

### 13.1 SAFETY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Switzerland is a very safe country and offers an extremely high quality of life. Switzerland receives high scores, in both cities and rural regions, for important criteria such as income, healthcare, climate and geography, political stability, safety and security, individual freedom, and family and community life.

The Swiss cities of Zurich, Bern and Geneva have for years occupied the top spots in global rankings of cities compiled by the global consultancy firm Mercer (Fig. 66).

#### International Comparison of Quality of Life, 2015

(FIG. 66)

1	Vienna, Austria
<b>2</b>	<b>Zurich, Switzerland</b>
3	Auckland, New Zealand
4	Munich, Germany
5	Vancouver, Canada
6	Dusseldorf, Germany
7	Frankfurt, Germany
<b>8</b>	<b>Geneva, Switzerland</b>
9	Copenhagen, Denmark
10	Sydney, Australia
11	Amsterdam, Netherlands
12	Wellington, New Zealand
<b>13</b>	<b>Bern, Switzerland</b>
14	Berlin, Germany
15	Toronto, Canada
27	Paris, France
34	Dublin, Ireland
40	London, United Kingdom
41	Milan, Italy
44	New York, USA
44	Tokyo, Japan
70	Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR

Source: Mercer Quality of Living Global City Rankings survey, 2015

Everyone is guaranteed freedom of movement and safety – everywhere and at all times. There are relatively few large population centers or extensive monotonous and impersonal housing developments. Children generally walk to school unaccompanied. The safe environment and the traditional discretion of the Swiss people are widely valued. Even internationally known celebrities can mostly move about in Switzerland without personal protection.

Switzerland acts like a magnet on qualified workers from abroad. It ranks top of international comparisons of the world’s most attractive countries. According to a study, Switzerland is particularly characterized by its stable economic and political climate, top-notch education system, and high productivity. Its people also have high level of international expertise and enjoy an excellent quality of life.

“Switzerland is the country of choice for qualified workers from abroad.”

### Personal Safety and Property Rights, 2015

1 = Low, 10 = High

(FIG. 67)

1	Finland	9.39
2	Hong Kong SAR	9.10
3	Denmark	9.01
4	Norway	8.92
5	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.87</b>
6	Singapore	8.84
9	Germany	8.58
10	Luxembourg	8.58
11	Netherlands	8.56
13	Ireland	8.45
15	United Kingdom	8.34
17	Japan	8.13
19	USA	8.10
24	Belgium	7.60
29	France	7.30
38	India	6.13
46	Italy	5.22
48	China	4.86
54	Russia	3.60
57	Brazil	3.24

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015

### Attractiveness to Highly Qualified Personnel from Abroad, 2015

1 = Low, 10 = High

(FIG. 68)

1	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.91</b>
2	Luxembourg	8.49
3	USA	8.31
4	United Arab Emirates	8.26
5	Singapore	8.12
6	United Kingdom	8.00
7	Canada	7.70
10	Hong Kong SAR	7.43
12	Ireland	7.22
14	Netherlands	6.85
18	China	6.34
19	Germany	6.26
24	Belgium	5.57
30	Russia	5.19
36	India	4.73
39	France	4.60
44	Brazil	4.19
50	Japan	3.39
51	Italy	3.37

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2015



## 13.2 MOVING AND INTEGRATION

More than 10,700 foreign enterprises currently operate in or from Switzerland. Many of them often send foreign managers and specialists to Switzerland for short-term, temporary stays to work as expatriates. There are specialized relocation agencies, expat groups, books and websites designed to help these transferred employees settle in and adapt quickly to life in Switzerland.

Moving to a foreign country raises many questions depending on one's individual situation. Which school is the most appropriate? Where can you shop? How do we find a house? How high are the taxes, duties and other fees? There are competent, internationally experienced consultants in all parts of the country who can give further assistance with these issues. Specialized relocation agencies offer comprehensive packages that cover relocation issues and the initial orientation period in Switzerland. The Internet offers a wealth of information. A number of the cantonal economic development agencies also have their own online information platforms that cater specifically to expatriates.

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Moving to Switzerland  
Moving to and within Switzerland  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 13.2.1 Moving

The personal effects of people moving to Switzerland (household items, personal collections, animals, vehicles, etc.) can be imported duty-free. The only requirement is that the imported objects must have been used personally abroad for at least six months and will continue to be used in Switzerland after arrival. In addition to a list of personal effects to be imported, the entry-point customs office must on arrival also be provided with an employment contract, rental agreement or the de-registration certificate from the country of departure (for citizens from EU25/EFTA countries). After entering Switzerland you are obligated to register with the local residential authorities within fourteen days. To do so, the following documents are required:

- A valid official identification document such as a passport or ID card (for each family member entering the country)
- Confirmation of health insurance (proof of mandatory basic coverage). The period for registering with a Swiss health insurance fund is three months, so confirmation of health insurance can also be submitted later
- A passport photo (for each family member entering the country)
- Marital status documents (e.g. an extract from the register of births and marriages, marriage certificate, birth certificates for children, etc.)
- An employment contract

If a vehicle is being brought into Switzerland, it must be registered for a technical inspection and be insured and licensed in Switzerland within twelve months. A Swiss driver's license is also required within the same time period.

[www.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch) > Information individuals > Personal property, students, holiday homes, getting married and inheritance  
Form for listing imported personal effects  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 13.2.2 Language Courses

Many Swiss citizens understand English and/or a second national language of Switzerland. In order to become integrated into Swiss society, however, knowledge of the national language spoken in the particular region is a great advantage. Depending on the area, the language may be German, French, Italian or Romansh. The fact that there are four national languages in Switzerland does not mean, however, that all Swiss people speak four languages.

There are large numbers of private companies and individuals offering language courses tailored to every need. Public institutions also offer language courses in the respective national language, partly in conjunction with immigrant integration efforts. We recommend searching the Internet or consulting the Website of the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning for courses.

[www.alice.ch](http://www.alice.ch) > Courses  
Swiss Federation for Adult Learning  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## 13.3 RENTING AN APARTMENT

Anyone interested in renting an apartment should contact the advertiser (often a professional property management company) and set up an appointment to see the apartment. If the apartment meets your expectations, you are generally asked to fill out an application form. This form includes information such as age, marital status, profession or occupation, children, residential status, employer, salary and pets. Applicants are often required to provide an abstract from the debt enforcement register as proof that they can pay the rent. This document can be obtained from the local debt enforcement office.

### 13.3.1 Deposits and Rental Agreements

Tenants must often pay a certain amount in advance as a security deposit. This may total up to three months' rent, which is deposited in a special bank account in the tenant's name. The deposit serves as security for the landlord. After moving out, the tenant receives the deposit back with interest.

Tenants have the right to move into a clean and usable property. The formal handover takes place before the new tenant moves in. The tenant and landlord inspect the condition of the property together and record any defects in writing.

In general, tenants pay their rent monthly in advance for the next month. Tenants mostly also pay additional costs for heating, hot water or cable television, for example. Tenants receive monthly or quarterly bills from the utility company for the electricity consumed in the apartment itself. Since there are a number of providers of telephone and Internet services (and often cable television as well), tenants enter into separate agreements for these services and pay the providers directly.

If landlords wish to increase the rent (after renovation or a rise in mortgage rates, for example), they must do so using an official form. Any tenant who considers a rent increase to be unreasonable has 30 days in which to submit a written appeal to the arbitration authority.

“In Switzerland you can choose among countless providers of fixed-line and mobile telephony, VoIP and Internet access.”

The lease or rental agreement may be terminated by either the tenant or the landlord. The required terms of notice are stated in the agreement. Any tenant giving notice of termination must do so in writing, preferably by registered mail. Married couples have equal rights. This means that the notice of termination is not valid unless signed by both spouses. When moving out, tenants are required to hand over a clean property. The tenant and landlord inspect the condition of the property together and record any defects in writing. They then decide jointly which party shall pay for any repairs that might be necessary.

### 13.3.2 House Rules and Maintenance

In most cases, professional property management companies are responsible for building management. In large buildings in particular, there is also a building superintendent who can answer tenants' questions, make small repairs and oversee security and maintenance. Regional tenants' associations can also assist tenants with problems.

[www.bwo.admin.ch](http://www.bwo.admin.ch) > Documentation > Publications > Info sheet for tenants

Important information for tenants  
Languages: German, French, Italian

#### Tenants' associations

**German-speaking Switzerland:** [www.mieterverband.ch](http://www.mieterverband.ch)

Language: German

**French-speaking Switzerland:** [www.asloca.ch](http://www.asloca.ch)

Language: French

**Ticino:** [www.asi-infoalloggio.ch](http://www.asi-infoalloggio.ch)

Language: Italian

### 13.4 TELEPHONE, INTERNET AND TELEVISION

Before liberalization, in 1998, the Swiss telecommunications market was dominated by Swisscom. Today you can choose among numerous providers of landline and mobile telephone, VoIP and Internet services. Swisscom, Salt and Sunrise are the major providers of mobile telephone services. However, there are also other companies that use the networks of the major providers and offer very attractive terms (including M-Budget Mobile, Coop Mobile, yallo and mobilezone). All services are also available to foreign nationals who are living in Switzerland temporarily. Even so, registration is obligatory (even for prepaid plans). Setting up Internet access is easy. Analog connections, ISDN, DSL and a variety of cable connections are available.

upc cablecom and Swisscom are the market leaders for television. With upc cablecom's analog cable connection, which is already installed in three-quarters of all Swiss households, you can receive more than 60 TV channels. An additional receiver is required for digital reception. It is also possible to receive more than 200 channels via the telephone line with Bluewin TV (from Swisscom). More than 300 regional cable operators offer services similar to those of upc cablecom. And of course you can also receive television programs via satellite. Anyone who listens to the radio or watches television in Switzerland must always pay reception fees. These license fees must be paid regardless of which programs are watched or listened to or how they are received. The license fees for radio and TV channels are invoiced and collected by Billag AG.

[www.local.ch](http://www.local.ch)

Phone book

Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.comparis.ch](http://www.comparis.ch)

Comparison of providers and prices

Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.teltarif.ch](http://www.teltarif.ch)

Comparison of providers and prices

Language: German

[www.billag.com](http://www.billag.com)

Radio and TV license fees

Languages: German, French, Italian

### 13.5 INSURANCE

Swiss citizens enjoy comprehensive insurance coverage. Swiss families spend an average of 19% of their household budget on insurance. Medical insurance is by far the most expensive insurance.

Contributions to social security and unemployment insurance are mandatory, as are medical and fire insurance (for property owners). Contributions to social security and unemployment insurance are set by the government and are deducted directly from employees' salaries. Medical and liability insurance can be purchased privately based on one's own choice of provider.

Tenants are urged to take out insurance covering household contents and personal liability (available either separately or in combination). Contents insurance covers damage such as water damage caused by an overflowing bathtub. Personal liability insurance covers damage caused by the insured person to third parties (property damage and/or personal injury).

Every owner of a motor vehicle is required to have motor vehicle liability insurance. This covers personal injury and/or property damage caused by operation of the insured motor vehicle, regardless of who is driving the vehicle at the time of the accident. Comprehensive and fully-comprehensive cover are also recommended.

### 13.6 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Thanks to public transport, people in Switzerland have many ways to get around, even if they do not have their own car. The rail, bus and boat network is very dense, and traffic intensity one of the highest in the world. Boats not only operate for tourism purposes but also represent important transport connections. There is not a single village in Switzerland that is not served by some form of public transport at least every two hours.

There is a wide range of tickets and passes for public transport. The basic rule is that the longer a pass is valid, the cheaper it is. For a 12-month pass you pay the equivalent of eight months' worth of single tickets. And with the "General-Abo", a one-year pass for all forms of public transport, you can travel at all times on the entire SBB rail network, most private railways, boats, buses and urban transit networks. The low-priced "Halbtax-Abo", which is available for one, two or three years, gives holders a 50% discount on SBB routes as well as many private and mountain railways. Children up to 6 years of age travel free of charge. Under-16s with a "Junior-Karte" can travel for free with their parents, as can those with the "Enkel-Karte" when accompanied by their grandparents. Young people between the ages of 16 and 25 can ride free in 2nd class cars after 7 p.m. with the "Gleis 7" pass. Although these special rates benefit people living in Switzerland, tourists can also benefit from offers that are designed especially for them.

[www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch) > SBB ticket shop

Timetables and ticket sales

Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.swisstravelsystem.com](http://www.swisstravelsystem.com)

Traveling in Switzerland for foreign visitors

Languages: German, English, French, Italian

### 13.7 LEISURE ACTIVITIES

#### 13.7.1 Recreational and Cultural Offers

Switzerland offers a great variety of cultural and recreational activities. It is no coincidence that the country is an ideal year-round destination for nature lovers, sports enthusiasts, people seeking peace and quiet, art aficionados and business travelers. Switzerland is synonymous with individuality, true relaxation and adventure. Both tourists and permanent Swiss residents find just what they need here: Summer and winter sports on the doorstep, charming market towns and busy urban centers, culture and nature, relaxation and action every hour of the day. Thanks to decentralized residential development, cultural life and opportunities for participating in sports and social activities are plentiful in both the city and the countryside. Switzerland is home to prestigious events like the Lucerne Festival and Montreux Jazz festival, the Menuhin Festival in Gstaad, the Film Festival in Locarno, Art Basel, the Omega European Masters golf tournament in Crans-Montana, Swiss Indoors Basel and the world-class athletics meeting in Zurich. In addition to these major events, there is also a lively local cultural scene.

With more than 900 museums, Switzerland has the world's highest density of museums. Nine opera houses and 14 theaters provide venues for a wide range of theatrical events, from amateur dramatics to performances by international artists. More than 800 libraries are open to the public. Switzerland's ten largest libraries hold more than 55 million titles.

Lovers of the great outdoors will find all their heart desires in the country's 20 nature reserves and on the more than 85,000 kilometers (53,000 miles) of footpaths and mountain hiking paths. The nature reserves cover a total area of 6,335 square kilometers (2446 square miles) and thus about 15% of the total surface area of Switzerland. There are also 11 UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites to marvel at. These include the prehistoric houses on stilts all around the Alps, the terraced vineyards of Lavaux, the three castles of Bellinzona, the Benedictine monastery in St. Gallen and the old town of Bern.

Popular sports are also extremely beloved in Switzerland. Soccer and gymnastics clubs can be found in even the smallest municipalities. Switzerland's sport infrastructure comprises more than 28,000 sports facilities, including more than 4,000 gymnasiums and more than 3,500 all-weather fields. In elite sports, it's clear to see that Switzerland is primarily a winter sports country. For example, Switzerland typically finishes among the top ten nations at the Winter Olympics. Tennis is one exception to this rule. There are no fewer than two Swiss players – Roger Federer and Stanislas Wawrinka – among the world's top four (as at November 2015). It's therefore hardly surprising that the sport is extremely popular, even among amateur players.

[www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

Swiss Tourist Board, including calendar of events  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.theater.ch](http://www.theater.ch)

Theater and dance  
Languages: German, French, Italian

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Culture > Seasonal customs

Seasonal customs  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

### 13.7.2 Associations and Volunteer Work

Many Swiss citizens are actively involved in clubs and pursue hobbies during their non-working hours. Even the smallest communities and villages cultivate and promote an active cultural and club life and offer the necessary infrastructure. From music, theater, sports and politics to hiking and conservation, there is hardly an area of life that does not have its own special club. There is often no clear-cut dividing line between hobbies and volunteer work. Approximately a fifth of the population in Switzerland engages in institutionalized volunteer and thus unpaid work. Since Switzerland does not require clubs and organizations to be registered, there is no complete list. However, the homepages of municipal Websites generally give information about local clubs.

[www.benevol.ch](http://www.benevol.ch)

Volunteer work  
Languages: German, French

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Addresses of administrative authorities

Addresses of administrative authorities  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

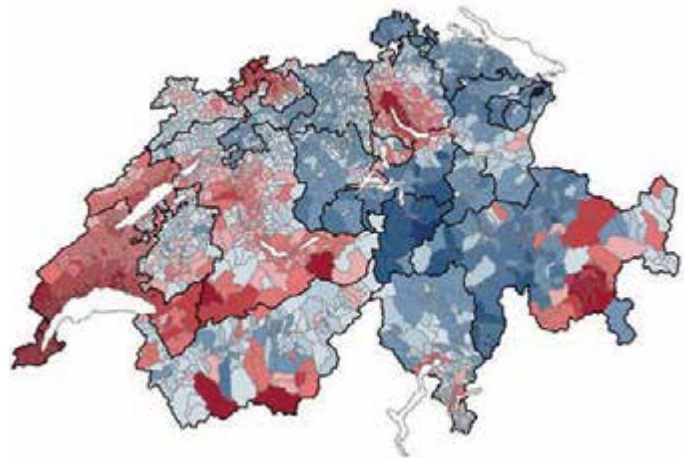
## 13.8 INCOME AND COST OF LIVING

The average Swiss household has 2.19 inhabitants with a combined monthly earned income of CHF 7,618. Together with income from other sources and transfer income, gross income totals CHF 10,052. After deduction of social security contributions and taxes, approximately 70% remains as disposable income for consumption. There are considerable regional differences in real disposable income (after the deduction of all fixed costs). Real disposable income is below the Swiss average (low RDI value), not only in the business centers but also in a small number of mountain communities. These are popular tourism areas with very high real estate prices. The cantons of Aargau, Lucerne, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Solothurn and Thurgau are in attractive locations and have high real disposable income (high RDI value), while the cities of Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich are at the other end of the scale (Fig. 69).

According to a UBS study (Fig. 71), Switzerland is in first place with the world's highest purchasing power, i.e. the highest real disposable income when compared with prices. The price level in Zurich is the highest in the world, followed by Geneva in second place and New York in third. In an international comparison of salaries Zurich also comes in first place, followed by Geneva and Luxembourg.

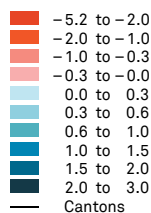
### Real Disposable Income of Swiss Municipalities, 2011

(FIG. 69)



Source: Credit Suisse Economic Research, Geostat

#### RDI indicator 2011



## Average Household Budget, 2011

(in CHF)

(FIG. 70)

<b>GROSS INCOME (EARNED INCOME, TRANSFERS, ETC.)</b>	<b>9,604</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Mandatory transfer expenses	-2,646	-27.5%
Social security contributions	-947	-9.9%
Taxes	-1,145	-11.9%
Health insurance: premiums for basic cover	-554	-5.8%
Money transfer expenses to other households	-208	-2.2%
<b>DISPOSABLE INCOME</b>	<b>6,750</b>	<b>70.29%</b>
Other insurance, fees and transfers	-575	-5.99%
<b>CONSUMER SPENDING</b>	<b>-5,394</b>	<b>-56.2%</b>
Foodstuffs and non-alcoholic drinks	-649	-6.8%
Alcoholic drinks and tobacco	-111	-1.2%
Restaurants and accommodation	-529	-5.5%
Clothing and shoes	-235	-2.5%
Living costs and energy	-1,475	-15.4%
Furnishings and ongoing household costs	-262	-2.7%
Health spending	-256	-2.7%
Transportation	-768	-8.0%
Communication	-177	-1.8%
Entertainment, recreation and culture	-616	-6.4%
Other goods and services	-316	-3.3%
<b>SPORADIC INCOME</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>4.45%</b>
Savings	1,209	12.6%
Number of people per household (median)	2.23	100%

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), HABE, 2011

## International Comparison of Purchasing Power, 2015

Net hourly income divided by the cost of the entire commodities basket, including rent

(FIG. 71)

Luxembourg	134.3
<b>Zurich</b>	<b>130.5</b>
<b>Geneva</b>	<b>127.5</b>
Munich	104.2
Frankfurt	102.0
Berlin	101.9
New York	100.0
Lyon	96.9
Paris	92.4
Dublin	91.4
Brussels	90.9
Oslo	86.6
London	85.3
Amsterdam	81.7
Rome	80.8
Tokyo	80.0
Hong Kong SAR	70.4
São Paulo	65.4
Copenhagen	64.5
Moscow	41.4
Shanghai	29.6
Peking	23.6
Mumbai	20.3

Source: UBS, Prices and Earnings 2015

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Economy > Wages and prosperity

Consumer spending

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Economic and social situation of the population > Income, consumption and wealth

Statistics on income, consumption and wealth

Languages: German, English, French, Italian



# INVESTMENT PROMOTION

# 14

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Investment promotion is an important part of Swiss economic policy and takes the form of close cooperation between businesses, the state, the cantons and Switzerland Global Enterprise. The activities used to promote foreign direct investment in Switzerland are organized and coordinated by Switzerland Global Enterprise on behalf of the state.

#### 14.1 RESPONSIBILITIES AND SERVICES

In accordance with Switzerland's federal form of government, responsibility for investment promotion is shared between the federal government and the cantons.

Acting on behalf of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the cantons, Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) informs foreign potential investors about Switzerland's particular strengths as well as the underlying conditions for doing business in Switzerland.

S-GE maintains offices abroad, known as Swiss Business Hubs (SBH). The specialists at these hubs are the first point of contact for foreign investors. Foreign investors from countries without SBHs can contact the S-GE team of experts in Switzerland directly. S-GE assesses the project's potential before passing it on to the cantons.

Area and cantonal economic development agencies are responsible for informing potential investors about the advantages of locating a business in their respective canton, presenting them with concrete location proposals, and organizing local support for investors as they settle in. Even after an investment project has been completed successfully, the economic development agencies continue to look after the investors through a kind of customer service.

S-GE supports foreign investors with the following tasks through the network of cantonal economic development agencies and various private-sector partners:

- Making contact with regional and cantonal economic development offices
- Looking for the ideal location in Switzerland
- Meeting legal and administrative requirements
- Working together with research centers and universities
- Obtaining work and residence permits
- Defining the ideal corporate structure and understanding the Swiss tax system

Switzerland Global Enterprise supports companies at all times throughout their investment project. Contact addresses can be found in the annex.

##### [www.s-ge.com/invest](http://www.s-ge.com/invest)

Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE)

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

##### [www.s-ge.com/cantons](http://www.s-ge.com/cantons)

Areas and cantons

Languages: German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese

## 14.2 BUSINESS PROMOTION POLICY AND INSTRUMENTS

In line with Switzerland's liberal economic system, economic policy in Switzerland focuses on optimum structuring and support for the general business environment. Financial assistance programs are time-limited and strategic. In general, financial assistance from the state always complements private initiatives.

The possible funding options, the mix of various instruments and the scale of payments depend on the specific investment project. There is always room for individual solutions. It is therefore advisable, once a project has been roughly evaluated, to discuss it with the cantonal economic development agencies first.

### 14.2.1 Cantonal Promotion

Most Swiss cantons have their own economic development agencies, although some of these work together with other cantons. All cantons can offer tax relief to businesses as an economic development incentive. Other forms of economic assistance vary from canton to canton, depending on interest and regional economic conditions.

### 14.2.2 Tax Relief as Part of Regional Policy

As part of federal regional policy, specific support is given for the economic development of structurally weak regions such as mountainous areas and rural districts. The federal government can support major investment and innovation projects as well as the establishment of new companies in these regions through tax relief (Fig. 73). The main requirement for federal tax relief is that the canton in question also supports the project by providing an equivalent level of tax relief.

The application process for tax relief in connection with regional policies is always handled by the cantons. The cantonal economic development agencies in question provide advice on the best way to proceed.

See also section 9.4.3

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Topics > Location promotion > SME policy  
Tax relief (regional policy)  
Languages: German, French, Italian

## Examples of Cantonal Business Promotion Instruments

(FIG. 72)

AREA	TYPE OF SUPPORT
Procurement of sites and premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support in finding business premises and sites</li> <li>– Subsidizing the planning and/or development of industrial sites</li> <li>– Subsidizing the cost of converting corporate buildings</li> </ul>
Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Offering tax relief during the start-up or construction phase as well as for restructuring projects</li> </ul>
Funding investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Granting or assisting with securities for bank loans</li> <li>– Assisting with interest-rate cuts or paying/waiving interest costs</li> <li>– Offering interest-free or low-interest cantonal loans</li> <li>– One-off donations (outright grants)</li> </ul>

Source: Legal basis and information from cantonal economic development agencies



## Areas of Application for Tax Breaks, 2013

(FIG. 73)

■ Areas of application as per DEA directive of November 28, 2007. As at January 1, 2013

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)



### 14.2.3 Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI)

CTI is Switzerland's federal innovation promotion agency. For more than 60 years, it has fostered the transfer of knowledge and technology between businesses and universities. It brings partners from these two areas together in applied research and development projects and provides assistance to start-up companies during the development phase. Switzerland has one of the highest levels of innovation of any country in the world. CTI has a budget of about CHF 100 million and operates under the motto "Science to Market." Companies work with universities to generate new knowledge that can be used to develop products and services and bring them to market.

CTI provides funding for:

- Market-oriented R&D projects carried out jointly by companies and universities to develop products and services
- The formation and development of science-based companies
- Know-how and technology transfers through platforms and networks

R&D project grants are available in all disciplines involving scientific innovation. Project applications are submitted in accordance with the bottom-up principle. Grants are awarded on the basis of innovative content and market potential.

In its Venturelab program, CTI helps promising entrepreneurs get started by guiding them through customized training modules. The modules give them the tools and methods they need to implement an exciting business idea and establish a new company. Young entrepreneurs can also apply for professional coaching. Support is provided to knowledge-intensive technology-based companies with great market potential.

CTI's KTT support strengthens knowledge and technology transfer between universities and industries in the same region. Professionally-run national thematic networks (NTNs) provide on-site assistance to SMEs and universities in making contacts and developing projects. Innovative Swiss companies and researchers are also offered development opportunities through access to international programs and networks such as IMS, ESA and EUREKA.

[www.kti-cti.ch](http://www.kti-cti.ch)  
Swiss Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI)  
Languages: German, English, French, Italian

[www.venturelab.ch](http://www.venturelab.ch)  
Venturelab  
Languages: German, English, French

[www.ctistartup.ch](http://www.ctistartup.ch)  
CTI start-up  
Language: English

### 14.2.4 Technology Parks and Business Incubators

Facilities and support centers designed to encourage or facilitate entrepreneurial activity are now part of an economy's infrastructure. Switzerland has a large number of technology parks and business incubator or start-up centers. Most have joined together to form networks or associations. They differ in concept and specific focus; some have developed in close cooperation with universities while others stem from purely private initiatives. They offer premises (generally at preferential rates) for the start-up and development phase as well as shared infrastructure and professional support.

Participation by their umbrella organizations in international networks enables them to use technology park infrastructures throughout Europe. This enables companies to speed up the difficult start-up phase and save on start-up costs. A number of business incubation centers have also been formed in major cities. They too serve as short-term start-up locations for foreign companies establishing new operations in Switzerland by providing flexible and expandable premises, contacts, and business incubation support.

Technology parks and business incubators have the following advantages:

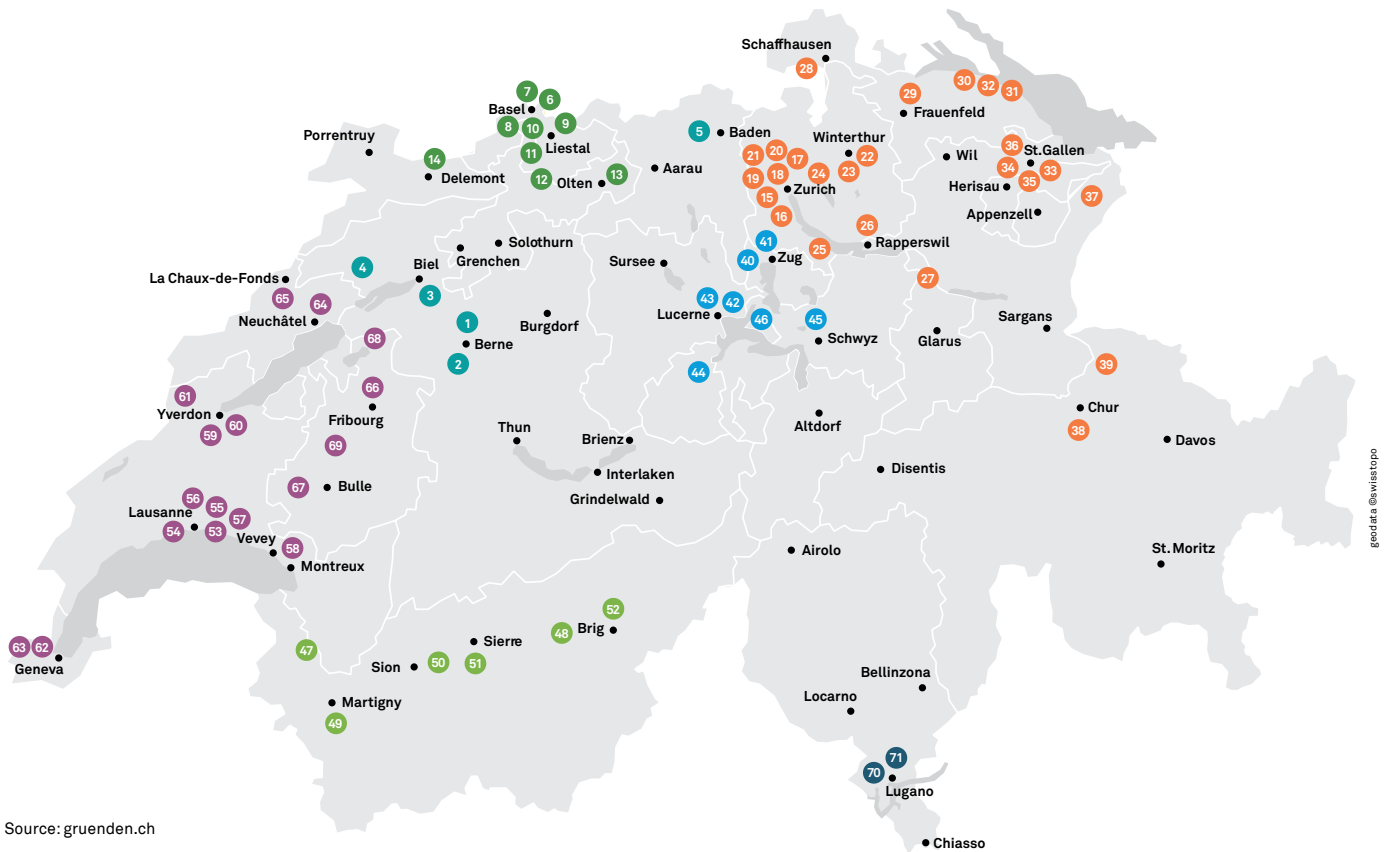
- They provide services such as advice, coaching, telephone services, etc.
- They offer contacts to universities
- Companies are surrounded by like-minded entrepreneurs
- Good infrastructure and flexible premises
- Networking
- Higher chance of success: The average survival rate is more than 90%

[www.swissparks.ch](http://www.swissparks.ch)  
Association of Swiss Technology Parks and Business Incubators  
Language: English

**“Numerous technology parks and business incubators offer premises, shared infrastructure and professional support.”**

## Technology Parks and Business Incubators

(FIG. 74)



Source: gruenden.ch

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Techno-Park Alliance

[www.technopark-allianz.ch](http://www.technopark-allianz.ch)

SwissParks – Association of Swiss Technology Parks and Business Incubators

[www.swissparks.ch](http://www.swissparks.ch)

Interest group

Co-working in Switzerland

[www.coworking-schweiz.ch](http://www.coworking-schweiz.ch)

### BERN/MITTELLAND

- 1 GründerZentrum Bern, Bern  
[www.innobe.ch](http://www.innobe.ch)
- 2 Berner Technopark, Bern  
[www.bernertechnopark.ch](http://www.bernertechnopark.ch)
- 3 DufourWest, co-working space, Biel  
[www.dufourwest.ch](http://www.dufourwest.ch)
- 4 PTSI technology park, St-Imier (BE)  
[www.st-imier.ch](http://www.st-imier.ch)
- 5 Technopark Aargau, Windisch  
[www.technopark-aargau.ch](http://www.technopark-aargau.ch)

### NORTHWESTERN SWITZERLAND

- 6 Basel Inkubator, start-up center of the University of Basel and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW)  
[www.basel-inkubator.ch](http://www.basel-inkubator.ch)
- 7 CoworkingBasel, Basel  
[www.coworkingbasel.ch](http://www.coworkingbasel.ch)
- 8 Technologiepark Basel  
[www.technologiepark-basel.ch](http://www.technologiepark-basel.ch)
- 9 Tenum AG, center for construction, energy and environmental technology, Liestal  
[www.tenum.ch](http://www.tenum.ch)
- 10 Business Parc, Reinach (BL)  
[www.businessparc.ch](http://www.businessparc.ch)
- 11 Business Parc Laufental, Zwingen (BL)  
[www.businessparc.ch](http://www.businessparc.ch)

- 12 TZW TechnologieZentrum, Witterswil (SO)  
[www.tzw-witterswil.ch](http://www.tzw-witterswil.ch)
- 13 Plug & Start, start-up-factory, Olten  
[www.plug-and-start.ch](http://www.plug-and-start.ch)
- 14 Creapole SA, technical park, Delémont  
[www.creapole.ch](http://www.creapole.ch)

### ZURICH/EASTERN SWITZERLAND

- 15 BlueLion, Zurich Incubator for ICT and cleantech companies  
[www.bluelion.ch](http://www.bluelion.ch)
- 16 StartZentrum Zürich, Zurich  
[www.startzentrum.ch](http://www.startzentrum.ch)
- 17 Technopark Zürich, Zurich  
[www.technopark.ch](http://www.technopark.ch)
- 18 The Hub, co-working space, Zurich  
[www.zurich.the-hub.net](http://www.zurich.the-hub.net)

- 19 Citizen Space, co-working space, Zurich  
[www.citizen-space.ch](http://www.citizen-space.ch)
- 20 RocketPark, business park for Internet start-ups, Zurich  
[www.rocketpark.ch](http://www.rocketpark.ch)
- 21 Bio-Technopark Schlieren-Zürich  
[www.bio-technopark.ch](http://www.bio-technopark.ch)
- 22 Technopark Winterthur, Winterthur  
[www.technopark-winterthur.ch](http://www.technopark-winterthur.ch)
- 23 CentralWay, incubator, Winterthur  
[www.centralway.com](http://www.centralway.com)
- 24 glaTec – technology center at the Empa, Dübendorf  
[www.glatec.ch](http://www.glatec.ch)
- 25 grow entrepreneurs' organization, Wädenswil  
[www.grow-waedenswil.ch](http://www.grow-waedenswil.ch)
- 26 Stiftung Futur, business incubator, Rapperswil-Jona (SG)  
[www.futur.ch](http://www.futur.ch)
- 27 TZL TechnologieZentrum Linth, Ziegelbrücke (GL)  
[www.tzl.ch](http://www.tzl.ch)
- 28 RhyTech – Materials Work, Neuhausen am Rheinfall  
[www.rhytech.ch](http://www.rhytech.ch)
- 29 START! Incubation center, Frauenfeld  
[www.start-tg.ch](http://www.start-tg.ch)
- 30 HTC High-Tech-Center AG, Tägerwil (TG)  
[www.high-tech-center.ch](http://www.high-tech-center.ch)
- 31 Spider Town, Tägerwil (TG)  
[www.spidertown.ch](http://www.spidertown.ch)
- 32 Bodensee Technologie & Trade Center AG, Kreuzlingen  
[www.bttc.ch](http://www.bttc.ch)
- 33 tebo center at the Empa, St. Gallen  
[www.tebo.ch](http://www.tebo.ch)
- 34 Startfeld, St. Gallen  
[www.startfeld.ch](http://www.startfeld.ch)
- 35 Ostsinn, co-working space, St. Gallen  
[www.ostsinn.ch](http://www.ostsinn.ch)
- 36 VentureWorks, incubator, St. Gallen  
[www.ventureworks.ch](http://www.ventureworks.ch)
- 37 ri.nova impulszentrum, Rebstein (SG)  
[www.rinova.ch](http://www.rinova.ch)
- 38 E-Tower, business incubator of the University of Applied Sciences, Chur  
[www.e-towerchur.ch](http://www.e-towerchur.ch)
- 39 Innoznet, TRUMPF innovation center, Grüşch (GR)  
[www.innoznet.ch](http://www.innoznet.ch)

#### CENTRAL SWITZERLAND

- 40 BusinessPark Zug, Zug  
[www.businessparkzug.ch](http://www.businessparkzug.ch)
- 41 CoworkingZUG, co-working space, Zug  
[www.coworkingzug.ch](http://www.coworkingzug.ch)
- 42 Technopark Luzern, D4, Root Längenbold  
[www.technopark-luzern.ch](http://www.technopark-luzern.ch)
- 43 Coworking Box, Lucerne  
[www.coworkingbox.ch](http://www.coworkingbox.ch)
- 44 microPark Pilatus, Alpnach  
[www.microparkpilatus.ch](http://www.microparkpilatus.ch)
- 45 Technologiezentrum Schwyz, Steinen  
[www.tzsz.ch](http://www.tzsz.ch)
- 46 Zentrum für neue Technologien Hohle Gasse, Immensee-Küssnacht (SZ)  
[www.hohle-gasse.ch](http://www.hohle-gasse.ch)

#### VALAIS

- 47 BioArk, Parc technologique - Biotech Monthey  
[www.bioark.ch](http://www.bioark.ch)
- 48 BioArk-Visp, Parc Biotech Visp  
[www.bioark.ch](http://www.bioark.ch)
- 49 IdeArk, Parc technologique - ICT Martigny  
[www.ideark.ch](http://www.ideark.ch)
- 50 PhytoArk, Parc technologique - Valrisation des plantes alpines Sion-Conthey  
[www.phytoark.ch](http://www.phytoark.ch)
- 51 TechnoArk, Parc technologique - ICT Sierre  
[www.technoark.ch](http://www.technoark.ch)
- 52 Energypolis, Parc technologique - Energie, Chimie verte, santé, Sion  
[www.energypolis.ch](http://www.energypolis.ch)

#### WESTERN SWITZERLAND

- 53 Parc Scientifique PSE, Lausanne  
[www.parc-scientifique.ch](http://www.parc-scientifique.ch)
- 54 Biopôle Business Park Lausanne, Epalinges  
[www.biopole.ch](http://www.biopole.ch)
- 55 SwissMedia Center, Lausanne  
[www.swissmedia-center.ch](http://www.swissmedia-center.ch)
- 56 Eclau, co-working space, Lausanne  
[www.eclau.ch](http://www.eclau.ch)
- 57 La Fondation des Ateliers de la Ville de Renens, Renens  
[www.ateliersvdr.ch](http://www.ateliersvdr.ch)
- 58 SwissMedia Center, Vevey  
[www.swissmedia-center.ch](http://www.swissmedia-center.ch)
- 59 TecOrbe Greentech Center, Orbe (VD)  
[www.tecorbe.ch](http://www.tecorbe.ch)

- 60 Y-Parc – Swiss technology center, Yverdon-les-Bains  
[www.y-parc.ch](http://www.y-parc.ch)
- 61 Technopôle, center for micro-welding, Sainte-Croix (VD)  
[www.technopole1450.ch](http://www.technopole1450.ch)
- 62 Eclasion SA, Plan-les-Ouates (GE)  
[www.eclasion.com](http://www.eclasion.com)
- 63 FONGIT, technology center, Plan-les-Ouates (GE)  
[www.fongit.ch](http://www.fongit.ch)
- 64 Neode Parc, center for micro-/nanotechnology, Neuchâtel  
[www.neode.ch](http://www.neode.ch)
- 65 Neode Park, center for micro-/nanotechnology, La Chaux-de-Fonds  
[www.neode.ch](http://www.neode.ch)
- 66 Fri Up, business incubator – central, Fribourg  
[www.friup.ch](http://www.friup.ch)
- 67 Fri Up, business incubator – south, Vaulruz (FR)  
[www.friup.ch](http://www.friup.ch)
- 68 Fri Up, business incubator – north, Murten (FR)  
[www.friup.ch](http://www.friup.ch)
- 69 Venturi Incubateur SA, Villaz-St-Pierre (FR)  
[www.venturi.vivier.ch](http://www.venturi.vivier.ch)

#### TICINO

- 70 Centro Promozione Start-up, Lugano  
[www.cpstartup.ch](http://www.cpstartup.ch)
- 71 Tecnopolo Lugano, Bioggio  
[www.tecnopolo.ch](http://www.tecnopolo.ch)



# ANNEX

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## 15.1 INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

### 15.1.1 Swiss Business Hubs Investment Promotion (Target Markets)

#### Europe

##### Germany

Swiss Business Hub Germany  
c/o Schweizerisches  
Generalkonsulat  
Hirschstrasse 22  
D-70173 Stuttgart  
Tel. +49 711 2229 4329  
Fax +49 711 2229 4319  
stu.sbhgermany@eda.admin.ch

##### France

Swiss Business Hub France  
c/o Ambassade de Suisse  
142, rue de Grenelle  
F-75007 Paris  
Tel. +33 1 4955 6785  
Fax +33 1 4955 6786  
par.sbhfrance@eda.admin.ch

##### Italy

Swiss Business Hub Italy  
c/o Consolato Generale  
di Svizzera - Italia  
Via Palestro, 2  
I-20121 Milano  
Tel. +39 02 77 79 161  
Fax +39 02 76 0142 96  
mil.sbhitalia@eda.admin.ch

##### Russia

Swiss Business Hub Russia  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
Kursovoy Per. 7  
RU-119034 Moscow  
Tel. +7 495 225 8841  
Fax +7 495 225 8842  
mot.sbhrussia@eda.admin.ch

##### United Kingdom

Swiss Business Hub United  
Kingdom  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
16-18 Montagu Place  
GB-London W1H 2BQ  
Tel. +44 20 7616 6000  
Fax +44 20 7723 6455  
lon.sbhuk@eda.admin.ch

#### Americas

##### Brazil

Swiss Business Hub Brazil  
c/o Consulado Geral da Suíça  
AV. Paulista 1754, 4º andar Edifício  
Grande Avenida  
BR-01310-920 São Paulo / SP  
Tel. +55 11 3372 8200  
Fax +55 11 3253 5716  
sao.sbhbrasil@eda.admin.ch

##### USA

Swiss Business Hub USA  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
633 Third Avenue, 30th Floor  
US-New York, NY 10017-6706  
Tel. +1 212 599 5700 ext. 1032  
Fax +1 212 599 4266  
nyc.sbhusa@eda.admin.ch

#### Asia

##### China

Swiss Business Hub China  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
Sanlitun Dongwujie 3  
CN-100600 Beijing, China  
Tel. +86 10 8532 8888  
Fax +86 10 6532 4353  
bei.sbhchina@eda.admin.ch

##### India

Swiss Business Hub India  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
502 Dalamal House, 5th Floor  
206, Jammalal Bajaj Marg  
Nariman Point  
IN-Mumbai 400 021  
Tel. +91 22 4343 5600  
Fax +91 22 2285 6566  
mum.sbhindia@eda.admin.ch

##### Japan

Swiss Business Hub Japan  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
5-9-12 Minami Azabu, Minto-ku  
JP-Tokyo 106-8589  
Tel. +81 3 5449 8433/8434  
Fax +81 3 3473 6090  
tok.sbhjapan@eda.admin.ch

### 15.1.2 Other Swiss Business Hubs of Switzerland Global Enterprise

#### Austria

Swiss Business Hub Austria  
c/o Handelskammer Schweiz-  
Österreich-Liechtenstein  
Schwindgasse 20  
AT-1040 Vienna  
Tel. +43 1 512 5959  
Fax +43 1 512 5979  
swissbusinesshub-austria@  
s-ge.com

#### Poland

Swiss Business Hub Poland  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
Aleje Ujazdowskie 27  
PL-00-540 Warsaw  
Tel. +48 22 628 0481  
var.sbhpoland@eda.admin.ch

#### Spain

Swiss Business Hub Spain  
c/o Embajada de Suiza  
Calle Nuñez de Balboa 35A-7,  
Edificio Goya  
ES-28001 Madrid  
Tel. +34 91 432 0466

#### Turkey

Swiss Business Hub Turkey  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
Esentepe Mah. Büyükdere Cad.  
173, 1. Levent Plaza A Blok Kat: 3  
TR-34394 Levent - Sisli - Istanbul  
Tel. +90 212 283 1298  
Fax +90 530 230 1220

#### Canada

Swiss Business Hub Canada  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
1572, Docteur-Penfield Avenue  
CA-QC H3G 1C4 Montreal  
Tel. +1 514 932 7181  
Fax +1 514 932 9028

#### Mexico

Swiss Business Hub Mexico  
c/o Embajada de Suiza en México  
Paseo de las Palmas No. 405, Torre  
Optima I, piso 11 Col. Lomas de  
Chapultepec  
MX-11000 Mexico D.F.  
Tel. +52 55 9178 4370 ext. 30  
Fax +52 55 5520 8685

#### South Africa

Swiss Business Hub Southern  
Africa  
Brooklyn Square 0075  
ZA-0181 New Muckleneuk, Pretoria  
Tel. +27 12 452 0690

#### ASEAN

Swiss Business Hub Singapore  
1 Swiss Club Link  
SG-288162 Singapore  
Tel. +65 6468 5788 ext. 579 or 580  
Fax +65 6466 8245

#### Hong Kong

Swiss Business Hub Hong Kong  
Consulate General of Switzerland  
62/F Central Plaza, 18 Harbour  
Road  
HK-Wan Chai  
Tel. +852 35 09 5000  
Fax +852 35 05 5050

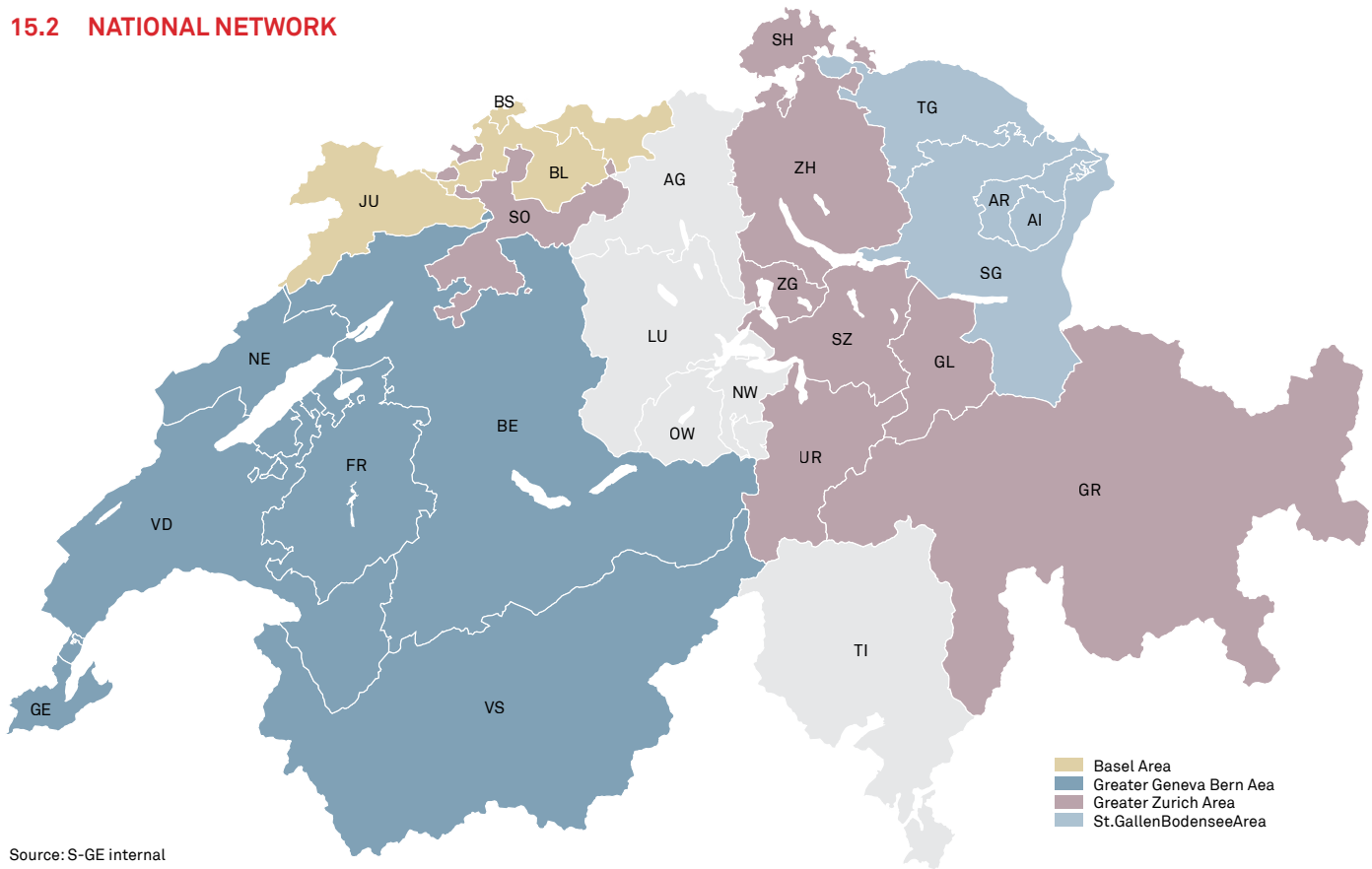
#### Gulf States

Swiss Business Hub Gulf States  
(GCC), Dubai Office  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
Dubai World Trade Center  
AE-Dubai  
Tel. +971 4 329 0999  
Fax +971 4 331 3679  
dai.sbhDubai@eda.admin.ch

#### South Korea

Swiss Business Hub Korea  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
77 Songwol-gil, Jongro-gu  
KR-110-101 Seoul  
Tel. +82 2 739 9511/12/13/14  
seo.sbh-korea@eda.admin.ch

## 15.2 NATIONAL NETWORK



Source: S-GE internal

### 15.2.1 Cantonal Business Promotion Agencies

#### Aargau (AG)

Aargau Services  
Location Marketing  
Rain 53  
Postfach  
CH-5001 Aarau  
Tel. +41 62 835 2440  
Fax +41 62 835 2419  
aargau.services@ag.ch  
www.aargauservices.ch

#### Appenzell Ausserrhoden (AR)

Office for Economic Affairs  
Government Building  
CH-9102 Herisau  
Tel. +41 71 353 6111  
Fax +41 71 353 6259  
info@wifoear.ch  
www.ar.ch/wirtschaft

#### Appenzell Innerrhoden (AI)

Economic Development  
Marktgasse 2  
CH-9050 Appenzell  
Tel. +41 71 788 9444  
Fax +41 71 788 9469  
wirtschaft@ai.ch  
www.ai.ch/standort

#### Basel-Stadt (BS) and Basel-Landschaft (BL)

BaselArea  
Economic Promotion  
Aeschenvorstadt 36  
CH-4010 Basel  
Tel. +41 61 295 5000  
Fax +41 61 295 5009  
info@baselarea.ch  
www.baselarea.ch

#### Bern (BE)

Bern Economic  
Development Agency  
Münsterplatz 3  
CH-3011 Bern  
Tel. +41 31 633 4120  
Fax +41 31 633 4088  
info@berneinvest.com  
www.berneinvest.ch

#### Fribourg (FR)

Fribourg Development Agency  
Boulevard de Pérolles 25  
Postfach 1350  
CH-1701 Fribourg  
Tel. +41 26 304 1400  
Fax +41 26 304 1401  
promfr@fr.ch  
www.promfr.ch

#### Geneva (GE)

Geneva Economic  
Development Office  
Rue de l'Hôtel-de-Ville 11  
P.O. Box 3216  
CH-1211 Geneva 3  
Tel. +41 22 388 3434  
Fax +41 22 388 3199  
promotion@etat.ge.ch  
www.whygeneva.ch

#### Glarus (GL)

Office of Economic Matters  
Zwinglistrasse 6  
CH-8750 Glarus  
Tel. +41 55 646 6614  
Fax +41 55 646 6609  
kontakt@glarusnet.ch  
www.glarus.ch

#### Grisons (GR)

Economic Development and  
Tourism Agency  
Economic Development  
Grabenstrasse 1  
CH-7001 Chur  
Tel. +41 81 257 2342  
Fax +41 81 257 2192  
info@awt.gr.ch  
www.awt.gr.ch

#### Jura (JU)

Economic Development  
12, rue de la Préfecture  
CH-2800 Delémont  
Tel. +41 32 420 5220  
Fax +41 32 420 5221  
bde@jura.ch  
eco.jura.ch

#### Lucerne (LU)

Business Development Lucerne  
Alpenquai 30  
CH-6005 Lucerne  
Tel. +41 41 367 4400  
Fax +41 41 367 4401  
info@lucerne-business.ch  
www.lucerne-business.ch

#### Neuchâtel (NE)

Service of the Economy  
Office for Economic Promotion  
Avenue de la Gare 2  
CH-2000 Neuchâtel  
Tel. +41 32 889 6823  
Fax +41 32 889 6295  
open@ne.ch  
www.neuchateleconomie.com

**Nidwalden (NW)**

Economic Promotion  
Canton of Nidwalden  
Stansstadterstrasse 54  
Postfach 1251  
CH-6371 Stans  
Tel. +41 41 618 7654  
Fax +41 41 618 7658  
wirtschaftsfoerderung@nw.ch  
www.wirtschaftsfoerderung.nw.ch

**Obwalden (OW)**

Business & Residential Promotion  
in Obwalden  
Dorfplatz 1  
CH-6060 Sarnen  
Tel. +41 41 660 9066  
Fax +41 41 660 9069  
info@iow.ch  
www.iow.ch

**Schaffhausen (SH)**

Economic Promotion  
Canton of Schaffhausen  
Herrenacker 15  
CH-8200 Schaffhausen  
Tel. +41 52 674 0303  
Fax +41 52 674 0609  
economic.promotion@generis.ch  
www.economy.sh

**Schwyz (SZ)**

Office for Economy  
Bahnhofstrasse 15  
Postfach 1187  
CH-6431 Schwyz  
Tel. +41 41 819 1634  
Fax +41 41 819 1619  
wirtschaftsfoerderung@sz.ch  
www.schwyz-wirtschaft.ch

**Solothurn (SO)**

Solothurn Economic  
Development Agency  
Untere Sternengasse 2  
CH-4509 Solothurn  
Tel. +41 32 627 9523  
Fax +41 32 627 9592  
wifoe@awa.so.ch  
www.standortsolothurn.ch

**St. Gallen (SG)**

Location Promotion  
Business Development Agency for  
the Canton of St. Gallen  
Davidstrasse 35  
CH-9001 St. Gallen  
Tel. +41 58 229 6464  
Fax +41 58 229 4740  
info.vdafw@sg.ch  
www.location.sg.ch

**Ticino (TI)**

Economic Promotion Office  
Viale S. Franscini 17  
CH-6501 Bellinzona  
Tel. +41 91 814 3541  
Fax +41 91 814 4457  
dfe-use@ti.ch  
www.ti.ch/copernico

**Thurgau (TG)**

Thurgau Business  
Development Agency  
Zürcherstrasse 183  
CH-8510 Frauenfeld  
Tel. +41 58 345 5500  
Fax +41 58 345 5501  
info@wiftg.ch  
wifoe.tg.ch

**Uri (UR)**

Economic Affairs, Canton of Uri  
Klausenstrasse 4  
CH-6460 Altdorf  
Tel. +41 41 875 2401  
Fax +41 41 875 2412  
wirtschaft@ur.ch  
www.ur.ch/wfu

**Vaud (VD)**

Economic Development  
Canton of Vaud  
Avenue de Gratta-Paille 2  
Case postale 19  
CH-1000 Lausanne 22  
Tel. +41 21 644 0060  
Fax +41 21 644 0079  
dev@dev.ch  
www.dev.ch

**Valais (VS)**

Business Valais  
Economic Development Office  
Canton of Valais  
Maison de Courten  
Place St. Theodule  
CH-1950 Sion  
Tel. +41 27 606 7350  
info@business-valais.ch  
www.business-valais.ch

**Zug (ZG)**

Economic Promotion of the  
Canton of Zug  
Aabachstrasse 5  
Postfach  
CH-6301 Zug  
Tel. +41 41 728 5504  
Fax +41 41 728 5509  
economy@zug.ch  
www.zug.ch/economy

**Zurich (ZH)**

Office of Economy and Labour  
of the Canton of Zurich  
Economic Development  
Walchestrasse 19  
Postfach  
CH-8090 Zurich  
Tel. +41 43 259 4992  
Fax +41 43 259 5171  
standort@vd.zh.ch  
www.standort.zh.ch

**15.2.2 Regional Location  
Marketing Organizations****BaselArea**

BaselArea  
Economic Promotion  
Aeschenvorstadt 36  
CH-4010 Basel  
Tel. +41 61 295 5000  
Fax +41 61 295 5009  
info@baselarea.ch  
www.baselarea.ch

**GGBa**

Greater Geneva Bern area  
Invest Western Switzerland  
World Trade Center  
Avenue de Gratta-Paille 2  
P.O. Box 252  
CH-1000 Lausanne 22  
Tel. +41 21 644 0090  
Fax +41 21 644 0099  
info@ggba-switzerland.ch  
www.ggba-switzerland.org

**Greater Zurich Area**

Greater Zurich Area AG  
Limmatquai 122  
CH-8001 Zurich  
Tel. +41 44 254 5959  
Fax +41 44 254 5954  
info@greaterzuricharea.ch  
www.greaterzuricharea.ch

**St.GallenBodenseeArea**

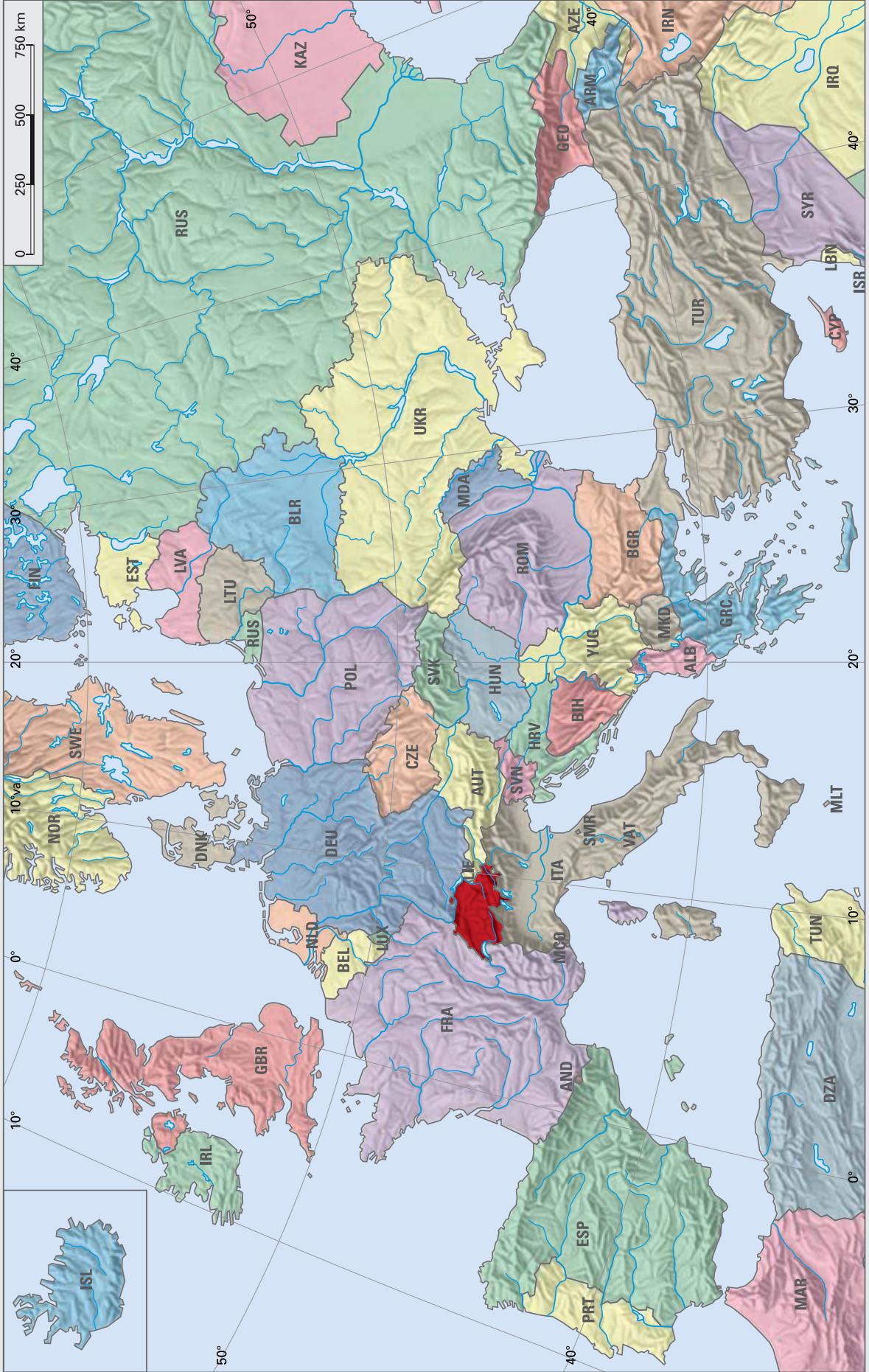
St.GallenBodenseeArea  
Davidstrasse 35  
CH-9001 St. Gallen  
Tel. +41 58 229 6464  
invest@sgba.ch  
www.sgba.ch

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# MAP OF EUROPE



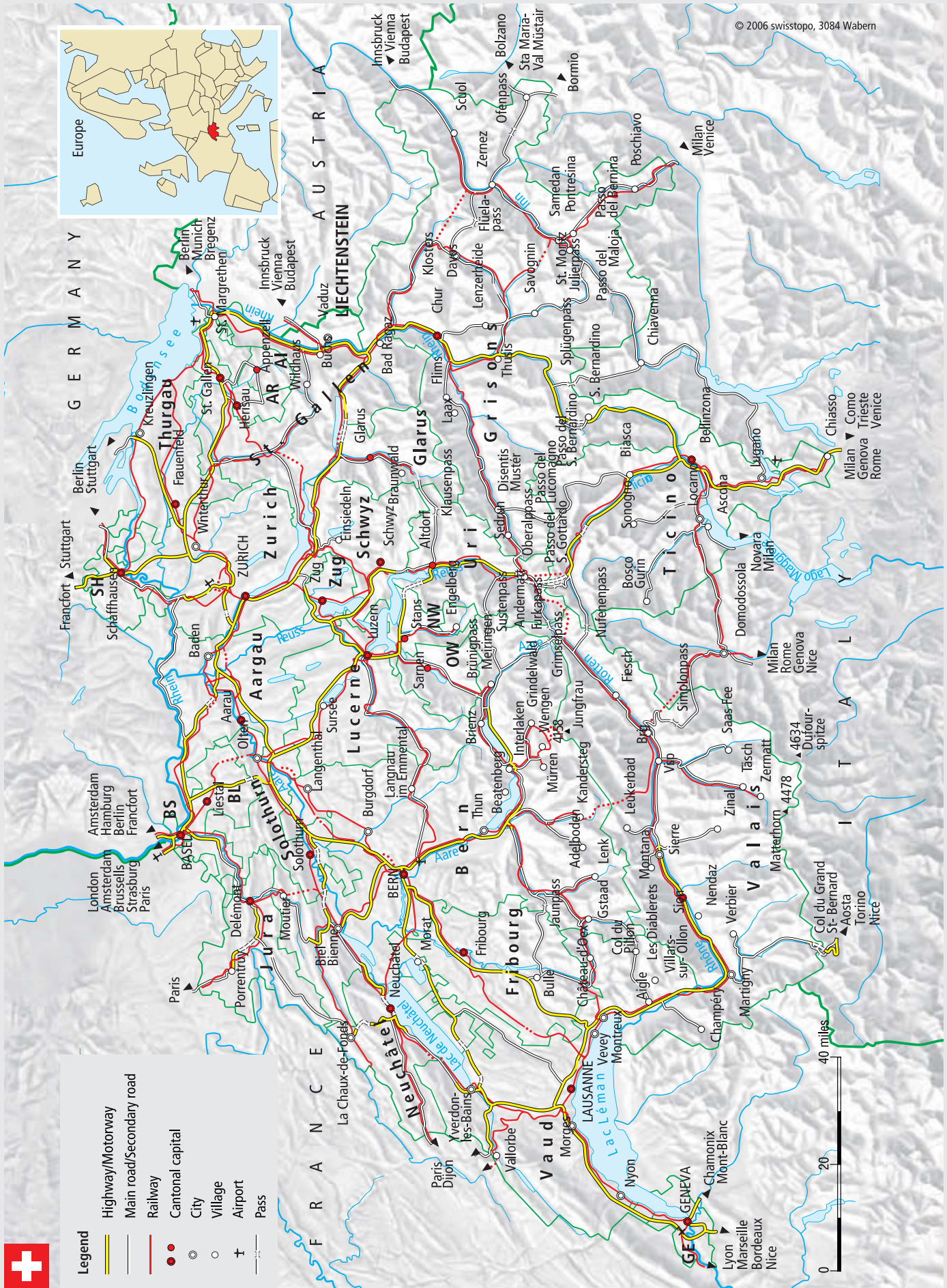
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MAP OF SWITZERLAND

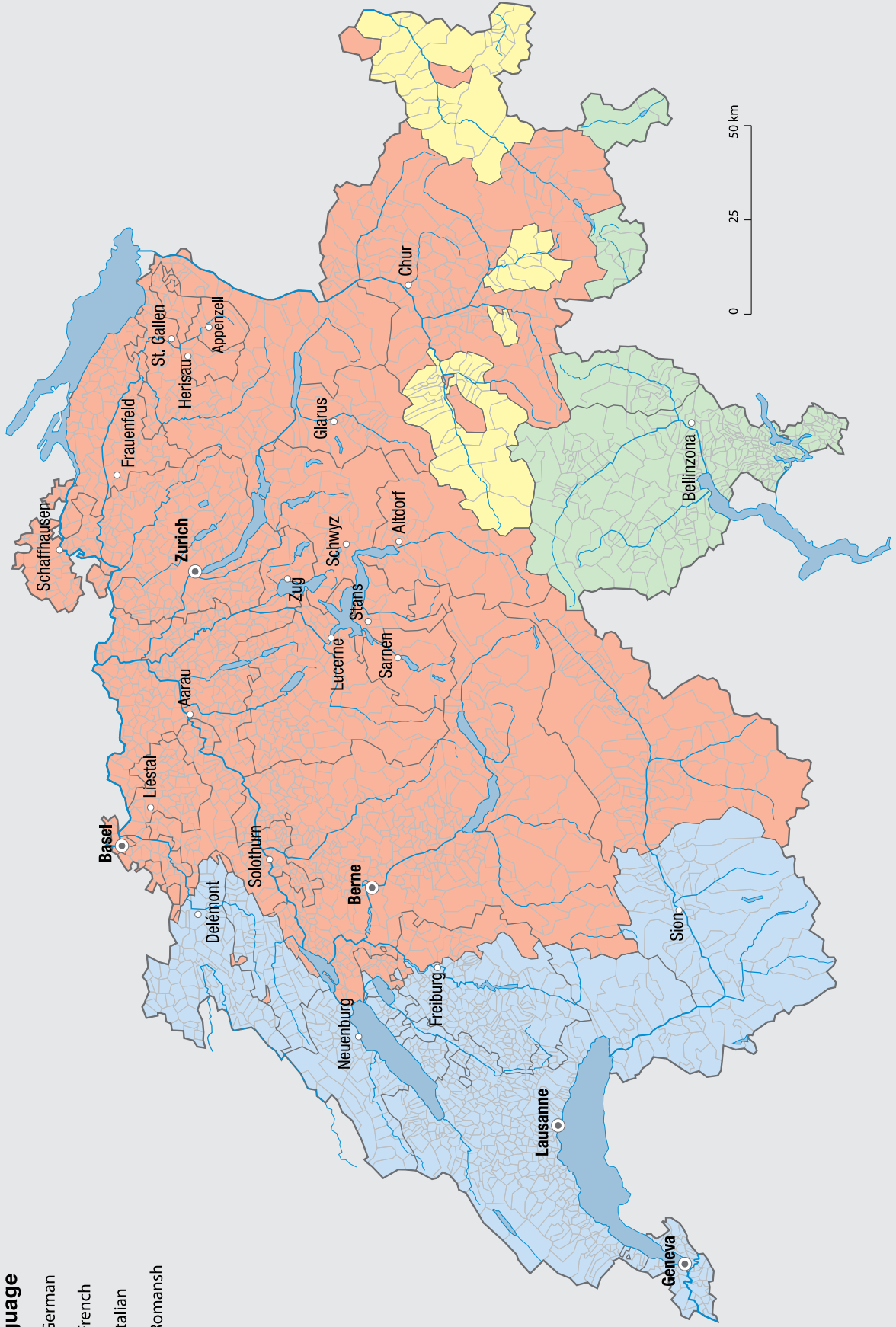


# LINGUISTIC AREAS OF SWITZERLAND

## Language regions

### Language

- German
- French
- Italian
- Romansh



## Investment Promotion

[s-ge.com/invest](https://s-ge.com/invest)



Switzerland Global Enterprise  
Stampfenbachstrasse 85  
CH-8006 Zurich  
T +41 44 365 51 51

[s-ge.com](https://s-ge.com)  
[info@s-ge.com](mailto:info@s-ge.com)