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**State Secretariat for Migration SEM**



# State Secretariat for Migration

An Overview



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## SEM is responsible for all matters relating to immigration and asylum policy in Switzerland.

State Secretariat for Migration SEM determines the conditions under which a person may enter, live and work in Switzerland. It also decides whether a person is granted protection from persecution. It works with the cantons to organise the accommodation of asylum seekers and the return of those who are not in need of protection. SEM also coordinates integration efforts and is responsible for naturalisation at federal level. In addition, it works to coordinate migration flows at international level.

## Entry and residence

SEM determines the conditions under which a person may enter and live in Switzerland. Entry requirements vary depending on the purpose of the stay (tourism, visiting family or friends, employment, family reunification, study) and the length of the stay (short or long term). Anyone who wishes to live in Switzerland permanently must have a valid travel document and a work permit. Nationals of EU/EFTA countries obtain a permit more easily than those from other countries. Anyone who is persecuted in their country of origin can apply for asylum.



## Employment

SEM determines the conditions under which foreign nationals may work in Switzerland. Foreign nationals require a permit to work in Switzerland. The exact rules depend on whether a person comes from an EU/EFTA country or from another country (third country).

### Nationals from EU/EFTA countries

Workers from EU/EFTA countries benefit from the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the European Union. To work in Switzerland, they require a valid employment contract and a residence permit.

### Nationals from third countries

Switzerland issues a limited number of work permits to highly qualified workers from outside the EU/EFTA area (third countries). For third-country nationals to obtain a work permit, their employer must prove that they were unable to find a suitable person for the job on the Swiss labour market. Depending on their country of origin, the person may also require a visa.



## Protection from persecution and conflict

### Protection from persecution: Asylum

Switzerland grants protection to people who are persecuted in their home country. Refugees are people who on account of their

- race
- religion
- nationality
- membership of a particular social group or
- political opinions

are subject to serious disadvantages, such as a threat to their life, their physical integrity, their freedom or measures that exert intolerable psychological pressure. Motives specific to women (forced marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic violence, forced abortion, honour killings) or related to sexual orientation are also taken into account.

During the asylum procedure, SEM decides whether the person is recognised as a refugee, is granted temporary admission or must leave Switzerland. For the duration of the procedure, until they receive a positive decision or must leave Switzerland, asylum seekers are accommodated in federal asylum centres run by SEM.

### Protection from armed conflict

Armed conflicts are generally not grounds for asylum in Switzerland as they do not involve individual persecution. People who cannot return to their home country because of war are often granted temporary admission to Switzerland.



10 **Protection status S**

Since the outbreak of war on 24 February 2022, several million people have fled Ukraine. On 11 March 2022, the Federal Council decided that Ukrainians in need of protection should be granted temporary protection in Switzerland. Protection status S gives Ukrainian refugees the right to stay without having to go through an individual asylum procedure. Switzerland has extended this protection status until 4 March 2026.

Anyone living permanently in Switzerland should be integrated into the labour market and society. Integration is a process that involves both the foreign and the the Swiss population. Integration into Swiss society takes place primarily through school, vocational training or employment. In addition, SEM funds specific integration projects.

## A bridge to the working world

One such integration project is the INVOL integration pre-apprenticeship project. The project prepares particularly young people with an asylum background for vocational training by providing them with specific and practical experience.



## Naturalisation

As a general rule, well-integrated foreigners who have lived in Switzerland for at least ten years and have a C residence permit can apply for regular naturalisation. The federal government sets the criteria, but the cantons and communes are responsible for implementation. The process is faster for people who are married to a Swiss citizen. In such cases, simplified naturalisation is possible. People of the third generation can also be naturalised under a simplified procedure. Swiss citizenship entails certain rights and duties. These include the right to vote and, for men, compulsory military service.





## Swiss migration foreign policy

SEM is committed at the international level to the effective management of migration flows. To this end, it engages in dialogue with third countries and countries of origin, negotiates international agreements and coordinates with international organisations on migration and refugees. SEM also sends immigration officers abroad to liaise between Switzerland and other countries or regions. These immigration liaison officers are responsible for implementing Swiss migration foreign policy on the ground.



## Return

Asylum seekers whose application has been rejected and whose return to their country of origin is reasonable, permissible and possible, must leave Switzerland. This also applies to people who are in Switzerland illegally. SEM encourages voluntary return, but also supports the cantons in the forced return of people who must leave the country.



More information  
[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch)



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