



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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Département fédéral de justice et police DFJP  
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Staatssekretariat für Migration SEM  
Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM  
Segreteria di Stato della migrazione SEM

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# Welcome to Switzerland!

You have been granted asylum in Switzerland or have been temporarily admitted. Your status is subject to special regulations. We would like to inform you about this in this brochure.

You will now live in Switzerland for a longer period of time. It is therefore important that you find your way around and integrate as quickly as possible. This includes, among other things, being aware of your rights and duties and striving for work and education. In this brochure, you will find basic information on the specific regulations that apply to your status, as well as links to further addresses and information.

State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

**This brochure is available in electronic format in the following languages: German, French, Italian, English, Arabic, Tigrinya, Kurdish, Tibetan, Farsi, Tamil, Somali and Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian**

[www.sem.admin.ch/info-integration](http://www.sem.admin.ch/info-integration)

# Brief overview

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## Recognised refugees — B permit

**B** A refugee is a person who, because of his/her race, religion, nationality, affiliation with a particular social group or because of his/her political opinions, has been subjected to serious disadvantages or has a well-founded fear of being exposed to such disadvantages in his/her home or country of origin. This definition is based on the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Refugee Convention). Serious disadvantages are, in particular, threat to life, physical integrity or freedom as well as measures that cause unbearable psychological pressure. Women-specific reasons for fleeing are also taken into consideration. The Geneva Refugee Convention also states that no one may be expelled or returned to a state where the person would be exposed to the above-mentioned threats.

### Legal basis

The legal status of refugees results from the Geneva Refugee Convention. At the national level, it is governed by the Asylum Act (Articles 58–62 of the Asylum Act). The relevant law can be found at: [www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142\\_31.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142_31.html)

### Permits issued

Recognised refugees are entitled to a residence permit in the canton in which they are legally residing (Foreign Nationals' residence permit B). This is limited to one year, but is usually renewed as long as the grounds for recognition as refugees continue to exist. After legally residing in Switzerland for ten years, a permanent settlement permit (C permit) may be issued to recognised refugees, if the criteria for integration are fulfilled and there are no grounds for revocation. Those who successfully integrate and can communicate well in the local language spoken at their place of residence, can apply for the permanent settlement permit after five years of legal residence.

## Temporarily admitted refugees — F permit

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A temporarily admitted refugee is a person who qualifies for the refugee status, but has not been granted asylum as there are reasons for exclusion from asylum. This is the case when a person's status as a refugee came about only by leaving his/her home or country of origin or due to his/her conduct after leaving the country. Refugees, for whom there are grounds for exclusion from asylum, are temporarily admitted

### Legal basis

The legal status of temporarily admitted refugees results from the Geneva Refugee Convention. The temporary admission is governed by the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and on Integration (AIG) (Art. 83–88a AIG). The relevant law can be found at: [www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142\\_20.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142_20.html)

### Permits issued

Temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons receive an F permit. This is issued for a maximum of twelve months and may be renewed by the canton of residence for a further twelve months. After legally residing in Switzerland for five years, temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons may apply for a residence permit (B permit). When examining the application, the authorities consider the level of integration, family ties and the reasonableness of a return to the country of origin.

## Temporarily admitted persons — F permit

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A temporarily admitted person is someone whose application for asylum has been rejected, but whose expulsion cannot be carried out for the following reasons: The enforcement of removal is not possible (for example: if no travel documents can be obtained), is not permitted (if the enforcement violates the provisions of international law) or is unreasonable (for example, because of war or a situation of generalised violence in the country of origin).

### Legal basis

The legal status of temporarily admitted persons is governed by the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and on Integration (AIG) (Art. 83–88a AIG). The relevant law can be found at: [www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142\\_20.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c142_20.html)

### Permits issued

Temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons receive an F permit. This is issued for a maximum of twelve months and may be renewed by the canton of residence for a further twelve months. After legally residing in Switzerland for five years, temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons may apply for a residence permit (B permit). When examining the application, the authorities consider the level of integration, family ties and the reasonableness of a return to the country of origin.

## Housing

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Recognised refugees, temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons are assigned to a canton during or after completion of the asylum procedure. They will continue to stay in the same canton after the asylum decision is rendered. You may freely choose where you want to live within the canton you have been assigned. Temporarily admitted persons who are receiving social welfare benefits may be assigned the place of residence or accommodation by the cantonal authorities. You must notify your residence address to the responsible cantonal authority. The issued foreign nationals' permit is only valid in the canton to which you have been assigned.

**Useful information for tenants in 16 languages:**  
[www.bwo.admin.ch/bwo/de/home/wie-wir-wohnen/infoblatt-wohnen/infoblatt.html](http://www.bwo.admin.ch/bwo/de/home/wie-wir-wohnen/infoblatt-wohnen/infoblatt.html)

**Swiss Tenants Association:**  
[www.mieterverband.ch](http://www.mieterverband.ch)

## Change of canton

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Recognised refugees can submit an application for a change of canton to the immigration authority of the canton to which they wish to move. The application is usually approved if the applicant is not permanently dependent on social welfare benefits or if there are no other grounds for revocation under immigration laws.

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**F**

Temporarily admitted refugees may apply for change of canton. The application is usually approved if the applicant is not permanently dependent on social benefits or if there are no other grounds for revocation under immigration laws. The application for the change of canton must be submitted directly to the SEM.

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**F**

Temporarily admitted foreigners may apply for change of cantons. The application must be sent directly to the SEM. The SEM will then consult the cantons concerned and decide whether or not to approve the application. Applications are approved if the applicant is entitled to family reunification or if both cantons concerned agree to the change of canton.

## Travel abroad

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Recognised refugees and temporarily admitted refugees may apply for a travel document for refugees at the immigration office of their canton of residence, with which they can travel abroad and back to Switzerland. To do this, you must go to the immigration office in person. The travel document is issued by the SEM and is usually valid for five years.

**Important: The travel document for refugees does not entitle you to entry into your home country or country of origin. If a recognised refugee or a temporarily admitted refugee travels to his/her home country or country of origin, his/her refugee status may be revoked.**

**Furthermore, it should be noted that the travel document for refugees does not automatically entitle you to entry into other countries. Entry into the Schengen area for tourism purposes is generally possible without visa for a period of up to three months. To enter other countries, you will require a visa. Please inquire with the authorities of the countries you wish to travel to.**

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Temporarily admitted persons are not entitled to travel abroad freely. You must deposit the passports issued by your country of origin with the SEM. In justified cases (for example, serious illness or death of family members), you may go to the cantonal immigration office in person and apply for a return visa. If you are unable to obtain passport from your country of origin, you may apply for a travel document for foreigners, which will allow you to travel. This travel document may only be used for the approved travel.

## Family reunification and family asylum

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Recognised refugees are permitted to be joined by their family members (spouses, registered partners and children under the age of 18). These family members will be recognised as refugees and granted asylum, provided this family unit existed before they fled and there are no special circumstances to preclude this.

Any children born in Switzerland to recognised refugees status will not be automatically recognised as refugees. For this reason, it is important that an asylum application is filed with the SEM as soon as possible after the child's birth so that the child can also be granted refugee status.

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Temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons must wait for at least three years after their temporary admission to file an application for family reunification with the cantonal migration authority. Only spouses, registered partners and unmarried children under the age of 18 may come to Switzerland through family reunification. Pre-requisites for family reunification are that the family lives together in the same household, has housing suitable for the entire family, is not dependent on social benefits and can communicate in the local language spoken at the place of residence.

If the time-related requirements for family reunification are fulfilled, the application for family reunification must be submitted within the next five years. The application for bringing children over the age of twelve must be submitted within the next twelve months.

## Integration

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Those who live in Switzerland for extended periods of time should integrate as quickly and sustainably as possible. For this, it is important that you gather information and make the effort to learn the local language, look for employment, and take part in social life. Switzerland supports the integration process through programs and projects and strives to offer equal opportunities for all. The aim of integration is peaceful coexistence of domestic and foreign population based on the values enshrined in the Federal Constitution as well as on mutual respect and tolerance.

**More information on Swiss integration policy:**

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

[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/integration.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/integration.html)

## Integration support

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Numerous governmental and private organisations offer courses and programs to support recognised refugees, temporarily admitted refugees, and temporarily admitted persons in their integration process in Switzerland. You are encouraged to seek advice and take advantage of these services. The necessary information can be found at cantonal integration offices.

**Further information on integration support:**

[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/integration/foerderung.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/themen/integration/foerderung.html)

**Points of contact for integration in the cantons and cities:**

[www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale\\_behoerden/kantonale\\_ansprechstellen.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_ansprechstellen.html)

**Information on the cantonal integration programs (KIP):**

[www.kip-pic.ch/de](http://www.kip-pic.ch/de)

## School and education

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Children of recognised refugees, temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons must go to school just like all other children living in Switzerland. The compulsory education, including kindergarten, lasts eleven years of school and begins at the age of four. After that, according to their abilities, the children can complete a vocational training and education (VET), or attend a secondary school and later, a university.

**More information on compulsory education and VET:**  
[www.ch.ch/private/00060/00062/index.html?lang=de](http://www.ch.ch/private/00060/00062/index.html?lang=de)  
[www.berufsbildung.ch](http://www.berufsbildung.ch)

## Continuing education and training

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On the Swiss labour market, workers are subject to stringent requirements both in terms of language mastery and technical skills. Often, the qualifications of foreigners do not meet the requirements of the Swiss labour market or the qualifications from abroad are not recognised here. Language courses, continuing education or other offers should help you to gain access to the world of employment. The Competence Centres for Integration and the cantonal career counselling centres will provide you with the necessary information and advice.

**Contact information of cantonal vocational, educational and career counselling offices:**  
[www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/8242](http://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/8242)

## Employment

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Employment and economic independence are important factors for integration into society. Take advantage of offers that make it easier for you to enter the world of employment and let the competent authorities advise you. You must actively seek a job.

You can take up gainful employment throughout Switzerland. Under certain conditions, a week's stay outside your canton of residence is possible. The employer must notify your employment to the responsible cantonal authority at the place of employment before you start working. The termination of employment and a job change must also be notified. The notification serves the purpose of protecting the employees, among other things. It is intended to prevent you from having to work for lower wages than other people.

The rules concerning the change of canton (see page 7) are still to be followed.

**Useful information on employment and how to find work:**  
[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch)

**Information on employees:**  
[www.ch.ch/private/00054/00055/index.html?lang=de](http://www.ch.ch/private/00054/00055/index.html?lang=de)

## Healthcare

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Switzerland offers a well-developed healthcare system. You should obtain information about how you and your family can live healthily and what offers are available.

All persons living in Switzerland must mandatorily take out a basic health insurance coverage.

As in other areas of everyday life, it is important also in the area of health that you are able to gather information and communicate, as far as possible, in the local language.

**For the prevention and treatment of physical and mental ailments, the Federal Office of Public Health provides comprehensive information in various languages:  
[www.migesplus.ch](http://www.migesplus.ch)**

**The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) offers medical care, psychotherapy and counselling to victims of torture and war and their families in Bern, Zurich, Geneva and Lausanne:  
[www.redcross.ch/de/organisation/ambulatorium-fuer-folter-und-kriegsopfer/hilfe-fuer-traumatisierte-menschen](http://www.redcross.ch/de/organisation/ambulatorium-fuer-folter-und-kriegsopfer/hilfe-fuer-traumatisierte-menschen)**

**The Swiss Centre for Psychotraumatology (GRAVITA) also offers medical care, psychotherapy and counselling to victims of torture and war and their families in St.Gallen:  
[www.gravita.ch/angebot](http://www.gravita.ch/angebot)**

## Social insurance

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Switzerland has a well-developed social insurance network. The benefits of each social security branch are financed in advance through contributions from earned income. As a recognised refugee, temporarily admitted refugee and temporarily admitted person, you are equally under obligation to contribute and are entitled to benefits as the Swiss. Social insurance offers insured persons protection against risks, the financial consequences of which they cannot manage on their own (for example, in case of unemployment or disability). There is also a pension for elderly people. A pension may also be paid if the spouse or a parent dies (for minors). Employees are insured by the employer against accidents and occupational diseases.

**More about the social insurance:**

[www.bsv.admin.ch/bsv/de/home/sozialversicherungen/ueberblick.html](http://www.bsv.admin.ch/bsv/de/home/sozialversicherungen/ueberblick.html)

**More information about unemployment insurance:**

[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch/arbeitslos/erste\\_schritte/](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch/arbeitslos/erste_schritte/)

**More information about other types of insurance coverage:**

[www.ch.ch/private/00029/00039/index.html?lang=de](http://www.ch.ch/private/00029/00039/index.html?lang=de)

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## Taxes

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Recognised refugees, temporarily admitted refugees and temporarily admitted persons must pay taxes in Switzerland. Taxes are withheld at source, i.e. directly deducted from a person's salary before it is paid (Art. 83 to 110 of the Federal Act of 14 December 1990 on Federal Direct Tax). The level of taxation varies from canton to canton.

## Social benefits

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Social benefits are financed by taxpayers' money. The amount of social benefits payments may vary from canton to canton.

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In most cantons, however, the guidelines for the calculation of the contributions, which are set by the Swiss Association

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of Welfare Organisations (SKOS), are applied. This ensures a fair and effective provision of social benefits in Switzerland

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Recognised refugees and temporarily admitted refugees have the same entitlement to social benefits as Swiss citizens, if they are unable to provide for themselves financially.

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The claims of temporarily admitted persons to social benefits are regulated by cantonal law. In general, social benefits for temporarily admitted persons are lower than those for recognised refugees and temporarily admitted refugees.

**More information at the following address:**

**[www.skos.ch/sozialhilfe/haeufig-gestellte-fragen](http://www.skos.ch/sozialhilfe/haeufig-gestellte-fragen)**

**All persons capable of working are expected to become independent of social benefits and to be able to provide for themselves and their family.**

# Important addresses

Cantonal immigration and labour market authorities:  
[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/  
kantonale\\_behoerden/adressen\\_kantone\\_und.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/adressen_kantone_und.html)

Cantonal naturalisation authorities:  
[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/  
kantonale\\_behoerden/kantonale\\_einbuengerungsbehoerden.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_einbuengerungsbehoerden.html)

Cantonal authorities for registration of employment:  
[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/  
kantonale\\_behoerden/Adressen\\_Meldeverfahren.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/Adressen_Meldeverfahren.html)

Cantonal and municipal integration offices:  
[www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/  
kantonale\\_behoerden/kantonale\\_ansprechstellen.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_ansprechstellen.html)

## Other useful links

Swiss authorities online:  
[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch)

State Secretariat for Migration (SEM):  
[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch)

Federal Commission on Migration (FCM):  
[www.ekm.admin.ch](http://www.ekm.admin.ch)

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