

Country specific information ...

Switzerland

General Information

- Switzerland is a 700 year old federal state. The Swiss Confederation is made up of 26 cantons. Its position both in Europe and internationally is long established in many spheres of activity.
- Bordered by Austria, France, Germany, Italy and measuring 137 miles (north-south) and 217 miles (east-west), it has one of the highest rates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the world.
- Switzerland has a population of 7,320,900, of which 5,834,100 are Swiss citizens and 1,486,800 are foreign nationals.
- It operates a unique system of democracy - citizens may 'petition' the authorities, may propose a constitutional amendment (with 100,000 signatures) and may organise a referendum to pronounce on a Parliamentary decision (with 50 signatures).
- Celebrated for its scenic beauty, the originator of international tourism, Switzerland enjoys a superior reputation as a producer of high-quality goods.
- Many international organisations' head quarters (HQs) are there. Switzerland jealously guards its neutrality. It does not hold membership of European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA).
- In March 2002 the Swiss voted to become members of United Nations Organisations (see United Nations System of Organisations (<http://www.unsystem.org/>)) and in that year also concluded bi-lateral agreements with the European Union (EU) (<http://europa.eu.int/>) in a number of key economic and social areas including free movement of persons.

Job market

Economy

Switzerland is a highly industrialised country characterised by an advanced manufacturing sector. The main industries are machine manufacture, electronics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals (investing heavily in Research & Development), precision instrument/watch manufacture and food manufacture.

The service sector is also very important and is dominated by banking, insurance/reinsurance, tourism and consultancy; over 70% of the workforce is employed in the service sector.

The economy, which was hit by recession in the 1990's, is slowly strengthening, although average annual growth remains low.

Employment

The Swiss rate of unemployment has always been very low and in the first half of 2004 was only 2.5%. However, with regard to new graduates the figure is usually higher. Graduate categories which have difficulties entering employment include: psychologists, sociologists, botanists, zoologists and geographers. But there are shortages of IT specialists, communication system engineers, biotechnologists, economists, finance specialists, lawyers and teachers of German.

Non-nationals work typically either as seasonal workers in tourism or in IT and financial services when highly qualified.

The Swiss workplace

The Swiss work long hours - 42 hours per week - and men are much in the majority, holding most senior positions. Swiss companies are traditional and hierarchical. Swiss workers are always punctual and project a low-key, modest image in the workplace.

Advice abroad

Higher education careers support

Generally speaking Swiss universities do not have careers services as they operate in the UK/Ireland. Individual university websites and prospectuses should be able to help you identify other kinds of student services' provision that exists at different universities. Information is available from the Rectors Conference of the Swiss Universities.

Public employment services

The Swiss Public Employment Service extends its facilities to non-nationals who are working in Switzerland as trainees or are there on the Leonardo da Vinci Programme (<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>).

Application procedures

Applications are most commonly made by CV with a covering letter, including appropriate certificates or testimonials from jobs previously held.

Swiss CVs are similar in structure to those presented in Germany including personal details, education/qualifications and work experience. Language skills, computer literacy and extra-curricular activities/interests should be included. A photo would normally be attached to the top left hand corner.

Selection is by interview; large organisations may include tests, group discussions and candidate presentations.

A useful source of information on Swiss CVs, covering letters and interview practice is the companion set of volumes in French and German - Success and Career.

Vacancy sources

Most Swiss graduates find jobs through responding to newspaper advertisements and by making speculative approaches to employers.

There is no national newspaper and job seekers should refer to the key newspapers in their area of choice (see list below).

French-speaking Switzerland

- Tribune de Geneve (<http://www.tdg.ch>);
- 24 Heures.ch (<http://www.24heures.ch>);
- Le Temps (<http://www.letemps.ch>).

German-speaking Switzerland

- Neue Zuercher Zeitung (<http://www.nzz.ch>);
- Tages-Anzeiger (<http://www.tages-anzeiger.ch>);
- eBund (<http://www.ebund.ch>);
- Die Weltwoche (<http://www.weltwoche.ch>).

Italian-speaking Switzerland

- Corriere del Ticino (<http://www.cdt.ch>).

Websites

- Espace-Emploi (<http://www.espace-emploi.ch>) vacancies links for Europeans wanting to work in Switzerland.
- Jobnet Switzerland (<http://www.jobnet.ch>).
- Portail Emploi (<http://www.portail-emploi.ch>) for graduates seeking employment in French-speaking Switzerland.
- Success and Career (<http://www.success-and-career.ch>) - website for candidates and employers with advice on CV management and job search.
- Talents (<http://www.talents.ch>) - executive website with search facility for jobseekers and companies.
- Telejob (<http://www.telejob.ethz.ch>) - the electronic job exchange board of the assistants and doctoral students of the technological institutes of Zurich and Lausanne (ACIDE).

Language requirements

Four languages are spoken in Switzerland:

- German, French, Italian and Romansch. In principle, all have equal status: Romansch is classified as a national language, not an official one.
- They are currently divided as follows: German 65%, French 18%, Italian 9% and Romansch 0.8%. Schools play a big role in fostering language development, as every child learns a second national language from the seventh school year at the latest.
- The German-speaking Swiss learn their official language High German at school, which they categorise as 'written' German. In everyday speech they use unwritten dialects collectively known as 'Schweizerdeutsch'.
- In the French-speaking region spoken mainly in the cantons of Geneva, Jura, Neuchatel and Vaud, the language is used nowadays as it is in France.
- The Italian-speaking region (the canton of Ticino and part of the Grisons) is characterised by rich local dialects.
- Romansch is spoken in a number of isolated valleys once colonised by the Romans.
- The graduate immigrant should be able to operate in the official language of the canton they are working in; possessing another would be no drawback together with English.

Work experience

Most new UK/Irish graduates tend to be seen as relatively young and inexperienced in Switzerland, since final year students there are normally aged 24-26 years. This means that it is important to seek ways of acquiring useful work experience which will also help to develop the necessary cultural awareness and linguistic competence.

These include:

- Seeking to take part in a European Union funded scheme, eg SOCRATES (see UK Socrates Erasmus Council (<http://www.erasmus.ac.uk>)) or Leonardo da Vinci Programme (<http://www.leonardo.org.uk>).
- Undertaking a work placement (normally technological) organised through a university enterprise consortium.
- Finding seasonal employment in Switzerland, particularly to enhance linguistic skills.
- Obtaining an AIESEC Switzerland/IAESTE Switzerland traineeship either during your course or on graduation.
- Applying for the Trainee Exchange Scheme that exists between the UK and Switzerland. This offers a work permit of up to 18 months duration for up to 400 British trainees aged between 18-35 who have completed their studies/occupational training. The work sought should normally be relevant to the degree studied, although there may be some flexibility. When approaching employers refer to the UK/Swiss Exchange Agreement made between the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Federal Office for Industry, Crafts and Labour (Emigration and Trainee Section). The Swiss employer must apply for a work permit ('L' - limited validity) for UK graduates.
- A similar programme operates between Ireland and Switzerland. It is administered by the Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment for Ireland - Work permits section.

Postgraduate Study

There are two kinds of institutions in the university sector (otherwise known as the tertiary education): universities and Federal Institutions of Technology.

University education is fundamentally divided into two cycles (most commonly two years), leading to a degree/diploma. Until recently, this model has prevailed as the dominant one - it lasts four to five years, is quite demanding, and corresponds roughly to a Masters degree. There is a move towards expanding some degrees in terms of incorporation of more in-depth professional training, eg the award of a Masters of Business Administration (MBA). Doctorates are awarded for original research. There is a move to develop a more 'third-cycle' provision in Switzerland.

A small number of scholarships are offered by the Swiss Government and advertised annually through Swiss Embassies. Swiss universities are often international in character.

Most Swiss universities link into the European Credits System (ECTS) and most of them participate in institutional exchanges as part of the ERASMUS/SOCRATES programmes by arrangement with the European Union (EU) (<http://europa.eu.int/>) (see UK Socrates Erasmus Council (<http://www.erasmus.ac.uk>)). There is also an ERASMUS Switzerland Bureau responsible for awarding mobility grants for students travelling to study in both directions.

For further information refer to:

- Universities in Switzerland information sheet, available from Swiss Embassies.
- A Guide to the Swiss Higher Education System and its Qualifications, available from the Rectors Conference of the Swiss Universities. This office also runs an Equivalency Information Service and can help with enquiries about the recognition of qualifications.
- SWITCH: Swiss Academic and Research Network gives details of Swiss universities research laboratories and research teams.

Visa and immigration

In 2002 the bi-lateral agreement on the Free Movement of Persons came into force. This agreement gives European Union (EU) (<http://europa.eu.int/>) nationals the following rights:

- to occupational and geographical mobility in Switzerland;
- to equality of working conditions, social security etc;
- to be joined by their families who may engage in gainful employment there;
- mutual recognition of diplomas with a view to access to a registered job.

The agreement essentially adopts the categories of residence permits as they exist within the EU. These are as follows:

- short-term residence permits (4 months - 1 year);
- residence permits (up to five years);
- cross border commuter permits;
- settlement permits (usually granted after 5 years residency).

Until 2007 there will continue to be quotas for work permits (15,300 new first-time long term/115,500 new short term).

After 2007 quotas for EU nationals are to be abolished but free movement is to be introduced 'on probation' up to the twelfth year after the entry into force of the agreement. If the influx of workers rises by more than 10% of the average of the preceding three years, Switzerland will be able to unilaterally re-introduce quotas for one year on each occasion under the so-called 'protective clause'. Contact the Swiss Embassy for UK and Swiss Embassy in Ireland for details.

Contacts and resources

Publications

Jobs and Careers Abroad, [Vacation Work Publications](#), 2004

Language Translation & Interpreting, [Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services \(AGCAS\)](#), Biennial

Objectif Emploi, [Success and Career](#), 2001/2002

The Official MBA Handbook, [Financial Times Prentice Hall](#), Annual

Postgraduate Study and Research, [Graduate Prospects Ltd](#), Biennial

Study Abroad (Peterson's Guides), Peterson's Guides, Annual

Summer Jobs Abroad, [Trotman Publishing](#), November 2005

Teaching English Abroad, [Vacation Work Publications](#), 2004

Using Languages, [Graduate Prospects Ltd](#), Biennial

Which MBA? A Critical Guide to the World's Best MBAs, [Pearson Education](#), Annual

Working Abroad, [Graduate Prospects Ltd](#), Biennial

Working in Europe - First Steps, [Graduate Prospects Ltd](#), Biennial

Working in Ski Resorts - Europe and North America, [Vacation Work Publications](#), 2003

Work Your Way Around the World, [Vacation Work Publications](#), Annual

Zielsichere Stellensuche, [Success and Career](#), 2001/2002

Websites

24 Heures.ch, <http://www.24heures.ch>

Corriere del Ticino, <http://www.cdt.ch>

Die Weltwoche, <http://www.weltwoche.ch>

eBund, <http://www.ebund.ch>

Espace-Emploi, <http://www.espace-emploi.ch>

European Union (EU), <http://europa.eu.int/>

Federal Office of Migration in Switzerland, <http://www.bfm.admin.ch/index.php?L=3>

Jobnet Switzerland, <http://www.jobnet.ch>

Languages Work, <http://www.languageswork.org.uk/>

Leonardo da Vinci Programme, <http://www.leonardo.org.uk>

Le Temps, <http://www.letemps.ch>

Neue Zuercher Zeitung, <http://www.nzz.ch>
Portail Emploi, <http://www.portail-emploi.ch>
Success and Career, <http://www.success-and-career.ch>
Tages-Anzeiger, <http://www.tages-anzeiger.ch>
Talents, <http://www.talents.ch>
Telejob, <http://www.telejob.ethz.ch>
Tribune de Geneve, <http://www.tdg.ch>
UK Socrates Erasmus Council, <http://www.erasmus.ac.uk>
United Nations System of Organisations, <http://www.unsystem.org/>
Vacation Work Publications, <http://www.vacationwork.co.uk>
Working or Training in Europe - Overseas Placing Unit,
<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/cms.asp?Page=/Home/Customers/WorkingOrTrainingInEurope>

Addresses

AIESEC Switzerland, Gesellschaftstrasse 49, Postfach 301, CH-3012, Berne
Tel: +41 31 302 21 61 URL: <http://www.aiesec.ch>

British Embassy in Switzerland, Thrnstrasse 50, Postfach 265, CH-3000 Berne 15
Tel: +41 31 352 50 21 URL: <http://www.britain-in-switzerland.ch>

British Swiss Chamber of Commerce, Freiestrasse 155, CH-8032, Zurich
Tel: +41 142 231 31 URL: <http://www.bscc.co.uk>

Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment for Ireland - Work permits, Adelaide Road, Dublin 2 Tel: +353 1631 2121

Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT Tel: 0870 000 2288 URL: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk>

Department of Trade and Industry - Switzerland Desk, Kingsgate House, 66-74 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6SW Tel: 0207 215 4539 or 8353

Expertise in Labour Mobility, Elandsgracht 17, NL-1016 TM Amsterdam, Netherlands
Tel: +31 20 683 69 64 URL: <http://www.labourmobility.com>

Federal Office for Industry, Crafts and Labour, Bundesgasse 8, CH-3003, Bern
Tel: +41 31 612 944

How To Books Ltd, Head Office, 3 Newtec Place, Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RE
Tel: 01865 793806 URL: <http://www.howtobooks.co.uk>

IAESTE Switzerland, Austauschdienst ETH Zurich, IAESTE Praktika, CH-8092, Zurich
URL: <http://www.iaeste.ethz.ch>

Irish Embassy in Switzerland, Kirchenfeldstrasse 68, CH-3005 Berne
Tel: +41 31 352 1442 or 1443

Rectors Conference of the Swiss Universities, Sennweg 2, CH-3012 Berne
Tel: +41 31 306 60 33 or 32 URL: <http://www.crus.ch>

Success and Career, Chemin du Pont de Ville, 1224 Chene-Bougeriers Tel: 022 860 1200
URL: <http://www.success-and-career.ch>

Swiss Consulate General, Portland Tower, Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LF
Tel: 0161 236 2933 URL:
http://www.eda.admin.ch/london_emb/e/home/conma/consulate.html

Swiss Embassy for UK, 16-18 Montagu Place, London, W1H 2BQ Tel: 0207 6166000

Swiss Embassy in Ireland, 6 Ailesbury Road, Dublin, Dublin 4 Tel: 269 2515

Swiss Federation Aliens Office, Quellenweg 915, 3003 Berne-Wabern

SWITCH: Swiss Academic and Research Network, Limmatquai 138, CH-8001, Zurich
URL: <http://www.switch.ch>

Vacation Work Publications, 9 Park End Street, Oxford, OX1 1HJ Tel: 01865 241978
URL: <http://www.vacationwork.co.uk>

Work Permits (UK), PO Box 3468, Sheffield, S1 4PQ Tel: 0114 259 4074 URL:
<http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/>



(c)Content copyright of or licensed to AGCAS(www.agcas.org.uk)

Written by Rachel Brearley, University of St Andrews, August 2004.
Edited by Gemma Green, AGCAS, August 2004.

The work of writers and editors is gratefully acknowledged

Visit <http://www.prospects.ac.uk/links/Countries>