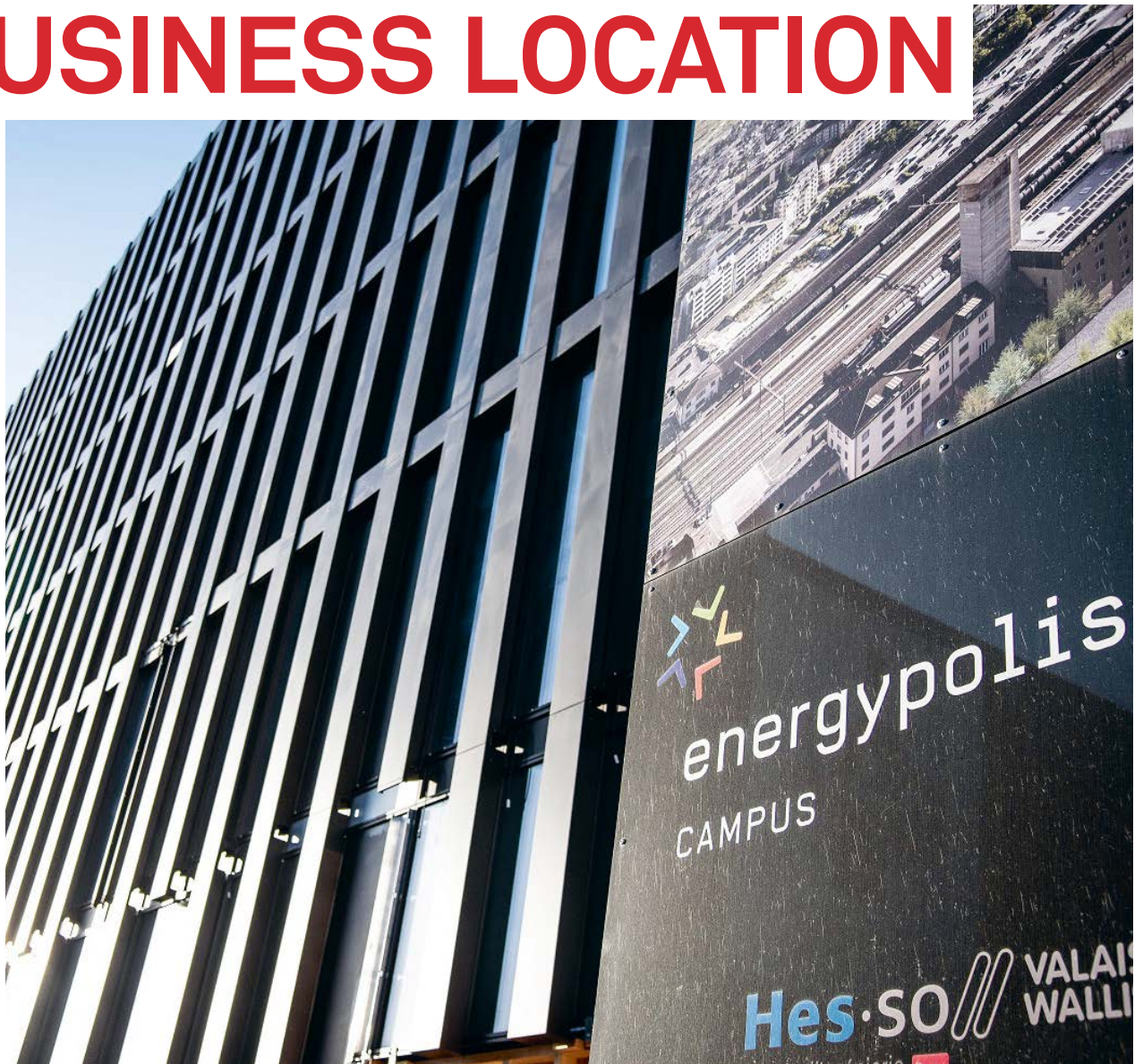




A Handbook for Investors

# VALAIS AS A BUSINESS LOCATION



IN COLLABORATION WITH



Cover photo: Energypolis campus (Sion)  
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June 2021  
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# Welcome

Dear readers,

Our canton stands in the heart of the Alps and at the centre of Europe. Apart from its stunning Alpine setting, it offers a range of advantages, including its bilingualism, a pleasant living environment, highly qualified personnel, cutting-edge infrastructure and a competitive cost of living. The following chapters offer you the chance to explore an innovative canton with leading hubs in a range of sectors.

## The Valais economy is:

- Over 300 million Swiss francs invested to stimulate innovation and research
- Almost 600 SMEs, schools and research institutes playing an active role in industry
- An accessible government that listens to businesses
- A canton with ambitious economic and environmental objectives.



### Christophe Darbellay

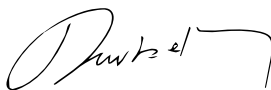
State Councillor,  
Head of the Department of the Economy Affairs  
and Education

Companies, start-ups and renowned research institutes that have based themselves here continue to grow, and day by day, enhance the canton's technological showcase, which resonates far beyond our frontiers. Information and communications technologies (ICTs), life sciences and engineering, not to mention a well-established hub in the field of energy and environmental technologies, form the backbone of innovation in Valais, presented through its foundation for innovation, The Ark. The government of Valais has therefore implemented a robust economic development strategy that is helping to strengthen and diversify the economic fabric to build a prosperous, open, dynamic, diverse and attractive region. As part of this strategy, Valais has also created a unique partnership scheme called "Economic Promotion Valais", which brings together all the key players in economic development to provide the best possible support for projects that offer added value. Thanks to its partners' skills, the Economic Promotion Valais offers swift, efficient support to the different requests made by project sponsors.

The skills of the Economic Promotion Valais, combined with the research institutes EPFL Valais Wallis, HES-SO Valais-Wallis and The Ark Foundation, are helping to drive value creation in the Valais economy. As a result, the canton has become a real source of innovation, with projects such as the Energypolis Campus, which offers a complete value chain, from basic research to bringing bold solutions to the market. Valais has now established itself as Switzerland's fourth-largest canton for high-tech start-ups. Moreover, 33% of entrepreneurs supported by The Ark Foundation come from outside the country.

Finally, the fact that 25% of the canton's GDP comes from industry and technology proves that Valais offers an optimal environment for creating new businesses. Valais unquestionably offers skills whose potential can be exploited and offered to others. Whether we are talking about basic research or technology transfer, the structures already exist and are ready to respond to the challenges of the future. Valais is, without doubt, the place to launch and grow your business. The Economic Promotion Valais will support you every step of the way.

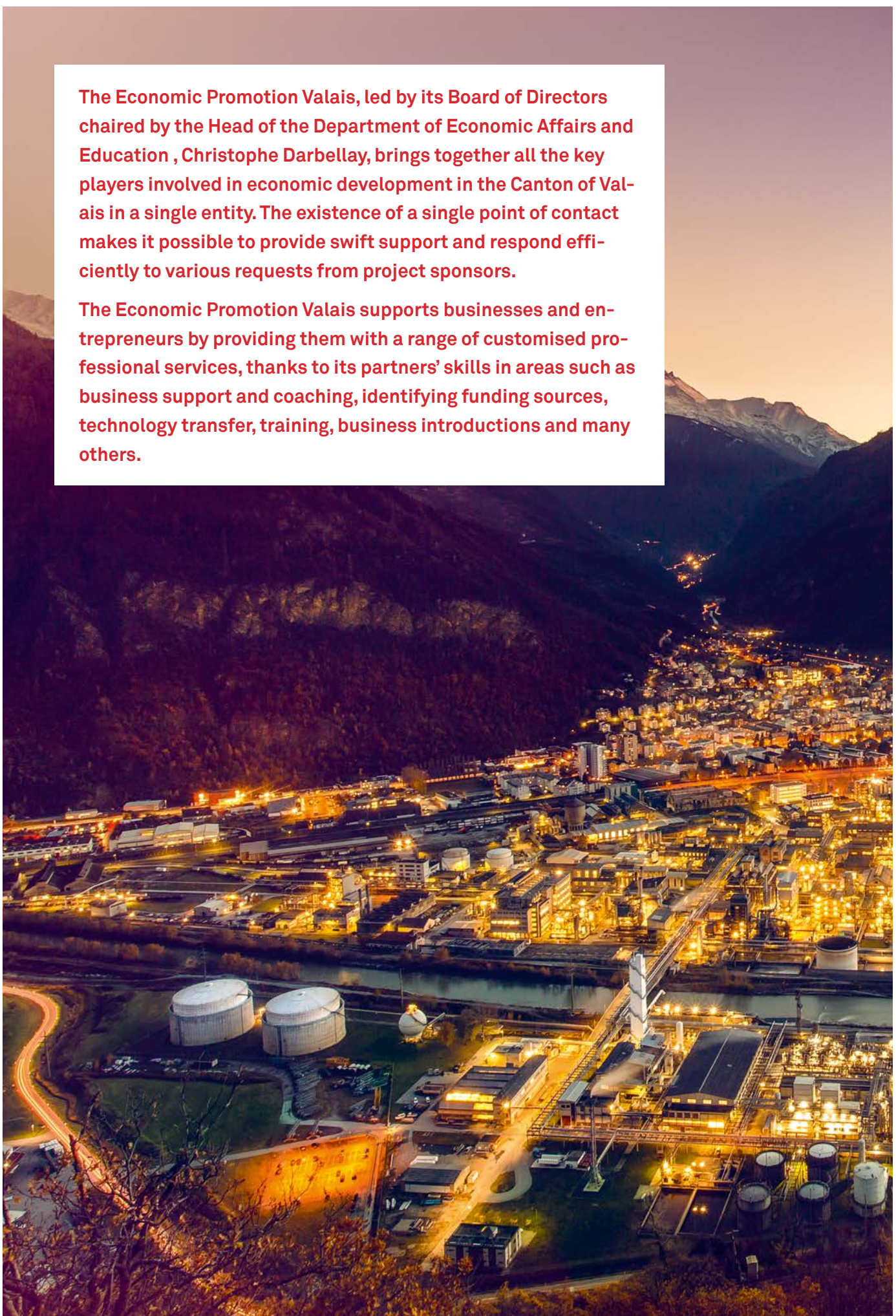
Happy reading, and I hope you enjoy finding out more about the opportunities on offer.



Christophe Darbellay  
State Councillor, Head of the Department of the Economy Affairs and Education

The Economic Promotion Valais, led by its Board of Directors chaired by the Head of the Department of Economic Affairs and Education , Christophe Darbellay, brings together all the key players involved in economic development in the Canton of Valais in a single entity. The existence of a single point of contact makes it possible to provide swift support and respond efficiently to various requests from project sponsors.

The Economic Promotion Valais supports businesses and entrepreneurs by providing them with a range of customised professional services, thanks to its partners' skills in areas such as business support and coaching, identifying funding sources, technology transfer, training, business introductions and many others.



**Photo**  
View of Viège and the Lonza industrial area.  
©Valais/Wallis Promotion – Christian Pfammatter

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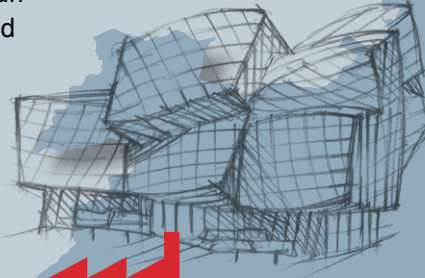
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Exclusively for purposes of better legibility, gender-specific terms will not be used in this brochure. All personal terms are thus to be understood as gender neutral.

# VALAIS – YOUR BUSINESS LOCATION

The Canton of Valais is a competitive business location. There are numerous good reasons to locate a business in Valais: 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.



Globally leading education system

Leading Industry Clusters:

- Life Sciences
- Engineering
- ICT

**INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY**



Leading technology ecosystems

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Robotics
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Personalized Health
- Blockchain

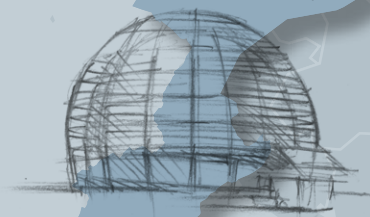


World's most innovative country

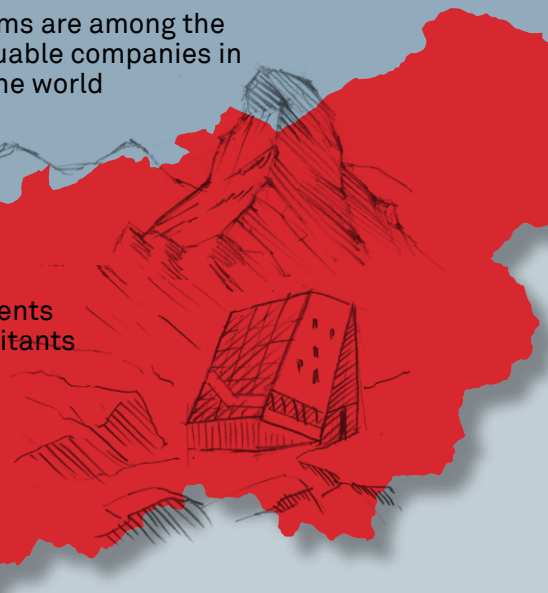


One of the happiest nations in the world


3 Swiss firms are among the 40 most valuable companies in the world




1<sup>st</sup> place – AI patents per 1 million inhabitants








Motivated workforce:  
No general strikes for  
more than 100 years




Most attractive country  
for highly qualified foreign  
workers


## SECURITY + TRUST




Employees with significant  
international experience



World's best working  
conditions




World's highest  
purchasing power




Multilingual employees  
with 4 national languages  
plus English

## ENVIRONMENT + LIFE



Highest macroeconomic  
and political stability



Among the top 10 most  
popular countries for  
expatriates



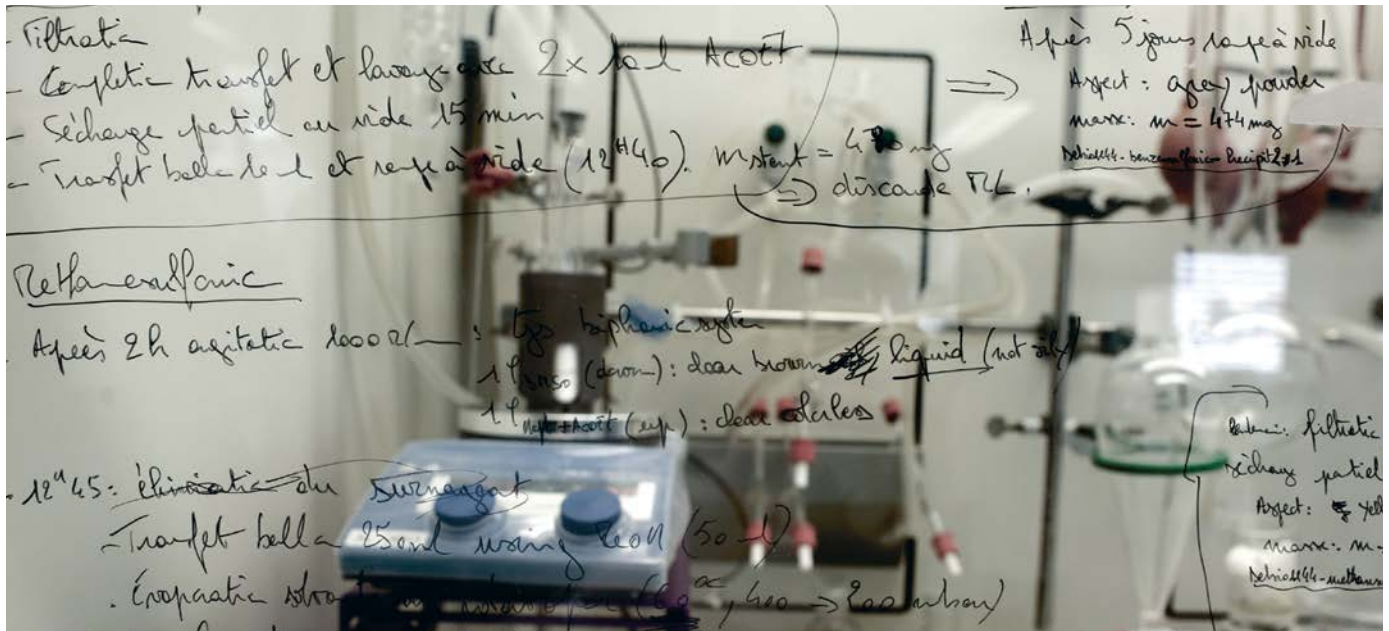
3 in the top 15:  
Swiss cities offer a very  
high standard of living



# INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Located in the heart of the Alps, Valais is firmly focused on innovation and technology. It invests in booming areas such as information and communications technologies, life sciences, industrial systems, artificial intelligence and energy supported by three key pillars: research institutes, a business-friendly environment and a highly qualified workforce.

**Photo**  
Solar park at Lac des Toules  
(Bourg-Saint-Pierre)  
© Romande Energie



# An active canton for research and development

Photo  
Pharmaceutical product manufacturing  
© Etat du Valais Jean-Yves Glassey

## KEY RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

### Energy and environment

- [Energypolis](#), Sion
- [CREM](#), Martigny
- [BlueArk](#), Châble

### Life sciences

- [BioArk](#), Monthey and Viège
- [PhytoArk](#), Sion/Conthey

### Information and communications technologies

- [TechnoArk](#), Sierre
- [IdeArk](#), Martigny
- [TEWI](#), Brigue

### Artificial intelligence

- [Idiap](#), Martigny

### Health

- [SUVA](#), Sion
- [S.M.A.R.T. Confluence](#), Sion

## AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF R&D

Valais is rooted in a solid industrial tradition but is also now recognised as a centre of excellence in terms of technology, innovation, research and development. Businesses in the canton work closely with both universities and basic and applied research institutes to take advantage of the new technologies and skills they develop on an ongoing basis.

## A DEDICATED INNOVATION NETWORK

As the fourth-largest Swiss canton for high-tech start-up creation in 2020, Valais boasts not only unique technology sites but also a large number of organisations dedicated to basic and applied research. The canton's commitment to developing cutting-edge technological infrastructure became a reality in 2004, with the creation of [The Ark Foundation for Innovation](#). The Foundation acts as both an accelerator and incubator and has not only encouraged the emergence of start-ups (over 190 to date) but also supported innovation in existing businesses.

The canton's technological infrastructure is unusual insofar as it comprises multiple sites and covers three specific areas: Information and communications technologies (at [TechnoArk](#) in Sierre and [IdeArk](#) in Martigny), life sciences (at [BioArk](#) in Monthey and Viège, and [PhytoArk](#) in Sion/Conthey) and engineering sciences (energy and environment at the [BlueArk](#) in Entremont). At the same time, leading institutions such as the nine research institutes at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO) Valais-Wallis, the [CREM](#) (Energy and Municipal Research Centre in Martigny), the [Institut Icare](#) (specialising in the internet of things in Sierre) and the [TEWI](#) (Business Informatics Technology Centre in Brigue) are developing applications that use new technologies.

The [Idiap Research Institute](#) (founded in 1991) is the flagship R&D centre in Valais and an internationally renowned actor in multimodal information management. In 2014, it created the [Swiss Biometric Security Research and Evaluation Centre](#), a centre of excellence whose objective is to facilitate cooperation between industry and universities. In 2019, it became the world's third biometric certification centre and a key global player in the certification of biometric systems.

In the health sector, advanced research into neuroprostheses is the result of collaboration between EPFL, SUVA (Switzerland's largest accident insurer) and [The Ark Foundation for Innovation](#). The creation of [S.M.A.R.T. Confluence](#), a reference ecosystem to innovate in health and sport in Valais, is another result of this collaboration. The aim of this initiative, with its focus on developing synergies, is to respond to the needs of the Swiss medical system. It is a centre of excellence for research on rehabilitation, working with athletes, traumatology, health data management and rescue operations in extreme environments.



## Example: Energypolis: the energy research hub

Photo  
Energypolis Campus at night (Sion)  
© évéquoz ferreira architectes

- The only research centre of its kind in Switzerland
- 180 million francs invested by the canton
- Developing synergies
- Specialising in green energies and health
- EPFL, one of the world's top academic institutions

### THRIVING BUSINESSES

#### **ExerGo SA, Sion**

Development of an innovative urban heating and cooling concept, which uses carbon dioxide as a coolant. This concept generates value locally from the energy lost from the grid, by combining heat pumps and heat exchangers.

#### **DynaBlue, Sion**

Creation of thermal flow sensors that can withstand very high temperatures to improve the efficiency of industrial processes.

### DEVELOPING SYNERGIES

In 2014, Valais laid the final stone in the Energypolis programme, which is dedicated to energy and green chemistry. The Energypolis Campus is an innovation ecosystem that combines skills from the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO Valais-Wallis) and parts of The Ark Foundation for Innovation, along with numerous other players in the fields of energy, green chemistry, the Alpine and polar environment, as well as rehabilitation and health. Together, these partners are responding to major topical issues, such as the ageing population, climate change and problems associated with energy and mobility.

These are the main reasons why the canton of Valais invested in this ambitious project, allocating funding of over 180 million francs.

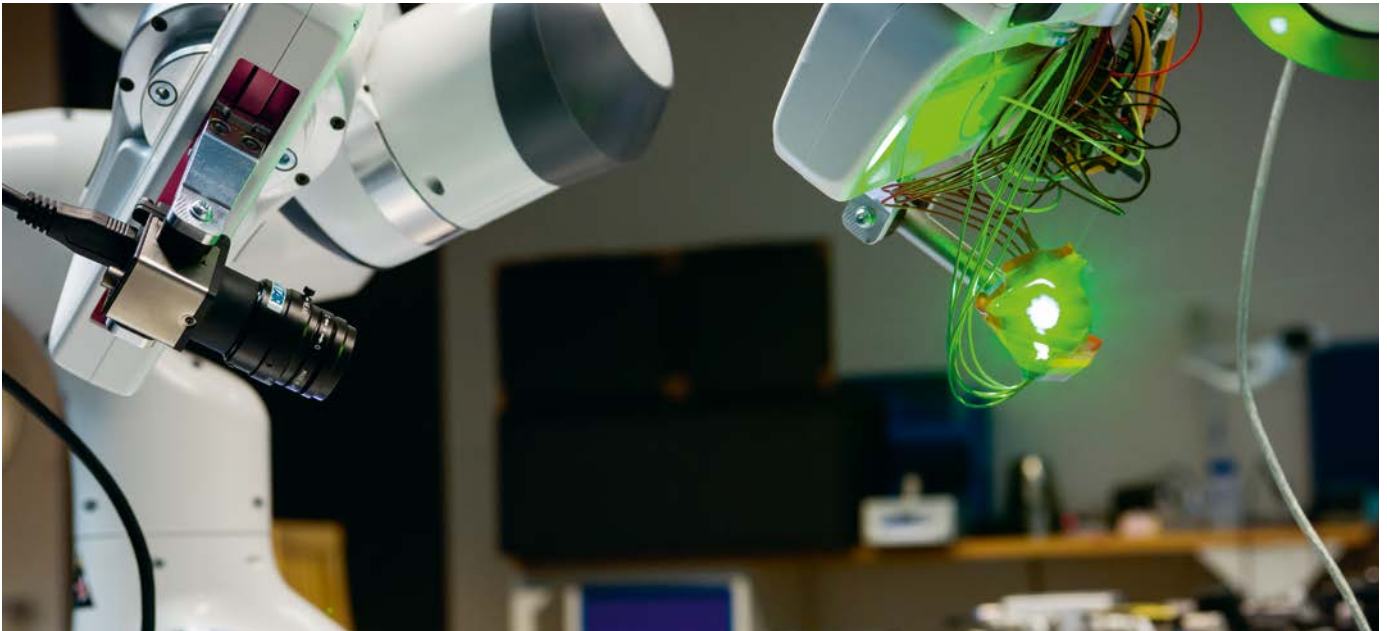
### OUTSTANDING RESEARCH INSTITUTES

The quality of the Energypolis Campus stands out in the field of green chemistry and enjoys a global reputation. The [GMF laboratory](#), for example, which specialises in molecular engineering of functional materials for photovoltaic applications, is renowned worldwide for its work on perovskite solar cells. Several other chemistry-related projects, such as the development of energy storage techniques or the use of hydrogen, are the main research priorities in this field. The HES-SO Valais-Wallis also carries out innovative research, in particular in relation to engineering sciences, biopharma, food and health. Various projects are run jointly by HES-SO and EPFL Valais-Wallis, ensuring mutual learning and stimulating sharing of know-how.

The Energypolis Campus has a number of demonstration facilities to encourage the development of efficient models. These are full-scale testing facilities used to test the technologies developed in the laboratories on the campus. Among them are the autonomous shuttle, a project developed in collaboration with the Swiss postal service; the [Grid Lab](#), which is studying how to integrate renewable energy into electrical networks (smart grid) and the demonstrator in Martigny, which offers a complete hydrogen production, storage and distribution chain.

### AN IDEAL LOCATION FOR BUSINESS CREATION

The campus also contributes to generating value from innovations and applying them in practice. The Ark Foundation and its incubator have provided an environment in which several start-ups have thrived and created jobs in the region.



## Leading hubs in a range of sectors

**Photo**  
 Robotic arms. Research and development  
 hub for IT businesses  
 © Idiap

- ICTs (information and communications technologies)
- Artificial intelligence
- Life sciences (chemistry, pharmaceuticals, medical technology and biotechnology)
- Engineering sciences (renewable energy, smart grids and industrial systems)

### AN OUTSTANDING LOCATION FOR HIGH-END BUSINESSES

High-tech sectors, particularly information and communications technologies (ICTs) are at the heart of the canton's economic development strategy. It played a pioneering role in 1988, creating Switzerland's first dedicated hub for ICTs, which now enjoys an international reputation. Over the decades, this strategy has been implemented in practice through the creation of significant sectoral hubs, which both drive solid endogenous growth and attract foreign businesses and investment.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS)

ICTs affect the whole of society and simplify our day-to-day lives in numerous areas, from sharing information to traffic management, energy use, the creation of new learning tools, processing medical data and more. With The Ark Foundation for Innovation, Valais has created a network of academic and industrial skills with the aim of strengthening and developing the region's economic fabric in this area. Thanks to the support of two complementary technology centres, the TechnoArk and the IdeArk, the canton is establishing its position in the following areas:

- Software Engineering
- Internet of Things
- Business Intelligence & Process Management
- Human & Media Computing
- Green IT

### BUSINESS EXAMPLES

#### T2i Group, Sierre

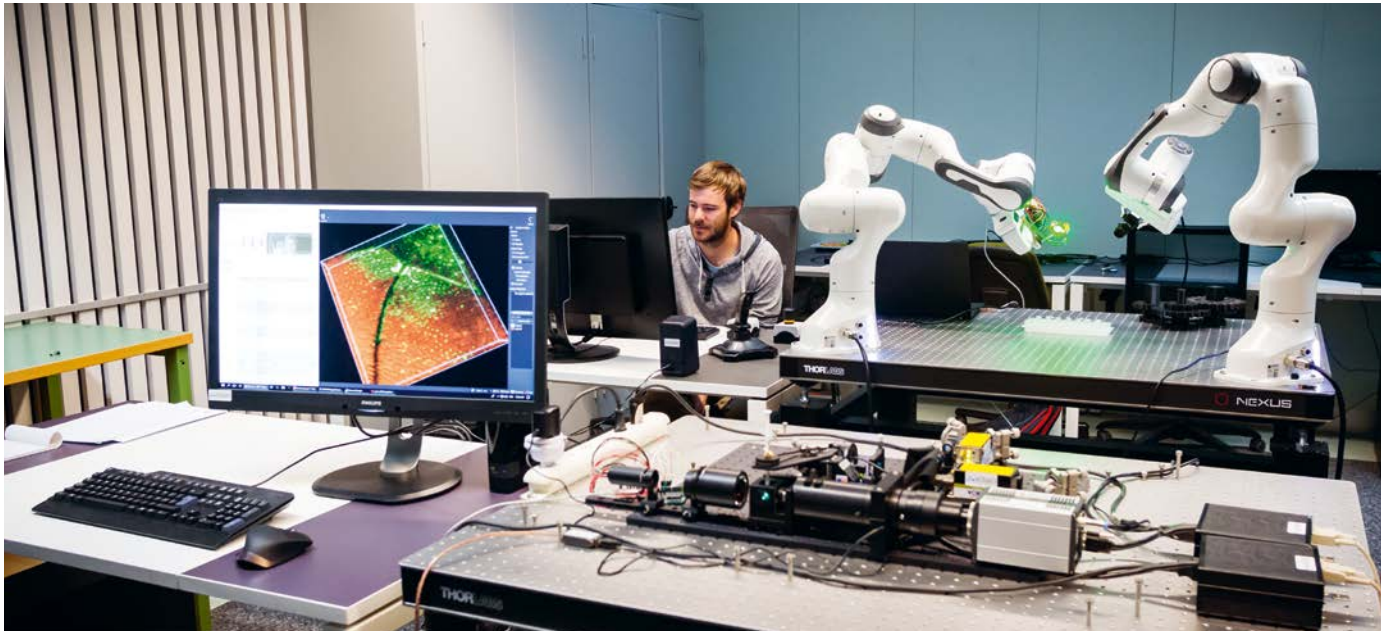
The T2i Group specialises in producing innovative software and delivering high added-value services, employing 230 staff in Switzerland, France and Canada.

#### Keylemon SA, Martigny

Development of IT solutions based on facial recognition. The company markets a software program that allows access to a computer or IT application with a simple webcam and the user's face. The start-up was taken over by the Austrian group AMS in 2018.

#### ALRO Engineering SA, Martigny

Active in the fields of industrial automation and electrical engineering. Its mission is to provide industrial production businesses with a comprehensive automation solution for validated processes. Its areas of activity include pharmaceuticals and biotech, chemistry, the food industry and medical equipment.



**Photo**  
Research and development hub for  
IT businesses  
© Céline Ribordy Idiap

## IDIAP'S RESEARCH AREAS

- Voice and spatial recognition
- Bio-imaging
- Human-machine interaction
- Robotics
- Energy
- Machine learning
- Genomics

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence has disrupted our habits in everything from communications technologies to health, industry and day-to-day living. Valais is able to focus strongly on innovation in new technologies thanks to a network of world-renowned businesses and research units. Founded in 1991, the Idiap Research Institute is one of the most active research centres in the world. It is made up of 11 research groups and contributes to the development of promising start-ups.

## A UNIQUE COURSE IN SWITZERLAND

The Idiap Research Institute has offered the only dual Master's course in artificial intelligence in Switzerland since 2019. This is an extremely attractive course for businesses, as a source of employees with specialist training working on a project that links directly to their area of activity. Moreover, the canton already has a network of businesses with significant potential for working together and facilitating implementation.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLES

### [Eyeware.tech SA, Martigny](#)

Development of eye-tracking software for cars, smartphones and laptops. Eyeware software products detect attention in 3D for a wide range of applications, including driver monitoring, games and identifying buyers.

### [Vima link, Martigny](#)

Development of advanced social IT solutions that combine artificial intelligence, computer vision and social sciences. Its behavioural intelligence tools can automatically understand human behaviour at a human level of accuracy, to identify opportunities in the field of human-machine interaction.

### [Calyps SA, Sion](#)

The company's aim is to develop solutions to facilitate the management of hospital data. The purpose of their technology is to help health care institutions to work more efficiently, without affecting the quality of patient care or wasting their resources. Calyps technology is used by Valencienne University Hospital to help it manage patient flow in the A&E department more efficiently.



Photo  
Draft of a 3D-printed hand prosthesis  
© Cimark

- Investment and strong support from the canton of Valais
- A sector with huge potential
- Unmissable annual meetings and events
- The perfect place to develop your projects and take advantage of the synergies between ICTs and life sciences

## DIGITAL HEALTH

The health of the future is being developed in Valais. The canton offers a positive environment for research and development and is committed to supporting the transition to digitalised medicine. It is home to world-renowned research centres, such as the Idiap Research Institute or HES-SO Valais-Wallis, which offers comprehensive training in the health field and excels in research related to information and communications technologies (ICTs). Its dedicated health innovation ecosystem encourages collaboration between innovators and key players in the health sector. As a result, it instigates and supports ambitious projects in the health arena. Valais also has a network of businesses specialising in this area, which helps to drive synergies that are important for future businesses seeking to join this fertile field.

## EVENTS THAT STIMULATE INNOVATION

Digital Health Connect is one of the main events in digital health in Switzerland. It brings together the key professional players and researchers in digital health, making it an ideal opportunity for building partnerships for new players. Another innovation driver is the Arkathon programme, which offers young entrepreneurs the opportunity to promote their talents and solutions in response to practical problems. No fewer than 40 projects have been instigated since 2015, 10 of which have resulted in the creation of promising businesses.

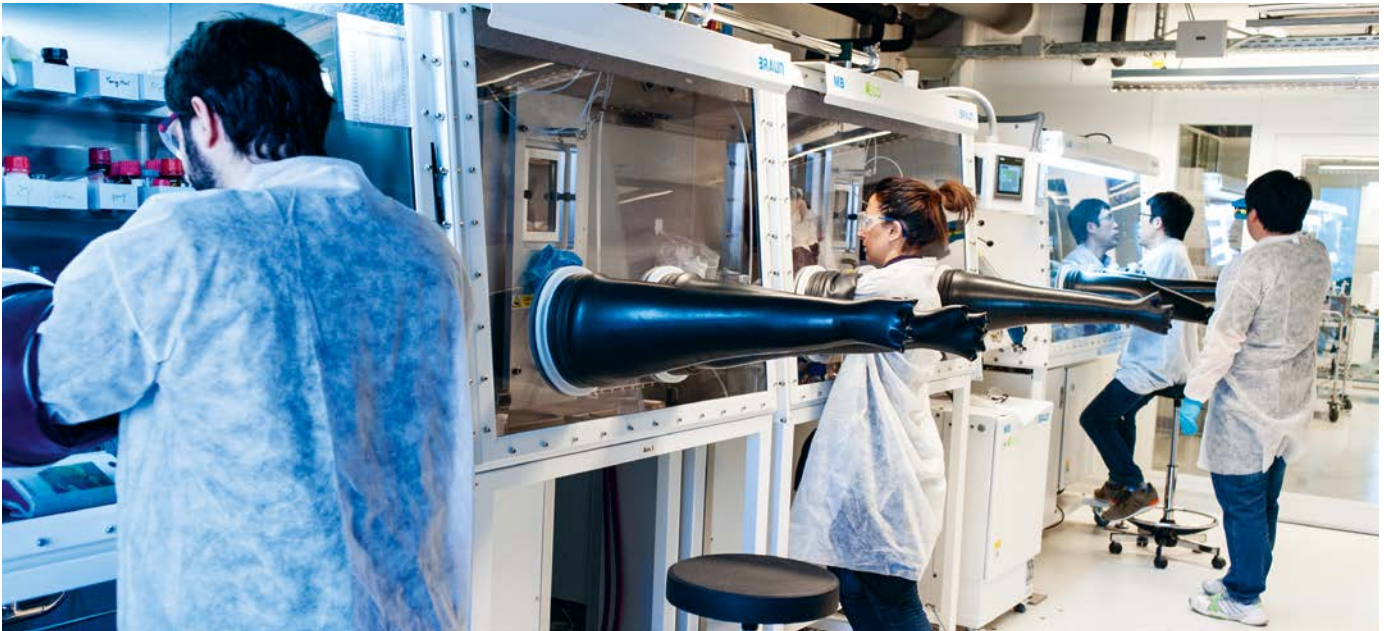
## BUSINESS EXAMPLES

### Myotest SA, Sion

Development of a new generation of smart digital training systems for running, including a cloud service. Myotest evaluates the runner's biomechanics based on 3D accelerometric signals available on all smartphones and other sports accessories. The app will offer personalised training plans and advice based on the runner's performance objectives, as well as tracking their progress.

### Logival SA, Sierre

Creation of an innovative medical file called "Mediway", which includes functionalities such as diagnostic aids, drug prescribing and a billing system. Logival's founders have translated their experience and practice into their software to help computerise medical practice and support ongoing improvements in patient care.



**Photo**  
Molecular engineering of functional materials laboratory (Energypolis)  
© Energypolis

- The second-largest Swiss canton in life sciences
- Home to Lonza, the world's largest biopharma production site
- Over 1 billion francs invested by the Lonza group
- Expertise in generating value from Alpine plants
- International pharmaceutical companies
- A highly qualified workforce

## LIFE SCIENCES

Valais boasts a strong industrial tradition in the areas of fine chemistry, biotechnology and creating value from Alpine plants. The result is a genuine health hub, which has grown up around a series of research institutes and a dense network of SMEs and start-ups working in the life sciences industry. The canton has also benefited as the home of leading groups in the sector, such as **BASF Pharma**, **Lonza BioPharma** and **Debiopharm Research**. Life sciences generate added value of over 1.7 billion francs a year for the Valais economy. The canton has established a strong position in the following areas of expertise, thanks to the BioArk and PhytoArk sites:

- Biotechnologies, pharma and chemistry
- Medical diagnosis
- Cosmetics industry
- Food industry (plant protection and nutraceuticals)

## DEDICATED TECHNOLOGICAL FACILITIES

BioArk, the dedicated life sciences facility in Monthey, bridges the gap between science and the market. As a unique technological platform working to GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) standards, the facility is involved in clinical trials and bespoke batch production. BioArk II, in Viège, has established itself in the innovation sector in “fill & finish” activities. The PhytoArk technology centre in Sion/Conthey operates in the cosmetics, health and phytopharmaceuticals sector and specifically, in generating value from Alpine flora and natural ingredients in high added-value products. Valais is home to the majority (70%) of Switzerland's production of aromatic and medicinal plants, which are mainly used in cosmetics.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLES

### Lonza SA, Viège

Specialises in the chemical production of peptides, small-molecule active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), very powerful and cytotoxic APIs, antibody-drug combinations and microbial biopharmaceutical products. In 2018, Lonza employed over 15,000 people worldwide. In recent years, Lonza has invested over a billion francs on the Ibex™ construction project at its site in Viège. Ultimately, the new site will be home to five modular buildings that can be used to develop, produce and market biopharmaceutical products according to needs.

### Bachem SA, Vionnaz

Offers a wide range of services for the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry. Specialising in the development of innovative manufacturing processes and secure production of peptide-based pharmaceutical substances, the business also offers a catalogue of biochemical substances used in research, as well as synthetic products manufactured exclusively for certain clients.



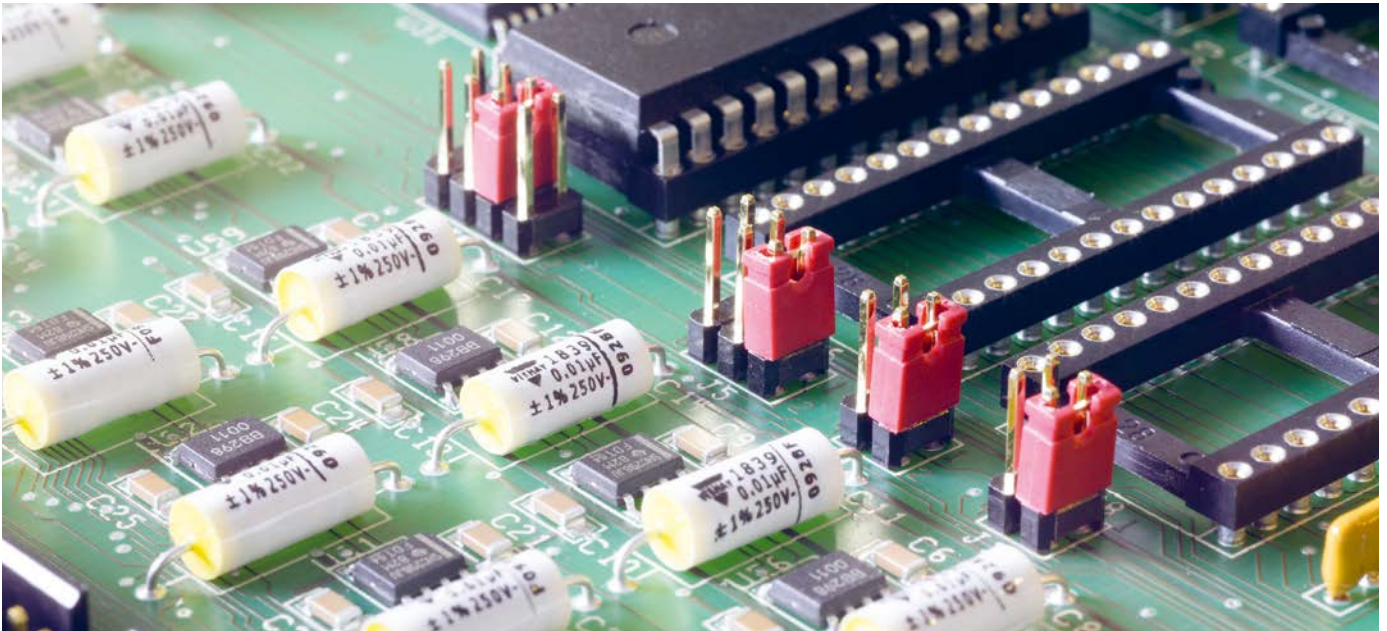


Photo  
High-Tech Mechanical Industry  
©Valais/Wallis Promotion Pascal Gertschen

## INDUSTRIAL SYSTEMS

Valais stands out in the following areas in the engineering sciences sector:

- Energy and environmental technologies (renewable energy and Smart Grids)
- Industrial systems (mechanics, design materials, electricity and electronics)

## ENGINEERING SCIENCES IN VALAIS:

- International businesses
- Expertise in industrial systems and energy
- The largest aluminium production and research hub in Switzerland
- Research institutes and training at the cutting edge of innovation in industrial systems and industry 4.0

The mechanical industries play an important role in the canton's economy. Areas of activity cover a diverse range of products, from electronic components to the production of watch movements and sophisticated micro-technologies. The canton also has a long tradition in the production of high added-value aluminium products. Several specialist SMEs in Valais are key subcontractors for major businesses in the micromechanics and micro-technologies fields. Their collaboration with the canton's research institutes supports the development of innovative solutions.

## INDUSTRY 4.0

Industry 4.0 is developing in Valais. HES-SO Valais-Wallis, working in close collaboration with [Constellium AG](#) to meet its new requirements, has opened the first research laboratory in Valais that is specially dedicated to applied research on industry 4.0. The Smart Process Lab works, in particular, on issues relating to digitalisation, process optimisation, artificial intelligence and smart manufacturing. Working in conjunction with Constellium, the Smart Process Lab studies a range of solutions to maximise production or logistics in the production of sheet aluminium, with the help of artificial intelligence.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLES

### [Novelis, Sierre](#)

The largest producer of laminated aluminium products and one of the biggest aluminium recyclers in the world. The Sierre site is home to two production plants and a European research and development centre. It has positioned itself as a leader in the development and production of sheet metal used for bodywork in the automotive industry (for Range Rover, Jaguar, Audi, Alfa Romeo, Maserati, etc.)

### [Eversys, Sierre](#)

Formed in 2009, Eversys specializes in the creation of highly advanced coffee machines. In 2021, the Italian company De'Longhi acquired Eversys for 150 million Swiss francs.



**Photo**  
 Prototype of the H55 100% electric aircraft  
 © H55 Anna Pizzolante

- DePoly, the most innovative start-up in Switzerland in 2019
- An optimal geographical location
- A research hub specialising in new energy sources
- An advantageous policy for green technologies
- CleantechAlps – a recognised partner throughout Western Switzerland

## CLEANTECHS

Valais is the leading canton for sustainable development in the Alpine Arc. It has effectively acted as an open-air laboratory for around 20 years and as a seedbed for innovative projects. As part of its development policy, Valais is committed to achieving 100% renewable energy production by 2060. The canton is an outstanding location for cleantech development, thanks to its abundant natural resources and hydroelectric industrial ecosystem.

## A DEDICATED INNOVATION NETWORK

Valais has built modern, environmentally responsible infrastructure to achieve its bold objectives. The development of the eco-industry sector, in particular, is in full swing. The town of Sierre is home to the Ecoparc de Daval, which welcomes businesses in an area that covers over 200,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Innovation is also at the heart of the environmental transition. The Energypolis Campus is in the town of Sion. It is home to environmental research units specialising in:

- Greenhouse gas capture technologies
- Optimisation of photovoltaic technologies
- Hydrogen-based electricity production

The canton also maintains close contact with the rest of Switzerland. The CleantechAlps Foundation enables businesses working in green energies to strengthen their international visibility and build collaborative relationships with existing actors.

## BUSINESS EXAMPLES

### [Aqua 4D Water Solutions, Sierre](#)

Offers innovative electromagnetic water-treatment solutions. The aim of Aqua 4D technology is to change the physical properties of water. The business specialises in treating water used for irrigation and enables high-yield agriculture without using chemical products. Aqua4D is already operating successfully in over 45 countries.

### [DePoly, Sion](#)

Development of a chemical recycling method for PET that returns it to its purified base components. DePoly helps to save almost 7,000 litres of oil per tonne of PET produced, and reduces the energy required to produce new plastic by 66%.

### [H55, Sion](#)

Development of an aerobatic aircraft powered by electricity, which flies without emitting any CO<sub>2</sub>. The prototype tested recently managed to fly for 45 minutes, including 30 minutes of energy-intensive aerobatics, without needing a single drop of kerosene.



## A highly effective education system

**Photo**  
HES-SO University of Applied Sciences  
and Arts Western Switzerland (Sierre)  
© Etat du Valais Céline Ribordy

- Dual-track education and training
- Highly effective compulsory schooling
- Renowned international schools
- High-quality universities
- Flexible higher education

### HIGHLY MARKETABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Higher education in Switzerland allows students to follow either a vocational route (through the universities of applied sciences and arts, teacher-training colleges and advanced vocational training) or an academic path (in a university or federal institute of technology)

The vocational route is well represented in Valais. HES-SO Valais-Wallis offers ten multilingual fields of study in five areas, including Engineering & Architecture, Business, Management & Services, and Health. Strategic collaboration between these areas, HES-SO's nine research institutes and partner businesses help to train high-level professionals and technicians, who are well equipped to enter the labour market quickly. Young people in Valais can also opt for an HES-level course in the arts, music or social work.

Attractive academic options are also available through the universities of Geneva and Lausanne, which offer an interdisciplinary Master's in children's rights and a Master's in tourism studies respectively. UniDistance Suisse offers well-established remote university teaching in a wide range of fields of study, including law, economics, psychology, history, mathematics and artificial intelligence.

In the hotel and catering sector, Valais is home to three world-renowned schools: César Ritz Colleges, Les Roches International School of Hotel Management and Vatel International School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

### ONE OF THE BEST COMPULSORY EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE WORLD

Public schools in Valais enjoy an excellent reputation and their pupils regularly achieve very high scores in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) rankings, particularly in maths and science. Compulsory schooling begins when children are four years old. Particular emphasis is placed on language learning: as well as the canton's two official languages (French and German), pupils study English and other European languages.

For families with an international lifestyle, several private schools in Sion, Verbier, Lens and Loèche-les-Bains offer boarding options and allow pupils aged four to 18 to work towards either the International Baccalaureate or the French baccalaureate.

Children in Valais have access to outstanding facilities outside school, giving parents a wide range of options for care and activities.



# SECURITY AND TRUST

Business that opt to base themselves in Valais enjoy a natural environment and conditions that support creativity and productivity on a day-to-day basis. The canton offers political stability, attractive operating costs, a steady property market and low energy costs.



## Reliable governance

**Photo**  
Valais government building (Sion)  
© Serge Ballestraz

- A canton that is not afraid to invest in its future
- Easily accessible government
- Political stability
- An efficient administration that listens to businesses
- A strong relationship of trust between people and government

### POLICY FOCUSED ON INNOVATION

Valais does its utmost to develop the region and give businesses and organisations the opportunity to settle here for the long term. With over 300 million francs invested in ambitious projects in recent years, Valais stands out as Switzerland's investment canton. To take one example, when the Valais parliament voted on granting an additional loan of 25 million francs for the construction of an innovation centre on the Energypolis Campus, it was accepted almost unanimously, with no opposition from any political force – a rare occurrence in Switzerland. Politicians and the public authorities are well aware of the canton's potential and do everything possible to make it an entrepreneurial, innovative region.

The government of Valais is elected by universal suffrage and has five members, who make up the Council of State and are split across the various subdivisions. They are elected for a four-year term and each of them serves as president for one year. Legislative power is held by the Grand Council, which has 130 members. People in Valais are regularly asked to participate in referendums on strategic issues affecting the canton or the Swiss Confederation. The results often serve as a reminder of Swiss people's capacity for supporting the public interest. In 2012, for example, 70% of voters in Valais rejected an initiative to increase the number of weeks' holiday (from four to six) and in 2009, 60% of them accepted a temporary increase in VAT rates to provide additional funding for disability insurance. The 122 municipalities in Valais enjoy a high level of autonomy, for example, in terms of tax rates.

Stability in political life, an efficient administration and the accessibility of the political authorities guarantee a high level of reliability and pragmatism for the economy.

### SOCIAL COHESION

Valais is the third-largest Swiss canton by surface area and landscape features – such as mountains, lakes, glaciers and forests – occupy a large part of the territory, creating an attractive living environment. The current population of 343,955 is growing steadily. The majority of people live on the Rhône plain and the surrounding hills. The capital of the canton, Sion, has a population of 35,000. The other main towns are Brigue, Viège, Sierre, Martigny and Monthey.

A comfortable standard of living, strong traditions and values, a well-rooted sense of community and successful integration of foreigners (who represented 22.7% of the population in 2018, mostly from other European countries) are the ties that hold society together in Valais. It also has one of the lowest crime rates, compared with other large Swiss cantons. Crime has been falling since 2012, and in 2018 the rate was the lowest in Western Switzerland. Particular emphasis is placed on prevention and building a relationship of trust between the people and the forces of law and order.



## Favourable labour and property markets

Photo  
Working day  
© Sarah Pflug

- Low unemployment
- A highly qualified workforce
- Affordable properties
- Steady growth
- Partnership between businesses and HES-SO Valais-Wallis

### EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES: A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

Like the rest of Switzerland, Valais has a low unemployment rate, of around 4%. Unemployment is not noticeably higher among young people. This is a shining example of the performance of the Swiss education system, which allows pupils to choose either a practical apprenticeship to learn a trade, or to go into higher education (in a university, applied university or institute of technology). This dual system gives businesses access to a remarkable pool of qualified staff at all levels, from basic trades through to the most highly skilled workers.

An increasing number of young people in the canton attend Swiss applied universities to secure highly qualified positions. The dynamism of training and research institutes in Valais helps support the labour market through partnerships and projects carried out in conjunction with businesses. In 2020, for example, HES-SO Valais-Wallis, which is particularly responsive to the needs of industry, provided access to its Management IT courses to anyone with a cantonal or federal school-leaving certificate, without a preliminary course. This initiative is intended to address the shortage of qualified personnel and to respond to the high demand from businesses looking for highly trained staff. HES-SO Valais-Wallis also offers professionals a wide range of flexible continuing education (Certificate of Advanced Studies) courses to fit around their other commitments.

As well as being well trained, employees in Valais have superior linguistic skills because of the canton's bilingualism (French and German) and the presence of numerous foreign communities. Employers and trade unions maintain an active social partnership: conflicts are resolved around the negotiating table and strikes are extremely rare. In addition, thanks to the exceptional quality of life it offers, Valais attracts numerous talented staff from the rest of Switzerland and abroad, while remaining competitive in terms of salaries.

In brief, Valais offers entrepreneurs a qualified, multilingual, reliable and committed workforce, with the guarantee of clear, stable and effective employment legislation.

### A STEADY PROPERTY MARKET

Valais has a wide range of property options throughout the canton for businesses who want to establish and expand their activities here. In addition, prices are very competitive and it is common to be able to use land under a leasing arrangement. Property for commercial use can be purchased by foreigners without any restrictions. Compared with other parts of Switzerland, a comfortable level of vacant housing (2.1) and competitive construction costs make it easier to look for a family home.



## An attractive tax regime

Photo  
Paying taxes.  
Copyright-free image.

- Highly competitive tax rates
- Tailor-made solutions and high-quality advice
- Set-up support
- No inheritance tax

### MODERATE TAXATION FOR INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES

Taxes in Switzerland are set and received by the federal government, cantons and municipalities. National tax competition plays a decisive role in lessening the tax burden, which means that corporate taxation and the taxes paid by highly qualified staff are generally very competitive in Switzerland. The rate of federal corporation tax is just 8.5%. In addition, there are taxes on profits payable to the canton and municipality.

VAT was introduced in Switzerland in 1995. The system is similar to that found in most countries in the European Union. The standard rate of 7.7% is one of the lowest in the EU. A reduced rate of 2.5% applies to various categories of goods and services.

In 2019, the population voted to accept a tax reform relating to the funding of old age and survivors' insurance. This aims to strengthen Switzerland's competitiveness in terms of corporate taxation. Since 2020, the tax on corporate profits in Valais (for profits up to 250,000 francs) has been 11.89%, which is one of the lowest rates in Switzerland and Europe. For businesses with profits of over 250,000 francs, the tax rate will increase to 16.98% from 2022.

### SUPPORT MEASURES AND TAX INCENTIVES

A business with an investment project that is interested in setting up in Valais may, under certain conditions (such as job creation in the canton, innovation, investment and a lack of competition in the local market) be entitled to tax exemptions at the cantonal and municipal level.

Under certain conditions, businesses that opt to base themselves in Valais may also be entitled to financial assistance (such as financial support, guarantees or subsidies).

### NO INHERITANCE TAX

Valais does not impose any inheritance tax or tax on gifts to non-separated spouses or direct heirs. The tax rates applicable to other relatives (aunts, cousins, etc.) are also very favourable.



## Simple business start-ups

**Photo**  
Project advice and follow-up.

- Few administrative formalities
- Low start-up costs: 5,000 francs maximum
- Personalised follow-up
- Support for innovation
- A combination of strengths

### **SET UP YOUR BUSINESS QUICKLY AND EASILY**

Businesses and individuals can create a new business swiftly and simply. In most cases, the legal process of creating a business takes just two to four weeks and generally costs no more than 5,000 francs. The only condition is that the person with signing authority must be resident in Switzerland.

And let's not forget the accessibility of the decision-making authorities and fluid administrative procedures, which make the process much easier for companies.

### **ONE-STOP SHOP**

The Economic Promotion Valais brings together all the key players involved in the canton's economic development. The existence of a single point of contact makes it possible to provide swift support and respond efficiently to various requests from project sponsors.

The Economic Promotion Valais provides interested foreign investors with information about the overall environment, the advantages it offers and the procedures for setting up a company or investing in the region. Once the decision to establish a business in Valais has been taken, the Economic Promotion Valais provides free project coordination support through its Case Managers, who can advise the business owner on all the procedures required to make their idea a reality. What's more, thanks to its partners' skills and expertise, the Economic Promotion Valais can provide a range of professional, personalised services in terms of support and coaching, identifying funding sources, technology transfer, training and introductions. The services offered by the Economic Promotion Valais include:

- Identifying appropriate solutions to the problems faced by the business
- Support for implementing an innovation project in an existing business
- Personalised support for start-ups
- Financial support for business creation
- Helping businesses from outside Valais to set up in the canton
- Assistance with promoting new technologies
- Developing and managing a network of economic actors in the canton





# ENVIRONMENT AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Valais offers an environment that allows the ideal balance between work, innovation, creativity, leisure, family and relaxation. A magnificent natural environment, friendly atmosphere and dynamic cultural life are all additional factors that make Valais a great place to live.



## Exceptional quality of life

Photo  
Couleur Pavé Sierre (Sierre)  
© David Zuber

- A protected terroir
- Sporting facilities in an exceptional setting
- A unique Swiss wine-growing area
- An energising, dynamic region

### SPORT, LEISURE AND CULTURE

As well as its excellent potential for entrepreneurship, Valais offers its inhabitants a unique living environment. With 41 peaks over 4,000 metres high and 300 days of sunshine a year, Valais is also one of Switzerland's major tourist destinations.

The canton has its own traditions and customs, including a varied cultural calendar, featuring internationally renowned events such as the [Verbier Festival](#), the [Omega European Masters](#), [Zermatt Unplugged](#) and the exhibitions organised by the [Fondation Gianadda](#) and the [Fondation Opale](#). The [Compagnie Interface](#) dance company, created in 1990 and based in Sion, enjoys an international reputation and has performed on almost every continent.

A real paradise for anyone who loves being outdoors, Valais offers a wide range of possibilities in both winter and summer: skiing, golf, hiking, horse riding, paragliding, climbing, mountain biking, water sports or simply walking with the family are all easily accessible and everything is only a short distance away.

There are plenty of opportunities for relaxation, too: spa complexes and top-class hotels with outstanding facilities are the ideal place to relax and enjoy a moment of calm.

### WINING AND DINING

A rich terroir, a unique wine-growing area and fine dining appeal to both locals and visitors. Valais has a long-standing agricultural tradition and now offers products with an ever-increasing reputation for their quality and uniqueness. The canton is home to seven products with protected designation of origin (PDO), including the famous raclette cheese, rye bread and saffron from Mund, a small village at an altitude of 1,200 metres, where 116 producers cultivate the precious crocus flowers.

Local restaurants, some of them award-winning, promote the jewels in the local gastronomic crown, such as beef from Hérens cattle, apricots, asparagus, game and cheese.

With 5,000 hectares of vines and some 60 different grape varieties, Valais is the largest wine-growing and making canton in Switzerland. Vines have been cultivated here since Roman times and represent a key element of the canton's heritage and society. Exceptional climatic conditions, highly diverse vineyards and unique grape varieties, such as Petite Arvine and Cornalin, are factors in its success and a reputation that extend far beyond the canton's borders. Cultural attractions linked to wine, such as the [Musée de la Vigne](#), leading events such as [VINEA](#) or the [Mondial des Pinots](#), educational trails and above all, the warm welcome from winegrowers, all contribute to an unforgettable experience.



## Reliable infrastructure

**Photo**  
Ganter Bridge (Simplon)  
© Brig Simplon Tourismus AG

- High-speed internet throughout Valais
- A highly developed railway network
- A road network linking Valais to Europe
- An airport at the heart of Valais

### MOBILITY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

Its geography means that Valais is accustomed to large-scale engineering structures. The building of numerous dams, in particular the Grande Dixence (the highest gravity dam in the world) and the boring of long railway (Lötschberg, Simplon and Furka) and road tunnels (Grand-Saint-Bernard), as well as the many projects to manage the course of the Rhône and diminish the harmful effects of high water levels, all demonstrate an outstanding level of know-how in these areas.

The Valais road network is dense and well connected to major European routes. Trains and buses provide reliable, punctual connections between towns, while the legendary yellow post coach reaches even the most remote valleys. The canton constantly improves and invests in infrastructure, with the aim of placing Valais at the heart of European mobility.

With three major international airports nearby, Valais occupies a strategic location for business development. Geneva, Zurich and Milan Malpensa all have railway connections that link them quickly and easily to the main towns in Valais.

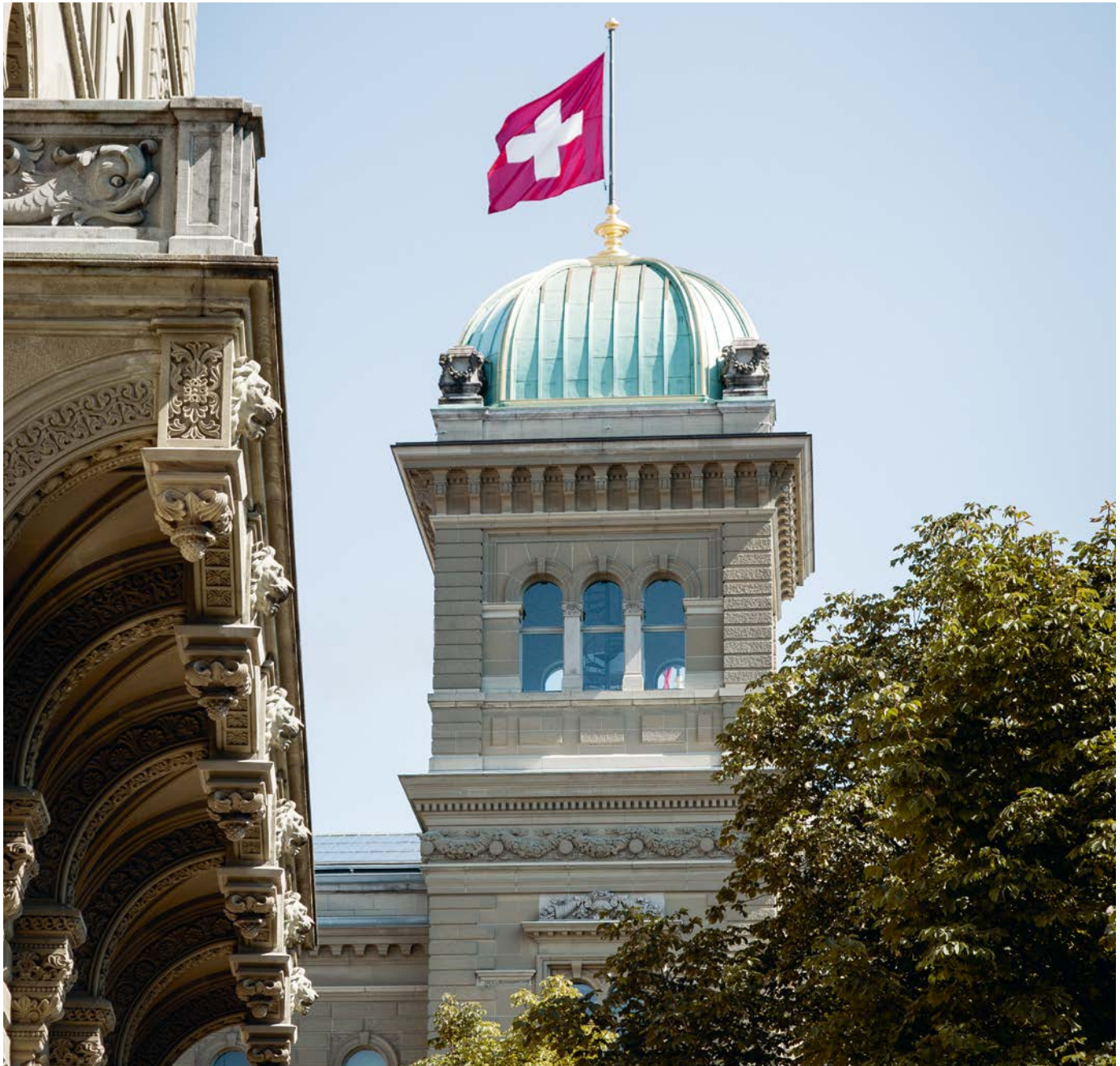
It is also possible to land directly in Sion in a private jet or helicopter. Sion international airport offers a wide range of services for private aircraft and helicopters, leisure flights, heli-skiing and transport of people and goods, as well as various flight connections. The excellent technical facilities, slot availability and development of a GPS approach system allow this airport in the heart of the Alps to offer high-quality solutions for business aviation.

### A DENSE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

VSnet manages an IT network connecting six access points in Valais (St-Maurice, Martigny, Sion, Sierre, Viège and Brigue) via a high-speed spine (10 Gbit/s) using fibre-optic technology. With one of the densest networks in the world in terms of high / very high-speed connectivity and a major expansion of fibre-optic technology, Valais can respond to the most stringent requirements from a speed and reliability perspective.

### HIGH-QUALITY HEALTH CARE

The quality of the Swiss health system is known throughout the world. The highly efficient health care network in Valais, which combines public hospitals, private clinics and outstanding doctor's surgeries, is another pledge of quality of life and safety.



# 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 – a place 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

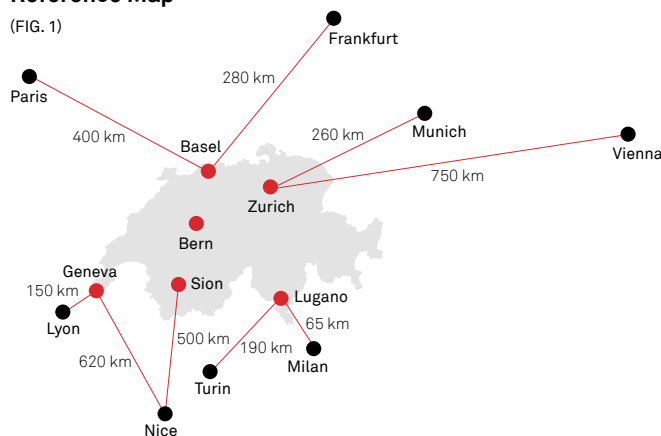
The total area of Switzerland is 41,285 square kilometers. The Swiss landscape is characterized by chains of hills, rivers and lakes, forests, and grassland. The Swiss Alps, the hilly Mittelland region that stretches from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva, and the Swiss Jura, a long range of fold mountains, form the three main geographical areas of the country. The Central Plateau accounts for 30% of Switzerland's total area and is home to two thirds of its population. Most industrial locations are to be found in the Central Plateau region. 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.

As a reservoir for Europe's water, Switzerland has around 1,500 lakes as well as numerous rivers. The two largest Swiss lakes are shared with the country's neighbors: Lake Geneva (Lac Léman) is shared with France in the southwest and Lake Constance is shared with Germany and Austria in the northeast.

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org)  
Switzerland – Facts and Figures

### Reference Map

(FIG. 1)



Source: compiled by the author

## 1.2 CLIMATE

The Swiss climate is characterized by a mild climate with moderate heat, coldness, and humidity. In the summer months, temperatures in the day range between 18 °C and 28 °C, and in the winter months, between -2 °C and 7 °C. In spring and fall, temperatures in the day lie between 8 °C and 15 °C. Temperatures in Switzerland depend primarily on the altitude. 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.

[www.meteoschweiz.ch](http://www.meteoschweiz.ch)  
Weather and Climate

## 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. Health-care, 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

### 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 shaping the constitution and the law by means of referendum or initiative.

The legislative body at the 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 Councilors 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.

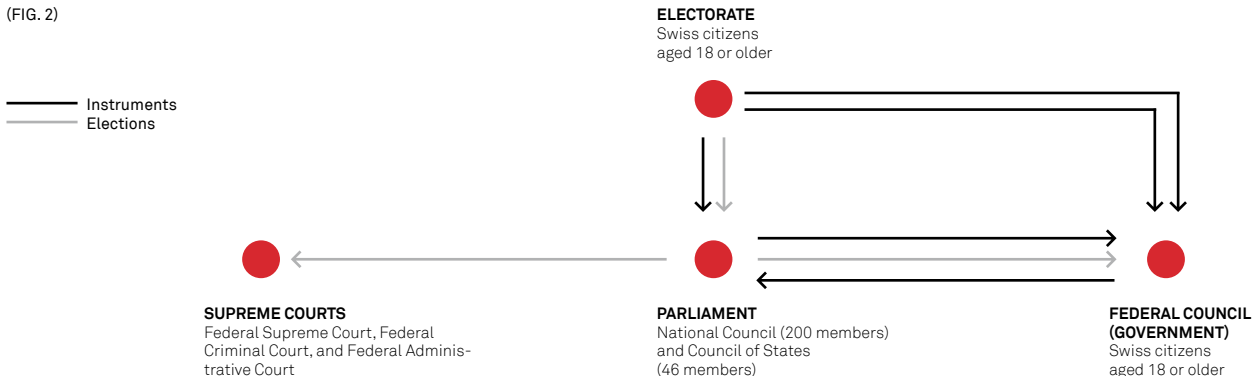
[www.bger.ch](http://www.bger.ch)  
Federal Supreme Court/Insurance Court

[www.bstger.ch](http://www.bstger.ch)  
Federal Criminal Court

[www.bvger.ch](http://www.bvger.ch)  
Administrative Court

## The Swiss Political System

(FIG. 2)



Source: Presence Switzerland

### 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 Councilors 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 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

#### Political Stability, 2019

Political direction: stable = 10, unstable = 0  
(FIG. 3)

1	Switzerland	9.49
2	Denmark	9.27
3	Luxembourg	9.21
4	Singapore	9.10
5	Finland	8.69
6	Ireland	8.65
7	Germany	8.65
9	Austria	8.57
10	The Netherlands	8.49
11	China	8.34
12	Sweden	8.30
14	Canada	8.00
20	Japan	7.74
21	France	6.96
23	Australia	6.78
25	USA	6.34
32	India	5.82
50	South Korea	3.69
56	Italy	3.39
57	United Kingdom	3.32

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

## 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 and the most important industrialized nations. This is also true for unemployment, which is regularly below 4%. Interest rates in Switzerland are also traditionally low, while the savings rate is high (national saving as a percentage of GDP in 2018: 21.3%).

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 32.9% (2017). 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 surplus ratio was 1.4% of the nominal gross domestic product at the end of 2018.

National debt is also below that of most countries in Europe. Total public sector debt amounts to 27% of GDP (2019). Compared to the average national debt ratio of EU countries (77.8%), Switzerland's ratio is extremely low. Most European countries have much higher levels.

[www.efv.admin.ch](http://www.efv.admin.ch)  
Federal Finance Administration (EFV)

**Switzerland's national debt is far below that of most countries in Europe.**

## 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)

## 1.6 POPULATION

The permanent resident population of Switzerland is around 8.6 million. Approximately 25% of the population is of foreign nationality. Life expectancy is one of the highest in the world: 81.7 years for men and 85.4 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. The English language is very widespread in Switzerland.

[www.statistik.admin.ch](http://www.statistik.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO)



## 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. 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, 2017

(FIG. 4)

Overall Rank		Economic	Social	Political
1	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>
2	The Netherlands	2	21	6
3	Belgium	3	16	9
4	Sweden	14	7	7
5	United Kingdom	23	5	4
6	Austria	17	11	10
7	Germany	24	14	3
8	Denmark	11	17	13
9	Finland	16	20	12
10	France	27	26	2
16	Canada	43	6	18
17	Ireland	6	8	68
20	Singapore	1	9	97
21	Luxembourg	4	1	88
22	Italy	48	44	1
23	USA	59	27	14
34	South Korea	75	40	24
37	Japan	66	50	31
70	Hong Kong	5	25	178
95	India	155	147	16

Source: KOF Globalization Index 2019



# 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, 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 second largest in the world (see Fig. 5). The per capita GDP was far above the EU average in 2019. 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. Key sectors are the pharmaceutical industry, the financial sector, ICT, and the mechanical, electrical engineering and metal industry. The Swiss economy is strongly export-oriented; the ratio of export trade to the gross domestic product is one of the highest in the world. The EU plays a key role here, accounting for 55% of exports and 71.6% 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. However, Switzerland is also home to multinational companies that account for around one third of the country's value creation. They employ 1.3 million people, with the result that one in three jobs is at 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), 2019

in thousands of US dollars

(FIG. 5)

1	Luxembourg	113
2	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>84</b>
3	Macau SAR	81
4	Norway	78
5	Ireland	78
8	USA	65
9	Singapore	64
10	Denmark	60
12	The Netherlands	52
13	Sweden	51
14	Austria	50
15	Hong Kong	49
18	Germany	47
19	Canada	46
20	Belgium	45
22	France	42
23	United Kingdom	41
24	Japan	41
28	Italy	33
30	South Korea	31

Source: IMF Online, 2019

More than 75% of people employed in Switzerland work in the service sector. The industrial sector accounts for nearly 22% (see Fig. 6). 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, 2019

(FIG. 6)

INDUSTRY	WORKFORCE (3 <sup>RD</sup> QUARTER 2019)	
	in 1,000	in %
<b>Total (not including agriculture and forestry)</b>	<b>5,137.00</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sector II Total</b>	<b>1,110.0</b>	<b>21.61%</b>
Mining and mineral extraction	5.0	0.10%
Processing and manufacturing	690.0	13.43%
Energy	29.0	0.56%
Water supply and purification	22.0	0.43%
Construction	365.0	7.11%
<b>Sector III Total</b>	<b>4,027.0</b>	<b>78.39%</b>
Vehicle trading, maintenance, and repair	630.0	12.26%
Transport and warehousing	250.0	4.87%
Hospitality	266.0	5.18%
Information and communication	176.0	3.43%
Financial and insurance services	236.0	4.59%
Real estate and housing	67.0	1.30%
Professional, scientific, and technical occupations	452.0	8.80%
Other economic services	364.0	7.09%
Public administration	205.0	3.99%
Education	357.0	6.95%
Healthcare and social services	749.0	14.58%
Arts, entertainment and leisure	106.0	2.06%
Other services	169.0	3.29%

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), employment statistics (BESTA)

In international competitiveness indexes, Switzerland has occupied one of the top spots for many years. Switzerland scores high for innovativeness, a strong education system, and a flexible labor market.

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

Switzerland Business Navigator: Figures of Switzerland as an interactive map

### International Competitiveness Ranking, 2020

Overall score from 1 to 100

(FIG. 7)

1	Singapore	100.0
2	Denmark	99.5
<b>3</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>98.4</b>
4	The Netherlands	98.4
5	Hong Kong	97.1
6	Sweden	95.9
7	Norway	94.6
8	Canada	93.5
9	United Arab Emirates	93.5
10	USA	92.4
12	Ireland	90.7
15	Luxembourg	87.7
17	Germany	85.9
19	United Kingdom	84.4
20	China	82.0
23	South Korea	79.2
32	France	71.7
34	Japan	69.9
43	India	62.1
44	Italy	62.0

Source: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2020

Switzerland is also one of the world's leading innovators. In 2019, it was ranked as the world's most innovative country for the ninth consecutive year, leading the Global Innovation Index.

### Global Innovation Index, 2019

Overall score from 0 to 100

(FIG. 8)

<b>1</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>67.24</b>
2	Sweden	63.65
3	USA	61.73
4	The Netherlands	61.44
5	United Kingdom	61.30
6	Finland	59.83
7	Denmark	58.44
8	Singapore	58.37
9	Germany	58.19
11	South Korea	56.55
12	Ireland	56.10
14	China	54.82
15	Japan	54.68
16	France	54.25
17	Canada	53.88
19	Norway	51.87
21	Austria	50.94
22	Australia	50.34
30	Italy	46.30
52	India	36.58

Source: INSEAD, The Global Innovation Index 2019

Switzerland is the world's most innovative country. It stands out primarily because of its innovation output, offering an ideal environment for innovation and proving its strength through the high maturity of the market and the economy.

## 2.2 INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

As the Swiss domestic market is small and the country lacks natural resources (apart from water), Swiss companies have been forced to seek and cultivate abroad what have often been their key markets since the advent of industrial production. Due to this necessity to open the country to the outside, Switzerland is an important player in world trade. Exports make up around 33% of the gross domestic product. As a result, Switzerland has taken a leading role among the important exporters in world trade, with regard to both goods and services.

### Foreign Trade by Economic Area, 2018

Imports and exports (billions CHF)

(FIG. 9)



Source: Swiss Customs Administration (EZV) 2020

### 2.2.1 Goods and Services Trade

Europe is by far Switzerland's most important trade partner (2019). Germany has traditionally been Switzerland's most important buyer and also supplier, while Italy and France are its second and third most important suppliers. Internationally, the United States and China are Switzerland's most important trade partners.

The classic example of a successful export-oriented branch of industry is what is known as Switzerland's "secret automobile and aviation industry" – a little-known network of highly specialized manufacturing companies and problem-solvers providing components for a range of areas, from precision and micromechanics 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.

**Switzerland is an attractive location for foreign investors. At the end of 2018, foreign direct investments amounted to approximately 1'300 billion Swiss francs.**

### 2.2.2 Direct Investments

Switzerland's exposure to global markets is among the strongest of any country. At the end of 2018, direct investments abroad totaled 1,467 billion Swiss francs. 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 fifteen largest direct investors in the world. Switzerland is an important direct investor in the USA as well; in 2018, 19.5% of all Swiss direct investments were made in the USA, a total of 285,535 million Swiss francs.

Switzerland is also an attractive location for foreign investors, in particular from the EU (84% or 1,087,992 million Swiss francs) and the USA. The capital stock of U.S.-American investors in Switzerland is 5.8% or 74,928 million Swiss francs.

### Direct Investments Capital Stock, 2018

(FIG. 10)

CAPITAL STOCK AT YEAR END, 2018	SWISS DIRECT INVESTMENTS ABROAD		FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS IN SWITZERLAND	
	CHF (millions)	in %	CHF (millions)	in %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1'466'548</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>1'295'914</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>809'986</b>	<b>55.2 %</b>	<b>1'087'992</b>	<b>84.0 %</b>
United Kingdom	78'309	5.3 %	80'202	6.2 %
Germany	58'160	4.0 %	20'444	1.6 %
The Netherlands	156'981	10.7 %	342'392	26.4 %
Luxembourg	191'191	13.0 %	380'316	29.3 %
France	63'803	4.4 %	44'856	3.5 %
Italy	17'815	1.2 %	2'934	0.2 %
Ireland	117'691	8.0 %	51'956	4.0 %
Austria	9'275	0.6 %	75'982	5.9 %
<b>Rest of Europe</b>	<b>60'267</b>	<b>4.1 %</b>	<b>59'480</b>	<b>4.6 %</b>
Offshore financial centers	25'907	1.8 %	N/A	N/A
Russian Federation	23'551	1.6 %	N/A	N/A
<b>North America</b>	<b>316'757</b>	<b>21.6 %</b>	<b>80'038</b>	<b>6.2 %</b>
USA	285'535	19.5 %	74'928	5.8 %
Canada	31'222	2.1 %	5'111	0.4 %
<b>Central and South America</b>	<b>139'829</b>	<b>9.5 %</b>	<b>51'961</b>	<b>4.0 %</b>
Brazil	10'487	0.7 %	N/A	N/A
Offshore financial centers	3'084	0.2 %	57'313	4.4 %
<b>Asia, Africa + Oceania</b>	<b>139'709</b>	<b>9.5 %</b>	<b>16'493</b>	<b>1.3 %</b>
Japan	16'611	1.1 %	3'081	0.2 %
Singapore	24'793	1.7 %	N/A	N/A
China	22'931	1.6 %	N/A	N/A
Hong Kong	7'238	0.5 %	N/A	N/A
South Korea	3'836	0.3 %	N/A	N/A
India	6'246	0.4 %	N/A	N/A
Australia	6'556	0.4 %	N/A	N/A

Source: Swiss National Bank (SNB), 2020

## 2.3 IMPORTANT TECHNOLOGIES AND INDUSTRIES

Clusters are industry groups that are formed based on a degree of regional proximity and through a common area of activity along the value chain. When these conditions are in place, a growth pool can arise, which attracts suppliers and specialized service providers and creates competitive advantages for all companies involved. Ecosystems, by contrast, describe a dynamic structure of wide-ranging, loosely connected economic players. These form a network and interact through common technologies, languages, and institutions.

Switzerland has several of these industry clusters and technology ecosystems, which are also important on an international scale. Over the next few pages, five technology ecosystems and the most important industry clusters in Switzerland will be presented briefly. The figures provided are for reference purposes only, as the clusters sometimes overlap.

### 2.3.1 Artificial Intelligence

Switzerland has world-renowned universities and research institutes in the field of artificial intelligence (AI). The proximity to high-caliber research is a key reason for the establishment in Switzerland of major tech giants like Google, IBM, and Microsoft. Thanks to its traditional strength in the area of life sciences, Switzerland is also driving forward AI developments in the healthcare system. In relation to number of inhabitants, the country has the highest number of AI patents in the world, underlining its high innovation potential. Companies here benefit to a considerable degree from efficient technology transfer, sustainable software systems, and unbureaucratic support from cantons and the government. Startups like StarMind, Sophia Genetics, and Recapp work with universities and research institutes specializing in the field of AI, e.g. the IDSIA in Ticino, the IDIAP in Valais, and the Schaffhausen Institute of Technology (SIT). Global groups such as Novartis and Microsoft have also founded a joint AI lab with the goal of developing intelligent and personalized therapies with the help of digital technologies.

[www.s-ge.com/artificial-intelligence](http://www.s-ge.com/artificial-intelligence)  
Facts and figures on artificial intelligence in Switzerland

### 2.3.2 Robotics

Switzerland is an international leader in the field of robotics and drones and is therefore often referred to as the “Silicon Valley of robotics”. On the one hand, this can be attributed to Switzerland’s long history and strengths in sectors such as mechanical engineering and watchmaking. On the other hand, key areas for robotics and drone innovations include artificial intelligence, sensor technology, photonics, information technology, and computer vision, fields in which Swiss business and research is prominently represented. In 2017, Switzerland took third place worldwide in terms of robotics patents in relation to the number of inhabitants and has doubled its share of global robotics patents since 2000. The most common area of application is in industry. The Swiss group ABB, headquartered in Zurich, is the world’s top performer in this respect (number one in the Robotics Business Review 2017 ranking). In the field of Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM), the company is also proving to be a pioneer: The air traffic control company Skyguide developed a completely digitized airspace management system (U-space), which was tested successfully for the first time in Europe in 2017 with international partners in Geneva.

[www.s-ge.com/robotics](http://www.s-ge.com/robotics)  
Facts and figures on robotics in Switzerland

### 2.3.3 Advanced Manufacturing

Thanks to the traditional watch, MEM, and medtech industries, a highly industrialized precision cluster has developed in Switzerland, which occupies a leading position in the field of advanced production processes in the digital age. As a production location, Switzerland allows companies to optimize their manufacturing processes by increasing efficiency and saving costs. Various international companies such as ABB, Oerlikon, Hamilton, Dätwyler, Swiss Smart Factory, and Schindler are optimizing their existing production processes with digital solutions in Switzerland; its dual education system enables them to find very well qualified staff who can operate highly specialized machines. Most companies focus on innovation and quality in order to compete with cheaper locations and maintain and expand their global market position. The World Economic Forum (WEF) has opened a center for cybersecurity in Geneva, with the aim of establishing a secure, global cyberspace. The independent institution is intended to optimize collaboration between private entities and authorities worldwide.

[www.s-ge.com/advanced-manufacturing](http://www.s-ge.com/advanced-manufacturing)  
Facts and figures on advanced manufacturing (Industry 4.0) in Switzerland



### 2.3.4 Personalized Health

Thanks to its strength in the life sciences and ICT sector, Switzerland is the ideal location for innovative companies that want to quickly and easily bring new ideas in relation to personalized health to the market. The close collaboration between science and industry plays a key role in this. Cutting-edge research is being carried out at Swiss pharmaceutical groups as well as at world-class universities and state institutes; SMEs and startups are also providing important momentum. Thanks to Switzerland's innovativeness and its life sciences cluster, the country covers the entire value chain from drug development to production. The Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics (SIB) supports top-class performance in data science and, through around 70 groups of researchers, provides the national and international life sciences community with an ultramodern bioinformatics structure based around the topic of precision medicine.

The Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN) is the overarching initiative for the promotion of personalized health. It works with the National Support Initiative "Personalized Medicine" run by the Swiss Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI) with the goal of enabling the national and international exchange of data required for research. The institutes of technology ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne support projects that are working, among other things, on open-source software permitting secure and decentralized access to health data with the help of blockchain technology.

[www.s-ge.com/personalized-health](http://www.s-ge.com/personalized-health)  
Facts and figures on personalized health in Switzerland

### 2.3.5 Blockchain

Alongside the traditional financial sector, crypto-based financial transactions have become increasingly important for Switzerland as a financial center. The country is globally recognized for its legislation supporting data protection, and the proactive stance of the national government has created extremely favorable conditions for blockchain companies. Through the decision of the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority (Finma) to grant banking permits to two blockchain financial services providers, Switzerland has recognized the innovative potential of new technologies for the financial markets. Blockchain technology is also used in the fields of supply chain management, the insurance industry, energy provision, and logistics. At the University of St. Gallen's Institute for Supply Chain Management (ISCM), research is being carried out on blockchain applications in the foodstuffs and pharmaceutical sector. The Swiss Blockchain Federation (SBF) is also committed to creating legal certainty and favorable conditions in relation to blockchain technology. It promotes dialog and collaboration between the Confederation, cantons, business, academia, and society. In addition, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has opened a center for cybersecurity in Geneva, with the aim of establishing a secure, global cyberspace and fighting against cybercrime.

[www.s-ge.com/blockchain](http://www.s-ge.com/blockchain)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as a blockchain location

### 2.3.6 Life Sciences

Major groups that are extremely successful globally, such as Novartis, Roche, and Syngenta, as well as smaller companies form a unique industrial cluster that is concentrated in the regions of Basel, Zurich, Zug, and Lake Geneva. The Swiss chemical-pharmaceutical industry is virtually exclusively active in specialty chemicals and is very internationally orientated. Companies in the Swiss chemical-pharmaceutical industry have a leading worldwide position in many market sectors and employ around 77,000 people. The industry represents around 5% of the gross domestic product. Only the metal and mechanical engineering industry is larger in Switzerland.

Thanks to the momentum created by pharmaceutical giants Novartis and Roche, but also as a result of recent investments by international companies such as Indigo, Alnylam, Bluebird Bio, BeiGene, and Incyte, a unique biotech cluster has arisen. Switzerland is one of the strongest and most innovative locations in Europe for biotechnology, which is why these companies have moved their European headquarters to Switzerland. Over half of Swiss biotech firms are small companies with fewer than 20 employees. They profit from the geographical proximity to large companies both in Switzerland and in its neighboring countries. Switzerland has a high concentration of innovative and successful companies, research institutes, and universities along the entire value chain of the life sciences sector. Some well-known global players headquartered in Switzerland and which are industry leaders in Europe include Actelion, Amgen, Biogen, Crucell, and Merck Serono.

The concentration of medical technology companies in Switzerland is also unusually high with around 1,350 companies. 75% of all products manufactured in Switzerland are then exported, which makes up 5.2% of all Swiss exports. Investment in research and development, growth rates, and profitability are all above average. In total, around 54,500 people are employed in medical technology. At 1% relative to the working population, this is more than any other country. Global Swiss companies include Ypsomed, Sonova, and Straumann. Some major foreign corporations worth mentioning are Zimmer Biomet, 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

[www.s-ge.com/invest-pharma](http://www.s-ge.com/invest-pharma)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as a pharma location

[www.s-ge.com/biotech](http://www.s-ge.com/biotech)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as a biotech location

[www.s-ge.com/medtech](http://www.s-ge.com/medtech)  
Facts and figures on Switzerland as a medical technology location

[www.scienceindustries.ch](http://www.scienceindustries.ch)  
Swiss industry association for chemicals, pharma, biotech

[www.swiss-medtech.ch](http://www.swiss-medtech.ch)  
Swiss medical technology association

[www.interpharma.ch](http://www.interpharma.ch)  
Umbrella organization of Swiss pharmaceutical companies

### 2.3.7 Engineering

The mechanical, electrical engineering, and metal industry (MEM) is the largest industrial sector and holds a key position in the Swiss economy, with around 320,000 employees: In 2019, the MEM industry's share of value creation amounted to about 7%. Almost 20% of jobs in the MEM industry are in the field of research and development. Countless companies of the Swiss MEM industry have a leading international role in their sub-sectors. Almost 80% of products from the MEM industry are exported. Global companies in the metal and mechanical industry with well-known names such as OC Oerlikon, Rieter, Schindler, and ABB are present in Switzerland.

The Swiss watch industry is primarily located in the Jura region stretching from Geneva to Schaffhausen (called the "watchmaker belt"). 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 is reflected in a very considerable division of labor. As a result, the sector generally comprises small and medium enterprises, averaging around 70 employees per company. Around 700 companies employ 59,000 people (as of 2017). 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 was 21.7 billion Swiss francs in 2019.

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", which has developed over the course of years, includes medical technology, which has significantly expanded its presence in the region in recent years. Today, this precision cluster features production technologies from the fields of robotics and additive manufacturing especially. A cluster strongly orientated to micromechanics, optics, and photonics 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

[www.swissmem.ch](http://www.swissmem.ch)  
Association of the Swiss mechanical, electrical engineering and metal industry (MEM)

[www.fhs.swiss](http://www.fhs.swiss)  
Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry (FH)

### 2.3.8 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Switzerland leads the way with respect to the expansion of infrastructure for the information society. According to the OECD, over 50% of the population has a fixed high-speed Internet connection, putting Switzerland in first place worldwide ahead of Denmark and France. In 2017, 93% of Swiss households had an Internet connection. The World Economic Forum "Networked Readiness Index 2019" placed Switzerland in fifth place behind Sweden, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Norway. With around 200,000 working in the field of information and communication technology (ICT), the ICT field is the seventh largest area in Switzerland (2017).

The ICT landscape is characterized by extremely specialized SMEs such as Abacus, Opacc, Elca, and Netcetera. Renowned companies, for instance IBM, Google, and Microsoft, have also established premises close to research institutes like ETH Zurich, EPF Lausanne, and their research establishments. 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

[www.s-ge.com/data-centers](http://www.s-ge.com/data-centers)  
Facts and figures on data centers in Switzerland

[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)  
Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)

[www.ictswitzerland.ch](http://www.ictswitzerland.ch)  
Umbrella association of the Swiss ICT industry

[www.digitalswitzerland.com](http://www.digitalswitzerland.com)  
National initiative for making Switzerland a leading digital innovation hub

### 2.3.9 Finance

The Swiss financial center is an important element of the economy as well as a world-class cluster. In Switzerland there are some 250 banks, 200 insurance companies, and 1,800 pension funds. The majority of the financial institutions are located in Zurich, Geneva, Basel, and Lugano. In 2018, direct value creation by banks and insurance companies amounted to around 60 billion Swiss francs, with banks and insurance companies each contributing 30 billion Swiss francs. This corresponds to about 9.4% of the entire Swiss gross domestic product. Nearly 214,000 employees work in the financial sector (full-time equivalent), which is about 5.3% of the entire working population in Switzerland. Around 144,000 of these employees work at banks, while roughly 74,400 work in the insurance industry. The importance of the financial industry is also reflected in the courses offered by universities. Thanks to the “Swiss Finance Institute” – a collaborative effort between financial institutions and leading Swiss universities – education and financial research are guaranteed.

From an international perspective, the Swiss banking center is regarded very highly and is extremely competitive. Innovativeness, professionalism, and quality set Swiss banks apart. Their core competency is asset management. With a fourth of the world’s global cross-border investments, Switzerland is the market leader in cross-border private banking. In addition to the two major globally active banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, there are numerous regional and specialized institutions. This diversity is one of Switzerland’s major strengths as a banking center, because it guarantees that every customer will find the right Swiss bank for every need.

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 88 onward.

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

Facts and figures on Switzerland as a financial center

[www.swissbanking.org](http://www.swissbanking.org)

Swiss Bankers Association

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

Swiss Insurance Association

### 2.3.10 Headquarters in Switzerland

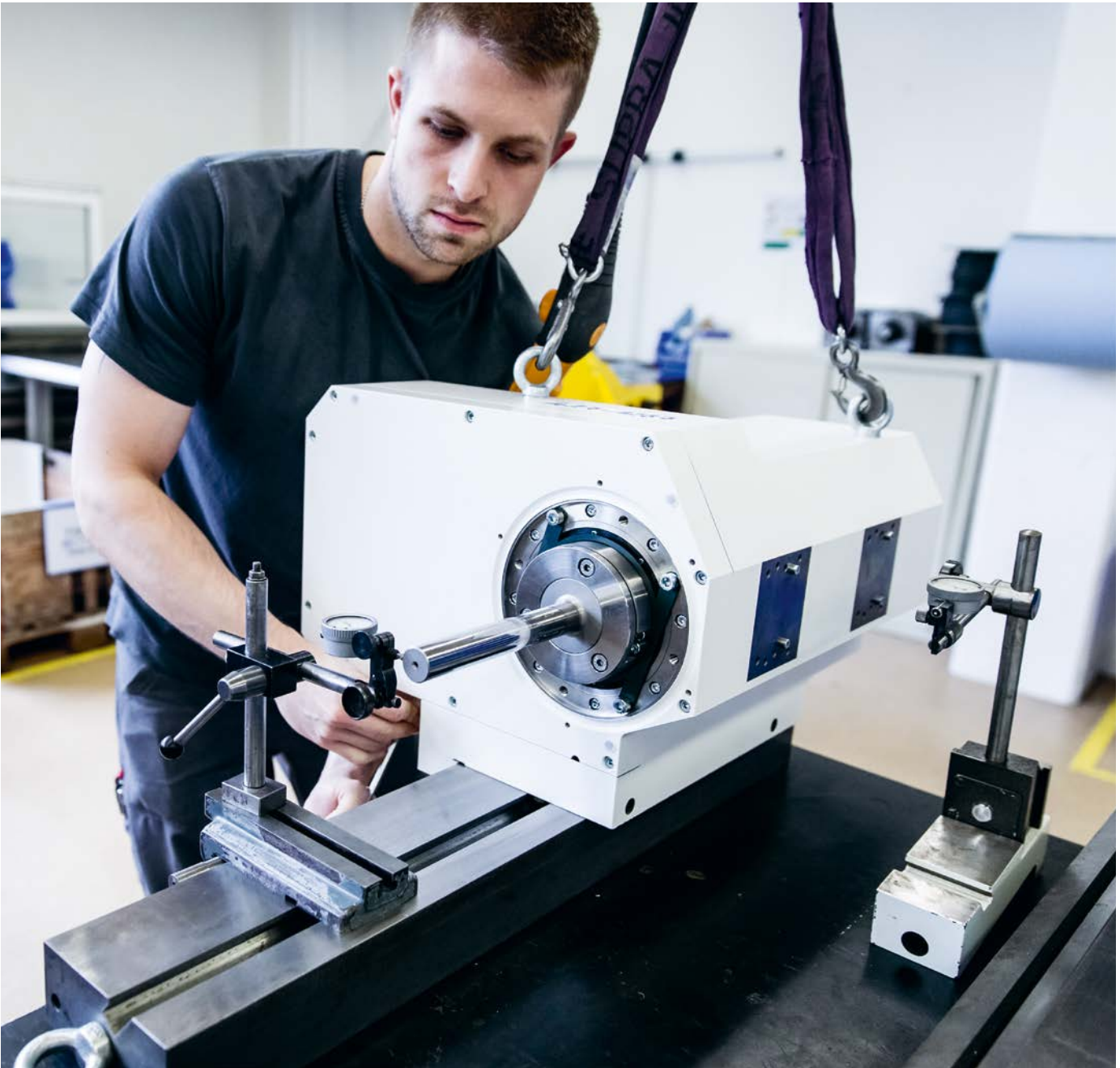
Switzerland is a vital center for the global and regional headquarters of foreign companies. While European firms have their global headquarters in Switzerland, U.S. companies tend to open their regional headquarters here. Prominent examples such as Unilever, Bombardier, Nissan, Sony, Google, Procter & Gamble, VF Corporation or Adidas demonstrate the attractiveness of Switzerland as a location for company headquarters.

Switzerland offers a multitude of benefits for businesses locating their company headquarters in the country. On the one hand, thanks to a high standard of education and excellent working conditions, there is a very large number of highly qualified workers available. On the other hand, Switzerland makes an excellent test market as it is a stronghold of political stability and legal certainty, has close proximity to research, and is home to important decision-makers. The country offers a strategically favorable location in the heart of Europe, providing direct access to the European market, excellent infrastructure, and an attractive tax system with a reliable double taxation treaty.

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

Facts and figures on headquarters in Switzerland

**Upwards of 850 international companies have headquarters in Switzerland.**



# 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.

### 3.1 ECONOMIC FREEDOM

Switzerland is an extremely attractive location for global companies. The main reasons for this are its liberal economic environment, political stability, good general conditions, and an economic policy based on the free market.

Switzerland has greater economic freedom than any other country in Europe. Globally, it's in fourth place behind Hong Kong, Singapore, and New Zealand, as confirmed by the annually published Economic Freedom of the World study. This index measures a country's economic liberty 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, 2017

Overall score from 0 to 10

(FIG. 11)

1	Hong Kong	8.91
2	Singapore	8.71
3	New Zealand	8.50
4	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.40</b>
5	USA	8.19
6	Ireland	8.13
7	United Kingdom	8.09
8	Canada	8.08
9	Australia	8.07
13	Denmark	7.89
17	Japan	7.86
17	Luxembourg	7.86
20	Germany	7.82
21	Finland	7.80
25	The Netherlands	7.72
26	Austria	7.71
33	South Korea	7.59
35	Sweden	7.56
40	Belgium	7.51
46	Italy	7.41
50	France	7.35
79	India	6.91
85	Russia	6.78
113	China	6.42
124	Brazil	6.23

Source: Fraser Institute, Economic Freedom of the World: 2019 Annual Report

## 3.2 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.

### 3.2.1 Free Trade Agreements, WTO, and Elimination of Trade Barriers

The continuous improvement of access to foreign markets is an objective of Swiss foreign trade policy. A growing number of countries are simultaneously concluding bilateral or plurilateral, regional or cross-regional free trade agreements to supplement the multilateral liberalization of trade. In addition to the EFTA Convention and the bilateral Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (EU), Switzerland currently has a network of 30 free trade agreements with 40 partners outside the EU and is also a member of the WTO. The agreements are normally concluded within the EFTA framework, but some stand outside it, such as those with Japan and China. The WTO 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 that it is not an obstacle. 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) > Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation  
Free trade agreements (WTO)

### 3.2.2 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 European internal 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 carried over.

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 7.7%, VAT is much lower than in neighboring countries (Germany: 19%, France: 20%, Austria: 20%, Italy: 22%). Within the European Union, value added tax rates vary between 17% (Luxemburg) and 25% (Denmark and Sweden).

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.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch)  
Swiss Customs Administration

[www.s-ge.com](http://www.s-ge.com) > Services > ExportHelp  
Information about exports and customs tariffs worldwide

### 3.2.3 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 a free trade agreement exists. If, for example, goods are imported in this way from a country outside the EU/EFTA area and processed 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.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch) > Information companies > Exemptions, reliefs, preferential tariffs and export contributions > Exportation from Switzerland  
Information about origin

### 3.3 PROTECTION OF FREE COMPETITION

Switzerland's economic system is based on the principles of the free market. The key regulatory task in a market economy is protecting competition. In Switzerland, this is primarily ensured via the instruments of the Cartel Act and the Internal Market Act. The Cartel Act, which has been largely harmonized with EU regulations since 1995, strengthens free and fair competition. Cartels are not illegal, but abuses are sanctioned. The Internal Market Act ensures greater internal competition and the elimination of protectionist regulations at cantonal and municipal level.

The application of the Cartel Act and the Internal Market Act is the responsibility of the Competition Commission, an independent government authority. The Competition Commission's tasks are to combat harmful cartels, to monitor abuses by companies dominant on the market, to carry out merger checks, and to prevent state restrictions of competition and intercantonal business transactions.

[www.weko.admin.ch](http://www.weko.admin.ch)  
Competition Commission

### 3.4 PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The protection of intellectual property rights is well established in Switzerland. The Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (Eidgenössisches Institut für Geistiges Eigentum, IGE) located in Bern, is the national authority for all issues concerning patent and trademark protection, indications of source, design protection and copyright.

A comprehensive system of patent, trademark, design, and copyright protection guarantees that the results of innovation and creativity in Switzerland are protected both nationally and internationally.

The IGE has a user friendly website where information about intellectual property rights in Switzerland can be accessed. The Swissreg database also provides free access to much important information in relation to patents, trademarks, designs, and copyright.

Switzerland has signed many bilateral and multinational agreements within the framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), including the protection of intellectual property to facilitate and enhance the export-oriented Swiss economy. Switzerland also cooperates in the worldwide protection of IP rights as a member state of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) which is based in Geneva.

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch)  
Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IGE)

[www.ige.ch/en](http://www.ige.ch/en) > Intellectual Property > SME Portal  
Information specifically for SMEs

[www.swissreg.ch](http://www.swissreg.ch)  
Database of the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property

[www.wipo.int](http://www.wipo.int)  
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

#### 3.4.1 Patents

A Patent provides the owner of an invention with the right to prevent others from using it for a maximum of 20 years. Patent rights can be used to give a competitive advantage while exploiting the invention directly, or can provide a legal basis for licensing someone else to make use of the invention.

To be eligible for a patent, the invention must fulfill the following basic criteria:

1. **Technical invention:** the resolution of a technical problem by technical means.
2. **New:** an invention is considered novel when it is not in the public domain at the time of the patent application. It must not be a simple modification to something that already exists. It must also be inventive such that the invention must not be obvious to someone with specialist knowledge and experience in the same field.
3. **Industrial application:** the invention must be something that can be made or used and must be suitable for industrial use.

There are three options to register a patent:

- National / Swiss patent: patent applications can be submitted to the IGE. Swiss patent protection extends to Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.
- Regional / European patent: patent applications can be submitted to the European Patent Convention (EPC) to obtain protection in the member states of the EPC including Switzerland, through a standardized patent investigation and granting procedure conducted by the European Patent Office.
- International patent: patent applications can be submitted to the WIPO pursuant to the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), which Switzerland has ratified and which enables inventors to submit an international application which then has the same effect as a national application in all named member states.

An application to patent an invention can be filed by individuals or legal entities, however the inventor will always be an individual and will be named as the inventor in the patent application.

A patent is protected in the country in which it is registered and in force. 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. The patent remains in force as long as the annual fees and annuities are paid during the 20-year validity period.

A patent costs CHF 200 for the application, CHF 500 for the Swiss patent application search and CHF 500 for the examination. Annual annuities are payable starting four years after the date of filing and increase on an annual basis according to the taxes outlined by the IGE (Latest taxes modified as of 1 July 2019).

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch)  
Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch) > Intellectual Property > IP Rights at a Glance  
IP Rights at a Glance

[www.epo.org](http://www.epo.org)  
European Patent Office

**According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, Switzerland has the highest number of patent applications per resident.**

### 3.4.2 Trademarks

Switzerland recognizes trademarks as any word, slogan, or device used to distinguish a trader's goods and/or services from those of another trader (individual/company). Trademarks are business identifiers. In Switzerland, rights arise from registration of a trademark with the Swiss trademark register, Swissreg. To be eligible for a trademark, the word, slogan, or device must fulfill all of the following basic criteria:

- The trademark must not infringe another's rights (e.g. an earlier registered trademark);
- The trademark must be distinctive;
- The trademark must not be descriptive of the goods or services; and
- The trademark must not be against public order or public morality.

An application to register a trademark in Switzerland can be filed with Swissreg by individuals or legal entities. A trademark is registered for 10 years from the date of filing the application and thereafter can be kept in force indefinitely by renewal at intervals of 10 years. In Switzerland, trademark applications can be submitted electronically. The registration fee is 550 Swiss francs (plus class fees). If the mark meets the protection requirements, it is normally registered within a maximum of six months. Swissreg does not check whether an identical or similar trademark exists. It is therefore recommended that a trademark availability analysis is conducted directly or with the support of a trademark attorney in advance of filing the application. International trademarks protected in Switzerland can be consulted, free of charge, online via the WIPO Madrid Monitor.

There are three options for protecting trademarks abroad:

- National trademark registration: trademark applications can be submitted to the relevant national intellectual property authority and are subject to local legal requirements (use of a local trademark attorney is thus recommended).
- Regional / European registration: trademark applications can be submitted to the European Union Intellectual Property Office via one single trademark application, which ensures registration and provides protection in all EU member states.
- International registration: trademark applications can be submitted to the WIPO, according to the Madrid System, the trademark owner can register its trademark in any of the 122 member states with a single application, while the assessment of such applications is carried out by the trademark authorities in the respective countries.

[www.ip-search.ch](http://www.ip-search.ch)  
Trademark search

[www.ige.ch/ma-berater](http://www.ige.ch/ma-berater)  
Trade mark consultants



### 3.4.3 Design

A design refers to the visual appearance of articles which are produced industrially. The features of appearance that are relevant are the three-dimensional shapes of the article or part of the article as well as the two-dimensional decoration on the surface of the article. To be eligible for registration as a design, it must fulfill both of the following basic criteria:

1. New: the design must be new; and
2. Individual Character: the design must be sufficiently distinguishable from existing designs.

An application to register a design in Switzerland can be filed with the IGE by individuals or legal entities. A design can be protected for a maximum of 25 years provided that renewal fees are paid at intervals of 5 years and publication can be deferred for up to 30 months after filing to protect the novelty of the design from competitors. The IGE does not check whether an identical or similar design exists. It is therefore recommended that a design availability analysis can be conducted directly, or with the support of a specialist attorney in advance of filing the application. There are three options for protecting designs abroad:

- National design registration: design applications can be submitted to the relevant national intellectual property authority and are subject to local legal requirements.
- Regional / European registration: design applications can be submitted to the European Union Intellectual Property Office via one single application, which ensures registration and provides protection in all EU member states.
- International registration: design applications can be submitted to the WIPO, according to the Hague System, the design owner can register its design in any of the 73 contracting parties in 90 countries (including Switzerland) with a single application, while the assessment of such application is carried out by the design authorities in the respective countries.

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

Facts and figures on product and industry design in Switzerland

[www.ige.ch](http://www.ige.ch) > Protecting your IP > Designs

Protection of Designs

### 3.4.4 Copyright

A copyright, protects the author of literary and artistic works; it arises automatically whenever such work is created and does not require any registration. Copyright lasts for the lifetime of the author plus up to 70 years. The first owner of copyright is the author however, if the author creates the work in the course of his or her employment duties, then the first owner is the employer. While there is no registration procedure for copyright, the Swiss Society for Authors, the SSA, protects the rights of stage writers and authors of audiovisual works in Switzerland and abroad.

[ssa.ch/en/](http://ssa.ch/en/) > About > Vision/Mission

Swiss Society for Authors

## 3.5 PRODUCT REGULATIONS AND PRODUCT LIABILITY

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

Mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) are a politically important 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 Européene]). The health and safety requirements for products 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 are largely comparable with those in the European Union - the manufacturer is liable for damage caused by defective goods, irrespective of whether the manufacturer himself is negligent. In Switzerland, 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) > Work > Product safety

Product safety regulations

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation

Technical trade barriers

[www.snv.ch](http://www.snv.ch) > Services > Switec InfoCenter

Standards: switec - Swiss information center for technical regulations

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

Accreditation: Swiss Accreditation Service (SAS)

### 3.5.1 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 Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). FOPH's 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 sale to consumers. The presence of GMOs is tolerated if they do not constitute more than 0.9%. 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 3.5.2).

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 Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH).

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

Information from the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)

**It takes a few 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.**

### 3.5.2 Pharmaceutical Products

The manufacture and sale of medicines is subject to mandatory licensing in Switzerland. It takes a few 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 80,000 Swiss francs (medicines with a known active ingredient with innovations cost 30,000 Swiss francs).

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

### 3.5.3 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 to the regulation of medical devices

Guide to the regulation of medical devices

## 3.6 LAND USE PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### 3.6.1 Building and Zoning

Thanks to progressive legislation on land use planning and environmental protection as well as 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. Populated areas account for only 7.5% of Switzerland's total space. In the Central Plateau, their share is over twice that of the national average at 16.0%, while it is considerably less in the Alpine regions. 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 a few 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.

Special regulations apply with respect to the acquisition of property by persons abroad, in accordance with the Act on the Acquisition of Real Estate by Persons Abroad ("Lex Koller"). This requires approval from the relevant cantonal authorities for the acquisition of property subject to approval.

Through their adoption of the second-home initiative in 2012, Swiss voters pronounced themselves in favor of restrictions on the building of second homes. In concrete terms, this means that the share of second homes is limited to 20% per municipality. The Federal Act on Second Homes (SHA) implements the constitutional article and has been in force since January 1, 2016.

[www.are.admin.ch](http://www.are.admin.ch)  
Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)

### 3.6.2 Environment

Swiss environmental legislation largely conforms to EU rules. Environmental law and the protective measures 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 environmental protection as well as 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 test are listed in the relevant ordinances. 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)

[www.bafu.admin.ch/uvp](http://www.bafu.admin.ch/uvp)  
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)



# SWITZERLAND AND EUROPE

# 4

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Culturally and geographically, Switzerland is situated in 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 deep-rooted political partnerships 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 52% of Swiss exports and with a share of 70% of Swiss imports (as per 2018), the EU is by far Switzerland's most important trading partner. In 2018, Switzerland was the third most important EU export destination after the USA and China. The EU is also the most important trading partner for foreign direct investments. At the end of 2018, Swiss direct investments in the EU totaled 810 billion Swiss francs. That represents a share of almost 55% of all direct Swiss investments abroad.

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

#### 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 single 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

#### 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 were gradually introduced in Switzerland vis-à-vis the EU. If the FZA is expanded to include new EU member states, longstanding transitional provisions are already in place. Citizens of Switzerland and the EU states have the right to choose their place of work and residence within the territory of contractual partners. A prerequisite is that they have a valid employment contract with an employer in Switzerland, are self-employed, or, if they do not work, can provide evidence that they have adequate financial resources and comprehensive medical insurance. The agreement also liberalizes the cross-border rendering of services by individuals for up to 90 days per calendar year. Service providers can therefore render their services in a guest country for a maximum of 90 working days. This free movement of persons is reinforced by mutual recognition of vocational qualifications and coordination of the national social insurance systems. The Swiss economy is able to recruit in the EU/EFTA region thanks to the FZA workforce. This boosts the efficiency of the labor market and promotes the availability of highly qualified employees. The free movement of persons also works in the other direction, of course: Swiss nationals can work and take up residence freely in the EU as well. At the moment around 460'000 Swiss people, around 60% of all Swiss abroad, live in the EU.

The agreement specifies transition periods. During these periods the entry 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). Once transitional provisions expire, the agreement also allows (based on a safeguard clause) for the number of residence permits to be limited again for a period of time, if the immigration levels are above average. The transition regulations guarantee a gradual and controlled opening of the labor markets, and the accompanying measures against wage and social dumping also apply.

- Since June 1, 2007, citizens of both the "old" EU states incl. Cyprus and Malta (the EU-17) and the EFTA states have benefited from the free movement of persons. Since May 1, 2011, EU-8 citizens have also benefited from unrestricted free movement of persons as have citizens of Bulgaria and Romania (EU-2) since June 1, 2016.
- Croatia entered the European Union on July 1, 2013. The expansion of the FZA to include Croatia was negotiated in Protocol 3. This came into effect on January 1, 2017. Since then special transitional provisions apply with regard to labor market restrictions (priority for Swiss nationals and supervision of wages and working conditions) and quotas.
- The United Kingdom has decided to leave the EU. This means that, after Brexit, the FZA is no longer applicable between Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Both countries have therefore signed an agreement on citizens' rights. This agreement safeguards the FZA rights of Swiss nationals in the United Kingdom and of British nationals in Switzerland even after Brexit. Existing residence rights are preserved, for example, through this agreement.

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

#### 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 has improved international cooperation between courts and the police in the fight against crime. This cooperation includes security measures such as strengthened controls on external Schengen 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 during their travel through 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. This also eliminates double inspections according to Swiss and EU requirements. 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

There is a long tradition of cooperation between Switzerland and the European Union in the areas of research and innovation. Researchers in Switzerland have participated in EU research framework programs since 1988, with Switzerland in the status of either a non-member country or an associated partner. In the latest generation of programs, "Horizon 2020," Switzerland was considered a partially associated country until the end of 2016. National measures for financing Swiss participation in projects came into effect for areas of Horizon 2020 that Switzerland is not associated with. As of the beginning of 2017, Switzerland has been fully associated with Horizon 2020.

[www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Research & Innovation > EU Framework Programmes for Research > Horizon 2020

Up-to-date information on Switzerland's status in Horizon 2020

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 Overland Transport Agreement regulates the mutual opening up of the market for the transport of persons and goods by road and rail, together with fee systems based on the cost-by-cause principle. 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 Switzerland

In accordance with the multilateral agreement on public procurement (GPA) 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 heat 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)

In accordance with WTO regulations, the public sector and affected companies are obliged to issue and carry out tenders for procurement and orders that exceed a certain threshold level. In principle the most economical or best-value offer must be chosen, as long as the offered goods or services are of comparable quality. However, the selection may also be based on the lead times, quality of service, or environmental 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 firms). Furthermore, the increased competition among providers leads to reduced prices and thus considerable savings for the public bodies that issue the contracts.

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch) > Bilateral agreements > Agreements and implementation > Texts of the agreements > Public procurement markets  
Public procurement in Switzerland

[www.simap.ch](http://www.simap.ch)  
Information-sharing platform for public contract awarding bodies and providers

#### 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 that 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 (e.g. duties and quotas) as well as non-tariff barriers (e.g. various product regulations and import requirements). This opening-up of the market will confront the agriculture sector with considerable challenges. To ensure that new market opportunities are seized and the affected sectors can be supported in the new market situation, free trade should 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% 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. 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, or license fees. This increases Switzerland's appeal as a business location.

In May 2015, Switzerland and the EU signed an agreement on the automatic exchange of information on tax matters. The new global standard will supersede the Savings Tax Agreement as of 2017/2018.

[www.efd.admin.ch](http://www.efd.admin.ch) > Topics > Taxes > International taxation > Taxation of savings agreement with the EU  
Current information on taxation of savings income

### 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 globalized Swiss financial center is set up to conduct all bank transactions in 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 (formerly freedom of trade) allows anyone, including foreign nationals, to operate a trade business in Switzerland, to form a company, or to hold an interest in one. 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; if a foreigner acquires property in Switzerland, approval may be required (Lex Koller, see chapter 3.6.1).

Swiss corporate law provides for a set number of corporate structures, the organization and content of which are restricted. A distinction is made between the following corporate structures: 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 type of limited liability company referred to as GmbH & Co. KG, a legal form 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, among other aspects, 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. Institutions and partner organizations also offer efficient assistance, for example the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) with EasyGov.swiss, cantonal location promotion organizations, Innosuisse, Venturelab, Genilem, and Eurostars. The state does not, however, grant any direct financial support for the establishment of new companies.

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

- Forming an unincorporated or incorporated company
- Setting up a foreign 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 should be considered when selecting an appropriate corporate structure (not exhaustive):

- 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. Anyone establishing a company must decide whether they want to work alone or with partners and whether they prefer pure capital investors or collaborative partners.
- Taxes: the business income and assets of the company and the owner are taxed either separately or together, depending on the corporate structure. High profits tend to be subject to lower taxes for capital-based incorporated companies than for partnership-type unincorporated companies or sole proprietorships.
- 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 Swiss SME portal

### 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 the 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 enterprises. 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 100,000 Swiss francs. In order to found a stock corporation, at least 50,000 Swiss francs must be deposited in a blocked Swiss account (so-called capital deposit account). An increase in the stock capital to at least 100,000 Swiss francs may, however, be demanded by the board of directors at any later date.

For stock corporations, the law prescribes three agents: the general meeting, the board of directors, and the auditor.

- The general meeting is the meeting of shareholders; it is responsible for tasks establishing a foundation for the corporation, such as decisions about the articles of association, the appointment of the board of directors and the auditor.
- 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 person (board of directors member, executive committee member, or authorized signatory) authorized to represent the corporation must reside in Switzerland, but they must not necessarily be a Swiss citizen. 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 compensation in Switzerland for a member of the board of directors in companies with up to

- 1,000 employees is about 25,500 Swiss francs 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.
- The auditor is responsible for control in stock corporations. Small and medium enterprises can forego auditing or have the company audited to a limited extent.

### 5.1.2 Limited Liability Company (GmbH)

A limited liability company (GmbH) is a mix of a stock corporation and general partnership and is particularly suited to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as family companies. A limited liability company 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 (so-called 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 100 Swiss francs. The nominal capital must total at least 20,000 Swiss francs and must be deposited in full in a capital deposit account. A nominal share can be easily transferred in writing. In contrast to requirements for AGs, the owner of the invested capital must be entered in the commercial register. In principle, all shareholders are entitled to joint management of the company; at least one managing director must have their place of residence in Switzerland.

For limited liability companies, the law prescribes three agents: the shareholders' meeting, the management, and the auditor.

- The topmost body of a limited liability company is the shareholders' meeting. It is responsible for tasks, such as decisions about the articles of association, the appointment of the manager and the auditor.
- 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: every shareholder, even ones added later, are entered in the commercial register.
- The provisions of stock law apply for the auditor.

## Legal Forms at a Glance

(FIG. 12)

	SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP	GENERAL PARTNERSHIP	STOCK CORPORATION (AG)	LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY	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 business activity has yet to be conducted, 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>Company name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Owner's last name (with or without first name)</li> <li>- Possible additions: type of activity, invented name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Last name of at least one shareholder with wording indicating the partnership status</li> <li>- Possible additions: type of activity, invented name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any name (personal name, type of activity, invented name)</li> <li>- The legal form must be indicated in the company name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any name (personal name, type of activity, invented name)</li> <li>- The legal form must be indicated in the company name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same name as main company</li> <li>- Special additions permitted</li> <li>- If the main company is foreign: location of main company, location of branch office</li> <li>- Indication of legal form</li> </ul>
<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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General meeting</li> <li>- Board of directors (at least 1 member)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General partners' meeting</li> <li>- Executive board (at least 1 member)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bodies of main company</li> <li>- Managed by own executives, authorized representative resident in Switzerland</li> </ul>
<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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- total assets of CHF 20 million</li> <li>- sales of CHF 40 million</li> <li>- average headcount over the year of 250 employees or more</li> </ul>		
<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	STOCK CORPORATION (AG)	LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY	BRANCH OFFICE
<b>Minimum capital</b>	- No requirements	- No requirements	- Minimum of 100,000 Swiss francs, minimum deposit of 50,000 Swiss francs.	- Minimum of 20,000 Swiss francs, deposited in full	- No capital required (endowment capital of foreign parent company is sufficient)
<b>Costs of consulting, establishment, notary</b>	- 700 – 1,200 Swiss francs	- 2,400 – 4,400 Swiss francs	- from 1,900 Swiss francs (electronic) - from 5,000 Swiss francs (traditional) (see 5.4.3)	- from 1,800 Swiss francs (electronic) - from 5,000 Swiss francs (traditional) (see 5.4.3)	- from 1,000 Swiss francs
<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 at least one person resident in Switzerland is entitled to represent the company)</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>- difficult from a tax point of view</li> <li>- Lacks 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.**

### 5.1.3 Branch Office

Instead of founding a subsidiary in Switzerland, a foreign company can also set up a branch office (a common corporate structure for foreign companies in Switzerland). These branch offices have a certain organizational and financial independence from the foreign parent company. From a legal point of view the branch office is a part of the foreign company, although it can sign contracts on its own behalf, perform transactions, and also appear in court at its place of business as a plaintiff and a 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 office 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 fully liable partner in a limited partnership for collective investment must be a stock corporation.

This legal form has existed in Switzerland since 2006. For investors and limited partners, it is an alternative to setting an LLP 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.

### 5.1.5 Sole Proprietorship

The 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).

Legal entities 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 consolidated financial statements if two of the following parameters are present in two successive fiscal years:

- Total assets of 20 million Swiss francs,
- Annual sales of 40 million Swiss francs,
- An average headcount over the year of 250 or more full-time positions

## 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 20 million Swiss francs,
- Annual sales of 40 million Swiss francs,
- 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 during the year.

[www.treuhandsuisse.ch](http://www.treuhandsuisse.ch)  
Swiss Fiduciary Association

[www.expertsuisse.ch](http://www.expertsuisse.ch)  
Swiss Expert Association for Audit, Tax, and Fiduciary

## 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 to 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 generally takes two to four weeks from the submission of required documents to the Commercial Registry Office to the date when the company is considered legally established (when it has legal effect with respect to third parties). Some of a new corporation's activities require a permit from a supervisory board (e.g. the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA), which must be obtained before an activity can be started.

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) 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 (AG) or a limited liability company (GmbH) requires entry in the commercial register, for which public documentation by a notary public is required.

[www.s-ge.com/company-foundation](http://www.s-ge.com/company-foundation)  
Facts and figures on establishing a company in Switzerland

[www.easygov.swiss](http://www.easygov.swiss)  
Electronic registration and creation of new companies

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical knowledge > Establish an SME  
Online notary for company formations (AG/limited liability company)

[www.startups.ch](http://www.startups.ch)  
Private platform for the establishment of new companies

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

(FIG. 13)

STEP	TIME REQUIRED IN WEEKS					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Advance checking of the company's name	■					
Preparation of necessary documents (corporate charter or articles of incorporation, statutes, application, etc.)		■				
Payment of the company capital into a blocked account at a specified deposit location (Swiss 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 deposited 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 the Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce ("SHAB")					■	
Entry of responsible person(s)/entities in the appropriate registers (commercial register, land register)						■
Registration as company liable to tax						■

Source: Documentation of cantonal economic development agencies

### 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)  
Zefix - Central Business Name Index

[www.shab.ch](http://www.shab.ch)  
Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce

### 5.4.3 Costs of Forming a Company

The costs for forming a stock corporation and a limited liability company 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 chapter 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 1 million Swiss francs. This exemption applies generally to the formation of corporations and to capital increases up to 1 million Swiss francs. Existing companies may therefore increase their capital to 1 million Swiss francs without owing any securities issue tax.

Excluding the securities issue tax, the fixed formation costs therefore total 5,000 to 8,000 Swiss francs for the traditional process and approximately 2,000 Swiss francs for the electronic process. For a small business that does not need to provide extensive documentation, the costs for establishing a company amount to a maximum of 2,000 Swiss francs. 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 > Establish an SME  
Costs of forming a company with different legal forms

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

(CHF)

(FIG. 14)

COSTS OF FORMING A COMPANY	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	from 1,900
Commercial register fee	600	600
Certification fees	1,000	600
Securities issue tax	–	–
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>7,000 – 9,000</b>	<b>1,900 – 2,000</b>

Source: [www.easygov.swiss](http://www.easygov.swiss), PricewaterhouseCoopers

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

(CHF)

(FIG. 15)

COSTS OF FORMING A COMPANY	TRADITIONAL	ELECTRONIC
Share 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	from 1,800
Commercial register fee	600	600
Certification fees	1,000	600
Stamp duty	–	–
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>6,000 – 8,000</b>	<b>1,800 – 2,000</b>

Source: [www.easygov.swiss](http://www.easygov.swiss), PricewaterhouseCoopers



# 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 ENTERING THE COUNTRY AND VISAS

The requirements for entering Switzerland differ depending on the purpose of the stay (for example, tourism, visit, employment, family reunification, or study) and the duration of the stay (short or long term). The State Secretariat for Migration publishes the current requirements on its website.

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

### 6.1.1 Visa Requirements

Depending on your nationality and/or the duration of your stay, you may need a visa to enter Switzerland. As a rule, persons requiring a visa must submit the visa application to the Swiss representation responsible for their place of residence. The corresponding application can be downloaded from the website of the representation or the SEM. In addition to a valid, recognized travel document, the application must include proof of travel health insurance and additional documents that verify the reason for the journey. The representation's website provides information on visa fees and documents that have to be submitted. The Swiss representation abroad may require a letter of sponsorship to be submitted before it issues the visa if the applicant does not have sufficient financial funds or if there is some doubt on this point.

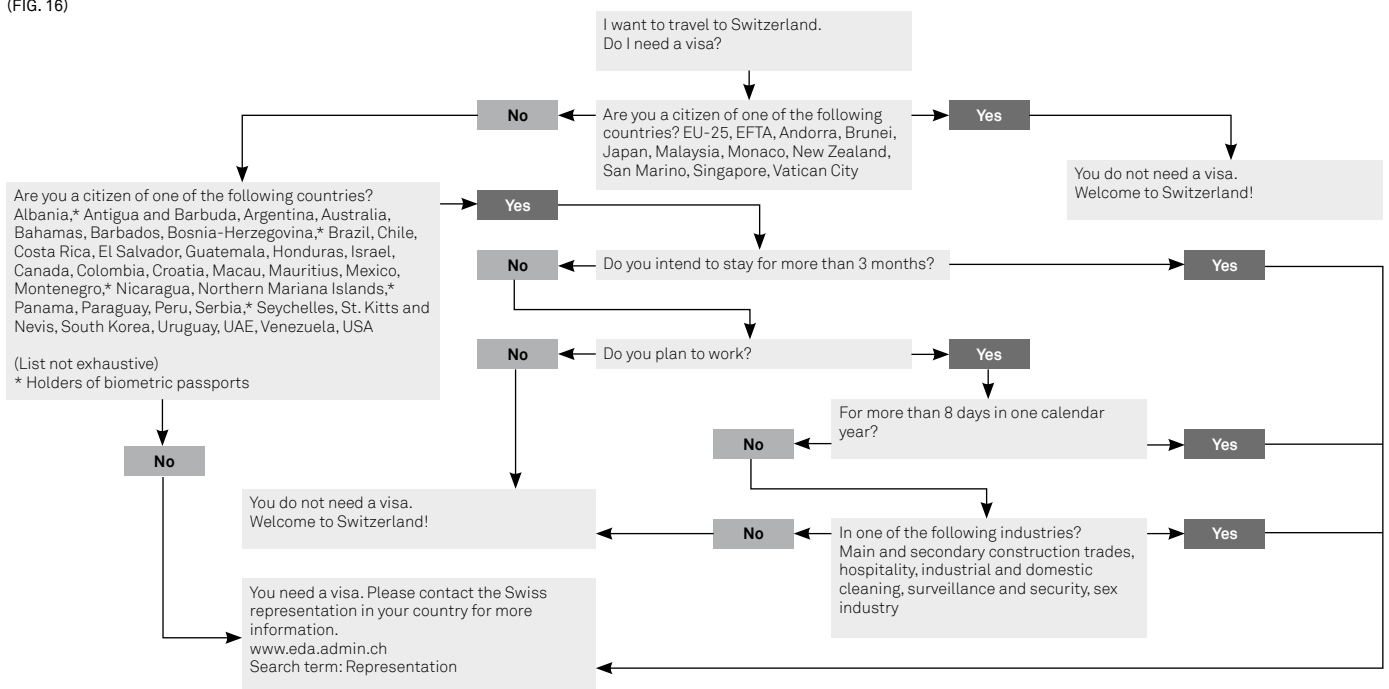
[www.swiss-visa.ch](http://www.swiss-visa.ch)  
Switzerland's online visa system

[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)  
Swiss representations abroad

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence  
Information about entering Switzerland

## Do I Need a Visa?\*

(FIG. 16)



\*Information is for guidance only. A general visa waiver does not mean, for instance, that no permit is required for work. Please consult the responsible Swiss representation.

### 6.1.2 Visa Procedure

Persons requiring a visa must submit the 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.

In some cases, the representation abroad may require a declaration of sponsorship. Detailed information on this requirement can be found on the SEM's website:

- Information on entry to the Schengen area/visa procedures: [www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence > Do I require a visa > Entry to the Schengen Area
- Information on letters of invitation and declarations of sponsorship: [www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence > Do I require a visa > Letters of Invitation and Declarations of Sponsorship

If the visa request is declined, it is possible to appeal the decision by writing to the SEM (in German, French, or Italian) within 30 days of notification and explaining the reasons for the appeal. An advance on costs is payable to the SEM for handling the appeal. The appeal will not be processed unless the required advance on costs is paid.

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence  
Visa application form

## Types of Permits

(FIG. 17)

<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.

Source: State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), 2020

## 6.2 TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Temporary and permanent residence permits are issued by the cantonal migration offices. It may be possible to work depending on the type of permit issued. Foreigners residing in Switzerland for more than three months receive a residence permit indicating which type of authorization has been granted (see Fig. 17).

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > About us > Contact > Cantonal authorities  
Cantonal migration and labor market authorities

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Foreigners in Switzerland  
Information for foreigners in Switzerland

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence  
Overview of residence

### 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 considered dependents
- Parents and parents of the spouse, who are provided with sufficient financial support

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

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

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

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

## 6.3 RESIDING IN SWITZERLAND WITHOUT GAINFUL 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. The reference period of 180 days is always calculated based on the inspection date and covers the 180 days preceding the inspection date. 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 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 funds to support 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 have sufficient funds to support themselves 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 provided 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 for tuition fees
- Proof of sufficient 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 GAINFUL 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 migration or employment office (depending on the canton).

Since the bilateral agreements on the free movement of persons and the revised EFTA convention entered into force, different conditions have applied to EU/EFTA citizens than to people from other countries. EU-27/EFTA citizens are on equal footing with Swiss employees. Transitional provisions apply in the case of Croatian citizens. Citizens of non-EU countries are subject to entry restrictions, labor market checks, and priority treatment for EU/EFTA citizens. Foreign asylum seekers may stay in Switzerland in accordance with the provisions of asylum legislation.

The cantons are responsible for deciding whether foreigners may stay and reside in the country. The Confederation is consulted for permission and considers applications from the point of view of Switzerland as a whole. The cantonal migration authorities are responsible for the control of aliens. Foreigner nationals must register with the Residents' Registration Office in the municipality in which they reside within eight days.

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 health, teaching, and technical sectors and in the administration of justice, are regulated. To practice these professions it is necessary to possess a diploma, certificate, or professional qualification. 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.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Education > Recognition of Foreign Qualifications  
Regulated professions / recognition of foreign qualifications

[www.crus.ch](http://www.crus.ch) > Services > Recognition/Swiss ENIC > Regulated Professions  
Regulated professions / recognition of foreign qualifications

## Work and Residence Permits: Rules and Procedures

(FIG. 18)

RULES FOR EU/EFTA CITIZENS		RULES FOR CITIZENS OF NON-EU/EFTA COUNTRIES
EU-27/EFTA	CROATIA	
<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>- Quotas are redefined each year.</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 highly qualified individuals (forming a company, training new employees, specialists working for international companies): 12 months, can be extended to 24 months.</li> <li>- Family reunification possible.</li> <li>- Quotas are redefined each year.</li> <li>- Trainees / interns: valid for 12–18 months, no provision for family reunification.</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>- Quotas are redefined each year.</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-27.</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>- Quotas are redefined each year.</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-27</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 (five years for U.S. citizens).</li> <li>- Holders are no longer subject to employment restrictions. Entitlement to work in self-employed capacity.</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 with 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>- Geographic mobility within all Swiss border zones.</li> <li>- Priority for Swiss workers, inspection of remuneration and working conditions.</li> <li>- Set-up time of six months for self-employed cross-border commuters.</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.</li> <li>- 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> </ul>

Source: State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), 2020

#### 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. Unrestricted free movement of persons already applies to members of EU-27 countries; citizens of Croatia are subject to limitations during the first phase of transitional provisions (priority treatment of Swiss nationals, salary and work conditions, quotas). These permits can be extended subsequently. Anyone who enjoys full freedom of movement (EU-27) 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 confirmation of employment. If the work contract expires within three months, no permit is needed, but these workers are still required to register. Service providers (self-employed or posted workers) based in the EU-27 or EFTA region no longer require a license for activities in Switzerland lasting less than 90 work days per calendar year. They simply need to register, which can be done via the Internet. Exceptions are made for services requiring a license that are provided for companies based in Croatia in the following economic sectors: primary and secondary construction, gardening and landscaping, cleaning, and surveillance/security.

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.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > **Entry & residence**  
Free movement of persons Switzerland – EU/EFTA

[www.europa.admin.ch](http://www.europa.admin.ch) > **Services and publications**  
Brochure: "European Nationals in Switzerland"

#### 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 persons involved in cultural affairs, employees of internationally active corporations and key persons 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, as well as for 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 or the EU/EFTA region and that the training of a suitable employee within a reasonable period was not possible.

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > **Entry & residence** > **Labour/Work permits**  
Employment for non-EU/EFTA citizens

#### 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.

Because of the free movement of persons between Switzerland and the EU, citizens of EU-27 and EFTA countries only need a short-term residency permit for au pair employees. The permit can be extended to a maximum of 18 months.

[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.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence > Labor/Work permits > Young professionals (trainees)  
Guide for foreign trainees/interns and Swiss employers

#### 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.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > Entry & residence  
Swiss citizenship/naturalization

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Foreigners in Switzerland  
Naturalization: Information



# 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](http://www.svit.ch)  
Swiss Real Estate Association (SVIT)

[www.alle-immobilien.ch](http://www.alle-immobilien.ch)  
[www.homegate.ch](http://www.homegate.ch)  
[www.immoscout24.ch](http://www.immoscout24.ch)  
[www.comparis.ch](http://www.comparis.ch) > Property  
[www.acheter-louer.ch](http://www.acheter-louer.ch)  
[www.immogalaxy.ch](http://www.immogalaxy.ch)  
Residential properties

[www.s-ge.com/realestate](http://www.s-ge.com/realestate)  
Commercial properties (in cooperation with Swiss Circle)

### 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](http://www.myswitzerland.com) > Accommodation  
Hotels and vacation accommodations

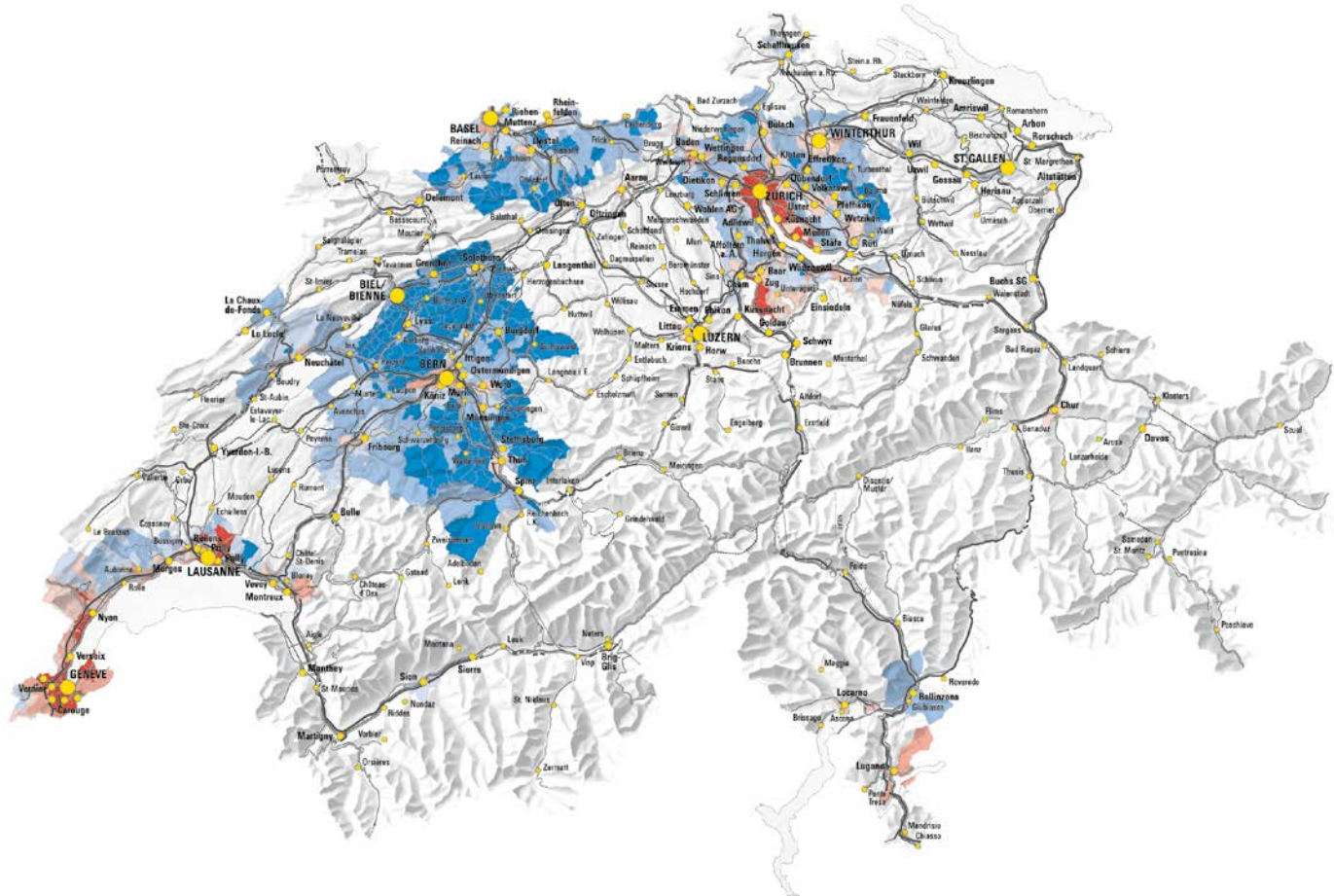
[www.xpatxchange.ch](http://www.xpatxchange.ch) > Moving  
Relocation agencies, providers of furnished and serviced apartments

## 7.2 COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

### 7.2.1 Renting

#### Market Prices for Office Space (last updated: 4th quarter of 2019)

(FIG. 19)



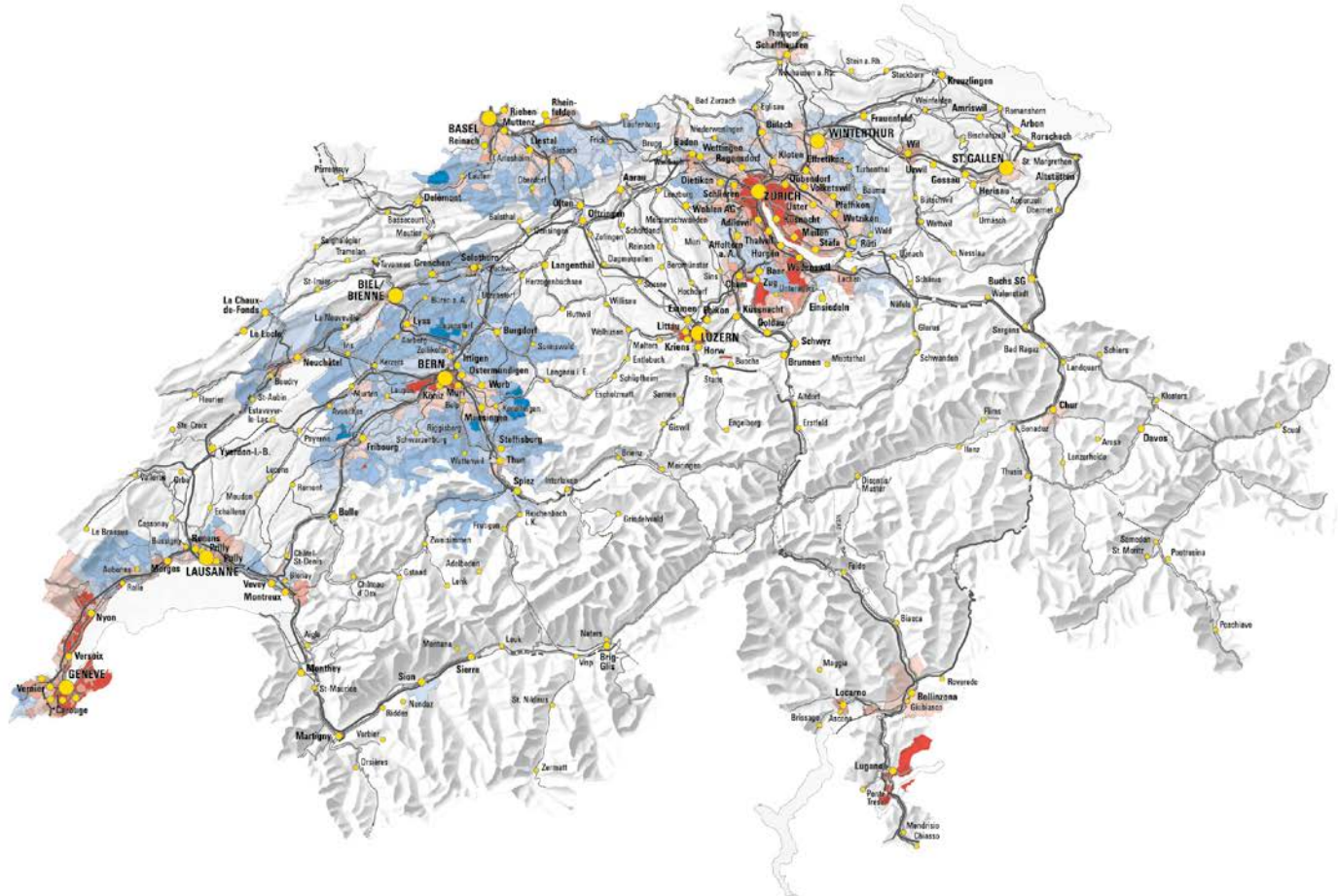
Source: Wüest Partner, source map: swisstopo, 2020

Net rent (CHF) per square meter of useful space and year (median)  
Major 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 Buildings**  
(last updated: 4th quarter of 2019)

(FIG. 20)



Source: Wüest Partner, source map: swisstopo, 2020

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

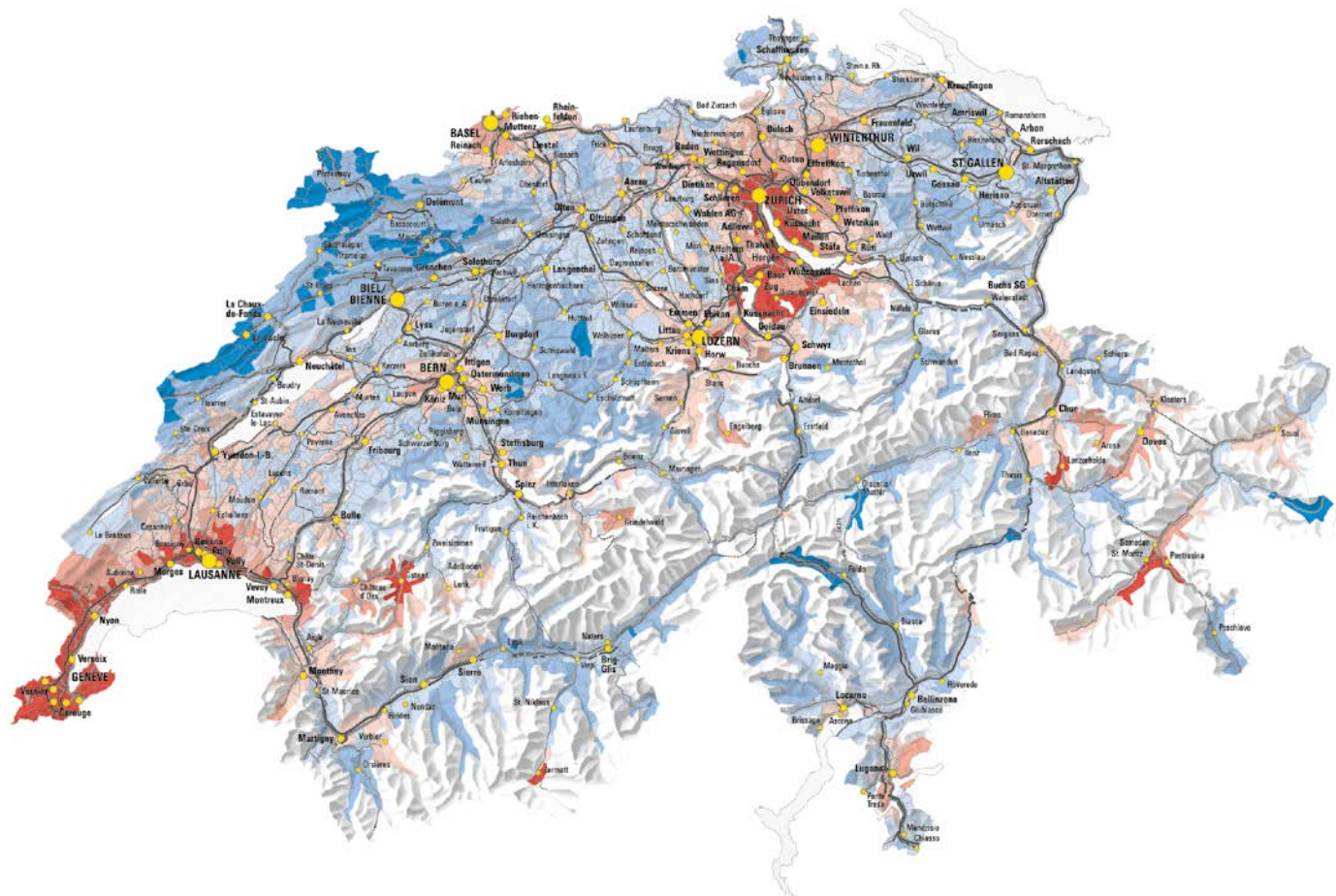
**7.2.2 Buying**

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.

## Market Prices for Rented Accommodation

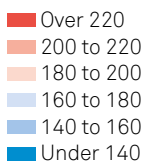
(last updated: 4th quarter of 2019)

(FIG. 21)



Source: Wüest Partner, source map: swisstopo, 2020

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



## 7.3 RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

### 7.3.1 Renting

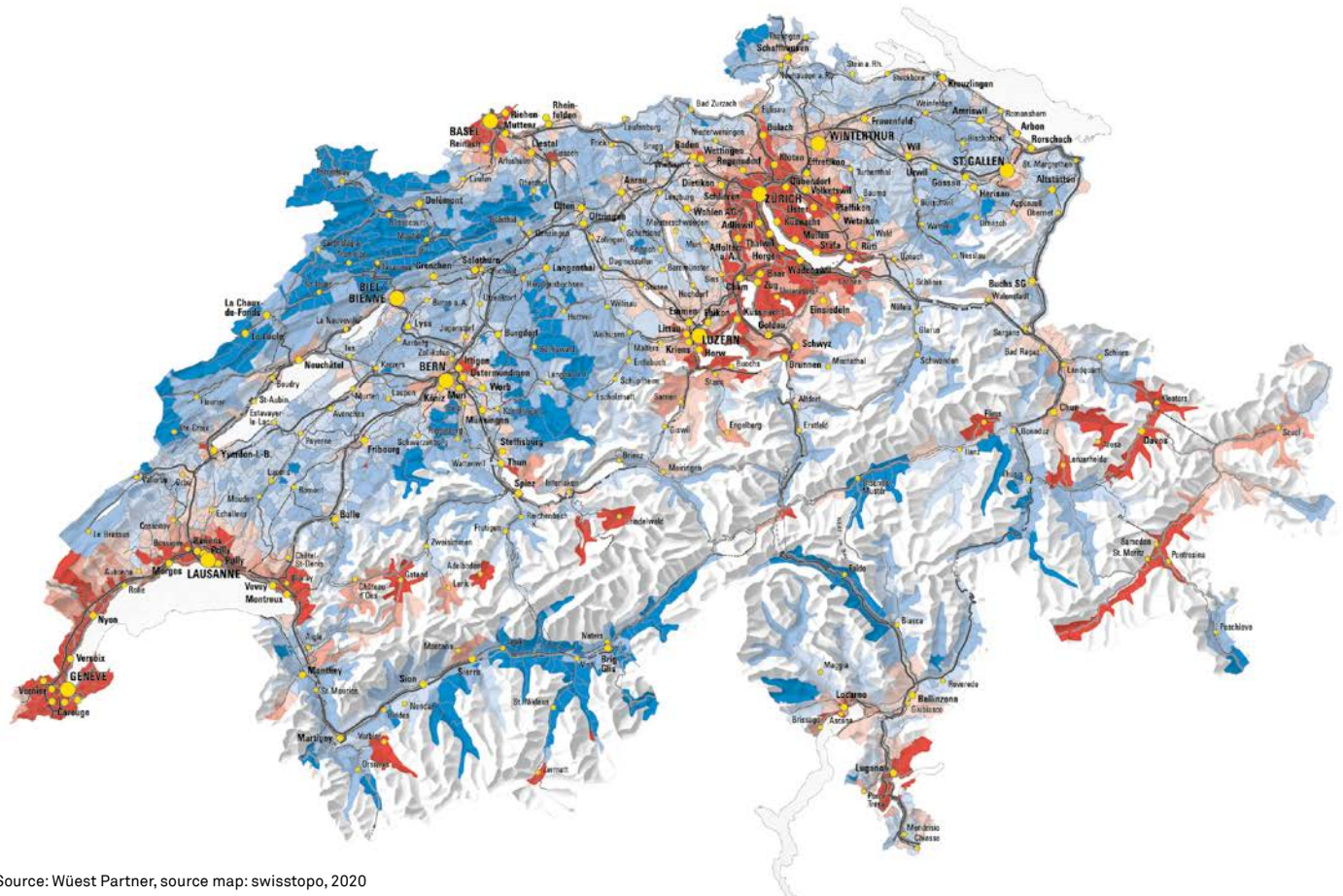
Two out of three people in Switzerland live in rented accommodation. Demand is high and availability scarce, especially in cities and large urban areas. Since 2003, the vacancy rate has been varying around the 1% mark (2019: 1.66%). It therefore takes some patience and luck to find the right place to 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

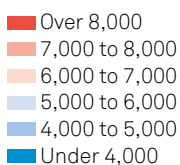
(last updated: 4th quarter of 2019)

(FIG. 22)



Source: Wüest Partner, source map: swisstopo, 2020

In CHF per square meter of usable space



### 7.3.2 Buying

The acquisition of residential property by individuals resident abroad is subject to certain legal restrictions (see 7.5). In 2017, the home ownership rate in Switzerland was about 38%. 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) > Homeownership in Switzerland > Homeownership: getting information  
Information about the land register

[www.grundbuchverwalter.ch](http://www.grundbuchverwalter.ch)  
Swiss Land Register Administrators Association

[www.hausinfo.ch](http://www.hausinfo.ch) > Finances and taxes > Purchases and sales  
Additional costs for condominiums

## 7.4 BUILDING PERMITS

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) Application review, 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 in Switzerland > Planning application and building permit  
Planning applications and building permits

## 7.5 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 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 sectors. It therefore covers self-employed professionals such as IT specialists and 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.

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

### 7.5.2 Permit Required

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

- Foreign nationals who reside outside Switzerland.
- Non-EU/non-EFTA nationals resident in Switzerland who do not have a permanent residence permit.
- Companies whose head office is located 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 who reside outside Switzerland. This is the case if foreigners 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.

### 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 that merit 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.

## Permit Requirements for Different Groups

(FIG. 23)

GROUP	NO PERMIT REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE OF...
<b>All persons</b>	<b>Commercial Real Estate</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

Source: Federal Office of Justice (FOJ)



# 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 4.7 million employed people (as at Q4 2019), about 2.2 million of whom are women. The rate of unemployment as defined by the International Labor Office (ILO) is 3.9%, among the lowest in Europe. Foreigners account for 26% of the employed population. 37% of employed people work part-time. Of the 2.2 million women in work, around 60% work part-time, compared to only about 18% of the 2.5 million men in work. Switzerland has consistently had low unemployment.

The Swiss workforce is highly qualified, over 40% having undergone tertiary training. Swiss employees are famous worldwide for their multilingualism, and Swiss managers have above-average international experience.

### International Experience by Managers, 2019

1 = Low, 10 = High

(FIG. 24)

1	United Arab Emirates	7.91
<b>2</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7.73</b>
3	The Netherlands	7.55
4	Qatar	7.53
5	Sweden	7.47
6	Ireland	7.47
7	Hong Kong	7.45
8	Luxembourg	7.32
9	Singapore	7.29
10	Belgium	6.75
13	Austria	6.40
21	Germany	6.03
28	United Kingdom	5.61
29	USA	5.57
34	India	5.29
40	Canada	5.13
43	Italy	5.12
45	China	5.07
48	France	4.94
52	South Korea	4.76

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

In terms of motivation to work, the Swiss rank fourth worldwide behind Denmark, Austria and Ireland. Swiss employees identify very strongly with their companies, partly because most companies are small or medium-sized.

### International Comparison of Motivation to Work, 2019

1 = Low, 10 = High

(FIG. 25)

1	Denmark	7.86
2	Austria	7.82
3	Ireland	7.55
<b>4</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7.47</b>
5	The Netherlands	7.44
8	Sweden	7.30
10	Germany	7.07
14	Hong Kong	6.97
16	China	6.88
18	USA	6.67
20	Singapore	6.49
21	Canada	6.39
22	Luxembourg	6.36
27	Japan	6.03
34	Italy	5.67
35	India	5.57
38	United Kingdom	5.46
41	South Korea	5.32
46	France	5.08

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

## 8.2 COST OF LABOR

### 8.2.1 Wages

Salaries are relatively high in Switzerland, reflecting the higher number of working hours and the country's high levels of prosperity and output. Generous salaries are a symbol of success and make the country attractive to qualified workers. 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 and between urban and rural areas.

[www.lohnrechner.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.lohnrechner.bfs.admin.ch)

Individual wage calculator

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Look for statistics > 03 Work and income

Wages, income from employment and labor costs

### 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.

### 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.

### Productivity, 2018

GDP per employed person, in US dollars

(FIG. 26)

1	Ireland	343'380
2	Saudi Arabia	304'536
3	Norway	227'516
4	Qatar	187'469
5	Sweden	185'030
<b>8</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>146'508</b>
10	Canada	139'156
12	USA	137'893
14	The Netherlands	133'687
16	South Korea	122'433
17	Austria	120'085
18	Germany	118'230
24	France	102'305
25	Japan	99'966
29	United Kingdom	96'047
30	Italy	96'042
32	Luxembourg	94'155
37	Hong Kong	76'530

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

### 8.3 EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS AND EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION

The Swiss labor market is generally considered one of the world's most liberal (Fig. 27). 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 health and 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. Certain mandatory 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, overtime, inventions, etc.). Employment contracts and employee handbooks must conform to the mandatory provisions of the Swiss Code of Obligations, labor law, 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 for

### Deregulation of the Labor Market, 2019

Hinders entrepreneurial activity 1 = Greatly, 10 = Not at all (FIG. 27)

1	Singapore	8.27
2	Hong Kong	7.90
3	United Arab Emirates	7.83
4	The Netherlands	7.39
5	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>7.21</b>
6	Denmark	7.16
7	Luxembourg	7.15
9	Ireland	7.02
11	United Kingdom	6.90
13	Qatar	6.79
15	Australia	6.60
16	USA	6.58
17	Canada	6.55
22	Saudi Arabia	6.00
24	China	5.71
30	Germany	5.29
31	India	5.26
36	Austria	4.84
48	France	4.10
49	Japan	4.02

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

**The Swiss labor market is considered one of the world's most liberal.**

compensating employees for agreeing to such non-competition clauses. Non-competition clauses, for example, 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
- define real execution, penalties, and their effects.

### 8.3.2 Collective Bargaining Agreements

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 not to engage in industrial action.

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 600 (2018) non-binding collective bargaining agreements must be observed only if the contractual parties are members of the respective associations. In Switzerland there are 46 generally binding collective bargaining agreements that have been issued by the federal government and 28 issued by the cantons (2019).

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 the mutual agreement to maintain peace, workers and management seek to resolve conflicts through discussions. Solution-oriented employer-employee relations are the norm in Switzerland (cf. Fig. 28).

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Arbeit > Personenfreizügigkeit und Arbeitsbeziehungen  
Collective Bargaining Agreements

### 8.3.3 Co-Determination and Employee Representation

The Co-Determination Act governs the participation of employees in the 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 changes. Employees have the right to take their questions and 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 joining 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.

### Cooperation in Labour-Employer Relations, 2017

1 = Total confrontation, 7 = Total cooperation  
(FIG. 28)

1	Switzerland	6.2
2	Singapore	6.2
3	Norway	6.1
4	Denmark	6.0
5	The Netherlands	5.9
6	New Zealand	5.8
7	Japan	5.7
10	Hong Kong	5.6
11	Luxembourg	5.6
14	USA	5.4
15	Canada	5.4
19	United Kingdom	5.3
21	Germany	5.3
27	Ireland	5.1
50	China	4.6
56	India	4.5
102	Italy	4.0
109	France	3.9
106	South Korea	3.5

Sources: WEF, The Global Competitiveness Index 2017 – 2018

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 representation 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 defining overtime 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-shift or multiple-shift operation, or continuous operation (7 x 24 hours x 365 days) are all possibilities. In particular should continuous operation be required, 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 weekly 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 time-frame, excess hours must be paid at a premium of 25%.

In contrast to many European countries, the consent of the employee representation 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 daytime work. Work undertaken between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. constitutes evening work. Daytime and evening work do not require approval. However, evening work may be introduced only after consultation with the employee representation 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 Night-time Periods

N = Night-time period, B = Approval required  
(FIG. 29)



Sources: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

Compared with other countries, Switzerland has highly investor-friendly labor market provisions.

#### 8.4.4 Night Work, Working on Sundays and 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 to 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)  
Calendar of public holidays

## 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 representation committee does not have a say in this type of termination. Only in the case of mass layoffs does the employee representation committee have the right to be consulted by the employees. The employee representation 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 redundancy 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. Unless otherwise agreed, the employment relationship ends after the probationary period at the end of each month. In order for the termination notice to be legally valid, the person to be dismissed must receive it before the notice period begins. In the case of an unconditional summary dismissal, the employee's salary must continue to be paid out until the end of the notice period even though the work performance ends immediately (though not fiduciary duty and other duties).

Termination without notice is only possible under certain restrictive conditions: the continuation of the individual employment relationship may no longer be acceptable (for example fraud, refusal to work, or competition with the employer). In most cases, a warning is required in advance. If there is an important reason, termination without notice must occur immediately (within a few days) or the right is forfeited.

## Flexibility in Hiring and Firing, 2017

1 = Obstructed by regulations,  
7 = Employers have flexibility to decide

(FIG. 30)

1	Hong Kong	5.8
2	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>5.6</b>
3	Singapore	5.6
4	United Arab Emirates	5.5
5	USA	5.4
6	Iceland	5.4
7	Denmark	5.2
8	United Kingdom	5.1
10	Canada	4.9
15	New Zealand	4.6
18	Germany	4.6
19	India	4.6
24	China	4.5
34	The Netherlands	4.2
44	Ireland	4.1
75	Luxembourg	3.7
88	Korea Republic	3.5
113	Japan	3.2
127	Italy	2.8
133	France	2.4

Sources: WEF, The Global Competitiveness Index 2017 – 2018

It is improper to dismiss an employee on the grounds of their age, skin color, or religion, nor for affiliation with a political party or a union. An abusive termination is valid but can be challenged and may give rise to compensation (a maximum of 6 months' wages at the court's discretion). Employees cannot be fired during certain "blackout periods," which apply to illness, accidents, pregnancy, military service, civil defense, community service, or relief activities abroad. Dismissal in these situations is not valid and is referred to as termination during barred periods.

Compared with other countries, Switzerland has highly investor-friendly labor market conditions. 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 a complete halt to production. In order to maintain jobs, an employer that applies for short-time work 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, as dismissals are the last resort with which an entrepreneur can respond to fluctuations in the level of

employment. In the case of mass layoffs, the Swiss Code of Obligations (OR Article 335d-335g) requires employers to

- consult and inform their employees, and
- inform the cantonal employment office in writing.

[www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch](http://www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch) > Employers > Insurance Benefits  
Short-time work brochures, forms, and addresses

## 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:

**1<sup>st</sup> Pillar:** 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.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar:** 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.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Pillar:** Individual, voluntary self-provision of the employed person should cover the further personal needs, above all by saving on bank and insurance costs. The individual provision of the third pillar are partially tax-deductible.

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)

[www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch) > Information for > Companies /SMEs  
SME counselor for social insurance

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical Knowledge > Personnel > Human Resource Management  
Social insurance for SMEs

## Overview of Obligatory Social Insurance Contributions

(FIG. 31)

INSURANCE	EMPLOYEE	EMPLOYER	SELF-EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED
<b>Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance (OASI)</b>	4.35% of salary	4.35% of salary	max. 8.1%	Min. 496 CHF Max. 24,800 CHF
<b>Disability Insurance (DI)</b>	0.7% of salary	0.7% of salary	max. 1.4%	Min. 65 CHF Max. 3,250 CHF
<b>Compensation for loss of income and maternity benefits</b>	0.225% of salary	0.225% of salary	max. 0.45%	Min. 21 CHF Max. 1,050 CHF
<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 portions of income up to CHF 148,200, 0.5% for salary shares over CHF 148,200	1.1% for portions of income up to CHF 148,200, 0.5% for salary shares over CHF 148,200	(non-insurable)	-
<b>Occupational Pension Funds</b>	7.73% (estimated as % of insured salary, max. CHF 842,400) Amount depends on insurance regulations	10.43% (estimated as % of insured salary, max. CHF 842,400) Amount depends on insurance regulations	voluntary	-
<b>Family Allowances</b>	only in the canton of Valais (0.3% of payroll)	0.3%–3.63% of total income (depending on family compensation fund)	0.3%–3.4%	-

Sources: Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office, 2020



### 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, 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 148,200 Swiss francs per year.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics > Insurance  
Swiss Office of Public Health (FOPH) information on accident insurance:

### 8.6.4 Health Insurance and Daily Sickness Insurance

Mandatory health insurance offers cover for illness, pregnancy, and accidents where there is no accident insurance for this. 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 (0 – 2,500 Swiss francs) 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 > Insurance  
Swiss Office of Public Health (FOPH) information on health insurance

[www.priminfo.ch](http://www.priminfo.ch)  
Comparison of health insurance premiums (FOPH)

### 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 (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 the 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) > Social Insurances > Income Compensations  
Information from the FSIO on compensation for loss of income

### 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 that required 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 3,797 Swiss francs. The maximum insured salary is 12,350 Swiss francs 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

### 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 21,330 Swiss francs to participate (2020). The maximum mandatorily insured salary is 85,320 Swiss francs. 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 of 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) > Social Insurances > Occupational pension funds  
Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office (FSIO) information on occupational pension funds

### 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 42,660 Swiss francs. 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 200 francs for children up to the age of 16.
- An education allowance of 250 francs 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.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > A-Z > Family allowances  
Calculation of family allowances by canton

## 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 the RAVs 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 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 agencies

### 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. Hiring staff from abroad is prohibited (except under very strict conditions within the Group).

[www.hrswiss.ch](http://www.hrswiss.ch)  
HR Swiss: Swiss Association for Human Resources Management

[www.swissstaffing.ch](http://www.swissstaffing.ch)  
Employment services trade association



# FINANCIAL CENTER AND CAPITAL MARKET

# 9

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Accounting for 9.4% of GDP and employing around 218,400 people (5.3% 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 the asset management and issue underwriting business.

## 9.1 BANKS

### 9.1.1 Structure and General Conditions

In Switzerland there are some 250 banks, 200 insurance companies, and 1,800 pension funds. Apart from the two major global banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, which together hold just under 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 most of which offer a government guarantee, have a domestic market share of about one third. Their share of the total assets of all Swiss-based banks in 2018 was about 18%. Another 97 foreign-owned banks with a share of 9.4% 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% in 2018, it is the world leader in the cross-border asset management business. Overall, Swiss banks managed assets totaling 6,943.5 billion Swiss francs at the end of 2018.

Switzerland's success as a financial center is due to 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.

### Global Financial Centers, 2019

Overall score from 1 to 1,000

(FIG. 32)

1	New York	790
2	London	773
3	Hong Kong	771
4	Singapore	762
5	Shanghai	761
6	Tokyo	757
7	Beijing	748
10	Sydney	738
11	Toronto	737
<b>14</b>	<b>Zurich</b>	<b>734</b>
15	Frankfurt	733
17	Paris	728
25	Luxembourg	708
<b>26</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>706</b>
36	Seoul	677
37	Amsterdam	675
48	Milan	655

Sources: The Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 26), 2019

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.

[www.swissbanking.org](http://www.swissbanking.org)  
Swiss Bankers Association (SBA)

### 9.1.2 Supervision

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.

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 additional form of governance 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)

### 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, the banks can offer all banking services, such as:

- Credit or lending business
- Asset management and investment consulting
- Institutional investment business
- Payment transactions
- Deposits (savings accounts, etc.)
- Securities (stock exchange 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. Most Swiss banks do not require a minimum deposit for normal savings or current accounts. Many banks offer accounts in euros, U.S. 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.ubs.ch](http://www.ubs.ch)  
[www.credit-suisse.ch](http://www.credit-suisse.ch)  
Major banks

[www.kantonalbank.ch](http://www.kantonalbank.ch)  
Cantonal banks

[www.raiffeisen.ch](http://www.raiffeisen.ch)  
Raiffeisen banks

[www.regionalbanken.ch](http://www.regionalbanken.ch)  
Regional and savings banks

[www.vav-abg.ch](http://www.vav-abg.ch)  
Association of Swiss Asset and Wealth Management Banks

[www.abps.ch](http://www.abps.ch)  
Association of Swiss Private Banks

[www.swissprivatebankers.ch](http://www.swissprivatebankers.ch)  
Association of Swiss Private Banks

[www.foreignbanks.ch](http://www.foreignbanks.ch)  
Association of Foreign Banks in Switzerland

[www.bankingombudsman.ch](http://www.bankingombudsman.ch)  
Banking Ombudsman

#### 9.1.4 Protection of Deposits

Swiss deposit insurance esisuisse insures customer deposits with banks and securities dealers in Switzerland. If the customer deposits are no longer available as a result of bankruptcy, customers receive up to a maximum of 100,000 Swiss francs of their money from the liquidator. This applies per customer and institute.

#### Privileged deposits

In the event of bankruptcy, deposits of up to 100,000 Swiss francs per client and financial institution are privileged (in any currency). "Privilege" in this case means that the deposits are assigned to the second bankruptcy class and thus paid out in liquidation before the claims of the third bankruptcy class. To secure the liquidation, the financial institutions must hold 125% of the privileged deposits in the form of liquid assets in Switzerland.

#### Secured deposits

esisuisse protects privileged deposits with a Swiss office up to 100,000 Swiss francs per client and financial institution. These deposits thus benefit from priority payout and the protection provided by esisuisse.

#### Function of deposit insurance (esisuisse)

If FINMA closes a financial institution (bank, securities dealer), the available liquid assets of the financial institution are initially used for the immediate payment of privileged deposits. esisuisse is only activated if the available liquid assets are insufficient to repay the secured customer deposits. esisuisse asks its members (all financial institutions are necessarily members) for the necessary funds via LSV and forwards them within 20 working days to the liquidator commissioned by FINMA. esisuisse provides a maximum of 6 billion Swiss francs. In addition to the liquidity required by law, financial institutions must constantly hold liquid assets amounting to half of their maximum contribution obligations to esisuisse.

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

Deposit Protection of Banks and Securities Dealers

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

## 9.2 SWISS STOCK MARKET: SIX SWISS EXCHANGE

SIX Swiss Exchange is one of Europe's most important stock exchanges. It has outstanding liquidity in Swiss securities trading and connects companies from around the world with international investors and trading participants.

Switzerland is a very attractive financial center for capital-seeking domestic and foreign companies, as it is well manageable, closely networked, and internationally oriented. It is thus hardly surprising that the financial center of Switzerland boasts an extraordinary number of global corporations, financial service providers and strong investors. This gives SIX Swiss Exchange a natural competitive advantage and gives listed companies access to an experienced and well-capitalized Swiss and international group of investors and high liquidity.

Thanks to its self-regulatory competence, the Swiss Exchange creates market-friendly conditions for the listing and trading of domestic and foreign shares, bonds, ETFs, ETPs, funds, and structured products.

The SIX Swiss Exchange combines the locational advantages of the Swiss financial center with first-class services and is the ideal listing location for companies of all origins, size, and sector affiliation. It sells its own index range, which includes the SMI,<sup>®</sup> Switzerland's most important stock index.

With the world's most efficient trading technology and a broad selection of connection options and interfaces, SIX Swiss Exchange offers its participants outstanding trading conditions. It maintains a close dialogue with its domestic and foreign customers and works with them to create the optimal environment for its success. It also offers access to a strong global network, which includes the market data provider SIX Exfeed AG and the fund database Swiss Fund Data.

The SIX Swiss Exchange is part of the SIX Group, which offers services in the area of trading and processing as well as financial information and payment transactions.

[www.six-swiss-exchange.com](http://www.six-swiss-exchange.com)

Swiss Stock Market

### 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 primary sources of credit for commercial finance are market performance, profitability, prospects, and the quality of the company's leadership. These factors are important for the bank in assessing whether the company can repay the loan. Whether or not the company can provide securities is of secondary importance in the commercial business.

As digitization (Industry 4.0) increasingly compels many companies to shift financing resources away from the acquisition of tangible capital goods and towards a fundamental redesign of their production processes, financing requirements are also changing. Banks are required to properly understand and assess business models and their potential in the digitized world while companies must be able to provide the banks with the relevant information.

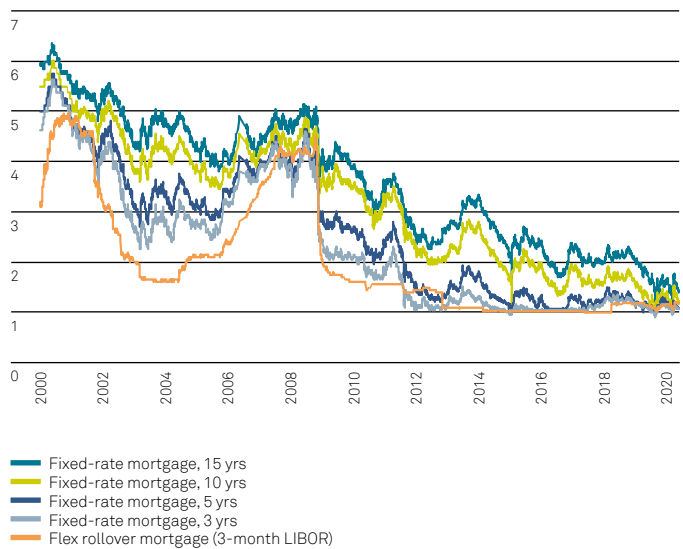
The variety and quality of service providers in Switzerland offer excellent conditions for corporate clients to receive the right financing solution from a wide range of offers. In addition to common products such as operating loans, investment loans, and leasing, special products such as start-up financing, commodity trade finance, convertible loans, guarantees, and equity loans are provided by business angels, venture capital companies, and private equity investors.

In addition, banks provide companies with the full range of derivative instruments (futures and options) that enable companies to selectively manage financial risks (such as interest rate or currency fluctuations).

#### Mortgage Rates, 2000–2020

Interest rate in %

(FIG. 33)



Sources: Credit Suisse, 2020

**In 2019, 2.3 billion Swiss francs were invested in innovative new companies in Switzerland.**

Source: [www.startupticker.ch/en/swiss-venture-capital-report](http://www.startupticker.ch/en/swiss-venture-capital-report), Swiss Venture Capital Report, 2020



### 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 (also called Libor 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 one to fifteen 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 to request offers from a number of lenders.

For commercial real estate, the collateral value depends increasingly on the earning-power value. For industrial projects, normally 50% of the total plant 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 of future prospects is therefore crucial.

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) > Finance & taxes  
Financial aspects of home ownership

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

## 9.4 RISK CAPITAL

In 2019, venture capital companies invested over 2.3 billion Swiss francs in innovative new companies in Switzerland. This represents more than twice the volume of investment since 2012. 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.startupticker.ch](http://www.startupticker.ch) > Assets > Swiss Venture Capital Report  
Online platform for start-ups

[www.seca.ch](http://www.seca.ch)  
Swiss Private Equity & Corporate Finance Association (SECA)

### 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 to the company founder or other investors.

[www.kmu.admin.ch](http://www.kmu.admin.ch) > Practical knowledge > financial > financing  
Overview of financing sources

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

## State Support Schemes

(FIG. 34)

INSTRUMENT	BENEFICIARY	REGIONS	MEASURES
New Regional Policy 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. 500,000 CHF)
Guarantees for mountain regions	SMEs, commercial undertakings	Mountain regions	Bank loan guarantees (max. 500,000 CHF) 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 allowances (max. 90 days for planning phase) Bank loan guarantees (max. 500,000 CHF)
Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI)	Projects for research collaboration at universities and businesses	All of Switzerland	Payment of researchers' salaries

Sources: various federal government agencies, information collated by Generis

### 9.4.2 Business Angels

During their start-up phase, many promising young companies need seed financing of less than 2 million Swiss francs. 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 2 million Swiss francs. More and more often it is so-called “business angels” – individual investors – who finance start-ups. Typically, business angels have experience and connections in addition to capital that they have ideally 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 ultimately make them attractive for future 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 (BAS)

### 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 (see Annex page 144f) 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 also 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 knowledge > financial > financing  
State support on financing

## 9.5 INTEREST AND CAPITAL COSTS

Switzerland is one of the most economically and politically stable countries in the world and is regarded as a “safe haven”. 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 public balance in Switzerland was positive at 3.1 billion Swiss francs (0.4% of GDP) in 2019. By contrast, the euro area and the OECD member states had a negative reference value (–0.8% and –3.2%, respectively). The Maastricht government debt-to-GDP ratio fell below 40% of GDP in 2006 and has since been further reduced thanks to the debt brake. In 2019, it remained at 26.9%.

### Credit Rating: Top Ten Most Secure Countries, 2019

Maximum = 100 points

(FIG. 35)

1	Switzerland	88.16
2	Singapore	87.86
3	Norway	87.80
4	Denmark	86.90
5	Sweden	84.72
6	Luxembourg	84.52
7	Finland	84.08
8	The Netherlands	83.85
9	Australia	81.21
10	New Zealand	80.32

Sources: Euromoney, December 2019

Switzerland's high credit standing, together with its high savings rate, leads to large amounts of foreign funds and therefore to low interest rates when compared to other countries. Business and investment activities can thus be financed relatively inexpensively. In recent years, the average difference in money and capital market rates between Swiss francs and euros has been between 1.5 and 2%. 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. 36).

[www.liik.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.liik.bfs.admin.ch)  
National Consumer Price Index (CPI)

[www.efv.admin.ch](http://www.efv.admin.ch)  
Federal Finance Administration (EFV)

## 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 and the major industrialized nations. While it has remained in negative territory for years, it has been moving at rates of 0.5% since the beginning of 2017.

## Capital Costs, 2019

1 = hinders economic development

10 = promotes economic development

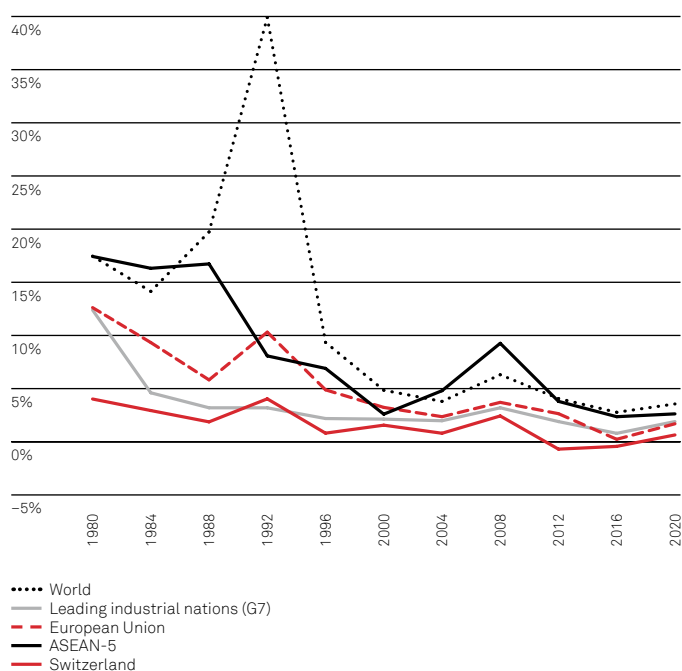
(FIG. 36)

1	Switzerland	7.84
2	United Arab Emirates	7.83
3	USA	7.74
4	The Netherlands	7.66
5	Sweden	7.57
10	Singapore	7.01
11	Germany	6.99
12	Hong Kong	6.88
13	United Kingdom	6.87
14	Luxembourg	6.85
15	Ireland	6.73
23	France	6.40
25	Japan	6.39
27	Canada	6.29
41	India	5.23
43	Italy	5.19
45	South Korea	4.99
51	China	3.98

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

## Inflation, 2020

(FIG. 37)



Sources: IMF WEO Report, 2020



# OVERVIEW OF THE SWISS TAX SYSTEM

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The Swiss tax system mirrors Switzerland's federal structure, which consists of 26 sovereign cantons with 2,202 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/communal 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 stock corporations, limited liability companies, and partnerships limited by shares, cooperatives, clubs and foundations, and collective investment schemes with direct ownership. Companies which have their registered office or place of effective management in Switzerland are generally considered resident for tax purposes.

#### 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 legally prescribed/statutory accounts of a Swiss company and – in the case of a foreign company the branch accounts – form the basis for determining taxable income. With the exception specific tax adjustments, expenditures recorded pursuant to commercial law are therefore tax deductible, provided that they comply with the dealing-at-arm's-length principle. Revenues from qualifying shareholdings (dividend returns and capital gains) constitute indirect tax exemptions. For tax purposes, losses can generally be carried forward for a maximum of seven years.

### **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, 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 minimum equity portion (generally expressed as a prescribed percent of the fair market value but often the lower book values suffice).

Related-party liabilities exceeding the allowable debt are classified as equity and added back to the taxable capital within the context of the cantonal/communal annual capital tax. Moreover, the allowable interest deductibility on debt is 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 if market-related prices cannot be proven on an arm's length comparison. In addition, such excessive interest payments are regarded as hidden dividend payments, which are subject to withholding tax.

### **Group Taxation**

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

### **Group Reorganizations**

Reorganization on a tax-neutral basis is generally possible, as long as the applicable tax accounting values of assets and liabilities are adopted, and the obligation to pay taxes in Switzerland continues to exist. However, transaction-specific regulations must also be followed.

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

Due to the harmonization of cantonal and municipal taxes, most of the aforementioned profit determination regulations apply analogously on a cantonal and municipal level (e.g. participation exemption, loss carryforward rules and, in most cases, thin capitalization rules).

#### **Overview of ordinary profit tax rates**

Combined effective income tax rates (for direct federal and for cantonal and local taxes) for properly taxed companies in 2020 are between 11.9% and 21.6%, depending on the canton and municipality.

#### **Special Tax Regimes**

In contrast to the Swiss federal tax law, all cantonal tax laws provide special tax regimes, in addition to the direct federal tax, which may be obtained provided that the legal conditions of the tax harmonization law are met. Tax proposal 17 will replace the special tax regimes set out below with new measures aimed at underpinning and increasing Switzerland's attractiveness as a location.

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

Facts and figures on Corporate Taxation in Switzerland

### Swiss corporate tax reform

To ensure the international acceptance of Swiss corporate tax law with lasting effect, at the end of 2019 several regimes that are no longer internationally recognized were abolished. To guarantee the continued attractiveness of the economic location nonetheless, the abolition of the regimes was accompanied by the replacement measures described below:

#### A) Reduction of corporate income tax rates

In the course of the tax reform, corporate income tax rates were lowered in most cantons. In some cases, cantons that formerly had high corporate income tax rates compared to Switzerland overall made significant reductions.

#### B) Patent box

Revenues from patents and comparable rights that are based on qualifying expenditure for research and development can be included in the tax calculation basis with relief applied. The introduction of the patent box is mandatory for cantons, but the level of relief differs from canton to canton and amounts to a maximum of 90%.

#### C) Additional deduction for research and development

For research and development expenditure that occurs in Switzerland, cantons can provide for an additional deduction of up to 50%. The additional deduction for research and development is optional for cantons.

#### D) Equity financing deduction

Cantons can provide for a notional interest deduction on the portion of taxable capital exceeding the equity capital required in the long term (so-called security equity capital). This essentially equates to the returns for 10-year government bonds. Where the security equity capital is allotted to internal group loans, an arm's length interest rate can be applied. At present, the equity financing deduction can only be applied in the Canton of Zurich.

#### E) Relief limit

The cantons must set a limit for the relief from all replacement measures (with the exception of the special rate solution). The maximum relief must not exceed 70% of profits, but the cantons are free to set a lower relief limit.

### 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 provide for crediting the cantonal corporate income tax against capital tax.

The tax rates vary from canton to canton. In 2020 the range lies between 0.0010% and 0.51%. Cantons can grant a reduction on the taxable capital that is allotted to qualifying shareholdings, patents, and loans to group companies.

### 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 economically weaker regional community centers and 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 provided for investment projects that meet certain requirements. Besides the creation of new production-related workplaces or investing, these also include conditions, for instance, that a competitive situation among existing companies should not arise.

#### 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. Practice differs in the individual cantons. 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 new jobs in most cantons.

## 10.2 TAX RATE IN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

The international comparison of the total tax rate shows that Switzerland has a tax system which is consistently extremely competitive compared with other highly developed industrial countries. The total tax rate measures the amount of all taxes and mandatory contributions borne by the business and is expressed as a percentage of commercial profits. The total amount of taxes borne is the sum of all the different taxes and contributions payable after accounting for deductions and exemptions.

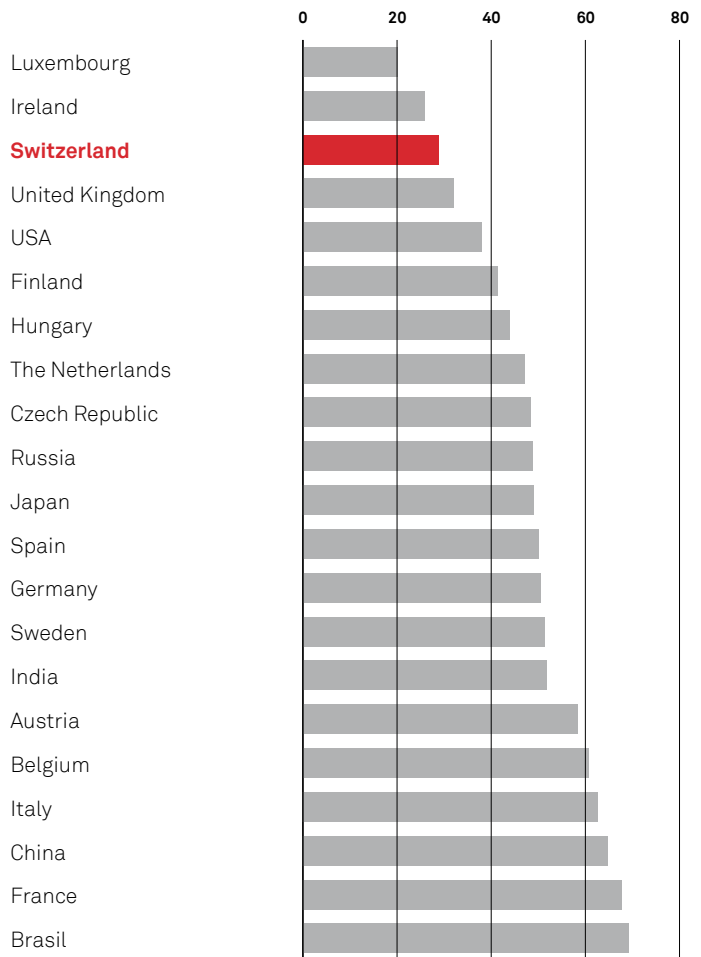
The taxes and contributions included can be divided into the following categories:

- profit or corporate income tax
- social contributions and labor taxes paid by the employer (for which all mandatory contributions are included, even if paid to a private entity such as a pension fund)
- property taxes
- sales taxes (and cascading sales taxes as well as other consumption taxes such as irrecoverable VAT)
- other taxes (such as municipal fees 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.

### Total Tax Rate, 2018 (% profit)

(FIG. 38)



■ Total Tax Rate (% profit), 2018

Source: PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020

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.



## 10.3 TAXATION OF INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYERS

### 10.3.1 Personal Income Tax

#### Taxable Persons

Individuals are subject to taxation on federal and cantonal/communal levels 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 gainful employment or b) for at least 90 days without pursuing any gainful employment. According to the Swiss tax system, partnerships are transparent; hence each partner is taxed individually.

The income of spouses is added together in accordance with the principle of family taxation. The same applies to any registered civil partnerships. The income of children who are minors is added to that of the person/persons with parental custody. An exception is income earned by minors that is subject to a separate tax.

The assessment and charging of personal income taxes is carried out by the responsible cantonal tax administration. Depending on the canton, the municipality of residence may also be responsible for cantonal and communal taxes.

Individuals who do not establish a domicile or place of residence in Switzerland are liable to taxes in Switzerland to a limited extent if an economic relationship exists between them and certain tax objects located in Switzerland (e.g. land, permanent establishment).

#### 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 personal income tax rate (exemption with progression reservation). The total income includes, in particular, income derived through gainful activities, both as an employee and when self-employed, income from movable and immovable property, and income from pensions. 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 income tax, however, they could be subject to other taxes such as gift tax or inheritance tax (see Chapter 10.3.6). Individuals can deduct so-called costs of acquisition from their gross income, e.g. professional outlays such as travel costs between their place of residence and their place of work (to a limited extent) or extra costs for refreshments away from home. Social insurance contributions and contributions to occupational pension funds as well as restricted private pensions are likewise deductible. Additional deductions can be asserted for children entitled to maintenance. Married couples (with one or two incomes) can likewise claim an additional deduction. The extent of deductions allowed may vary greatly on a cantonal level. Debt interest in connection with gainful self-employment is fully deductible. In contrast, the deductibility of private debt interest on taxable earnings from movable and immovable private property is limited to a maximum of the total investment income plus 50,000 Swiss francs. For value-retaining property expenditure, an effective or flat-rate deduction may optionally be claimed.

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 applicable cantonal tax rates therefore vary significantly from canton to canton (highest tax rates for cantonal capitals around 10.33% to 27.09%). For married persons and persons living in the same household with children, special tariffs exist.

#### 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.

#### Losses

Contrary to personal losses, business losses are tax deductible and may be carried forward for a maximum of seven years, if they cannot be offset against the taxpayer's other taxable income in the respective tax period.

#### Distribution of Capital Contributions

The repayment of qualifying capital investments is tax-free. It is subject to neither withholding tax (chapter 10.4) nor personal income tax on the part of the receiving individual.

### **Tax at Source**

Foreign employees with their residence/domicile in Switzerland who do not, however, possess a residence permit are taxed on their earned income by a tax deduction at source. The employer is required to deduct the tax owed from the wages and to pay it to the tax authorities. If the source-taxed income exceeds 120,000 Swiss francs (500,000 Swiss francs in Geneva until the end of 2020) per annum, a tax declaration has to be submitted. In all other cases, the tax at source is definitive. The employee can, however, assert special deductions in a separate process. From 2021, persons whose income is below 120,000 Swiss francs can submit a tax return upon application (deadline March 31 of the year following the tax year). Once applied for, this also applies for subsequent years. Without an application, no additional deductions are granted.

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 in Switzerland for their earned income. An exception applies from 2021 for persons who have their residence abroad but gain their income almost exclusively from Swiss sources, or whose situation is comparable with those of taxable persons resident in Switzerland. Here too, without an application, no additional deductions are granted.

### **10.3.2 Wealth Tax**

Net wealth tax is only levied at the cantonal/communal level in accordance with the respective cantonal tax laws and rates. The tax is based on net assets. Net assets include immovable and movable assets (e.g. securities and bank deposits, cash, redemption of life insurance, cars, shares of non-distributed inheritances etc.). 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 maximum tax burden therefore varies considerably and ranges from 0.135% to 0.870%. The federal government does not charge wealth tax.

### **10.3.3 Expatriates**

Qualifying expatriates are foreign managers and certain specialists (e.g. IT specialists) who are temporarily seconded to Switzerland by their employer for a period of up to five years, i.e. the (secondment) contract may only be limited in time for a maximum of five years. Expatriates may claim tax relief on work-related expenses incurred due to their stay in Switzerland.

The following expenses incurred by expatriates are deductible:

1. necessary relocation costs including travel costs to and from Switzerland,
2. reasonable accommodation costs in Switzerland, if the residence abroad is still maintained for personal use (i.e. no renting during secondment),
3. costs for children of school-going age attending a private school provided that residence is in Switzerland and if local state-funded schools cannot offer adequate educational provisions in their language. 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.

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

Cross-border commuters are those people who live abroad 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 rights 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 do not have a right to Swiss citizenship 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. 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 on the 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 measurement base must correspond either with a) at least seven times the rent paid on rental property or the rental value of the taxpayer's property if he lives in his own house or apartment or b) three times the annual costs of lodging if the taxpayer lives in a hotel or similar accommodation. If the taxpayer owns or rents more than one property, the most expensive will be taken into account. A minimum taxable income of 400,000 Swiss francs applies 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 double taxation treaties, however, allow for treaty benefits only if all income from the source country is subject to ordinary taxation in Switzerland. The abolition of lump-sum taxation continues to be the subject of political debate. Lump-sum taxation remains an option in the following cantons: Aargau, Appenzell Inner Rhodes, Bern, Friborg, Geneva, Glarus, Grisons, Jura, Lucerne, Neuchatel, Nidwalden, Obwalden, St. Gallen, Solothurn, Schwyz, Thurgau, Ticino, Uri, Vaud, Valais, and Zug.

### 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. This means that repayments of capital contributions declared and identified accordingly are not subject to withholding tax and for individuals (if shares are held as private assets) now no longer represent taxable income (see chapter 10.3.1).

Also subject to withholding tax are profits from gambling, lotteries, and the like, which are not exempt from personal income tax, as well as 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 revenues have been properly declared for the purposes of personal/corporate income taxation and the recipient is entitled to use the revenues subjected to withholding tax. The aim is to prevent tax evasion. For corporate taxpayers, withholding tax is reimbursed by way of a refund, whereas for individuals resident in Switzerland, 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 taxation 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%. No withholding tax is levied on interest payments for corporate credit agreements that do not qualify as bonds or bond-like debt instruments. There is no withholding tax on interest payments relating to qualifying ordinary company loan agreements. Provided that royalties, licenses, and 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 double taxation 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 that was practically identical to the version of the EU Parent/Subsidiary Directive and the EU Interest/Royalty Directive in effect at that time.

Accordingly, dividend, royalty, and interest payments between Switzerland and the member states of the EU have not been subject to withholding tax since July 1, 2005, provided conditions such as minimum shareholding and holding period are fulfilled.

As of 2017/18, the Interest Taxation Agreement was replaced by the Agreement for the Automatic Exchange of Information on Tax Matters (AIA Agreement). This not only includes interest returns but all types of capital returns and also trusts and foundations.

The withholding tax exemption of cross-border payments of dividends, interest, and royalties between affiliated companies enshrined in the Savings Tax Agreement will continue to apply.

In general, the bilateral agreements, including the AIA Agreement, also apply to new EU member states joining the EU after July 1, 2005 (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania or Croatia).

The application of the above-mentioned benefits from the AIA Agreement can be denied in cases of abuse or fraud because of the explicit reservation made in the AIA Agreement as to the use of domestic or agreement-based provisions for the prevention of fraud or abuse, both by Switzerland and 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. In practice, this means that taxable persons can choose between reference to the AIA Agreement or the applicable double taxation treaty.

## 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 made by the recipient of the goods or services).

### 10.5.1 Taxable Persons

Any legal entity or individual, establishment, partnership without legal capacity, institution, etc. (i.e. irrespective of legal form, purpose, and intention to make a profit) that operates an enterprise (obtains revenues for a long period of time through independent commercial or professional activity and appearance in one’s own name) is essentially liable for tax. There is a VAT registration obligation if global taxable turnover exceeds 100,000 Swiss francs per year. All domestic establishments of a Swiss corporation form one taxable entity together with the headquarters. All domestic establishments of a foreign corporation are also classed as one taxable entity. On the other hand, the domestic establishments and the foreign headquarters are each considered a separate taxable entity.

A so-called acquisition tax obligation (no VAT registration obligation) also exists for recipients within Switzerland who are not liable for taxation, provided that, within the calendar year, they acquire services subject to acquisition tax amounting to a total of more than 10,000 Swiss francs. Such services include those acquired from non-resident enterprises that are not entered in the register of taxable persons, provided that the place of service provision in accordance with the recipient location principle is the domestic market, with the exception of telecommunications or electronic services for recipients not liable to taxation.

Recipients liable for taxation are also subject to the acquisition tax obligation. They must declare acquisition tax within the context of their regular value added tax calculations.

If the revenues of a taxable entity (global turnover from taxable supplies and services) amount to less than 100,000 Swiss francs within the year (for sport and cultural associations and charitable institutions 150,000 Swiss francs), it is exempt from the tax obligation. However, any such entity may also waive exemption from tax liability. Upon registration with the Swiss Federal Tax Administration, the taxpayer receives a VAT number that is essentially based on the company identification number. VAT is added to the company identification number (e.g. CHE123.456.789 VAT).

A special regulation exists for holding companies. In general, the acquisition, holding, and selling of shareholdings is a commercial activity within the meaning of Swiss VAT legislation. Shares of capital in other companies amounting to over 10% are classed as shareholdings, which are held with the intention of long-term investment and have a considerable influence.

Holding companies would generally not be subject to value added tax, as their turnover usually comes from shareholdings and does not therefore fall under taxable supplies. The qualification of the holding activity as a commercial activity means, however, that the holding company can be voluntarily registered for value added tax due to the waiving of the exemption from tax.

The advantage of registration is that input tax claims can be asserted, which accrue within the context of their commercial activity providing an entitlement to input tax deduction. Exempt services for which no tax option is taken or can be taken do not provide an entitlement to input tax deduction (see chapter 10.5.5). In the area of monetary and capital transactions, for example, trading in securities and shares in corporations is a service exempt from taxation, for which an input tax correction is necessary.

### 10.5.2 Taxable Supplies

Services provided by taxable persons domestically in return for remuneration are subject to domestic tax, provided that they are not exempt or released from taxation. A service that is considered to be provided abroad in accordance with value added tax principles is not subject to domestic taxation. Value added tax is levied on the following types of services:

1. supplies in Switzerland (including other customs areas counting as domestic, e.g. Liechtenstein),
2. provision of services in Switzerland (including other customs areas counting as domestic, e.g. Liechtenstein),
3. services and supplies from non-resident enterprises subject to acquisition tax and
4. import of goods.

Services whose place of performance is abroad, as well as supplies of goods abroad, are not subject to Swiss value added tax. Exports of goods from Switzerland are taxable but are exempt from value added tax. The supply of goods in a value added tax sense is not limited to goods supplies according to Swiss commercial law. The value added tax law provides for a number of transactions which, in the sense of value added taxation, are considered to be supplies, such as the maintenance of machinery, the rental or leasing of property, the sale of electricity, etc.

### 10.5.3 Taxable Amount

The basis for the calculation of the taxable amount for supplies and the provision of services is the agreed upon or the collected gross remuneration (in cash or in kind). An claim for input tax, i.e. the tax paid on services acquired, can in principle be asserted by the person registered for value added tax in the periodic value added tax calculation and can be deducted from the sales tax owed, provided that the person liable to taxation is entitled to full input tax deduction. Consequently, only the value added is taxed (net all-phase principle).

### 10.5.4 Tax Rates

Since January 1, 2018, the standard rate has been 7.7% on all taxable supplies of goods or services. A reduced rate of 3.7% is applicable for accommodations. 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 turnover of below 5.005 million Swiss francs (incl. VAT) and a tax liability of 103,000 Swiss francs (calculated according to the applicable net tax rate) or less per year. Small businesses may opt to submit VAT based on a balanced tax rate which is lower than the standard rate of 7.7% 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 approved by the Swiss Federal Tax Administration and maintained for at least a tax year. Contrary to the normal case of quarterly billing, a VAT return has to be submitted only twice a year.

### 10.5.5 Exemptions

The law differentiates between VAT-exempt revenue and revenue excluded from VAT (so-called turnover exempt from taxation and turnover released from taxation). No VAT is levied in either case, but a distinction is made regarding the input VAT deduction.

In cases of exclusions, no input tax deduction is 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. However, for most of these excluded revenues, it is possible to opt for voluntary taxation. This option is, however, not possible in the case of banking and insurance revenue, as well as the renting and purchase 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 total value added 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 this 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).

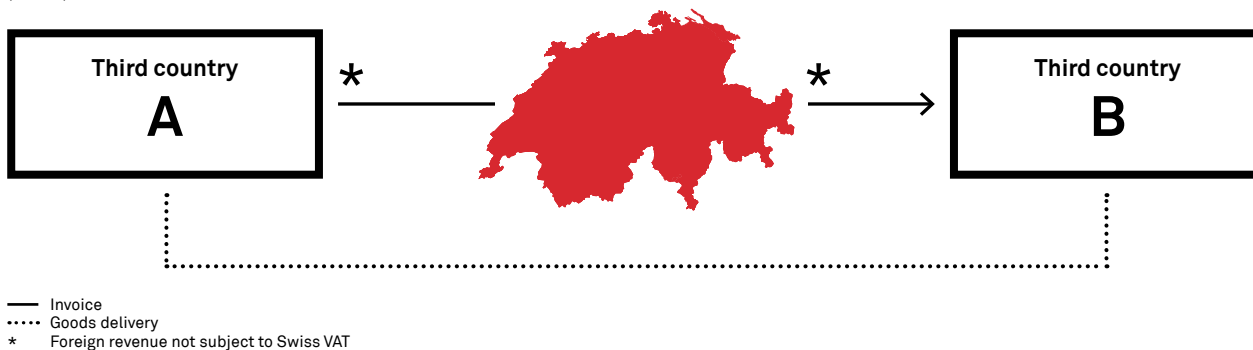
However, the VAT-exempt or non-taxable nature of such services must be proven by the underlying documents such as invoices, agreements, etc. The same applies to export shipments, where a customs export/import certificate is required for tax exemption.

### 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. 39)



Sources: Illustration by PricewaterhouseCoopers

### 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 chapter 10.5.1 are required to appoint an authorized VAT representative based in Switzerland. Such entrepreneurs may claim input VAT directly. Exempted from compulsory VAT duties are foreign companies that only provide services in Switzerland exempt from tax or recipient-centered services (except telecommunications or electronic services to non-taxable recipients), or deliveries of electricity in pipelines, gas via the natural gas distribution network, and district heating to taxable persons in Switzerland.

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

**At 7.7%, 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 1 million Swiss francs of the total capital paid in, whether it is made in an initial or subsequent contribution. Amounts contributed without a corresponding increase in the equity of the corporation are likewise subject to tax, and in this case the tax allowance of 1 million Swiss francs does not apply.

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 10 million Swiss francs 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 from immovable property (real estate) in Switzerland are subject to a special cantonal real estate gains tax, provided that the corresponding capital gain is added to the personal assets of an individual. If the capital gain is added to the business assets of an individual or to the assets of a legal entity, it is subject – depending on the canton in which the real estate is located – to normal corporate income tax or likewise to a special cantonal real estate gains tax. On the level of direct federal tax, capital gains from immovable property forming part of the personal assets of an individual are not taxable, whereas capital gains on business assets or on the assets of legal entities are subject to normal corporate income tax.

Furthermore, in some 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 (“real estate tax”). 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 applicable tax rate is 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 essentially applies 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). For certain income streams (dividends, interest, and license fees), Switzerland by contrast generally applies the crediting method. For dividends, interest, and license fees, both states – the state in which the income is earned and the state of the recipient’s residence – are typically 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 chapter 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 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)



# 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.

## 11.1 TRANSPORTATION

The Swiss economy is supported by an excellent distribution infrastructure for supplying goods and services. With 1.7 kilometers (approx. 1 mile) 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.

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

Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC)

### 11.1.1 Road Traffic

Switzerland's highway network is one of the densest in the world. There are currently approx. 1,840 km (1,143 miles) of national highways in operation, providing access to all parts of the country. The high proportion of tunnels is remarkable: 250 tunnels are currently in operation. When finished, the currently planned national road network should run 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 40 Swiss francs). 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 pm - 5:00 am) and Sunday driving ban applies to trucks.

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

Federal Roads Office (FEDRO)

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

Cantonal road traffic offices

[www.ezv.admin.ch](http://www.ezv.admin.ch) > Information companies > Taxes and duties

Performance-related and lump-sum heavy vehicle fees

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

Specialist group for underground construction

### 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 10,000 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 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 2019, 89.5% 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, worth 5.4 billion Swiss francs, contains more than 100 infrastructure projects and is due to be completed by 2025. It includes measures to improve both the frequency and capacity of the rail network.
- 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 2 ¾ 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 was opened on June 1, 2016, is 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 992 million Swiss francs in the rail network by the end of 2020 to provide better connections with the European high-speed rail 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

[www.bav.admin.ch](http://www.bav.admin.ch)  
Federal Office of Transport (FOT)

### 11.1.3 Shipping and Navigation

In Switzerland, shipping and navigation not only plays an important role in tourism but is also a crucial part of international trade. The source of the Rhine, which is the origin of one of the busiest waterways in the world, is located in Switzerland. With access to the North Sea guaranteed by international law and a deep-sea fleet, the inland ports in Basel represent an important hub for Switzerland’s import and export. 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 is 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 for people, 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

#### 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 2019 Zurich Airport received the World Travel Award as Europe's leading airport for the 16th 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 32 million passengers used the Zurich airport in 2019. The freight volume in the same period totaled 451,827 metric tons. Zurich airport changes its flight plans twice a year, at the end of October and the end of March. Over 100 destinations in around 65 countries are served. Switzerland's two other international airports – Geneva and Euro-Airport Basel – also have many connections to key European business centers and holiday destinations and a number of direct flights to overseas destinations. Geneva handled 18 million passengers and 84,927 metric tons of freight in 2019. In the same year, Basel Airport processed 9.1 million passengers and 106,075 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.

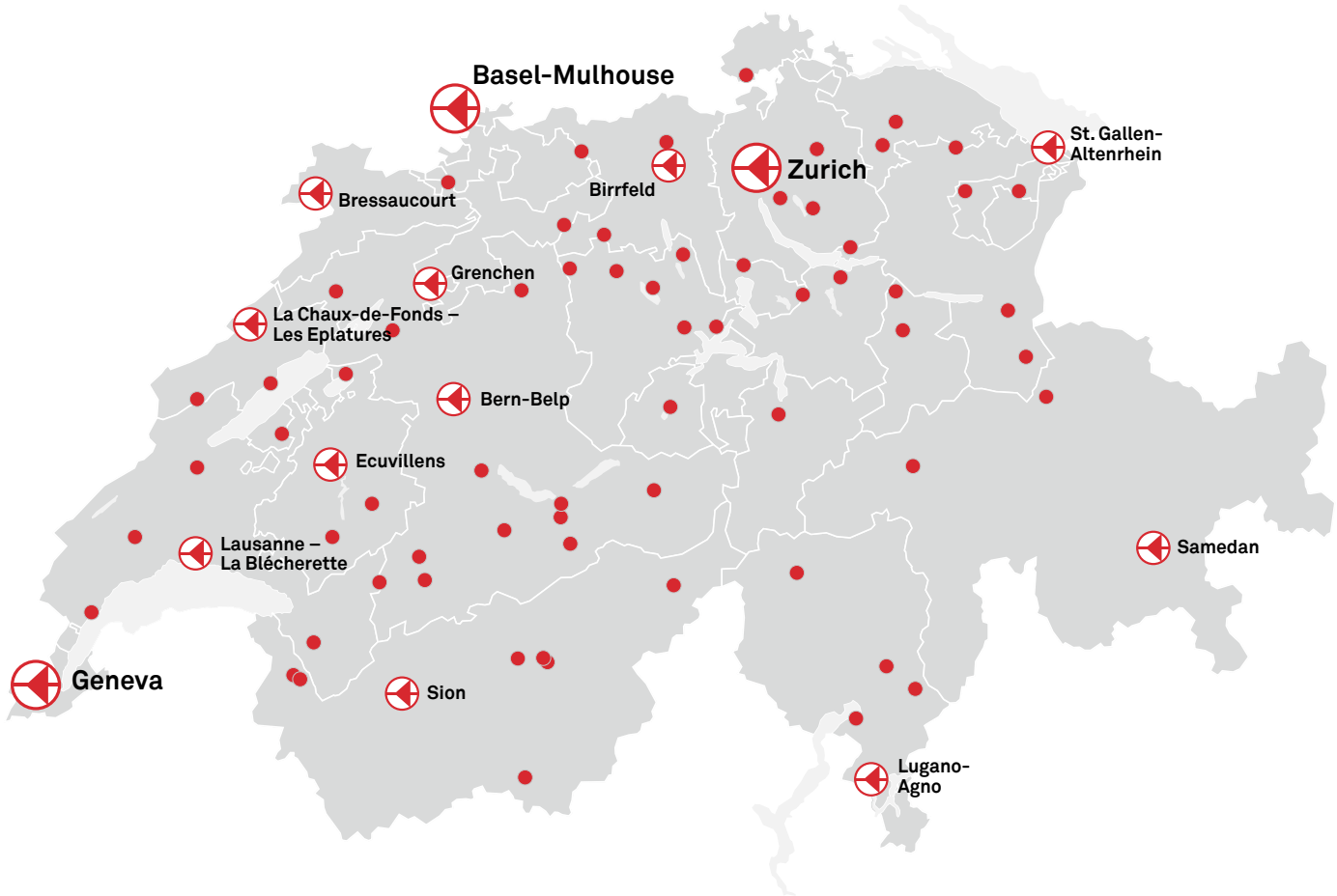
[www.flughafen-zuerich.ch](http://www.flughafen-zuerich.ch)  
Zurich Airport




[www.gva.ch](http://www.gva.ch)  
Geneva Airport

[www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com)  
EuroAirport Basel

## Switzerland's National and Regional Airports

(FIG. 40)



 national airport  regional airport  airfield, heliport

Sources: Swiss Federal Office for Civil Aviation (BAZL); own representation of S-GE

[www.bazl.admin.ch](http://www.bazl.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA)

[www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)  
Swiss International Air Lines

[www.flughafen-zuerich.ch](http://www.flughafen-zuerich.ch)  
Zurich Airport

[www.gva.ch](http://www.gva.ch)  
Geneva Airport

[www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com)  
EuroAirport Basel

[www.aerosuisse.ch](http://www.aerosuisse.ch)  
Umbrella association of the Swiss aerospace industry

[www.aopa.ch](http://www.aopa.ch)  
Aircraft Owners' and Pilots' Association

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 (for 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.

## 11.2 COMMUNICATION

Switzerland has outstanding access to ICT infrastructure. Switzerland has comprehensive broadband and mobile phone coverage. Around 95% of Swiss households have broadband internet access. Switzerland has a talented pool of ICT specialists thanks to the Computer Science departments of ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne, which are among the best in the world. Moreover, the ICT apprenticeship is one of the most popular professional apprenticeships in Switzerland. In international comparisons, Swiss companies are technology-friendly and understand how to employ new technologies for the digital transformation.

**Around 95% of Swiss households have broadband internet access.**

[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)  
Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Look for statistics > Culture, media, information society, sports  
Information society indicators

[www.nic.ch](http://www.nic.ch)  
Swiss Internet domain name registry (.ch, .li)

### Digital Competitiveness, 2019

Overall score from 0 to 100

(FIG. 41)

1	USA	100.0
2	Singapore	99.4
3	Sweden	96.1
4	Denmark	95.2
5	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>94.6</b>
6	The Netherlands	94.3
8	Hongkong SAR	93.7
10	South Korea	91.3
11	Canada	90.8
15	United Kingdom	86.2
17	Germany	85.9
19	Ireland	85.9
20	Austria	84.5
21	Luxembourg	84.4
22	China	84.3
23	Japan	82.8
24	France	82.5
41	Italy	67.9
44	India	65.0

Source : IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

### 11.3 ENERGY

Switzerland has a reliable and secure nationwide energy supply system. Petroleum products account for approximately 50% of gross energy consumption in Switzerland. Electricity accounted for 25% of final consumption and was generated for the most part in Switzerland. Compared to the neighboring countries, Switzerland has a practically CO<sub>2</sub>-free production mix. The most important power suppliers in Switzerland are hydroelectric power plants and nuclear power plants. 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 3,500 gas stations provides fuel for motor vehicles. Within the scope of Swiss environmental policy, mineral oil taxes are levied on gasoline and diesel (approx. 0.75 Swiss francs per liter), revenues that 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 (unleaded 98), which averaged 1.64 Swiss francs per liter in February 2020, 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)

[www.stromkunden.ch](http://www.stromkunden.ch)  
Group of major electricity consumers

### 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  
Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) - Water

#### 11.4.1 Drinking Water

The water that flows through all 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 300 liters of water per capita per day in homes, industry, and commercial operations. On average, household consumption accounts for 142 liters of this. Drinking water from water pipes costs an average of about 2 Swiss francs per thousand liters in Switzerland. At a cost of 0.30 Swiss francs per person per day, the cost is just under 0.90 Swiss francs 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



### 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 wastewater 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 wastewater treatment plants.

### 11.5 POST

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.

The postal service provides an overall dense network of access points. In an international comparison with seven other European countries, Switzerland had the highest density of post office branches per area and the smallest 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

[www.bakom.admin.ch](http://www.bakom.admin.ch)  
Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)

## 11.6 HEALTHCARE

### 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. By international standards, Switzerland has a cost-intensive healthcare system relative to GDP. A dense network of hospitals, pharmacies, and medical and dental practices ensures universal access to out-patient and in-patient care. 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 the WEF Competitiveness Report 2019, at an average of 83 years, the Swiss have the fifth-highest life expectancy.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)

[www.redcross.ch](http://www.redcross.ch)  
Swiss Red Cross

[www.hplus.ch](http://www.hplus.ch)  
Hospitals in Switzerland

[www.fmh.ch](http://www.fmh.ch)  
Swiss Medical Association (FMH)

[www.doctorfmh.ch](http://www.doctorfmh.ch)  
Swiss doctors directory

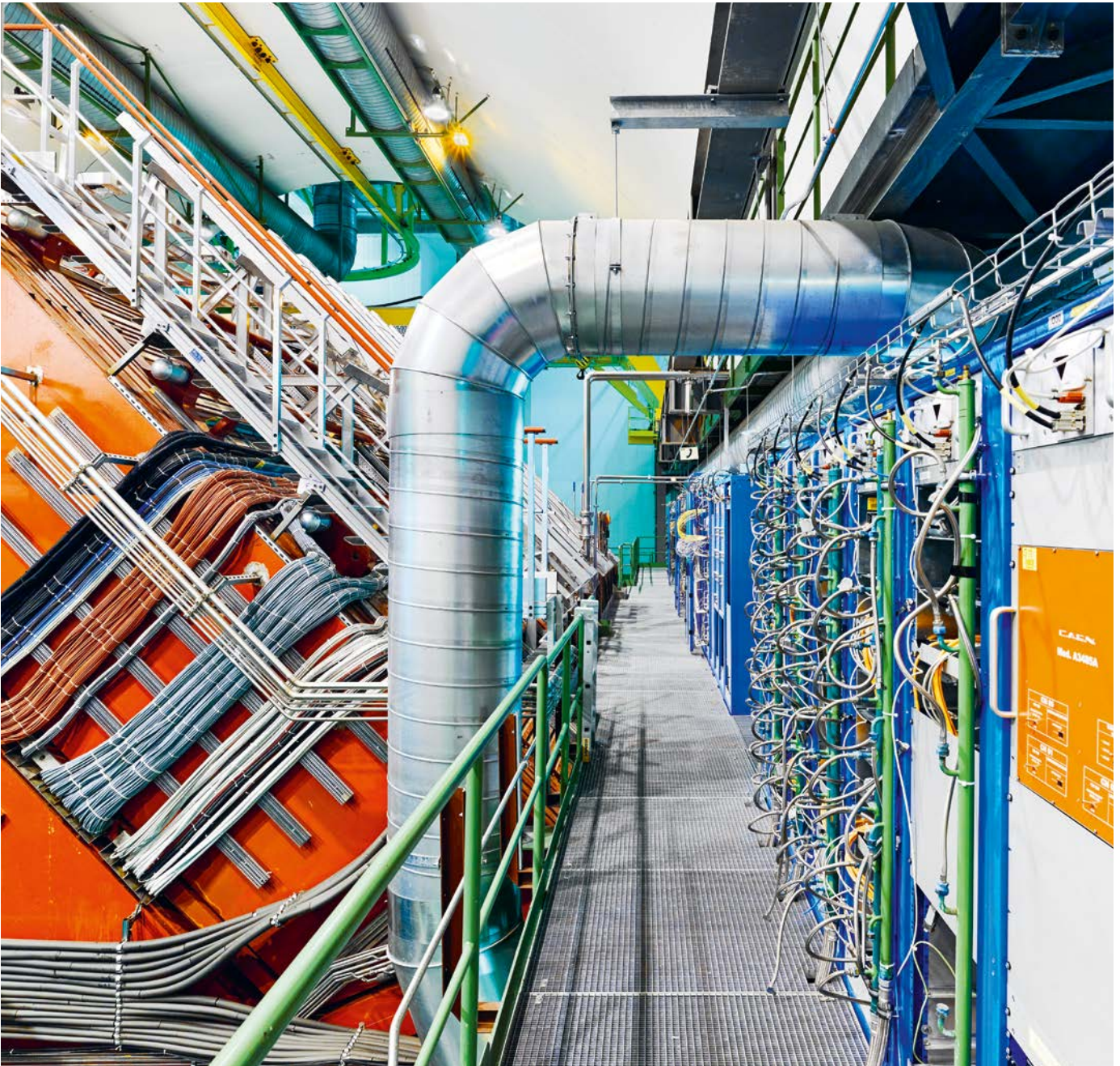
[www.rega.ch](http://www.rega.ch)  
Swiss air rescue service (Rega)

[www.spitex.ch](http://www.spitex.ch)  
Spitex association, Switzerland

### 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 private health insurance companies. Additional insurance is optional.

[www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > Topics > Insurances  
Overview of health insurance



# EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

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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 programs, 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 SCHOOLING 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 coordinating 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)

[www.educa.ch](http://www.educa.ch)  
Swiss education server

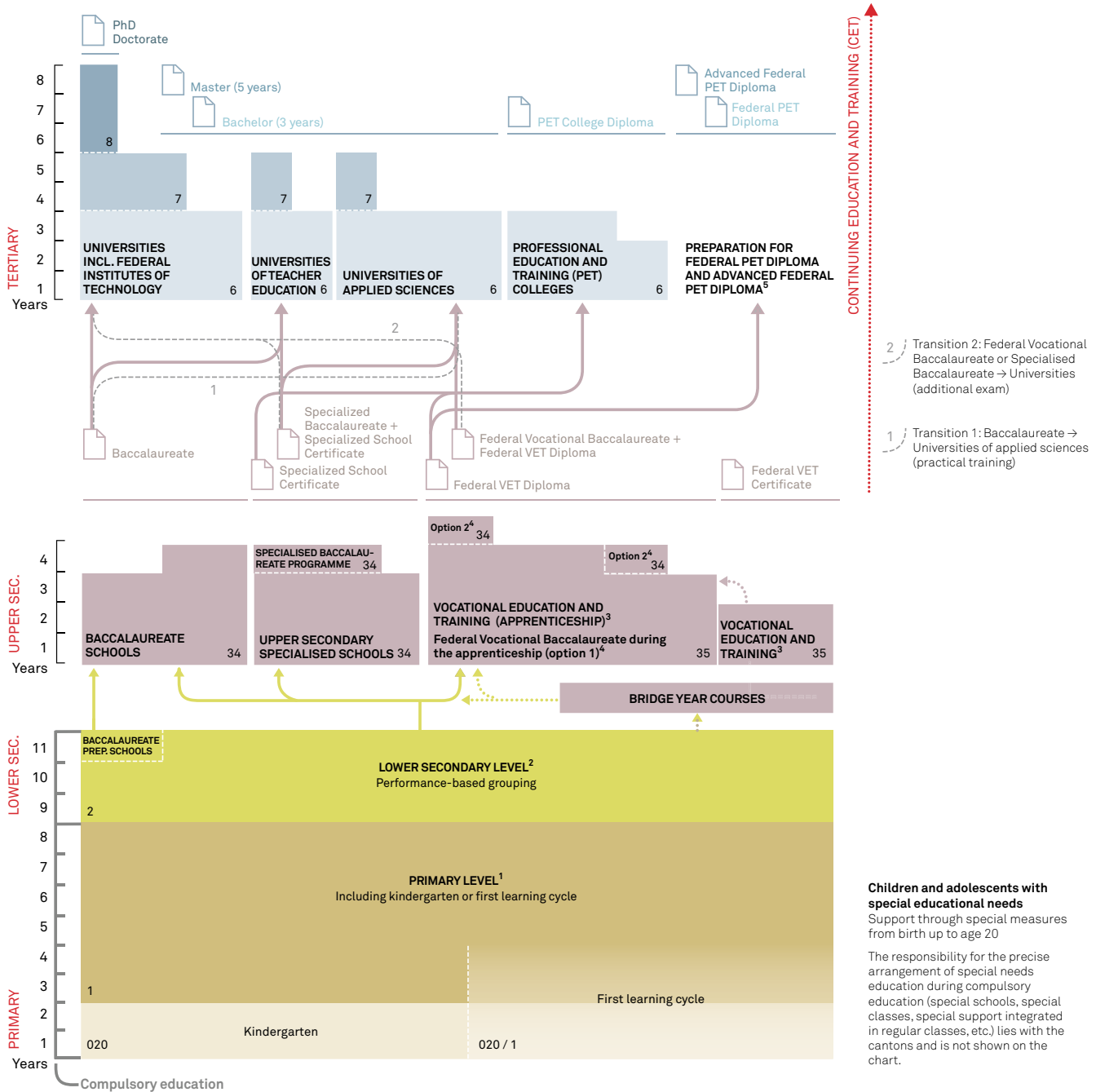
[www.bildungssystem.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bildungssystem.bfs.admin.ch)  
Education statistics

### 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 the levels of which correspond 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. 42)



ISCED | International Standard Classification of Education 2011

- ISCED 8
- ISCED 7
- ISCED 6
- ISCED 4
- ISCED 34 + 35
- ISCED 2
- ISCED 1
- ISCED 020

- 1 Two years of kindergarten or the first two years of a first learning cycle: included in compulsory education in the majority of cantons
- 2 Lower secondary level: 4-year scuola media in the Canton of Ticino (pursuant to exception clause in Art. 6 HarmoS Agreement)
- 3 Vocational education and training (apprenticeship): training company + VET school + intercompany courses; full-time school education possible
- 4 Federal Vocational Baccalaureate: combined with an apprenticeship (option 1) or after an apprenticeship (option 2); duration option 2: full-time 1 year, part-time 1.5 – 2 years
- 5 Federal PET examination / Federal PET diploma = ISCED 6  
 Advanced federal PET examination / Advanced federal PET diploma = ISCED 7

### Quality of the Education System, 2019

1 = completely fails to meet the economy's needs,  
10 = meets the economy's needs

(FIG. 43)

1	Finland	9.07
2	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>8.85</b>
3	Singapore	8.71
4	The Netherlands	8.69
5	Denmark	8.61
8	Ireland	7.96
10	Germany	7.82
11	China	7.76
12	Australia	7.71
13	Canada	7.61
16	Belgium	7.34
18	Luxembourg	7.28
19	Austria	7.13
21	France	7.09
27	United Kingdom	6.54
28	Italy	6.52
29	USA	6.52
32	Japan	6.31
42	India	5.45
47	South Korea	4.74

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

95% of students finish their mandatory education at a local state school. Only 5% attend private schools. Public schools enjoy a good reputation. In the 2018 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. The IMD management institute has also confirmed that Switzerland has a high-quality education system that meets the economy's needs (Fig. 43).

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 2017, public-sector spending on education in Switzerland was approximately 38 billion Swiss francs. That's 5.7% 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

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch)  
Swiss Federal Statistical Office

### Public per Capita Spending on Education, 2017

in US dollars

(FIG. 44)

1	Iceland	5,359
2	Luxembourg	4,940
3	Norway	4,227
4	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>3,957</b>
5	Denmark	3,724
6	USA	3,597
7	Sweden	3,582
10	Belgium	2,752
12	The Netherlands	2,485
14	Austria	2,297
15	Ireland	2,234
16	France	2,089
17	Canada	1,982
19	United Kingdom	1,839
20	Germany	1,835
22	Singapore	1,638
23	Hong Kong SAR	1,536
25	South Korea	1,353
26	Italy	1,229
27	Japan	1,211
48	China	321

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

### 12.1.2 Vocational Training

Switzerland has the world's best vocational training system. The consistently low unemployment rate in the Swiss labor market is attributable to the quality of the Swiss vocational training system, as well as a stable economy. 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. 88% 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. Youth unemployment is significantly below that of the average in the Euro countries. 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

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

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

[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)

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Education

Education in Switzerland

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

Advice on choosing a profession, higher education course and career

## 12.2 FURTHER EDUCATION

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)

[www.up-vhs.ch](http://www.up-vhs.ch)

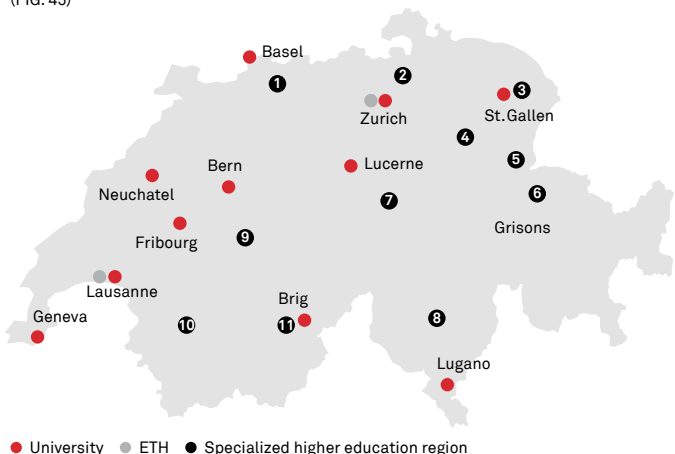
Swiss Adult Education Association

## 12.3 UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

### 12.3.1 Universities and Institutes of Technology

#### Universities and Institutes of Technology

(FIG. 45)



#### Specialized higher education region

- 1 University of Applied Sciences Northern Switzerland (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz)
- 2 University of Applied Sciences Zurich (Fachhochschule Zürich)
- 3 FHS St. Gallen University of Applied Sciences
- 4 University of Applied Sciences Rapperswil
- 5 NTB Interstate University of Technology Buchs
- 6 Chur University of Applied Sciences (Fachhochschule Graubünden)
- 7 University of Applied Sciences Central Switzerland (Fachhochschule Zentralschweiz)
- 8 University of Applied Sciences Southern Switzerland (Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana)
- 9 University of Applied Sciences Bern (Fachhochschule Bern)
- 10 University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (Haute école spécialisée de Suisse occidentale)
- 11 Swiss Distance University Institute, Brig

Sources: State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI), 2020

## Annual Tuition Fees

(Bachelor degree, in CHF)

(FIG. 46)

	EPF LAUSANNE	ETH ZURICH	UNIVER- SITY OF BASEL	UNIVER- SITY OF BERN	UNIVER- SITY OF FRIBOURG	UNIVER- SITY OF GENEVA	UNIVER- SITY OF LAUSANNE	UNIVERSI- TY OF LUCERNE	UNIVERSITY OF NEUCHATEL	UNIVER- SITY OF ST. GALLEN	UNIVER- SITY OF ZURICH	USI (LUGANO MENDRISIO)
Domestic stu- dents	1,560	1,458	1,700	1,568	1,310	1,000	1,160	1,620	1,030	2,458	1,548	4,000
Additional fees for international students				400	300			600	550	3,800	1,000	4,000
Total for interna- tional students	1,560	1,458	1,700	1,968	1,610	1,000	1,160	2,220	1,580	6,258	2,548	8,000

Sources: berufsberatung.ch 2020

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, Neuchatel), Italian (Lugano), or bilingual – German and French (Fribourg). There is a Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (French) and one in Zurich (German). In the 2019/2020 autumn semester, around 156,669 students were enrolled in these twelve universities, of whom 51% were female and 31% were foreign students. This is one of the highest percentages of international students worldwide. At 50%, 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.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch)  
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

[www.universityrankings.ch](http://www.universityrankings.ch)  
University ranking

[www.swissuni.ch](http://www.swissuni.ch)  
Swiss association of university continuing education

[www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch)  
Information for foreign students

## Executive MBAs: The Most Important Providers

(FIG. 47)

SUPPLIER	HOME PAGE
International Institute for Management Development (IMD)	<a href="http://www.imd.org/emba">www.imd.org/emba</a>
Omnium Alliance (University of St. Gallen, University of Toronto, partner schools)	<a href="http://www.omniumgemba.com">www.omniumgemba.com</a> <a href="http://www.gemba.unisg.ch">www.gemba.unisg.ch</a>
University of St. Gallen	<a href="http://www.emba.unisg.ch">www.emba.unisg.ch</a>
University of Zurich	<a href="http://www.emba.uzh.ch">www.emba.uzh.ch</a>
Rochester-Bern (University of Bern, University of Rochester)	<a href="http://www.rochester-bern.ch">www.rochester-bern.ch</a>
Zurich Institute of Business Education	<a href="http://www.ceibs.ch">www.ceibs.ch</a>
ZfU International Business School	<a href="https://www.zfu.ch/master-programme/">https://www.zfu.ch/master-programme/</a>
EMBA Lucerne	<a href="http://www.hslu.ch/emba">www.hslu.ch/emba</a>
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL)	<a href="http://emba.epfl.ch">emba.epfl.ch</a>
Università della Svizzera italiana	<a href="http://www.emba.usi.ch">www.emba.usi.ch</a>
Geneva School of Economics and Management	<a href="http://www.unige.ch/gsem/en/executive/emba">www.unige.ch/gsem/en/executive/emba</a>

Sources: 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.

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, and development and services skills that are strongly geared to clients, markets, and practice. In their role as research institutes, they are supported at the national level by the Swiss Innovation Promotion Agency Innosuisse and work together with the Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology and universities.

[www.sbfi.admin.ch](http://www.sbfi.admin.ch) > Hochschulen > kantonale Hochschulen > Fachhochschulen und pädagogische Hochschulen  
Overview of universities of applied sciences

[www.innosuisse.ch](http://www.innosuisse.ch)  
Swiss Innovation Promotion Agency

### 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 one of the best programs in the entire world.

[www.find-mba.com](http://www.find-mba.com) > Europe > Switzerland  
MBA/EMBA- Programs in Switzerland

[www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch](http://www.ausbildung-weiterbildung.ch)  
Swiss continuing training portal

[www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch)  
Programs at Swiss universities



## 12.4 INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND BOARDING SCHOOLS

The Swiss education system also includes private schools. The more than 260 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 over 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 US university admission certificate. 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

[www.swiss-schools.ch](http://www.swiss-schools.ch)  
Swiss Federation of Private Schools (SFPS)

[www.sgischools.com](http://www.sgischools.com)  
Swiss Group of International Schools

## 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 2017 it spent more than 3% of its GDP on research and development.

Of the CHF 22.6 billion spent on research and development in 2017, 69% (approx. CHF 15.6 billion) was financed by the private sector. The pharmaceutical industry (36%) and the engineering industry (10%) have the highest expenditure.

Relative to its population, Switzerland has the world's highest proportion of Nobel laureates (see fig. 49). In terms of patent applications Switzerland ranks second in international comparison (see fig. 48).

**Switzerland is one of the world's most research-intensive countries. In 2017 it spent more than 3% of its GDP on research and development.**

## Patent Applications per 100,000 Inhabitants, 2017

(FIG. 48)

1	Luxembourg	585
2	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>528</b>
3	South Korea	440
4	Japan	363
5	Sweden	231
9	The Netherlands	219
10	Germany	213
12	USA	161
13	Austria	157
14	Singapore	124
15	Belgium	121
17	Ireland	111
18	France	106
20	China	94
21	United Kingdom	81
23	Canada	65
24	Italy	52
25	Australia	47
27	Hong Kong	32
55	India	2

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

## Nobel Laureates per Million Inhabitants, 2018

(FIG. 49)

1	<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>1.53</b>
2	Norway	1.50
3	United Kingdom	1.04
4	Sweden	0.98
5	USA	0.91
6	Israel	0.90
7	Denmark	0.69
8	The Netherlands	0.52
9	Austria	0.45
10	Ireland	0.41
11	Germany	0.41
13	Belgium	0.35
14	France	0.33
16	Canada	0.24
18	Japan	0.15
19	Hong Kong	0.13
22	Italy	0.08
27	China	0.00
28	India	0.00
29	South Korea	0.00
29	Luxembourg	0.00

Sources: IMD World Competitiveness Center 2019

In terms of academic publishing, Switzerland, with almost 4,300 publications per million inhabitants, is a world leader. From a global perspective, Switzerland is responsible for 1.1% of publications and hence finds itself in 19th place globally. 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. Switzerland produces 1.5% of the world’s most quoted publications. This shows that Swiss publications receive considerable recognition internationally. In Switzerland, most publications are published in the area of life sciences.

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 Swiss Innovation Promotion Agency Innosuisse can make significant financial contributions to research and development projects in which companies cooperate with non-profit research organizations.

[www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch) > Topics > Research and innovation  
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI)

[www.innosuisse.ch](http://www.innosuisse.ch)  
Swiss Innovation Promotion Agency

[www.snf.ch](http://www.snf.ch)  
Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

[www.myscience.ch](http://www.myscience.ch)  
Swiss Portal for Research and Innovation

### 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 SNSF > Research policies > International cooperation  
International Collaborative Research

[www.sbfli.admin.ch](http://www.sbfli.admin.ch) > Research & Innovation > International Cooperation in Research and Innovation  
International cooperation in education, research and science

### Research Establishments in Switzerland

(FIG. 50)

INSTITUTION		LOCATION	HOMEPAGE
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research	Geneva	<a href="http://mwww.cern.ch">mwww.cern.ch</a>
EAWAG	Aquatic research institute of the ETH	Dübendorf (ZH), Kastanienbaum (LU)	<a href="http://www.eawag.ch">www.eawag.ch</a>
EMPA	Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science + Technology	Thun (BE), Dübendorf (ZH), St. Gallen	<a href="http://www.empa.ch">www.empa.ch</a>
PSI	Paul Scherrer Institute	Villigen (AG)	<a href="http://www.psi.ch">www.psi.ch</a>
SLF	Swiss Federal Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research	Davos (GR)	<a href="http://www.slf.ch">www.slf.ch</a>
The Graduate Institute	The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies	Geneva	<a href="http://www.graduateinstitute.ch">www.graduateinstitute.ch</a>
WSL	Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research	Birmensdorf (ZH), Bellinzona (IT), Davos (GR), Lausanne (VD), Sion (VS)	<a href="http://www.wsl.ch">www.wsl.ch</a>

Sources: Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

## 12.6 SWITZERLAND INNOVATION – THE SWISS INNOVATION PARK

Switzerland Innovation, Switzerland's innovation park, offers technology companies space to cooperate with leading international universities, including the prestigious Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (ETH Zurich and EPFL) and the University of Basel, and to use research results to develop marketable products and services. Switzerland Innovation thrives off of interdisciplinary cooperation between science and industry, which opens up new ways of marketing for a new era.

Switzerland Innovation's technology parks are the ideal location for research-oriented companies to develop their next groundbreaking or highly profitable product. Switzerland thus lives up to its reputation as the most innovative country in the world.

### 12.6.1 Innovation Focus Areas

Switzerland Innovation focuses on five innovation focus areas: health and life sciences, mobility and transportation, energy, the environment and natural resources, manufacturing and production, and computer and computational science. Each of these fields is a breeding ground for the development of a broad range of innovations that benefit society in areas such as robotics, artificial intelligence, space, nanotechnology, materials research, additive manufacturing, diagnostics, cancer treatments, or renewable energy.

### 12.6.2 Switzerland Innovation Parks

#### Switzerland Innovation Park Basel Area

The Switzerland Innovation Park Basel Area offers a platform and the latest infrastructure for innovative research and development projects at the interface between leading industry in the field of life sciences as well as precision mechanics and first-class academic research. The focuses are health and medical technology, digital health, biotechnology, and industrial transformation. With local research institutes such as the University of Basel or the Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering at ETH Zurich, top research can be accessed in many different areas. The Innovation Park Basel Area is located at the four sites Allschwil, Basel, Jura, and the Novartis Campus, offers innovative and ultra-modern infrastructure, and is an ideal breeding-ground for startups.

#### Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne

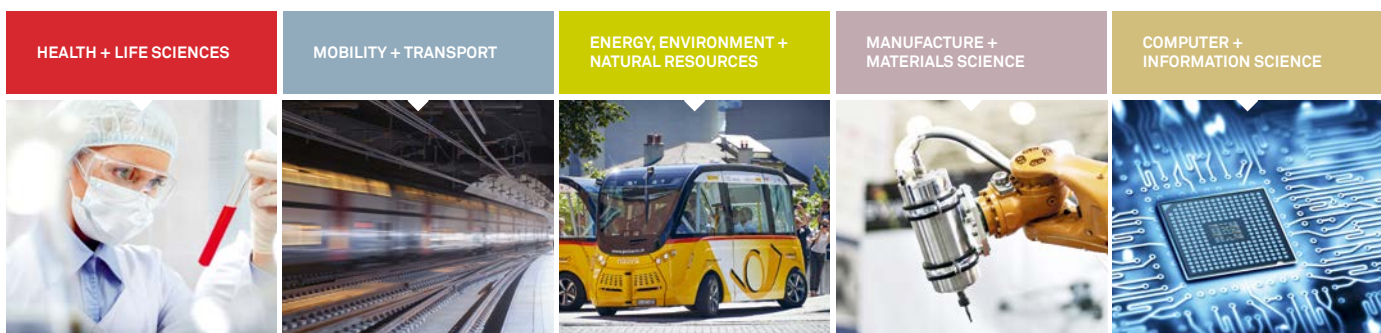
Switzerland Innovation Park Biel / Bienne has four competence centers – modern production techniques (industrial 3D printing), battery technology, medical technology and smart factory – as well as five priority areas for research and development: health and life sciences; energy, environment and natural resources; manufacturing and materials; computer and information technology; and mobility and transport. Its laboratories and research services are available for SMEs and start-ups and it supports them in development and implementing marketable products.

#### Switzerland Innovation Park Innovaare

The Switzerland Innovation Park Innovaare is a unique innovation park at the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) in Villigen that boasts large-scale, state-of-the-art research facilities. It is the site of an emerging research and development ecosystem that brings together research groups from large companies, SMEs, and startups with outstanding academics from the Paul Scherrer Institute. Based on the PSI's expertise, innovations are brought to market maturity in the areas of accelerator technology, new materials and processes, people and health as well as energy.

## Innovation Focus Areas and Specialist Areas

(FIG. 51)



Sources: Switzerland Innovation; own representation of S-GE

### Switzerland Innovation Park Network West EPFL

The Switzerland Innovation Park Network West EPFL is a network that extends across six university locations in Western Switzerland, based around the renowned École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). It covers all innovation areas. Here, companies and researchers will find outstandingly equipped laboratories and a unique atmosphere in an academic environment where the big sellers of the future are developed. Thanks to dialog between researchers, talented individuals and entrepreneurs, the network is a breeding-ground for innovations. R&D teams from large groups and creative startups get the chance to work with world-famous professors and innovative spin-offs and to shape the future with their new product developments. More than 200 startups and 30 international companies are located in the innovation parks.

### Switzerland Innovation Park Zurich

In close proximity to the top-ranking Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich and the University of Zurich, Switzerland Innovation Park Zurich is creating a new platform for research, development and innovation. The first projects in this park come from the areas of robotics and mobility, space travel and aviation, as well as advanced manufacturing. For example, the ETH intends to establish a robotics and mobility hub to promote collaboration between academic research, companies, and start-ups. The University of Zurich is also planning a space and aviation hub.

### 12.6.3 Target Audience

The strategic position of Switzerland Innovation at the forefront of global research attracts many highly innovative businesses. Nowhere else offers such a wide range of new technologies and the combined expertise of some of the world's leading experts making breakthrough innovations a reality. Research teams and innovation cells work together in an environment that inspires innovation and is focused on successfully launching new products on the global market. Target groups include:

- Medium-sized and large technology companies that develop new marketable products, services, and processes.
- Established companies from high-tech industries with a high value-added ratio and a clear focus on research and development and innovation activities.
- Research groups, the research and development teams of corporations, and start-ups.

### 12.6.4 Services

A wide range of services and excellent research infrastructure have been specifically designed to ensure the full potential and operational effectiveness of R+D staff and innovation cells at Switzerland Innovation. This includes, among others:

- Support for cooperation with world-class academic partners and easy access to the best talent and researchers.
- A network of thriving high-tech start-ups and spin-offs.
- A platform for the exchange of ideas and for partnering with the research and development teams of international companies.
- Industrial liaison officers who help R & D personnel to expand their options.
- Approximately 200,000 square meters of high-quality laboratories, offices, conference rooms and co-working spaces; large research institutions with accelerator facilities.
- A business-friendly and politically stable environment; access to research funding from Switzerland and the EU; very high quality of life that is attractive to top talents and their families.

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

[www.switzerland-innovation.com](http://www.switzerland-innovation.com)  
Switzerland Innovation Foundation



# LIVING IN SWITZERLAND

# 13

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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 7,304 Swiss francs, 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, Geneva, Basel, and Bern have for years occupied the top spots in global rankings of cities compiled by the global consultancy firm Mercer.

#### International Comparison of Quality of Life, 2019

(FIG. 52)

1	Vienna, Austria
<b>2</b>	<b>Zurich, Switzerland</b>
3	Vancouver, Canada
3	Munich, Germany
3	Auckland, New Zealand
6	Düsseldorf, Germany
7	Frankfurt, Germany
8	Copenhagen, Denmark
<b>9</b>	<b>Geneva, Switzerland</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Basel, Switzerland</b>
11	Sydney, Australia
11	Amsterdam, The Netherlands
13	Berlin, Germany
<b>14</b>	<b>Bern, Switzerland</b>
16	Toronto, Canada
18	Luxembourg, Luxembourg
33	Dublin, Ireland
39	Paris, France
41	Milan, Italy
41	London, United Kingdom
44	New York, USA
49	Tokyo, Japan
71	Hong Kong, Hongkong SAR

Sources: Mercer Survey, Quality of Living Rankings, 2020

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 is a magnet for qualified specialists from abroad. In an international comparison of the most attractive countries, it has been at the top as a global talent hub for several years in a row (see Fig. 53). The ranking is published annually by the Institute of Management Development (IMD) and compares the ability of countries to attract and retain top talents. According to the study, Switzerland is characterized in particular by a stable economic and political environment, an efficient education system and high productivity. In addition, there is a high level of international expertise and an excellent quality of life.

Switzerland is the country of choice for qualified workers from abroad.

#### Development, Attraction and Retention of Talent, 2019

Overall score 0–100

(FIG. 53)

1	Switzerland	100.00
2	Denmark	90.80
3	Sweden	86.94
4	Austria	86.91
5	Luxembourg	86.65
6	Norway	85.95
7	Iceland	85.15
8	Finland	83.14
9	The Netherlands	81.81
10	Singapore	81.80

Sources: IMD World Talent Ranking 2019



## 13.2 RELOCATION AND INTEGRATION

More than 10,000 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 Switzerland

### 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 items 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) or residence permit (nationals of other 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 excerpt 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 > Importing into Switzerland  
Form for listing imported personal effects

### 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) > Services > Finding further education  
Swiss Federation for Adult Learning

## 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.

In Switzerland you can choose among countless providers of fixed-line and mobile telephony, VoIP, and Internet access.

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.

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 minor repairs, and oversee security and maintenance. Regional tenants' associations can also assist tenants with problems.

[www.bwo.admin.ch](http://www.bwo.admin.ch) > How we live > Info sheet "Living in Switzerland"  
Important information for tenants

Tenants' associations  
German-speaking Switzerland: [www.mieterverband.ch](http://www.mieterverband.ch)

French-speaking Switzerland: [www.asloca.ch](http://www.asloca.ch)

Italian-speaking Switzerland: [www.asi-infoalloggio.ch](http://www.asi-infoalloggio.ch)

### 13.4 TELEPHONE, INTERNET, AND TV

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, CoopMobile, yallo, 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 market leaders in 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 telephone line with "Swisscom TV". 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 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 Serafe AG.

[www.local.ch](http://www.local.ch)  
Phone book

[www.comparis.ch](http://www.comparis.ch)  
Comparison of providers and prices

[www.teltarif.ch](http://www.teltarif.ch)  
Comparison of providers and prices

[www.serafe.ch](http://www.serafe.ch)  
Schweizerische Empfangsstelle für Radio- und Fernsehempfangsgebühren (Swiss Collection Center for Radio and TV License Fees)

### 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 pension and unemployment insurance are mandatory, as are medical and fire insurance (for property owners). Contributions to pension 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 to the floor 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 is 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 "GA travelcard," a 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" 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 travelcard" can travel for free with their parents, as can those with the "Children's Co-travelcard" when accompanied by an adult. Young people between the ages of 16 and 25 can ride free in 2nd class cars after 7 p.m. with the "Seven25" 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)  
Swiss national railway operator SBB: Timetable, tickets

[www.swisstravelsystem.com](http://www.swisstravelsystem.com)  
Traveling in Switzerland for foreign visitors

### 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 1,100 museums, Switzerland has the world's highest density of museums. Nine opera houses and 15 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 (2,446 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. Football clubs and gymnastics associations can be found in the smallest communities. Switzerland's sport infrastructure comprises more than 28,000 sports facilities, including more than 4,000 sports halls 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 twenty (as of 2020). 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

[www.theater.ch](http://www.theater.ch)  
Theater and dance

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) > Society > Traditions  
Seasonal customs

### 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

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) > Addresses of administrative authorities  
Communal authorities

## 13.8 INCOME AND COST OF LIVING

The average Swiss household has 2.23 inhabitants with a combined monthly earned income of 7,304 Swiss francs. Together with income from other sources and transfer income, gross income totals 9,946 Swiss francs. 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.

According to a UBS study (Fig. 55), Switzerland is in first place with the world's highest purchasing power, i.e. the highest real disposable income when compared with prices.

## Monthly Average Household Budget, 2017

(CHF)

(FIG. 54)

<b>GROSS INCOME (EARNED INCOME TRANSFERS, ETC.)</b>	<b>9,917</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Mandatory transfer expenses	-2,747	-27.7%
Social security contributions	-946	-9.5%
Taxes	-1,155	-11.6%
Health insurance: premiums for basic cover	-646	-6.5%
Monetary transfer expenses to other households	-186	-1.9%
<b>DISPOSABLE INCOME</b>	<b>6,984</b>	<b>70.4%</b>
Other insurance, fees, and transfers	-591	-6.0%
<b>CONSUMER SPENDING</b>	<b>-5,281</b>	<b>-53.3%</b>
Foodstuffs and non-alcoholic drinks	-636	-6.4%
Alcoholic drinks and tobacco	-105	-1.1%
Restaurants and accommodation	-579	-5.8%
Clothing and shoes	-202	-2.0%
Living costs and energy	-1,463	-14.8%
Furnishings and ongoing household costs	-222	-2.2%
Health spending	-244	-2.5%
Transportation	-742	-7.5%
Communication	-189	-1.9%
Entertainment, recreation, and culture	-577	-5.8%
Other goods and services	-320	-3.2%
<b>SPORADIC INCOME</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
<b>SAVINGS</b>	<b>1,428</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
Number of people per household (median)	2.18	

Sources: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), 2019

## International Comparison of Purchasing Power, 2018

Hourly wage divided by total cost of goods, excluding rent

(FIG. 55)

<b>Zurich</b>	<b>131.7</b>
Los Angeles	129.4
Miami	125.9
Luxembourg	124.6
<b>Geneva</b>	<b>117.4</b>
Toronto	107.9
Frankfurt	106.4
Munich	104.8
New York	100.0
Berlin	99.0
Vienna	97.8
Dublin	95.2
Hong Kong	94.6
Tokyo	85.7
Lyon	84.3
London	81.8
Rome	81.3
Paris	76.1
Milan	62.4
Seoul	52.1
Shanghai	33.9
Beijing	32.0
Mumbai	15.8

Sources: UBS, Prices and Earnings 2018

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) > Look for statistics > Economic and social situation of the population > Income, consumption, and wealth  
Statistics on income, consumption, and wealth



# 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

National location promotion is a task shared by the Confederation and the cantons. Acting on behalf of the Confederation (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO) and the cantons, Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) informs foreign potential investors about the particular strengths as well as the underlying conditions of Switzerland as a business location.

The offices S-GE maintains abroad are 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 an SBH can contact the S-GE team of experts in Switzerland directly. S-GE provides information about the specific benefits of Switzerland as a location and answers location questions on a national level. If a company is interested in the numerous benefits of the different locations in Switzerland, S-GE puts the foreign company in touch with the regional and cantonal business promotion agencies. These, in turn, provide information about the specific benefits of an establishment in their economic area, prepare establishment offers, and support the foreign company in the ongoing establishment process. Even after an investment project has been completed successfully, the business promotion agencies provide investors with ongoing customer care.

Contact addresses can be found in the annex.

[www.s-ge.com/invest](http://www.s-ge.com/invest)  
Switzerland Global Enterprise S-GE

[www.s-ge.com/areas](http://www.s-ge.com/areas)  
[www.s-ge.com/cantons](http://www.s-ge.com/cantons)  
Areas and cantons

## 14.2 PROMOTIONAL 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. 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. Since July 1, 2016, 93 regional centers in 19 cantons belong to the regions applying such 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 consultation on the best way to proceed.

See also chapter 9.4.3

[www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch) > Promotion activities > SME policy  
Tax Relief as Part of Regional Policy

## Examples of Cantonal Business Promotion Instruments

(FIG. 56)

RANGE OF SERVICES	TYPE OF SUPPORT
Procurement of sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Providing commercial premises and land</li> <li>– Contribution to the costs of planning and / or building industrial premises</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 contributions ("à fonds perdu")</li> </ul>

Sources: Legal basis and information from cantonal economic development agencies

## Areas of Application for Tax Breaks, 2016

(FIG. 57)



● Areas of application as per DEA directive of July 1, 2016

Sources: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)



### 14.2.3 Switzerland Innovation

Switzerland Innovation offers domestic and foreign business in Switzerland's 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 and 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. Switzerland Innovation consists of five regional locations and one national foundation.

For more information on Switzerland Innovation, please see chapter 12.6.

### 14.2.4 Innosuisse – Swiss Agency for Innovation Promotion

Innosuisse is Switzerland's federal innovation promotion agency. Digital transformation is changing the world, and Switzerland is a global leader in innovation. With the goal of remaining competitive in the digital age, Innosuisse promotes the transfer of knowledge and technology between companies and universities. It brings partners from these two areas together in applied research and development projects and provides assistance to startup companies during the development phase. Innosuisse has a budget of 200 million Swiss francs.

Innosuisse provides funding for:

- market-oriented R+D projects carried out jointly by companies and universities in the areas of industry and services,
- the establishment and development of science-based companies,
- transfer of knowledge and technology 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, Innosuisse 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.

Innosuisse promotes knowledge and technology transfer (KTT) between universities and industry, where this does not happen without support. 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 IS, ESA, and EUREKA.

[www.innosuisse.ch](http://www.innosuisse.ch)  
Innosuisse – Swiss agency for innovation promotion

[www.venturelab.ch](http://www.venturelab.ch)  
Venturelab

[www.ctistartup.ch](http://www.ctistartup.ch)  
KTI Start-up

### 14.2.5 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 incubators 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 consultation, coaching, telephone services, etc.
- They offer contacts to universities
- Companies are surrounded by like-minded entrepreneurs
- 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

## Science parks, incubators, and research institutes

(FIG. 74)

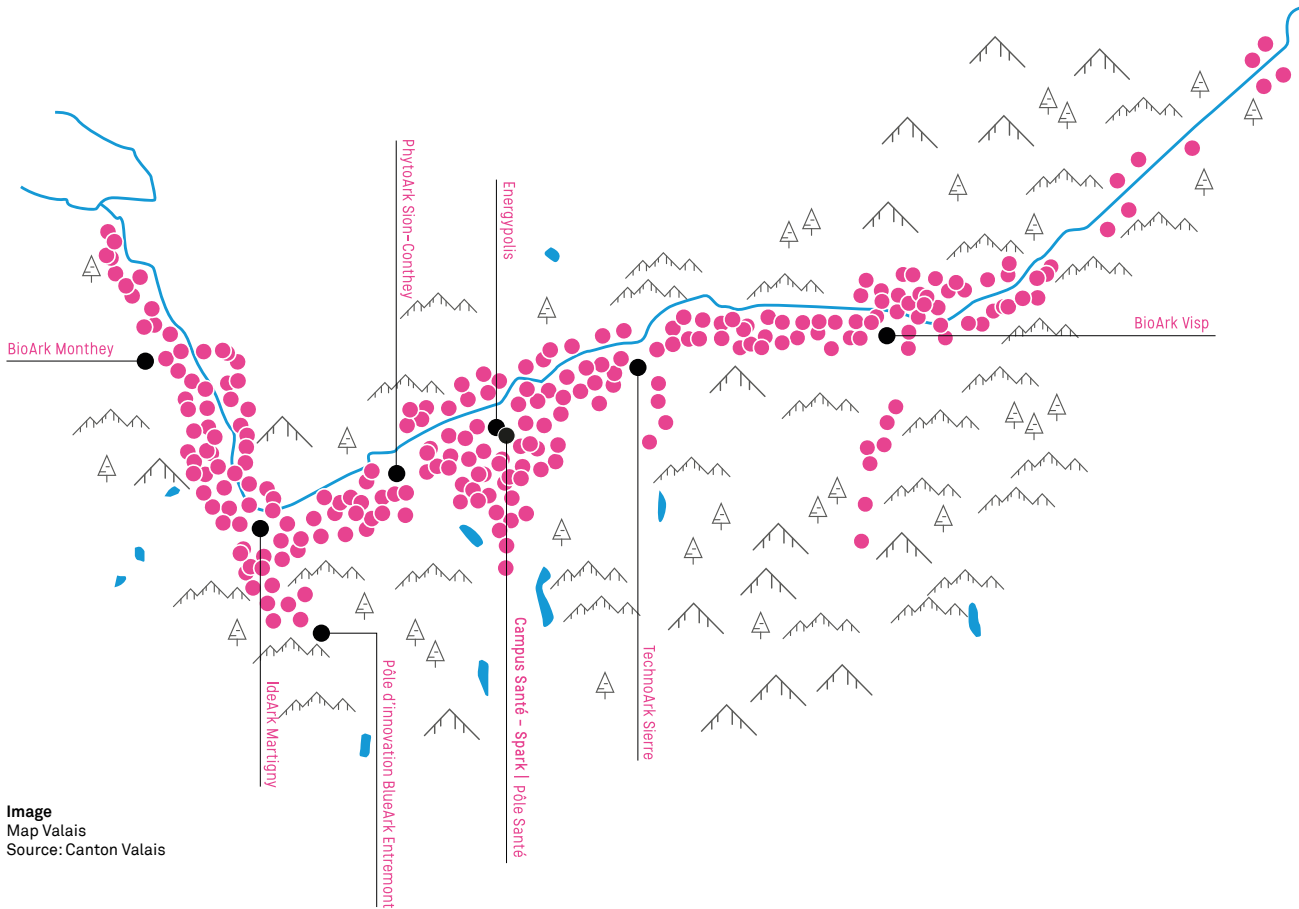


Image  
Map Valais  
Source: Canton Valais

### MONTHHEY

#### BioArk SA

Case postale 451  
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CH-1870 Monthey 1  
Tél. +41 24 472 11 50  
[info@bioark.ch](mailto:info@bioark.ch)  
[www.bioark.ch](http://www.bioark.ch)

### MARTIGNY

#### IdeArk SA

Centre du Parc  
Rue Marconi 19  
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[info@ideark.ch](mailto:info@ideark.ch)  
[www.ideark.ch](http://www.ideark.ch)

### Institut de recherche Idiap

Centre du Parc  
Rue Marconi 19  
Case postale 592  
CH-1920 Martigny  
Tél. +41 27 721 77 11  
[www.idiap.ch](http://www.idiap.ch)

### Swiss Center for Biometrics Research

Centre du Parc  
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Case postale 592  
CH-1920 Martigny  
Tél. +41 27 721 77 11  
[www.biometrics-center.ch](http://www.biometrics-center.ch)

### Centre de Recherches Energétiques et Municipales

Avenue du Grand-Saint-Bernard 4  
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CH-1920 Martigny  
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[Info@crem.ch](mailto:Info@crem.ch)  
[www.crem.ch](http://www.crem.ch)

### LE CHÂBLE

#### BlueArk Entremont SA

Place de Curala 5  
1934 Le Châble  
Tél. +41 58 332 21 20  
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[www.blueark.ch](http://www.blueark.ch)

### CONTHEY

#### PhytoArk

Route des Eterpys 22  
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Tél. +41 27 346 42 04  
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[www.phytoark.ch](http://www.phytoark.ch)

### Mediplant

Centre de recherches sur les plantes  
médicinales et aromatiques  
Route des Eterpys 22  
CH-1964 Contthey  
Tél. +41 58 481 35 11  
[www.mediplant.ch](http://www.mediplant.ch)

## **SION**

### **Energypolis**

Rue de l'Industrie 17  
CH-1950 Sion  
Tél. +41 21 695 82 00  
[www.energypolis.ch](http://www.energypolis.ch)

### **Institut Technologies du vivant**

Rue de l'Industrie 19  
CH-1950 Sion  
Tél. +41 21 695 82 00  
[info@hevs.ch](mailto:info@hevs.ch)  
[www.hevs.ch/itv](http://www.hevs.ch/itv)

### **Institut Systèmes industriels**

Rue de l'Industrie 17  
CH-1950 Sion  
Tél. +41 21 695 82 00  
[Info.isi@hevs.ch](mailto:Info.isi@hevs.ch)  
[www.hevs.ch/isi](http://www.hevs.ch/isi)

### **Institut de Recherche en Réadaptation**

Dr. Bertrand Léger  
Avenue Grand-Champsec 90  
CH-1950 Sion  
Tél. +41 27 603 30 05  
[www.irr-valais.ch](http://www.irr-valais.ch)

## **SIERRE**

### **Swiss Digital Center**

Techno-Pôle 10  
CH-3960 Sierre  
Tél. +41 27 452 22 25  
[info@technoark.ch](mailto:info@technoark.ch)  
[www.technoark.ch](http://www.technoark.ch)

### **Institut Informatique de gestion**

Rue de la Plaine 2  
CH-3960 Sierre  
Tél. +41 27 606 90 01  
[info.iig@hevs.ch](mailto:info.iig@hevs.ch)  
[www.hevs.ch/iig](http://www.hevs.ch/iig)

### **Institut Entrepreneuriat & Management**

Techno-Pôle 1 – Le Foyer  
CH-3960 Sierre  
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[www.hevs.ch/iem](http://www.hevs.ch/iem)

### **Institut Tourisme**

Techno-Pôle 3  
CH-3960 Sierre  
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TechnoArk 10  
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## **VISP**

### **BioArk Visp AG**

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



# APPENDIX

# 15

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## 15.1 INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

### 15.1.1 Swiss Business Hubs Investment Promotion

#### Europe

##### Germany

Swiss Business Hub Germany  
c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland  
Hirschstrasse 22  
70173 Stuttgart, Germany  
Phone +49 711 22 29 43 29  
stu.sbhgermany@eda.admin.ch

##### France

Swiss Business Hub France  
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par.sbhfrance@eda.admin.ch

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c/o Consulate General of  
Switzerland – Italy  
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mil.sbhitalia@eda.admin.ch

##### UK & Ireland

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Swiss Business Hub Canada  
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Swiss Business Hub USA  
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New York, NY 10017-6706,  
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#### Asia

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Sanlitun Dongwujie 3  
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##### India

Swiss Business Hub India  
c/o Consulate General of  
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##### Japan

Swiss Business Hub Japan  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
5 Chome-9-12 Minami-Azabu  
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Swiss Business Hub South Korea  
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Phone +82 2 739 9511 / 12 / 13 / 14  
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### 15.1.2 Additional Swiss Business Hubs

#### Austria

Swiss Business Hub Austria  
c/o Embassy of Switzerland  
Prinz Eugen-Strasse 9a  
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vie.sbhautria@eda.admin.ch

#### Poland

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## 15.2 CANTONAL NETWORK



### **Tourist economy and innovation service**

This service promotes and supports the balanced, sustainable development of the economy in Valais by implementing both the canton's policy on the tourist economy and regional policy. Guided by its clients' needs, the service supports existing businesses in Valais, companies that want to start operating in the canton, start-ups and institutions. It promotes innovation, establishes positive framework conditions and coordinates activities with the various economic actors.

[www.valais.ch/economy](http://www.valais.ch/economy)



### **Guarantee and Funding Centre (CCF)**

The CCF provides financial services for the Economic Promotion Valais. It offers advice to both existing and new businesses in Valais to help them during their start-up phase, development or restructuring, as well as offering a financial assessment service. It also provides financial support to businesses that are already located or about to set up in Valais from its own or foreign funds.

[www.ccf-valais.ch](http://www.ccf-valais.ch)



#### **French-speaking Valais regional office**

The office operates in the French-speaking part of the canton and provides support to local authorities (municipalities, prefectures and regions) and regional players in Valais. Its role includes helping them to fulfil their obligations in the areas of local development, urban policy, tourism and culture (heritage). It also helps to connect businesses by pointing them towards the Economic Promotion Valais partners or private-sector organisations.  
[www.regionvalaisromand.ch](http://www.regionvalaisromand.ch)



#### **Regions- und Wirtschaftszentrum Oberwallis (RWO)**

The RWO AG supports the Haut-Valais as a skills centre for regional and economic development. Its aim is to bring regional interests together, exploit their potential and enhance the region's added value. It implements and supports projects aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the Haut-Valais region. The RWO is the gateway for companies that are looking to grow their business and directs them towards the Economic Promotion Valais partners or private-sector organisations.  
[www.rw-oberwallis.ch](http://www.rw-oberwallis.ch)



#### **CimArk SA**

The CimArk team provides technology services to the Economic Promotion Valais to support entrepreneurs. It is active in business innovation, the digital transformation and strengthening the canton's economic diversity. It also provides professional support to businesses working in areas that offer high added value (such as ICTs, life sciences, energy and environment, health, industry 4.0, etc.). CimArk provides targeted services, such as generating value from technology, business formation, innovation in SMEs and start-ups, etc.). As the operational arm of The Ark Foundation, it supports SMEs, start-ups and research institutes on diversification and innovation, to support the canton's economic fabric.  
[www.cimark.ch](http://www.cimark.ch)



#### **Valais/Wallis Promotion**

Valais/Wallis Promotion is an independent, innovative and efficient business that focuses on its partners' and clients' needs and expectations. It helps secure the canton's position and promotes it across different sectors as a leading player on the national and international market, and creates added value for the Valais economy. Valais/Wallis Promotion positions and markets the canton as a cross-sectoral, leading player on the Swiss and international market and creates added value for the people of Valais.  
[www.valais.ch](http://www.valais.ch)

## 15.3 LIST OF FIGURES

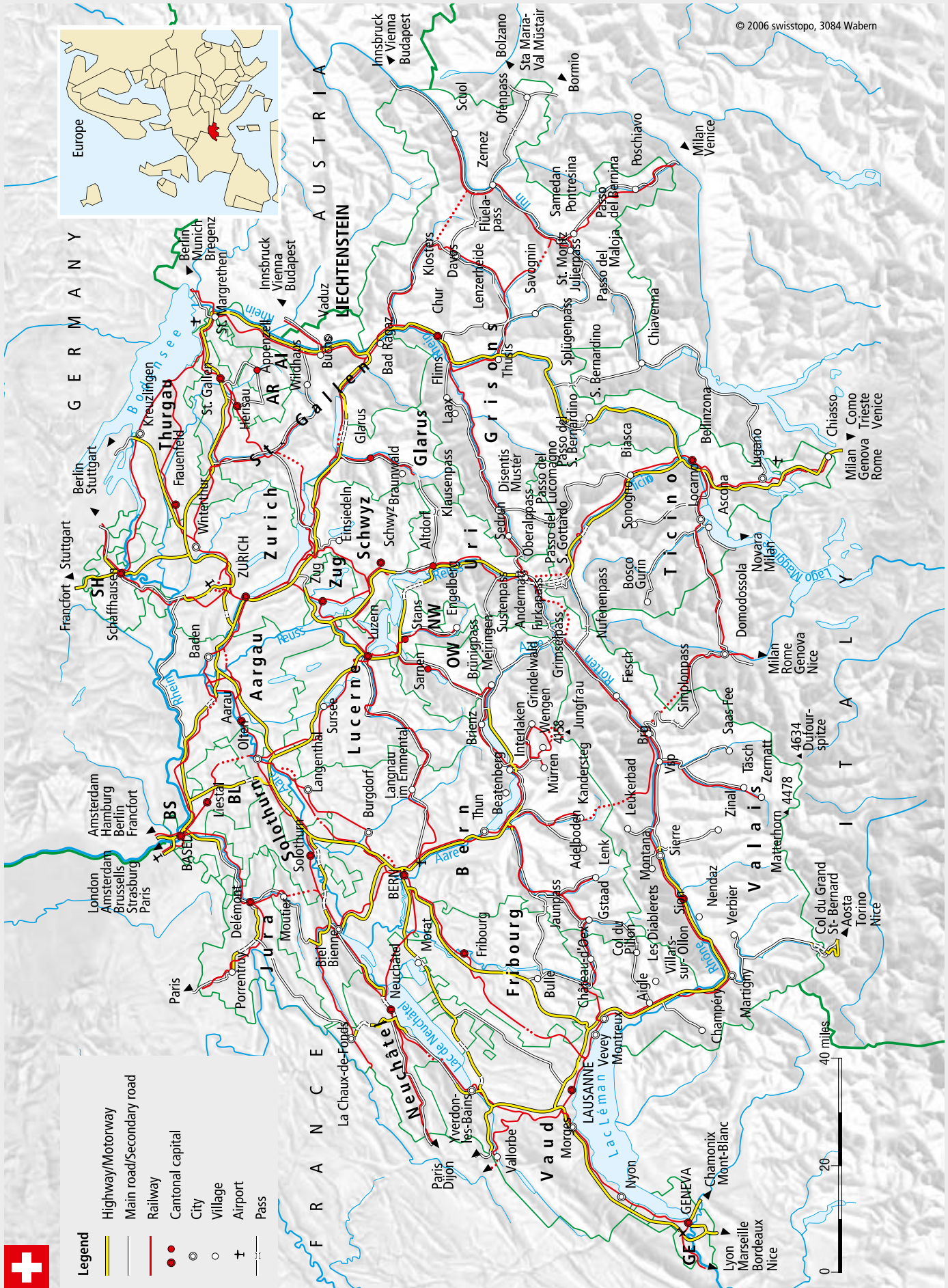
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# MAP OF EUROPE



MAP OF SWITZERLAND

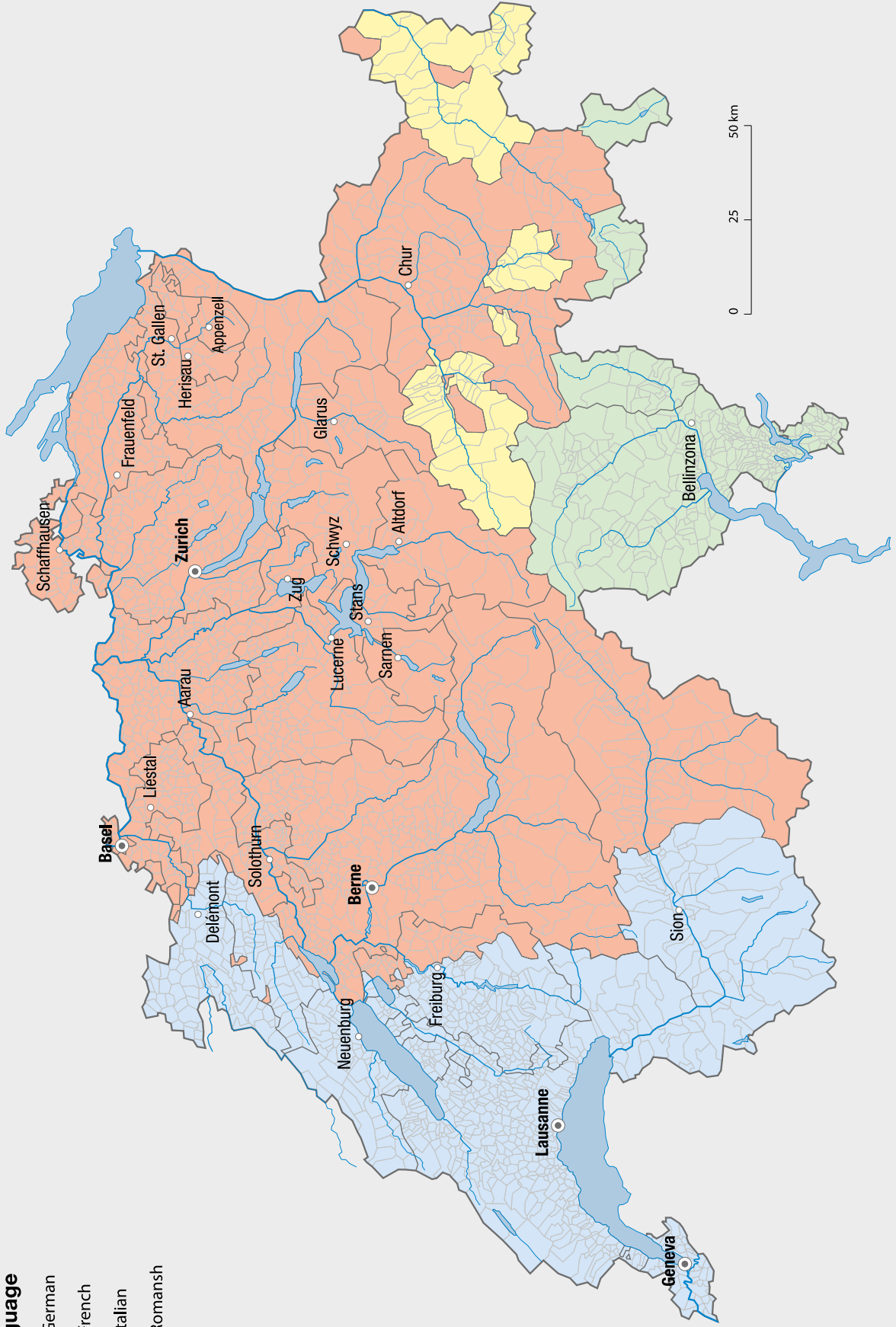


# LINGUISTIC AREAS OF SWITZERLAND

## Language regions

### Language

- German
- French
- Italian
- Romansh











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