
Persons not gainfully employed (old-age pensioners, students, others...)

Requirements for the right of residence

The Agreement between Switzerland and the European Community and its Members States on the Free Movement of Persons grants persons who are not gainfully employed, such as old-age pensioners, students and others, as well as the members of their families, a right of residence. To be able to obtain that right, people must satisfy the following requirements:

- People who are not gainfully employed must have sufficient financial means for them not to become dependent on social security and a burden on the host country.
- They must have a health insurance cover which covers all risks, including accident.

Their financial means are deemed sufficient if they exceed the amount which would entitle them to claim social benefits in accordance with Swiss law. The relevant amounts in this context are those laid down by the Swiss Conference on Public Welfare (SKOS guidelines). The calculation of the financial means also takes into account pensions and payments made by social insurance institutions.

EC/EFTA residence permits

People who are not gainfully employed may stay in Switzerland without a permit for up to three months. If their stay exceeds three months, they will have to register with the authorities and obtain a residence permit. They will be granted an EC/EFTA residence permit with a validity of five years against production of a valid passport or ID card. The permit is valid throughout Switzerland and will automatically be renewed by the competent authorities if the above-mentioned requirements are still satisfied. In exceptional cases, the authorities may limit individual permits to two years if the holders' financial means do not appear to be secured. If the authorities notice that a permit holder's financial means are no longer sufficient, they may revoke the permit or refuse to extend it.

Legal position of family members

People who are not gainfully employed are also entitled to be joined by their families if they have sufficient financial means for their support (cf. fact sheet on the subsequent immigration of families).

Special provisions for the persons mentioned below

1) Old-age pensioners who draw a foreign pension

Old-age pensioners who want to settle in Switzerland will also have to provide evidence that they possess sufficient financial means and an adequate health insurance cover. Their financial means are deemed sufficient if they exceed the amount which would entitle them to receive supplementary benefits in accordance with the Federal Law of 19 March 1965 on Benefits Supplementary to the Old-Age, Survivors' and Invalidity Insurance.

2) Students

Pupils and students need only provide credible evidence that they will not become a burden to their host country during their stay. Moreover, they must provide evidence that they have enrolled in a recognised educational institution in Switzerland and will be able to attend a general educational course or an occupational training course.

Please note: Access to universities and other educational institutions, as well as the issuance of grants, is not covered by the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. If the above requirements are satisfied, pupils and students are granted a residence permit for the duration of their course or for the duration of a year if the course takes more than a year. This permit will be extended to the regular conclusion of the course if the holder continues to satisfy the above requirements.

3) Job-hunters

Job-hunters who look for a job in Switzerland do not require a permit for a period of three months. If a job-hunt lasts more than three months, then the job-hunter will have to register with the competent authorities (this also applies if they receive unemployment benefits from their home country). They will then be granted a short-term EC/EFTA residence permit with a validity of three months. This permit may be extended to one year if its holder is able to provide evidence that he or she is still looking for a job and that there is a justified prospect of finding employment. Permits for job-hunters are not subject to quotas. In accordance with the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, job-hunters are not entitled to social benefits.