

Free movement of persons: Swiss citizens in the EU

Many Swiss benefit from the freedom to look for employment in their preferred EU country. And companies benefit from the possibility of sending own personnel to the EU to carry out tasks on site.

Today, over 400,000 Swiss live in the EU. There are many reasons for this: some have found their dream job, others accompany their spouses abroad. Some go abroad to study, others spend their retirement near the sea. Thanks to the free movement of persons, all Swiss are entitled to reside and work in their preferred EU country.

Swiss companies also make extensive use of the free movement of persons: First, because they can recruit needed specialists in the EU (see chapter "EU citizens in Switzerland"). Second, they now have the possibility of carrying out tasks in

the 27 EU states using their own personnel. They can send employees to EU states for up to 90 days a year, for example, to assemble or service machines, without the need for a residence permit. Thanks to the recognition of professional qualifications, their own personnel also have the right to work in the EU in professions requiring a state recognized professional qualification.

For many companies, this ruling has increased market opportunities and expanded their sales market. In addition, it enables small and medium-sized companies, whose main market is Switzerland, to accept interesting and lucrative orders in the EU from time to time. This opens up new customer potential, in particular for specialist companies. Especially companies in the border regions of Switzerland can benefit due to their proximity to the new markets.

Who does the free movement of persons apply to?

The following regulations apply to both Swiss citizens in the EU as well as to EU citizens in Switzerland.

Gainfully employed persons, i.e. both employees as well as self-employed persons, have the right of entry, residence and the right to gainful employment.

Persons not gainfully employed, such as pensioners and students, have the right of entry and residence, provided they have health insurance and sufficient financial resources to ensure that they do not become a burden on the social system of the country concerned. Students must furthermore be enrolled at an educational institution.

Service providers, i.e. self-employed persons or employees sent by their companies, can accept orders in an EU country or in Switzerland for a maximum of 90 working days a year and can offer their services across borders.



Key data

Date of signing: 21 June 1999 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)

Approval by the electorate: 21 May 2000 (in the framework of Bilaterals I)

Date effective: 1 June 2002

“ Thanks to the free movement of persons we have just participated in the building of a house in Scotland. The property owner, who has been coming to Davos on holiday for years, appointed us to build the roof construction and windows for his new house. Around 12 people from my company spent varying periods of time working in Scotland. Without the free movement of persons we would not have been able to accept the order – we would not have found any suitably qualified personnel in Scotland. And the qualifications of our employees would not have been recognised. The Bilateral Agreements with the EU open up new opportunities for our company and for my colleagues – we have many tourists here who like our architecture. Now they can simply order it. ”

Hansjürg Künzli, Master Cabinet Maker

