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This Guide

Working abroad sounds to many people like an adventure.

However, without thorough preparation, starting with a successful application, it is bound to fail. Therefore, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) has prepared a set of country guides describing the main routes to employment in over 40 countries. Are you interested in working in Australia, France or Japan? Has your partner accepted a job in Hungary, Italy, or the United Arab Emirates?

Are you looking for an internship possibility in the UK, Singapore or the United States of America? The Looking for work in... guides from ELM will help you with accurate information and practical tips on working cultures and differences in job hunting in over 40 countries.

As an extra addition to the series – following many requests - ELM introduced a new guide: Looking for work in International Organisations which explains how to successfully look for work in for instance the institutes of the European Commission, UN institutions and NGO's.

This guide contains information on Switzerland. It tells you how to apply for a job in Switzerland and the cultural differences that you will come across when looking for a job in Switzerland. Do not underestimate those national differences. What is common in one country might be very unusual in another country. Despite globalisation, to find a job abroad you need to be aware that national differences manifest themselves not only in different

languages, but also in different recruitment practices. Thus, looking for work in another country involves more than writing your CV/resume in another language.

No matter the country in which you are looking for work, the key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview. Accordingly, your CV should be regarded as a marketing tool, adapted to the market in which you intend to use it. The information in this guide, together with the sample CV, will help you to adapt your application for the Swiss job market. However, make sure your application remains a reflection of your personality. Working abroad is one thing, but having a job that does not suit you will definitely cause homesickness!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nannette Ripmeester', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Nannette Ripmeester, MA
Managing Director
Expertise in Labour Mobility





Country Profile

Country

Switzerland lies at the heart of Europe and is surrounded by Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and France. It has a surface of 41,293 square kilometres (25,658 sq mi).

The capital is Bern (approximately 130,000 inhabitants, 2009).

Other main cities are Zurich (approximately 370,000 inhabitants, 2009), Geneva (approximately 186,825 inhabitants, 2008), Basel (approximately 180,000 inhabitants, 2009) and Lausanne (approximately 129,273 inhabitants, 2009).

The Alps take up the central and Southern regions of the country and the Jura Mountains straddle the border with France in the

North-East. Over 60 percent of the country is mountainous and a quarter of it is covered in forests. The Dufour summit (4634m) of Monte Rosa is the highest peak, however, the Matterhorn (4478m) is better known.

Climate

The mountains are mainly responsible for the variety of local and regional microclimates. In general Switzerland has a moderate climate. There is constant snow cover at altitudes above 3000m.

Population

Switzerland has a population of approximately 7.6 million (2009) of which 69 percent is Swiss German, 20 percent is from French origin, 8 is from Italian origin and 1.4 percent are foreigners and 1 percent is Romansch.

History

The first inhabitants of the region were a Celtic tribe, the Helvetia. The Romans took over Switzerland in 107 BC, but they were gradually driven back by the Germanic Altemanni tribe that settled in the 5th century. The territory was united under the Holy Roman Empire in 1032 although there was hardly any central control.

That all changed when the Germanic Habsburg family took over in the 13th century and Rudolph I became emperor. After Rudolph's death in 1291, local leaders saw a chance to gain independence. Their pact of mutual assistance is seen as the origin of the Swiss Confederation. Encouraged by early successes, the Swiss gradually acquired a taste for territorial expansion themselves and gained independence from the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in 1499. After a number of military victories, the Swiss finally over-reached themselves when they took on a combined force of French and Venetians in 1515. Realising they could no longer compete against larger powers they declared their neutrality.

The Reformation in the 16th century caused agitation in Switzerland, as in the rest of Europe. The Protestant influences spread quickly, although central Switzerland remained Catholic. While the rest of Europe was fighting in the Thirty Years' War, the Swiss remained neutral and at the end of the war in 1648 they were recognised in the Treaty of Westphalia as a neutral state. Nevertheless, the French Republic invaded Switzerland in 1798 and established the Helvetic Republic. The Swiss revolted against the centralised control, and Napoleon was finally defeated by the British and Prussians at Waterloo. The ensuing Congress of Vienna guaranteed Switzerland's independence and permanent neutrality in 1815.

In 1848, a new federal constitution was agreed and it is still largely in place today. Bern was established as the capital and the federal assembly was set up to take care of national issues. Switzerland developed industries predominantly dependent on highly skilled labour. Networks of railways and roads were built, opening up previously inaccessible alpine regions and helping the development of tourism. The international Red Cross was founded in Geneva in 1863 and free education was introduced.

The Swiss have remained their neutrality in the 20th century. Their only World War I involvement lay in the organising of Red Cross units. In World War II, however, Switzerland played a more insidious role as the money, possessions and gold stolen by Nazi Germany was kept in Swiss banks. Switzerland also shut its borders to Jewish refugees and repatriated many of those who escaped Nazi-occupied Europe, probably in full knowledge of the fate that awaited them. While the rest of Europe underwent the painful process of rebuilding from the ravages of war, Switzerland was able to expand from an already powerful commercial, financial and industrial base. Zürich developed as an international banking and insurance centre, and many international bodies, such as the World Health Organisation, based their headquarters in Geneva. Afraid that its neutrality would be compromised, Switzerland declined to become a member of the United Nations (though it currently has 'observer' status) or NATO. It did, however, join EFTA (the European Free

Trade Association). In the face of other EFTA nations applying for EU (European Union) membership, Switzerland finally made its own application in 1992. As a prelude to full EU membership Switzerland was to join the EEA (European Economic Area), but the citizens rejected the EEA in a referendum in December 1992. Switzerland's EU application has consequently been delayed; in the meantime the government has been laying groundwork for closer integration with the rest of Europe.

At the end of the 20th century, growing doubts about Switzerland's past and future emerged. Many Swiss questioned the country's traditional "bunker mentality" in a Europe at peace, with open borders. Particularly troubling for Switzerland was an international debate during the 1990s about "dormant accounts" assets left by foreign Jews in Swiss banks during the Nazi era but never returned, a controversy that challenged Switzerland's self-image. Furthermore, with many United Nations (UN) and international organisations headquartered in Switzerland, there was a growing debate about whether Swiss neutrality was hindered or furthered by its refusal to join the UN.

Finally, after nearly 60 years of non-membership, Swiss voters, taking the lead of the major political parties, endorsed entry into the UN in 2002. Switzerland reached an agreement with the European Union related to the free movement of persons; on the