



Information note on the continued stay in Switzerland of staff members of international organisations (IOs), who are holding a Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) legitimisation card and are resident in Switzerland (July 2025)

The information is provided for guidance only. It is not legally binding on the Cantonal and Federal Authorities responsible for issuing stay permits under ordinary Swiss law.

According to FDFA rules, staff members of IOs are automatically granted a **courtesy period of 2 months** from the exact date of the end of their duties (interns are entitled to a courtesy period of 2 weeks). The courtesy period allows staff members to organise their final departure from Switzerland or to regularise their continued stay in Switzerland, or even to find a new job with an international organisation or a foreign representation. During the courtesy period, they keep their legitimisation card and the status it confers. The same rule applies to family members. See Section 11 of the Guidelines on the issuance of legitimisation cards¹.

The granting of an ordinary Swiss stay permit (stay permit, B permit, permanent residence permit, C permit, or short-term permit, L permit) is the **responsibility of the Cantons** (Cantonal Population Offices – CPO) and, depending on the nationality or type of permit, requires the **approval of the State Secretariat for Migration** in Bern (SEM).

Staff members who wish to extend their stay in Switzerland after the expiry of the courtesy period must **submit an application for a permit** to the CPO of their canton of residence for themselves and their family members. They may apply for **family reunification**. In all cases, applicants must prove that they have **sufficient financial means** to extend their stay in Switzerland (see below).

Staff members or family members who have exchanged their B/C permit for a legitimisation card must ask the CPO to have their previous permit returned. The **number of years spent in Switzerland** with a legitimisation card is taken into account when determining the **entitlement to a C permit** (see Section 4.1 of the above-mentioned Guidelines), subject to language knowledge in the place of residence (A2 oral and A1 written).

Nationals of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- EU Member States (27): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.
- EFTA countries (4): Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

CPO will examine applications submitted under **the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons** (AFMP²) concluded between EU, its Member States and Switzerland.

L permit for the purpose of employment seeking. CPO may issue an L permit for a period of 6 months. EU/EFTA spouses may also apply for an L permit (e.g. if the staff member is a third-country national).

B permit with gainful employment (if employed). The employer must, on behalf of the applicant, submit the request to the COP.

¹ <https://www.dfae.admin.ch/missions/mission-onu-geneve/en/home/manual-regime-privileges-and-immunities/introduction/legitimation-card.html>

² https://www.ejpd.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/fza_schweiz-eu-efta.html

B permit without gainful employment. If the applicant or their EU/EFTA spouse subsequently finds employment, they may apply for a B permit with gainful employment. EU/EFTA spouses may also apply for a B permit (e.g. if the employee is a third-country national).

B permit without gainful employment in Switzerland or abroad for staff members who are retiring or taking early retirement. If the applicant is at least 55 years old, has lived and worked in Switzerland for the IO without interruption for the last 5 years prior to retirement or the last 10 years prior to early retirement in accordance with Article 7.2.5.1 of the SEM's Guidelines³. If they subsequently find employment, they may apply for a work permit. They may obtain a C permit if they meet all the conditions, in particular the criteria of integration and language knowledge in their place of residence (A2 oral, A1 written).

EU/EFTA spouses with a **Ci permit** may apply for a B permit through their employer to continue their gainful employment.

If the spouse is a **Swiss national or an EU/EFTA national with a B/C permit**, they may apply for family reunification in favour of the staff member.

If the staff member lives in neighbouring France, they can apply for a **G permit for cross-border commuters** if they find employment in Switzerland. The conditions applicable to cross-border commuters apply⁴. Their EU/EFTA spouse may do the same.

Third-country nationals (non-EU/EFTA nationals)

Third-country nationals who wish to work are subject to the provisions of the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNA⁵). They must **first find an employer** willing to submit a permit application to the CPO. It is up to the Cantonal Foreign Labour Authority to decide whether to grant a permit in accordance with the **strict conditions** in force (e.g. highly qualified applicants who meet specific labour market needs).

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Spouses with a **Ci permit** may apply, through their employer, for a B permit to continue their gainful employment, subject to the approval of the Cantonal Foreign Labour Authority (see above).

If the spouse is a **Swiss or EU/EFTA national with a B/C permit**, they may apply for family reunification on behalf of the staff member.

If the staff member resides in neighbouring France and has a valid French residence permit, they may apply for a **G permit for cross-border workers** if they find employment in Switzerland. The conditions applicable to cross-border workers apply⁴ and the prior approval of the Cantonal Foreign Labour Authority is required (see above). Their spouse may do the same.

³ <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/auslaenderbereich.html>

⁴ <https://www.ge.ch/demandeur-permis-travail-frontalier>

⁵ <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2007/758/fr>

Proof of sufficient financial means (for all nationals)

Applicants must prove that they have sufficient financial means to support themselves and their family members **without recourse to Cantonal Social Assistance**. As proof, they may submit bank statements (assets) and/or confirmation that they have been granted a pension from their IO or that they have received severance pay.

Scale according to the Law on integration and social assistance of the canton of Geneva (in CHF, for information only)

	1 person	2 persons	Family with 1 minor child
Maintenance package	1031	1577,45	1917,70
Rent and charges	1465	1735	1925
Health insurance *	572	1144	1309
Total per month	3068	4456,45	5151,70

* Swiss basic health insurance (LAMal), average premium, with accident cover and deductible of CHF 300

How and when to apply for a permit?

Applicants must submit a motivation letter along with the appropriate form (available online) and **all the required attachments** (which are indicated on the form) to the CPO of their place of residence. It is important that the submitted application is **complete** to ensure that it is processed within a reasonable time frame. The CPOs have access to the FDFA database and can check the years during which the applicant has held a legitimization card.

Applicants must submit their application **in advance**, e.g. as soon as they learn that their contract will not be renewed. It is preferable **not to wait until the end** of the term of office or the courtesy period. However, the applicant will not be able to receive their permit **before the end of their employment**.

Once the applicant has found **a job**, it is up to the employer to submit the request (for all nationalities, including cross-border commuters).

Hardship cases (third-country nationals)

A case of hardship refers to an **exceptional individual situation** where the return of a foreign national home, even if they are not entitled to asylum, would have **extremely serious consequences** for them. The Cantonal and Federal Authorities may grant a stay permit (with or without the right to work) taking into account all the **circumstances presented**. Such applications are examined **with restraint** and the conditions must be **strictly met**.

Those concerned must submit **in advance** a reasoned application for a permit to the CPO. It is recommended that they consult **a Swiss lawyer or a Swiss association for migrants** who can assist them with the procedure.

Asylum application (third-country nationals)

Persons who are **exposed to serious prejudice** in their country of origin because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion may apply for asylum in Switzerland⁶. The application will be examined by the SEM in accordance with the **Federal legislation** in force.

⁶ <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/overview-asyl.html>

They must submit an asylum application by presenting themselves, without need of an appointment, at to a **Federal Asylum Centre** (for French-speaking Switzerland: "Centre fédéral de Boudry", rue de l'Hôpital 60, 2017 Boudry, Canton of Neuchâtel).

Competent Cantonal Authorities

The Cantonal Authorities are not in a position to provide information to each person individually. They will take a decision on the basis of a complete written application.

Canton of Geneva

Office for Population and Migration (OCPM)

Foreign Nationals Service

All information is available online (<https://www.ge.ch/organisation/ocpm-service-etrangers>)

Office of Labor Relations and Inspection) (OCIRT)

Foreign Labour Service

All information is available online (<https://www.ge.ch/organisation/ocirt-direction-main-oeuvre-etrangere-moe> / <https://www.ge.ch/embaucher-candidat-etrange>)

Canton of Vaud

Applicants must submit their application to their local authority, which will forward it to the Cantonal Authority

Population Service (SPOP)

Foreign Nationals Division

All information is available online (<https://www.vd.ch/prestation/demander-un-permis-pour-travailler-etudier-rejoindre-sa-famille-ou-vivre-dans-le-canton-de-vaud>)

Directorate General for Employment and Labour Market

All information is available online (<https://www.vd.ch/deiep/dgem>)

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