Switzerland
1. General information

Language
Switzerland has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. German is the most widely spoken language. It is spoken as a collection of dialects known as Swiss German. The number of speakers of all the Swiss national languages except French has been falling. English is becoming increasingly vital as a lingua franca between speakers of the four national languages.

Administrative settings
Switzerland is governed under a federal system at three levels: the Confederation, 26 cantons and more than 2,300 communes. The Confederation, the cantons and the communes share political and legislative powers.

Switzerland does not have an official capital city. Bern is the seat of government. It is referred to as the ‘federal capital’ and operates as the de facto capital.

Population
The resident population of Switzerland is approx. 8.5 million. The country has one of the highest proportions of foreign residents in Europe: 25% of the population. Most people live in cities and their surrounding areas.

Emergency contacts
- Emergency number: 112
- Police: 117
- Fire service: 118
- ‘Helping Hand’ counselling helpline: 143 (0.20 CHF per call)
- Ambulance: 144
- Toxicological information centre (in case of suspected poisoning): 145
- ‘Pro Juventute’ helpline for children and young people: 147
Driving licence

If you hold a valid national or international driving licence that is recognised by Switzerland, you can drive in the country all vehicles for which your driving license is valid. Foreign drivers must carry a translation of their national driving licence in French, German, Italian or English, issued by an official service (for example, the national authority in charge of issuing national driving licences, a public notary or an approved professional translator). The first name and surname of the holder should appear in Roman script.

Foreign drivers who have lived in Switzerland for more than 12 months and without interruption for more than 3 consecutive months; as well as professional drivers of certain categories of vehicles need a Swiss driving licence.

You can find more information at https://www.ch.ch/en/documents-and-register-extracts/driving-licence/exchanging-your-driving-licence

Ukrainian diaspora

A small community of approximately 7 000 Ukrainians lives in Switzerland.

Ukrainian embassy in Switzerland

Address: Feldeggweg 5, 3005 Bern, Switzerland

You can reach the embassy by phone on

- Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 15:00 to 16:00
- Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 to 11:00

General telephone number (no consular consultations): +41 (0)313522316

Consular Section: +41 (0)313522378

You can reach the embassy by email at emb_ch@mfa.gov.ua or consul_ch@mfa.gov.ua
2. Entry in Switzerland

Under normal circumstances, Ukrainian citizens can enter Switzerland only if they fulfil certain entry requirements. Since 24 February 2022 Switzerland is showing solidarity to Ukraine and will allow into the country refugees from Ukraine who do not have biometric travel document and visa. Exceptions may apply if there are compelling reasons to refuse entry in individual cases. Regarding COVID-19, no proof of vaccination, recovery or testing is currently required to enter Switzerland. You can visit https://travelcheck.admin.ch/home to learn which COVID-19 rules apply to your specific situation.

**Family reunification:** Family members seeking protection who do not require a visa (e.g. Ukrainian nationals holding a biometric passports) may enter Switzerland and apply for protection themselves. Family members seeking protection who do require a visa to enter the country should contact a Swiss diplomatic mission abroad. Spouses, persons living together in a permanent relationship, registered partners and minor children who are abroad will be able to enter Switzerland, if they have been separated by their family due to the events in Ukraine and if there are no special circumstances to refuse them entry.

If the requirements for independent entry are not met, it is possible to submit a written application for family reunification to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM: https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/kontakt.html).

You can find more information on entering Switzerland at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/aktuell/ukraine-krieg.html#2068110311
3. Temporary protection

Switzerland is not bound by the Temporary Protection Directive. However, similar rules apply based on the Swiss law on asylum.

Who is eligible for protection status?

- Ukrainian citizens seeking protection and their family members who were resident in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
- non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons seeking protection (and their family members) who had international or national protection status in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
- non-Ukrainian nationals and stateless persons (and their family members) seeking protection who can prove that they hold a valid short-term or long-term residence permit in Ukraine and cannot return to their home countries in safety and on a permanent basis.

Family members are partners, minor children and other close relatives who were fully or partially supported at the time of flight. Non-Ukrainian nationals seeking protection who can safely and permanently return to their home country are not eligible for protection status S in Switzerland. An appeal against such a negative decision can be filed with the Federal Administrative Court. Moreover, these persons are free to file an asylum application if they believe they are at risk on returning to their home country. This ensures that all persons who need protection will receive it.

You can find more information on ‘protection status S’ at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/aktuell/ukraine-krieg.html#1641582656

Where can you register to receive ‘protection status S’ in Switzerland?

The responsible body is the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). Useful information is available at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/ukraine.html

If you want to seek protection from Switzerland, you can apply for ‘protection status S’ online at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/ukraine/registerme.html. To submit an application, you need to have been a resident in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 and have already entered Switzerland.
If you have a place to stay in Switzerland and have your ID documents, you can use the link https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/ukraine/registerme.html to book an appointment for registration. The appointment will take place from Monday to Friday at the Federal Asylum Centre (FAC) in one of the following locations: Bern, Basel, Zurich, Altstätten SG, Boudry or Chiasso.

The FACs are the first points of contact for Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland and are open 24 hours a day. You will need to report directly to a FAC, without a registration appointment, in the following cases:

♦ you do not have accommodation in Switzerland;
♦ you have accommodation in Switzerland but do not have any ID documents.

For more information you can contact the dedicated service SEM ‘Helpline Ukraine’:

♦ email address: ukraine@sem.admin.ch

**Which documents do you need for registration?**

If you have a biometric passport, take it with you. If you do not have a biometric passport, you will need to show other documents or otherwise prove that you have Ukrainian citizenship, a residence permit or international or national protection status in Ukraine before 24 February 2022. If you are already living in a private accommodation in Switzerland and want to stay there, you should bring to your FAC appointment for registration a printed copy of the form Confirmation of private accommodation (PDF, 269 kB, 06.05.2022) signed by your host.

**What is the procedure to access ‘protection status S’ in Switzerland?**

You have up to 90 days to register for ‘protection status S’. You can apply online at: https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/ukraine/registerme.html. You will need to book an appointment to register at a federal asylum centre (FAC). The requirements to register are that you have already entered Switzerland.
At the registration appointment at the FAC, you will need to fill in a **written form**. Your fingerprints will be taken and you will receive free legal advice. The aim is to establish your identity and decide if you are eligible for ‘protection status S’. In certain cases, there could be a **brief interview** to clarify any questions. Legal advice is provided during the interview too.

The authorities will examine your written form. As soon as possible after the appointment, you will receive a **decision saying if you have received ‘protection status S’ or not**. If you are staying in cantonal or private accommodation, you will receive the decision by post. If you are staying at a FAC, you will be given the notification letter in person.

You will receive information on the issuing of your physical ‘S permit’ directly from your canton. This is irrespective of whether you are staying in cantonal or private accommodation.

If you are refused ‘protection status S’, you have the right to appeal against the negative decision.

**Which documents do you receive as a beneficiary of ‘protection status S’?**

You will receive an ‘S residence permit’. The permit has a maximum validity of 1 year but can be extended. As a beneficiary of ‘protection status S’, you can travel abroad and return to Switzerland without a travel permit. The entry regulations of the respective countries of entry apply. You can also work (including self-employment) without having to wait a certain period to do so.

**Duration of ‘protection status S’**

The ‘S residence permit’ is valid for 1 year and can be extended. After 5 years, if you are still in need of protection you can be granted a ‘B residence permit’. This is going to be valid until ‘protection status S’ is lifted.

‘Protection status S’ can end in any of the following situations.

- Temporary protection is terminated based on the situation in Ukraine for certain groups of persons. In this case, all affected persons who had received ‘protection status S’ will be heard by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). If there are indications of persecution, an interview will take place. If there are no indications of persecution, the SEM will issue a removal order and you will need to leave the country.
◆ ‘Protection status S’ can be revoked in certain specific cases: it had been obtained by false statements or concealment of essential facts; the person has violated the security of Switzerland, endangered it or committed reprehensible acts; the person has stayed repeatedly or for a long period of time in their home country; the person has a regular right of residence in another country.

◆ ‘Protection status S’ can expire in certain specific cases: the person has moved the centre of their life abroad; they have renounced temporary protection; they have received a permanent residence permit; they have been expelled from the country with legal effect.

Your rights as beneficiary of ‘protection status S’ in Switzerland

Your rights as beneficiary of ‘protection status S’ are the following:
◆ Residence in Switzerland
◆ Access to accommodation
◆ Access to medical insurance and accident insurance
◆ Access to social welfare assistance for those who depend on it
◆ Access to the labour market
◆ Access to education for children
◆ Travel abroad and return to Switzerland without a travel permit
◆ Family reunification

Accommodation

As part of the ‘protection status S’ procedure, the migration authority SEM will assign you accommodation in one of Switzerland’s 26 cantons. You will be placed in either a private accommodation or an official cantonal accommodation facility.

The canton where you are staying will be responsible for your accommodation and other care. This may include the payment of social assistance benefits, if necessary to cover your basic daily needs in Switzerland. The canton is responsible for many aspects of your stay in Switzerland. If you have any questions, you should contact the local cantonal authorities. Important information on what applies in each canton is available here.

As a rule, you are allocated to one of the 26 cantons in proportion to the size of their population. Therefore, you are not free to choose where to live.
You can be allocated to the same canton as your relatives or close contacts only in the following cases:

- extended nuclear family: spouses, parents and their minor children, parents and their adult children if they are seeking protection without their own families, grandparents;
- vulnerable persons with close contacts outside of the extended nuclear family, e.g. unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, serious health problems or age-related condition.

Requests for allocation with more distant relatives or close friends can only be considered if the distribution ratio can be maintained. The distribution ratio also applies to those who have arranged private accommodation by themselves. This means that you can stay in your existing private accommodation only if the distribution ratio in that canton can be maintained. Otherwise, you will be allocated to another canton which will then find new accommodation for you.

You must remain in the canton to which you have been allocated. A move to another canton will be approved in exceptional cases only. You can find more information at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/aktuell/ukraine-krieg.html#

**Travel abroad**

Persons who are granted S status may travel abroad and return to Switzerland without a travel permit. The entry regulations of the respective countries of entry apply.

Travel within the Schengen area. This is possible in principle if the trip does not exceed 90 days within a period of 180 days. Those travelling should have a valid travel document.

Travel outside the Schengen area. We recommend clarifying the entry requirements with the representation of the destination country before the planned trip abroad.

Under the following circumstances, a stay abroad may result in protection status S being rescinded:

- if the focal point of a person in need of protection’s living arrangements shifts abroad, temporary protection status in Switzerland expires
- if a person in need of protection stays in the home country or country of origin for more than 15 days per quarter, the temporary protection status in Switzerland may be revoked.

Each case is examined individually. Revocation is waived, for example, if the person has taken the trip (lasting more than 15 days per quarter) due to coercion or in preparation for definitive return to their country of origin.
Access to the labour market
You can access the labour market once you have ‘protection status S’. However, a work permit is required before starting work. If you are employed, the employer must apply for a work permit for you with the canton where you wish to work. In this process, the canton checks if the applicable wage and working conditions are respected. If you are self-employed, you must apply for the work permit yourself from the canton of the place where you work. A work permit can be granted when the financial and operational requirements for the desired activity are met. If you work from home for a foreign employer (e.g. for your previous employer from your home country) or wish to pursue your previous self-employed activity in a field that has no connection to Switzerland, you do not require a work permit.
If you have ‘protection status S’ and are looking for work, you can register with the unemployment insurance and public employment service at https://www.arbeit.swiss/secoalv/en/home.html. They will help you in finding work. You can find more information on access to the labour market at https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/sem/aktuell/ukraine-krieg.html#473855463.

Social welfare
If you have ‘protection status S’ and cannot support yourself, you can receive social welfare assistance in goods or money. Your canton is responsible for social assistance arrangements. Each canton may decide on the basis of the cantonal legislation how to support the persons with ‘protection status S’.
Social assistance is intended to secure a person’s livelihood. Consequently, persons who can fully cover their living expenses through paid work do not receive social assistance. However, if the amount they earn is not sufficient to cover living expenses, they may receive supplementary social assistance.
Support measures are available to facilitate linguistic acquisition, social and professional participation in Switzerland.
You can ask your canton for detailed information on social welfare and support measures. You can also find the most important information on what applies in each canton here.

Means of subsistence in the reception system
Anyone with ‘protection status S’ who cannot support themselves can receive assistance from the canton where they have been allocated. This support covers the basic needs of daily life in Switzerland and can take the form of non-cash benefits (accommodation, food, toiletries, clothes, and other personal expenses) and/or money.
The modalities and procedures for receiving social welfare assistance vary from canton to canton. Please request detailed information from your canton. You may find the most important information on what applies in each canton here.

**Public health**


**Medical care/medical prescriptions**
If a person in need requires immediate medical treatment even before applying for protection status S and has no health insurance, the costs will be covered by the cantons or the cantonal welfare support and emergency aid. If you have an acute medical problem, you can contact the following services:
- for life-threatening emergencies: the ambulance service at 144 or the accident and emergency unit of the nearest hospital;
- for non-life-threatening emergencies: a doctor.

Persons in need of protection submit an application for temporary protection (S status) at a federal asylum centre or via RegisterMe. If you are dependent on social welfare support, you are then retroactively registered for compulsory health insurance by the canton from the date on which the application was submitted.

Persons who are not dependent on social welfare support must fulfil the health insurance obligation independently by taking out insurance with a health insurance company within 3 months of submitting the application - with retroactive effect to the date of the application. These persons pay the premiums and co-payments themselves. Medication prescribed by a doctor and for which you have a valid prescription is generally paid by your health insurance. You can obtain your medication from a pharmacy.

During initial reception in a FAC (where you may be accommodated during the registration phase or for a short time), the migration authority SEM will provide emergency medical consultations and treatment at the FAC in case of need.
Psychosocial support

The migration authority SEM ensures that persons seeking protection who have suffered trauma and are accommodated at a FAC have access to psychological care via Medic-Help (https://www.medic-help.ch/), then to partner doctors and ultimately to psychiatrists. Once assigned to a canton, the cantonal authorities are responsible for providing this service. The cost of psychological care is covered by compulsory health insurance. You can seek detailed information from your canton. You can find the most important information on what is offered in each canton here.

Disabilities

Switzerland has enshrined the principle of equality for people with disabilities into its constitution. An anti-discrimination law has been in force since 2004. All persons residing or working in Switzerland are compulsorily insured under DI. To receive DI benefits, you must fulfil several conditions: https://www.ahv-iv.ch/p/4.01.d. Additional useful information can be found at https://www.ahv-iv.ch/p/11.01.d.

COVID-19

You have the opportunity to be vaccinated against COVID-19 with the vaccines approved in Switzerland.

If a person in need of protection has symptoms (e.g. during the registration process) indicating a coronavirus infection, or reports health problems to SEM staff or support staff, a COVID-19 test will be performed and any necessary further measures taken. Since accommodation at the 6 Federal Asylum Centres is usually short-term (a few days), and often only for registration, emergency only medical consultations and treatment are offered at the FAC. The responsibility for providing medical treatment to persons with ‘protection status S’ rests with the canton.

Vaccinations for children

Compulsory health insurance covers the cost of the recommended basic vaccinations (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis, invasive Haemophilus influenzae type b infections (severe meningitis and laryngitis), Hepatitis B, pneumococcal, measles, mumps, rubella and the additional vaccination for meningococcal). A small deductible fee is payable by the insured person.

**Mandatory veterinarian check-up for pets**

Cats and dogs brought from Ukraine may enter Switzerland in exceptional cases. On arrival to the country, they must be registered, specifying if they have been vaccinated against rabies.

To register your cat or dog, fill in the registration form and send it to petsukraine@blv.admin.ch. The veterinary office will inform you whether further measures are necessary. You can find information about the procedure at https://www.blv.admin.ch/blv/en/home/tiere/reisen-mit-heimtieren/hunde-katzen-ukraine.

Poultry, hoofed and cloven-hoofed animals cannot enter Switzerland due to the high risk on disease. Owners of these animals must contact the veterinary authorities immediately.

**Access to education**

Useful links providing information on education and vocational training in Switzerland:

- [https://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/194350](https://www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/show/194350)
- [https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/swiss-education-system](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/swiss-education-system)
- [https://edudoc.ch/record/224543/files/FAQ%20Ukraine%20EN.pdf](https://edudoc.ch/record/224543/files/FAQ%20Ukraine%20EN.pdf)
- [https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/ukraine](https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/ukraine)

Here you can download a graphic in Ukrainian of the Swiss education system.

**Childcare/nursery schools**

Childcare services are widespread in Switzerland. Nursery schools are available, along with other childcare options such as crèches and home day-care.

**Crèches**

Crèches take children from 0 to 4 years. They are usually open from 7:00 to 18.30, Monday to Friday.
Parents can enroll children by approaching the crèche directly. The demand is very high so you could be placed in a waitlist. Crèches generally prioritise children who live in the commune. You have better chances if you enrol your child in a crèche in your local area.

Family crèches also exist. In this system, children are cared for during part of the week at the home of the family crèche worker, who is employed by the crèche and authorised by the Department of Youth Protection. The rest of the time is spent at the crèche itself.

**Day-care families**

In some cantons, there is the option of foster families for children from 2 months to 12 years. Foster families (also known as ‘host families’) act as parents and are authorised by the Department of Youth.

**Child day-care at home**

Parents needing short-term day-care can use child-care services at the parent’s home for as little as two hours at a time. Longer-term day-care is also available for periods of up to 1 year.

**Primary and secondary school**

In Switzerland compulsory education generally starts at the age of 4 and lasts a total of 11 years. Children can immediately attend school free of charge after arrival in Switzerland, regardless of nationality and residence status. Compulsory education is provided by the different cantons and regulated at a cantonal level. As a result, it is structured in different ways, depending on the canton. Many cantons have developed specific concepts for targeted support of children with a refugee background. This includes measures to assess the school background of the child, specific language support, the use of individual forms of learning as well as recommendations for dealing with children with specific needs. You can contact the commune where you live for information about your child’s school education.

More details on cantonal school systems can also be found at https://www.edk.ch/en/education-system/websites-of-the-cantons?set_language=en

https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/ukraine

Here you can download a graphic in Ukrainian of the Swiss education system.
University

For admission to higher education, the admission regulations of each higher education institution apply. You can find further information at:

www.swissuniversities.ch
https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/ukraine
https://www.perspektiven-studium.ch/en/status-s/

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine decided to conduct National Multi-subject Test (NMT), the Master’s Comprehensive Test (MCT) and the Master’s Test of Educational Competence (MTEC) for admission to several Ukrainian higher education degree programs not only in Ukraine but also abroad. Applicants can find information about the entrance exams to Ukrainian higher education institutions in 2022. Detailed information about NMT, MCT, MTEC can be found in the official website of the Ukrainian Centre for Educational Quality Assessment at https://testportal.gov.ua/

Recognition of education titles

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is responsible for the recognition of many foreign diplomas, but is not the only authority. Additional information on the recognition of Ukrainian qualifications is available at https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/news/ukraine.html.

Protection against trafficking in human beings and other forms of abuse

Victims of trafficking in human beings and other forms of abuse can find protection in Switzerland. In this case, contact the authorities without hesitation:

- at the Federal Asylum Centre, contact the security or support staff;
- in the cantons: https://www.opferhilfe-schweiz.ch/de/kurzinformationen-uber-die-opferhilfe/information-auf-ukrainisch/;
- In case of emergency: police at 117; ambulance / medical service at 144.

You can find more information in Ukrainian, Russian, English.

If you need legal advice you can contact:
- free legal aid service in your canton,
- a cantonal bar association.
4. International protection

In view of the war in Ukraine, SEM has suspended the processing of pending asylum applications of Ukrainian citizens since 24 February 2022. The introduction and granting of ‘protection status S’ to Ukrainian refugees aims at not overloading the Swiss asylum system. This ensures that the asylum system continues to function and that refugees from Ukraine receive the protection they need quickly, with little bureaucracy and under a solid legal basis.

In this light, if a person fleeing the war in Ukraine applies for international protection (submits an asylum application), the asylum procedure is suspended and ‘protection status S’ is granted if the applicant belongs to the group of persons in need of protection. An ordinary asylum procedure is conducted only if a person obviously fulfils refugee status.

As soon as the Federal Council lifts the ‘protection status S’ for persons from Ukraine, asylum procedures will be carried out whenever there are indications of persecution in case of return.
# Annex I – Repository of sources

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| **Page of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) dedicated to the Ukrainian emergency.**  
**General information and FAQs** | **General information**  
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<p>| <strong>Protection status S</strong> | <strong>Online registration for ‘protection status S’</strong> | <strong><a href="https://registerme.admin.ch/">https://registerme.admin.ch/</a></strong> |</p>
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| General information on higher education | [https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/swiss-education-system](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/studying/swiss-education-system)  
Available in English, Italian, French, German |
| Specific information for refugees from Ukraine on higher education | [https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/ukraine](https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/ukraine)  
Available in English, Italian, French, German and partially in Ukrainian |
| Cantonal education departments | [https://www.edk.ch/de/bildungssystem/kantonale-schulorganisation/webseiten-kantone](https://www.edk.ch/de/bildungssystem/kantonale-schulorganisation/webseiten-kantone)  
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<tr>
<td>Language and communication</td>
<td><a href="https://www.migesplus.ch/en/topics/ukraine#ukraine-language-and-communication">https://www.migesplus.ch/en/topics/ukraine#ukraine-language-and-communication</a></td>
<td>English, Italian, French, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on public transport</td>
<td><a href="https://www.allianceswisspass.ch/ukraine">https://www.allianceswisspass.ch/ukraine</a></td>
<td>Ukrainian, English, Italian, French, German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you want to know more about Temporary Protection in a specific country</td>
<td><a href="https://whoiswho.euaa.eura.eu/temporary-protection">https://whoiswho.euaa.eura.eu/temporary-protection</a></td>
<td>Available in EN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>