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Entry visas for Switzerland

Visa requirements must be met before arrival to Switzerland.

Based on their nationality, participants attending conferences in Switzerland may require a visa to enter the Swiss territory. The list of nationalities subject to visas can be found by consulting the following link:

https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/weisungen-kreisschreiben/visa/liste1_staatsangehoerigkeit.html

Entry visas for Switzerland are primarily issued by the Swiss Embassy/Consulate responsible for the applicant's country of residence and in some cases are handled by an outsourcing center. Switzerland has agreements with certain Schengen states that allow them to issue visas on its behalf where Switzerland is not represented. If another State issues visas on behalf of Switzerland, the process and the documents required may differ. We advise participants to check with the competent Swiss representation if such agreements apply to their case. You may find the nearest Swiss Embassy or Consulate responsible for the participant's place of residence by consulting the following link:

https://www.swiss-visa.ch/register/i210_select_country_view.action

The processing time for visa applications varies and depends on local circumstances. Participants requiring an entry visa are advised to book their appointment as soon as possible (minimum 20 days but maximum 3 months before departure). All applicants need an appointment in order to submit their visa application. Please bear in mind when arranging your appointment that the visa procedure takes at least 15 days once the application has been registered. The visa examination process is only initiated once the application is registered based on a complete file. An incomplete file may lead to a visa refusal.

Please note that Switzerland applies the European Schengen regulations concerning the issuance of visas. Since October 2011, Schengen member states have introduced the Visa Information System (VIS), which is used to store the biometric data (10 fingerprints and facial image) of Schengen visa applicants. All Swiss Embassies and Consulates are connected to the VIS system. It is therefore necessary for the visa applicant to present him/herself in person to submit and register his/her biometric data. This biometric data remains valid in the VIS system for a period of 5 years. However, some categories of applicants (such as heads of states, ministers in office and their delegations) are exempted from the biometric requirements. Applicants should check with the Swiss Embassy/Consulate responsible for processing their application if they qualify for this exemption.

The list of required documents varies depending on the country of residence. Each Embassy/Consulate has its own requirements, therefore we strongly recommend participants to contact the responsible representation to inquire about its specific requirements. In general, the following documents are needed when applying for a visa:

- An application form for short stays duly filled and signed by the applicant
(The form is available on the following site:
<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/einreise/visumantragsformular.html>)
- A valid travel document (must be valid for at least 3 months after the return date and issued within the last 10 years) and a copy of it
- When needed a valid residency permit or equivalent document (e.g. exit/return visa): to ensure that the applicant is allowed to travel back to his/her country of residence.
- Two recent passport-sized photographs
- A letter of invitation from the organization based in Switzerland mentioning the applicant's first and last names (exactly the same as in the passport), purpose and duration of visit. It should also be indicated if the inviting party in Switzerland covers travel, accommodation and other costs associated with the stay
- *Note verbale* from the applicant's government (for officials only)
- A proof of health and repatriation insurance valid for the Schengen states and covering a minimum amount of 30'000 euros (for holders of ordinary passport only)
- A hotel reservation;
- A flight reservation / booking, including return flight;
- **Additional documents may be required by the Swiss Embassy / Consulate**

More general information about visas can be found by consulting the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration website: <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/einreise.html>