



Information

**for persons wishing to take up employment in Switzerland
as private household employees in the service of a staff member of an embassy, consular post,
permanent mission
or an officer of an international organisation**

**You have received an offer of employment as a private household employee in Switzerland;
please find here some advice and information.**

1. What is the applicable law?

Your working relations will be governed by Swiss employment law. The Federal Council (Swiss government) has adopted an ordinance which defines your minimum working conditions (Private Household Employees Ordinance of 6 June 2011, PHEO). Prior to arriving in Switzerland you may request a copy of the Ordinance from your future employer or from the Swiss representation in your country (www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/topics/intorg/chres/reslaw.html).

Do not hesitate to ask for information from the person dealing with your visa request at the Swiss representation. You may also ask that person to provide you with the address of your country's embassy or consulate in Switzerland.

2. Do you have an employment contract in writing?

It is compulsory for you to sign a written employment contract with your future employer. This must be based on the standard form supplied by Switzerland (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs). It is compulsory for employment contracts to be drawn up in one of the following languages: French, German, Italian, English, Spanish or Portuguese. You must have sufficient knowledge of the language used for the employment contract to understand its content.

We recommend that you read your employment contract thoroughly before you sign it. If you have any problem understanding anything in your employment contract do not hesitate to ask for an explanation from either your future employer or the Swiss representation during the course of your visa application procedure. Remember that the living conditions in Switzerland may be very different from that of your own country (costs of living, climate and social conditions, etc.).

The standard form employment contract to be used may be obtained from your future employer or from the Swiss representation authorised to issue your visa. The employment contract signed by you and your employer must be presented to the Swiss representation with your visa request.

The contract must specify the conditions of your employment. It must contain a job description, your work schedule, your days of leave, public holidays and holiday allocation, the conditions for your accommodation and food, your salary amount, the cancellation notice period of your employment contract and the notice that must be given to terminate it, whether you have social security insurance cover in Switzerland or in another country, if you have health and accident insurance cover in Switzerland or in another country, all other items to be paid by your employer, etc.

We recommend that you keep a copy of your employment contract signed by you and your employer with you in your personal belongings.

3. Is your employment contract for a fixed or indefinite term?

Your employment contract may be entered into for a fixed term, determined in advance. In this case you may not, in principle, leave your employment before the date specified in the employment contract. Nor, in principle, may the employer cancel the contract before such date.

Your employment contract may be entered into for an indefinite term. In this case it will remain valid until such time as it is cancelled. You and your employer each have the possibility to cancel your employment contract. Each of you must respect the notice periods specified in the employment contract.

4. What work will you be doing?

You will be carrying out domestic tasks in the home of your employer such as housework, cooking, childcare, ironing, laundry, waiting at table, light gardening, etc. Your employment contract must specify the sort of tasks you will be expected to carry out. You will be expected to carry out your work conscientiously and follow the instructions given to you by your employer.

5. What salary will you receive?

The Private Household Employees Ordinance prescribes the minimum salary amount to which you are entitled. Your employment contract may provide for a higher salary.

You are entitled to a minimum of:

- A monthly net salary in cash of 1,200 Swiss francs (as at 1 July 2011), paid only in Swiss francs. Your employer is not permitted to make any deductions from this amount. Your salary must be paid to you into a Swiss bank or postal account which has been opened in your sole name. Your salary must be paid to you every month or it is possible for it to be divided for the purpose of payment in weekly instalments, depending on what has been agreed upon in your employment contract.
- Your employer must provide you with healthy and adequate food in the form of three meals a day. If your employer does not provide you with this food then you are entitled to a financial allowance. The minimum amount of this allowance is specified in the required standard form employment contract.
- Your employer must provide you with accommodation within his/her home or alternative accommodation not within his/her home but in Switzerland. The accommodation provided to you must include your own individual room which you can lock, it must be furnished (bed, wardrobe, chair, table), as well as provide access to bathroom and toilet facilities and to the kitchen.

You may refuse the accommodation provided by your employer and find your own accommodation but it is compulsory for it to be in Switzerland. In this case you must pay all the costs relating to your accommodation, that is to say rent and service charges (water, gas, electricity, etc.).

If you wish to find your own accommodation, your employer must provide you with accommodation until you have found your own. When you have found your own accommodation your employer must pay you a minimum accommodation allowance of 345 Swiss francs per month (as at 1 July 2011).

We would like to bring your attention to the fact that accommodation rental in Switzerland is expensive and that you may find it difficult to find suitable accommodation at an affordable rent. You should consider the possibility that the accommodation allowance payable by your employer may not cover the entire cost of the rent and service charges of the accommodation you select.

It is advisable to take accommodation close to your employer's home so as to avoid long journeys, particularly if you have to work in the evenings. Public transport does not operate throughout the night.

- If you do not reside in your employer's home then your employer must pay the travel costs you incur between your accommodation and your employer's home (e.g. public transport travel pass).
- Your employer must pay all of your compulsory social insurance contributions (both the employee's share and the employer's share). Your employer must also ensure that you have insurance cover against risk of illness and accidents and pay all the premiums of such insurance cover as well as any participation costs payable by the insured person towards the cost of the services envisaged by Swiss law.
- Your employer must pay the travel costs of your initial journey from your country to Switzerland when you commence work, including any applicable visa costs. Your employer must also pay the travel costs of your return journey to your home country upon termination of working relations unless you have found a new employer authorised to engage you in Switzerland.
- If your employer requires you to wear special clothing for your work (e.g. a uniform), your employer must pay all costs relating to such clothing.

6. How many hours a week will you work?

You must work on a full-time basis. A working week consists of a maximum of 45 hours. If your employer does not give you enough work, you are still entitled to your full salary.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract provides further detail on the periods of rest and leave to which you are entitled.

Your employer is not permitted to prevent you from leaving his/her home outside your working hours.

You may only work for your employer. You are not permitted to work for another employer, even if it is only for a few hours and even if your employer does not give you enough work to keep you fully occupied. The sole exception is where you have been authorised by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to work for a second employer and upon the condition that the second employer is a member of a diplomatic mission, permanent mission or consular representation or an international official authorised to engage a private household employee.

If you do not comply with your obligation to work solely for your employer, your right to work in Switzerland can be withdrawn.

7. What is the situation in respect of overtime?

Your employer may ask you to work overtime. Your employer must compensate you with a period of leave or pay you for the hours you work overtime. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract explains the details relating to overtime.

You and your employer must together keep a weekly record of the hours you work. This record must be signed by you and your employer. You and your employer must each keep a copy. This record will permit you to claim your right to the compensation of leave or payment of overtime to which you are entitled in accordance with your employment contract.

8. You are entitled to days of leave.

You are entitled to a minimum of one and a half days of leave per week. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract explains the details relating to leave.

9. You are entitled to paid holiday leave.

You are entitled to a minimum of four weeks of paid holiday if you are, or are over, 20 years of age.

You are entitled to a minimum of five weeks of paid holiday:

- if you are under 20 years of age or
- after 20 years of service with the same employer or
- if you are or are over 50 years of age and after five years of service with the same employer.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract explains the details relating to holidays.

10. You are entitled to public holiday leave.

You are entitled to a minimum of eight public holidays per year. These may be the legal Swiss public holidays or days which have been specified in your employment contract. If a public holiday falls on a Sunday or coincides with the weekly day of leave specified in your employment contract then it does not have to be compensated for by a replacement day of leave. However, should you be compelled to work on a public holiday then you are entitled to receive a day's holiday in lieu the following week.

11. It is compulsory for you to have social security insurance cover.

It is compulsory for you to be registered with a social security scheme in Switzerland or abroad. Your employment contract must specify whether you will be registered with the compulsory Swiss insurance scheme or the social security scheme of a different State. Your employer will provide you with all the necessary information. Your employer must pay all contributions (for both the employee and the employer) and is not allowed to deduct them from your salary.

In the event that you are registered with the Swiss social security scheme, at the end of your stay in Switzerland you will receive a portion of the contributions made. Depending on your nationality you might not receive reimbursement of these contributions but you will receive a pension allowance in your home country when you reach retirement age. Ask your employer, when the time comes, to ask the Swiss social security office for information about the provisions for the reimbursement of contributions or the payment of a pension allowance. You can also contact the aforesaid office yourself to obtain this information.

In the event that it is possible for you to be insured with the social security scheme in the State of your employer or in your home country, you may ask to be exempted from the Swiss social security scheme. Your employer will help you to take all the necessary steps in Switzerland. If you are able to remain registered with the social security scheme of your home country, do not forget to bring with you your original insurance certificate which is essential for you to be exempted from the Swiss social security scheme.

12. It is compulsory for you to have health insurance.

It is compulsory for you to have insurance cover against the risk of illness. It is the responsibility of your employer to ensure that this insurance cover complies with Swiss legal requirements. Your employer must select the insurance in agreement with you and pay all the insurance premiums.

You must, in principle, have health insurance in Switzerland. It is however possible for you to be exempted from taking out Swiss health insurance if you are insured in another State. The insurance cover provided by the foreign insurance must be equivalent to that provided to meet the legal requirements for compulsory medical care by Swiss insurers.

In the event that you have insurance cover against the risk of illness in your own country, do not forget to bring with you your original insurance certificate which you must give to your employer to enable him/her to assist you with your request for exemption from Swiss health insurance. Your employer will pay your insurance premiums. Please check that your insurance will fully cover all medical and hospital costs during your stay in Switzerland.

13. It is compulsory for you to have accident insurance.

It is compulsory for your employer to take out accident assurance cover for you in Switzerland or in another country against the risk of accidents. Your employer will pay all the costs relating to this insurance. Should your employer insure you against accidents abroad please check that your insurance will cover you for all medical costs which could ensue following an accident during your stay in Switzerland.

14. What happens if you are unable to work due to illness or an accident?

If you fall ill or have an accident that prevents you from working, your employer will continue to pay your salary for a limited period, the length of which will depend upon how long you have been working for your employer.

If you should find yourself in this position you may obtain further information from:

- the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the Office of the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva (hereafter: "the Swiss Mission", rue de Varembé 9–11, 1211 Genève 20, tel. 058 482 24 24) if you work for a member of a permanent mission or for an international official;
- Protocol of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (hereafter: "Protocol", Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. 058 464 85 26) if you work for a member of an embassy or consulate.

15. Can you leave your job?

You are entitled to leave your job, but you must respect the notice provisions specified in your employment contract. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract explains the details relating to such notice provisions.

You must cancel your employment contract in writing. If your employer asks, you must specify, in writing the reason(s) for your resignation (e.g. because you wish to return to your home country, because you have found another job, because you are unhappy with your job etc.).

Warning: if you have signed your employment contract for a fixed term, you cannot, in principle, leave your job before the expiry date specified in your employment contract. You can however, leave your job at any time if you have just cause for leaving immediately. For this you must have serious reason(s). You can also leave your job at any time if you reach an agreement with your employer to terminate your employment contract.

16. Can your employer dismiss you?

Your employer can dismiss you, but he/she must respect the notice provisions specified in your employment contract. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract explains the details relating to such notice provisions.

The periods during which your employer may not dismiss you are specified in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs standard form employment contract.

Your employer must cancel your employment contract in writing. You are entitled to ask your employer the reasons for your dismissal in writing (e.g. because he/she has learnt that he/she must leave Switzerland to work in another country, because he/she is not satisfied with your work, because he/she can no longer afford to pay you etc.).

Warning: if you have signed your employment contract for a fixed term, your employer cannot, in principle, dismiss you before the expiry date specified in your employment contract. Your employer can, however dismiss you at any time if he/she has just cause for instant dismissal. For this he/she must have serious reason(s). You can also reach an agreement any time with your employer to terminate your employment date before its expiry date.

17. What happens if you leave your employer or if your employer dismisses you?

You may at any time look for a new employer in Switzerland. You have a two month period following the termination of working relations in which to find a new job with an employer who holds a Federal Department of Foreign Affairs legitimization card B, C, D, K pink or K blue. If you do not find a new employer authorised to engage you, you must leave Switzerland and your employer must pay the travel costs for your return journey to your home country.

You can find out in advance who is authorised to engage you from:

- the Swiss Mission (Rue de Varembe 9-11, 1211 Genève 20, tel. 058 482 24 24) or
- Protocol (Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. 058 464 85 26).

In order to find a new employer authorised to engage you, you can contact the Geneva Welcome Center (Centre d'accueil – Genève internationale) (hereafter: CAGI, route de Ferney 106, 1211 Genève 20, tel. 022 546 14 00). The CAGI manages an employment exchange which compiles a list of offers of employment from employers looking for private household employees and offers of services for private household employees looking for a new employer.

18. You do not have to pay tax in Switzerland on your salary.

19. What authorisation will you receive to stay in Switzerland?

Upon your arrival in Switzerland, an officer of the Swiss Mission or Protocol will personally give you a Federal Department of Foreign Affairs legitimisation card. This card will authorise you to legally reside and work in Switzerland for your employer. This card will be your authorisation to stay in Switzerland and you must keep it with you at all times.

This legitimisation card does not authorise you to work for another employer, unless Protocol or the Swiss Mission has authorised you to work for a second employer, who is a member of an embassy, consular post, permanent mission or international organisation (the holder of a legitimisation card B, C, D, K pink or K blue). You may not work in the ordinary Swiss employment market even, for example, for a few hours a week in a private household. Please refer to the conditions for changing employer set out above.

Your employer must tell you when you should present yourself to the Swiss Mission or Protocol to receive your legitimisation card. On this occasion you should take the opportunity to ask all the questions that you want about your work and life in Switzerland.

You should always keep possession of your personal documents such as your passport, your legitimisation card, your bank card, your copy of your employment contract, etc. Your employer is not permitted to take them from you.

20. Information about the cost of living in Switzerland (indicative)

To give you an idea of the cost of living in Switzerland and to enable you to determine whether the salary conditions proposed to you by your employer seem adequate to you, please find set out below some indications of average prices in Swiss francs (CHF) as found in the shops at this time (it is, of course, possible to buy these items at lower prices):

▪ Beer (restaurant)	approx. CHF 3.50
▪ Cinema ticket	CHF 18.--
▪ Coffee/tea (restaurant)	from CHF 3.-- to 4.90
▪ Shoes (supermarket)	from CHF 50.-- to CHF 300.--
▪ Cigarettes (pack of 20)	CHF 7.--
▪ Coca-Cola (restaurant)	CHF 3.50 to CHF 4.50
▪ Hair cut (hairdresser)	approx. CHF 50.--
▪ Toothpaste (supermarket)	from CHF 3.-- to CHF 5.--
▪ Photo developing	from CHF 0.65 to CHF 1.40 (per item)
▪ Seasonal fruit (supermarket)	from CHF 2.50 to CHF 4.--
▪ Jeans (supermarket)	from CHF 50.-- to CHF 150.--
▪ Foreign daily newspaper	from CHF 3.-- to CHF 5.--
▪ Local daily newspaper	from CHF 3.-- to CHF 4.--
▪ Skirt/Dress (supermarket)	from CHF 50.-- to CHF 300.--
▪ Women's magazine	from CHF 5.-- to CHF 8.--
▪ Winter coat (supermarket)	from CHF 150.-- to CHF 500.--
▪ Pizza (restaurant)	from CHF 13.50 to CHF 22.--
▪ Dish of the day (restaurant)	from CHF 15.50 to CHF 22.--
▪ Shower product (supermarket)	from CHF 4.-- to CHF 7.--
▪ Fast food meal	from CHF 10.-- to CHF 20.--
▪ Sandwich (bakery)	from CHF 4.-- to CHF 8.--
▪ Bus ticket	from CHF 1.60 to CHF 2.60
▪ T-Shirt (supermarket)	from CHF 10.-- to CHF 40.--

If you wish to send money to your family, do not forget to retain a little for your own purchases in Switzerland.

21. Who can you go to for help if you have problems in Switzerland?

- To the embassy or consulate of your country in Switzerland. We recommend that you make sure you know the address of your embassy or consulate before you leave for Switzerland. The addresses of all the foreign embassies and consulates in Switzerland are available on the internet: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs/forrep.html>.
- In the event of problems concerning your stay in Switzerland or with your employer, if you work for a member of a permanent mission or for an international official you may go to the Swiss Mission (rue de Varembe 9-11, 1211 Genève 20, tel. 058 482 24 24). The Swiss Mission will inform you which individuals or institutions can assist you.
- In the event of problems concerning your stay in Switzerland or with your employer, if you work for a member of an embassy or a consulate you may go to Protocol (Bundesgasse 32, 3003 Bern, tel. 058 464 85 26). Protocol will inform you which individuals or institutions can assist you.
- If you reside in the Geneva area and you need practical information on living in Geneva (e.g. the address of a doctor, a church, lessons in French, etc.), you can go to CAGI (route de Ferney 106, 1211 Genève 20, tel. 022 546 14 00).
- In emergency situations the nearest police station (tel. 117).

Do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it.
