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Swiss Confederation

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Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP
Staatssekretariat für Migration SEM
Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations SEM
State Secretariat for Migration SEM



Brief overview

Persons in need of protection – Status S

english/anglais/inglese

Welcome to Switzerland!

You have been granted protection status S in Switzerland. This brochure informs you about the special rules that apply to your status.

You will probably be living in Switzerland for some time. It is therefore important that you settle in and become integrated as quickly as possible. That includes familiarising yourself with your rights and obligations, looking for a job, or finding out about education and vocational training. This brochure provides you with general information about the special rules that apply to your status and with links to further information and contact addresses.

State Secretariat for Migration SEM

www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/publikationen.html

This brochure is available in electronic form in the following languages: German, French, Italian, English, Ukrainian and Russian

Persons in need of protection

— Status S

Under Article 4 of the Asylum Act (Asyla), any person who is subject to a serious general danger, particularly during a war or civil war or in situations of general violence, is in need of protection.

Legal bases

The legal status of persons in need of protection is governed by Art. 66 ff. Asyla. The relevant legislation is available in German, French, Italian and English under the following link:

www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/358/en

Identity document

Persons in need of protection are issued with a credit-card-sized non-biometric S permit which is purplish-blue in colour. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) may also issue a paper version of this identity document with a light blue protective cover. The identity document is valid for a maximum of one year and may be renewed if the holder still requires protection or until the Federal Council lifts the S status. If the Federal Council has not lifted the provisional protection status after five years, the person in need of protection receives a B residence permit from their canton of residence, which remains valid until protection is lifted.

Requirements for granting status S

Status S may be granted to three categories of persons:

1. Ukrainian citizens seeking protection and their family members (partners, minor children and other close relatives whom they were fully or partially supporting at the time of leaving Ukraine) who were residing in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
2. Persons of other nationalities and stateless persons seeking protection and their family members as defined in letter a who held international or national protection status in Ukraine before 24 February 2022;
3. Persons of other nationalities and stateless persons seeking protection and their family members as defined in letter a who can prove by means of a valid short-term residence permit or residence permit that they have a valid right of residence in Ukraine and cannot return to their home country in safety or on a permanent basis.

The decision on granting status S is either given in writing during registration in one of the six federal asylum centres or is sent by post at a later date.

Withdrawal of status S

SEM may revoke the S status of persons who have fled Ukraine if they return to their country for more than 15 days per quarter. SEM may waive the revocation if the person can prove that their stay in the country was in preparation for their definitive return. Status S will also be revoked if a person moves their place of residence to a third country and obtains a legal right of residence there ([Art. 78 para. 1 let. d AsylA](#)).

In addition, SEM will revoke status S if it has been fraudulently obtained by making false statements or by concealing essential facts, or if the person in need of protection has violated or endangered Switzerland's internal or external security, or is guilty of serious misconduct.

If a person has resided repeatedly for an extended period in their native country or country of origin since being granted temporary protection, or if they have a legal residence permit issued by a third country to which they can return, SEM may also revoke temporary protection status ([Art. 78 AsylA](#)).

Protection status S is valid for as long as the Federal Council considers that Ukrainian nationals are subject to a serious general danger ([Art. 4 AsylA](#)). When the Federal Council deems that the security situation allows for a return, it will lift protection status S and decide on an appropriate return period.

Place of residence

SEM allocates housing to persons in need of protection in one of the 26 Swiss cantons. This can be either accommodation provided by the canton or accommodation in a private household. SEM decides on the canton of allocation on the day of registration in one of the six federal asylum centres and informs the person directly. Those who cannot proceed to the allocated accommodation on the same day are temporarily accommodated in a federal asylum centre.

Allocation to the cantons is based on a distribution ratio, as is used for asylum seekers. Each canton receives a number of persons in need of protection in proportion to its population. This forms the basis of SEM's decision on allocation.

The distribution ratio also applies, in principle, to persons who have found their own private accommodation. For this reason, private accommodation is only permitted if it is compatible with the distribution ratio. If this is not the case, the person will be assigned to a new canton, which will find them appropriate accommodation.

Information for tenants (also available in Ukrainian and Russian):

[Brochure in 19 languages](#)

Change of canton

Persons in need of protection must apply to SEM if they wish to change canton. Reasons for a change of canton include the following:

- the reunification of close family members;
- the reunification of vulnerable persons with close contacts other than family members if this ensures better care arrangements;
- employment or vocational education and training.

The latter case only applies if the journey is particularly long (at least two hours each way) or if the working hours are unreasonable. The request to change cantons may be submitted if the employment relationship has existed for at least 12 months. In addition, a change of canton is only possible if the person concerned or their family members are not receiving social welfare benefits.

SEM requires the consent of both cantons concerned for a change of canton for the following reasons: moving to suitable private accommodation; moving to live with distant relatives or acquaintances; moving because of gainful employment or vocational education and training in another cantons.

Travel abroad

In principle, persons in need of protection who have a valid travel document from their home country or country of origin recognised by Switzerland must have a return visa for Switzerland for travel abroad ([Art. 7 TDocO](#)).

However, persons who obtain status S under the Federal Council's decision of 11 March 2022 may travel abroad and return to Switzerland without a travel permit if they have a valid passport ([Art. 9 para. 8 TDocO](#)). The entry regulations of the respective countries apply.

Ukrainian nationals holding a valid biometric passport may travel in the Schengen area without a visa for 90 days within a period of 180 days. SEM recommends that they contact the Swiss representations of the countries they wish to visit in advance to find out about the entry requirements. The S residence permit alone does not constitute a valid travel document.

Ukrainians who do not hold a biometric passport and other third country nationals are advised to contact the consulates or embassies of the countries they intend to visit to clarify entry requirements before travelling abroad.

For travel outside the Schengen area, it is advisable to contact the representations of the countries concerned in advance to clarify entry requirements.

Provisional protection may be revoked if the person with status S has stayed in their home country or country of origin for an extended period or repeatedly since provisional protection was granted ([Art. 78 para. 1 let. c AsylA](#)). SEM may revoke their S permit if they stay there for more than 15 days per quarter (see chapter on 'Withdrawal of status S').

Family reunification and family asylum

Family reunification of persons in need of protection

The family members of persons in need of protection who are abroad may enter Switzerland if they submit a written application to SEM. Family members include ([Art. 71 para. 1 AsyIA](#)):

- spouses;
- persons living together in a permanent relationship;
- registered partners;
- minor children.

Entry to Switzerland will be granted under the following three conditions:

- the family has been separated owing to the events in Ukraine;
- they wish to reunite;
- there are no particular reasons for them not to enter Switzerland.

Integration

Participation in social and economic life

People with status S should be able to participate in the social and economic life of Switzerland. To this end, it is important that they obtain the relevant information, make efforts to learn the local language and find a job. The aim of participating in the social and economic life of Switzerland is to ensure that the Swiss and foreign populations live together according to the values of the Federal Constitution and in mutual respect and tolerance.

Information on cantonal integration programmes (in German, French and Italian):

www.kip-pic.ch/fr/

For information on promoting integration (in English, German, French and Italian):

[www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/integration-einbuengerung/
integrationsfoerderung.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/integration-einbuengerung/integrationsfoerderung.html)

Promoting integration

Support measures – Program S

Many public and private institutions offer courses and support programmes to help foreigners become integrated in Switzerland. Advice and information are available from the integration advice centres and cantonal integration services.

Integration services in the towns and cantons (German, French and Italian):
www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_ansprechstellen.html

The Confederation has launched the 'Support measures for persons with protection status S' programme ('S Programme' for short) to enable them to find a job and participate in social life quickly. It particularly wants to encourage them to acquire language skills. The programme offers people in need of protection help in accessing language courses, the labour market and support services for children and families.

Education and vocational training

The children of persons in need of protection attend school like all children in Switzerland. Schooling is compulsory and free for all children who live in Switzerland for a certain period of time.

Compulsory schooling, including kindergarten, lasts eleven years and starts at the age of four. After that, young people can opt for an apprenticeship, which is unique to Switzerland and provides young people with the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to learn a vocation through paid training. Training consists of a theoretical part (in a training institute) and a practical part (in a company). Following the successful completion of an apprenticeship, young people who wish to do so can go on to study at a college or university.

In principle, young people have access to all secondary and higher education services. However, various formal admission requirements exist.

Information on education and vocational training is available from the cantons and the communes.

Information on apprenticeships (in German, French, Italian and Romansh):

[Apprenticeships](#)

For more information on schooling (in French only) and vocational training (in English, German, French and Italian):

www.ch.ch/fr/ecole-et-formation/ecole-obligatoire/

www.formationprof.ch/dyn/21307.aspx

Further training

In Switzerland, foreigners have to meet high requirements with respect to their language and professional skills. Migrants' qualifications often do not match those sought by companies, or their diplomas are not recognised in Switzerland. A wide range of specific services as well as language and further training courses facilitate integration into the labour market. Advice and information are available from integration advice centres and cantonal career guidance services.

Contact details of cantonal vocational, academic and career guidance services (in German, French and Italian):

www.orientation.ch/dyn/show/8242?lang=fr

Employment

Work and financial independence are important factors for participating in society. Persons in need of protection are therefore encouraged to find a job.

Persons with status S may work as soon as temporary protection is granted. Before starting a job, they must obtain a work permit from the relevant cantonal authority. Gainful employment is governed by the Asylum Act ([Art. 75 AsylA](#)) and the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA). The cantonal authorities monitor compliance with the following conditions ([Art. 53 Ordinance on Admission, Period of Stay and Employment OASA](#)):

- a. the employer submits an application for a work permit;
- b. the salary and employment conditions customary for the location, profession and sector are met ([Art. 22 FNIA](#)) and correspond to the person's qualifications and the job profile.

Persons with status S are also allowed to be self-employed ([Art. 53 para. 2 OASA](#)) if they have a work permit from the relevant cantonal authorities. The cantonal authorities monitor compliance with the following conditions:

- c. the financial requirements for running a business are met ([Art. 19 let. b FNIA](#));
- d. the person has an adequate and independent source of income ([Art. 19 let. c FNIA](#)).

It is possible to work anywhere in Switzerland.

Information on looking for work (in English, German, French and Italian):
www.arbeit.swiss/secoalv/en/home.html

Information for employees (in English, German, French and Italian):
www.ch.ch/en/work

Healthcare

Basic health insurance is compulsory for everyone living in Switzerland. Persons in need of protection must take out health insurance as soon as they apply for protection status S.

- Persons with status S who are dependent on social welfare support are retroactively registered (i.e. from the date on which they submitted their application for status S) for compulsory health insurance by the canton to which they are allocated. The cost to the cantons of premiums and co-payments (deductibles and retention fees) are subsidised by the federal government.
- Persons who are not dependent on social welfare support must pay the premiums and contributions themselves. Health insurance also guarantees accident coverage. If the person starts working, the employer will take out accident insurance.

If a person in need of protection requires immediate medical treatment before applying for status S and has no health insurance, the costs will be covered by the cantons or the cantonal welfare support and emergency fund.

Note: Ukrainian health insurance does not cover medical treatment in Switzerland.

The Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) provides information in several languages on the prevention and treatment of physical and mental illness (in English, German, French or Italian):

www.migesplus.ch/en

Many people who have experienced war and have fled their country suffer from psychological problems such as anxiety or sleep disorders. In Switzerland, help is available for those affected at the following addresses:

Swiss Red Cross (in German and French):

[Service ambulatoire pour victimes de la torture et de la guerre \(redcross.ch\)](http://Service.ambulatoire.pour.victimes.de.la.torture.et.de.la.guerre.redcross.ch)

List of services under the R Programme (German):

www.sem.admin.ch/dam/sem/de/data/integration/ausschreibungen/2022-programm-r/unterstuetzte-projekte-programm-r.pdf.download.pdf/

unterstuetzte-projekte-programm-r.pdf

Social security

Switzerland has a network of social security schemes which provide those insured (living or working in Switzerland) with cover against the financial consequences of certain situations, in particular unemployment, disability, old age, death and maternity/paternity. Insurance benefits are financed primarily through contributions (mainly from earned income) or premiums.

Further information on who is entitled to social security is available here (in English, German, French and Italian):

www.ahv-iv.ch/en/Leaflets-forms/Leaflets

In order to qualify for unemployment benefits, it is necessary to have worked as an employee for at least 12 months over the last two years (exceptions exist). It is then possible to receive these benefits for a maximum of 2 years.

For more information on social security (in English, German, French and Italian):

www.bsv.admin.ch/bsv/fr/home/assurances-sociales/ueberblick.html

How and where to register for unemployment benefits in Switzerland (in English, German, French and Italian):

www.ch.ch/en/work/unemployment

Other types of insurance (in English, German, French and Italian):

www.ch.ch/en

Taxes

Persons in need of protection must pay taxes in Switzerland.

They are taxed at source on the income from their employment as an employee, which means that taxes are automatically deducted from their earnings ([Art. 83 to 110 of the Federal Act on Direct Federal Taxation](#)). The amount of tax can vary from canton to canton.

Social welfare assistance

Social welfare assistance is financed by tax revenues. The amount a person receives may vary from canton to canton.

Persons in need of protection who are unable to support themselves receive social welfare assistance from the canton to which they are allocated. Social welfare assistance covers the basic needs of daily life in Switzerland. It may be paid in the form of benefits in kind (accommodation, food, toiletries, etc.) or in cash. The canton is responsible for organising it.

More information is available at:

[Home - CDAS \(sodk.ch\)](#) (German and French)

[www.skos.ch](#) (German, French and Italian)

All those who are capable of working are expected to support themselves and their families.

Important addresses

Cantonal immigration and employment market authorities:

www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/adressen_kantone_und.html

Cantonal naturalisation authorities:

www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_einbuengerungsbehoerden.html

Cantonal authorities responsible for registration procedures:

www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/Adressen_Meldeverfahren.html

Contact address for integration in the cantons and towns:

www.sem.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/ueberuns/kontakt/kantonale_behoerden/kantonale_ansprechstellen.html

Other useful links:

Information about life in Switzerland:

www.ch.ch/en/

State Secretariat for Migration SEM:

www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home.html

Federal Commission on Migration FCM:

www.ekm.admin.ch/ekm/en/home.html

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