

# Job matters

## 1. General information

In order to have an employment contract in Switzerland, you **MUST** have a work permit. A work permit and a work contract go hand in hand. They are inseparable entities. Work permit applications are processed by the company employing you.

When applying for a job, follow the strict guidelines indicated in the ad (refer to [www.jobs.ch](http://www.jobs.ch), select **tips** then **applications** for a complete guideline on how to apply for jobs in Switzerland).

Do not be surprised when job ads request a photo, or specify an age limit. This is culturally acceptable in Switzerland.

Always provide proof of all the required diplomas/certificates and previous employment along with your CV and a letter of application.

If you do not already have a work permit and apply from abroad, send your applications directly to companies located in Switzerland. Otherwise apply in your country of origin through international placement agencies working with international companies whose headquarters are in Switzerland. Swiss based recruitment agencies will only place candidates already in possession of the appropriate work permit, although for EU citizens, the bilateral agreements can make that rule a bit more flexible.

In order to start working within your new company in Switzerland, you must have your Assurance for a residence permit (**Zusicherung der Aufenthaltsbewilligung**). Wait until your future HR department tells you that you have been granted a work permit, especially if you belong to the category of citizens under immigration quotas in Switzerland. Before resigning from your current position, make sure all the legal immigration paperwork is valid. (Refer to *Arrival Check List* chapter for more information).

*Note: Expat packages depend on the employer and can be quite generous depending on your industry and your seniority level. Special allowances such as relocation, temporary accommodation, health insurance, daycare/schools for your family, and extra holidays may be granted. Although even if it looks very appealing and will make your life easier to start the integration process, make sure you know what happens, and what is covered in case of redundancy.*

Average weekly working hours is approximately 42 hours. More is expected from management/board level staff. Catering and hospital staff can be asked to work many more hours a week.

Employees are entitled to 4 weeks holiday per year (5 if you are under 20).

Swiss law does not stipulate a minimum wage.

For more information on maternity leave, please refer to the *Before and after birth* chapter.

For information on work contracts and all legal matters on working conditions under Swiss Labor Law, please visit the following websites (English version available):

 [www.seco.admin.ch](http://www.seco.admin.ch)

 [www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch)


Relocation to a new country is based mainly on a working contract for 1 family member. This can change the household dynamics and can take time for the other family members to adjust to a new life. As a spouse or partner, be prepared to accept the challenge of putting on hold a personal career even if the topic has been discussed before.


Here are some helpful tips to make the transition easier for everyone:

- **Volunteer work.** Helps in getting to know people, integrating within the local community and gives the opportunity to do something meaningful.
- **Going back to study.** Check the Open University's website [www.open.ac.uk](http://www.open.ac.uk) or check in your country of origin for distance learning courses or refer to the *School and education* chapter, *Language courses* section to select a language class.
- **Offer your services,** such as giving English classes, set up a network with common interests, artwork, sports, book clubs and other ideas that could help you meet more people.

Check with your future employer or the relocation company if they have other tips or specialized consultants for your situation.

Tip: find out more about support and ideas for working Moms or international Moms in Switzerland from the following websites:

 [www.familienservice.ch](http://www.familienservice.ch)

 [www.mamizeit.com](http://www.mamizeit.com)

 [www.spousecareercentre.com](http://www.spousecareercentre.com) (for more details, please refer to Section 4d of this chapter)

## 2. Work permits

We are by no means work contract specialists. This is for information purposes only and is subject to change, as the Swiss immigration laws tend to adapt to domestic economic situations.

### The 3-Step Model, success to relocate happily



In order to give a lived-in example of what relocating to a new country can trigger, we asked Désirée Steinmann of Steinmann International (Coach for individuals and companies. She specializes in expatriation situations) to present us with a case study. This article describes a family moving to a new country and the different feelings and behavior incurred by it.

In my work as an Expatriate-Coach, I get to work with both the working partner who has been offered a job in another country, as well as with their accompanying partner. This duality translates into both business coaching and life coaching. For both scenarios, we work with the 3 step model 1-2-Change to aim for clarity, ownership and action. In this case study about change through the eyes of an expatriate family, I will introduce Karen and Mike to you, clients of mine, who relocated from the US to Germany and underwent the transitioning process. Everything we will explore now within their experience also applies to other change-situations such as starting a new business, thinking about a career change, or managing a huge change process within the corporate environment. So, while reading this story, compare Karen's and Mike's insights to your own situation and aim for clarity, ownership and action.

It all started with the job proposal for Mike to climb up another step on the career ladder and his acceptance of a senior management position in Germany. He was proud and excited to get such a chance and living abroad sounded interesting and thrilling. Though it had been initiated by the company, it felt self-initiated to Mike, since he had been working toward this

Immigration laws and agreements divide, in general, the world population into 3 categories:

- Citizens of the European Union (EU)
- Citizens of the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand
- Citizens of the rest of the world

Since 2002 the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU have been putting together an agenda in order to reach free movement of persons:

- **EU citizens:** On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2002, the Bilateral Agreements between Switzerland and the European Union on the free movement of persons came into being and have been developing in parallel with the

assignment for a long time. However, Karen instead responded to this opportunity with more resistance and fear. She had to give up her job, leave her well-built social structure, and deal with the unknown of a foreign country. But as Mike was all up for it and ready to take it on, she supported him in this decision and they got all ready to move.

The company took care of the move and Mike went earlier to Germany to get started before Karen followed. Thus, he had more time to dedicate to the new job at the beginning. In contrast, Karen was back at home in the U.S. and feeling left out. She had no control over the move and didn't even know who was in charge, since all the communication went through Mike, the employee. Mike was very busy and with the time difference, just managed a quick call each day to say "hi" to Karen and to tell her what was happening there. Then Karen also moved to Germany with all the best intentions and positive thinking, but still hesitant and wondering what it was going to be like.

#### What kind of emotions did they both go through the first few weeks?

**Mike:** first he was excited and energized, then he felt pressure to adapt quickly, the need to gain respect, prove himself, all the while feeling like an outsider, less competent, a learner instead of a leader, stress at home, cultural awareness and some hesitance since it was more difficult and different than he had expected.

**Karen:** felt overwhelmed, out of control (as she was not involved in the move), uprooted, disconnected, a victim of the situation - even that she agreed to come along, frustrated and depressed, incompetent and got very angry and resentful towards Mike, who had gotten her into this situation.