

## Country Profile: Switzerland



(Matterhorn)

**Switzerland lies at the heart of Europe** and occupies a total area of 41,285 km<sup>2</sup>. The productive area (urban and agricultural areas - without water, mountains or unproductive vegetation areas) comprises 30'753 km<sup>2</sup>. Influenced by mountains and hills, rivers and lakes, the land offers in a small area - 220 km from north to south and 348 km from west to east - a wide variety of landscapes.

Not only are there **multiple language and cultural areas** in Switzerland, it is also an important watershed. So there are 3 rivers find their way into three different seas: so leads, for example the Rhine to the North Sea, the Rhone to the Mediterranean and the Inn at the Black Sea.

A couple of numbers from 2012:

**Resident permanent population: 8.039 Mio**

Resident population (older than 15 years): 6'662'333

Swiss citizens: 5'157'999

EU/EFTA citizens: 996'898

Employed persons, 3rd Qtr 2013: 4.844 Mio

Women 45.3%

Foreigners 29.7%

Part-time 34.4%

Self-employed 8.3%

Normal working week, 2012; 41.7 hours

Full-time employed (90-100%) 2'928'116

In 2006 Swiss population worked in the following sectors:

agricultural sector	3.8%
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Manufacturing sector	23.0%
Services sector	73.2%

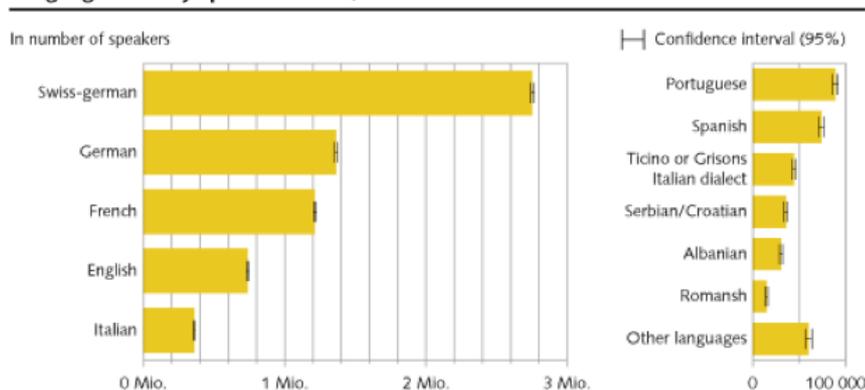
Switzerland comprises **four main linguistic and cultural regions**: German, French, Italian and the Romansh-speaking valleys. Therefore the Swiss, although predominantly German-speaking, do not form a nation in the sense of a common ethnic or linguistic identity; rather, the strong sense of identity and **community is founded on a common historical background, shared values such as federalism and direct democracy.**

Resident population in these 4 areas (2012):

German speaking region	4'760'432
French speaking region	1'579'240
Italian speaking region	300'955
Romansh speaking region	21'706

The most used language in Switzerland Swiss-german, a German dialect:

**Languages usually spoken at work, 2012**



Employed persons, persons interviewed could indicate more than one language.

Source: FSO – Structural survey (SS)

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At work Swiss German is the most widely spoken language (66,2% of employed persons), followed by German (32,8%), French (29,1%), then English (17,7%) and Italian (8,7%).

Switzerland is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-confessional nation shaped by the will of its people. It has been a federal State since 1848. Switzerland has a **federal structure with three different political levels**: the Confederation, the cantons and the communes.

The Federal Charter from early August 1291 is Switzerland's oldest constitutional document. In this ancient pact, the valley communities of Central Switzerland, Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden pledged to help each other resist any threat of violence or injustice. Foreign judges were not to be tolerated, while the existing power balance remained intact.

Switzerland is also the birthplace of the Red Cross and home to a large number of international organizations, including the second largest UN office. On the European level, it is a founding member of the European Free Trade Association and is part of the Schengen Area – although it is notably not a member of the European Union, nor the European Economic Area.

The first university in Switzerland was founded in 1460 in Basel (with a faculty of medicine) and has a tradition of chemical and medical research in Switzerland.

The Swiss economy is characterised by a skilled and generally 'peaceful' workforce. One quarter of the country's full-time workers are unionised. Labour and management relations are amicable, characterised by a willingness to settle disputes instead of resorting to labour action. They take place between trade unions and branch associations, that are themselves often grouped in Union of Employers. About 600 collective bargaining agreements exist today in Switzerland and are regularly renewed without major problems.

### Legislation - generally

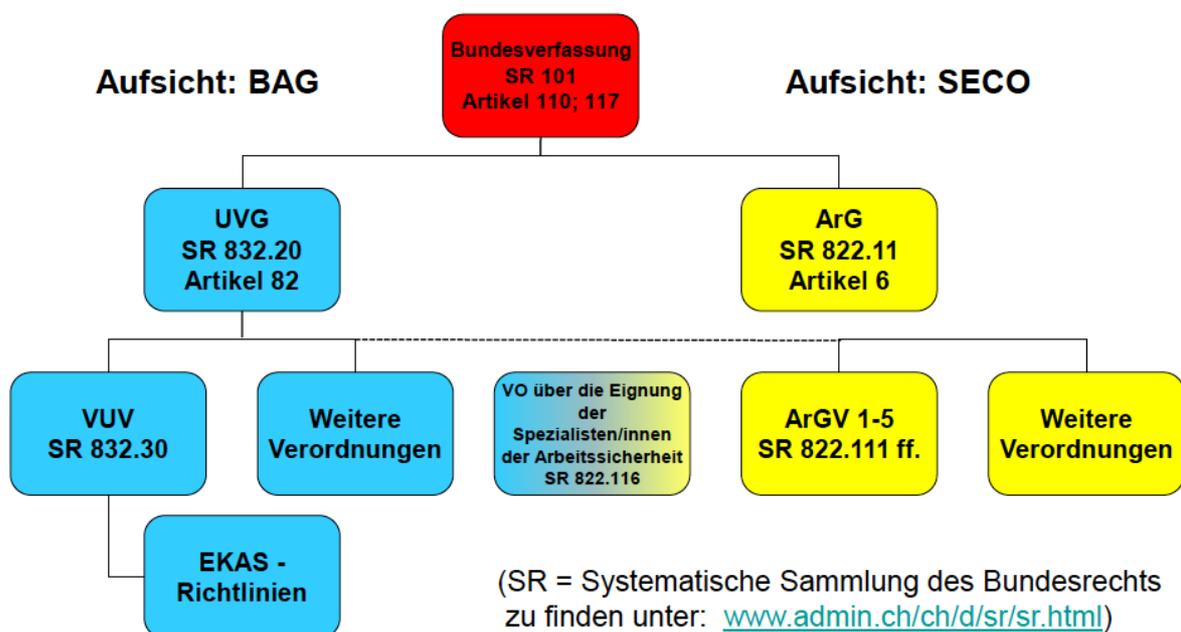
The Federal Constitution adopted in 1848 is the legal foundation of the modern federal state. It is among the oldest constitutions in the world. It outlines basic and political rights of individuals and citizen participation in public affairs, divides the powers between the Confederation and the cantons and defines federal jurisdiction and authority. There are three main governing bodies on the federal level: the bicameral parliament (legislative), the Federal Council (executive) and the Federal Court (judiciary).

### Occupational safety and health legislation

In Switzerland there are two main laws governing OSH.

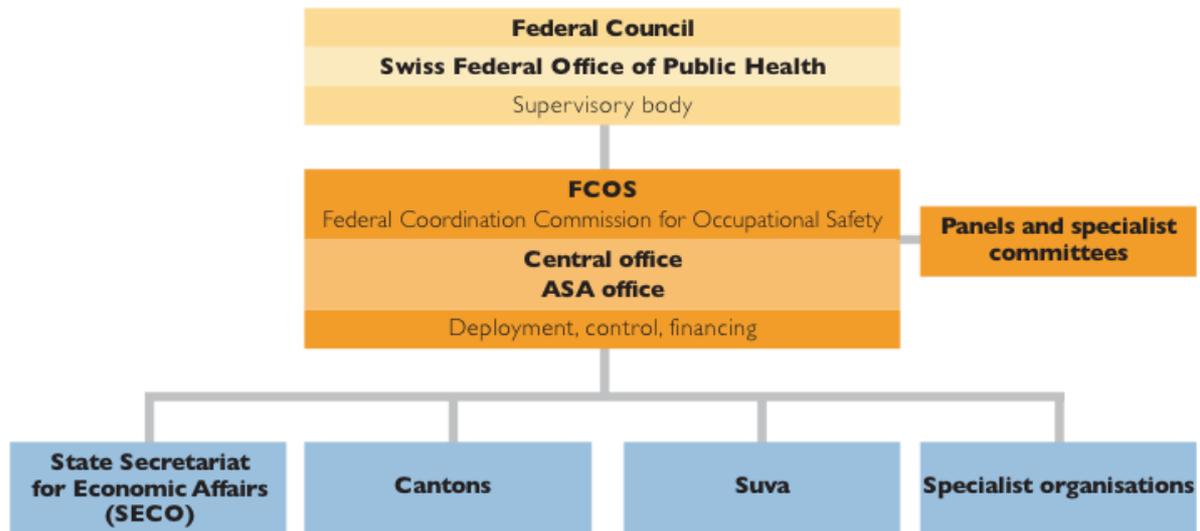
- The Accident Insurance Law covers the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases which are caused almost entirely by work.
- The Labour Law covers work hours, health protection, workplace building standards and the protection of personal integrity.

## Arbeitnehmerschutz in der Schweiz



(EKAS-Referat Gesetzliche Grundlagen)

The cantonal labour inspectorates, SUVA (main accident insurance authority) and the State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) enforce the laws. A coordination commission (FCOS: Federal Coordination Commission for Occupational Safety) oversees and finances the inspection system for accident prevention.



(ekas\_portrait-oct.2006\_e, page 5)

The social partners (employers, employees, FOPH, seco, suva, private insurers) are represented on the FCOS and in the Federal Labour Commission, which develops the general health protection laws.

The legislators have stipulated that the Federal Council sets out the areas of supervision of the executive organs. It is FCOS' task to regulate the details and cooperation in practice.

The Federal Council has given Suva the mandate to supervise and advise in matters relating to the prevention of occupational accidents in companies with special operating hazards (about 1.3 million employees) and relating to a range of complex technical machines and appliances. In Switzerland - due to the federalism - every canton has his own independent cantonal labour inspectorate. So there are 26 cantonal labour inspectorates that are responsible for advising and supervising the other companies (about 2.3 million employees). A special regulation was worked out for SECO. The specialist organisations monitor compliance with accident prevention regulations in their specialist fields according to special contracts that they conclude with Suva and are authorised by FCOS.

With regard to the prevention of occupational diseases, the Federal Council has given sole responsibility to Suva.

In Switzerland OSH specialists must be consulted by companies with higher accident risks and more than 10 employees.

Occupational safety specialists are organised in special societies

- suissepro (umbrella organisation)
- Swiss Society for Occupational Safety (SGAS)
- Swiss Society for Occupational Hygiene (SGAH)
- Swiss Society of Occupational Medicine (SSOM)
- Swiss Ergonomics Association (SwissErgo)
- Study group for health protection in industry, services and trade (SGIG)
- Groupement Romand de Médecine, d'Hygiène et de Sécurité au Travail (GRMST)
- Threshold value committee (GWK)

Members of Swiss Society for Occupational Safety (SGAS):

People, promoting and professionally dealing with Health and Safety at the workplace.

These are in particular:

- Safety Officers within Executive Boards
- Safety Advisors or Representatives
- Safety Engineers
- Safety Experts
- Safety Assistants
- Safety Co-ordinators

Currently over 1150 Experts from all over Switzerland and abroad nearby the border are member of SGAS!