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In all of these cases, Swiss citizens have the right to live and work in the EU. The same, of course, applies to EU citizens in Switzerland. The basis for this is provided by the bilateral agree-





ment between Switzerland and the EU on the free movement of persons. As well as equal access to the labour and housing markets, the agreement also covers practical issues of moving abroad, such as the relocation of families, coordination between social insurance schemes and recognition of professional qualifications.

#### **TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS FOR SWISS CITIZENS IN EU COUNTRIES**

The free movement of persons is being introduced gradually. This means that certain restrictions currently apply for a transitional period with regard to the opening up of the employment markets.

■ There are essentially no longer any special provisions for Swiss citizens in the EU (excluding Bulgaria and Romania). Some countries that joined the EU in 2004 (EU-10) are exceptions to this. These apply transitional provisions for Swiss citizens with regard to the acquisition of property and second homes. Before moving to a country in the EU-10, we recommend that information be obtained on the relevant provisions from the local Swiss embassy.

■ The free movement of persons does not yet apply to Bulgaria and Romania.

#### **Referendum on the free movement of persons**

The free movement of persons was introduced for an initial period of seven years. Switzerland must now notify the EU whether it wants to continue with the free movement of persons after 2009 on a permanent basis. The agreement is also to be extended to the EU countries Bulgaria and Romania. The Swiss people will decide on the continuation and extension of the agreement at a referendum on 8 February 2009. The free movement of persons is part of the seven agreements of Bilaterals I. These are legally interconnected. A rejection of the free movement of persons would result in the automatic loss of all Bilaterals I (so-called guillotine clause).

The free movement of persons has become a crucial factor for the Swiss economy because Switzerland is reliant on foreign workers. One in four employees is of foreign nationality. There is also a lack of highly skilled and specialist workers. Access to a Europe-wide pool of labour currently helps to reduce gaps in the labour market, while Switzerland remains an attractive location for business and the trend to relocate production processes abroad is slowed. This is helping to secure employment and prosperity in Switzerland. 150,000 new jobs were created in 2006 and 2007.

The Bilaterals I are extremely important for Switzerland economically. They provide the Swiss export industry with extensive, equal access to the Single European Market. Any reduction in access to this market would be extremely damaging to the competitiveness of companies in Switzerland. The EU is Switzerland's most important trading partner by some distance. 60% of exports are destined for the EU. Likewise, Switzerland is the second most important sales market for the EU, even ahead of giants like Russia and China. We earn one franc in three from trade with the EU. Losing the Bilaterals I would undermine Switzerland as a business location. Stable framework conditions are particularly important in times of economic uncertainty.

A "No" vote would jeopardise cooperation with the EU on European policy, which has been developed and continually extended over decades. Switzerland's approach to European policy has proven successful to date. It combines competitiveness, independence, openness and joint responsibility in Europe to create a genuinely Swiss policy on Europe, the policy of the bilateral approach.

More information at [www.personenfreizuegigkeit.admin.ch](http://www.personenfreizuegigkeit.admin.ch)

(German, French, Italian)

Ambassador Urs Bucher, Head of the DFA/DEA Integration Office

### **Information on popular initiatives**

Until now we have listed newly submitted initiatives with the signature deadline, and then presented them in more detail at a later stage. Despite limited available space, we have endeavoured to provide you with objective information on all popular initiatives. However, the number of popular initiatives submitted each year varies considerably. And popular initiatives are also often submitted as soon as the required number of signatures has been reached, in some cases several months before the date announced. It has therefore not been possible in some cases for us to inform you about initiatives that are at the signing stage, which has led to complaints. To ensure equal treatment of all initiatives, in future we will only list newly submitted popular initiatives with the name of the initiative committee, a link to the initiative committee's website and the expiry of the signature deadline.

### **Increase the rights of the people in foreign policy**

The Movement for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS) submitted the federal popular initiative "Increase the rights of the people in foreign policy (state treaties before the people!)" in March 2008.

More information can be found on the website of the initiative committee [www.auns.ch](http://www.auns.ch). This initiative can be signed until 4 September 2009.

#### **POPULAR INITIATIVES**

A list of current initiatives and signature forms can be found at [www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis\\_1\\_3\\_1\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html).

Please complete, sign and return the forms directly to the initiative committee. This committee is also responsible for certifying your signature.

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