

11 March 2020

IMPORTANT - Alert / Immigration Switzerland / Coronavirus COVID-19

Dear Customer,

With reference to the above mentioned matter.

In light of the recent developments on the coronavirus situation, please find below more information.

1. Update

As many other countries in the world, Switzerland has an outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Federal Council has categorized the situation in Switzerland as special in terms of the Epidemics Act. This enables the Federal Council to issue measures concerning individuals as well as the whole population. The Cantons can issue additional measures and recommendations.

As the situation is evolving rapidly, the measures and recommendations can change at any time.

You will find below the link to the website of the Federal Office of Public Health with the latest updates (in English).

<https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/krankheiten/ausbrueche-epidemien-pandemien/aktuelle-ausbrueche-epidemien/novel-cov.html>

2. Travel from Switzerland abroad

As a general recommendation, please check regularly the official coronavirus-related website of the transit and destination countries before any travel.

The Swiss government did not issue any exit restrictions specific to the coronavirus yet. Flight or train cancellations may however occur.

a. Professional travels

The individuals should consult and follow the travel policies of the company.

b. Private travels

Switzerland shares a common border with France, Germany, Italy, Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein. All of these countries have an outbreak of Coronavirus. As you might know, Italy has in the meantime declared the entire country to be in quarantine.

Even though from the point of view of immigration law a third country national living legally in Switzerland is allowed to travel freely within the Schengen area, we strongly recommend to refrain from travelling across the border, among other for following reasons:

- Risk of contamination because of the very high outbreak numbers in the neighbor country;
- Risk to be stuck in the neighbor country because of possible new measures issued by the authorities of the country, such as putting the country, region or city in quarantine or to carry out stronger controls at the border.

Based on this situation, it is highly recommended not to travel abroad for private reasons (e.g. weekend shopping in Italy, France or Germany).

3. Travel from abroad to Switzerland

The Swiss government did not yet issue any entry restrictions specific to the coronavirus. However, foreign countries may issue restrictions with regard to travel to Switzerland. Flight or train cancellations may occur.

As a general recommendation, please check regularly the official coronavirus-related website of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (link above) and of the competent Office of the departure and transit countries before any travel.

The borders between Switzerland and Germany, France, Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein are currently open as usual.

Further to measures taken by the Italian government, the crossing of the border between Switzerland and Italy is very restricted and monitored.

Currently, following groups of persons may travel from and to Italy:

- Persons able to prove that they are travelling for professional reasons (e.g. G-permits holders residing in Italy and working in Switzerland);
- Persons travelling for medical reasons;
- Persons travelling for further reasons of necessity;
- Tourists travelling back to their residence place in Italy or abroad.

All other crossings are in principle not allowed.

You will find below the link to the website of the Federal Customs Administration with the latest updates in regard to the crossing of the Swiss border:

<https://www.ezv.admin.ch/ezv/en/home/teaser-homepage/focus-teaser/coronavirus.html>

4. Current measures on Swiss territory

Measures have been taken by the federal and cantonal authorities and by private companies. Most of the measures also apply to the foreign nationals working and living in Switzerland.

a. Governmental measures

One of the measures is the ban of all public and private events attended by more than 1000 people. Smaller events may also be prohibited depending on the canton. For the moment, places of work and public transportation are not affected by the ban on events.

b. Measures taken by private companies

i. In general

Private companies can take additional measures. These may involve working remotely from home, adjusted working hours to avoid rush hour in public transportation, keeping the number of meetings to a minimum, or holding telephone/video conferences instead.

Most Swiss companies have issued guidelines or measures especially for the coronavirus situation. This may include a hotline or an information desk. In case of doubt or questions, the concerned Swiss company's hotline or information desk should be directly contacted.

ii. Home office

If a Swiss company has implemented a policy for its employees to work remotely from home (so called home office) it can be applicable for the employees on deputation too (please check with the competent department of the Swiss company). In such a case, it is in principle admitted for employees on deputation to work from their home until this policy is revoked / amended.

5. Closing of Swiss representations

Currently, we are not aware of any closing of any Swiss representation abroad. However, this might change at any time. Please check the website of the competent Swiss representation for more information.

6. Health screenings and quarantines upon arrival

At the moment, there are no systematic health screenings or quarantine measures upon arrival in Switzerland.

7. Extension of work and residence permits in specific situations linked to the coronavirus

There is no automatic extension of work and / or residence permits. The Swiss authorities are aware of the situation and currently decide on a case-by-case basis how to handle the specific case.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the situation is evolving rapidly. Therefore, it is recommend to check on a regular basis the Federal Office of Public Health's website. In case of major changes on the measures and recommendations, we will inform you accordingly.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for questions regarding the formalities of entry and exit of Switzerland, extension of the stay in Switzerland and postponing of travels etc.

Kind regards,
Your Suter Howald Immigration Team

Disclaimer: The content of this email does not represent legal advice and may not be used as such. Furthermore, the above mentioned links to the official websites may currently not represent the situation as it has been on 11 March 2020 anymore.

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