Many reasons lead people to leave their home country and immigrate to Switzerland or elsewhere. Some come here to work, others flee from war or seek protection from persecution. Switzerland’s present prosperity was built on cultural exchanges through immigration – the Romans taught us their alphabet, the Huguenots laid the foundation for the chemical industry in Basel with their knowledge of the production and use of colours, and Italian families enriched our culinary traditions.

Integration is a process of give and take. One of the keys to this mutual exchange is the local language. The core of many integration projects is to facilitate access to our language for immigrants. Learning the local language(s) lays the groundwork for an advanced level of integration – in social networks, in the workplace and at school.
General information

The main regional agencies around Basel are the «Fachstelle Integration» of the canton Baselland, the «Ausländerdienst Baselland» and the immigration help centre of the «Gesellschaft für das Gute und Gemeinnützige (GGG) Basel». An overview of all these immigration-related services is presented on a shared website. Services of the «Ausländerdienst Baselland» include: counselling, integration projects, interpreting and translation, information for new arrivals, German classes, civics classes, assessment of one’s current personal and professional situation, workplace integration.

The migrant newspaper MIX deals with concerns of the migrant population of the cantons Aargau, Basel-Landschaft, Basel-Stadt, Bern, Solothurn and Zurich. Each issue has a particular focus. The following issues focus on family-related topics: nr. 02/December 2000, Children and school; nr. 07/June 2003, Juvenile violence; nr. 12/April 2006, Youth unemployment. Migration newspaper MIX as PDF: www.aller-anfang-ist-begegnung.ch >Mix - Migrationszeitung

Family reunification

Based on the revised immigration act, Swiss citizens and persons from countries outside the EU (third-country nationals) with a residence permit or permanent residence permit may bring their foreign spouses and unmarried children under 18 years of age to Switzerland if they intend to live together in a suitable residence. Families must have sufficient finances and must not be facing or have faced prosecution.

Deadlines
Family reunification must be applied for within five years upon arrival. Children older than 12 years of age must be brought into the country within 12 months.

Asylum
Temporarily admitted persons – that is, rejected asylum seekers who are allowed to stay in Switzerland for a limited period of time – may bring their families into the country after a minimum of three years, provided they live together in a suitable residence and the family is not dependent on welfare.

Teenage children
Teenagers aged 15 to 18 are rarely granted entry permits, as it is difficult at this age for young people to keep up with their peers in the educational system. Children living abroad should therefore be brought into the country as early as possible.

EU/EFTA-citizens
The agreement on the free movement of persons allows EU/EFTA citizens who are in possession of a Swiss residence permit to bring their families into the country. This right is independent of nationality and includes:

• spouse, children (or spouse’s children) who are younger than 21 years of age and dependant children
• dependant parents or parents of spouse.

Third-country nationals
If family members are third-country nationals, they may enter and stay in Switzerland only if they have previously
been permanent residents of a EU/EFTA state. If this is not the case, the regulations for third-country nationals apply.

**Students**

Students may bring only their spouse and dependant children into the country.

The cantonal migration office can give you further information.

**Raising children – a matter of personal choice**

In Switzerland as in other countries, each family, maybe even each parent, has their own view on how to bring up their children. Still, people who live in a certain area tend to share common values. These may differ from the values held by people from other countries. Such differences can lead to misunderstandings.

**On the playground**

Children of a «typical» Swiss family often play with each other in a playground, under the watchful eye of their mothers (or more rarely, their fathers). Playgrounds are an important meeting and networking place for parents. We encourage all parents with small children to use the public playgrounds!

**Kindergarten and school**

The participation of parents in school life greatly benefits a child’s integration and social development. At parent-teacher meetings and other events, you get to know the teachers and other parents. You can help your child simply by taking an interest in school and kindergarten and your child’s homework. The way you structure family life can have a huge influence on your child’s performance at school: Make sure your child gets enough sleep, eats a healthy diet (see the chapter «Health and Diet»), and spends time outdoors. Children who are active and exercise are also better at concentrating.

**Family relationships**

Maintaining a close relationship between children and parents is not always easy. Playing games, reading out loud and talking with each other are activities that strengthen the family bond and teach your child useful social skills at the same time.

**Gender roles**

The influence of gender roles on a child’s development is significant. In our pluralistic society, it is okay for a boy to cry now and again or for a girl to be the strong one. Observe your environment and be inspired by flexible models for men and women.

**Early Immersion**

Children generally perform better at school if they spend time at day nurseries before reaching compulsory school age. Extrafamilial childcare is a popular institution that is affordable, open to all and gives your child a head start in learning the new language and culture.

Please consult the chapter on „professional childcare“ for useful addresses.

**Diversity in the classroom**

Today’s classrooms are places of diversity that bring together pupils of different geographic, cultural and social backgrounds. This diversity impacts...
teaching and often also influences a child’s scholastic development.

**Individualised instruction**

Studies have shown that the Swiss school system is only partially successful in supporting the needs of children from different backgrounds. On the other hand, many teachers have started to give pupils supplementary resources, in addition to the required class material, that is customized to meet each individual’s needs.

**Native language and culture classes**

Public and private organisations offer classes in native language and culture. Besides written and spoken language instruction, the classes also teach cultural traditions of the country of origin. Native language and culture classes are normally held outside the regular curriculum.

**Learning German**

Children starting kindergarten, primary or secondary school in the Canton of Baselland who speak little or no German can benefit from a range of programmes to learn German. The school board decides whether the child is best suited to attend a foreign language class or take an intensive course in German as a second language. No further evaluation is necessary. The following programmes are on offer:

1. **Foreign language classes at primary school**

   Pupils who speak no German at all normally attend a foreign language class. According to their capabilities, they gradually take part in the lessons of their future class. Foreign language lessons normally last one year.

2. **Intensive course in German as a second language**

   Pupils who do not speak German can choose to take an intensive course in German as a second language instead of enrolling in a foreign language class. The intensive course lasts a year at the most and takes place side-by-side with regular lessons. At the end of either the intensive course or the foreign language class, children can take further courses in German as a foreign language.

3. **Courses in German as a foreign language (Deutsch als Zweitsprache, DaZ)**

   Pupils with an insufficient knowledge of German receive remedial instruction, available for two years in kindergarten and an additional three years in primary school.

**Moving up - vocational training/ apprenticeships**

Completing vocational training is extremely important for young people to establish themselves socially and financially. The apprenticeship model is an extremely successful component of the Swiss educational system. An apprenticeship lays the foundation for a successful career. People who have completed an apprenticeship often have even better professional prospects than university graduates. There are two types of apprenticeship certificates: the two-year «Eidgenössisch anerkanntes Berufsattest (EBA)» (basic federal certificate) or the
three- to four-year «Eidgenössisches Fähigkeitszeugnis (EFZ)» (advanced federal certificate). Apart from receiving vocational training in the workplace, apprentices take classes at least one day a week.

The new service «Elterntreff Berufswahl» (available in nine languages) introduces parents to the Swiss system of vocational training and highlights the importance of parental support for the education and training of their children.

Teenagers who have difficulty finding an apprenticeship can seek support through career counselling or find a mentor. There are mentoring programmes for young women especially, but also for young men. Several other services help young people improve their performance at school, raise their chances of finding an apprenticeship and prepare for starting a career.

Adults who did not graduate from high school and wish to obtain their high school diploma at a later point can do this by taking a one-year course called «Link zum Beruf» provided by the «Allgemeine Gewerbeschule Basel» (AGS Basel).

Adults who did not finish their apprenticeship can complete their training on a part-time basis while continuing to work. If someone has acquired solid knowledge and practical skills in a certain profession, they can take the final apprenticeship examination without actually having an apprenticeship contract.

The Red Cross offers a nursing assistant training course. Completing the course qualifies you to work in elder or childcare. To find out if you qualify for educational grants, contact the «Amt für Berufsbildung und Berufsberatung».

**Services for women and mothers**

In some cantons there are special offers for women and mothers to learn the language and to function better in daily life. In the Canton of Baselland for example the „Ausländerdienst Baselland“ offers a special class called „Connectica“. «Connectica» is a language course focusing on common everyday language and designed to help mothers settle into their new life in Switzerland. While the mums are in class, their children are looked after by German-speaking childcare workers.

**Bicultural families**

Having different nationalities in one family creates a unique chance to get to know and love other ways of thinking. At the same time, situations arise daily that put mutual understanding to the test. The counselling centre for binational couples and families («Beratungsstelle für binationale Paare und Familien») offers support in dealing with formalities, but also with the particular challenges bicultural families face.

You can find further information in the part on bicultural families in the chapter on “family diversity”.

**Forced marriage**

Forced marriage is illegal under Swiss law. Forced marriages differ from arranged marriages, where potential partners are introduced to each other through an intermediary, but decide themselves whether or not they want to marry.
The threat of forced marriage is greatest for young women. Couples in forced marriages often assume traditional gender roles. Changing gender attitudes and achieving true integration requires openness on both sides. Our society must provide young adults with real opportunities for self-fulfillment if we are to prevent them from withdrawing into traditional roles.

**Health**

If you are unfamiliar with the Swiss health care system, it can be quite confusing. The Red Cross offers a course called «VIA Gesundheitswegweiser» that introduces you to the health care system.

The website www.migesplus.ch has compiled a wealth of information for migrants on health related issues such as children, women, love, sexuality, addiction, crisis, prevention, and health care. You can also download a brochure explaining the Swiss health care system. The brochure, which is available in 18 languages, was used as the basis for the Red Cross course mentioned above.

**Female circumcision**

The circumcision of girls is considered serious bodily injury. More and more countries where circumcision is practiced are starting to acknowledge this fact. Neither the Bible nor the Koran recommends circumcision. In Switzerland, circumcision of girls is a serious crime that will be prosecuted.

For a long time, female circumcision was considered a taboo. With her book «Desert Flower», the Somali writer Waris Dirie increased awareness for this topic in the western world.

**Living in Switzerland**

When searching for a flat or signing a lease, it is important to be familiar with Swiss regulations.

An information sheet in 11 languages can be downloaded from the website of the Federal Office for Housing («Bundesamt für Wohnungswesen»).
# Migration-Integration: addresses and links

Please note: Most of the described services and links are in German. If a service is explicitly offered in English this is marked by a *

## General Information

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<td>The state secretariat for migration SEM is responsible for all issues concerning migration and integration at federal level *:</td>
<td>The platform hallo-aargau.ch informs new residents in many languages about living in the Canton of Aargau and where to find help: *</td>
<td>Integrationsdatenbank Basel-Stadt und Basel-Land</td>
<td>Integrationsdatenbank Basel-Stadt und Basel-Land</td>
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## Family reunification

Family reunification: https://www.ch.ch/en/family-reunification1/

## Raising children- a matter of personal choice


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<td><a href="http://www.sba-basel.ch/beratungsstellen/mentoring.html">http://www.sba-basel.ch/beratungsstellen/mentoring.html</a></td>
<td><a href="https://www.ag.ch/de/bks/hochschulen/stipendien_1/stipendien.jsp">https://www.ag.ch/de/bks/hochschulen/stipendien_1/stipendien.jsp</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.integration.so.ch/sprache/deutschkurse/">http://www.integration.so.ch/sprache/deutschkurse/</a></td>
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<td>Association of Counselling Agencies for Binational and Intercultural Couples and Families, Switzerland:</td>
<td>Aargau has no specialized counselling agency for binational couples and families. You can find general information on the following website</td>
<td>Counselling Agency for binational and intercultural couples and families in Basel: Steinengraben 69, 4051 Basel</td>
<td>Counselling Agency for binational and intercultural couples and families in Basel: Steinengraben 69, 4051 Basel</td>
<td>Frabina Counselling Agency for binational couples and families in Solothurn and Olten *</td>
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<td>Association of binational couples and families <a href="http://www.ig-binational.ch/">http://www.ig-binational.ch/</a></td>
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### Health

- [www.migesplus.ch](http://www.migesplus.ch)
- Gesünder Basel has special programs for migrants: [www.gsuenderbasel.ch](http://www.gsuenderbasel.ch) > Gesundheit für MigrantInnen

### Female circumcision

Information by Caritas Switzerland on female circumcision (FGM)
- [http://www.caritas.ch/de/was-wir-tun/engagement-schweiz/integration-und-chancengleichheit/maedchenbeschneidung/](http://www.caritas.ch/de/was-wir-tun/engagement-schweiz/integration-und-chancengleichheit/maedchenbeschneidung/)

### Living in Switzerland

- Bundesamt für Wohnungswesen, guide in 11 languages *
  - [www.bwo.admin.ch](http://www.bwo.admin.ch) > Dokumentation > Publikationen > Infoblatt Wohnen > Infoblatt
Book recommendations

Our book recommendations are generally for books that are available only in German. Where possible we’ve listed the English translation or an equivalent.

On the topic of female circumcision