Temporary practical adjustments of the Migration Office Canton of Zurich

Both our general information desk and the biometrics desk are currently open for you at regular opening hours between 8.00 and 16.30 hrs.

Temporary changes
Due to the special situation regarding coronavirus:
- No Swiss travel documents are currently issued
- The migration office only accepts payments with credit and debit cards to minimize the risk of infection
- We kindly ask you not to drop off any documents at our counter or to get in touch with us at the counter regarding questions; to get in touch, please call us (043 259 88 00), e-mail us (info@fma.zh.ch) or contact us by mail

Biometric data collection
Appointments for biometric data collection can be kept as usual. If you are unable to come by our office, please postpone your appointment here. (in German)

Refusal of entry
On March 18, 2020, the Federal Council decided to stop issuing Schengen visas in general as well as national visas and to stop authorizing the issuance of visas for persons from all third countries, from EU countries that are not Schengen member states (United Kingdom, Ireland, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Cyprus) as well as EU/EFTA high-risk countries (currently Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Spain) for the time being until June 15, 2020. On March 24, 2020, the entry restrictions were extended to all remaining Schengen states except the Principality of Liechtenstein. This means that the entry restrictions now apply worldwide, with the exception of the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Applications from persons who are in a situation of a serious emergency or who are of great importance to the health sector in their capacity as specialists are exempt from this restriction. This means:

All foreign nationals, with the exception of persons from the Principality of Liechtenstein, must be refused entry. Accordingly, Schengen visas will no longer be issued and people who already have a Schengen visa but have not yet used it cannot enter the country.

Exceptions: Entitled to enter the country are
• persons who have a valid residence permit issued by Switzerland, including holders of FDFA legitimation cards;
• persons with a visa or an assurance for a business permit as a specialist in the health care sector or for the purpose of an “official visit”;
• cross-border commuters who can identify themselves with a valid copy of their cross-border permit (ZEMIS printout);
• persons with rights under the Agreement on Free Movement of Persons who want to enter Switzerland as self-employed service providers or delegated employees and can present an official document (Meldebestätigung / attestation d’annonce).

• COVID-19 Federal Ordinance

• COVID-19 directive of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) (PDF, 314 kB)

**Entry for gainful employment**

At present, entry for gainful employment cannot be permitted. Accordingly, these applications are not being processed and pending applications are written off as invalid. Applicants must resubmit their applications after the entry restrictions have been lifted.

**Exception:** If the applicant is a specialist in the health sector, the application will be assessed.

Entry applications by EU/EFTA nationals for the granting of a short term permit or residence permit that were submitted before March 25, 2020 can be resubmitted from May 11, 2020 onwards and approved by means of an assurance, provided the regular admission requirements are met.

Applications for employees from Third Countries that were submitted before March 19, 2020 and do not have a positive preliminary labor market decision yet, will be processed again from May 11, 2020 onwards. The Office for Economy and Labour (AWA) is in charge for assessing the applications. If a positive labor market decision has been made already, the persons concerned have to contact the Migration Office as of May 11, 2020 at the earliest to apply for the authorization/assurance. Once the entry permit has been issued, it is their own responsibility to inquire the entry formalities (e.g. obtaining the visa at a Swiss representation abroad, air travel).
Entry for the purpose of family reunification, residence without gainful employment, pensioners

Applications are assessed by the Migration Office as usual. If the conditions for approval are not met, the application will be rejected. If the application can be granted, the applicants are informed that the requirements are currently met, but that entry cannot be granted at present due to the entry restrictions. In such cases, the authorization to issue visas will only be granted after the entry restrictions have been lifted, at which the Migration Office reserves the right to re-assess the current circumstances at the time (in particular the financial situation).

Authorizations and assurances of resident permits which expire unused due to the entry restrictions cannot be extended. After the lifting of the entry restrictions, but no earlier than June 15, 2020, the persons concerned must contact the Migration Office to apply for a new issuance of the authorization/assurance.

Exceptions: Spouses and minor children of a Swiss national who, because of the current situation, wish to return to Switzerland from their previous place of residence abroad together with the Swiss national may still enter Switzerland (evacuation).

As of May 11, 2020, family reunifications can be granted again for family members of Swiss citizens. The same applies for family members of EU/EFTA nationals living in Switzerland. Once the entry permit has been issued, the applicants are responsible for inquiring the entry formalities (e.g. obtaining the visa at a Swiss representation abroad, air travel).

Sojourns for education and training

Applications for permission to enter Switzerland for the purpose of education and training (schoolchildren, students, doctoral candidates, postdocs, etc.) will no longer be accepted until June 15, 2020. Applications for an extension of the residence permit for the purpose of education and training will be assessed normally.

Cross-border permits

It is not possible to issue a first-time cross-border permit to third-country nationals. Such applications will be returned to the employer on the grounds that no cross-border permits are currently being issued. Exception: Specialists in the health sector.

Until May 11, 2020, it is not possible to issue cross-border permits to EU/EFTA nationals (with the exception of the Principality of Liechtenstein). Such applications will be returned to
the employer on the grounds that no cross-border permits are currently being issued. Exception: Specialists in the health sector.

Cross-border permit applications for EU/EFTA nationals which were submitted before March 25, 2020, can be re-submitted as of May 11, 2020, and can be granted, provided that the regular admission requirements are met.

The renewal of cross-border permits will be assessed normally. A copy of the permit is sent to the employer, so that a person can enter Switzerland.

**Permit renewals**

Applications for the renewal of permits under the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, respectively for temporary admissions will be assessed as usual.

Individual municipal administration offices are closed or have constricted the services at their counters. It may therefore happen that renewal applications or permit applications cannot be submitted. In such cases, foreign nationals have to wait until the counters of their municipal administration office reopen before submitting their application. Late applications or registrations submitted after March 13, 2020 will not be sanctioned by the authorities.

**Attention:** The Migration Office will not accept any renewal applications or permit applications which were not submitted via the Residents' Registration Office, i.e. by personal appearance at the Residents' Registration Office. Any such applications will be returned to the applicants. Applicants have to resubmit their application to the Residents' Registration Office responsible for them once the counters have been reopened. In addition, applications which are not submitted by the person concerned but "by proxy" will not be processed and will be returned.

**Termination of the permit**

The Migration Office waives the determination of termination for persons who are abroad and cannot return to Switzerland in time due to the current situation. The requirement is that the permit had not already expired before March 13, 2020 and that they return to Switzerland promptly after the entry restriction has been lifted. This applies to persons who are staying abroad with a maintenance permit, to persons who are staying abroad to the extent permitted by law and to persons whose permit expires during the unintended stay abroad.
**Social welfare benefits**

A foreign national receiving social welfare benefits does not automatically lose the permit under the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act. This also applies to social welfare benefits during the Corona crisis. A foreign national meets the criteria for revocation of the permit if he/she receives social welfare benefits permanently and to a large extent and if the foreign national can be reproached for that. You can find more information in our directive on practical measures in cases of social welfare dependency.

In concrete terms, this means that in the individual case assessment we take into account, within the limits of commensurability, whether someone had to benefit from social welfare solely because of the Corona crisis. As a rule, such benefits are not self-inflicted and a person cannot be reproached for it.

**Procedure for persons with tourist visa or persons whose permit-free stay expires**

Given the travel restrictions, it is currently impossible for many third-country nationals to leave the Schengen area in time, i.e. before their visas or permit-free stay expires, and to return to their countries of origin. For persons concerned not having to move in and around Switzerland without a permit, the Migration Office will issue a registration card (Meldekarte) upon personal appearance.

The prerequisites are:

- The persons concerned must identify themselves with a passport and provide the address of their current whereabouts,
- a formal obligation as well as a valid travel insurance in the amount of Fr. 50'000.- (or € 30'000.-) must be presented,
- a fee of Fr. 45.00 is to be paid for the registration card.

For EU/EFTA nationals, it is still possible to return to their home country, if need be, overland. Persons who cannot leave the country for subjective reasons (e.g. age, health) can apply for a registration card at the Migration Office. For this purpose, they must present q travel insurance and a concrete written explanation why it is currently impossible for them to leave Switzerland. A fee of CHF 45.00 is to be paid for the registration card, with which continuing to stay in Switzerland is allowed.
**Deadlines**

In order to give applicants and their legal representatives enough time to submit the necessary documents and statements, the Migration Office usually sets the deadlines at 60 days. Exceptions to this rule are urgent cases (e.g. proceedings concerning the protection of public security and order, proceedings without suspensive effect). Shorter deadlines continue to be set in these cases.

**Departure deadlines**

In the case of persons who are objectively unable to comply with the ordered departure deadline, an extension of the departure deadline until June 30, 2020 will be granted upon request.

**Return visas**

The issue of return visas is generally refused in order to restrict travel. In view of the current pandemic situation, all passenger transport poses a threat to public health.

**Exceptions:** In proven cases of hardship (e.g. due to serious illness or in the event of death of a close family member) and in the case of definitive departure, return visas are issued.

**Cantonal Integration Office**

**Integration support services**

Face-to-face teaching will be discontinued for the time being; this also applies to the services offered as part of the cantonal integration program and the implementation of the integration agenda.

Wherever possible, these services will be continued however via alternative channels (telephone, internet, “distance learning” etc.).

Exception: Only the work assignments in the form of internships and individual placements are currently being continued. However, employers must comply with the prevention requirements of the Federal Government and be prepared to continue these services.

**Further information for the migrant population**

You will find a lot of further information on the situation regarding coronavirus on the Cantonal Integration Office’s website (in various languages).