

# Having your foreign qualifications recognised in Switzerland

## Careers



## Overview

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What does recognition mean?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Professional recognition</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Recognition isn't the only thing that counts</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Alternatives to recognition</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Regulated and non-regulated professions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>No recognition required ...</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Recognition criteria</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Story: Hard work pays off</b> Danijela Antanaskovic, 45, care and community health assistant, works in a retirement home	<b>10</b>
<b>Recognition authorities</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>What do you need to do?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Who can you contact for help?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Story: Finding work: it's not just about qualifications</b> Gloria Taborda, 43, electrical project engineer	<b>16</b>
<b>Ask the expert</b> François Donnet, Head of the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications unit at the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation	<b>18</b>
<b>Academic recognition</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Story: "A Google search doesn't tell you what life is like in Switzerland!"</b> Ladislav Mravec, 37, Master of Laws student	<b>22</b>
<b>Visual recap</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Additional resources</b>	<b>26</b>

## Introduction

Finding a job or studying in Switzerland if you don't have Swiss qualifications can be a headache – or a long and winding road – for many job candidates and prospective students. Many of them are unaware of the process for getting their qualifications recognised.

What's the difference between a regulated and a non-regulated profession? Which authorities are in charge of recognition? This booklet gives you all the answers you need, and guides you every step of the way. It also includes the personal stories of three people who have had their foreign qualifications recognised, as well as an interview with an expert in the field.

# What does recognition mean?

The recognition of diplomas and certificates is becoming increasingly important in the context of international mobility. In Switzerland, employers set great store by official professional and academic titles.

Accordingly, there are two types of recognition: professional and academic.

**Professional recognition** is useful or essential to the pursuit of a given professional activity. It is aimed solely at those wishing to join the labour market. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) offers a national point of contact for all ge-

neral questions concerning the recognition of professional qualifications.

➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma)  
> **English (top right)**

**Academic recognition** is required before a person can be admitted to a course of study. It is aimed at individuals who wish to embark upon or continue studies at higher education, continuing education or postgraduate level. The higher education institution alone decides whether or not to admit the individual concerned.

➤ [www.enic.ch](http://www.enic.ch) > **English (top)**  
> **Higher Education Admission**

# Professional recognition

If you are aiming to pursue a professional activity in Switzerland, and get your foreign qualifications recognised, don't rush things, and take time to reflect before taking the plunge. These early steps represent a significant investment in both time and money. You must also do some thorough research. The formalities differ depending on the nature of the qualification, country of origin, the field you want to work in, and the competent recognition authority.

## Recognition isn't the only thing that counts

Securing a certificate of equivalence doesn't mean that you will immediately find work, because several other factors must be taken into account when looking for a job. Three recommendations are given below. These are the golden rules:

### ➤ Learn the language of the place where you live

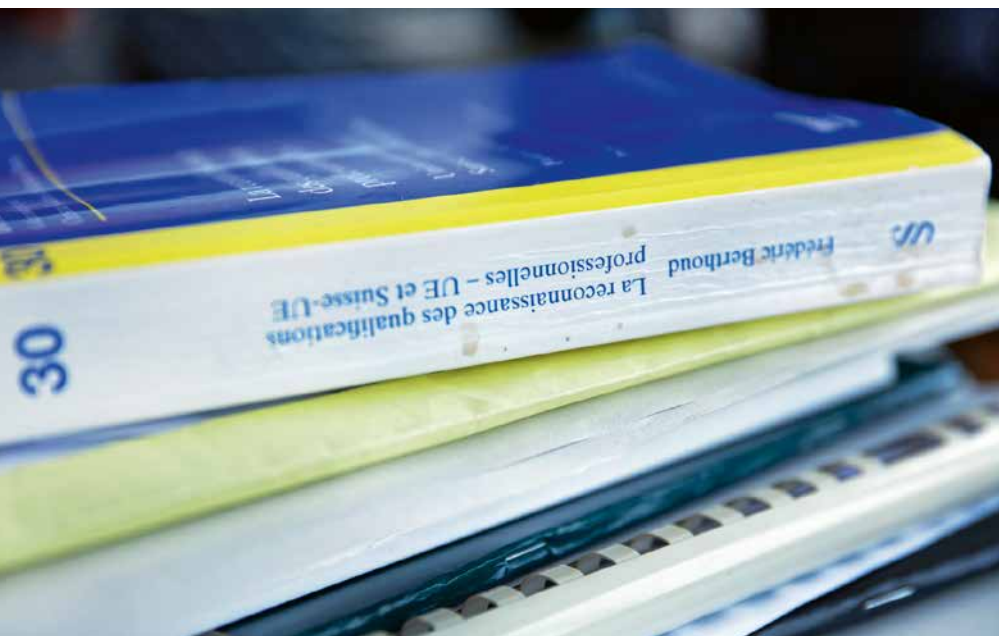
This is the key to every professional integration process. Even if your qualifications have been recognised, it will be difficult for you to find work if you don't know how to write, read or express yourself very well in the company's language.

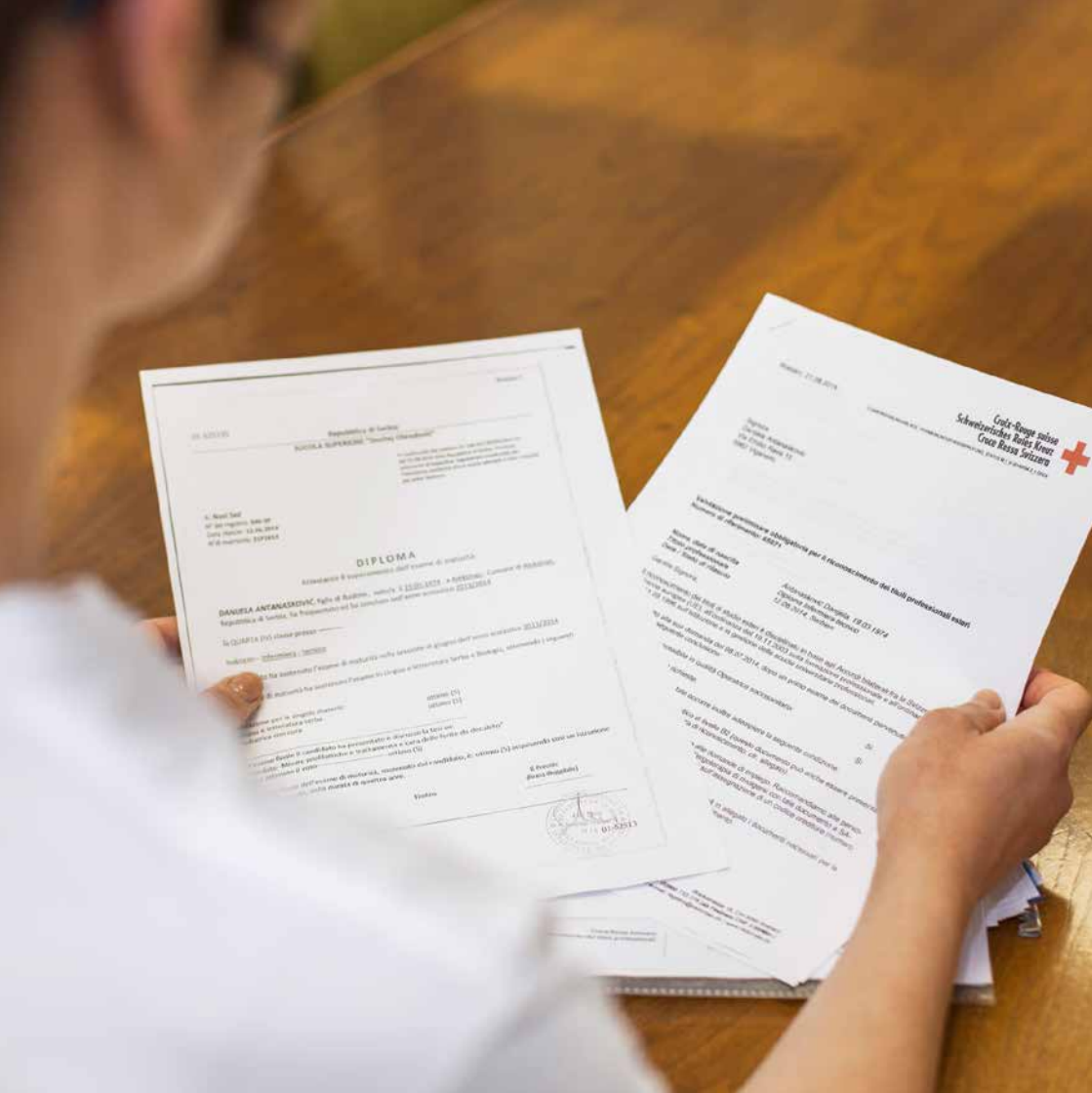
### ➤ Sound out the job market

Are there any opportunities in your field in Switzerland? Are there employers that might be interested in the training and education that you have completed abroad? Would you have a better chance of finding work if you had a recognised title? It will be of no great use to you to have your qualifications recognised in a saturated labour market, or if the skills that you have acquired during your training differ too much from those required in Switzerland.

### ➤ Familiarise yourself with the culture of your sector

It may sometimes be necessary to start on the bottom rung of the professional ladder, initially taking a job that is low-skilled or unskilled. This will be particularly useful in allowing you to gain experience in Switzerland, and get to know the country's way of working and its rules and regulations. You will also be able to meet others in your field and build a personal network. At the same time, you can take steps to get your qualifications recognised so that you can then move on to better-qualified posts.





**Alternatives to recognition**

You should also ask yourself if getting your qualifications recognised is the right thing for you. There may be other, more appropriate approaches, such as those set out below. These three paths enable you to gain an actual Swiss qualifica-

tion, rather than just a certificate of equivalence.

- Direct admission to the final apprenticeship exam: if you already have the practical knowledge needed to pursue a particular professional activity, you can put yourself forward for the

**Regulated and non-regulated professions**

In the professional recognition context, a distinction must be made between regulated and non-regulated professions. Put simply, this is about knowing whether or not your diplomas, certificates, etc. will have to be officially recognised before you can pursue your chosen professional activity in Switzerland.

If your **profession is not regulated**, you do not need to have your qualifications recognised to work in your field. Whether or not you can pursue your professional activity therefore depends on the labour market and the employer's requirements.

Examples of non-regulated professions are cook, car mechanic, hairdresser, administrative assistant, computer scientist, retail store manager and biologist.

You need specific qualifications to practice a **regulated profession**. If your profession is regulated in Switzerland, you must have your foreign qualifications or certificates recognised by a Swiss authority or institution before you are allowed to work. Examples of regulated professions are doctor, optician, nurse, electrician and teacher.

final apprenticeship exam. This option is open for all basic VET courses.

- Validation of prior learning (VPL): run by the cantons, this process enables those with sound experience in a particular trade or profession to gain a diploma without having to do a classic apprenticeship or sit exams. VPL is available for only a small number of professions.
- Vocational education and training (VET) in Switzerland: depending on your background, you may benefit from a dispensation for your course, or a reduction in the length of your training.

For more information on these different paths, please consult:

- [www.berufsberatung.ch/berufsabschluss-nachholen](http://www.berufsberatung.ch/berufsabschluss-nachholen)
- [www.berufsberatung.ch/berufe](http://www.berufsberatung.ch/berufe)

**From commerce to construction**

Where VET qualifications are concerned, most professional activities associated with the industrial, retail, business, hotel and catering and construction sectors are non-regulated and therefore don't require foreign qualifications to be recognised.

An indicative list of the professions and activities that are regulated in Switzerland is available on the SERI website.

➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma)  
> English (top right)

There is also a portal for authorisations and regulated professions in Switzerland.

➤ [www.authorisations.easygov.swiss](http://www.authorisations.easygov.swiss)

**No recognition required ...**

With the exception of regulated professions, there is therefore no need to have a foreign title recognised to work in Switzerland. It may nonetheless be useful to obtain level certification for your foreign qualifications. This is intended to tell future employers where your title fits into the hierarchy of the Swiss education system. It will also make your job search easier.

A chart showing the Swiss education system can be found at

➤ [www.berufsberatung.ch/bildungsschema](http://www.berufsberatung.ch/bildungsschema)

SERI supplies level certifications for VET qualifications for non-regulated professions.

➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma)  
> English (top right)

Managed by the Swiss Conference of Rectors of Higher Education Institutions, the Swiss ENIC information centre issues **recommendations of recognition** for those who hold degrees from foreign higher education institutions. These recommendations provide a way into non-regulated professions.

➤ [www.enic.ch](http://www.enic.ch) > English (top right)

SERI's level certifications and Swiss ENIC's recommendations of recognition have a certain value on the labour market. They are well-regarded and welcomed by employers.

**Recognition criteria**

Not all foreign qualifications can go through a recognition process. Several criteria must be fulfilled at the same time for qualifications to be recognised:

- The qualification must have been awarded or recognised by the individual's country of origin.
- There must be a corresponding course of study or training in Switzerland.

➤ The level and duration of the study or training must be the same as the equivalent programme in Switzerland.

➤ The two courses must have comparable content (theoretical and/or practical).

➤ The course of study/training must have been completed. Courses that have not been finished are not recognised.

**Good to know****Can I get a CAS recognised?**

Certificates of continuing education, i.e. postgraduate qualifications such as the Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS), certificates from private courses or certificates of employment cannot be submitted for recognition. Nevertheless, including them in your application portfolio can provide valuable additional information for the recognition process of another qualification.



**Danijela Antanaskovic**  
45, care and community health assistant, works in a retirement home

### Hard work pays off

Having gained her general baccalaureate in her home country of Serbia around 20 years ago, Danijela Antanaskovic settled in the Ticino, where her parents and ex-husband live. “At the beginning I did a bit of everything - telephone operator, sales assistant, croupier in a casino ...,” she explains.

As time went on, Danijela increasingly pondered her profes-

sional future. She therefore decided to take positive action: “I felt like I still hadn’t found my direction. A friend suggested a three-day orientation course at a retirement home. It was a turning point in my life!”

At ease among the residents, Danijela finally felt useful. “All of my doubts vanished. I did a caregiver’s course, and then worked

as a carer for several years.” She realised that she would like to work in the medico-social sector and complete her training. She also felt a desire to go back to live in the country of her birth. All of these factors led her to make a brave decision. “I enrolled in a private college in Serbia to become a nurse. I graduated after two years.”

Ultimately, family ties led her to return to Switzerland. That then raised the question of recognition for her foreign degree. “I went back to work as a care assistant in the Ticino while starting the recognition process with the Swiss Red Cross (SRC). After gathering all the necessary documents (certificate copy, study programmes, etc.), translating them and having them certified, I learned that my nursing degree only corresponded to a care and community health assistant qualification - which is the entry level in Switzerland.”

The SRC also told Danijela that compensation measures would be necessary before she could gain this recognition. “They asked me to take a course to fill in the gaps when it came to medico-technical procedures, and to complete a six-month, full-time adjustment period, which I did in the home where I still work today. I never had to have my language skills certified. Having worked in the Ticino all

these years, my Italian was good enough.”

The recognition process took more than a year but is now over. “It wasn’t an easy time for me personally. The hardest thing was the financial side. During the adjustment period I had to live on a tiny salary and count on my parents’ support. Don’t forget the

**➤ The hardest thing was the financial side. During the adjustment period I had to live on a tiny salary and count on my parents’ support.**

fees, either. I had to spend several thousand francs on the recognition process and additional training, in addition to all the translations and authentications required for the documents you have to submit.”

Despite all of these sacrifices, Danijela’s hard work has paid off. “I’ve been able to grow in my work,” she remarks. “I’ve always needed to be stimulated, and my new accredited status lets me take on new responsibilities.”

### Recognition authorities

In Switzerland there is not one, but several authorities which have the power to recognise foreign qualifications. Each is responsible for one professional sector, or for specific professions. The first step is therefore to identify the authority which can recognise your qualifications, and then contact it to set the process in motion.

The SERI website offers a list of the main groups of professions, with direct links to the competent authorities.

➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma)  
> English (top right)

The following are the main authorities with the power to recognise foreign qualifications in Switzerland:

#### State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

For foreign VET qualifications giving access to regulated professions: Federal VET Certificate, Federal VET Diploma, Federal Diploma of Higher Education, Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education, professional education institution (PEI) diploma. Examples of regulated professions overseen by SERI: dental assistant, medical as-

sistant, early childhood educator, animal keeper, driving instructor and chimney sweep.

SERI is also authorised to recognise foreign qualifications in certain regulated professions requiring a university-level degree, such as social worker, civil engineer and architect (although the latter two are regulated in only six cantons).

➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch)  
> English (top right)

#### Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)

For foreign qualifications in medical professions requiring a university degree, as well as psychology: doctor, dentist, pharmacist, psychologist, psychotherapist, vet, chiropractor, etc. Please note that, as a general rule, Switzerland does not recognise qualifications in medicine (human medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine), in pharmacology or in chiropractic medicine gained outside of the European Union (EU). There is nonetheless what is known as 'indirect recognition' for medical professions. In other words, on certain terms Switzerland may recognise the qualifications obtained outside of the EU if they have already

been recognised by an EU member state.

➤ [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > English (top right)

#### Swiss Red Cross (SRC)

For foreign qualifications at the VET or university of applied sciences (UAS) level in certain health-care professions: nurse, physiotherapist, care and community health assistant, lab technician, radiologist, dietician, midwife, paramedic, ergotherapist, naturopath, etc.

➤ [www.redcross.ch](http://www.redcross.ch)

#### Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

For foreign qualifications in teaching and special needs education: teacher (nursery, primary, lower and upper secondary), speech therapist, special needs teacher, psychomotor therapist, etc.

➤ [www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch) > English (top right)

#### What do you need to do?

On their websites, the various authorities with powers of recognition describe the process in detail and the steps that must be taken (forms to fill in, documents to collect and send, fees to pay, etc.). What, specifically, needs to be remembered?

#### Cantonal authorities

For certain professions, authority for recognising foreign qualifications reverts to cantonal authorities. Licence to practice law is one example here. Furthermore, certain cantons impose conditions that go beyond those that apply to federal recognition. Professional activities associated with the exercise of public authority (police officers or wardens, etc.) cannot be subject to the recognition process.

#### Duration

From the point at which the documents have been sent and the dossier is judged complete by the competent authority, the recognition process can last up to three months. It may be longer if compensation measures (theoretical and/or practical) have to be completed.

#### Fees

Handling a request for recognition for a regulated profession costs several thousand francs. The amounts involved differ greatly from one authority to the next. SERI charges a handling fee of CHF 150 for level certification for VET qualifications for non-regulated professions. By contrast, Swiss ENIC will produce a recommendation of recognition of qualifications for non-

regulated professions requiring a university-level degree free of charge.

### Certified true copies

Diplomas, certificates and other important elements of a person's application dossier must be submitted as 'certified true copies', in other words along with confirmation of their authenticity. You can get certified true copies from the local authority of the municipality where you live (subject to some exceptions), from a notary, or from the embassy of the country which issued the document. This will entail costs.

### Translation

If your diploma is not in English, French, German or Italian, you will need a translation. The diploma and any important annexes must be translated by a professional translator, for which there will of course be a fee.

To find a translator, you can get in touch with ASTTI, the Swiss association of translators, terminologists and interpreters, for example.

➤ [www.astti.ch](http://www.astti.ch)

### Language skills

It's impossible to work in any job if you aren't fluent enough in the

language spoken at your workplace. As part of their recognition process, many organisations require candidates to have a certain level of language skills, necessary for them to pursue their chosen professional activity, in the health-care sector, for example. These skills generally have to correspond to at least level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Requirements are much higher (level C2 or above) in the teaching sector. Depending on the circumstances, you may be asked to produce a language certificate.

If you would like to test your language skills by taking a test online or at a school, or if you have to – or want to – take a language course, you'll find a variety of options at:

➤ [www.berufsberatung.ch/austauschprogramme](http://www.berufsberatung.ch/austauschprogramme)

### Compensation measures

As part of the recognition process, the authority concerned will assess whether or not the education and training completed abroad are equivalent to a Swiss programme in the same field. Specifically, this involves comparing the two curricula and the resulting qualifications. If there are substantial differences between the

duration and content of the training received abroad and that given in Switzerland, you will have to complete compensation measures to close the gap. These may take the form of additional training, an internship, or an aptitude test. Please note that certain measures may require a great deal of commitment. You must also factor in the fees, which may be high and which participants must pay themselves.

### Who can you contact for help?

In each canton, professional careers guidance officers are available to provide information and answer your questions.

➤ [www.adressen.sdbb.ch](http://www.adressen.sdbb.ch)

The HEKS/EPER MosaiQ service from HEKS Swiss Church Aid offers advice and aftercare to qualified migrants from outside the EU, so that they can make the most of their professional potential in Switzerland. It also guides these individuals through the process of getting their qualifications recognised.

➤ [www.heks.ch](http://www.heks.ch) > English (top right)  
> Search: **mosaiq**

## Good to know

### Recognition = Swiss qualification?

Having your foreign diploma recognised does not mean that you are eligible for the equivalent Swiss diploma. Individuals whose professional titles are recognised by the competent authorities receive only a recognition certificate (e.g. 'xxx diploma is equivalent to the Federal VET Diploma as a care and community health assistant'). Moreover, they are not allowed to use the legally protected Swiss title (Registered Paramedic, Advanced Federal Diploma of Higher Education, for example). However, they are permitted to use the Swiss professional designation 'paramedic', or the professional title they gained in their country of origin (stating that country).





## Gloria Taborda

### 43, electrical project engineer

#### Finding work: it's not just about qualifications

After a university course in electrical engineering and a post as a project engineer, Gloria Taborda left Colombia in 2008 to settle in Geneva with her Swiss husband. The early days were difficult. "I didn't know anyone, and I only knew a few words of French," she explains. "I tried to find work in my field, but without success. My lack of knowledge about the Swiss

electrical system and the absence of a professional network also complicated matters." Gloria therefore decided to abandon her job search to concentrate on learning French. She took a two-year course leading to a level B2 language certificate.

In parallel, she decided to get the recommendation of recognition of her degree by Swiss ENIC.

"Although recommendation of recognition wasn't mandatory to practice my profession, it was strongly recommended. Because of the electricity codes that are specific to Switzerland, I also took the relevant courses. Thanks to them, I was able to meet fellow professionals, which made it easier for me to enter the job market." Gloria therefore put together the necessary documents (copy of degree certificate, grade card, etc.), which she had had authenticated and translated into English during a language stay in England after graduation, and sent them to Swiss ENIC. She soon received the recommendation of recognition.

After two short-term jobs, she went on to land a position as an electrical draughter with a Geneva company. "I told myself that it might be better to start at a slightly lower level and to work my way up from there. What's more, that type of work was a better match for my French skills." The recommendation of recognition was a factor in her getting the job: "My Colombian university degree was recognised as equivalent to a bachelor's in electrical engineering from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH. That has a certain value from the employer's perspective, as they know what they're dealing with!" Gloria found further satisfaction in the recognition process: "It's wrong

to think that there aren't any good universities in South America. This certificate of equivalence proves that. It's also reassuring to know that all the years of study and all the money I invested weren't wasted".

Gloria went on to work as a manager at an engineering consulting firm, and then as a project engineer. Her role consisted of

➤ **Learning French and making professional contacts are just as - if not more - important as having qualifications recognised.**

designing electrical installations, calculating costs and preparing request for proposals. "These positions were much closer to my university training," she says. Right now, Gloria is taking a career break to take care of her family.

"Learning French and making professional contacts are just as - if not more - important as having qualifications recognised. Lots of migrants wrongly believe that if they have a certificate of equivalence they'll get a job right away, but sometimes it's not enough. You have to do language courses and take time to get to know the professional environment in your host country," she emphasises.



**François Donnet**, Head of the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications unit at the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)

**SERI offers a national contact point for those wanting to have foreign professional qualifications recognised in Switzerland. What role does this hotline play?**

It's important to state that the contact point should not be used as the primary source of

information when finding out about the options for having foreign qualifications recognised in Switzerland. The first instinct should be to consult our website at [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma) > English (top right). There, you'll find a description of the procedures involved, as well as answers to the most frequently asked questions. The main purpose of our hotline is to help internet users who still have further questions concerning the recognition procedure.

**In Switzerland, qualifications only have to go through the recognition process if the profession in question is regulated. Who decides whether or not a profession is regulated?**

As a result of the division of powers between the Confederation and the cantons, some decisions will be made by federal legislators, and some by cantonal legislators. The aim of regulation is to protect collective interests, such as the health or safety/security of the population.

**SERI does more than just recognise qualifications in regulated professions. It also**

**supplies numerous level certifications of VET qualifications in non-regulated professions. What is level certification, exactly?**

A level certificate is a document which places the foreign title within the hierarchical framework of the Swiss education system, based on the level and duration of the studies that have been completed. It allows Swiss employers to determine whether or not the candidate has the skills that are presumed necessary to take on the intended role. SERI handles between five and six thousand dossiers per year, most of which concern level certification.

**Where do the applications handled by SEFRI come from? And what type are they?**

Applications come mainly from Switzerland's neighbouring countries: France, Germany, Austria and Italy. We most often get recognition applications from those in the social work sector. We also receive lots of applications with regard to the dental assistant profession, which is regulated. Where level certificates are concerned (non-regulated professions), applications mainly

concern the hospitality and mechanical industries.

**Your website describes in detail how your recognition procedures work. What is important for applicants to remember?**

They must be clear about the professional activity (designation, level, etc.) that they wish to pursue in Switzerland, and willing to cooperate with our administration. It is also up to them to send us a complete application dossier because, without it, we can't compare the content of their education or training with that required for the corresponding professional activity in Switzerland.

# Academic recognition

Have you gained a foreign upper secondary school leaving certificate or a bachelor's or master's degree outside Switzerland? Would you like to continue your studies at a Swiss higher education institution (HEI)? If so, contact the matriculation (registra-

tion) office at the institution of your choice directly, and then send them your application for admission. Unlike other countries, Switzerland does not have a central commission that assesses foreign academic qualifications. Each HEI sets its own terms for

admission, and it alone has the authority to accept or reject the diplomas submitted to it. In other words, the higher education institution where you aim to study will make a completely independent decision on whether or not to admit you.

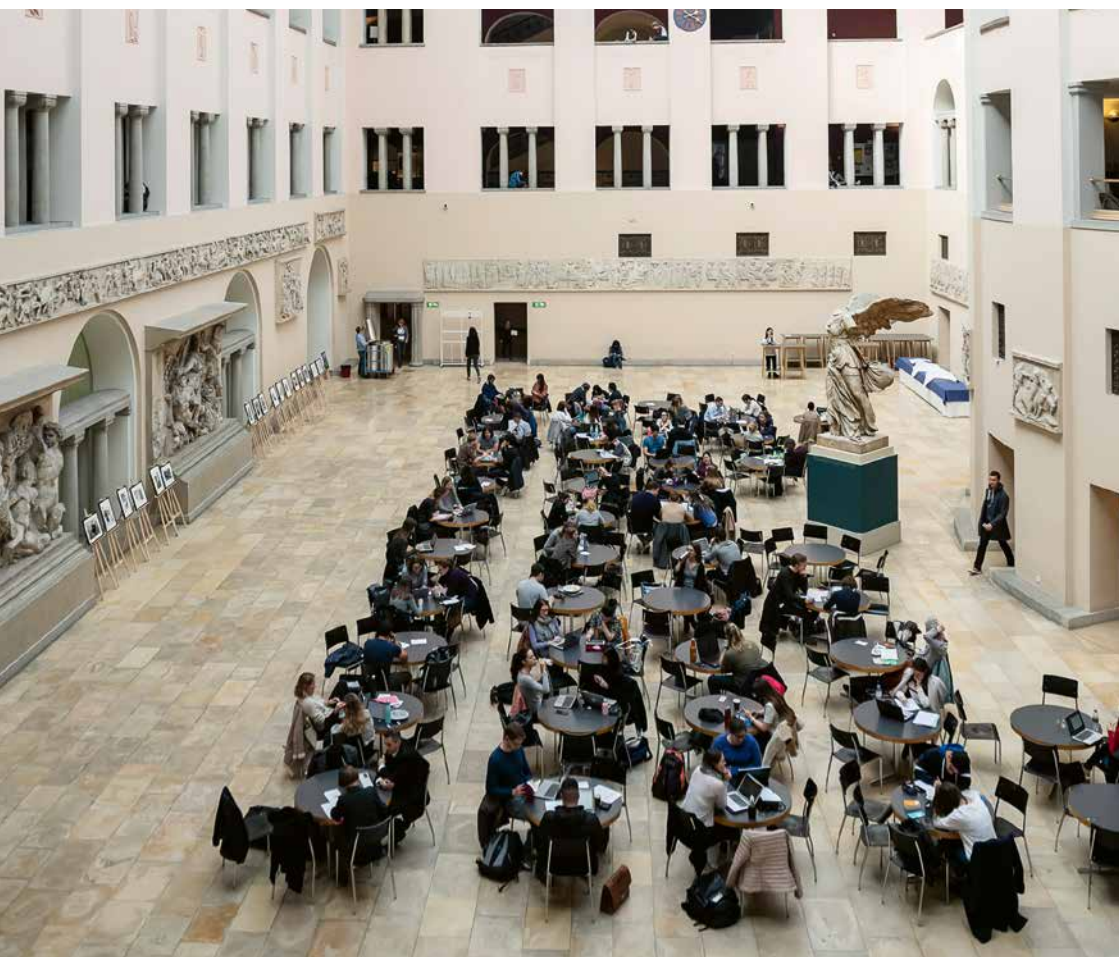
Since you hold a foreign qualification, you may have to go through an additional admission process, take remedial exams, or attend additional classes before being allowed to start your course.

## Good to know

### School-leaving certificates

It is not possible to have foreign upper secondary school-leaving certificates recognised. Those wishing to embark on higher education can find information on the equivalence of their academic title at [Swissuniversities / Swiss Enic](#). They can also check whether or not they satisfy the general conditions for admission to Swiss higher education institutions

➤ [www.enic.ch](#) > English (top right) > Higher Education Admission



## Ladislav Mravec

### 37, Master of Laws student

#### “A Google search doesn’t tell you what life is like in Switzerland!”

Originally from Slovakia, Ladislav Mravec first studied economics and sports management at university in his home country. During the course, he spent an exchange year in Cologne, where he learned German. For his second master’s degree, he chose Olympic Studies at the University of Peloponnese, Sparta

campus, in Greece. “I could see myself working in international relations with a link to sport,” he explains.

Having returned to Slovakia, he found a job with the Ministry of Sport in Bratislava, where he realised that he lacked legal training: “So I decided to do a bachelor’s degree by distance learning, with

a university that allowed me to study while continuing to work”.

Ladislav is currently writing a doctoral thesis by distance learning on the threats associated with sports betting, match-rigging and corruption in the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Germany. “Not yet knowing Switzerland, I decided to do a master’s degree in law.”

Ladislav easily found all the information he needed to begin studying in Switzerland by Google search. He thus enrolled at the University of Zurich.

“The University confirmed my place in mid-June, but told me that I had until the beginning of September to get a level C1 certificate in German. It was already summer. I looked all over Europe, but there weren’t many language schools administering the tests, and all the dates seemed to have been booked up already. Finally I got lucky and was able to take the test more or less at the last minute in Munich. Obviously, if I’d known I’d have done it earlier!”

Unlike other students, Ladislav has to take the course in Swiss criminal law, and do the exam and get his grade, before the end of his studies: “Luckily Swiss criminal law is based on the fundamentals of Roman law, just like Slovak criminal law. I’m having trouble at the language level, mainly, because there are so many technical terms to learn”.

Ladislav submitted his degree certificates to Swiss ENIC. The recommendation of recognition is not essential to be admitted to a Swiss higher education institution, but it is an asset when it comes to looking for a job in the future.

Ladislav has lived in Switzerland for a year now, and is juggling studying and working. He has to be organised. “The cost of living

➤ **Getting into the university wasn’t a problem. That said, the cost of living in Switzerland is very high, and it isn’t easy to find a job.**

here is very high. I go to university one or two days a week and share the rest of my time between my job, my revisions and my doctoral thesis. Finding work was more complicated than I thought it would be. A Google search doesn’t tell you what life is like when you’re here!”

“After graduation I’d like to stay in Switzerland and work for one of the international sporting organisations that are based here.”

## Visual recap

You have qualifications gained abroad and you wish to ...

... find work in  
Switzerland

... study at a Swiss higher education institution  
(university, federal institute of technology, university  
of applied sciences or university of teacher education)

You have qualifications ...

... that give you access to regulated professions via VET programmes  
(dental assistant, medical assistant, driving instructor, etc.)

... as a social worker, civil engineer or architect

... as a VET college lecturer

... as a doctor, dentist, pharmacist, psychologist, psychotherapist, vet or  
chiropractor

... that give you access to healthcare professions at the VET and  
university of applied sciences level (nurse, physiotherapist,  
midwife, etc.)

... as a teacher (nursery, primary, lower and upper secondary school),  
speech therapist, special needs teacher or psychomotor therapist

... as a lawyer or notary

... as a forester, taxi-driver, security officer or complementary therapist

... that give you access to non-regulated professions via VET programmes  
(cook, car mechanic, hairdresser, computer scientist, hospitality specialist,  
etc.)

... from a higher education institution that give you access to a non-  
regulated profession (biologist, software engineer, economist, etc.)

Contact the institution concerned directly, and send your application  
form to the matriculation (registration) office.

Submit your application for recognition to:

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)  
➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch) > English (top right)

Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH)  
➤ [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch) > English (top right)

Swiss Red Cross (SRC)  
➤ [www.redcross.ch](http://www.redcross.ch)

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)  
➤ [www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch) > English (top right)

Competent cantonal authority

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI)  
➤ [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma) > English (top right)  
In this case you can just get a “level certificate” here.

Swiss ENIC  
➤ [www.enic.ch](http://www.enic.ch) > English (top right)  
In this case you can just get a “recommendation of recognition” here.

This recap mentions only the main authorities that have the power to recognise foreign qualifications in Switzerland. There are others. To find out more, please visit [www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/diploma) > English (top right).

# Additional resources

- [www.berufsberatung.ch](http://www.berufsberatung.ch), for all questions about apprenticeships, career paths and training
- [www.adressen.sdbb.ch](http://www.adressen.sdbb.ch), address of careers advice offices
- [www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > **English (top right)**, website of the State Secretariat for Migration, with information on living, training and working in Switzerland
- [www.studyinswitzerland.plus](http://www.studyinswitzerland.plus), English-language information portal on higher education institutions, studying and life in Switzerland
- [www.shop.sdbb.ch](http://www.shop.sdbb.ch), SDBB publications covering the professional activities and types of education/training available in Switzerland



## Legal notice

1st edition 2020  
© 2020 SDBB, Berne. All rights reserved.

### Publisher:

Swiss Service Centre for Vocational Education and Training | Vocational, Educational and Career Guidance SDBB  
SDBB Publishing, [www.sdbb.ch](http://www.sdbb.ch), [verlag@sdbb.ch](mailto:verlag@sdbb.ch)  
The SDBB is an institution within the EDK.

**Researchers and editors:** Fabio Ballinari, Jean-Noël Cornaz, Regula Luginbühl, SDBB

**Translation:** ch Foundation Language Service, Berne

**Proofreading:** François Donnet, Jacqueline Provini, SERI; Marianne Gattiker, Saint-Aubin-Sauges

**Photos:** Viola Barberis, Claro; Maurice K. Grünig, Zurich; Iris Krebs, Berne; Thierry Parel, Geneva;

Thierry Porchet, Yvonand

**Graphic design and formatting:** Andrea Lüthi, SDBB

**Printing:** Cavelti, Gossau

### Distribution and customer service:

SDBB Vertrieb, Industriestrasse 1, 3052 Zollikofen  
Tel. +41 (0)848 999 001, [vertrieb@sdbb.ch](mailto:vertrieb@sdbb.ch),  
[www.shop.sdbb.ch](http://www.shop.sdbb.ch)

**Artical numbers:** LO8-3062 (single copy) und LO8-3063 (bundel of 20 copies)  
This booklet is also available in German, French and Italian.

Our thanks to all of the companies and everyone involved in the production of this document.  
Issued with the support of SERI.



**Are you intending to settle in Switzerland and work or study here? Do you know what you need to do to get your foreign qualifications recognised?**

**This booklet explains the qualification recognition process, and the situations in which it is necessary. It also offers specific examples in the form of personal stories, as well as an interview with an expert.**