



**KEY FIGURES**



Sources: SECO; SERI, 2020

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND

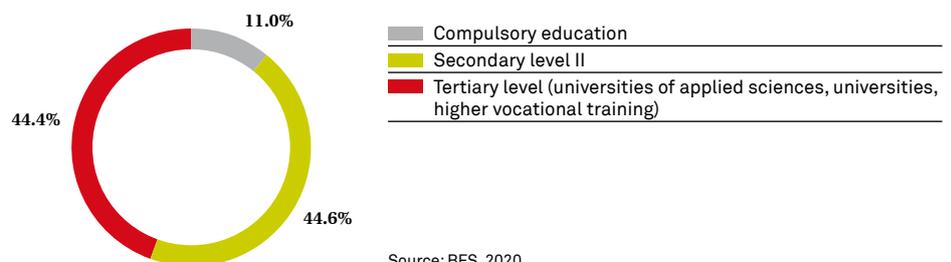
**AT A GLANCE**

The high quality of vocational training is a central pillar of the innovative strength and efficiency of the Swiss economy. A total of 240 different vocations can be learned through direct channels in Switzerland. The vocational training courses, each lasting two to four years, focus on professional qualifications that are actually in demand and on jobs that are currently available. The resulting highly educated professionals form the basis for an excellent talent pool for companies based in Switzerland. The economy thus has an ideal selection of specialist professionals at its disposal, thanks to this combination of academic education and vocational training.

The Swiss vocational training has a high labor market relevance and is an integral part of the education system. It is divided into sectors: upper-secondary level vocational education and training (VET) and tertiary-level professional education. The VET system is based on the duality between theory and practice. The Swiss dual education system has generated great international interest. Switzerland thus exchanges knowledge on both diplomatic and technical levels.

**Educational Status of the Swiss Population**

% of permanent residents aged 25–64 according to highest educational qualification, 2019



## SECONDARY LEVEL II: BASIC VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- Switzerland has a training system that optimally meets the requirements of the economy. According to the WEF's Global Competitiveness Report, the Swiss vocational training system performs best in an international comparison.

### Quality of vocational training

international comparison, 2019

Country	Rank
 Switzerland	1
 Austria	2
 Netherlands	3
 Denmark	4
 Finland	5
 Singapore	6
 Germany	7
 USA	8
 Luxembourg	9
 Norway	10

Source: WEF Global Competitiveness Report, 2019

- Upon completing obligatory education, around **two thirds of young people in Switzerland opt to undertake foundational vocational training**. This proportion has remained steady for many years.

### The ten most frequently chosen initial professional training programs

Number of learners, 2019

Profession	Total
Business administration	13,067
Health specialist	4,814
Retail specialist	4,395
Care specialist	3,816
IT technician	2,047
Electrician	1,944
Logistician	1,733
Chef	1,589
Illustrator	1,580
Retail Assistant	1,546

Source: BFS, 2020

- At **secondary level II**, young people qualify for the first time after compulsory education. A completed education on the secondary level II does not only give them access to the next education level. It also prepares young adults to enter the labor market as qualified workers. The graduation rate at secondary level II is **91.2%** in Switzerland.

- There are two sides to the **apprenticeship market**: host companies that offer apprenticeship positions (supply side) and young people looking for apprenticeship positions (demand side). The state acts as an intermediary: it ensures the best possible apprenticeship conditions for host companies; it encourages the creation of apprenticeship positions; and it provides guidance and counseling services to young people to help them choose a career.
- Apprentices increase their productivity during their training and are therefore more valuable to businesses. The **cost-benefit ratio** is an important factor for a business when deciding whether to become involved in vocational training. Employers offering training programs in Switzerland can generally achieve a **positive net gain**. On the one hand this is because apprentices can be employed at low wages, and on the other hand, because their having been trained according to the company's requirements leads to lower recruitment costs. Apprentices also have a tendency to be loyal to the company where they trained, often returning at a later stage in their career.
- Most apprenticeships take place in small businesses. In addition, there are different forms of organization of vocational training through training associations and training centers.
- Training service providers** such as libs (Industrielle Berufslehren Schweiz) guarantee professional and practical training (see case study). Libs works with over 100 companies and is the largest provider of basic vocational training to Swiss industry.

### Switzerland's positions at the last world championships of vocational skills

EuroSkills	
Budapest 2018	1
Gothenburg 2016	1
Lille 2014	4
Spa 2012	2
WorldSkills	
Kazan 2019	4
Abu Dhabi 2017	2
São Paulo 2015	4
Leipzig 2013	2

Source: www.swiss-skills.ch, 2020

- For decades, Switzerland has been **one of the leading nations in the world championships of vocational skills** - thanks to the Swiss vocational training system, which ensures high-quality, practical and versatile basic vocational training.

## TERTIARY LEVEL: VOCATIONAL BACCALAUREATE, UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES AND HIGHER VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- The **higher vocational training and education** forms the **tertiary level of the education system**, with the universities of applied sciences (UAS) and the universities/ ETHs. Advanced professional education and training enables professionals with a Swiss Federal Certificate of Competence or a similar degree to specialize in a particular subject and to enhance their specialist knowledge. It is also possible to obtain qualifications in Corporate Management. The number of qualifications earned in higher vocational training has almost tripled between 2000 and 2018. The main reason for this was the recognition of specialized studies in the field of health.
- Slightly more than a third (38%) of all young adults have a **baccalaureate**. Approximately 20% achieve a **high-school baccalaureate** qualifying them for university studies, with 15% receiving a **vocational baccalaureate**. This percentage is somewhat lower than in other countries, since school leavers with vocational training also receive a competitive and very prestigious education and have access to training programs at the tertiary level.
- The **vocational baccalaureate** makes it possible for students to transfer to a **university of applied sciences** without having to take any further examinations. It can be completed during the apprenticeship or afterwards. By taking an additional examination, the “Vocational Baccalaureate - Universities”, it is also possible to transfer to a university or a Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH).
- The universities of applied science are divided into seven regions. They have two stages – Bachelor and Master degrees – and are active in 12 different subjects. There are also additional private UAS which teach in the areas of economy and health. The number of bachelor’s degrees increased by 60% between 2010 and 2018. The selection of master’s courses on offer has also been expanded over the years.

### Graduates of universities of applied sciences by field of study and level of graduation, 2019

Field of study	Bachelor	Master
Architecture, Construction and Planning	911	144
Engineering and IT	2,707	277
Chemistry and Life Sciences	516	180
Agriculture and Forestry	129	0
Business, Management and Services	4,455	905
Design	662	222
Sports	26	7
Music, Theater and other Arts	854	1,225
Applied Linguistics	119	36
Social Work	1,623	107
Applied Psychology	180	101
Health	1,936	149
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,118</b>	<b>3,353</b>

Source: BFS – SHIS-studex, 2020

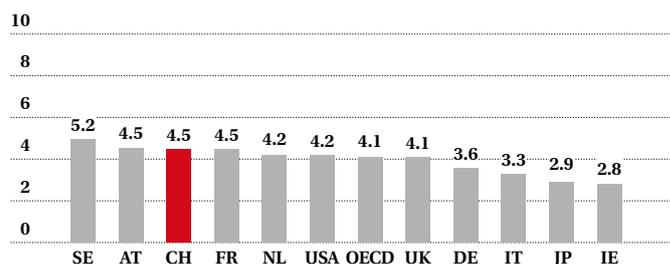
- According to the WEF’s Global Competitiveness Report, Switzerland is among the world’s top three in the categories of **labor market, skills and innovation capability**. This underlines the high status of training and further education in Switzerland.

## RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN DIPLOMAS AND FUNDING

- The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) **recognizes many foreign qualifications and diplomas**. Recognition makes it easier for holders of foreign qualifications to carry out a professional activity regulated in Switzerland and to integrate into the Swiss labor market.
- Switzerland works closely with the European Union within the framework of the Swiss-EU Bilateral Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP) and has adopted the EU’s system of **mutual recognition of professional qualifications**. Nationals from non-EU states are also entitled to apply for recognition of their foreign qualifications in Switzerland. SERI’s national contact point provides general information about the recognition of foreign qualifications.

### Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP

Public funds, primary to tertiary level of education (2017)



Source: OECD “Education at a Glance 2020”

- **Public investment** in vocational training amounted to around **3.5 billion Swiss francs annually** in recent years. The cantons, which are responsible for implementing vocational training, take on three quarters of the costs. The federal government’s share is one quarter of the costs of the public sector. Up to ten percent of the federal funding is slated for supporting development projects and special services within the public sector.

## TESTIMONIAL



“Switzerland’s dual education system is unique in the world and clearly a strength of our country. The combination of theoretical knowledge transfer and practical application is of very high value for both young people and companies. The prospective specialists thus gain practical experience at an early stage and learn to work independently. With

its apprenticeship, Siemens ensures the high-quality training of its young people and identifies talent at an early stage. In Switzerland, we employ around 250 apprentices and train them at our own training centers in Zug and Zurich and on the job in our departments.”

MATTHIAS REBELLIOUS  
CEO of Siemens Switzerland  
[www.siemens.ch](http://www.siemens.ch)

## CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Swiss vocational education and training (VET) system has generated great international interest. Switzerland **exchanges knowledge** on both diplomatic and technical levels. It also receives numerous foreign delegations interested in finding out more about the Swiss system. At the same time, Switzerland maintains a continuous dialogue with countries that have their own VET systems or would like to develop one. In 2014, 2016 and 2018, the **International Congress on Vocational and Professional Education and Training was held in Winterthur** and served as a platform for open dialogue and the exchange of good practices between 70 different countries.
- Switzerland indirectly takes part in EU education and youth programs (**Erasmus+**). Among other things, this includes funding for mobility and cooperation activities in the area of VPET ([www.movetia.ch](http://www.movetia.ch)).

## CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

### Authorities and regulators

[State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation \(SERI\)](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training \(SFIVET\)](http://sfivet.swiss)  
[sfivet.swiss](http://sfivet.swiss)

[swissuniversities](http://swissuniversities.ch)  
[swissuniversities.ch](http://swissuniversities.ch)

### Further information

[Vocational and professional education and training in Switzerland – Facts and figures 2020](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Overview of universities of applied sciences in Switzerland \(in German, French and Italian\)](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Overview of all courses and studies studyprogrammes.ch](http://studyprogrammes.ch)

[Recognition of foreign qualifications and diplomas](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Specialist information on vocational training, vocational guidance and the labor market, with an overview of current developments in the domain of vocational training \(in German, French and Italian\)](http://panorama.ch)  
[panorama.ch](http://panorama.ch)

[University Rankings](http://universityrankings.ch)  
[universityrankings.ch](http://universityrankings.ch)

[Professional register of all federally-accredited professions \(in German, French and Italian\)](http://bvz.admin.ch/bvz)  
[bvz.admin.ch/bvz](http://bvz.admin.ch/bvz)

[Apprenticeship barometer: survey among young people and enterprises on the apprenticeship situation \(in German, French and Italian\)](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Leading Houses – for the sustainable development of vocational training research in Switzerland](http://sbfi.admin.ch)  
[sbfi.admin.ch](http://sbfi.admin.ch)

[Center for Research in Economics of Education](http://ffb.unibe.ch)  
[ffb.unibe.ch](http://ffb.unibe.ch)

[National campaign focusing on supporting talent \(in German, French and Italian\)](http://berufsbildungplus.ch)  
[berufsbildungplus.ch](http://berufsbildungplus.ch)

**S-GE resources**  
[Handbook for Investors](http://s-ge.com/handbookforinvestors)  
[s-ge.com/handbookforinvestors](http://s-ge.com/handbookforinvestors)

[More fact sheets on Switzerland as a business location](http://s-ge.com/factsheets)  
[s-ge.com/factsheets](http://s-ge.com/factsheets)

This fact sheet was produced with the kind support of Swissmem.

### WE OFFER FREE CONSULTATION

Are you expanding in Europe and considering Switzerland as a business location for your company? Here, you can get free advice and support throughout the entire settlement process: We will connect you unbureaucratically with the cantonal business promotion agencies and provide you with expert contacts for matters such as taxes, real estate, etc.

Get in touch with us: [s-ge.com/invest](http://s-ge.com/invest)