

SWISS VOTERS REJECT THE “NO 10-MILLION-SWITZERLAND!” INITIATIVE

KEY POINTS AT A GLANCE

- On 14 June 2026, the federal popular initiative "No 10-Million-Switzerland! (Sustainability Initiative)" was rejected.
- As a result, no constitutional threshold for the permanent resident population in Switzerland will be introduced.
- The Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU remains in force and is unchanged.
- For companies based in Switzerland, facilitated access to workers and specialists from the EU/EFTA area remains in place.
- The current Swiss residence and admission rules also remain unchanged for internationally mobile private individuals.
- However, the issue of proactively managing immigration remains on the political agenda.

INITIATIVE AND POLITICAL DEMAND

On 14 June 2026, the People and the Cantons rejected the federal popular initiative "No 10-Million-Switzerland! (Sustainability Initiative)" by 54.79% of all votes and by 14 of the 26 Cantons.

Had the initiative been adopted, the Federal Constitution would have been supplemented by a new provision, under which Switzerland's permanent resident population would not have been permitted to exceed 10 million people before 2050. Once the resident population reached 9.5 million, the Federal Council and Parliament would have had to take measures, particularly in the areas of asylum seekers and family reunification. As a last resort, the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons of 21 June 1999 with the EU (AFMP) would have had to be terminated. This, through the so-called "guillotine clause", could also have triggered the lapse of the other Bilateral I treaties in important areas such as the elimination of technical barriers to trade, public procurement, agriculture, overland transport, air transport and research.

RETENTION OF THE STATUS QUO

Because the initiative was rejected, these mechanisms will not take effect. The current legal position remains unchanged. Ordinary immigration to Switzerland therefore continues to follow a dual system.

Nationals of EU and EFTA member states continue to benefit from facilitated access to the Swiss labour market under the AFMP: persons in gainful employment who have an employment contract are, in principle, granted a residence permit, without quotas and without priority being given to domestic workers.

EU/EFTA nationals who are not economically active may freely take up residence in Switzerland under the AFMP if they have sufficient financial means and health insurance.

Under the AFMP, EU/EFTA nationals enjoy comparatively broad residence rights for family members, in principle, irrespective of those family members' nationality. This specifically includes spouses, children and descendants, as well as dependent relatives in the ascending and descending lines (e.g. parents).

Third-country nationals continue to be subject to the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA) and the Ordinance on Admission, Stay and Employment (OASA). Their admission to the labour market is already numerically limited (annual quotas), requires priority to be given to domestic and EU/EFTA workers and is restricted to qualified specialists.

Wealthy third-country nationals who are not economically active in Switzerland may be granted a Swiss residence permit if important public interests are present, including in the context of so-called residence permits for retirees or in cases of substantial cantonal fiscal interests, frequently in connection with lump-sum taxation.

For third-country nationals, family reunification is governed by the FNIA and remains narrowly defined: as a rule, only spouses

and unmarried children under 18 years of age may be admitted by way of family reunification (i.e. not parents).

The existing rules on admission and family reunification also remain unchanged in the asylum area.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND OUTLOOK

The issue of proactively managing immigration remains politically relevant in Switzerland. It can therefore be expected that further political proposals addressing this topic will be launched in the coming years, whether by way of popular or parliamentary initiative.

The focus at present is on the Switzerland–EU package ("Bilaterals III"), which was signed on 2 March 2026 and submitted to Parliament with the dispatch on 13 March 2026. In the migration area, it provides, among other things, for a revised AFMP and an autonomous safeguard clause that would allow Switzerland to limit immigration autonomously in the event of serious problems. Parliamentary deliberations on the package are ongoing. It is currently disputed whether the package should be subject to a mandatory referendum or merely to an optional treaty referendum. Either way, a popular vote is expected in the course of 2027.

In addition, on 29 January 2025, in response to the "No 10-Million-Switzerland!" initiative, the Federal Council had already initiated specific regulatory and political adjustments that remain relevant even after the initiative's rejection.

The most important proposed measures are the following:

- The Federal Council intends to strengthen the integration of family members admitted by way of family reunification into the labour market through an amendment to the FNIA. To this end, it has provided for the introduction of mandatory notification to the cantonal Career, Study and Vocational Counseling Services for persons admitted by way of family reunification who are not yet economically active and who have a foreign professional qualification or who do not have any upper-secondary education qualification. Building on this, the individuals concerned are to be invited to a voluntary counselling

meeting. This measure is intended to make it easier for Swiss companies to find and recruit more workers domestically.

- The Federal Council has also announced that it will standardise and tighten the practice regarding short-term residence permits and residence permits around staff leasing. An amendment to the Ordinance on the Free Movement of Persons (OFMP) is intended to lead to a more restrictive and more uniform approach in this area. This is particularly relevant for Swiss companies with EU/EFTA temporary staff, project-related assignments or staffing-intensive business models.
- In addition, the Federal Council has proposed an amendment to the Federal Act on the Acquisition of Real Estate by Persons Abroad ("Lex Koller"). Among other things, the proposal provides that acquisitions by certain third-country nationals of business premises, primary residences, interests in listed residential real estate companies, units in real estate funds or real estate SICAVs (open-ended collective investment schemes with variable capital), as well as of holiday apartments and aparthotels, are to be regulated more restrictively.
- In the housing sector, the federal Fund for Promoting Non-Profit Housing Construction is to be increased by a total of CHF 150 million over a period from 2030 to 2034.
- As part of the overall federal asylum strategy, measures are to be examined to reduce asylum applications or accelerate procedures.

In addition, further European-policy proposals are pending at a federal level, notably the so called "Kompass Initiative", which requires that international treaties incorporating important legislative provisions, such as the above-mentioned Switzerland–EU package, be subject to a mandatory referendum and therefore always to the approval of the People and the Cantons.

A renewed debate on the issue of proactively managing immigration, whether through the Switzerland–EU package or through further federal popular initiatives, is therefore to be expected.

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