

Free movement of persons: Switzerland benefits

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At a glance

The latest federal report on the effects of the free movement of persons since 2002 shows that immigration to Switzerland has changed significantly. In contrast to previous years, it is now mainly well to very well qualified people who are immigrating. The feared pressure on wages has largely failed to materialize and the social security system has been relieved financially.

The "8th Report of the Observatory on the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons between Switzerland and the EU" presented today in Bern shows in detail how immigration to Switzerland has changed since 2002. Conclusion: While migration from third countries has remained stable, immigration from EU/EFTA countries has increased significantly. However, this was not an end in itself, but because the growing Swiss economy urgently needed these workers.

According to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Seco), the often-heard claim that immigrants are forcing locals out of the labor market cannot be substantiated. The unemployment rate is low in both population groups and is even trending downwards. With a few exceptions, there has also been no pressure on salaries: Since 2002, real wages in Switzerland have grown by an average of 0.6 percent per year - in the previous ten years, this figure had been just 0.2 percent.

AHV and IV benefit

83% of today's immigrants have at least an upper secondary school leaving certificate, 51% even have a tertiary degree. The incomes of these people are correspondingly high and they therefore also make an important contribution to the financing of Swiss social insurance, in particular the AHV and IV. The federal government's report states unequivocally: "Employees from EU/EFTA states currently contribute significantly more to these social insurance schemes than they receive from them."

Overall, the Seco report impressively demonstrates that Switzerland benefits from the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the EU in a variety of ways. *economiesuisse* is aware that higher immigration also has negative side effects, for which concrete solutions must now be developed. However, the various popular initiatives calling for the free movement of persons to be terminated would be detrimental to prosperity in Switzerland. The umbrella organization will therefore fight them resolutely.