

An information leaflet for parents

Young Muslims learning a profession in Switzerland

What is this leaflet about?

Around 70% of young people in Switzerland learn a profession after having completed their obligatory schooling by taking a basic vocational training. Statistics however show that immigrants more often than Swiss do not complete any kind of training after finishing their mandatory schooling, and that they are very seldom promoted to high school. This applies even more so to Muslim immigrants. That means that they will not get good jobs and there is no chance of advancement. This leaflet will show you that if employers and parents are open-minded and flexible it is no problem to successfully integrate young Muslims into the Swiss professional world.

Whom does this leaflet address?

This information leaflet is for parents of young Muslims. It was written by career counsellors in co-operation with Muslim advisors and representatives of the Muslim Community of Switzerland.



Life and education in Switzerland

In Switzerland school education and vocational training are considered very important and crucial. This should apply also for Muslims. The more you know, the better you can deal with a given situation, and the better you can fend for yourself. Learning the language of the country is therefore crucial.

What is a basic vocational training?

A basic vocational training means an apprenticeship or job training in an industrial, commercial, agricultural, social or educational profession. It lasts three or four years. There are also two-year vocational trainings available for youths with learning and/or language difficulties. The trainees learn the practical work on the job whilst the theoretical and general education are covered at vocational schools. After having completed the basic vocational training one can work as a qualified professional. Basic vocational training also prepares one for various careers. One can specialise in ones job, make a follow-up apprenticeship in a related trade or take up an advanced training to become a boss. Particularly talented trainees can enter for a Vocational Matriculation (Berufsmaturität) or attend a technical college (Fachhochschule). It is even possible to enter university after having completed a preparation course. But one thing one can take for granted: the professional world is changing! It is not enough to just make a vocational training and that's it. One must constantly be ready to learn new things and adapt to new situations.

How to choose a profession?

In Switzerland it is possible to learn more than 250 professions! There are professions that require manual or technical skills and others that require a very good knowledge of languages or mathematics. The chosen profession should suit the person. This means, that it is very important to choose the most suitable profession. Parents and young people should seek information in good time (i.e. from 8th grade) about the

possibilities and the requirements of a profession, and also search for a suitable place to be apprenticed (Lehrstelle). To get thoroughly informed helps you to decide about a profession or where to ask for help.

Where to go for information and counselling

Career information events provide insight into specific professions for young people and their parents. To take part in such events is highly recommended. Many leaflets and brochures about professions and addresses of possible employers and/or schools are available from career information centres. If you feel unsure or have questions regarding the chosen profession, don't hesitate to ask for a personal appointment with a career counsellor. At the school or Municipality you will be given the address of the nearest-by Career Information Centre.

Each canton has at least one Career Information Centre (Berufsberatungsstelle): www.berufsberatung.ch > BIZ. These centres are often better known under one of the following abbreviations: In the German speaking part of Switzerland BIZ. In the French speaking part of Switzerland OP, OSP, OCOSP

Why is a training after mandatory schooling important?

Without a proper vocational training there is no well-paid job available. In Switzerland, jobs for unskilled people are becoming more and more scarce and unemployment increases. Without a good education and training the risk is high not to find a job at all.

This applies to girls as well. They, too, should have a good education in order to contribute to the family income in case of need. For a family with children living in Switzerland, it might be necessary that both, husband and wife, earn for the family income. You also have to bear in mind that according to Swiss law, it is not only the responsibility of the husband to support the family, but also the wife's.

Are girls at risk during a vocational training in a company?

Women and men are protected by Swiss law against any form of sexual harassment at their place of work. The employers are responsible for the implementation of this law.

Can Islamic Rules regarding food be observed?

Most apprenticeship places (Lehrstellen) are in small and medium companies. In most cases, they have no canteens. The employees can bring their lunch from at home if they wish to do so. Bigger companies often have canteens. In most of these canteens, vegetarian meals or meals without pork are available. It should therefore be no problem to adhere to Islamic rules regarding food and beverages. Nobody is obliged to drink alcohol! But one thing one has to bear in mind: To be trained as a cook means to learn how to prepare pork (although one doesn't have to eat it). And if one chooses a vocational training as service personnel one will have to sell and serve alcohol. And one will also have to advise guests who want to drink alcohol. After having completed ones vocational training it is however possible to find work in a place where no pork and/or no alcohol is sold.

Can girls with head-scarves also be trained?

Basically, it is possible for a girl wearing a head-scarf to make a vocational training. But it is up to the employer to accept it or not. In Switzerland, many people feel embarrassed by the scarf. In some businesses (e.g. banks) there are dress-codes for some places of work (e.g. counter services). This means, there it would not be allowed to wear a scarf. Girls and parents should consider the consequences well. It certainly is much more difficult to find a place for an apprenticeship wearing a head-scarf than without. Employers

are basically free to engage whomever they want. If a girl wishes to wear a scarf, she should be able to convincingly explain this wish at an interview.

Vocational trainings in the health services

Some years ago, the separation of sexes in Swiss hospitals was normal. It meant that women were looked after by women only. This has changed. Women may have to take care of men, and men of women. After having completed your vocational training as a healthcare assistant it might be possible to work at a women's hospital or in the gynaecological ward. It might also be possible to specialise in other health-professions (laboratory, mid-wife), in social professions or in house-keeping.

Going to work

Sometimes one cannot avoid having to travel quite far between where one lives and where one works. It is true that in traditional or Islamic societies decency requires that a girl or woman be accompanied if they travel for some distance. But these rules are for safety reasons only; they are not meant to hinder the freedom of movement of women and girls. Where public safety is granted, which is mostly the case in Switzerland, there is no need to accompany women and girls on their way to work.

Most children of immigrant families will remain in Switzerland. This applies to children of Muslim families as well. If they want to be successful, they must learn to align their religious and cultural identity with Swiss society norms.

www.berufsberatung.ch/migration
www.orientation.ch/migration

Deutsch: Muslimische Jugendliche lernen in der Schweiz einen Beruf, s. www.be.ch/biz-dokumente

Français: Des jeunes musulmans et des jeunes musulmanes apprennent un métier en Suisse, voir sous www.be.ch/op-documents