“Labour Law and Status S”

Summary of the JobBridge Switzerland webinar: your rights and obligations on the Swiss labour market

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Finding a job is only half the task. The other half is understanding the terms you work under, what your contract must contain, how your salary is calculated and where to turn if something goes wrong. The first thematic webinar of the JobBridge Switzerland programme was devoted to labour law and Status S. Mariana Tabarkevych has worked in Switzerland since 2022 – first in a social services department, now in cantonal administration. She combined the legal basics with her own experience and that of the hundreds of Ukrainians she has supported.

Important: this information is general in nature and does not replace individual legal advice. Specific conditions depend on your contract, the collective labour agreement (GAV) in your sector and your canton. The expert expresses her personal views, not the official position of any authority.

Key takeaways

1. **Status S is valid at least until 4 March 2028.** Programme S – language courses, integration measures – also continues.
2. **New rules do not apply retroactively.** An existing Status S remains valid, even if the person comes from a region now considered safe.
3. **After five years there are three different routes to a B permit**, with different requirements and consequences.
4. **No work permit is needed any more – but the Meldung is mandatory.** Your employer registers your employment via EasyGov.
5. **Only a written contract protects you.** Oral agreements are valid but almost impossible to prove.
6. **There is no national minimum wage.** Check the GAV for your sector and cantonal rules.
7. **Report every change in income to social services.** A miscalculated budget after seasonal work is one of the most common traps.
8. **Documents are your main evidence.** Contract, time records, payslips, bank statements – keep everything.

1. Status S: what applies now and what has changed

Protection Status S has been extended until **4 March 2028**. What happens next depends on the situation: the status may be extended again or, once Ukraine is safe, lifted. **Programme S** also continues, supporting language learning, integration courses and labour-market programmes.

When could Status S end?

Moderator Svitlana Prokopchuk put this question to SEM spokesperson Samuel Wyss. His answer: the SEM will assess not just a signed ceasefire document but the **actual situation in Ukraine**. The decision will be coordinated with the EU, just as the introduction of the status was. Even after a decision to lift the status, no one would have to return "the next day" – time would be given. According to the expert, people in employment would be able to keep working in Switzerland for roughly another year while preparing to return.

Changes for new applications

1. **Since November 2025**, several regions of Ukraine have been considered safe – people from there can no longer obtain Status S.
2. **Since 20 August 2026**, applicants must have fulfilled their military obligations towards Ukraine, if these apply to them. People who left legally (not of conscription age, with a deferral, with a disability) apply as before. How other cases will be handled in practice is still unclear.
3. **These rules do not apply retroactively.** All Status S already granted remains valid.

Please send questions about military obligations via the feedback form: the JobBridge team is preparing a separate video interview with the SEM spokesperson on this topic.

2. After five years: three routes to a B permit

Route	Requirements	Good to know
B permit linked to Status S	Five years of uninterrupted residence in Switzerland, no rule violations	Granted virtually automatically: you do not need to apply – letters and forms will arrive, as with Status S. Same rights, just a different name. If Status S is lifted, this B permit lapses too.
B permit via a Härtefallgesuch (hardship application)	Four SEM requirements (see below) plus proof of good integration	The permit is independent of Status S. Cantons interpret the requirements differently; Bern is considered the strictest.
Independent B permit for highly qualified specialists	High or unique qualification, economic interest for Switzerland, priority for Swiss and European candidates, appropriate salary	The employer applies. Five years of residence are not required. Since 2022, around 220 Ukrainians have received such a permit – mostly in IT.

Härtefallgesuch: four mandatory requirements

1. At least one year **without social assistance** – you work and support yourself.

2. **No criminal record**, fines or debt-enforcement entries.
3. **Proven knowledge of the cantonal language** – SEM recommendation: at least A1. In practice, submit the best certificate you hold at the time of application.
4. **Good integration**, documented.

How can you prove integration? Collect written confirmations (Bestätigung) of volunteer work (Freiwilligenarbeit) and involvement in your municipality (Gemeinde) and clubs (Verein): singing in a Christmas choir, a fishing club, helping the scouts – all of this shows community engagement, even when unpaid. Decisions will most likely be based on documents, so it is worth starting now.

Appeals. If the canton rejects an application on grounds of insufficient integration, the rules provide for no court appeal (although some cantons have their own practice). If the canton approves, the file goes automatically to the SEM; an SEM decision can be challenged in court.

3. Ukrainians on the Swiss labour market

Almost **40%** of Ukrainians with Status S in Switzerland are employed. The highest rates are in small cantons such as Appenzell and Obwalden, where few Ukrainians live. Aargau ranks third, thanks to its convenient location (easy commuting to Zurich and other cantons) and mandatory integration measures that motivate people to learn.

The expert notes that it was easier to find work at the beginning – with B1 German, many were hired as interpreters or coordinators in municipalities. Today competition is stronger and employers expect more.

4. Starting a job: step-by-step checklist

1. **Check the terms:** position, salary, working hours, start date.
2. **Meldung via EasyGov.** The work permit requirement for Status S has been abolished, but your employer must register your employment – in the canton where you **work**. This procedure protects you from being paid below the sector norm. Employers often forget – remind them.
3. **Keep your documents:** employment contract and confirmation of the Meldung.
4. **Inform social services** of every income and every change.
5. **Calculate your budget**, especially for seasonal work or work through an agency.
6. **Show the contract to your social worker** before signing.

The seasonal-work trap. In Lenzburg, people worked seasonally for three months and spent all their wages. When the job ended, they received no social assistance: their earnings should have been spread so that they lived on an amount equivalent to social assistance. Rules vary between municipalities (the "municipal lottery"), so seek advice early.

5. Types of employment contract

Contract type	What it is	What to watch for
Unbefristeter Arbeitsvertrag	Permanent contract – the most stable option	Notice periods apply. The employer must confirm the key terms in writing no later than one month after you start.
Befristeter Arbeitsvertrag	Fixed-term contract	Ends on the agreed date without notice. Early termination is possible if provided for in the contract.
Arbeit auf Abruf	On-call work	If hours are guaranteed in writing, you are entitled to be paid for them – even if you are sent home. Oral promises are almost impossible to prove.
Temporärarbeit (Personalverleih)	Work through an agency (Temporärbüro): agency – worker – client company	Your employer is the agency. Check both the framework contract and the **Einsatzvertrag** for each assignment. Notice periods may be shorter. Fees for a job are never acceptable.

What to check in any contract

1. Who the employer is and where you will work.
2. Position, start date and, if applicable, end date.
3. Weekly working hours.
4. Salary, allowances, 13th-month salary.
5. Holiday entitlement.
6. Probation period (Probezeit) and notice periods.
7. Staff regulations, insurance.

6. Salary: who sets the minimum

There is **no** national minimum wage in Switzerland. Pay is regulated at four levels: **federal, cantonal, sector and individual contract**. Some cantons, such as Basel-Stadt, have their own minimum wage. Many sectors have a collective labour agreement – **Gesamtarbeitsvertrag (GAV)** – or a standard employment contract (Normalarbeitsvertrag) that can set binding minimum rates. Always check the sector, place of work, position and qualifications. Agriculture has the lowest wages.

7. Probation, notice and protection against dismissal

The **Probezeit** usually lasts one month and can be extended by agreement to up to three. During probation, either side may terminate with **7 calendar days'** notice. Probation may be extended if this is in line with the contract – as happened to the expert herself.

Notice periods (Kündigungsfrist)

Length of service	Notice	Example
Probation	7 days	No particular reason needed
Year 1	1 month	
Years 2–9	2 months	Notice given 15 October → last day 31 December
From year 10	3 months	

Notice normally runs to the end of a month. The contract or GAV may set different periods. An unusually long notice period (e.g. six months) or a very short one (a few days in a permanent contract) is a reason to seek free legal advice.

Sperrfristen: when you cannot be dismissed

After probation, your employer cannot dismiss you in the ordinary way while you are unable to work through illness or accident that is not your fault: **30 days** in year 1, **90 days** in years 2–5, **180 days** from year 6 (but no longer than the incapacity itself). Protection also applies during pregnancy and for **16 weeks after giving birth**.

Unemployment benefit. After one year of work you are entitled to benefits through the RAV. How the employment ends – by mutual agreement or by the employer – matters, because it affects your entitlement.

8. Arbeitszeugnis – the employment reference

This document does not exist in Ukraine, but in Switzerland it matters a great deal to future employers. References are traditionally written in a coded language: behind warm words such as “she was very pleasant and will be missed”, an experienced reader may see “talked too much and was too direct”. Officially, such codes should no longer be used, but conservative companies still use them.

1. Have your reference read by experienced Swiss colleagues.
2. If you disagree with any wording, ask politely for it to be corrected. Employers usually agree.
3. If your manager asks you to draft the reference yourself, this is acceptable by mutual agreement – the employer reviews and signs the final text.

9. Working hours, holidays and other benefits

The legal maximum is **45 or 50 hours** a week depending on the type of work. It is important to distinguish between:

1. **Überstunden** – hours beyond your contractual hours but within the legal maximum. Compensated with a supplement or time off, depending on the contract.
2. **Überzeit** – hours beyond the legal maximum. Stricter rules apply, with exceptions, e.g. regarding the supplement for the first 60 hours for certain categories.

Example: contract 40 hours, legal limit 45, actually worked 47. Then 5 hours are Überstunden and 2 hours are Überzeit. So the statement "every extra hour always earns 25% more" is an oversimplification.

Benefit	What applies
Holidays	At least 4 paid weeks per year; 5 weeks up to age 20
13th-month salary	Not required by law – only if agreed in the contract
Illness	Depends on contract and insurance (KTG) – often 80% of salary
Maternity	14 weeks at 80% of salary
Other parent's leave	2 weeks within 6 months of the birth

Hourly pay. Check whether holiday pay, public holidays and the 13th-month salary are included in your hourly rate. If so, you will receive no separate pay during holidays – plan your budget accordingly. If your employer justifies this model with tax reasons and you have doubts, seek free advice.

10. Gross, net and the Lohnabrechnung (payslip)

In Switzerland, job interviews and contracts usually refer to **gross** salary. Mandatory contributions are deducted from it:

Contribution	Purpose	Rate / who pays
AHV/IV/EO	Old-age pension, disability, income compensation (maternity, military service)	5.3% employee + 5.3% employer
ALV	Unemployment insurance	1.1% employee + 1.1% employer
BVG (2nd pillar)	Occupational pension	Depends on the pension fund; employer pays at least half
NBU	Non-occupational accident insurance	Mandatory from 8 hours a week; who pays depends on the employer
KTG	Sickness daily allowance	As per contract
Quellensteuer	Tax deducted at source from salary	Depends on canton and family situation

The expert's example: with identical circumstances, her Quellensteuer was 2.8% in Zurich and 4.6% in Aargau.

Tip on church tax. Because the expert stated a religious affiliation on her employer's form, she paid over CHF 50 a month in church tax. Declare your affiliation deliberately – it affects your tax.

Familienzulagen (family allowances). These are paid not by the employer but by the family compensation fund (in Aargau, the SVA), although they often appear on the payslip. In Aargau, for example, it is CHF 215 per child per month; for children in education (including an apprenticeship) the

allowance is higher and continues after age 18. A detailed guide to reading your payslip will soon be published on the JobBridge portal.

11. Traps and where to get help

Situation	Where to turn
Employer has not submitted the Meldung	Remind your employer (they risk a fine). If they refuse: the cantonal labour office or migration office in the canton where you work
Dangerous conditions or far more hours than agreed	Arbeitsinspektorat or Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit. Come with facts: time records, documents
Unpaid wages, dispute over dismissal	Schlichtungsbehörde (conciliation authority), trade unions, free legal advice
Pay below the GAV	Sector joint commission (Paritätische Kommission), trade unions Unia or Syna
Unpaid “trial work”, fees for a job	Legal advice; if fraud is suspected – the police

Job scams. The expert has seen cases where people from Ukraine paid intermediaries for “vacancies” advertised online, only for the intermediaries to disappear with the money. You should never pay to get a job.

Your evidence: contracts, time records, payslips, correspondence, bank statements – what was invoiced and what was actually paid. Raise claims politely, but with facts.

Questions and answers

I am 63. Is it worth working? It is always worth it, but be realistic: finding a job at this age is very difficult; chances are better for those who already speak German. If an opportunity arises, take it.

Is a commission-based contract possible, e.g. in a beauty salon? Yes, this practice exists: the specialist receives a share of the revenue from her own clients. The details are set by the contract.

My probation was extended by a month. Is that normal? Yes, if it is in line with the contract and you were informed. Employers do this when they want to assess your skills further.

A one-year fixed-term contract with one month’s notice – is that allowed? Yes, the two can be combined: early termination is possible if the contract provides for it.

Can pay during probation be lower? It is usually the same, but the contract may provide otherwise. By signing, you accept the terms – read carefully.

Internship at 40% under the contract, but in reality 9 hours a day, mostly cleaning. Is that legal? Interns and apprentices in Switzerland often do work below their qualification – this applies to everyone, not only Ukrainians. But if you are working far more than the contract states, contact the Arbeitsinspektorat or an advice centre.

By what date must wages be paid? Usually by the end of the month; the exact date is set by the contract.

How can I find out whether my employer submitted the Meldung? Ask your employer for confirmation, or contact social services or the migration office in the canton where you work.

The JobBridge Switzerland programme is free of charge for participants and is implemented by USB – United for Support and Belonging with financial support from the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).