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Factsheet on the entry of persons from third countries travelling to Switzerland for religious events (maximum stay of 90 days)

1. What are third countries?

Third countries are countries that do not belong to the European Union or the Schengen area.

2. Who needs a visa to enter Switzerland?

You can find out whether persons wishing to enter Switzerland require a visa on the website of the State Secretariat for Migration.

3. Who has to apply for the visa?

The person wishing to enter Switzerland must apply for the visa at their nearest Swiss representation abroad.

4. When is a short-stay permit required?

If a person from a third country travels to Switzerland in connection with a religious festival and carries out work (e.g. playing music, conducting acts of worship, preaching, etc.), this is regarded as **employment**, even if the activity is voluntary and no salary or fee is paid. An application for a **short-stay permit** must therefore be submitted to the cantonal migration or labour market authorities if a person works for **9 days** or more. If a person works for less than 9 days, a visa is sufficient for entry.

5. How exactly are the number of working days calculated?

Only the days (including Saturdays and Sundays) on which the person actually works are counted towards the 8 working days. For example, if a person stays in Switzerland for four weeks and works two days a week, they do not need a short-stay permit.

6. How do you apply for a short-stay permit?

If the work is done in the Canton of Bern, the religious community (or the person) must submit an application to the Canton of Bern's Office for Economic Affairs. You can find information on how to submit an application on the page Erwerbstätige anstellen aus Drittstaaten (Employing workers from third countries). Use one of the two application forms below to submit the application:

- <u>Gesuchsformular für ausländische Musiker, Bühnenkünstler, Artisten und Discjockeys</u> (Application form for musicians, stage performers, artists and disc jockeys)
- <u>Stellenantritt – Ausländische Arbeitnehmende aus Drittstaaten</u> (Application form for all other activities)
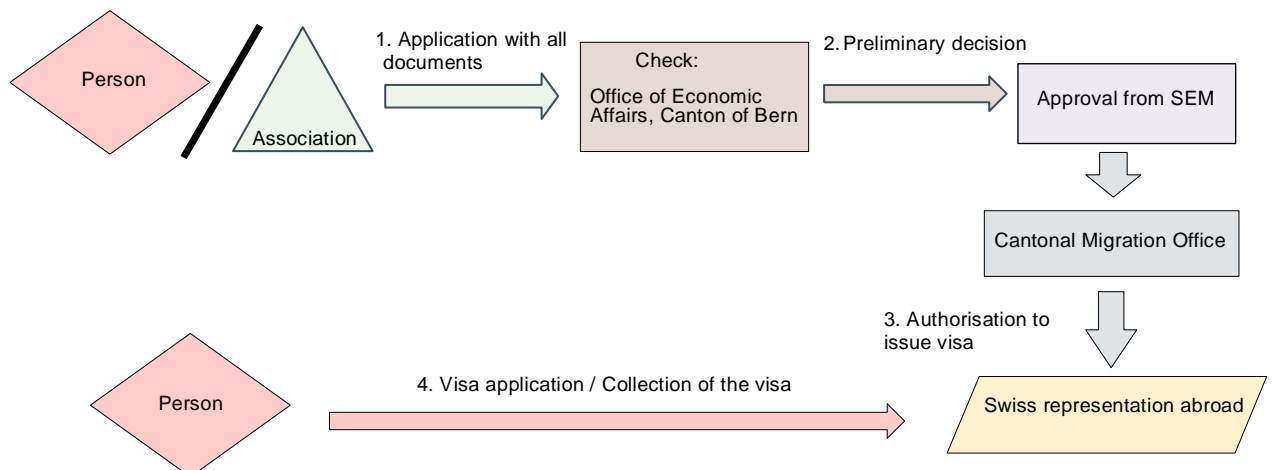
7. Which documents must be submitted with the application?

a. A **detailed explanation**: Why does the person have to come to Switzerland? How long are they planning to stay? What will they be doing in Switzerland and for how long? Where will they be working?

b. An **up-to-date curriculum vitae** of the person visiting the country

c. An **employment or service contract**
   If the person is not being paid a salary or fee, there must at least be some arrangement on meals, accommodation and travel insurance for the duration of the stay.

d. A **declaration** <u>that the person concerned is familiar with the Switzerland's system of social and legal values</u> ([Erklärung betreffend die Vertrautheit mit dem gesellschaftlichen und rechtlichen Wertesystem der Schweiz], only for priests, imams, other religious caregivers)

8. Please note:

- You should submit the application with all the required documentation (in English, German or French) at least eight weeks before entry.
- There is no requirement to register with an OASI (AHV/AVS) office or pay tax at source for unpaid work.

9. Procedure

The application is checked by the Office of Economic Affairs of the Canton of Bern (OEA). The preliminary decision is forwarded to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) for approval. SEM informs the OEA and the Cantonal Migration Office. If the decision is positive, the Cantonal Migration Office authorises the Swiss representation abroad to issue a visa. The Swiss representation abroad informs the person concerned. If all other entry requirements (e.g. valid travel document) are met, the person concerned may enter the country.