

## Philippine – Switzerland Au Pair Program

This program between the Philippines and Switzerland started in 2010, and involves the placement, in Switzerland, of Filipino au pairs between 18 and 30 years of age under a cultural exchange agreement with a Swiss host family. The maximum stay of a Filipino au pair in Switzerland is one year.

Under this scheme, the au pair is placed in a cultural and language learning program in Switzerland. He/she lives with the host family at par (*au pair*) or on equal basis with the members of the family, and share in light household chores, child care and other responsibilities agreed upon in the au pair placement contract. The host family shall provide the au pair with an allowance (pocket money) and assume the cost of his/ her language lessons.

Hiring of au pairs in Switzerland are done through authorized Swiss agencies. A Filipino who is interested to be deployed to Switzerland as an au pair, may either have to find a host family and request a Swiss agency to facilitate the processing of his/her documents in Switzerland, or apply directly with the Swiss agency that will in turn match him/her with a host family seeking an au pair. The Swiss agency will handle the processing of the au pair's documents in Switzerland, including arrangements for the au pair's departure / arrival from the Philippines to Switzerland and the final return to the Philippines.

From the Philippine side, management of the deployment of Filipino au pairs has been liberalized and turned over, principally, to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and the Philippine Bureau of Immigration. Generally, these procedures are followed for Filipino au pairs departing for Switzerland:

- The Swiss agency submits the au pair contract (signed by the host family, duly notarized and legalized) to the Philippine Embassy in Berne or the Philippine Consulate General in Geneva, for authentication. The authenticated contract is sent to the au pair candidate in the Philippines.
- In a parallel procedure, the Swiss agency processes the au pair's documents and permits in the canton (or state) where the host family resides; after which, the clearance /visa endorsement is transmitted to the Swiss Embassy in Manila for the visa issuance.
- After his/her visa has been issued, the au pair attends a country familiarization (CFS) seminar at the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), which will then issue a CFS sticker affixed on his/her passport.
- The au pair will depart from the Philippines by presenting to immigration authorities (at the airport of departure) his/her au pair contract authenticated by the Philippine Embassy /Consulate General, and passport with the CFS sticker.

The Philippine-Swiss au pair program is expected to enhance and deepen the friendship and understanding between the Filipino and Swiss people.

## **The Philippine-Swiss Agreement on the Exchange of Professional and Technical Trainees**

This is an agreement signed in the year 2002 between the Philippines and Switzerland that allows the exchange of trainees between the two countries, at 50 trainees per year per country.

Under this program, training candidates must meet the educational requirements of their respective professions or field of work, and must be between 18 and 35 years of age. Trainees will be engaged in regular work in the institution /company that hire them for a period of not more than 18 months, and will be duly compensated and receive benefits in accordance with the labor laws of host country.

So far since 2002, only around 20 trainees have been deployed from the Philippines to Switzerland, mostly from technical fields, and there had been only one (1) trainee from Switzerland to the Philippines.

In the past 2 to 3 years, efforts have been made by both countries to maximize the full potential of this Agreement. In December 2010, the Philippine-Swiss Joint Working Group (JWG) was formed in Berne, to look into ways to actively promote the two-way exchange of trainees, from various professions, including nursing and healthcare. The JWG continues to meet to date in order to enhance the management of the trainee program.

For a Filipino who wishes to become a trainee in Switzerland, he/she must find an employer. Employers may require trainees to be proficient in the official language of the canton where their institution/company is located (German, French, or Italian).

The standard training contract, training application forms and related training guidelines are available at the Swiss Federal Office of Migration (FOM)'s webpage: <http://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/bfm/en/home/themen/arbeit/stagiaireprogramme.html>

A Filipino trainee's training contract, duly signed by the employer, has to be submitted for review/approval at the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), which will then issue the exit clearance for the trainee's departure. The Swiss Embassy in Manila will issue the visa to trainees after their documents have been approved/ endorsed by the FOM.