

The Federal Office for Customs and Border Security

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The authority responsible for the Swiss side of the border is the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security (FOCBS), known in German as the *Bundesamt für Zoll und Grenzsicherheit* (BAZG) and in French as the *Office fédéral de la douane et de la sécurité des frontières* (OFDF). It bears this name since 1 January 2022, when the former Federal Customs Administration was renamed and reorganised. The change reflected a deeper transformation, since the office no longer regards itself primarily as a tax collector. Its mandate now covers the security of the border in a broad sense, which includes the control of persons, the fight against cross-border crime, the enforcement of non-tariff legislation and the collection of duties and import value added tax.¹

The most visible element of the reform is the merger of two professions that had existed side by side for more than a century. Switzerland used to distinguish between the civilian customs officials, who processed declarations and assessed duties, and the Border Guard Corps (*Grenzwachtkorps*), a uniformed and armed body responsible for the green border, for the control of persons and for the fight against smuggling. The reform created a single job profile, usually described as specialist for customs and border security, whose holders are trained to perform both kinds of task. The integration has been contested internally, because it changed working conditions, career paths and the culture of two very different services. It was nevertheless pursued with the argument that goods, persons and means of transport can no longer be controlled separately when the same lorry may carry undeclared goods, an irregular migrant and a sanctioned component.²

Organisationally, the FOCBS is part of the Federal Department of Finance. It is structured in regional units, with the region covering north-western Switzerland responsible for Basel and the crossings along the Rhine. Its tasks extend to more than one hundred and fifty federal acts and ordinances

outside customs law in the narrow sense, ranging from food safety and animal health to weapons, narcotics, cultural property and intellectual property. In Basel, the office is present at the motorway crossings, at the Rhine ports, at the Badischer Bahnhof, in the trains and on the trams that cross into Germany and France, and through mobile units that operate in the hinterland of the border. Its Swiss sector at the EuroAirport, whose binational status chapter II of this Part described, completes the picture.³

1 Notes

1. On the renaming of the Federal Customs Administration (EZV/AFD) as the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security (BAZG/OFDF/FOCBS) on 1 January 2022, see the FOCBS website and the Federal Council's communications on the DaziT transformation programme. To be verified. ↩
2. On the merger of the civilian customs and the Border Guard Corps into a single profession within the FOCBS, and on the criticism voiced by staff associations, see the FOCBS publications on its new job profile and press reports from 2021 to 2024. Status to be verified. ↩
3. On the organisation of the FOCBS and the number of non-customs enactments it enforces, see the FOCBS annual reports and its website; the figure of more than 150 enactments is approximate. On the EuroAirport, see chapter II of this Part. Figures to be verified. ↩

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