

Buying property in Switzerland as a foreign national

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Many families who move to Switzerland want to buy a home, and many foreign companies want to own their offices or production sites. Swiss law restricts the acquisition of residential property by persons abroad under the Federal Act on the Acquisition of Real Estate by Persons Abroad, known as the Lex Koller. Once the rules are understood, most families who actually live in Switzerland and most companies that use property for their business can buy without difficulty.

1 Who is a person abroad

The Lex Koller applies to persons abroad. These include foreign nationals who do not have their legal and actual domicile in Switzerland, nationals of states outside the European Union and EFTA who live in Switzerland without a settlement permit (C permit), and companies with their seat abroad or controlled by persons abroad. Swiss nationals, holders of a settlement permit and nationals of the European Union and EFTA who live in Switzerland are not persons abroad and can buy freely.

2 Buying a home to live in

A foreign national who lives in Switzerland with a residence permit may buy a main residence without an authorisation, provided that he lives in it himself. The property must be of a size appropriate for the family, and it cannot be let to others. Before the move, a family can reserve a property but needs to hold the residence permit when the purchase is completed.

3 Holiday homes and second homes

Persons abroad who do not live in Switzerland need an authorisation to buy a holiday home. The cantons that allow such purchases do so within annual quotas, usually only in certain tourist municipalities and for

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properties of limited size. In addition, the Second Homes Act limits the construction of new second homes in municipalities where they already make up more than 20 per cent of the housing stock, which applies to many popular resorts.

4 Commercial property

Property used for a business, such as offices, shops, warehouses and production sites, can be acquired by persons abroad and by Swiss companies they control without an authorisation, as long as it serves as a permanent establishment for the business. Residential units that are necessarily part of the business property may be included. Buying residential property as an investment, including through shares in real estate companies that hold mainly residential property, remains subject to the restrictions.

5 Financing and tax

Swiss banks finance residential property for residents, usually up to a share of its value, and expect the buyer to contribute part of the price from his own funds. Owners pay a transfer tax or land register fees in most cantons, an imputed rental value on a home they live in (abolished by the popular vote of 28 September 2025 with effect from 1 January 2029), and property gains tax when they sell. The tax consequences should be reviewed together with the residence and tax position, as described in the articles on [moving to Switzerland](#) and [lump-sum taxation](#).

6 How Ressos Legal helps

I advise foreign families and companies on the acquisition of residential and commercial property in Switzerland, review Lex Koller questions and coordinate the purchase with the residence permit and the tax ruling. [Contact me](#) for a first conversation.

For general information only. This article does not constitute legal or tax advice, does not replace advice on an individual case and creates no lawyer-client relationship. It reflects the legal position as of September 2026.

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