

## Religion

Switzerland has a Christian tradition. Today many members of other religious groups call Switzerland home. Freedom of religion is guaranteed and public schools are religiously neutral.

### Religion and State

Switzerland has been traditionally influenced by the Christian religion. The cantons are responsible for defining the relationship between religion and state. Most German-speaking cantons, including Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden, recognise Christian religious organizations as public institutions (regional churches, Landeskirchen). In effect, the state grants the regional churches certain rights, such as collecting taxes from their members. In Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden the regional churches are Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Christian Catholic.

### Religion in Appenzell Ausserrhoden

In addition to the publicly recognized religious communities (national churches), the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden is home to many other religious communities of various denominations. The canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden is shaped by the evangelical-reformed tradition.

### Freedom of Religion

The Swiss constitution guarantees religious freedom. Everybody has a right to their religious beliefs as well as a right to express and pass on these beliefs. Nobody can be forced to join a religious group or participate in religious acts. Persons may gather to practice religious rituals and celebrations. Nobody may be discriminated against based on their religion or their beliefs.

### Religion and School

Compulsory schooling is religiously neutral. This does not mean that religious issues cannot be a part of education. There are two kinds of religious education: the denominational religious education offered by the regional churches and the religious education offered by the school which is called "Ethics and Religion". This subject discusses religious and ethical matters that are relevant to all people. It is compulsory on the primary and first upper level. Participation in the denominational religious education offered by the regional churches is optional. Some other religious communities offer religious education for children outside of school.

**Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)**

[www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/religion](http://www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/religion)