

Language and Integration

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Integration

Foreigners are expected to integrate into society. This involves abiding by the law, being economically independent, and learning German.

Important Principles

All Swiss residents must abide by the Swiss constitution (e.g. equality of men and women) and abide by the law. It is expected that one is, as far as possible, economically independent. In addition, foreigners are expected to learn the language spoken in their place of residence as quickly as possible. Integration depends on efforts from both sides. An openness towards foreigners is expected of the local population.

Independence

The confederation, cantons, and communities provide foreigners with fair access to economic, social, and cultural life. In return foreigners must make independent efforts to integrate themselves. It is expected that they make use of available programmes.

Taking Part in the Social Life

A good way of integrating oneself into Swiss society is joining a club. Attending festivities and events held by the community of residence is also a good way of meeting people. It may not be easy at first. Not all Swiss residents are equally open towards other cultures. Sometimes patience and perseverance is necessary.

Advice / Support

In the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, various support services are available for newcomers. A good first point of contact is always the local municipality. However, there are also specific support services for migrants. The Informationsstelle Integration provides information about life in Switzerland and answers specific questions on various topics. Those who do not yet speak German can bring someone to translate or request an interpreter.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/language-and-integration/integration

Integration Programmes

Integration takes place first and foremost at school and at work. For persons who do not (yet) have access to school or work, there are various integration programmes.

Initial information and brief information

In the initial conversation, the information office INFI informs newcomers about their rights, duties, and life in Switzerland and Appenzell Ausserrhoden. Topics such as education, health, work, rights, and social insurance are covered. For specific integration needs, suitable offers and contact points are provided.

Haven't scheduled an appointment for the first information meeting yet? Contact us by email at chancengleichheit@ar.ch or by phone at +41 71 353 64 26

Additionally, INFI is available to provide quick information for migrants on everyday issues.

Do you have a question? Contact us by email at chancengleichheit@ar.ch or by phone at +41 71 353 64 26.

Specific Programmes

There are numerous specific offers for foreigners to help them integrate into Swiss society and establish contacts. These offers include discussion groups, leisure activities, lectures, or courses. The contact point Informationsstelle Integration INFI or the local municipality provides information about these offers. Many municipalities host an event to welcome new residents - a great opportunity to get an initial overview.

Clubs

Many residents in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden are members of a club (Verein). There are clubs for a wide range of interests. Even small communities have athletic, cultural, and other clubs which are an excellent way of meeting people. Most clubs are open for everyone. Information regarding clubs can be found on the community websites.

Offers for Young People

For young people in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden there are many recreational offers that give them a chance to meet their peers. Many communities have meeting points and various recreational activities. The young people are supervised, can contribute ideas, and realize projects (Jugendarbeit). Most offers are free. Youth clubs are an opportunity to take part in outdoor activities with peers. The offers are provided by clubs, communities, or regional churches and are open for all young people. The community of residence will provide further information.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/language-and-integration/integration-programmes

Language

Non-German-speaking residents of Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden are expected to learn German. Language skills are the essential requirement for successful integration into society and the job market.

High German / Swiss German

Switzerland has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance. German is the official language in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden. There is a difference between High German (Hochdeutsch) and Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch). High German is spoken at school and on certain radio and television programmes. In everyday life people speak Swiss German. Swiss German is a German dialect that is not always easy to understand, even for people with good German skills. It is not expected that foreigners speak Swiss German, but it is expected that they are eventually able to understand Swiss German. It is always acceptable to ask the Swiss to speak High German.

German and Children

It is recommended that children who do not speak German meet German-speaking children as soon as possible. Ideal opportunities are playgroups or special programmes for parents and their children. Parents can support their children in their learning by talking, listening, and telling them stories. They should do so in the parent's strongest and most natural language.

Translations

It cannot be expected that persons speak and understand German immediately upon their arrival. Nonetheless there are situations in which communication is essential. Many new arrivals ask family members or friends to interpret. In complicated, personal, or confidential conversations a professional interpreter may be called for. Schools, counseling centers, doctors, and hospitals have the opportunity to book intercultural interpreting through the Arge Verdi mediation service in St. Gallen. Please request this when scheduling the appointment. It is free for you.

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

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Learning German

In order to learn German properly a German class is recommended. There are many offers in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden that cater to different living situations.

Offers

The canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden and the municipalities pay part of the costs for German courses. This makes the courses much cheaper for the participants.

The association Weiterbildung Appenzeller Mittelland offers German courses for adults. Courses are held at language levels A1 to B2.

Mothers with children between the ages of 2 and 4 can attend affordable German courses in St. Gallen through the association Aida I Bildung + Begegnung. While the mothers are learning, the children participate in a children's course. In this way, children learn German from an early age.

The INFI information office or the municipality of residence provide information on the offers.

Language Levels

German language skills are often evaluated according to the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (GER). The six progressive levels extend from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficiency). Levels A1 and A2 correlate with basic knowledge of the German language. Persons interested in a official professional education must achieve, in most cases, levels B1 or B2. Levels C1 and C2 for advanced students are generally required by universities.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/language-and-integration/learning-german