



Regulation of professions as a

Ski Instructor

Date:

December 2015

Introduction

Under the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP¹), professionals from the EU can have their qualifications recognised if the profession for which they are qualified in their country of origin is regulated in Switzerland.

This document aims to describe the Swiss regulations in the sector concerned. Regulated professions are those that are subject to specific training requirements and where access to the profession in question is only possible for professionals holding a specific qualification that is defined in relation to the Swiss education system. Foreign professionals can only access a regulated profession or occupation once their qualifications have been recognised.

If holders of foreign professional qualifications wish to pursue a profession or occupation other than those described in this document, they are free to do so without obtaining recognition of their qualifications (non-regulated profession). In this case it is the job market which will dictate their chances of finding employment or being awarded jobs in the case of self-employed persons.

The specific aspects of the procedure relating to service providers (as opposed to cases of permanent establishment in Switzerland) are described at the end of this document.

1. Scope of activity

The profession of snow sports instructor is regulated in Switzerland, so holders of foreign professional qualifications must have their qualifications recognised or verified **before** starting to provide services, provided the services fall within the categories defined by the legislation.

Due to its federalist system, Switzerland has two tiers of legislation. A federal act governs ski instruction outside the areas that are the responsibility of the ski lift operators. The cantons are free to enact their own legislation and thus to regulate the profession in the areas not covered by federal legislation.

The profession of snow sports instructor covers the professional teaching of the following disciplines:

¹ Bilateral agreement of 21 June 1999 between the Swiss Confederation and the European Community and its Member States on the free movement of persons, RS 0.142.112.681.

- alpine skiing,
- cross-country skiing,
- Telemark skiing,
- snowboarding,
- snowshoeing to difficulty level WT3²

2. Scope of federal legislation

The Federal Act on Mountain Guides and Organisers of Other High-Risk Activities³ and its ordinance⁴ apply throughout the territory of the Confederation. It lays down certain criteria and defines which activities can only be carried out by mountain guides.

a. *Criteria*

At federal level, the Ordinance on High-Risk Activities sets out the following criteria:

- Nature of the activity: to fall within the scope of the Ordinance, and thus be subject to a declaration requirement, the activity of a ski instructor must:
 - be carried out outside the area that is the responsibility of ski lift operators;
 - be carried out primarily on Swiss territory. Thus, where a course starts and finishes in another country but passes temporarily through Switzerland, it does not constitute a service that is subject to a preliminary declaration requirement;
 - generate revenue of at least 2300 francs a year.⁵ This income must originate solely from the pursuit of the gainful professional activity. No account may be taken of income related to the pursuit of activities as part of an association or related to a school education (e.g. for an alpine club, sports club or hiking club, or as a school or university teacher).
- Duration of the activity: service providers may pursue their professional activity without authorisation in Switzerland for one to ten days in any calendar year (SERI does not require a preliminary declaration) provided:
 - they are not permanently established in Switzerland,
 - they are authorised to pursue the activity concerned on a professional basis in a member state of the EU or EFTA.
 - they do not use a commercial unit in Switzerland.

From the eleventh day, the person pursuing the activity is obliged to follow the preliminary declaration procedure, which is carried out on the SERI website.

After pursuing the activity for 90 days, a procedure for recognising the diploma must be conducted at the relevant SERI office, and if the conditions are met, a licence to operate has to be issued by the canton concerned.

² Below the treeline, the activity may be freely pursued; above level WT4, instructors must have a mountain guide licence.

³ Federal Act on Mountain Guides and Organisers of other High-Risk Activities (SR 935.91).

⁴ Ordinance on Mountain Guides and Organisers of other High-Risk Activities (SR 935.911; hereafter: Ordinance).

⁵ Art. 2 of the Ordinance on High-Risk Activities.

- Regarding the difficulty of terrain, activities carried out below the treeline are not regulated. However, even in such cases, the organisers of high-risk activities remain subject to a duty of care that requires them to cease or modify their activities when below the treeline if they realise that they are unable to guarantee their clients' safety or that the terrain is too difficult.

b. Activities reserved to mountain guides acting alone

Snow sports instructors must also ensure that they do not pursue activities that are reserved to mountain guides. Snow sports instructors may ski outside the areas for which ski lift operators are responsible on condition that:

- they do not cross glaciers and that a general and reasonable evaluation of the situation in the specific case indicates no more than a slight avalanche risk,
- the use of additional technical equipment such as ice axes, crampons or ropes is not necessary and
- above the treeline, proposed activities do not exceed:
 - in the case of ski and snowboard touring, the rating of 'not very difficult', abbreviated (from the French) to PD;
 - for off-piste descents, the rating 'rather difficult', abbreviated to AD.

The table below⁶ indicates which terrains are reserved for mountain guides. The colours have the following meanings:

- Green: not subject to the federal legislation, therefore not regulated unless the cantons have additional legislation (see point 3 below).
- Orange: regulated activities, so subject to the SERI declaration procedure according to the criteria above;
- Red: activities reserved to mountain guides, which therefore may not be carried out by persons who do not have the required qualifications.

⁶ Annex 2, no 3 of the Ordinance on High Risk Activities.

Touring	Off-piste descents	Rating	Gradient	Exposure	Terrain	Bottlenecks during descent
		F (+)	Up to 30°	No risk of sliding out of control	Tame, hilly, smooth ground	No bottlenecks
		PD (- +)	30° or more	Generally open slopes with some short steep sections. Opportunity to avoid obstacles (quick turns required)	Short with few steep sections	
		AD (- +)	35° or more	Risk of sliding a long distance, opportunities to brake (risk of injury)	Unavoidable short steep sections, some obstacles on moderately steep terrain requiring quick reactions (short turns required)	Short but steep
		D (- +)	40° or more	Risk of sliding a long distance, occasionally down steep slopes (risk of death)	Steep slopes cannot be avoided. Numerous obstacles requiring a good skiing technique	Long and steep. Short turns possible for good skiers
		TD (- +)	45° or more	Risk of sliding down steep slopes (risk of death)	Terrain generally very steep, often interspersed with rock steps. Numerous obstacles and	Long and very steep. Side-slipping and jump turns required.
		ED (- +)	50° or more	Very steep slopes or couloirs, no opportunity to stop during the descent	Long, with a succession of very steep sections, descent by side-slipping and jump turns only.	
		EX	55° or more	Extreme slopes and couloirs	Rappelling sometimes required cross certain sections	

Ski tours with difficulty ratings of F and PD that take place above the treeline are regulated and require a declaration to SERI within the scope of the criteria defined above.

The ratings PD and AD for ski descents off-piste are subject to the same rules.

Difficulty ratings AD (tour category) or D (off-piste descent category) and higher are reserved solely to mountain guides. Snow sports instructors are not permitted to carry out any commercial activities on terrain in these categories.

3. Scope of application of cantonal law

a. Legislative situation

In certain cantons, additional regulations must be observed.

The legislation in the cantons of Vaud⁷, Valais⁸, Graubünden⁹ and Jura¹⁰ specifically regulate the activities of snow sports instructors working on slopes accessible by ski lift. They make the activities of snow sports instructors dependent either on authorisation or on meeting certain requirements.

In addition, certain cantons that regulated these activities adapted their legislation when the Federal Act on High-Risk Activities came into force, simply by referring to the federal legislation. The cantons concerned are Glarus¹¹ and Uri¹², while Obwalden¹³, Schwyz¹⁴, Zug¹⁵ and Zurich¹⁶ specifically provide information online based on the Federal Act.

b. Additional regulations in the cantons of Vaud, Jura, Valais and Graubünden

The scope of the cantonal regulations was revised in the Canton of Vaud, which, from 1 November 2014, in addition to activities covered by the Federal Act on High-Risk Activities, also regulates all teaching of snow sports to minors (under 18 years of age) and the activities of businesses and schools that teach these classes. This means that any ski instructor who provides a service teaching minors must make a preliminary declaration to SERI, even if they do not leave the area for which the ski lift operators are responsible.

In the Canton of Vaud, snow sports instructors – who require different levels of qualification depending on whether they teach as an employee or on a self-employed basis¹⁷ – must in addition have a clean criminal record when it comes to offences of violence or sexual offences against minors and must take a continuous professional development course every two years. Managers of snow sports schools require a licence (valid for two years) and must have completed the required training at Swiss Snowsports or the Swiss Association for Snowboard Schools. Like the snow sports instructors, they must not have a criminal record for the offences mentioned above. The required level of training is as follows: in addition to the off-piste and touring modules (VT) and tourism/law (TR), instructors are required to complete two multidisciplinary internships of 40 days each (P1 and P2), as well as being able to teach a second discipline to beginners (ZG).

In the **canton of the Jura**, ski instructors must successfully complete a ski instructor course in order to obtain a licence. This licence must be renewed each year by doing a two-day refresher course. The activities of an assistant instructor are also regulated; after successfully completing the preparatory course, they can teach skiing for two years under the supervision of the manager of a ski school.

⁷ Act on the Exercise of Economic Activities (LEAE ; RSV 930.01).

⁸ Federal Act on Mountain Guides and Organisers of other High-Risk Activities (LGAR ; RSVs 935.2).

⁹ Act on Mountain and Snow Sports (Bündner Rechtsbuch 947.100) and implementing provisions for the Act on Mountain and Snow Sports (Bündner Rechtsbuch 947.200).

¹⁰ Ordinance on Ski Teaching in the canton of Jura (RSJu 935.221).

¹¹ Act on Commercial Activities, Art. 10 (GS IX/B/25/1).

¹² Implementing regulations for the Federal Act on Mountain Guides and Organisers of other High-Risk Activities (High-Risk Activities Regulations, RiskR) (Urner Rechtsbuch 70.2322).

¹³ http://www.ow.ch/de/verwaltung/dienstleistungen/welcome.php?dienst_id=4105

¹⁴ http://www.sz.ch/xml_1/internet/de/application/d4/d29130/d1592/p27918.cfm

¹⁵ <http://www.zg.ch/behoerden/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/amt-fur-wirtschaft-und-arbeit/risikoaktivitaeten>

¹⁶ <http://www.awa.zh.ch/internet/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/awa/de/arbeitsbedingungen/gewerbebewilligungen1/risikoaktivitaeten.html>

¹⁷ Regulations on Snow and Hiking Sports, Art 10 (RSV 935.25.21).

In the **canton of Valais**, snow sports instructors wishing to operate in skiing areas must provide proof of having completed an initial training course (federal professional diploma or Swiss Snow sports +VT +TR¹⁸ instructor or SSBS instructor) to obtain a licence and must provide a guarantee that they comply with the obligations imposed by the federal legislation.

In the **canton of Graubünden**, persons who teach and supervise snow sports in areas that fall within the responsibility of ski lift operators – in return for direct or indirect payment – require training as a mountain guide, snow sports instructor or equivalent. In addition to the activities of snow sports instructors mentioned above, the canton of Graubünden also regulates the sport of skwalling. The profession is also open to mountain guides. The cantonal licence is needed for all teaching or guiding activities carried out using snow sports equipment, even on prepared pistes or cross-country trails¹⁹.

4. Specific details for EU/EFTA citizens who wish to provide services in Switzerland

Basic principle

In accordance with the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP), professionals who are legally established in the EU/EFTA may provide services in Switzerland without permanently establishing themselves in the country. In such cases, the duration of service provision is limited to 90 days per calendar year.

If the profession they wish to pursue is regulated, they can take advantage of a fast-track verification procedure for their professional qualifications, as set out in the EU directive 2005/36/EC²⁰ and the DRPA²¹. The service provision **must be declared in advance to SERI**²².

Other obligations

In all cases, persons intending to provide services **must also register with the State Secretariat for Migration** (www.bfm.admin.ch > Registration procedure CH-EU/EFTA) and follow the *registration procedure for short-term work in Switzerland*: <https://meweb.admin.ch/meldeverfahren>. This obligation also applies to non-regulated professions.

Who is a service provider?

Service provision is an economic activity that is practised on a self-employed basis or without conclusion of an employment contract with a Swiss employer. It is remunerated work of a temporary or occasional nature (limited to 90 working days per calendar year) carried out in Switzerland by an individual who is established in a country of the EU or EFTA. If you require further information, SERI provides a more detailed note on the concept of a service provider on its website.

Persons who are not service providers within the meaning of the AFMP will not be able to take advantage of the fast-track qualification verification procedure. They should instead have their qualifications recognised in accordance with Title III of directive 2005/36/EC by contacting the competent authority.

¹⁸ See the course programme: http://www.snowsports.ch/fileadmin/autoren/files/education/ausfuehrungsbestimmung_schneesportlehrerausbildung_de.pdf

¹⁹ Implementing provisions for the Act on Mountain and Snow Sports, Art. 3 para. 1 let. g (RS/GR 947.200).

²⁰ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications, OJ L 255 of 30.9.2005, p. 22, in the current version in accordance with the agreement on the free movement of persons and the revised EFTA Convention.

²¹ Federal Act of 14 December 2012 on the Declaration Requirement and the Verification of Service Provider Qualifications in Regulated Professions, SR 935.01.

²² www.sbf.admin.ch/declaration.