



Acquisition of real estate in Switzerland by foreign citizens

The acquisition of real estate properties located in Switzerland is restricted and may be subject to official authorization for foreign persons, especially when they live abroad.

Foreign citizens who do not hold a valid Swiss residence permit (the so-called B or C permit) are regarded as "foreign people" and thus required to obtain an authorization before acquiring any residential real estate property located in Switzerland.

The following persons are not concerned by the restriction on acquisition of real estate:

- Swiss citizens, including those who have double nationality, residing in Switzerland or abroad;
- Nationals of a country which is an EU or a EFTA member who have a residence in Switzerland (i.e. a temporary residence (B-Permit) or a permanent residence permit (C-Permit);
- in principle, Nationals of other countries who hold a valid settlement authorization (C-Permit) and are actually residing in Switzerland who want to acquire a residence for their own use only.

Companies which have their registered office abroad as well as legal entities or companies having no legal personality or controlled by persons abroad are also regarded as "persons residing abroad."

Real estate properties subject to authorization

The purchase of any kind of single-family houses, blocks of apartments, isolated apartments and land intended for constructing such accommodation is, in principle, subject to authorization requirements.

Properties which are used for commercial, industrial or trading activities are however considered to be business properties and therefore are in principle exempt from the requirement to apply for authorization.

Acquisition of real estate within the meaning of Swiss federal law

The notion of "acquisition" encompasses not only entries of real estate ownership at the Land Register but also any transaction that grants to a non resident actual control over Swiss real estate for which prior authorization is required.

Authorization procedure and Grounds for "green-light" authorization

The acquisition of real estate for which prior permission is required may be authorized only on grounds provided for in the Swiss legislation and, as appropriate, in cantonal legislation.

The main grounds to obtain an authorization concern notably secondary residences, holiday homes and hotel condominium units located in the cantons of Berne, Fribourg, Glarus, Grisons, Jura, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, Nidwalden, Obwalden, St-Gall, Schaffhausen (for condominium units only), Schwyz, Ticino, Uri, Vaud and Valais (Geneva being not listed).

A person residing abroad can request thus the authorization to acquire a holiday dwelling or hotel condominium unit in the above-mentioned regions. This acquisition may however only be made by individuals in their own name and under no circumstances through a company. Moreover, the dwelling must be in a place designated by the cantonal authorities as a holiday resort.

Holiday homes may not be let on an annual basis but at most only periodically. The buyer must be able to use them at any time for their alleged purpose.

As a general rule, the net floor space and the surface area of a holiday home or a flat in an apartment hotel must not exceed 200m² and 1'000m² respectively. In accordance with the consistent practice, larger areas are authorised automatically on proof of additional need up to 250m² and 1'500m² respectively. In exceptional cases, the limits may even be higher.

Authorization is given by the cantonal authority of the region where the real estate is located. The authorization is issued subject to the satisfaction of the above-mentioned conditions. Note that the cantons and tourism-oriented municipalities may add their own restrictions/conditions to ensure that the real estate is indeed used for the purpose cited by the buyer (e.g. the authority may specify a prohibition to resell the acquired real property within a certain period of time).

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For further information and/or study of your specific situation, we kindly invite you to contact:

Olivier Ducrey (+41 22 707 98 05 / olivier.ducrey@bakermckenzie.com) of the law firm Baker & McKenzie Geneva, 5 rue Pedro-Meylan, 1208 Geneva, Switzerland.