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Free movement of persons

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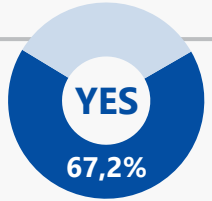
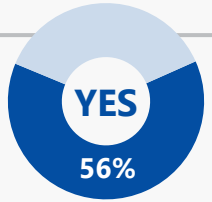
Voting on free movement of persons

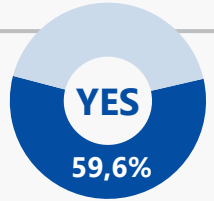
2000
Bilaterals I



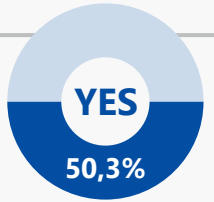
2005
Extension to EU-10



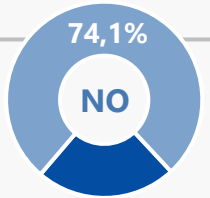
2009
Continuation and extension to EU-2



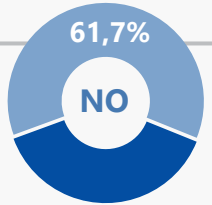
2014
'Stop Mass Immigration' initiative



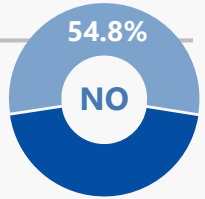
2014
Initiative Ecopop



2014
Ecopop initiative



2026
Sustainability Initiative



The importance of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP) for Switzerland

- The free movement of persons is very important for Switzerland as a business location because it facilitates labour mobility and thereby improves the opportunities for companies based in Switzerland to recruit suitably qualified staff.
- Recruitment from the EU is driven by labour market needs and complements the domestic labour supply; consequently migrant workers are well integrated into the labour market.
- Swiss citizens also make use of the free movement of persons; about two thirds of the Swiss abroad live in Europe.

Principles of the free movement of persons

Immigration for work / residence / study under the AFPM

At least one of the following conditions must be met:

- Valid employment contract or confirmation of employment from employer.
- Sufficient financial resources and comprehensive health insurance.
- For self-employed persons: proof of income.

Coordination of social security systems

Insurance entitlements are not affected by working in another EU country or Switzerland.

Recognition of qualifications

Swiss and EU professional qualifications in regulated professions are mutually recognised.

Provision of services

- Cross-border services may be provided for up to 90 days per calendar year.
- Workers remain subject to the employment contract in their country of origin.

Conditions

- Maximum of 90 days per calendar year allowed.
- Prevailing wage and working conditions must be applied (Posted Workers Act as part of the accompanying measures).
- Self-employed persons must provide proof of self-employment.

Coordination of social security systems

Contents

- National social security systems not standardised or harmonised, but coordinated.
- Each country is free to determine, within the frame of its national legislation, who is covered by social security and what benefits are granted.
- The AFMP lays down coordination rules, for example regarding equal treatment.
- Guarantee that no one loses insurance entitlements when working in another state.

Principle

Insurance entitlements are not affected by working in another EU/EFTA state or Switzerland.

Recognition of qualifications

Contents

- The regulations on the mutual recognition of professional qualifications significantly simplify access to the labour market and the exercise of regulated professions within the EU and Switzerland.

Principle

Swiss and EU professional qualifications in regulated professions are mutually recognised.

Posted workers and accompanying measures

Contents

- An employer sends workers on a temporary assignment in a country of the contracting states other than that of its head office.
- Workers remain subject to the social security systems of their country of origin.
- The accompanying measures were introduced on 1 June 2004 to protect workers from unfair undercutting of wage and working conditions applicable in Switzerland.

Principle

Freedom to provide services for 90 working days per calendar year.

Accompanying measures

Objective

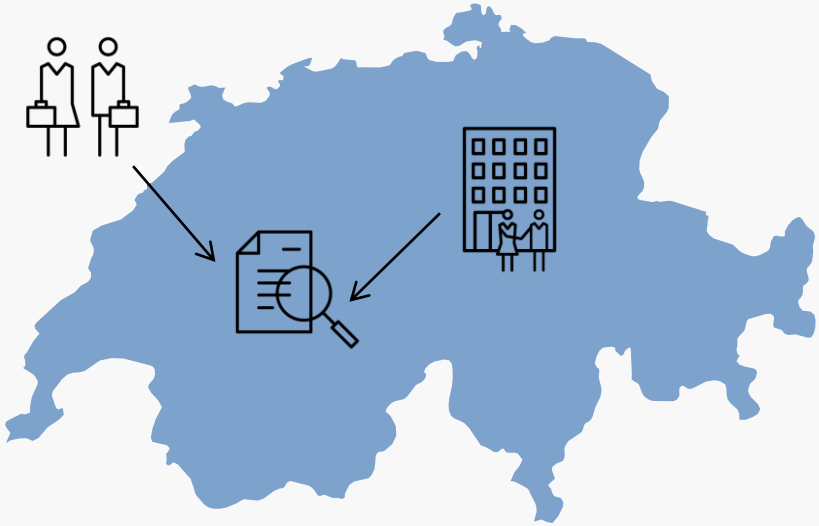
- Protection of Swiss and posted workers against the undercutting of wage and working conditions applicable in Switzerland.

Content

- Includes the advance declaration requirement, facilitated declaration of the general application of collective employment agreements, standard employment contracts with mandatory minimum wages, possibility of penalties in the event of violations (fines of up to CHF 30,000).

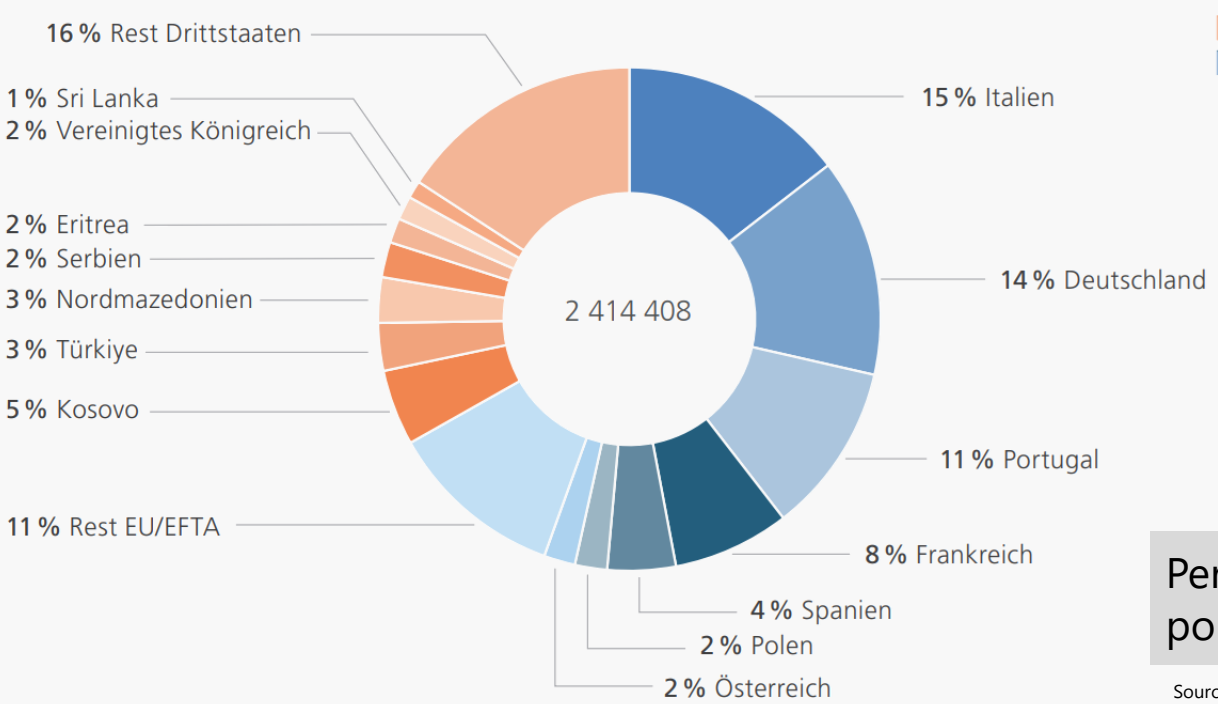
Implementation

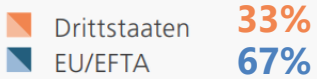
- Verification of wage and working conditions of 38’567 companies and 147’286 individuals by tripartite and joint commissions in 2025.



Source : State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

Foreign resident population

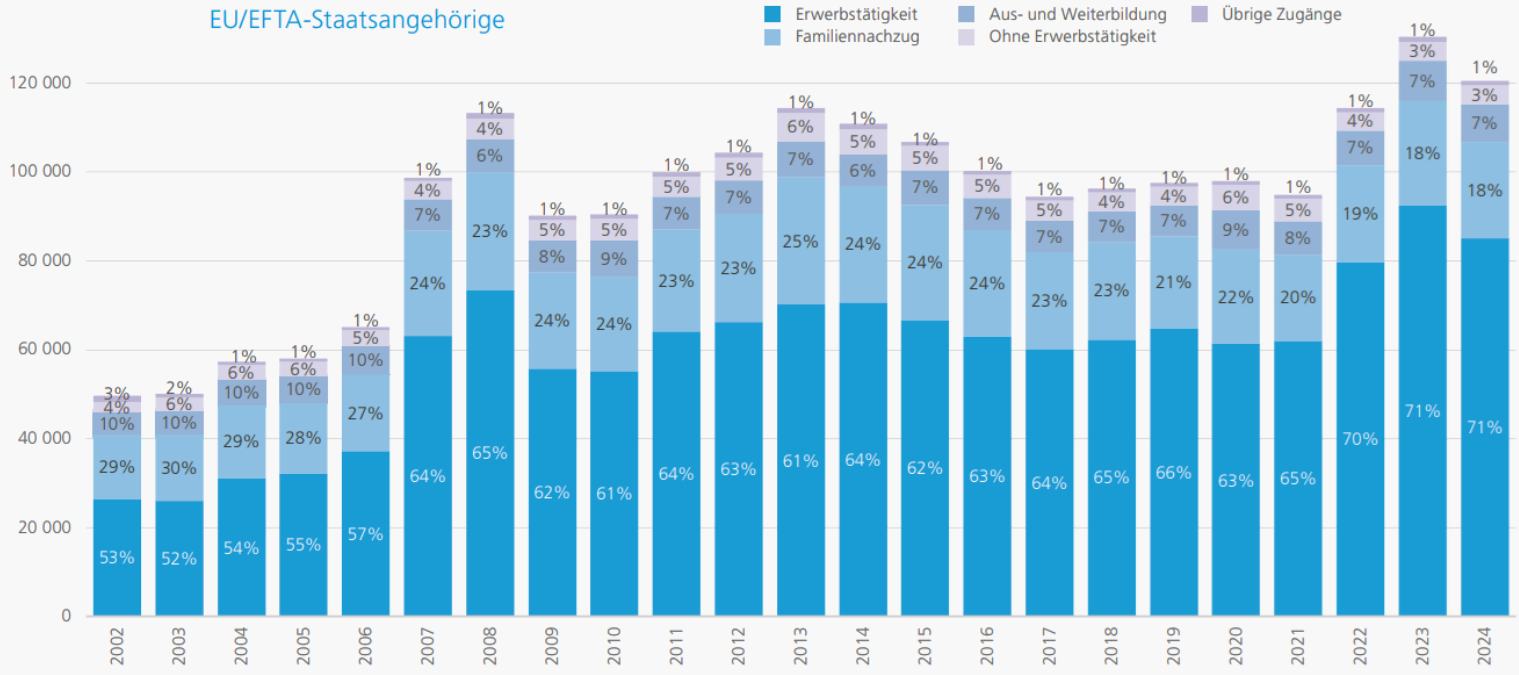




Permanent foreign resident population (2025)

Source: State Secretariat for Migration SEM Statistik Zuwanderung (2025)

Reasons for immigration (2002-2024)

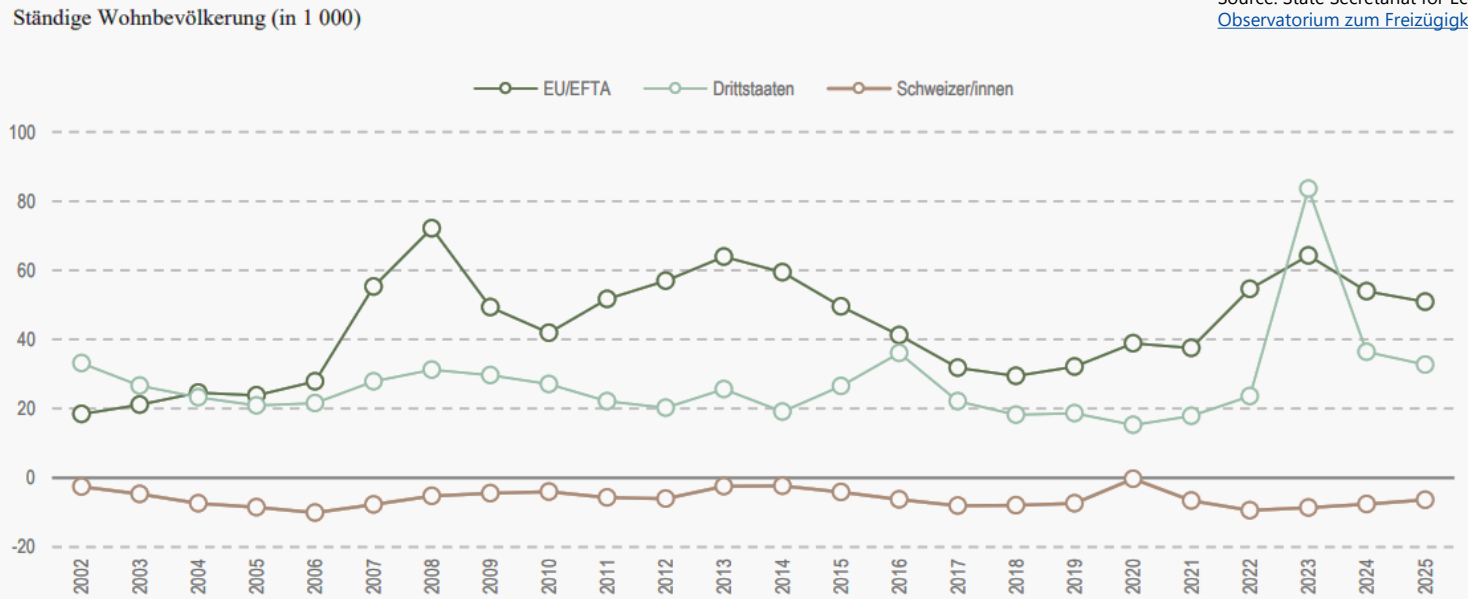


Source: State Secretariat for Migration SEM, Statistik Zuwanderung (2024)

Net migration

Net migration by nationality (2002-2025)

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, 22. Bericht des Observatorium zum Freizügigkeitsabkommen Schweiz-EU



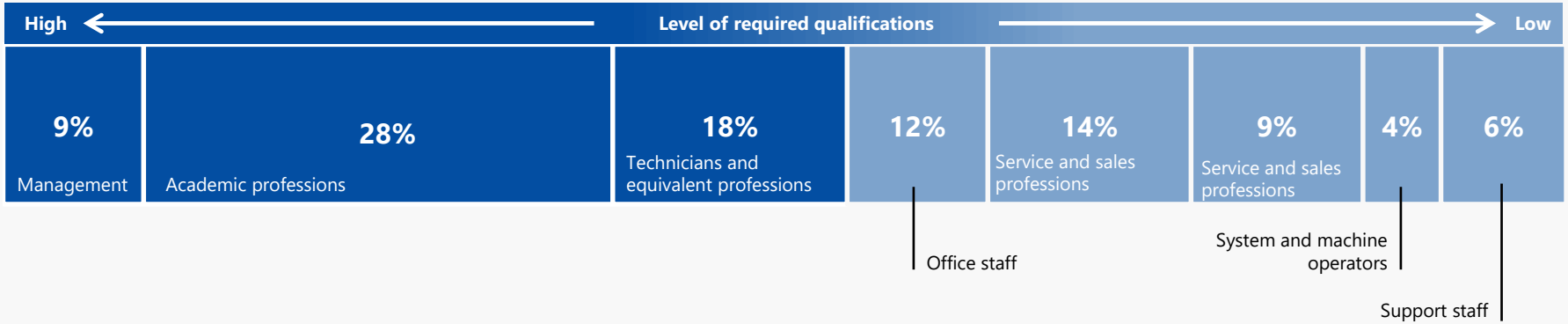
Professional profiles of AFMP immigration

People in employment aged 15 and over, resident population (2025)

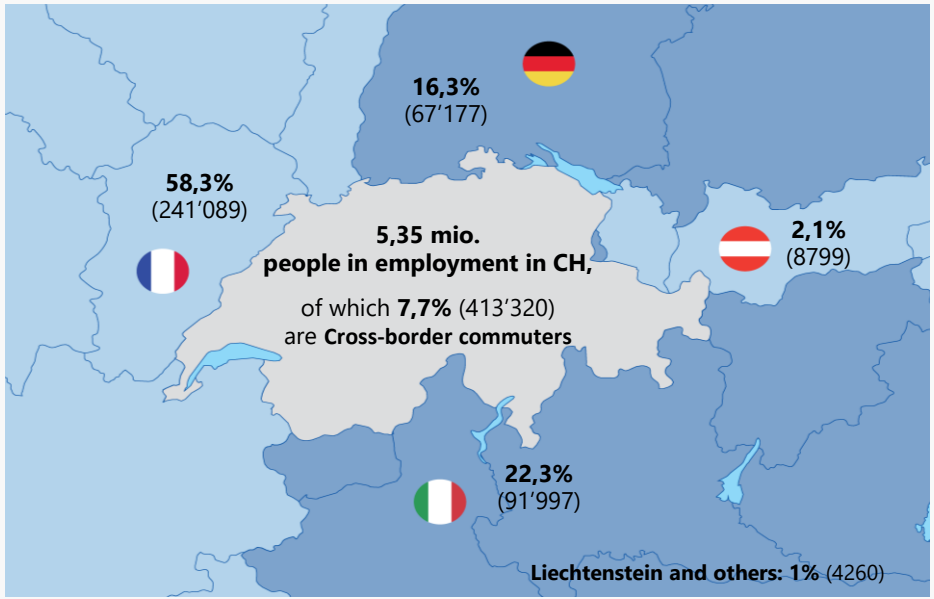
55%

of AFMP immigrants are employed in positions with high qualification requirements.

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, 22. Bericht des Observatorium zum Freizügigkeitsabkommen Schweiz-EU



Cross-border commuters from neighbouring countries



Foreign cross-border commuters
(2026, first quarter)

Source: Federal Statistical Office FSO, Cross-border commuters

Facts and figures – social security

First pillar	Invalidity insurance	Social assistance	Unemployment insurance
• EU/EFTA immigrants pay in more to the social security system than they receive from it.	• The free movement of persons does not place any additional burden on the invalidity insurance.	• Reduction in social assistance rate in recent years thanks to high professional qualifications of EU/EFTA immigrants.	• EU/EFTA nationals paid 26% of contributions and received 34% of compensation in 2024.

Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, 22. Bericht des Observatorium zum Freizügigkeitsabkommen Schweiz-EU

Labour mobility within the EU

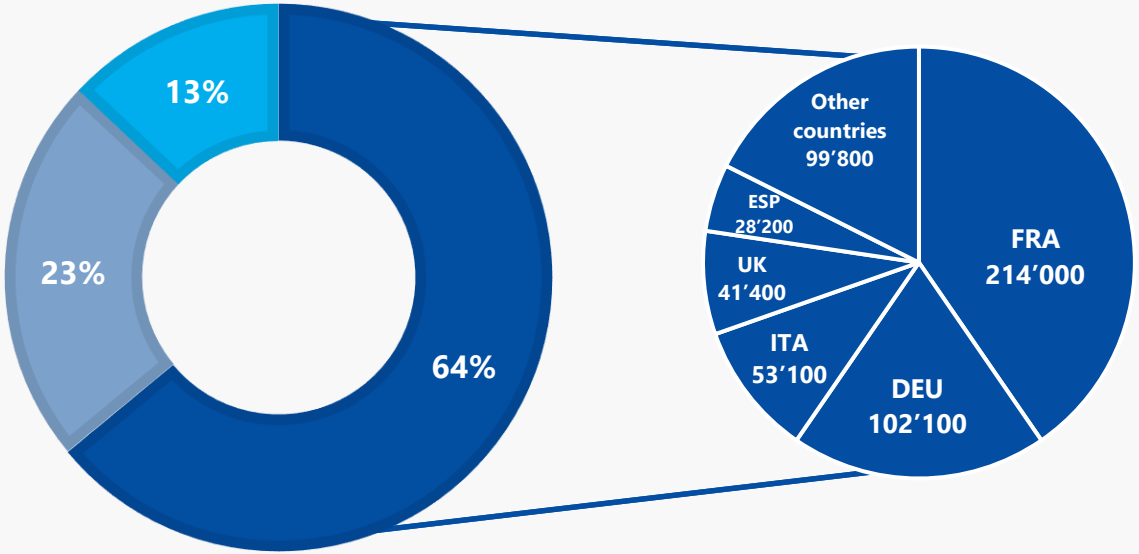
- EU/EFTA labour markets: Mobile workforce of 10,1 million persons (2024).
- With 1,1 million workers from EU/EFTA countries, Switzerland ranks third after Germany and Spain.
- Workers from the EU/EFTA account for 20% of the Swiss workforce.
- This means that as a destination country, Switzerland has a significant share of intra-European labour migration.

Source: European Commission, Annual report on intra-EU labour mobility (2025)

Swiss citizens living abroad

A total of **838’600** Swiss citizens are living abroad (as of 31.12.2025)

- Europe (EU/EFTA, other European countries): 538’600
- North, Central and South Amercica, Caribbean
- Other continents



Source: Federal Statistical Office FSO

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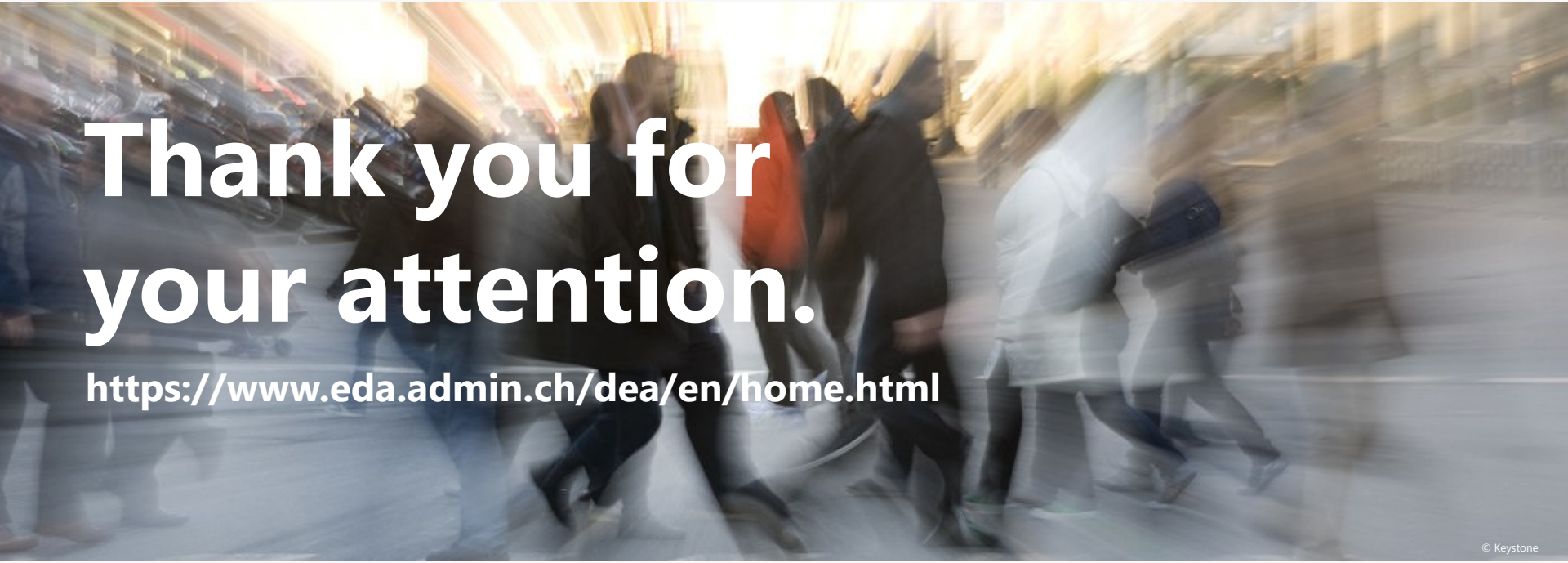

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