



## Allocation of responsibilities between

# Swiss Red Cross (SRC) and SERI

---

Date :

January 2016, updated March 2019

---

## 1 Aim

The present information sheet is intended to orient holders of foreign upper secondary level vocational qualifications and foreign tertiary level professional qualifications in the field of health (excl. medical professions) who wish to know whom to contact (Swiss Red Cross or SERI) to request recognition of their professional qualifications. The answer to this question mainly depends, as explained here below, on the occupation for which the professional was trained in his or her country of origin.

## 2 Regulated and non-regulated professional activities

Recognition procedure varies according to whether the given professional activity is regulated or not in Switzerland. If the professional activity is not regulated, then there is essentially no need to obtain recognition of the foreign qualification in order to carry out the professional activity in Switzerland. If the professional activity is not regulated, then the qualification holder can simply enter the Swiss labour market directly on the basis of his/her foreign qualification. In such cases, it is up to prospective employers to decide whether the foreign qualification matches the requirements of the position to be filled. In contrast, if the professional activity is regulated, recognition of the foreign qualification is absolutely necessary in order to carry out that professional activity in Switzerland.

## 3 Areas of responsibility

### 3.1 Professional activities falling under SRC's responsibility

The SRC<sup>1</sup> is responsible for the following **regulated** activities:

Upper secondary level vocational qualifications:

- Healthcare assistant
- Podiatrist assistant

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.redcross.ch](http://www.redcross.ch) > Für Sie da > Gesundheit/Integration > Anerkennung Gesundheitsberufe

Tertiary level professional qualifications:

- Dental hygienist
- Emergency medical technician
- Female or male midwife
- Medical masseur
- Naturopath (homeopathy, ayurvedic medicine, European traditional medicine ETM, traditional Chinese medicine TCM)
- Dietician
- Nurse
- Occupational therapist
- Biomedical scientist
- Operating room technician
- Orthoptist
- Physiotherapist
- Paramedic
- Podiatrist
- Radiographer

### **3.2 Professional activities falling under SERI's responsibility**

Generally speaking, SERI is responsible for all other vocational and professional qualifications as well as qualifications awarded by universities of applied sciences in the field of health. This includes the following activities:

- Art therapist (music therapy, plastic and visual arts therapy, intermedial therapy, dramatherapy, movement and dance therapy)
- Beautician (only regulated in canton Tessin)
- Chemist
- Complementary therapist (shiatsu, ayurveda, eutony, yoga)
- Dental assistant
- Health and social care worker (non-regulated occupation)
- Laboratory assistant (non-regulated occupation)
- Medical assistant
- Pharmacy assistant (non-regulated occupation)
- Veterinary assistant

### 3.3 Professional activities falling under the responsibility of other authorities

Other authorities are responsible for adjacent fields and professions:

- Medical health professions (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, chiropractors, veterinary surgeons): Federal Office of Public Health's Medical Professions Commission (MEBEKO)<sup>2</sup>
- Psychomotor therapy: Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK)<sup>3</sup>
- Speech therapy: EDK
- Psychology and psychotherapy: Psychology Professions Commission (PsyCO)<sup>4</sup>
- Osteopathy: Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Health (GDK)<sup>5</sup>

## 4 Who is responsible for which professional activity?

### 4.1 Reminder of recognition rules

Holders of professional qualifications issued from an EU/EFTA member state are authorised to work in this capacity in Switzerland (Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications, included in Annex III of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons<sup>6</sup>). **Neither the duration nor the level of training are determinant factors. Rather, it is the professional activity that the qualification holder has the right to carry out in his or her country of origin.** The qualification holder may request that his or her qualification be recognised as equivalent to a corresponding Swiss qualification enabling one **to carry out the same professional activity.**

Generally speaking, migrants from third states (i.e. non EU/EFTA member states) are subject to similar rules, with the difference that their training can be compared to a lower level of training under the terms set forth in VPETO<sup>7</sup> and HEdO<sup>8</sup>, if certain conditions for recognition are not met. For example, a holder of foreign nursing qualifications at tertiary level in his or her home country might actually be recognised in Switzerland as a holder of an upper secondary level Federal VET diploma as in healthcare assistance if the training content abroad appears similar to the training content for the Swiss qualifications. This would make compensatory measures to bring the foreign qualification to the level of a Swiss tertiary level nursing qualification excessive.

---

<sup>2</sup> [www.foph.admin.ch](http://www.foph.admin.ch) > Health professions > Foreign diplomas of health professions

<sup>3</sup> [www.edk.ch](http://www.edk.ch) > Arbeiten > Diplomanerkennung

<sup>4</sup> [www.foph.admin.ch](http://www.foph.admin.ch) > Health professions > Foreign diplomas of health profession

<sup>5</sup> [www.gdk-cds.ch](http://www.gdk-cds.ch) > Themen > Gesundheitsberufe > Osteopathie

<sup>6</sup> Agreement of 21 June 1999 between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Swiss Confederation, of the other, on the free movement of persons (FMOPA), SR 0.142.112.681.

<sup>7</sup> Ordinance of 19 November 2003 on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPETO, SR 412.101).

<sup>8</sup> Ordinance of 12 November 2014 to the Higher Education Act (HEdO, SR 414.201).

## 4.2 Who to contact?

Holders of foreign professional qualifications should consider the following:

1. They should know the field for which they were trained in their country of origin and what professional activities are covered by this field.
2. They should find out what training is required in Switzerland in order to work in the same occupation/profession or to carry out the same professional activity. Job descriptions and corresponding training programmes can easily be found over the Internet<sup>9</sup>. This information will enable one to determine which training programmes, occupations and professions in Switzerland are most closely related to the ones in the country of origin.
3. Once it is known which Swiss qualification is equivalent to the foreign professional qualification issued in the country of origin, the qualification holder may then contact **one of the authorities mentioned in item 3 above**.

Example: if a professional is qualified in his or her country of origin to nurse and assist sick, disabled or elderly people as the needs and situation require, being attentive to their daily routine, living circumstances and surroundings, applying certain treatments and, under the responsibility of nursing staff, performing simple medical-technical acts<sup>10</sup>, then he or she must **contact the SRC** to request that his/her qualification be recognised as equivalent to a Federal VET healthcare assistant diploma.

If this same professional is not, for instance, trained to perform medical-technical acts, he/she may freely work in a non-regulated occupation. If he/she underwent training that is comparable in duration (2 years) with the VET programme for the Federal VET certificate, he/she may **contact SERI** – although not mandatory<sup>11</sup> – to request a level certificate or recognition of equivalence with a Federal VET health and social care worker certificate.

Specifically, for professional activities falling within SERI's area of authority, the qualification holder must go to the website : [www.sbf.admin.ch/becc](http://www.sbf.admin.ch/becc) > Recognition Procedure on Establishment > SERI Declaration Procedure > Online Platform / Procedure and Duration.

---

<sup>9</sup> [www.sbf.admin.ch](http://www.sbf.admin.ch) (SERI list of vocational and professional qualifications in German) and [www.berufsberatung.ch](http://www.berufsberatung.ch) > Berufe > Berufe suchen

<sup>10</sup> Complete description of the healthcare assistant occupation (in German); see [www.berufsberatung.ch](http://www.berufsberatung.ch)

<sup>11</sup> As it happens, this occupation is not regulated in Switzerland