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Global Immigration alert

June 2026

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Switzerland

Switzerland rejects initiative to cap its population at 10 million

Executive summary

On 14 June 2026, the Swiss electorate rejected the popular “No to a 10 million Switzerland” initiative (also known as the Sustainability Initiative) with 54.79% voting against the proposal, indicating that the current constitutional framework and immigration regime remain unchanged. While the legal framework remains unchanged, the strong public debate highlights growing political sensitivity around immigration, infrastructure, housing and pressure on public services, which is likely to remain central in the coming years.

Background

The initiative sought to ensure that the permanent resident population in Switzerland does not exceed 10 million inhabitants. To achieve this objective, the Federal Council and Parliament would have been required to adopt measures to limit immigration, including the introduction of more restrictive legislation in the areas of asylum and family reunification, as well as the renegotiation or adaptation of international agreements, including the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the European Union. If implemented, this would have represented a structural shift from the current system, which is largely demand-driven and allows facilitated access to foreign labor from EU/EFTA countries.

Key developments

The initiative proposed a phased mechanism requiring Swiss authorities to take progressively more restrictive measures as population thresholds were reached. Upon reaching 9.5 million inhabitants, authorities would have been required to implement restrictive measures, notably in the areas of asylum and family reunification. At 10 million, further measures would have included the renegotiation or, if necessary, termination of international agreements contributing to demographic growth. If no safeguard clause could be secured, Switzerland would have been required, within two years of reaching this threshold, to terminate the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons with the European Union.

Impact on employers

Although no immediate policy changes are expected, the possibility of future initiatives or more restrictive legislation aimed at managing population growth cannot be ruled out. For employers, there is no short-term impact expected, and current admission criteria and processes remain unchanged. However, given the heightened scrutiny of immigration policies, employers may continue to monitor future developments and remain flexible in their recruitment strategies.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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