

The Economy of Switzerland as a Key Attractive Factor for German Immigrants: Aspect of Net Income and Alternative Approaches

Lyutsiya BUKHARMETOVA

Abstract. Over the past several decades Switzerland has become one of most popular destinations for immigration among Europeans, especially Germans. Such attractiveness of the country is associated with the many different factors as language, high standards of living and social protection. However, this article is focused on the economic indicators as the most important, because from our perspective they reflect the actual realities in the both states. Here is important to notice that 85 per cent of Germans migrate to Switzerland for professional reasons. This means that they are particularly interested in the economic dimensions and opportunities provided. And in this regard, the factors of social protection and language are considered as alternative in growing attractiveness of Switzerland for German immigrants.

Keywords: *Germany, Switzerland, immigration, economy, language, social protection.*

Economic arguments for increasing number of German immigrants in Switzerland

Nowadays Switzerland is known for its strong economy. In 2017 it has been recognized as the most flexible and rival and gained the highest score in the Global Competitive Index¹. Moreover, according to Forbes, Switzerland takes the first place for the trade freedom and innovation in the world rankings². Such leading positions highlight the achievements in the field of economy, which in turn attract migrants from all over the world. The best testimony in this regard is the fact that Switzerland is ranked the second among the countries with the highest share of foreign population³. In 2013 this rate was 23.3 per cent⁴, while it has increased by 1.7 per

¹ 'Global Competitiveness Index', World Economic Forum, accessed June 8, 2018, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/competitiveness-rankings/>

² 'Best countries for business: Switzerland', Forbes, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/places/switzerland/>

³ 'Foreign population: Chart', OECD, accessed June 10, 2018, <https://data.oecd.org/migration/foreign-population.htm#indicator-chart>

⁴ 'Foreign population: Chart'

cent in 2016⁵. Being one of the most economically developed countries it especially attracts Europeans, who numbered 1 759 000 and constitute 83.7 per cent of its foreign population⁶.

In particular, it is important to emphasize that Switzerland is clearly preferred by Germans as the best country for immigration and hold the first place in the ranking⁷. It is noteworthy that this destination has remained attractive for a considerable time. For example, it recorded 20 715 immigrants from Germany in the first eight months of 2010, up 12 per cent over 2005⁸. And after a while, the recent data demonstrates that Switzerland continue to remain a popular destination. According to Federal Statistical Office, the figure has grown up from 284 200 German immigrants in 2012 to 303 500 in 2016⁹. Based on this data we can calculate the per cent of this increase during the given period:

$$G_r = \frac{303500}{284200} \times 100\% = 106.790992 \approx 106.79\%.$$

Consequently, 6.79 per cent increase in the number of German immigrants (106.79%-100%=6.79%) between 2012 and 2016 leads to the conclusion that Switzerland continues to remain attractive for them over the past several years. Moreover, the recent data shows that this trend has become stable. For example, the amount of German immigrants has increased from 298 000 in 2014 to 300 700 in 2015 and 303 500 in 2016¹⁰. And in order to prove that this trend is being maintained we would like to make the following calculations:

$$G_{r2015} = \frac{300700}{298000} \times 100\% = 100.90604 \approx 100.90\%;$$

$$G_{r2016} = \frac{303500}{300700} \times 100\% = 100.931161 \approx 100.93\%.$$

This means that the amount of German immigrants has grown from 2014 to 2015 by 0,9 per cent (100.90%-100%=0.9%), while the same rate has increased from 2015 to 2016 by 0.93 per cent (100.93%-100%=0.93%). Thus, these calculations

⁵ 'Foreign population', Swiss Federal Statistical Office, accessed June 11, 2018, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population/migration-integration/foreign.html>

⁶ 'Foreign population'

⁷ 'Here are the top 10 countries Germans immigrate to', *The Local*, August 10, 2017, <https://www.thelocal.de/20170810/here-are-the-top-countries-where-germans-immigrate-to>

⁸ Gary Levinson, 'German immigrants in Switzerland cause cultural backlash', *Deutsche Welle*, June 20, 2011, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-immigrants-in-switzerland-cause-cultural-backlash/a-15143982>

⁹ 'Foreign population'

¹⁰ 'Foreign population'

demonstrate the stability in the annual growth rate. And therefore, it can certainly be observed that there is a trend in the increase of German immigrants over the past years. In addition, special attention should be paid to the fact that they continue to be the second largest group of foreigners in Switzerland, giving way to Italians, who numbered about 316 500 individuals in 2016¹¹. Meanwhile, German immigrants make up 3.6 per cent of the country's population¹². All these figures confirm the fact that that Switzerland remains an attractive destination for the relocation among Europeans, especially for German throughout the years.

We assume that such interest is connected with the economic success of the country. To prove this, it is necessary to analyze and compare the indexes of the both states. To begin with, it is significant to pay attention to such an important economic indicator as gross domestic product per capita. It enables to measure the living standards, taking into account the size of population. According to the International Monetary Fund, Swiss gross domestic product per capita is 86 840 dollars¹³. In comparison, Germany, which citizens prefer the neighboring country for immigration, has significantly lower figure. This difference in GDP per capita constitutes 36 000 dollars¹⁴. Thus, such figures demonstrate better standard of living in Switzerland and explain its attractiveness with nearly double GDP per capita among German immigrants. In addition, the difference between two countries is even larger, when the annual growth of inflation is compared. In 2017 this rate in Germany was 2.25 per cent, while in Switzerland constituted only 0.53 per cent¹⁵. Such level of inflation makes one country with the lower annual growth more attractive than another. In this case it is also significant to notice that this rate was even below zero in Switzerland from 2013 to 2016¹⁶. For example, in 2015 the annual growth of inflation constituted -1.14 per cent, while in Germany it was 0.61 per cent in the same year¹⁷. As a result, this difference in the rates of price increases contributed to the fact that Switzerland has become a popular destination for

¹¹ 'Foreign population'

¹² 'Population', Swiss Federal Statistical Office, accessed June 18, 2018, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/population.html>

¹³ 'GDP per capita, current prices', International Monetary Fund, accessed June 20, 2018, <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/DEU/CHE>

¹⁴ 'GDP per capita, current prices'

¹⁵ 'Inflation (CPI): Total, Annual growth rate (%)', OECD, accessed June 25, 2018, <https://data.oecd.org/price/inflation-cpi.htm>

¹⁶ 'Inflation (CPI): Total, Annual growth rate (%)'

¹⁷ 'Inflation (CPI): Total, Annual growth rate (%)'

relocation.

What is more important is to take into account such indicator as the income. It remains one of the most attractive factors, as German citizens primarily immigrate for professional reasons. Therefore, there is no coincidence that 85 per cent of them aged 15-64 are employed in Switzerland¹⁸. Such level of involvement of foreigners from the neighboring country illustrates their special interest in the career opportunities abroad. And in this case primarily income is the matter of a great concern. For example, in 2017 the average annual wage in Germany was 47 585 dollars, while in Switzerland people earn 62 283 dollars per year¹⁹. Even the difference constitutes 14 698 dollars, German immigrants are mostly interested in net income. To prove it, we will calculate the Fechner correlation coefficient. It will help to analyze the connection between the growth of German and average annual wage in Switzerland. As the first step we need to find the mean value of each variable:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n} = \frac{1478700}{5} = 295\,740;$$

$$\bar{y} = \frac{\sum y_i}{n} = \frac{311564}{5} = 62\,312.8.$$

The calculated mean values are compared with the variables x and y and their deviation signs are put in the Table 1:

Table 1. Data and deviation signs for the Fechner correlation coefficient

(n)	Years	Number of German immigrants in Switzerland ²⁰ (x_i)	Average annual wage in Switzerland in US dollars ²¹ (y_i)	$x_i - \bar{x}$	$y_i - \bar{y}$
1.	2012	284 200	61 567	-	-
2.	2013	292 300	62 516	-	+

¹⁸ OECD, *Talent Abroad: A Review of German Emigrants*, p. 49, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/talent-abroad-a-review-of-german-emigrants_9789264231702-en#page51

¹⁹ 'Average wages', OECD, accessed June 23, 2018, <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/average-wages.htm>

²⁰ 'Foreign population'

²¹ 'Average annual wages', OECD Statistics, accessed July 10, 2018, https://stats.oecd.org/viewhtml.aspx?datasetcode=AV_AN_WAGE&lang=en



(n)	Years	Number of German immigrants in Switzerland ²⁰ (x _i)	Average annual wage in Switzerland in US dollars ²¹ (y _i)	x _i - \bar{x}	y _i - \bar{y}
3.	2014	298 000	62 616	+	+
4.	2015	300 700	62 495	+	+
5.	2016	303 500	62 370	+	+
	Total	1 478 700	311 564	Total	
				Number of matched signs for differences (N ₊)	Number of unmatched signs for differences (N ₋)
				4	1

Thus, we can calculate the Fechner correlation coefficient, knowing the number of matched (4) and unmatched (1) signs for differences:

$$r = \frac{N_+ - N_-}{N_+ + N_-} = \frac{4 - 1}{4 + 1} = \frac{3}{5} = 0.6$$

As a result, the correlation coefficient 0.6 demonstrates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables x and y. This means that the annual wage in Switzerland play a role in attracting immigrants from German, but not the most important one.

In this connection it is significant to take into account such a significant factor as the net income. It varies from country to country, as the wages also include taxes and social security. In particular, Switzerland guarantees employees the highest net income in Europe regardless of the sum, which they receive²². And for this reason remains one of the most attractive countries for immigration²³. At the same time

²² Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017: Swiss version*, The Creative Studio at Deloitte: London, December 2017, p. 15
<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ch/Documents/tax/ch-tax-european-salary-survey-swiss-report-final.pdf>

²³ Simon Bradley, 'What's behind Geneva's immigration influx?', *SwissInfo.ch*, August 3, 2015, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/society/new-eu-workers-what-s-behind-geneva-s-immigration-influx-/41563800>

Germany has practically one of the lowest one, which constitutes only 54.67 per cent of the average salary²⁴. Thus, the difference in average net income between two analyzed countries is about 20.87 per cent²⁵. In addition, the taxes included in the salaries also play a significant role. Despite they vary depending on the amount of income and other factors, the attention is focused on the share of taxes in the average wages. Specifically, in Switzerland it constitutes 10.23 per cent²⁶. At the same time German spend 20.51 per cent of their average wages on the income tax²⁷. And this difference is twice as big. In order to illustrate the importance of this factor, we would like to examine the relationship between the increase of German immigrants and the reduction of taxing wages in Switzerland. For this purpose, we can count the Spearman`s correlation coefficient, based on the data of Swiss Federal Statistical Office and OECD, and include all the additional calculations in the Table 2:

Table 2. Additional calculations for the Spearman`s correlation coefficient

(n)	Years	Number of German immigrants in Switzerland in thousands ²⁸ (x)	Average tax wage in Switzerland for one-earner married couple at 100% of average earnings and 2 children ²⁹ (y)	R _x	R _y	d=R _x - R _y	d ²
1.	2012	284.2	10.10	1	5	4	16
2.	2013	292.3	9.79	2	4	-2	4
3.	2014	298.0	9.30	3	3	0	0
4.	2015	300.7	9.24	4	2	2	4
5.	2016	303.5	9.16	5	1	4	16
	Total	1478.7	47.56			8	40

Having calculated the sum of squares of differences of ranks, which were assigned to each observation of the analyzed variables, we can find the correlation coefficient with the following formula:

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot 40}{5(5^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{240}{120} = 1 - 2 = -1$$

As a result, the correlation coefficient -1 proves the perfect monotonically

²⁴ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, p.11.

²⁵ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, p.11.

²⁶ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, p.11.

²⁷ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, p.11.

²⁸ 'Foreign population'

²⁹ 'Taxing Wages – Comparative tables: Average tax wage. One-earner married couple at 100% of average earnings, 2 children', OECD Statistics , accessed July 18, 2018, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=AWCOMP>

decreasing relationship between the variables x and y . This means that the lower average tax wage is in Switzerland, the more the number of German immigrants in the country. Consequently, such policy aimed at providing people with the higher net income from 2012 to 2016 contributed to the growing popularity of the state.

Thus, it can be concluded that the interest of German immigrants towards Switzerland is stirred by its economic success, which leads to the possibilities to have better living standards, higher wage and net income, lower taxes and not to worry about prices because of deflation.

Alternative attractive factors for immigration

1. The aspect of social protection

There is also another alternative theory, according to which countries tend to be attractive for immigrants mostly because of their generous social protection³⁰. However, this statement does not apply to the growth of German immigrants in Switzerland. Being appreciated as highly-skilled labor force³¹ with the share of 58.9 per cent of university graduates³², Germans are interested in possibility to have a high net income instead of the generosity of the welfare state, which remains the most important factor for the foreigners with poor qualifications³³. Thus, the factor of social protection does not play an important role for the Germans.

This is also evidenced by the fact that their own country tends to be one of the most generous welfare states³⁴. It means that Germany spends more on the social protection than Switzerland. This fact is confirmed by the statistical data. For example, in 2016 the social spending constituted 25.3 per cent of German GDP and only 19.7 per cent of Swiss³⁵. Such a difference in the expenditures between the analyzed countries can be observed when comparing other indicators.

³⁰ Jan K. Brueckner, 'Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom: Theory and Evidence', *Southern Economic Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 3. (Jan., 2000), pp. 507-510.

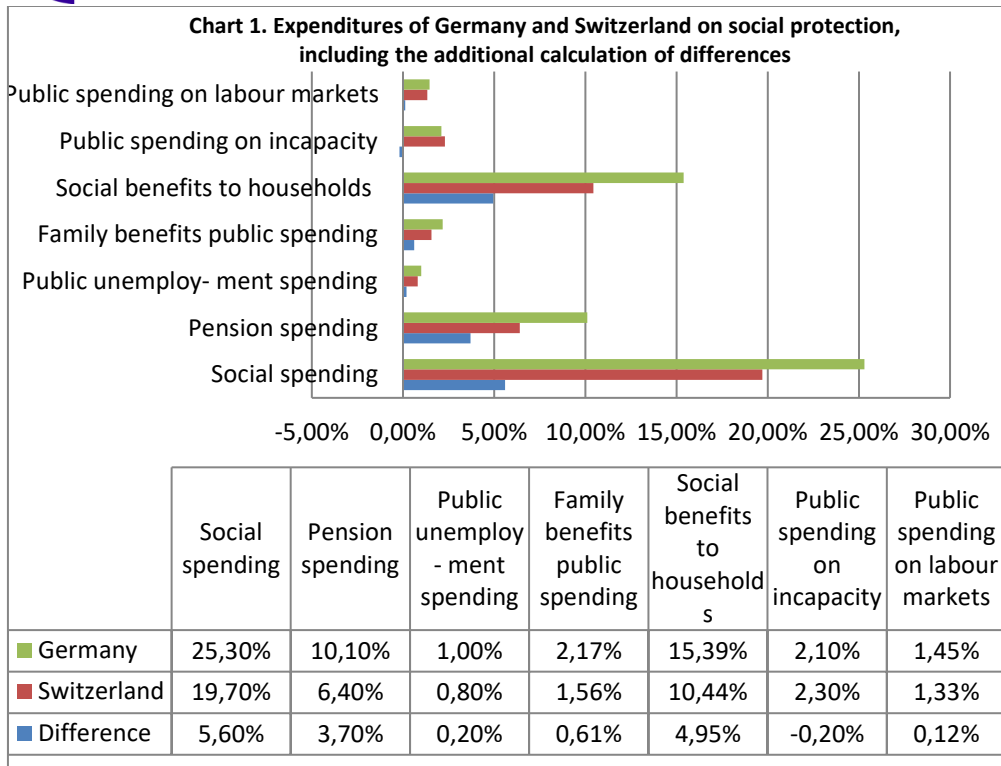
³¹ Renat Künzi, 'The changing face of German immigration', *Swissinfo*, July 10, 2012, https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/it-s-complicated_the-changing-face-of-german-immigration/33070896

³² OECD, *Talent Abroad: A Review of German Emigrants*, p. 49.

³³ Assaf Razin, Jacline Wahba, 'Migration Policy and the Generosity of the Welfare State in Europe', *CESifo DICE Report*, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 30.

³⁴ Kees Van Kersbergen, 'The Welfare State in Europe', in La Fábrica (Ed.), *The Search for Europe: Contrasting Approaches*, Madrid: BBVA, 2015, p. 278.

³⁵ 'Social spending: Public, % of GDP, 2016', OECD, accessed August 9, 2018, <https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm>



Based on OECD data and our calculations we have built a Chart 1, where the every item of expenditure on the social protection is taken into account. The results show that Germany spends higher percentage of its GDP than Switzerland on pensions , unemployment , labor markets programs , family and social benefits to households . The only exception among the all indicators is public expenditures on incapacity, as in this case Switzerland invests higher percentage of its GDP than Germany . Thus, the analysis of the figures with the help of Chart 1 illustrates the difference in spending of the both countries on social protection. What is more important, the comparison of indicators demonstrates that Germany is more generous welfare state than the host country. And despite this fact its citizens tend to immigrate to Switzerland. This leads to the conclusion that social protection is not the most attractive factor for Germans.

2. Linguistic connections and the example of Austria

Apart from economic factors the influx of immigrants from Germany has been associated with the language issues. Without the need to learn something new

it is much easier to decide for the move and, for example, get a job in a foreign country. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that migration to the countries, where the official languages are similar to the mother tongue of the foreigners, are by 19-35 per cent higher than to the destinations, where the potential settlers can face the language barriers³⁶. However, in the case of Switzerland it is only particularly true for several reasons. To begin with it is important to notice that only 62.8 per cent of the Swiss population speaks German³⁷. Furthermore, it is also recognized as the sole official language in 17 of the 26 cantons³⁸. At the same time the situation is rather better in the neighboring country than in Switzerland. Specifically, German is the only official language of Austria and the mother tongue for 88.8 per cent of its population³⁹. Moreover, it is spoken by 96.9 per cent of country's inhabitants, including foreigners⁴⁰. This number is by 34.1 per cent higher than in Switzerland. But despite these facts, Austria is less attractive for immigrants and holds only the second place in the ranking as a destination for immigration⁴¹. This prove also the statistical data, according to which Austria in 2015 had 220 000 German immigrants in 2015⁴², representing more than 2.5 per cent of the country's population⁴³. It is 80 700 individuals less than Switzerland had in the same year⁴⁴. Consequently, such difference in numbers of German immigrants shows that the similarity of the official

³⁶ Alícia Adserà, Mariola Pytliková, 'International migration: The impact of linguistic proximity on preferred destinations', *Vox CERP Policy Portal*, October 8, 2015, <https://voxeu.org/article/language-and-migration>

³⁷ Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Bundesamt für Statistik. *Als Hauptsprachen genannte Sprachen, 2016 [Languages mentioned to be the main, 2016]*, February 28, 2018, <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/bevoelkerung/sprachen-religionen/sprachen.assetdetail.4542467.html>

³⁸ Eric Weine, 'Multilingualism is to Switzerland what politeness is to the British or style to the Italians: a deep source of national pride', *BBC*, March 26, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20180325-switzerlands-invisible-linguistic-borders>

³⁹ 'Austria Population 2018', *World Population Review*, accessed August 19, 2018, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/austria-population/>

⁴⁰ 'German language knowledge in Europe', *Language Knowledge EU*, accessed August 23, 2018, <http://languageknowledge.eu/languages/german>

⁴¹ 'Here are the top 10 countries Germans immigrate to'

⁴² 'Origins and destinations of European Union migrants within the EU', *Pew Research Center*, accessed August 5, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/interactives/origins-destinations-of-european-union-migrants-within-the-eu/>

⁴³ 'Population, total: Austria', *World Bank*, accessed August 27, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2017&locations=AT&start=2015>

⁴⁴ 'Foreign population'.

language with the mother tongue is not the most important factor for foreigners. In addition, the refutation of this assumption is even more confirms our hypothesis, according to which economic success make countries attractive for relocation. In this connection it is also significant to take into account that Austria has annual growth of inflation (constituted 0.892 per cent in 2016⁴⁵) instead of deflation, lower GDP per capita by 33 080 dollars in 2018⁴⁶ than in Switzerland. Moreover the average annual wages constituted only 80.8 per cent of the Swiss income per year⁴⁷. This also means that Austria has lower net income than Switzerland⁴⁸. Thus, all these economic factors make German immigrants to opt for the country, where they can earn money, not attaching great importance to the language issues.

Conclusion

Having analyzed the increase of German immigrants in Switzerland it can be pointed out that it has become a stable trend over the past several years. The calculations showed that the annual growth constituted about 0.9% from 2014 to 2016. Due to the analysis of the different factors of attractiveness of Switzerland we have proved that the economic indicators contributed to such increasing popularity of the country as a destination for immigration.

In particular, it was found out that the possibility to have the highest net income in Europe is the most attractive factor for Germans. This was evidenced by the correlation coefficient equal to -1, which demonstrated the perfect monotonically decreasing relationship between the increasing number of immigrants from the neighboring country and the reduction of average tax wage in Switzerland. At the same time it was figured out that foreign labor force were less interested in annual salaries. This was proven by the calculation of the Fechner correlation coefficient, according to which the relationship between the analyzed variables were moderate and equal to 0.6. Consequently, all these figures have demonstrated that the difference of 20.87 per cent in net income⁴⁹ between two countries play the most important role in making Switzerland attractive for German immigrants.

⁴⁵ 'Inflation (CPI): Total, Annual growth rate (%)'.

⁴⁶ 'GDP per capita, current prices'.

⁴⁷ 'Average wages'.

⁴⁸ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, pp. 7-8, 15.

⁴⁹ Deloitte, *European Salary Survey 2017*, p.11.

This hypothesis was also confirmed due to the overview of alternative aspects such as social protection and language. Specifically, the comparison of expenditures of the both countries showed that Germany is more generous welfare state than Switzerland. Thus, in this case social protection cannot be seen as the factor of attractiveness. Moreover, German language also does not contribute to the growing popularity of Switzerland. Mostly because it is spoken only by 62.8 per cent of its population⁵⁰, while in Austria this rate is higher by 34.1 per cent⁵¹. In addition, the comparison of the economic indicators of Austria and Switzerland proved that language is not the reason of the growth of the foreigners with the same mother tongue from the neighboring country. As a result, it can be concluded that all these facts and figures confirm that the possibility to have higher net income in Switzerland is the most attractive factor for German immigrants.

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⁵⁰ Swiss Federal Statistical Office, Bundesamt für Statistik. *Als Hauptsprachen genannte Sprachen, 2016 [Languages mentioned to be the main, 2016]*.

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