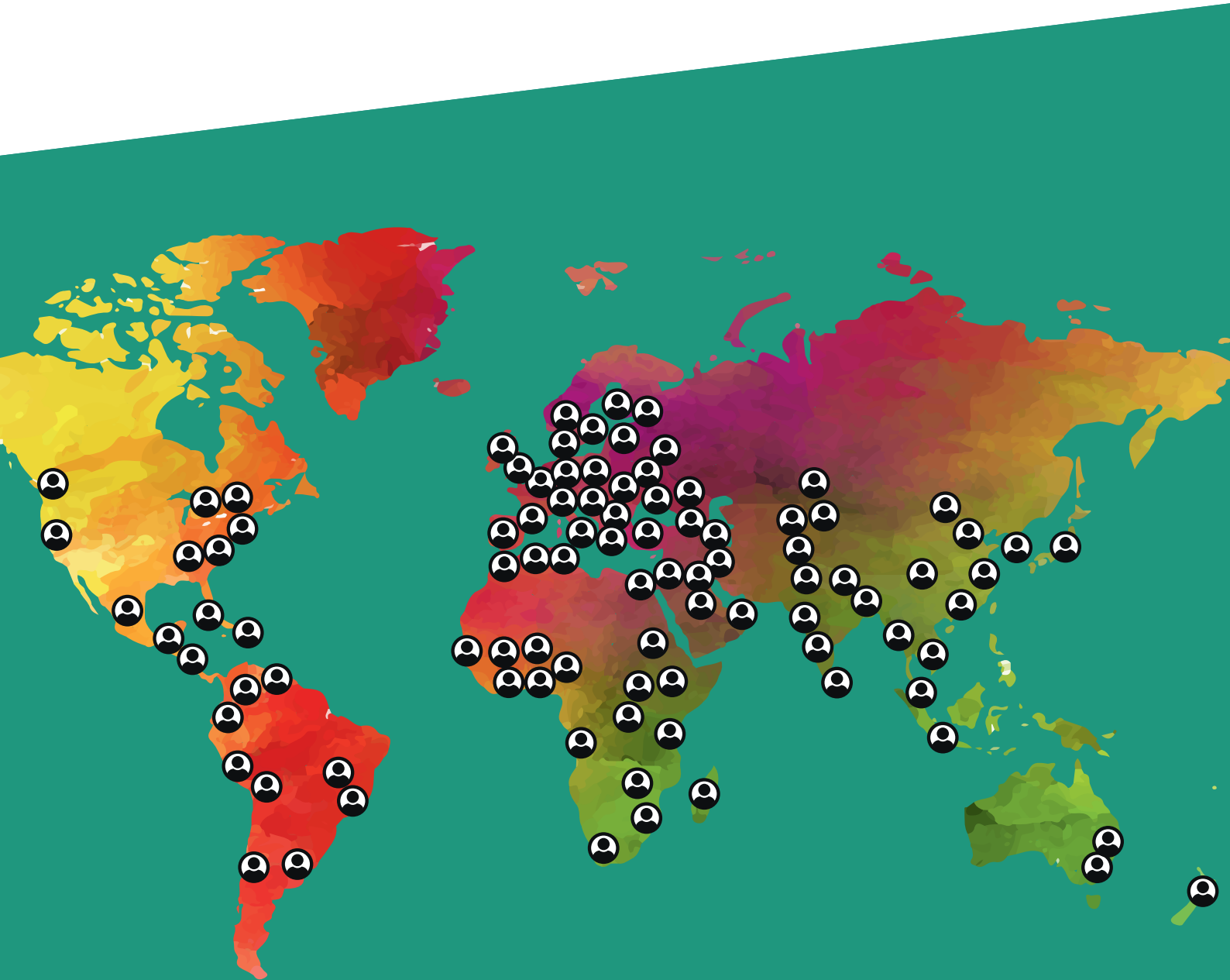




Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of  
Foreign Affairs FDFA

# FDFA Local Staff Guidelines



# Foreword

FDFA local staff are central to implementing the Federal Council's foreign policy strategy. They are employed to work for Switzerland's external network in accordance with the local law. Local staff account for just over half of the FDFA's workforce. This makes their contribution to safeguarding Swiss interests abroad significant, as well as their role in promoting Swiss values worldwide. Local staff have both expertise and invaluable knowledge of the specific conditions in their respective countries. This enables us to integrate local languages, cultures and customs into our work. Local staff also have effective and useful networks on the ground.

The guidelines set out the principles for this key group as well as a globally binding framework for their employment. They are intended to serve as a guide for everyone, particularly to help our local staff identify with the FDFA.

These guidelines can only be fully effective when managers exemplify and incorporate these principles into their daily work. Managers are role models and make sure that employees are able to assume full responsibility for their work. To this end, it is essential that we consistently embody the three principles we seek to apply – quality, responsibility and recognition. I expect effective and respectful leadership from my management staff, in our day-to-day work as well as in times of crisis. This can only happen if communication is open and clear.

The cultural diversity of our local staff merits particular attention: it is a clear added value of our work, but diversity in practice is also a challenge, especially in our everyday work. Jointly implementing tasks within a diverse group of staff requires tolerance, excellent social skills and a lot of creativity. I would like to encourage all FDFA managers to discuss these guidelines with local staff, and to ensure that they are aware of these principles and practice them in their day-to-day work. This will help us build trust and lay the foundation for loyal and long-term partnerships.



Being an attractive employer also means that we believe it is important to provide comprehensive development opportunities for our staff. We want all of our staff and managers to be able to advance professionally and develop their skills accordingly. Take advantage of our HR tools or ask for support from our specialists at head office.

Let me end by thanking all of our staff for their invaluable commitment, hard work, loyalty and, above all, their willingness to build bridges and connect cultures. You are all playing your part in helping us to anchor the ONE FDFA principle in our external network, and are making an invaluable contribution to the implementation of Swiss foreign policy. With my sincerest thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cassis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ignazio Cassis  
Federal Councillor

Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

# 1 Principles

ONE FDFA means tackling challenges together and creating an environment that supports and fosters continuous learning and knowledge sharing. Staff at all levels and in the representations realise this to full effect by orienting their actions around the following principles.

## **A. Quality**

We do our work with the utmost diligence and to a high standard. We are service-oriented.

## **B. Responsibility**

We develop our skills responsibly within the framework of our position and tasks. We assume responsibility for our behaviour, work and objectives.

## **C. Recognition**

We interact respectfully with one another, which builds trust and close cooperation. We appreciate and value our colleagues' work.

# 2 Working for the FDFA

The FDFA is committed to providing an attractive and modern working environment. Details of the benefits it offers are set out in contracts, directives and regulations, all of which are binding.

## A. Starting work

The terms and conditions of a job are set out in an employment contract, which also takes local law into account.

## B. Salaries

FDFA salaries are performance-related and categorised according to tasks and positions. Representation staff should be in the third quartile of the local salary range.

Pay progression should be linked to the employee's performance appraisal provided the legal and financial conditions allow this. All local staff should have specific objectives as part of the Management by Objectives (MbO) process.

## C. Social security

The FDFA is a socially responsible employer that contributes to health and maternity protection as well as provisions for illness, accident, disability or death. It supports staff members wishing to top up individual pension plans.

## D. Withholding tax

The FDFA complies with local taxation regulations in countries where employers are in charge of withholding tax.

## E. Personal development

Opportunities for skills development are available to all staff, with training primarily aimed at optimising the performance of duties. Education and training can take place at the workplace (job enrichment, mentoring, etc.) or in parallel to the job.

Managers at the representations are in charge of personnel development. They assess training needs as part of the employee's annual MbO cycle and in relation to the employee's position. Managers encourage staff to improve their employability where this also benefits the department. The amount of time and funding that can be allocated to personnel development is determined by how beneficial such measures are to the FDFA's work; development measures at the representations are financed by their staff budgets.

## F. Career prospects and advancement within the FDFA

The FDFA expects employee loyalty and supports professional advancement in a fair manner. Career prospects for local staff are limited because of their functions. Other jobs can only be undertaken by Swiss employees.

For local staff, internal mobility is restricted to job transfers within the representation. These decisions are generally taken by the representation, including the framework and conditions for such changes.

## G. Working time model

The representations support alternative forms of work and flexible working models for their staff, provided this is compatible with the needs of the department and security measures.

## H. Equal opportunities

The FDFA fosters equal opportunities and sees cultural diversity as an added value. It guarantees mental and physical integrity in the workplace. All staff are entitled to protection from discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. The principles for promoting equal opportunities at the FDFA are set out in the [Equal opportunities policy 2010–2020<sup>1</sup>](#) and the [FDFA policy on equal opportunities in the workplace](#).

## I. Information and advice

The FDFA communicates in a clear and transparent manner with a view to fostering greater understanding and acceptance of its decisions. Staff are consulted on the relevant aspects of HR regulations.

FDFA Human Resources helps managers implement the department's personnel policy by providing tools, training courses and advice. In the event of conflict with a manager at a representation, staff can request mediation services from the Federal Administration Training Centre ([info@azb.admin.ch](mailto:info@azb.admin.ch)). Staff experiencing difficulties at work or home can also make use of the free services provided by the Personnel and Social Counselling Service of the Federal Administration under the Federal Office of Personnel ([psb@psb.admin.ch](mailto:psb@psb.admin.ch)).

The FDFA Compliance Office ([compliance@eda.admin.ch](mailto:compliance@eda.admin.ch)) can also be contacted to report criminal offences, violations of the [Code of Conduct for FDFA employees abroad](#) or other irregularities. All reports are treated confidentially.

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<sup>1</sup> The Action plan on equal opportunities and diversity for 2021–2028 is under development.

# 3 What the FDFA expects from its local staff

Local staff represent Switzerland's interests on the ground, which lays the foundation for the successful implementation of Swiss foreign policy. Their commitment and loyalty contribute to the high standard and continuity of the representations' services.

All staff are expected to carry out their duties responsibly and diligently. They should play an active role through their language and technical skills as well as their local knowledge. If there are any changes to tasks or duties, an open and flexible approach is required. Staff must comply with the statutory duties and legal regulations at their place of work. They should communicate in a broad and open manner.

Staff contribute to ensuring that their working environment is free from discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying, and must comply with the [FDFA policy on equal opportunities in the workplace](#).

Staff are responsible for their own social security requirements including pension plans. They are expected to comply in full with their obligations under tax and civil law independently.

Staff are responsible for their own personal development. They should take steps to maintain their employability and be ready for potential changes, including changes to their employment contract.

# 4 What the FDFA expects from its managers

Leadership is based on mutual trust and openness. Transparency and inclusiveness help staff identify with their work. Managers should provide staff with regular opportunities to voice their concerns.

Managers at the representations should create a working environment where responsibilities are clearly delineated, which makes it possible to achieve common goals. Under the MbO process, direct line managers are in charge of agreeing objectives with the individual employee and reviewing them periodically.

Managers are expected to interact respectfully with all staff in day-to-day practice, particularly when it comes to different cultural contexts. They must comply with the [Code of Conduct for FDFA employees abroad](#) and other reference documents (section 5). Managers should value the diversity of the functions and personnel categories at the representation, as well as the cultural and linguistic backgrounds within their teams.

They are also obliged to provide staff with information on employment conditions and any relevant developments within the department. In such cases, communication must be tailored to the employee's function and in a language that they understand.

Managers at the representations are responsible for applying and reviewing the principles in these guidelines effectively and consistently, taking into account local law and customs. FDFA Human Resources is also in charge of verifying whether this is the case – by conducting surveys among local personnel for example – and can provide managers with support in implementing the guidelines where necessary.

# 5 Reference documents

1. [Directive 240-0 on the recruitment of local personnel in Switzerland's network of representations](#)
2. [Directive 240-2 on FDFA social security for local personnel in Switzerland's network of representations](#)
3. [Code of conduct](#)
4. [Equal Opportunities Policy 2010–2020](#)
5. [FDFA policy on equal opportunities in the workplace](#)
6. [Code of conduct for contractual partners of the FDFA](#)

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