



Horizon 3

Information Bulletin for Migrants in Geneva

New Constitution: Not a step forward

After four years' work, the constitutional assembly agreed on the final version of the new Constitution for the canton of Geneva. The population will vote on the text on 14 October 2012.

For many years now, CCSI has been fighting to grant foreign residents the right to vote and to be elected. A first battle was won in 2005, when the right to vote (but not to be elected) was granted on the communal level. We saw the revision of the Constitution as an opportunity to extend these rights to the cantonal level. All along the process, CCSI campaigned with other organizations in favor of such an extension. Among other actions, a petition was sent to the constitutional assembly with over 5000 signatures.

While the initial ambition was to write a Constitution fit for Geneva in the 21st century, our hopes have been severely disappointed. As their work came to an end, the constitutional deputies finally decided to maintain the status quo, thus continuing to exclude nearly 40% of the canton's residents from the democratic process.

In spite of a few positive elements (the text is clearer, more readable, the list of fundamental rights is more complete, etc.), CCSI could not support a text that so lacked a vision for our future. Our disappointment as to this missed opportunity was too great.

Family allowances

If you have children and are without legal status, you may be eligible for family allowances (financial contribution from the State for persons with dependent children).

To qualify for family allowances, the conditions are as follows: **the declared salary must be minimum 580.- per month;** for persons from non EU/EFTA

**Do not forget,
to be done every year**

Health insurance subsidy:

Depending on your income, your children have a right to a subsidy for their health insurance. Do not forget to make an appointment at CCSI **as of December** to renew your child's subsidy.

If you and/or your partner have a residence permit, there have been changes in 2012. When you call to make an appointment, please ask what documents you will need to bring with you.

School meals and activities:

Depending on your income and where you live, you have a right to request financial aid for school meals for your children. Do not forget to make an appointment at CCSI **as of the beginning of the school year.**

For after-school activities (**para-scolaire**), you may leave the green form, completed and signed, at the reception of CCSI.

countries, the **children must be in Switzerland;** your employer **must start the procedure.**

Useful tip: family allowances can be granted retroactively over five years. At CCSI, the permanence Ecole and Petite enfance can help you with the procedures.

Domestic violence

Many women victims of domestic violence, are unable to leave their husbands in spite of the violence.

In cases where the permit is linked to marital status, it is even harder to make the decision to leave a violent spouse, because of the fear of losing one's residence permit. It is important to know that **a permit obtained by marriage can be renewed even if the marriage ends**, for example in cases of domestic violence. CCSI can provide you with relevant information. For these procedures however, it is very important to have **proof of the violence** (medical certificate, report from a victims' center, etc.).

Whatever your immigration status is, you shouldn't hesitate to seek help. If you are a victim of domestic violence, please contact Solidarité Femmes (46, rue de Montchoisy, 1207 Geneva, tel : 022 797 1010) or the Centre LAVI (72, Bd. St-Georges, tel : 022 320 0102). You can of course talk about this with the person attending you at CCSI, who will give you more information.

Primary school: registration

Any child living in Geneva, regardless of their legal status, has the right and the obligation to go to school. Children born before 01.08.2007 start school on 27 August 2012. You can register your child at CCSI all year long.

To be accepted in school, your child must have health insurance. For children without a residence permit, CCSI is in charge of the affiliation with the child's legal guardian. Make an appointment or come directly to the reception with ID for the child and the legal guardian(s). Coming to CCSI gives your child the green light to go to school.

Health insurance: caution!

Do not sign any documents related to your health insurance (basic or complementary) with an insurance broker who has come to your home! The pressure might be strong, but it is dangerous to sign such documents. Contact us before making any changes regarding your (or your children's) health insurance.

Income certificate

For parents followed by the permanence Ecole who cannot obtain a salary certificate to prove their income, CCSI can provide you with an income certificate (attestation de revenus). The certificate is needed for the dental clinic, and school support classes given by ARA. Please make an appointment with the permanence Ecole.

Domestic workers

If you work in the domestic sector (cleaning, cooking, child-care, assisting elderly persons, etc.) **you have rights**, regardless of your immigration status. There is a compulsory contract in the sector, that applies to all workers without distinction. Among others things, it establishes a maximum number of working hours per week (45h if you work full time, 8h per day max.), maternity leave, and a minimum wage (18.60/h, not including holidays).

If your employer agrees to making the request, domestic employees can be **declared to social insurances regardless of their immigration status**. It is very important to try to be declared, as contributing to social insurances grants you rights (accident insurance, family allowances, etc.) and protects you as a worker. In Geneva, Chèque-service can help your employer with the necessary administrative procedures in order to declare you.

(www.chequeservice.ch).

Do not hesitate to find out how to defend your rights: for further information, you can ask CCSI or go directly to the SIT (a trade union, 16, rue des Chaudronniers, 1204 Geneva, tel : 022 818 0300).

Finally, CCSI and other organizations are launching a national campaign, as of autumn 2012, to raise public awareness about living and working conditions in the sector, and to demand regularization for the undocumented workers living in Switzerland. More information, will be available soon.

Your contribution

As of 1 January 2012, we kindly ask you for an **annual financial contribution of 50 francs** per case (the amount can of course be negotiated if you have financial difficulties).

This decision was taken by the CCSI committee. In order to continue to assist you as adequately as possible, we need more resources. Over the last few years, CCSI has made considerable efforts to increase its income. Today we are asking you to contribute to these efforts.

If you have any questions about this decision, please feel free to ask !

Our opening hours

The opening hours of CCSI (telephone and reception) are as follows:

- Monday: 1.30-4.30 pm
- Tuesday, Wednesday: 8.30-11.30 am and 1.30-4.30 pm
- Thursday, Friday: 8.30-11.30 am.

If you have an appointment with one of the consultations outside of these hours, please wait in the hall by the elevators. Someone will come to fetch you.

Important!

Please note that CCSI is not able to assist you in finding work or housing in Geneva.

