

## SWITZERLAND

*Population:* 7,2 Mio

*Area:* 41.285 km<sup>2</sup>

### Part 1: Laws concerning Homosexuality

*Forbidden by law:* No

*Registered partnership/marriage:*

It varies from one canton to the other, a federal law is in preparation

*Differences to heterosexual marriages:* Yes

Procreation, adoption (singles may adopt)

*Anti-discrimination law, protecting lesbians/gays (L/G) against discrimination:* No

*At work:* No

*On the housing market:* No

*In other areas:* No

*Comments:* The constitution (valid since Jan 1st 2000) contains an article (Article 8 of the Swiss constitution, part 1) forbidding discrimination in general, listing several possible reasons for unlawful discrimination, including religion, ethnic origin, gender, handicaps and "lifestyle". The latter is meant to include sexual orientation. The main problem is that up to now the practical application of this paragraph is unclear, and will not be clarified until the highest court has reason to interpret it.

*Other groups in the society protected through such a law:* Yes

However, for many of them the situation is similarly unclear (see above).

*Incidents that briefly describe the situation of L/G in society:*

Homosexuality is tolerated as a part of private life, not as a political or public issue – "don't ask, don't tell" is the general attitude.

Marianne (French-speaking Switzerland): Most of my gay and lesbian friends conceal their homosexuality at work. I know one person who lost her job after having registered her partnership.

Irène: On the other hand, in the canton of Zürich, the partnership law was accepted by public vote, which shows a large amount of support for same-sex relationships.

### Part 2: Situation in the Church(es)

*Open L/G welcome to*

*Eucharist:* Yes

*Comments:* Very few gays and lesbians in church live openly, at least in French-speaking Switzerland. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, there are some congregations who have a reputation of being gay-friendly, many just accept their lesbian and gay members without making a big issue of their acceptance, and yet others are quite homophobic.

*Do volunteer work:* Yes

*Work as ordained ministers:* Yes/No

*Comments:* "Yes" for most of the Reformed Swiss Churches. Exception: canton of Vaud. On the other hand, several churches have declared that the sexual orientation of a candidate is of no importance when it comes to their ordination, and the church of Argovia even has an anti-discrimination paragraph in its by-laws, as well as providing social security for same-sex partners of employees.

As ministers are elected by the congregations, being lesbian or gay is a handicap when looking for employment, but there are several openly lesbian and gay ministers both in rural and more urban congregations.

*Other employment in church(es):* Yes/No

See above.

*Partnership blessing possible:* Yes/No

*Comment:* Again, this varies from one canton to the other, in many German-speaking Reformed Churches it is possible, in most of the French-speaking Churches it is not. But that may change soon ("at least, I hope so", says Marianne)

*Incidents/outspoken attitudes that briefly describe the situation of L/G in the churches:*

Marianne: I am the first minister in French-speaking Switzerland to have told my superiors in the Reformed Church.

Irène : In the German-speaking part, the church leaders are generally supportive. For example, there is a book with material for discussions with adult groups, published by the Church of Zürich. The church contacted gay and lesbian groups to find people for the editorial committee. There has also been financial support for gay and lesbian Christian groups, as well as repeated instances of supportive statements when individuals or groups were attacked by fundamentalists (evangelicals). However, in every church there are also very outspoken people who think homosexuality is an illness needing to be healed. Therefore, some church statements are compromises which satisfy neither group, and verbal attacks can happen.

### Part 3: Christian Lesbian/Gay Networks

*Network name:* Chrétien(ne)s et Homosexuel(le)s (C+H, gays and lesbians), Geneva

*Number of members:* approx. 50

*Year of foundation:* 1993

*Web page/contact address:* Dialogai, 11-13 rue de la Navigation, Case postale 69, CH -211 Geneve 21

ch\_homo@hotmail.com

*Network name:* Cool Christliche Organisation von Lesben, (women only)

*Number of members:* approx. 50

*Year of foundation:* 2000

*Web page/contact address:* CH-3000 Bern.

[www.cool-schweiz.ch](http://www.cool-schweiz.ch)

*Network name:* Lesbische und Schwule Basiskirche Basel (gays and lesbians)

*Number of members:* approx. 60

*Year of foundation:* 1991

*Web page/contact address:* c/o Offene Kirche Elisabethen, Elisabethenstr. 10-14, CH-4051 Basel

[www.lsbk.ch](http://www.lsbk.ch)

*Network name:* Gottesdienste in der Helferei, Zürich (gays and lesbians)  
*Web page/contact address:* [www.lsbk.ch/seiten/zuerich.asp](http://www.lsbk.ch/seiten/zuerich.asp)

*Network name:* Zwischenraum (men and women with an evangelical background)  
*Number of members:* approx. 40 (Switzerland and Germany)  
*Year of foundation:* 2001  
*Web page/contact address:* [www.zwischenraum.net](http://www.zwischenraum.net)

*Questionnaire filled in by Irène from Cool and Marianne from C + H*