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## **Federal Act on Weapons, Weapon Accessories and Ammunition (Weapons Act, WA)**

of 20 June 1997 (Status as of 1 January 2022)

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*The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation,*

on the basis of Article 107 paragraph 1 and Article 118 paragraph 2 letter a of the Federal Constitution<sup>1,2</sup>

and having considered the Dispatch of the Federal Council dated 24 January 1996<sup>3</sup>,  
*decrees:*

### **Chapter 1    General Provisions**

#### **Section 1    Subject Matter, Scope of Application and Definitions**

**Art. 14**            Purpose and subject matter

<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this Act is to prevent the improper use of weapons, weapon components, weapon accessories, ammunition and ammunition components.

<sup>2</sup> It regulates the acquisition, bringing into Switzerland, export, storage, possession, carrying, transport, brokerage, manufacture of, and trade in:

- a.    weapons, essential or specially designed weapon components, and weapon accessories;
- b.    ammunition and ammunition components.

<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this Act is also to prevent the improper carrying of dangerous objects.

AS 1998 2535

<sup>1</sup>    SR 101

<sup>2</sup>    Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl 2006 2713).

<sup>3</sup>    BBl 1996 I 1053

<sup>4</sup>    Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl 2006 2713).

**Art. 2<sup>5</sup>** Scope of application

<sup>1</sup> This Act does not apply to the Swiss Army, the Federal Intelligence Service, the customs authorities or the police services. Nor does it apply to the military authorities, with the exception of Articles 32a<sup>bis</sup>, 32c and 32j.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Antique weapons are governed solely by Articles 27 and 28, and by the relevant criminal provisions of this Act. Antique weapons are defined as firearms that were manufactured before 1870, and cut, thrust or other weapons that were manufactured before 1900.

<sup>3</sup> This Act applies without prejudice to the provisions of federal hunting and military legislation.

**Art. 3** Right to acquire, possess and carry weapons

The right to acquire, possess and carry weapons in compliance with this Act is guaranteed.

**Art. 4<sup>7</sup>** Definitions

<sup>1</sup> Weapons are defined as:

- a. devices that allow projectiles to be fired by means of a propellant charge and that can be carried and operated by a single person, or objects that can be converted into such devices (firearms);
- b. devices that are intended to permanently endanger a person's health through the spraying or vaporisation of substances;
- c. knives whose blade can be opened by means of an automatic mechanism that requires the use of one hand only, butterfly knives, throwing knives, and daggers with a symmetrical blade;
- d. devices that are intended to injure a person, in particular knuckledusters, simple or spring batons, throwing stars and slingshots;
- e. electrical shock devices that can impair a person's power of resistance or permanently damage a person's health;
- f. compressed air and CO<sub>2</sub> weapons that develop a muzzle energy of at least 7.5 joules or that can be mistaken for real firearms due to their appearance;
- g. imitation, blank cartridge and airsoft weapons that can be mistaken for real firearms due to their appearance.

<sup>2</sup> Weapon accessories are defined as:

- a. silencers and their specially designed components;

<sup>5</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS **2008** 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl **2006** 2713).

<sup>6</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 23 Dec. 2011, in force since 1 Jan. 2013 (AS **2012** 4551 6775; BBl **2011** 4555).

<sup>7</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS **2008** 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl **2006** 2713).

- b. laser and night vision devices, and their specially designed components;
- c. grenade launchers that are designed as an additional device for a firearm.

<sup>2bis</sup> High capacity loading devices are loading devices for semi-automatic centrefire weapons that have a capacity of:

- a. more than 20 rounds in the case of handguns;
- b. more than 10 rounds in the case of small firearms.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2ter</sup> A Schengen state is a state bound by any of the Schengen Association Agreements. The Schengen Association Agreements are listed in the Annex.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The Federal Council decides which objects are essential or specially designed components of weapons and weapon accessories, and are therefore regulated by this Act.

<sup>4</sup> The Federal Council defines which compressed air, CO<sub>2</sub>, imitation, blank cartridge and airsoft weapons, knives, daggers, electrical shock devices, devices in accordance with paragraph 1 letter b, and slingshots are considered to be weapons.

<sup>5</sup> Ammunition is defined as firing material containing a propellant charge whose energy is transmitted onto a projectile by ignition in a firearm.

<sup>6</sup> Dangerous objects are defined as objects such as tools, household appliances and sports equipment that can be used to injure a person. Penknives, such as the Swiss Army pocket knife and similar products, are not considered to be dangerous objects.

## Section 2 General Bans and Restrictions

**Art. 5<sup>10</sup>** Bans relating to weapons, weapon components and weapon accessories

<sup>1</sup> The transfer, acquisition, brokerage for recipients in Switzerland, bringing into Switzerland and the possession of the following weapons are prohibited:

- a. automatic firearms and military launching devices for ammunition, for projectiles or for missiles that have an explosive effect, and their essential or specially designed components;
- b. automatic firearms modified to semi-automatic firearms, and their essential components; the foregoing does not apply to Swiss army firearms the own-

<sup>8</sup> Inserted by the Annex to the FD of 28 Sept. 2018 on the approval and the implementation of the exchange of notes between Switzerland and the EU on the adoption of Directive (EU) 2017/853 on the Amendment of the EU Weapons Directive, in force since 15 Aug. 2019 (AS **2019** 2415; BBl **2018** 1881).

<sup>9</sup> Originally para. <sup>2bis</sup>. Inserted by No I of the FA of 11 Dec. 2009 (Adaptation of the Implementation of the Schengen Acquis), in force since 28 July 2010 (AS **2010** 2823; BBl **2009** 3649).

<sup>10</sup> Amended by the Annex to the FD of 28 Sept. 2018 on the approval and the implementation of the exchange of notes between Switzerland and the EU on the adoption of Directive (EU) 2017/853 on the Amendment of the EU Weapons Directive, in force since 15 Aug. 2019 (AS **2019** 2415; BBl **2018** 1881).

ership of which is acquired by the holder directly from the military authorities, and to components essential for maintaining the functionality of such weapons;

- c. the following semi-automatic centrefire weapons:
  - 1. handguns equipped with a high-capacity loading device,
  - 2. small firearms equipped with a high-capacity loading device;
- d. semi-automatic small firearms that may be shortened by means of a folding or telescopic shaft or without auxiliary means to a length of less than 60 cm, without losing any functionality;
- e. firearms that resemble an article of everyday use and their essential components;
- f. grenade launchers in accordance with Article 4 paragraph 2 letter c.

<sup>2</sup> The transfer, acquisition, brokerage for recipients in Switzerland, bringing into Switzerland and the possession of the following weapons are prohibited:

- a. knives and daggers in accordance with Article 4 paragraph 1 letter c;
- b. striking and throwing devices in accordance with Article 4 paragraph 1 letter d, with the exception of batons;
- c. electrical shock devices in accordance with Article 4 paragraph 1 letter e;
- d. weapon accessories.

<sup>3</sup> Shooting with the following weapons is prohibited:

- a. automatic firearms;
- b. military launching devices for ammunition, for projectiles or for missiles that have an explosive effect;

<sup>4</sup> Shooting using firearms in publicly accessible places outside officially authorised shooting events or shooting ranges is prohibited.

<sup>5</sup> Shooting using firearms in places not accessible to the public that have been appropriately protected, and shooting while hunting is permitted.

<sup>6</sup> The cantons may authorise exceptions to the prohibitions in paragraphs 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> The Central Office (Art. 31c) may authorise exceptions to the ban on bringing weapons into Switzerland.

#### **Art. 6<sup>11</sup>** Bans and restrictions relating to ammunition

<sup>1</sup> The Federal Council may prohibit or make subject to compliance with special conditions the acquisition, possession, manufacture and bringing into Switzerland of ammunition and ammunition components that are proven to potentially cause serious injury.

<sup>11</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS **2008** 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl **2006** 2713).

<sup>2</sup> Ammunition and ammunition components that are used at ordinary shooting events or for hunting are exempt.

**Art. 6a<sup>12</sup>** Inheritance

<sup>1</sup> Any person who acquires through inheritance weapons, essential or specially designed weapon components or weapon accessories that are prohibited under Article 5 paragraph 1 must apply for an exemption permit within six months.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign nationals who do not have a settlement permit but who are resident in Switzerland may only be granted an exemption permit for the acquisition of a weapon, an essential or specially designed weapon component or weapon accessory under Article 5 paragraph 1 if they submit an official attestation from their home country confirming that they are authorised to acquire such an object.

**Art. 6b<sup>13</sup>** Official attestation

<sup>1</sup> Persons who are resident abroad may only be granted an exemption permit for the acquisition of a weapon, an essential or specially designed weapon component or weapon accessory under Article 5 paragraph 1 if they submit an official attestation from their country of residence confirming that they are authorised to acquire such an object.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Where there is doubt as to the authenticity of the attestation or the person is not able to submit such an attestation, the canton shall forward the file to the Central Office. The Central Office shall examine the attestation or may issue one if appropriate.

**Art. 7<sup>15</sup>** Ban for nationals of certain states

<sup>1</sup> The Federal Council may prohibit the acquisition, possession, offering for acquisition, brokerage or transfer of weapons, essential or specially designed weapon components, weapon accessories, ammunition and ammunition components, and the carrying of and shooting with weapons by nationals of certain states:

- a. if there is considerable risk of improper use;
- b. in order to take into account resolutions by the international community or principles of Swiss foreign policy.

<sup>12</sup> Inserted by Art. 3 No 6 of the FD of 17 Dec. 2004 on the Adoption and Implementation of the Bilateral Agreements between Switzerland and the EU on the Association with Schengen and Dublin (AS 2008 447; BBl 2004 5965). Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl 2006 2713).

<sup>13</sup> Inserted by Art. 3 No 6 of the FD of 17 Dec. 2004 on the Adoption and Implementation of the Bilateral Agreements between Switzerland and the EU on the Association with Schengen and Dublin, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 447 5405 Art. 1 let. e; BBl 2004 5965).

<sup>14</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl 2006 2713).

<sup>15</sup> Amended by No I of the FA of 22 June 2007, in force since 12 Dec. 2008 (AS 2008 5499 5405 Art. 2 let. d; BBl 2006 2713).