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## Media release

# Foreign employees feel well-integrated at the workplace

**More than half of foreign employees in Switzerland feel well-integrated in their work environment. Language difficulties serve as one of the main reasons for a lack of integration. This is concluded by the latest issue of the Swiss HR Barometer issued by the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich and the Universities of Lucerne and Zurich.**

The focal topic of the tenth issue of the Swiss Human Relations Barometer (HR Barometer) is «Integration and discrimination of foreign employees in the work environment». Based on a survey of some 1300 foreign employees, the study investigated the determining factors and effects of perceived integration and discrimination on the grounds of nationality, ethnic origin and faith.

### **The majority is fully integrated**

The overall picture is positive for perceived integration: 52 percent of foreign employees feel that they are fully and completely integrated at the workplace, while 31 percent say that they are quite integrated. 17 percent of respondents feel that they are only partially, not quite or not at all integrated. Language difficulties proved to be one of the main reasons for a weak sense of integration.

### **Hardly any discrimination on the grounds of origin, nationality or faith**

The result for perceived discrimination is similarly positive. 86 percent of respondents do not experience or experience only slight discrimination at the workplace on the grounds of nationality, ethnic origin or faith. Foreign employees mostly experience discrimination during the application process and with regard to their salaries. It is interesting that foreigners experience more discrimination from customers than from their employer in their everyday working lives.

### **Improvement potential for integration climate**

Co-editor Prof. Bruno Staffelbach of the University of Lucerne says: «Fulfilled expectations, a good integration climate and good relationships with superiors and colleagues help reduce the sense of discrimination at the workplace.» The integration climate in particular is an essential determining factor for the integration of foreign employees and also counters



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discrimination in companies. But there is some potential for improvement in this regard in Swiss companies. Around one-third of foreign employees assess the integration climate at their company as just average. Companies with a good integration climate attach great importance to fair personnel management measures, the acceptance of people with a different background and the integration of different viewpoints into decision-making processes.

### **Critical trends include salaries and job insecurity**

In addition to the changing focal topic, the HR Barometer also takes a look at the recurring topics that are always included in the biennial surveys. The trend since 2012 has been mostly stable. The expectations of employees in Switzerland of their employers are therefore constant and predictable.

As before, the biggest discrepancy in the psychological contract, i.e. the mutual expectations and obligations still lies in the definition of an adequate salary. The employees actually gave a worse assessment for the salaries that are offered than during the previous survey. In addition to actual salary adjustments, more transparency regarding salaries could help counter this negative trend.

Also, perceived job insecurity reached an all-time high this year since the start of the survey in 2006. The comparative increase in job uncertainty is highest for employees in the transport and communications sector, in the real estate, rental, IT, research and development sectors and in the manufacturing industry. Co-editor Prof. Gudela Grote from the ETH Zurich emphasises: «Generally speaking, more should be invested in the development of labour market skills to ensure that employees are equipped to cope with losing a job.»

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### **The Swiss HR Barometer**

The Swiss HR Barometer measures how employees in Switzerland experience their work situation. Surveys focus on topics such as the following: Mutual expectations and obligations of employees and employers as a component of the employment relationship (psychological contract), HR management practices such as working arrangements and staff development, management, work satisfaction, labour market skills and career focus. The study is regularly published by Prof. Gudela Grote, professor of Work and Organisational Psychology at the ETH Zurich, and Prof. Bruno Staffelbach, Head of the Centre for Human Resource Management at the University of Lucerne, in cooperation with the University of Zurich.



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The HR Barometer 2018 is based on a survey of 1947 employees selected from the sample frame register of the Federal Statistical Office. The focal topic of the current issue is «Integration and discrimination». In order to obtain meaningful input from foreign employees, a sample of foreign employees was also drawn for this year's focal topic. A total of 1325 replies by foreign employees in Switzerland was evaluated for the focal topic. The survey took place in the German-, French- and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland between March and May 2018.

The HR Barometer 2018 was published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

### **Information about this year's issue**

An electronic version of the report can be downloaded at  
[www.hrbarometer.ch](http://www.hrbarometer.ch)

Gudela Grote and Bruno Staffelbach (editors): Swiss HR Barometer 2018: Integration and discrimination. Zurich 2018. Universities of Lucerne and Zurich and ETH Zurich.  
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