

The  **MB**  
**NEWCOMERS'**  
**GUIDE**

To D-BSSE, ETH Zürich  
Department of Biosystems Science and Engineering  
2024

# Welcome to D BSSE



Association of Scientific Staff @ D-BSSE  
*Verein des Mittelbaus*

Version 4.2

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This guide was threaded by a joint effort between the VMB media team and a number of volunteers that willingly shared their knowledge with the D-BSSE community.

The VMB media team wants to acknowledge their effort and thank them for their contribution.

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We also want to thank Carolin Arndt Foppa for useful comments, proofreading and materials and Andrea Huber Brösamle for also checking and approving the contents of this guide. The leadership of D-BSSE also supported this initiative.

Cover images

BSS front view and atrium

Optogenetics experiment by Dirk Benzinger - Screenshot from [BSSE video](#) (D-BSSE/ETH Zürich)

Found a mistake or want to add something to the guide? - feel free to comment [here](#).

# INDEX

First Steps at D-BSSE	5
Department Organisation	9
Get Involved!	13
Internal Events	15
Doctoral Studies at D-BSSE	18
Useful Links for Postdocs at D-BSSE	20
Scientific Networks in Basel	21
What to do if something goes wrong?	22
Basics of Employment at ETH	24
Useful Links	26
Health insurance	26
Financial Insights	28
Sustainability and Recycling	30
Culture and Fun in Basel	32
Living in France while working at D-BSSE	34
Living in Germany while working at D-BSSE	36

You have just joined D-BSSE, and an exciting future of scientific research awaits you. Because it is always challenging to start working in a new environment, we want to provide you with a few tips to make your first steps easier. Please note that none of this should be considered financial or legal advice and we do not guarantee the correctness of the content of this document. We are simply trying to provide the peer-to-peer advice to give you the best possible start at the department!

## First Steps at D-BSSE

### Getting started

You can find very useful information for your first days at work on [this ETH webpage](#), which contains some of the most frequent questions from Newcomers.

In your first month, you will notice an email from the Department Administration Services ([DAS](#)) announcing the new members of D-BSSE joining around the same time as you. Some time later the Scientific Staff Association ([VMB](#)) will contact you to join a **Newcomers Event**, where you will be able to meet some of the other Newcomers and ask all questions you can think about. In addition, the coordinator of doctoral studies (Andrea Huber Brösamle) organizes periodical **information events for new PhD students** - if this is your case you will be invited to this meeting via email.



BSS Building - Home of the D-BSSE since 2023

Next, you need to know about the [D-BSSE Wiki page](#) and the [intranet](#), especially the intranet pages on [getting started at BSSE](#). Both are very useful resources where you will find the answers to many questions about how to go around at D-BSSE (some information may be redundant to this guide, as we are trying to make sure it reaches as many people as possible). Please review the [intranet pages](#) to inform yourself about important aspects first steps, such as [compulsory safety introductions](#). Both platforms are only available from within the D-BSSE/ETHZ network, which means you **need to physically be at the department or connect through VPN**. Use your ETHZ username and password to log in and you will be able to navigate through the general D-BSSE space and also your research group's wiki space.

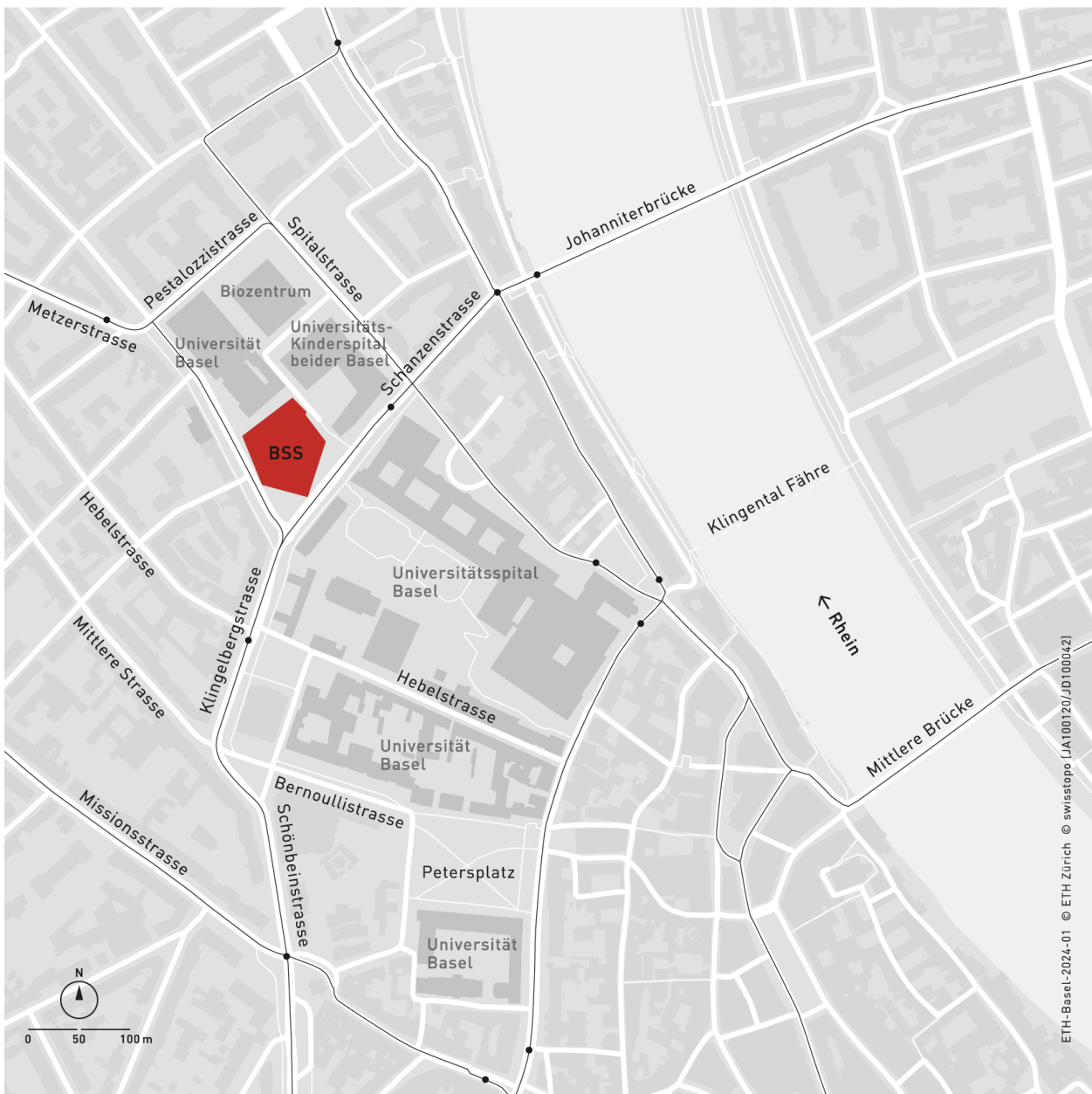
### Where am I?

As of fall 2023, the D-BSSE has moved to a new building at [Klingelbergstrasse 48, 4056 Basel](#), in the north-western part of Grossbasel. (Please note that the shipping address is Schanzenstrasse 44, 4056 Basel.) We are located in close vicinity to departments of the [University of Basel](#), such as

# LIFE @ D BSSE **ETH** zürich

the [Biozentrum](#), [Department of Biomedicine](#), and the [Pharmacenter](#). We are also neighbors to the Children's hospital and the University Hospital.

On ETH maps the D-BSSE building appears as **BSS**. You can find further information on the building and floor plans on the corresponding [ETH webpage](#). Floor “E” corresponds to the **entrance level**; from there to “K” are all the floors above the ground. “D” and “C” are the first and second underground floors, respectively. This terminology applies to **all ETH buildings**, just in case you need to visit another location in Zurich or somewhere else. In that case, you can also check maps and floor plans of other ETH locations [here](#).



Map of the BSS and its surroundings (modified from ETH catalogue).

## Keys and badges

Now that you know where you are standing, you need to get access to the BSS. The first step to this is the [ETH Badge](#), which you should have received per mail before starting your contract. Aside from identifying yourself, you will need the badge to:

- enter the BSS building outside of regular opening hours (7am to 7pm, weekends). For this you have to set your own 6-digit PIN by going [here](#).
- open the main doors on floors F-K or enter into the stairwells. The BSS is a semi-public building — the doors with badge readers separate public spaces from ETH spaces.

In addition, you should pass by the reception desk (south side of the E floor, open from 7am to 5pm) to receive keys to open the labs and offices assigned to you. For more details about **distribution and return of keys**, just contact Facility Services (FS) or read the [instructions on the ETH website](#).

## IT - getting equipped

Before you arrive at your new workplace, you will be invited to an IT user induction via your private email. At the induction, your ETH account will be set up and you will get a laptop, screen, keyboard and/or some other hardware and software. After discussing your needs with your supervisor, the equipment can be picked up at the [IT Helpdesk](#), which is open every day from 09:00 to 11:00 and 14:00 to 16:00 and is located in room E 45. You can get in contact by emailing to [helpdesk@bsse.ethz.ch](mailto:helpdesk@bsse.ethz.ch).

You can also visit their [Wiki webpage](#), where they publish extensive instructions and updates about the IT infrastructure at D-BSSE or check the [intranet](#).

## The Helpdesk system

The Helpdesk system is a centralised resource that distributes **tickets** (questions or calls for support from staff members) throughout the entire D-BSSE domain. This includes the facility Services for Science and Teaching (FaST) and IT Services and Consulting.

If you have any questions or need help in any of these subjects, you just need to “**write a ticket to Helpdesk**”, which simply means “**send an email to [helpdesk@bsse.ethz.ch](mailto:helpdesk@bsse.ethz.ch)**”. The Helpdesk system will allocate your ticket to the corresponding department and they will personally get back to you by email. Your issue will then be followed in time with a unique tracking number associated with your email thread, and once your issue is solved your ticket will be closed.

Please check the services provided by FaST on their [webpage](#) (login required) and note that for different issues you will need to ask the more general [Facility Services](#) of the department, which uses a separate ticket system (see below). Please also note that the Departments for [Finance &](#)

[Controlling and Administration \(DAS\)](#) are not included here and need to be contacted separately. Find more about the various services also on this D-BSSE [wiki page](#) or the [intranet](#) (login required).

## The Facility Services (FS)

The FS manage important operations in the building, such as technical maintenance, removal and procurement of furniture, supplies, building cleaning, waste disposal and recycling, general care taker services, etc. If you need to get a service from FS you can use their [ticketing system](#). To find out more about the management and services at the department, please visit the [wiki pages](#) or the [intranet](#).

## Lunch at D-BSSE

If you like cooking and prefer **bringing your own food**, you can find **microwaves** and fridges on the K floor (see floor plan below). The Science Lounge on the K Floor offers ample seating options, both inside and on the outdoor terrace during summer. Additional seating is available in the north entrance area on the E Floor. If you want to **buy lunch**, there are several options around the D-BSSE.

**We have two cafeterias at BSS**, at the [Flavour Kitchen](#) (E Floor) and the [Science Lounge](#) (K Floor). For menu and opening hours you can visit their websites or the [ETH App](#). All ETH students and employees receive a 20% discount at the Flavour Kitchen and the Science lounge has a 3-tier pricing system: students (including PhD students), employees (Postdocs, staff, etc.) and external. Please note that outside food can be eaten at all seating spaces on the K Floor, and on the round tables at the E Floor, but not at the long wooden tables in the area of the Flavour Kitchen.



*Plan of Floor "K" (form the ETH website) with seating areas and food services.*

In addition, there are **coffee machines and vending machines** to buy drinks and snacks located on the K Floor (west side of the building).



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There is a bilateral agreement with the University of Basel: students/employees of D-BSSE will receive student/employee pricing at UniBasel facilities, and vice versa. So feel free to invite your UniBasel colleagues to come eat with us in the D-BSSE! **If you instead want to eat at Uni Basel**, the closest option is [BaCells'](#) then, the mensa of the Biozentrum (Floor -1). Information on the other cafeterias of Uni Basel can be found [here](#).

Of course you can also go for a **take-out option in the area**, some of our suggestions are:

- [MamaEat](#), Spitalstrasse 36, 4056 Basel: Thai food.
- [Bollywood Take Away](#), St. Johannis-Vorstadt 41, 4056 Basel: Indian food.
- [Somara Kebab](#), St. Johannis-Vorstadt 41, 4056 Basel: Kebab/wraps.
- [Tang Asien Supermarket](#), Spalenring 1, 4055, Basel (a supermarket that has take-out options during lunchtime).
- [Äss bar](#), Spalenvorstadt 41, 4051 Basel: Shop that sells day-old/unsold items from bakeries (at a very budget-friendly price).

If you have other suggestions to be included here, feel free to let us know: [ymb@bsse.ethz.ch](mailto:ymb@bsse.ethz.ch)

The **nearest supermarket** is [Coop Supermarkt Basel Spalemärt](#), Missionsstrasse 53, 4055 Basel, which is approximately a 7 min walk from the department. It offers a wide assortment of foods and other items, including pre-packaged take-out options such as sandwiches, salads, and bowls.

Finally, a great budget-friendly option for food is the mobile phone app [TooGoodToGo](#), which helps save food from going to waste. A selection of restaurants, shops, and bakeries offer their leftover food (sometimes with surprise content) at a discounted price.

## Department Organisation



*D-BSSE staff members ensure that everything runs smoothly in our department  
(picture from D-BSSE website)*

D-BSSE offers a variety of different services including [Administration](#), [Coordination](#), [Communication](#), [Finance and Controlling](#), [Facility Services for Science & Teaching](#), [Facility Services](#), [IT Services and Consulting](#) and [Student Administration](#). You can learn more about each of these services and their contact people in the corresponding D-BSSE webpages (links provided above) or by browsing the points of contact on the [intranet](#) (login required).

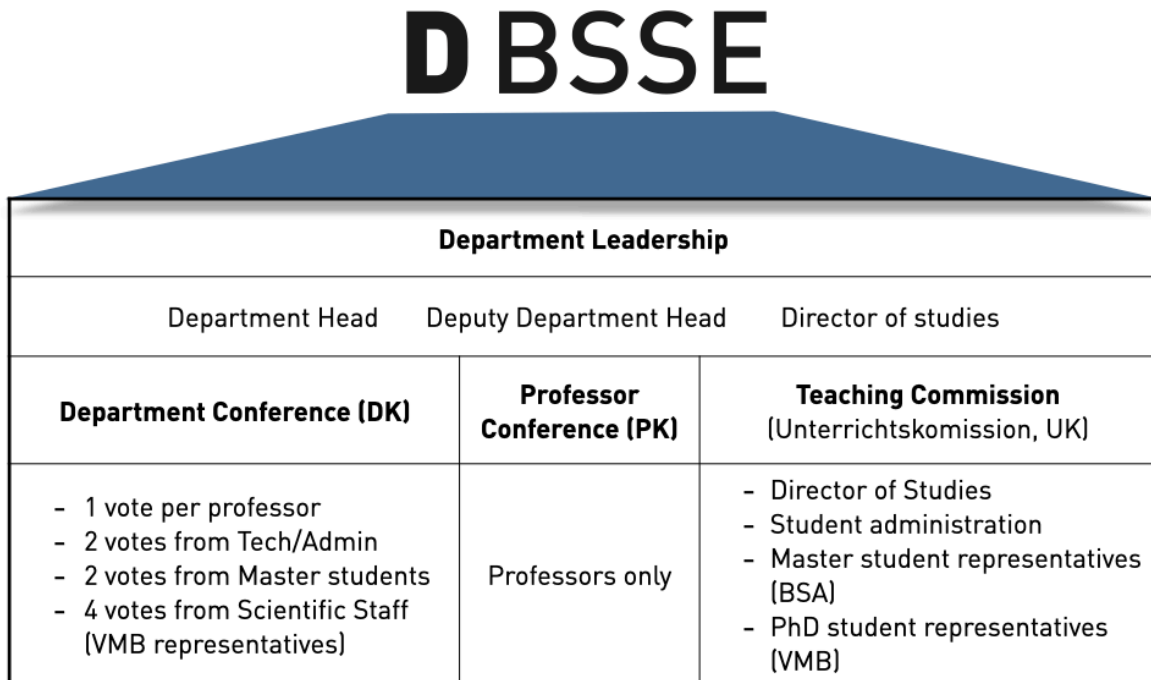
On top of that, we have several specialised facilities that support our experimental work. You can learn more about the [department facilities on the intranet](#), here we provide a short overview:

## Department facilities

- **Genomics Facility Basel (GFB)** supports the entire research community in Basel. Have a look at their [website](#) to find out details about available services and how to get in touch with them.
- The **Single Cell Facility (SCF)** provides microscopy, flow cytometry, image analysis and data management services. For more information visit their [website](#) or get in touch via [email](#) to discuss particular topics with individual members of the facility.
- The **Cleanroom Facility** provides support for the fabrication of microsystems such as microelectromechanical or microfluidic devices. For more details visit their [website](#).
- **Lab automation facility (LAF)** supports the development of automated workflows for a great variety of experimental setups: cell culture, cloning and standardised assays as well as custom assays. An extensive description of their services can be found on their [website](#).



Structure of the department



You can find the [current structure and leadership of the D-BSSE on the intranet](#). As a general overview, the D-BSSE is structured into multiple committees with different tasks and decision-making power:

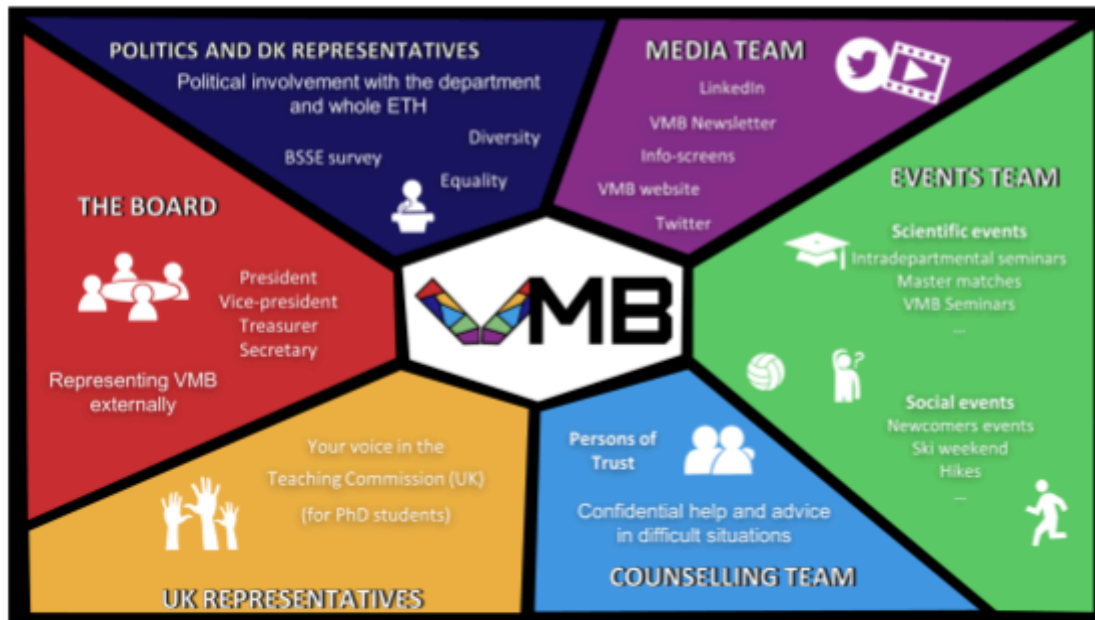
- **Department conference (DK):** the DK is the highest body of the department and all decisions that affect the entire department are decided here with simple majority vote. The votes are distributed as follows: **each professor** has 1 vote, **Tech/Admin employees** have 2 votes, our **master students** (represented by the BSA) have 2 votes and the **VMB** has 4 votes. Important agenda points must be officially submitted to the department coordinator (Andrea Huber Brösamle) at least one week ahead of the conference. The DK also **approves PhD defences, external committee members and second advisors**. Andrea typically sends a reminder to PhD students to submit their committee members and advisors for approval before each conference. The DK takes place 4 times a year and dates can be found [here](#).
- **Professor conference (PK):** the PK is a regular meeting of all professors that occurs 7-8 times a year. Dates for the PK can also be found via the above link.
- **Department management:** The D-BSSE is headed by the department management consisting of a **department head**, a **deputy department head** and a **director of studies**. Those positions are renewed/reinstated every two years by the DK. You can check in [this](#)

[website](#) who are the current elected members of this body.

- **Teaching commission / Unterrichtskommission (UK):** The UK is a regular meeting of representatives of the master students (**BSA**) and doctoral students (**VMB**) with the **director of studies, program coordinators** and the [student administration](#) (Simone Zuber). The UK representatives from VMB are elected every year in the VMB's General Assembly. In those meetings, everything regarding teaching is discussed including lectures, practical courses, credits etc. If you have any issue you would like to be discussed in these meetings, don't hesitate to **contact the student representatives** — the current UK representatives are listed on the [VMB website](#).

## Get Involved!

If you want to look beyond your day-to-day scientific work, here you have a summary of the



Overview of VMB working groups and functions.

different initiatives currently existing at D-BSSE.

## VMB (Verein des Mittelbaus, Association of PhDs and Postdocs)

Are you good at organising all sorts of activities? Are you committed to politics and protecting the interests of young fellow scientists? Do you enjoy acting as a mediator to solve conflicts between your colleagues? If you want to take part in **actively shaping life at D-BSSE**, the VMB (Association of Scientific Staff at D-BSSE) is your place.

**The VMB (Verein des Mittelbaus)** is the association of all scientific staff (PhD students and postdocs) at D-BSSE. It is part of the AVETH (Academic Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich, [AVETH](#)). The VMB participates in the **department conference (DK)** and **teaching commission (UK)**, and is structured in multiple sub-groups with different tasks. If you want to know more, please visit **our webpage!** There you will find all information related to VMB events and initiatives, who we are, and news related to D-BSSE.

There are various ways of participating in VMB, and they are not strictly delimited, you can **freely choose your level of commitment:**

- **Non-active members** are all the D-BSSE employees (PhDs and Postdocs) who regularly contribute to AVETH, which is the ETH "association of associations" of employees. AVETH receives this contribution and distributes it throughout the departments.

As a non-active member, you are always welcome to:

- ▶ **Join the monthly VMB meetings** (either on Zoom or in person).
  - ▶ **Join the VMB slack channel** ([vmb-group.slack.com](https://vmb-group.slack.com)) to stay updated on the current events and initiatives within the VMB.
  - ▶ **Raise questions or matters of concern** to discuss internally at VMB (who can escalate that to the DK / head of the department).
  - ▶ **Join any VMB-organised event** and benefit from discounted prices in special events such as the Ski weekend.
  - ▶ **Join the annual VMB General Assembly** and **vote** for your favourite candidates for official VMB positions.
  - ▶ **Benefit from the AVETH travel fund** to reimburse the cost of public transport tickets for travel from Basel to Zurich, allowing you to attend ETH events such as AVETH social events (e.g., board game nights, salsa nights), Career Weeks, PolyHack, Poly-E-Job Fairs, and more. Details and instructions [here](#).
- **Active members usually attend VMB meetings and** form part of a **working team** (The Board, Events, Media, Politics and DK Representatives, Counselling). Participation in one of these teams is not really done on an all-or-nothing basis, but rather **everyone backs each other up** — always bearing in mind that we are very busy scientists! The members of the board, representatives and heads of the other teams are **elected every year** in our general assembly (usually around the end of November) and can earn **1 ECTS credit per year** counting towards their PhD.

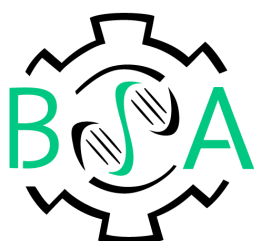
You can check if you are a member of AVETH (and thereby of VMB) on your **payslip** (the monthly contribution is usually deducted from your salary). If you are still not a member of AVETH and you would like to join, you just need to visit their website and **fill in the corresponding form**. In case you are a student, it is enough to go to [your semester invoice](#) and select “contribution to AVETH - Yes”. Check out the section “Join us!” on our [website](#) or just [contact us](#) if you have any questions.

**New membership scientific staff association AVETH (CHF 4.- per month)**



Without your monetary contribution we would not be able to organise our activities, but there is an even more important contribution: **your time and ideas**. VMB is a very open and safe space where you will always be welcome, and it needs enthusiastic people like you to stay up and running at full speed!

## Other D-BSSE associations



**The BSA (Biotechnology Students Association)** is the association of all biotechnology and computational systems biology master students and

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part of [VSETH](#). They participate in the department conference and the teaching commission, organise the **Thursday pint** and various **student events**. Further information can be found [here](#).

**D-BSSE Meets Industry (DMI)** is ETH D-BSSE's life sciences industry partnership program. Its mission is to **tighten the links between the Basel academic community and the biotech ecosystem**, especially from the vibrant Basel-Zürich innovation hub. Since 2015, the initiative organises events bringing together Basel academics and leading industry players in a wide variety of formats. Have a look at [some of the past events](#) to have a glimpse into our activities. DMI is [always recruiting new members](#), whether as core members or one-time contributors. Don't hesitate to reach out by email to get more information: [bsse-industry@bsse.ethz.ch](mailto:bsse-industry@bsse.ethz.ch)



**TWIST**, "Towards more Women In Science and Technology", is an initiative born from a group of scientists across the different life science institutions in Basel (D-BSSE, UniBasel, SwissTPH, FMI) aiming to create a **network to empower and connect women in STEM within the Basel area**. They organise several events that encourage people to interact, create new

**opportunities** and address issues surrounding **careers** and **education** in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Find out more on their [website](#) or contact them via [email](#).

The **Sustainability Initiatives at D-BSSE (SIB)** aims to encourage and involve the D-BSSE community to participate in the process of making research and our lives, in general, **more sustainable** and work towards **reducing our collective carbon footprint**. In addition to **raising awareness** through seminars, discussion panels, vegetarian BBQs, and other fun events, SIB also **promotes sustainable practices in the lab** by informing about and advocating for environmentally responsible research methods.



The Sustainability Initiatives at D-BSSE are not to be confused with the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, which is also abbreviated SIB!

The SIB team welcomes you to join their events and stay up to date about their activities, check out their [webpage](#) or contact [sib@bsse.ethz.ch](mailto:sib@bsse.ethz.ch) to find out more.

## Internal Events

You can find an overview of the department internal events in the [department calendar](#). Please note that events organized by VMB and other department associations may not always be listed

there. To stay informed about VMB-organized events, watch for email announcements or join our Slack channel at [vmb-group.slack.com](https://vmb-group.slack.com). We also recommend joining the D-BSSE Slack at [d-bsse.slack.com](https://d-bsse.slack.com) to stay connected with the department, keep up with events, and benefit from resource exchange through the 'Take a Penny, Leave a Penny' channel.

## VMB Newcomers Events and Other Casual Meet-ups

The VMB is dedicated to enriching life and community within the department. Our goal is to facilitate the integration of newcomers and to ensure that we are accessible to all interested department members. To this end, we regularly organise events aimed at creating casual opportunities for you to interact with each other and with members of the VMB.

These events include the Newcomer's Drinks, which occurs approximately a couple of times a year, offering a relaxed setting for members of the department to get to know each other and the VMB. Stay tuned for email invitations from the VMB to these events—or feel free to reach out and ask us directly. We are looking forward to getting to know you!

## Scientific events

Science seminars and talks are vital for scientific exchange, providing inspiration and fostering collaboration. At D-BSSE, **numerous scientific seminars take place regularly**, often paired with opportunities to socialise over coffee or apéros. Our department hosts a weekly seminar every Tuesday at 11:00 AM. Details about dates and speakers are communicated via email invites.

Some of the Tuesday department seminars are organised by the VMB and often feature external guests or topics of particular interest to the VMB. Additionally, throughout the year, there are various scientific seminars and series, frequently in partnership with neighbouring departments in Basel. To stay updated, watch for email notifications and check the information screens located near the elevators on the E and K Floors.

Whenever you need to give a presentation or prepare a scientific poster, you can find the **ETH/D-BSSE corporate templates** for these documents and the appropriate design guidelines in the [intranet](#).

## D-BSSE-wide events

Of course, at the D-BSSE, it's not always science, lab work, and troubleshooting your scripts. Sometimes you need to get away from your project, spend some time sharing experiences with your fellow PhDs, and learning about other things that will help you in your journey here at the D-BSSE. That's why we have **department-wide**



*The BSS atrium during the D-BSSE retreat in November 2023. Image provided by Carolin Arndt Foppa.*



activities, retreats and workshops, as well as PhD Days!

PhD Days is a multi-day event made just for you and your fellow PhDs to bond over **team-building games**, learn some important **transferable skills**, get **career advice**, and realign yourself in your **path to your doctoral degree**.

## Social events

Taking some time off and enjoying yourself with your colleagues is part of our life at D-BSSE. Among the recurrent highlights are our **BBQs and hikes in summer**, departmental **apéros & dinners**, the **lunch lotteries**, and the occasional **VMB Pub Quiz or game night** where you can get to know new people from the institute. In the past, we have had **Ski Weekends**, **beer brewing**, and **Volleyball** and **Football** tournaments... and much more is coming! There are always new events in the works. If you have an idea, come talk to us, together we can find a way to make it happen. Also keep an eye out for **Monday Morning** coffees (MoMo's), where the whole department is invited to an informal get together with free coffee.



*Beer Brewing, by Selen Manioglu*

# Doctoral Studies at D-BSSE

## Doctorate modalities

At D-BSSE you can choose between joining a **doctoral program** or the **standard D-BSSE doctorate** (something like being a “freelance” doctoral student). If you joined D-BSSE by direct contact with your supervisor (i.e. not following the doctoral program admission procedure) you are still eligible to join a doctorate program from the [Life Science Zurich Graduate School](#).

You should carefully check the doctoral regulations, which you can find [here](#) (webpage) and [here](#) (intranet, login required).

If you have questions about which ordinance applies to you or any other question related to doctoral modalities, [Andrea Huber Brösamle \(andrea.huber@bsse.ethz.ch\)](mailto:andrea.huber@bsse.ethz.ch) is the coordinator of doctoral studies at D-BSSE and she will be happy to help you.

In addition, central ETH organises an [introductory programme](#) for all its students who recently started their doctorate, comprising orientation events and useful workshops and seminars. Make sure to check the above link for the upcoming dates (you should also receive invitations via your academic email). For these specific events, you can email the Doctoral Administration at [intro\\_doctorate@ethz.ch](mailto:intro_doctorate@ethz.ch).



The **Life Science Zurich Graduate School (LSZGS)** comprises 17 different PhD programs and is run jointly by ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich (you can enrol and obtain your degree from any of these two universities). These programs are designed to help you become an expert in a certain

field and offer **targeted courses** covering those disciplines. Some of them might require **more ECTS credits** to graduate, but you may be interested in those specialised courses, which are usually **exclusive for members of the doctoral program**. Besides, a big plus for enrolling in a doctoral program is that you will get more opportunities to **network** with PhD students working at other locations in Zurich or Basel (e.g. in annual retreats or joint courses).

The **Systems Biology (SysBio) PhD program** is coordinated by D-BSSE and taught by many professors from our department. This makes it the usual choice of doctoral candidates in our institute, but bear in mind that some of its compulsory courses take place in Zurich and you will need to cover transportation costs yourself. This may change every year, so if you want to know more please contact the [organisers/administration of the program](#).

Whether you are a “freelance” PhD student or you are part of a LSZGS doctoral program, you will have to obtain a number of **ECTS** (European Credit Transfer System) from participating in different **courses** along your PhD. In addition, you will need to submit a **research plan** summarising your project, and assemble a **Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC)** that will help you navigate through your doctoral research in TAC meetings (mainly called Thesis Committee

Meetings at D-B SSE). The responsibility of fulfilling all these requirements will be yours, e.g. you will be the one assembling a Thesis Advisory Committee and organising these meetings, always in coordination and with support of your supervisor. Note that the Thesis committee meetings at the end of years 2 and 3 are voluntary and take place if requested by either the doctoral student or the thesis supervisor, whereas those at the end of year 4 and 5 are mandatory.

The **requirements to graduate vary slightly** between the two existing doctorate modalities, so we prepared a table to summarise the most important points. For simplicity, we will mostly refer to the **Systems Biology curriculum** as the LSZGS doctoral program (regulations are specific to each of them).

	D-B SSE doctorate	Doctoral program (LSZGS)
<b>Required ECTS to graduate</b>	12	12
<b>Courses</b>	Any from the ETHZ/UZH/UniBas catalogue, except for those restricted for students of specific doctoral programs.	Any from the ETHZ/UZH/UniBas catalogue + <b>specific courses of your doctoral program</b> (some take place in Zurich).
<b>Doctoral Plan</b>	Submit <b>4 weeks</b> before the date of your aptitude colloquium. Please note that doctoral administration will contact you to choose a date for the aptitude after 6 months of starting and that by then one will have a 2 week deadline to appoint a secondary advisor.	Submit after one year at the latest. D-B SSE requests <b>earlier submission</b> for internal control before sending it to central ETHZ (around <b>8 months</b> after starting your PhD)
<b>Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings</b>	You have to have a TAC after <b>45-48 months</b> and another one after <b>57-60 months</b> , if no defence date is set within the next 12 months.	Your first TAC meeting should happen <b>9-12 months after the start</b> of your doctoral studies. You should hold a second one after 2 years and optionally a third one after 3 years.
<b>Retreats / Networking</b>	<b>PhD Days</b> , usually happening every two years and targeted to all D-B SSE PhD students.	<b>PhD Days + annual retreat</b> with relevant speakers for your specific doctoral program, usually in a remote location around Switzerland. Find out more about the last retreat of the SysBio program <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Regulations</b>	Link to <a href="#">D-B SSE regulations</a>	Regulations are <b>specific to the program you choose</b> . Here you can find the <a href="#">regulations of the SysBio PhD program</a> .
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://bsse.ethz.ch/doctorate.html">https://bsse.ethz.ch/doctorate.html</a>	<a href="https://systemsbiology-phd.ethz.ch">https://systemsbiology-phd.ethz.ch</a>

Regulations might change faster than we update this guide. **Always make sure to check out the corresponding official webpage and the [intranet](#) for up-to-date content!**

## Useful Links for Postdocs at D-BSSE

### Basel Postdoc Network Annual Meeting

These networking events jointly organised by a group of Postdocs from many different research institutions in Basel (Biozentrum, Pharmazentrum, Roche, DBM...) bring together postdocs from academia and the industry in the fields of life sciences, chemistry, medicine and physics.

<https://postdocretreat.biozentrum.unibas.ch>

### AVETH Postdoc+ Team

The Association for Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich organises various networking events in Zurich for postdocs such as Wine and Cheese tastings and senior scientists lunches.

<https://www.aveth.ethz.ch/postdoc/>

### Postdocs welcome!

These orientation events are a joint initiative from AVETH, the Office of Research and HR. They take place every 3 months online or in Zurich. Online registration is required and can be done at:

<https://ethz.ch/en/research/young-researchers/postdocs.html>

You may also find additional helpful links on the [intranet](#).

## Scientific Networks in Basel

### National Centre of Competence in Research - Molecular Systems Engineering (NCCR MSE)

Funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and led by the University of Basel and ETH Zurich, the NCCR MSE funds and coordinates long term research projects in Switzerland at the interface of Biology, Chemistry and Physics. It also organises science communication events in Basel (SeminBar, Art of Molecules) and international conferences (International Conference on Molecular Systems Engineering, International Conference Ethics of Engineering Life).

<https://www.nccr-mse.ch/en/>



NCCR  
Molecular Systems  
Engineering

### Basel Stem Cell Network (BSCN)

<https://baselstemcells.ch/en/home/>



### Neuroscience Network Basel

<https://www.neuronetwork.unibas.ch>

### Research Network for Computational Sciences (RNCS)

<https://rnccs.unibas.ch>

### Immunology Community at the University of Basel

<https://ubico.unibas.ch/en/home/>

### Swiss Personalized Health Network

<https://sphn.ch/>



### Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics (SIB)

<https://www.sib.swiss>



# What to do if something goes wrong?

ETH has a [Code of Conduct](#) that serves as a guideline of how ETH members should treat each other. ETH does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, threat or violence; if you witness any of those you should react quickly and firmly. The webpage <https://respekt.ethz.ch/en/> provides an overview on ETH's position and **guidelines** to follow in case of **misconduct**.

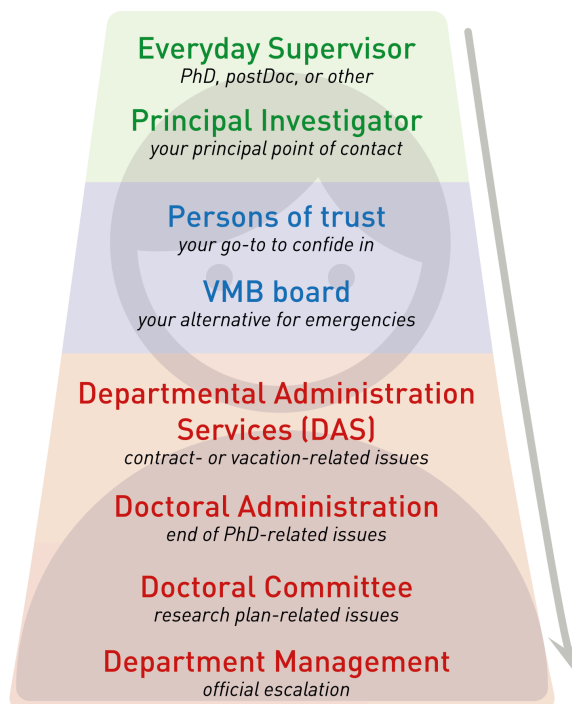
If there is ever a problem that you cannot solve by yourself, you can get support from the **VMB**, the **Persons of Trust** or different **ETH services**. All information will be treated on a **confidential level**, unless you want to be identifiable.

The **Persons of Trust** have enabled a [protonmail email address](#) to ensure that you can contact us anonymously and without linking to ETHZ email domains. Protonmail is an encrypted email service that allows you to create an email account without providing any personal information. If you want to stay anonymous, you can create a Protonmail account within 2 minutes, and get in touch with the Persons of Trust via email. Alternatively you can directly address any of the Persons of Trust via **email** (to ensure your own privacy, preferably a non-ETHZ one) or just approach them **in person**. The current Persons of Trust and their contact details are listed on our [website](#).

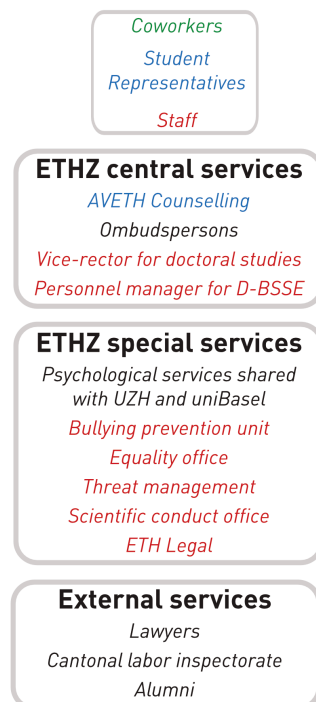
For an overview on how to get help as a student or employe at D-BSSE you can also check the [intranet](#).

**AVETH** also has persons of trust and offers counselling at <https://www.aveth.ethz.ch/counselling/>.

## Your main points of contact at D BSSE



## Other Contacts



## Other useful institutional resources

- **Psychological counselling services from UZH-ETH**

- Based in Zurich
- Support in English, German, French, Dutch and Polish
- Webpage: <https://www.pbs.uzh.ch/en.html>

- **University of Basel Student Advice Center**

- Numerous resources, counselling support in Basel
- Webpage: <https://studienberatung.unibas.ch/en/>

- **Studies & Health, ETHZ**

- Collection of resources at ETH (help and contact points, tips & tricks, stress tests and more)
- Webpage: <https://ethz.ch/students/en/studies/study-abroad/contact/weitere.html>

- **Crisis Hotline 143**

- Available around the clock in German
- **Crisis support in English:** dial 0800 143 000 - daily from 6 to 11 pm
- Webpage: <https://www.143.ch/>



# Basics of Employment at ETH

## ETHIS (ETH Information and Support System)

ETHIS is the ETH Zurich web portal to manage your **financial and employment related data and applications**. In ETHIS you can find all information related to your contract, update your personal data, apply for vacation or sick leaves and request reimbursement for work-related expenses, among many other functions. Whatever formality you need to solve, the way to go is ETHIS.

In order to [connect to ETHIS](#) you need to be **located within the ETH network domain** or have access to it via **VPN**. You can log in using your ETH username and password.

Using ETHIS is quite intuitive, but in case you need some help you can check this useful [Help/FAQ section](#) in the ETH website (requires login). Some headers for certain ETHIS sections might appear only in German, but most of the portal can actually be displayed in English.

## Employment regulations at a glance

Doctoral students and postdocs always have **non-permanent contracts**, but specific conditions (salary, duration, payments) apply for each individual case. You should make sure you understand the conditions of your contract. If you have any questions, please contact [ETH Human Resources](#).

Working <b>hours/week</b> (full time)	41 h (above this, over-hours)
<b>Maximum</b> legal working <b>hours/week</b>	45 h (above this, overtime)
<b>Holidays</b>	5 weeks/year (must be taken within the calendar year, minimum of 2 weeks at a stretch)
<b>Maternity leave</b>	4 months
<b>Paternity leave</b>	20 days
<b>Maximum period of employment</b> for PhDs and postdocs	6 years
<b>Probation period</b>	3 months

You can find the source of this information and all details about employment on the dedicated [ETH webpage](#). We highly recommend reviewing the **brochure on personnel law** for ETH Zurich's personnel policies, which you can find here in [English](#) or [German](#). Future parents should also check out [this webpage](#) about parenthood while working at ETH.



## L3H - Life Long Learning Hub

L3H is an online platform designed to provide ETH employees with access to diverse learning content, including courses, documents, videos or podcasts. It promises to offer flexible, practical learning experiences, encourages community knowledge sharing, and allows employees to actively shape their professional development, all within a central platform integrated into Microsoft Teams. While L3H is still growing, it is meant to be the go-to platform for you to find further education on all kinds of topics surrounding your soft skills and career development at ETH. You can find further information and instructions on how to get access [here](#).

# LIFE IN BASEL



## Useful Links

- [AVETH survival guide](#)
- Finding a **WG** (shared flat): <https://www.wgzimmer.ch> (website in 6 different languages, posts mostly in German, but with an embedded option for automatic translation) or <https://www.wg-gesucht.de> (in German, English and Spanish).
- Finding an **apartment**: [homegate](#), [flatfox](#), [immoscout24](#), [Immomapper](#), and [Comparis](#) (German/English) are some popular options, in general, they have good filtering and mapping options. Beware of scams, so be very careful before paying any money or giving away your personal information. However, in Switzerland, it is common to “apply” for apartments you would like to rent, and sometimes applying comes with a small fee. A full introduction to Swiss apartment hunting would be too comprehensive for this guide, if you need further insight consider the resources [here](#) and [here](#). The University of Basel also rents out student accommodation (shared flats and studios, see [Wove](#)).
- [Internal D-BSSE Marketplace](#) (requires signing into the Wiki).
- [Marktplatz Uni Basel](#), with all kinds of ads (buy/sell/rent...and also apartment rental and flat sharing. Website in German, some posts also in English).
- [Unisport Basel](#): PhD or Master students at D-BSSE can sign up for sports at the Uni Basel sport centre, which offers a [wide variety of activities](#) (sign up is only required for some of them). ETHZ students need to write to UniBasel to officially request access to the sports facilities. Please note that this option is no longer available for Postdocs or scientific staff. However, you can get a **subscription to [Puregym St Johann](#) at a significant discount** (for details on both check the [wiki](#)).
- If you want to **learn a language (including German)**, one of the best available options are the University of Basel’s courses. You can find an overview of the courses and fees on their website <https://sprachenzentrum.unibas.ch/de/>. D-BSSE PhD students are considered students of a collaborating institution and are eligible to sign up for courses. Postdocs and scientific staff may be eligible, but this is decided on a case-by-case basis (just e-mail to [info-sprachenzentrum@unibas.ch](mailto:info-sprachenzentrum@unibas.ch) and inquire about the course you’d like to join).
- You can find some useful links on the **scientific community in Basel** in the [intranet](#)

## Health insurance

In Switzerland it is **compulsory to have health insurance**. You have **three months** after arriving in Switzerland to settle down and do some research to find the most suitable health insurance

plan for you. After these three months you will have to **pay retrospectively** for that time (e.g. if you arrive in January and contract your insurance in March, your first bill will include January and February coverage as well, at the same rate of your selected insurance provider). The insurance then becomes active retrospectively, so applies to any health care expenses you may have had in those first three months.

If you are a **student** and you come from abroad, prices are definitely not cheap but you can find a way to reduce the amounts. Have a look at the section **Prämienverbilligung** and **ETH discounts** in the *Financial Insights* chapter and check out the [information sheet](#) from ETH Zurich about health insurance for doctoral students (if you live in Zurich) and the [information sheet](#) from University of Basel about health insurance for all students.

Swiss healthcare insurances are based on **monthly payments** (premium) and a **franchise**, which is the minimal amount of money you need to reach so that your insurance starts covering your medical expenses. Up to that amount you will need to pay everything yourself.

In Switzerland, having [accident insurance](#) is mandatory and is paid by your employer, such as ETH Zurich (or the Swiss university you are enrolled in). “Employees, trainees and interns at ETH Zurich who work at least eight hours per week at ETH Zurich are compulsorily insured against occupational accidents, occupational diseases and leisure accidents”. So in the event of an unlucky accident in Switzerland you will be fully covered - even if this accident was not occupational. This insurance scheme also covers accidents abroad (but may not guarantee full coverage).

## ETH discounts

If you just arrived in Switzerland and you are still shocked by the high cost of living, have a look at the [offers and benefits](#) for all members of ETH Zurich. Ranging from childcare and health insurance to transport (car sharing, SBB rail passes...), you can find a good deal for many activities. In addition, Basel has some special conditions and offerings, which you can find summarised [here](#) on the D-B SSE wiki and on the intranet ([Basel-specific](#) and [ETH-wide benefits](#)).

One of the most remarkable offers is the **half-fare travel card** that ETH members can request for free. While not mandatory, this pass is highly recommended for rail and public transport travel through Switzerland, as it allows you to purchase tickets at approximately half price, making travel much more affordable. If you will be commuting a lot, you can alternatively get a discount on your **GA** (GeneralAbonnement, an annual flat-rate ticket for the entire Swiss public transport system, including trains, trams, buses and partially also ships and cablecars). You can read more and request your half-fare/GA in the [ETH website](#) (requires login with your ETH username).

Another great benefit is the possibility to use VeloSpot rental bikes at a discounted rate or to get a subscription to [Puregym St Johann](#) at a significant discount (for details on both check the [wiki](#)).

## Financial Insights

Because understanding finances when you are new to a place takes a lot of time, we have prepared a compilation of useful tips to save money and get some cash back. (Again, this is not financial or legal advice, just peer-to-peer information.)

### Prämienverbilligung (Health care premium deduction)

- Cash-back: **0 - 2,652 CHF per year**

The most rewarding cash-back is the “**Prämienverbilligung**” which reduces the burden of the expensive healthcare insurance\* for low income households/students. How much you will profit from it depends on your **salary level, age and insurance model** (standard or alternative model). You can find further information on the website of the Kanton Basel-Stadt (<https://www.asb.bs.ch/familien/praemienverbilligung.html>)

*Note: The “Einkommensgruppe” is determined by your annual income **after** the social deduction but **before** the tax (Quellensteuer). If you apply for the Prämienverbilligung in your first year, you will most likely stay in that “Einkommensgruppe” although your salary will increase. The reason is that the change is less than what the canton demands to change your group.*

\*to find a listing of healthcare insurances by price check [comparis.ch](https://www.comparis.ch); be aware that premiums can change every year so it is advised to **check shortly before the cancellation period is over**, usually at the end of November. Some consulting companies can also help you choose the most appropriate insurance for you. Ask around for good references from your colleagues!

### Stromspar-Bonus (energy saving bonus)

- Cash-back: **around 60 CHF each year**

Another nice cash back is the energy saving bonus (**Stromspar Bonus**). You do not really have to do much except wait for the **Sign-up form** to arrive at your home (this should happen automatically within the first half of the year (January-June). If you did not receive it contact the responsible department of the canton (<https://www.aue.bs.ch/energie/stromspar-fonds.html>) The only requirement is that you have to be registered in the canton by the 15<sup>th</sup> December of the previous year.

### Saving option 3a pillar (Retirement savings)

- Cash-back: **0 - 1,400 CHF each year**

Paying into your 3a pillar, a voluntary form of retirement savings in Switzerland, **reduces your taxable income** (you have to apply for a [Tarifkorrektur](#) to get money back), however as long as you live in Switzerland you cannot access these savings (it is meant for your **retirement**). As

soon as you move out of Switzerland this money will be accessible again but you do need to pay back the tax that you saved (the **interest** you made during that time **will not be taxed**). So even if you move out of Switzerland you still made some extra bucks.

## Other saving options

- **Colourkey** for students under 25 (<https://www.colourkey.ch/>)
- **SBB Halbtax / Discounted GA** for public transportation (see ETH discounts)



**mobility**  
car sharing



- **Mobility Carsharing/Europcar:** very useful if you only use a car sporadically, owning a car in Switzerland can be complicated. Read more about [mobility carsharing](#) or [Europcar](#) discounts on the ETH website.
- **VeloSpot Basel:** as a member of ETH Zurich, you can get a [discount on VeloSpot Bike rentals](#) - the red bikes are distributed all over the city and a good solution to get around Basel quick.
- **U-Abo:** The local public transport service, TNW, offers a variety of subscription options, including monthly flat rates and economical choices for weekends and evenings. Many of these ticket options cover the local tri-country area, which includes Switzerland, Germany, and France. For more information, please visit the [U-Abo website](#).
- **The Digital Prozentbuch:** Prozentbuch is a dynamic collection of coupons for gastronomy, nightlife, and leisure in the cities of Basel, Bern, Lucerne, and Zurich. Most offers follow the "2 for 1" principle, allowing two people to save up to 50% on their experiences. For more information, visit [Prozentbuch](#).

# Sustainability and Recycling

Household waste management is quite elaborate in Switzerland. We have a short summary for you here, you can also find additional information on the [intranet](#). First of all, in each canton/city you need to buy official trash bags — in Basel they are called **Bebbi-Sagg**. You can only find them in supermarkets, and you need to specifically ask for them at the counter (you will not find them on the shelves). They are quite pricey — the idea is to reduce common waste (which goes in these bags) and maximise the amount of recycled waste (paper and cardboard, different types of glass, PET, metal...), which is collected separately (find out all the collection points at <https://recycling-map.ch/en/>).



Only Bebbi-Sagg allowed!  
(Picture Martin Töngi)

Second of all, if the building where you live does not own a waste container, you can only dispose of household waste on **certain days of the week**. This is because *Bebbi-Sagg* are placed at the edge of the road for garbage trucks to collect them in the early morning. There are some useful apps like [Dräggwägg](#) (from the *Tiefbauamt*, the Civil Engineering Department of Basel) that remind you of your neighbourhood's waste collection dates and give you information about the correct disposal of each type of waste.

General **bins for recycling** glass, metal and batteries are provided throughout the city. **PET** bottles and some other **hard** plastics can be recycled at supermarkets. There is the option to recycle more [plastics in select locations of Coop supermarkets using the "Plastiksammelsack"](#).

If you would like to **compost**: Basel-Stadt can help you set up your own compost for free if you can provide the space, otherwise there are district composts where you can compost for free as well, or can use the chargeable bio-flaps ([Bio-Klappe](#)). Find more info on the official website: <https://www.aue.bs.ch/abfaelle/haushaltsabfaelle/abfaelle-von-a-bis-z-entsorgen.html>.

(Unfortunately the information is mainly available in German, we recommend the auto translate feature of your browser.)

## Sustainability at the department

Grab your **D-BSSE mug** (the [DAS](#) will provide you with a new one — make sure to label it properly!) and find out where to get your [reCIRCLE box](#) (Deposit: 10 CHF) for take-away food. You can use this box almost at every take away restaurant within Basel and Switzerland!



BSSE sustainability campaign, caption of video by Carolin Arndt Foppa



Types of reCIRCLE boxes

Please also consult the department's [waste disposal guidelines](#). These guidelines provide an overview for handling hazardous and biological waste, as well as proper disposal methods for items such as batteries, PET bottles, coffee capsules, and more.

For more information on sustainability and recycling at the department please also check the corresponding [intranet pages](#).

One way to contribute to sustainable and efficient research at the ETH Zurich is to join the LEAF Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework (LEAF) platform together with your lab. (This is mainly directed at wet-lab research, the applicability to computational research labs is limited.) LEAF was developed by University College London and adopted by over 80 universities globally, to enhance

resource-friendly lab operations and track progress. The framework helps labs assess their practices and implement measures to save energy, water, plastic, and other resources. Labs can earn bronze, silver, or gold certificates based on their sustainability efforts, with a calculator available to estimate cost savings and greenhouse gas emissions. You can find more information and join the platform [here](#).



## Culture and Fun in Basel

In order to get to know Basel, it's best to learn from the locals. This is why we will refer you here to the [Canton of Basel's official guide](#) (2019 edition, in English), which will give you a comprehensive overview of the city and what it is like to live here. You can also check the [intranet](#) for additional information. We also advise you to watch out for a little booklet of vouchers you will receive in the mail from the city of Basel after first registering here; it contains a lot of free tickets or discounts for museums and other cultural activities.

If you just want a quick glimpse, here are a few tips:

- Tinguely museum, Kunstmuseum, Fondation Beyeler... Basel is well known for its fine selection of **museums** and exhibitions. The **first Sunday of every month** you can visit many museums for free.



*Morgenstreich, by Sebastien Bozon, AFP for the local.ch*

- The **Basler Fasnacht** ([Basel's carnival](#)) is THE event of the year in Basel. The whole city goes crazy, piccolo and brass street bands play music as they march through the city and hundreds of disguised participants roam around the streets. A couple of insider tips: to support Fasnacht, you can buy a **Blaggedde** (a metal badge) in many of the city's stores. And **do not dress up if you are not part of a Fasnachtsclique** (group of people actively taking part in the carnival).
- [Museumsnacht](#) is also something special every year. Lots of special

exhibitions, and lots of fun activities. Museums and exhibits are open late into the night!

- In summer, lots of people meet at the Rhine to [float down the river](#) with their *Wickelfisch* (the typical fish-shaped waterproof bag from Basel). Join the crowds, but always make sure to follow the [recommendations](#) — the current can get strong and there are boats passing by!



*Swimming in the Rhein, from [HYPERLINK](#) "<http://lifeinbasel.com>"[lifeinbasel.com](#)*

- Basel has a nice selection of [parks](#) (Schützenmattpark, Kannenfeldpark...), as well as a [Zoo](#). If you want a budget alternative, you can also visit the [Tierpark Lange Erlen](#) for free. All these places are great family-friendly leisure options.
- For **shopping**, the main hubs are around Barfüsserplatz (Grossbasel), Clarastrasse (Kleinbasel) and even on the other side



of the border — you can easily shop in France or Germany (Weil am Rhein is just a 10 min bike ride from D-BSSE) and profit from lower prices and even get back some tax money.

- Finally, if you want to **hang out** and have a drink in cool places, check out the Landestelle area or the bars around Kleinbasel (Grenzwert, Kaserne...).



*Landestelle in summer, by Andreas Zimmermann*

# Living in France while working at D-BSSE

Living in France while working at D-BSSE is an interesting option for French citizens. However, several parameters must be taken into account before making this decision.



## Work permit

If you choose to live in France, you will need to obtain a **Work Permit - Category "G"** to cross the border freely between your home and D-BSSE. In normal times border controls are frequent by car, a lot less if you are walking or by bike. The administrative personnel of D-BSSE will apply for your work permit at least 4 weeks before your start date — without it you are not allowed to work.

## Social Security

When starting a job in Switzerland while still living in France, you will have to choose between the **French** social security system (CSG by default) or the **Swiss** one (different private options available). If you choose the first option, you have **three months** to notify the French CPAM. After this period you will be automatically registered at the Swiss social security system without a possibility to change your mind during your current employment! The choice between the French and Swiss systems mostly depends on your **personal needs and salary**: while the yearly fee of the French system is calculated based on your salary, the Swiss system has a fixed price.

Lastly, if you choose the French system, it is VERY important that you **register on the URSSAF website** to declare your salary based on your last tax form. The URSSAF will be collecting your Social Security fees, if you do not declare your salary they will assume you fall in the highest salary category (500k+ euros per year) and ask you to pay the corresponding fees.

More information [here](#).

## Taxes

If you are a tax resident in France, employed in the cantons of Vaud, Valais, Neuchâtel, Jura, Berne, Basel-Stadt, Basel-Landschaft or Solothurn, and you return to France on a daily basis, you have cross-border commuter tax status. As a result, your salary is taxable in France, and you can make sure to **only pay taxes in France**.

To avoid being subject to withholding tax in Switzerland, you must present ETH with a **2041-AS certificate**. This attestation must be stamped by the Service des Impôts des Particuliers (SIP) of your tax domicile. You need to fill the [2041-AS form](#) and send four copies of it to your local tax office. They will then send three copies back, two of which you need to send to the HR department so they do not subtract Swiss taxes from your monthly salary (if they did before you sent them the form, you will be reimbursed with your next salary).

Note that you will need to repeat this procedure **EVERY YEAR**.

As is the case for French residents working in France, some cross-border commuters can benefit from tax exemption on part of the overtime they work. If you have worked in one or more of the above-mentioned cantons for more than 1840 hours in the year (in the case of full-time work), you can benefit from this tax exemption. Even if these hours are not considered overtime in the work country.

As the average number of hours worked in Switzerland is over 40 (for full-time contracts), most cross-border workers in the mentioned cantons will have exceeded this limit and will be able to claim overtime deduction. This is subject to a ceiling of 368 hours overtime (pro rata for part-timers) and a maximum deduction ceiling of 5,000€.

To do this, you need to fill in the 2041-AS form (available on the French tax website) and have it signed by ETH HR. In this document you will find additional information and the necessary tools to make the calculation.

## Transportation

You can subscribe to the **bus company in Saint-Louis**, they have monthly plans that include cross-border buses and all trams and buses in Basel. There are also different ticket options covering the tri-regional zone around Basel (in Switzerland, Germany and France), more information can be found [here](#).

Street parking spots in Basel are mostly reserved for Basel residents (marked in blue). You cannot park on these unless you pay a subscription fee. There is a parking garage close to the department, but be aware that parking times are limited and cost per hour (some more information [here](#)). **No parking space is reserved for D-B SSE employees** around the campus.

Distribus website: <https://www.distribus.com>

## Bank account

ETH does not permit salary transfers to foreign banks, including Revolut accounts. You have the option to open a bank account in Switzerland or a special account for border workers at Cr dit Mutuel in Saint-Louis. The latter will facilitate the transfer from CHF to EUR with minimal additional fees. More information can be found [here](#).

If you need time to open your bank account, you may collect your salary in cash at the cash desk in Zurich. For more details, please visit [this link](#).

# Living in Germany while working at D-BSSE

Weil am Rhein, Lörrach or even Freiburg are just a short commute away from Basel — you can live in a German location and cross the border every day on foot, bike or train.



## Grenzgängerausweis

To cross the border as a commuter you will need to obtain a **Work Permit - Category “G”**. The administrative personnel of D-BSSE will apply for your work permit at least 4 weeks before your start date - without it you are not allowed to work. This document is also important in order to open a bank account or find a health insurance provider.

## Health Insurance

As a commuter between Germany and Switzerland, you can choose between a **German** and a **Swiss health insurance**. In Germany, you can be voluntarily insured (“freiwillige Versicherung”), and the monthly contribution will be calculated based on your salary. Instead in Switzerland many insurance companies offer **special insurances for commuters** that cost around 300 € per month (Franchise 300-700 €). With these insurances, you can go to a doctor in Switzerland according to your insurance plan. In case you need to go to a doctor in Germany, you can apply for the **form E106**, with this form you can choose a German health insurance and receive a German insurance card. You can then also go to a doctor in Germany and the German insurance will settle the cost with the Swiss insurance. **IMPORTANT:** You only have **3 months to decide** where you would like to be insured and this cannot be changed later (only in very special cases). You can find more information on the [BAG website](#) (Swiss Federal Office of Public Health)

## Bank account

In addition, banks offer **special accounts for commuters** (Sparkasse Lörrach or UBS), which often include a EUR and a CH account, to make transfer of money easier and more transparent. It is worth comparing different banks as costs for the account can differ substantially.

## Taxes

The canton of Basel has a [tax agreement with Germany](#) by which cross-border employees can pay most of their taxes in Germany. To apply for this you must fulfil the following requirements:

- **Daily return** to your place of residence in Germany.
- Your place of residence is **less than 100 km away** from the place of work (calculated on the shortest way by private car) or the travel time by public transport does **not exceed 1.5 hours** (each way).

If you meet these conditions, you will need to fill out a questionnaire to request an **“Ansässigkeitsbescheinigung”** (certificate of residence) from the German tax office. Once you

have this document, you need to inform the Human Resources Department that you will pay your taxes in Germany — otherwise ETH will automatically subtract the Swiss taxes from your salary.

The German tax office will then calculate your income taxes and you will have to **pay** them **every three months — in addition to the 4.5% of “Quellensteuer”** that you still need to pay in Switzerland. This can also be declared at the end of the year in Germany, and you might get a refund.

## Transport

Street parking spots in Basel are mostly reserved for Basel residents (marked in blue). You cannot park on these unless you pay a subscription fee. There is a parking garage close to the department, but be aware that parking times are limited and cost per hour (some more information [here](#)). **No parking space is reserved for D-BSSE employees** around the campus.

The “Deutsche Bahn” offers **special prices for the ICE for commuters** between two fixed locations. The price depends on the route, but is most often cheaper than a BahnCard 100. These Abos often include a BahnCard 25 for free and can be used together with the family on the weekends. If you work a lot in the home office, there are [special tickets for 20 rides per month offered by the “Deutsche Bahn”](#).

Another attractive option for public transport in Germany is the "Deutschland-Ticket," a monthly ticket priced at 49 euros. This ticket allows you to use all local transport systems (Nahverkehr) throughout Germany, including regional trains (such as RE, RB), S-Bahn, U-Bahn, buses, and trams. However, it does not cover long-distance trains like ICE, IC, or EC, and it also excludes most long-distance buses like FlixBus. Fortunately, the Deutschland-Ticket covers some of the cross-border trains going in and out of Basel-Bad Bahnhof and Basel SBB; please check the list of covered connections [here](#). The ticket can be purchased from [DB](#) or many other providers.

There are also different ticket options covering the tri-regional zone around Basel (in Switzerland, Germany and France), more information can be found [here](#).