

# SWITZERLAND SET TO JOIN SCHENGEN



against national principles.

Switzerland has, along with other states such as Iceland and Norway, been considered as Europe's exception for a number of years. Instead of joining the EU like most other European states, the Swiss banking system and subsequent wealth allow the central Europeans the luxury of being able to choose what to join and when to join it. Switzerland is a country of complete neutrality, leading some to view the imminent joining of the Schengen agreement to be

The Schengen agreement is based on increased security and the simplification of the movement of people. Europe has a large number of states for its size, meaning that border controls can be a huge hindrance if they are in place. However, recent changes have seen the abolition of border controls in most European states, leaving people and goods to move freely around the continent.

Switzerland provided an exception, until now. The border controls are set to disappear on either the 5th or 6th of December this year. However, this by no means infers that Switzerland is to become a European Union member state.

Indeed, not that much is expected to change in terms of customs regulations. The Swiss plan to continue with spot checks on foreign vehicles within their territory, just not necessarily at the border points. Similarly, Switzerland will not belong to the European economic area, unlike neighbouring Liechtenstein, which is stepping into Schengen at the same time as the Swiss.

The changes will have a financial impact in that airports such as Zurich will have to fork out huge amounts of money to pay for the changes, yet the money should be recouped by the new right to issue Schengen visas.

As a result of the introduction of Switzerland into Schengen, Swiss police should begin to share information about criminal activity with other EU countries. For the average person, the abolition of the need to show documents should be the most pleasant change.

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