

Safety & Security Recommendations for Research Enterprises Abroad

(Based on the Code of Conduct of the NADEL – Center for Development and Cooperation at ETH Zurich – which is a modified version of the Swiss Red Cross' "Security Directives for SRC Delegates")

Preamble

Research projects abroad are not just rewarding for the research itself, but also for the researchers personally. As not all travel destinations are safe, however, ETH Zurich has compiled this document to help its members plan and conduct research projects in high-risk regions (for excursions with students as part of courses there is a [directive](#) →). Besides the personal health and safety of those travelling, the main emphasis is also on protecting ETH Zurich's reputation. All members of ETH Zurich are ambassadors of ETH Zurich. By protecting themselves, they also help maintain ETH Zurich's good name.

Some of the recommendations outlined here may seem unnecessary, overly strict or exaggerated, but they are all based on experience – often unfortunate ones – and their sole purpose is to protect life, health and reputation on research enterprises abroad. Please consider that there are no universal recommendations applicable in every situation, and that events can be hard to predict in hazardous situations. The application of the recommendations in any given situation should therefore always be based on common sense combined with a personal understanding of the local situation.

Core Recommendations

- Carefully evaluate the necessity of travelling to a high-risk destination in order to conduct your research enterprise. If the same results can be achieved by travelling to a less risky destination, a change of destination is imperative.
- Plan your stay carefully and well in advance.
- Consult ETH's Safety, Security, Health and Environment (SSHE) administrative department for recommendations on safety and security abroad (cf. Contact below).
- Register yourself with the Swiss representative body (embassy or consulate) upon arrival in the guest country.
- Seek advice of trustworthy organisations familiar with local circumstances.
- Make sure that important information such as emergency contacts or information about personal health issues (medication, allergies etc.) are available to trustworthy local organisations/persons for the time of your stay, or carry it with you at all times.

Recommendations

- 1) Personal Items
 - Carry an identification document, ideally a copy of the key passport pages (including visa), with you at all times.
 - Make sure to carry emergency contacts for the event of an incident with you at all times.
 - Deposit your passport, credit cards and other valuables in a safe place (e.g. at the project office or at home).
 - Carry an ETH-letter with you signed by your supervisor describing your research and the goal of your stay (“ordre de mission”).

- 2) Behaviour
 - Comply with the laws of the host country.
 - Keep yourself informed about the general safety and security situation and keep up-to-date with local news.
 - Make sure your behavior and appearance (clothes etc.) do not offend local traditions, cultural practices or working customs/habits.
 - Respect all persons equally and without distinction based on nationality, race, gender, religion, class or political opinion.
 - Refrain from engaging in political activities. Neither do so via social media channels.
 - Stay away from crowds and big gatherings, especially in unstable situations.
 - Be aware that inappropriate behaviour might cause negative effects not only for yourself but also for your (host) organisation and colleagues.
 - In case of emergency, get in contact with trustworthy local organisations or the national Swiss representative body as soon as possible.
 - Offer no resistance, if you are attacked.
 - In case of conflict situations or terrorist attacks, observe the rules of trustworthy local organisations or the national Swiss representative body.
 - Strictly obey local curfews.

- 3) Housing
 - Seek advice of organisations familiar with local circumstances to find safe accommodation. It should be earthquake resistant if possible.
 - Always keep doors locked. Keep all doors and windows locked at night.
 - Avoid putting your name on the postbox or gate and do not open doors to strangers.

- 4) Health
 - Make sure you have international health insurance coverage.
 - Inform yourself about necessary vaccines before you travel and take along an appropriate “first aid kit” (consult the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute TPH).
 - Inform yourself about hospitals / medical clinics in your neighborhood and save their phone number in your mobile phone.
 - Do not swim in slow-flowing or standing waters.
 - Food: Cook it, peel it, or leave it.
 - In case of a medical issue, immediately seek advice of a doctor / in a hospital.
 - If you are allergic or have medical pre-conditions, please consult your general practitioner about the need for special measures.

- 5) Movement and Travel
 - Observe the restrictions that may be in place with regard to movement and travel (both on a private or work-related basis).
 - Wherever possible, do not travel alone, and do not travel by night.

- Generally, use local, known drivers or public transportation whenever travelling, and avoid driving vehicles yourself as far as possible. If there is no other option than driving yourself, always take a valid international driver's license (or a valid local driving license) with you.
 - In case of a traffic accident, follow the advice of the driver. If there is no driver present (or if he/she is unable to take action), proceed with care in order to prevent hostile actions. Only deal with the issue on the scene if there is no risk involved and follow the guidelines of your host organisation (if available).
 - If taking a taxi, only use licensed taxis or those recommended by trustworthy local organisations. Make sure you have cash for your fare.
 - Try to avoid motorcycle taxis. If you choose to take a motorcycle taxi, you are obliged to wear a helmet.
- 6) Taking Photographs
- Don't take photos in a security-relevant environment, i.e. in airports, at checkpoints or during declared alerts. Neither take photos of local army, police or security personnel or members of any other armed group – it is strictly prohibited.
 - Avoid carrying a camera (and do not take photos with other type of equipment) in areas where the security situation is perceived as unclear or unstable.
 - Even if taking photos is not prohibited, show extreme care, in order to avoid offending local customs or traditions and consequently provoking an incident.
 - Ask persons for their consent before taking photos. Ask for written consent, if you plan to publish the pictures later.
- 7) Social Media
- Refrain from posting personal data and planned activities.

Further Information

- Information and tools for safety and security on excursions on the [SSHE-Website](#) →
- Travel advice on the [website](#) → of the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs
- Travel advice on the [website](#) → of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs

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 Version: 11 August 2022