



Factsheet – Nomenclature

## Spatial divisions – Areas with urban character 2012 (including agglomerations)

---

### Description

Areas with urban character 2012 encompasses the agglomerations and two other urban spatial categories: multi-oriented municipalities and centres outside of agglomerations. The agglomerations are part of the territorial divisions. In order to measure urbanisation, the definition of the urban area has been defined by the FSO for over 100 years. It allows a spatial comparison to be made between urban spaces whose boundaries are unequal at institutional level.

---

### Methodology

Methodology used:

This classification of Switzerland's municipalities is based on uniform statistical criteria for the whole of the territory (chiefly population density, the number of jobs, the link of continuity of the developed area, minimum number of inhabitants and commuter flows).

Variables used:

Population and Households Statistics (STATPOP), FSO

Structural Business Statistics (STATENT), FSO

Tourist accommodation statistics (HESTA), FSO

Municipality matrices of employed persons by municipality of residence and work, FSO

Cross-border Commuters Statistics (CCS), FSO

National passenger traffic model, DETEC/ARE

For the neighbouring area abroad: data from statistical offices of neighbouring countries or from other official bodies.

Basic data reference period:

2012 version: data reference period: 2011-2012

2020 version: data reference period: 2020

Publication frequency:

Updated approximately every 10 years (see revision policy)

Degree of regionalisation:

Municipalities

Revision :

Last methodological revisions of the definition of agglomeration: 1984, 2014

---

### Revision policy

The FSO periodically updates and revises all non-institutional geographic levels.

Update:

The perimeters of non-institutional divisions are regularly modified to take into account changes taking place at institutional level (e.g. municipal mergers). With each change, the FSO reassesses the assignment of the new municipalities to the various spatial divisions.

Reassessment:

A country's spatial structure changes over time. The FSO keeps track of these developments by updating the spatial divisions roughly every 10 years, i.e. by using the same calculation methods but with new data. Exceptionally, the threshold values may be adapted.

Methodological revision :

In order to ensure that data can be compared over time, revision of the calculation methods and definitions occurs less frequently (approximately every 20 to 30 years).

---

---

**Legal basis**

Federal Statistics Act of 9 October 1992 (FStatA)  
Multi-annual programme for federal statistics

---

**Organisation**

Federal Statistical Office  
Environment, Sustainable Development, Territory Section  
[raumnomenklaturen@bfs.admin.ch](mailto:raumnomenklaturen@bfs.admin.ch)

---