

CENTRAL OFFICE FOR PRECIOUS METALS CONTROL

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SWISS CUSTOMS



SWISS PRECIOUS METALS CONTROL

LAW

*English is not an official language of the Swiss Confederation.
This translation is provided for information purposes only and has no legal force.*

The Main Features of the Swiss Precious Metal Control Act

Preliminary Remarks

This booklet was revised on 1st May 2010 and it replaces the 2009 edition. This revision results from the November 2009 edition "Instructions about the application of the precious metals legislation".

The booklet should assist the experienced in the trade to look up the principal and most current provisions of the Swiss precious metals legislation covering the manufacture and sale of articles made of precious metal, multimetal, plated metal and imitations of these articles.

This booklet is based on:

- Precious Metals Control Act of 20 June 1933 (SR 941.31):
www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/c941_31.html
- Precious Metals Control Ordinance of 8 May 1934 (SR 941.319):
www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/c941_311.html
- Ordinance of 17 August 2005 on the Fees for Precious Metals Control (SR 941.319):
www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/c941_319.html

The Instructions about the application of the precious metals legislation (PMCI, D243) may be found on the internet:

www.ezv.admin.ch/dokumentation/04027/04031/05005/index.html?lang=en →
PMCI, D243.

The Central Office for Precious Metals Control is prepared to provide oral and written information about the Swiss legislation.

Watches and jewellery articles are, along with the precious metals legislation, subject to the ordinance on articles on daily use (SR 817.02). This requests that articles, in contact with the skin, shall only release contained substances (such as nickel, cadmium) in quantities that are inoffensive to health. Responsible for fulfilling this request is the entity placing the articles on the market. The cantonal authorities are in charge of supervising and enforcing this ordinance.

Important information for Swiss importers

On importation, all consignments containing goods which are regulated by the Swiss precious metals regulation must be submitted to one Assay Office. The Assay Office will use its discretion on deciding the degree of control. Each article is not necessarily checked individually. The importer remains in any responsible for ensuring that all goods placed on the market fulfil the legal requirements.

Bern, 1st May 2010

**Directorate General of Swiss Customs
Central Office for Precious Metals Control
Monbijoutrasse 40
3003 Berne
Switzerland**

Phone +41 (0)31 / 322 65 17 or 66 75

Facsimile +41 (0)31 / 324 84 41

jean-pierre.kuettel@ezv.admin.ch

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Essential requirements	1
1.1	Standards of fineness for precious metals	1
1.2	Precious metal articles (incl. mixed articles, i.e. articles composed of more than one precious metals)	1
1.3	Multimetal articles	1
1.4	Plated articles	2
1.5	Imitations	2
2	Definitions	3
2.1	Coloured Gold	3
2.2	White gold	3
2.3	Gluing/sticking	3
2.4	Inseparable parts	3
2.5	Separable parts	3
2.6	Inlay	3
2.7	Additional marks such as "GOLD", "METAL", etc.; abbreviations and languages	4
3	Marking requirements	5
3.1	Principle	5
3.2	Responsibility Mark	5
3.3	Special marking of articles for exportation	7
4	Precious metal articles	8
4.1	Composition	8
4.1.1	Solders	8
4.1.2	Gilded silver (vermilion) and gold plated silver	8
4.1.3	Parts of 750‰ gold permitted on gold articles of 999‰ or 916‰	9
4.1.4	White gold parts permitted on platinum goods	9
4.1.5	Base metal parts permitted for technical reasons	9
4.1.5.1	General	9
4.1.5.2	For all precious metals articles	10
4.1.5.3	For silver articles the following parts are also permitted	10
4.1.6	Gold nuggets	11
4.1.7	Fillings	11
4.1.8	Parts of non metallic substances	11

4.1.8.1	General.....	11
4.1.8.2	Silver photo frames	11
4.1.9	Mixed articles (Articles containing more than one precious metal).....	12
4.1.9.1	General.....	12
4.1.9.2	Colour differentiation in mixed articles	12
4.1.9.3	Coating of precious metals articles	12
4.2	Marking.....	13
4.2.1	General	13
4.2.2	Gilded and gold plated silver articles	13
4.2.3	Marking of mixed articles	14
4.2.3.1	Principle.....	14
4.2.3.2	General.....	14
4.2.4	Marking of parts, findings and semi finished products.....	14
4.3	Supplementary provisions for horology	15
4.3.1	Fastening principle for watch-cases	15
4.3.2	Permitted base metal parts.....	15
4.3.3	White gold parts on watch-cases and bracelets made of platinum	15
4.3.4	Optional marking of parts of precious metals movements.....	16
5	Multimetal articles.....	17
5.1	Principle.....	17
5.2	Composition.....	17
5.2.1	General	17
5.2.2	Colour differentiation in multimetal articles	18
5.2.3	Surface finishing on articles of multimetals.....	18
5.3	Marking.....	18
6	Coating of precious metals articles and multimetals articles	19
6.1	On precious metals	19
6.2	On base metal	21
7	Coated articles	22
7.1	Principle.....	22
7.2	Composition.....	22
7.3	Marking.....	23
7.3.1	Marking according to the traditional practice	23
7.3.2	Marking according to International standards.....	23
7.4	Forbidden descriptions.....	24

7.5	Indications of sizes, numbers, references.....	24
7.6	Combined designations	24
8	Imitations	25
8.1	Composition	25
8.2	Permitted Descriptions	25
8.3	Table hollow-ware and cutlery	25
9	Other marking requirements	26
9.1	Specific designations for certain industrial branches or craft industry	26
9.2	Use of precious metals names	27
9.3	Invoices, correspondence.....	27
9.4	Guarantees	27
10	Controlling and official hallmarking.....	28
11	International conventions on precious metals control.....	30
11.1	Convention in the control and marking of articles of precious metals, signed in Vienna on 15 November 1972, "Vienna Convention - Common Control Mark"	30
11.2	Bilateral Convention Switzerland - France	31
11.3	Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Spain	31
11.4	Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Austria	31
11.5	Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Italy	31
11.6	Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Russian Federation	31
12	Second-hand gold and silver, materials containing precious metals	32
12.1	Acquisition and exchange.....	32
12.2	Resale.....	32
12.2.1	Resale of melted waste	32
12.2.2	Resale of the waste produced by their own activity	32
12.2.3	Resale of second-hand gold and silver in the shop (second-hand jewellery) ...	33
12.3	Old gold and silver in the production of new articles	33
12.4	List of recognised assayer-melters	33
13	Inspections	34
14	Final regulation.....	34
15	Addresses of precious metal control offices	34

16	Reproduction of official hallmarks used before august 1, 1995	35
-----------	--	-----------

1 Essential requirements

1.1 Standards of fineness for precious metals

The standard of fineness is expressed in parts per thousand (‰) in relation to the total mass of the alloy concerned.

Switzerland recognizes the following standards of fineness:

- for gold articles: 375 585 750 916 999
- for silver articles: 800 925 999
- for platinum articles: 850 900 950 999
- for palladium articles: 500 950 999

Additional standards of fineness are accepted for medals.

1.2 Precious metal articles (incl. mixed articles, i.e. articles composed of more than one precious metals)

Precious metal articles are articles made of precious metal alloys with at least the minimum legal standard of fineness - according to the above list.

Mixed precious metal articles composed of more than one precious metal are articles in which each precious metal part has at least the minimum legal standard of fineness.

1.3 Multimetal articles

Multimetal articles are goods composed of a precious metal with a legal standard of fineness and base metals marked appropriately. The different metals have to be clearly visible, of a different colour and must not resemble plated goods.

1.4 Plated articles

Plated articles are articles with a precious metal layer applied permanently to another material which bears a legal mark corresponding to their composition. The precious metal coating must meet the following minimum requirements:

Thickness

The thickness must be at least 5 micrometres for gold, platinum and palladium and at least ten micrometres for silver (1 micrometre or micron = 1 thousandth of a millimetre).

For watch-cases and their accessories parts (mostly bracelets), the act recognizes a superior quality called "gold capped" or "coiffe or" which must have a minimum thickness of 200 micrometers.

Minimum fineness

- gold 585‰
- silver 800‰
- platinum 850‰
- palladium 500‰

1.5 Imitations

The following articles are classed as imitations:

- precious metal articles which are below the minimum fineness standards or which do not satisfy the other criteria for precious metal articles;
- articles corresponding to multimetals or plated articles, which are not marked as such or do not satisfy the criteria required for these categories of goods.

2 Definitions

2.1 Coloured Gold

Except for white gold, the designation "coloured gold" applies to all gold alloys, i.e. red, yellow or green gold, the colour of which is normally due to the silver and copper components of the alloy.

2.2 White gold

White gold alloy, obtained for instance by the addition of palladium, nickel, iron, etc.

2.3 Gluing/sticking

Gluing/sticking is considered to be the same as soldering.

2.4 Inseparable parts

Parts of an article which are fixed by soldering, riveting, gluing or pressing are considered as inseparable parts.

2.5 Separable parts

Any parts fixed by screws, pins, poppers or clips which allows the dismantling and re-assembling of the article without causing any damage to it, is considered as separable.

It is permitted to assemble objects from different goods categories if they are separable. Each object must be marked individually.

Example: Gold plated base metal bracelets attached to gold watch-cases must bear the mark "METAL".

2.6 Inlay

Elements of metallic decoration which are added mechanically onto an article by means of inlaying, laminating or hammering. Precious metals inlays are not considered as coatings, but as precious metal components. Objects with inlay are considered as mixed articles or multimetals.

2.7 Additional marks such as "GOLD", "METAL", etc.; abbreviations and languages

The additional marks given in this booklet should be considered as examples. These additional marks may be a complete word or abbreviated. Abbreviations must be explicit and not misleading; the names of the metals may be expressed by their chemical symbol (i.e. "Au" for gold, "Cu" for copper).

Such marks may be expressed in German, French, Italian or English.

3 Marking requirements

3.1 Principle

The designations which are required by the act or the ordinance must refer to the composition of the article. Any false description, applied to precious articles, multimetal and plated metal articles or imitations, or articles susceptible to be confused with such goods, are prohibited.

Precious metal goods and multimetal articles must bear regardless of the weight the mark for a legal standard of fineness and a responsibility mark, registered at the Central Office for Precious Metals Control, multimetal articles must bear a supplementary marking which indicates the used base metal.

Even the smallest objects and the piercing jewellery must be stamped with a standard of fineness mark and a responsibility mark.

Plated goods must bear marks indicating the precious metal coating and a responsibility mark.

3.2 Responsibility Mark

One might compare the responsibility mark with a signature; by striking his mark the owner vouches for the accuracy of the article's composition and accepts the consequences of any further dispute.

The responsibility mark must be deposited with the Central Office for Precious Metals Control in Berne. The deposition is valid for 20 years.

The precious metals control offices have a file which lists all responsibility marks deposited in Berne (there are more than 12'000 in Switzerland and abroad). This register is public and anyone can ask for information with regard to a specific mark.

There are few restrictions concerning the appearance of responsibility marks; they should be incapable of confusion with official or registered marks and be stamped completely, legibly and durably on the articles.

Examples of responsibility marks (black signifies impressed into the surface of the object):



Swiss watch-cases may bear a collective responsibility mark registered by an association of manufacturers. Each member has a personal number included in the mark (represented by crosses in the reproductions below).



The imprint of the responsibility mark must correspond in all its details to the reproduction of the mark registered with the Central Office. The mark must be applied on the article in a clear and indelible manner.

The use of a Swiss responsibility mark is prohibited without the agreement of its holder.

The holder of a responsibility mark must report to the Central Office any changes (i.e. change of the corporate name, or of address). Changing the Central Office record is free of charge.

The application forms for a responsibility mark can be obtained through the Central Office for Precious Metals Control, Directorate General of Swiss Customs, Monbijoustr. 40, CH-3003 Berne (tel. +41 (0)31 322 66 22, facsimile +41 (0)31 324 84 41).

3.3 Special marking of articles for exportation

The Swiss legislation is not necessarily recognised abroad. It is the exporters responsibility to inquire if the composition and the marking of his goods will be accepted by the importing country, especially the new fineness standards and the marking of multimetal articles.

Articles for exportation may be marked by the exporter, under his own responsibility with marks which are not in accordance with the act on Precious Metals Control but are required or usual in the importing country.

When the articles bear a quality mark, they must be marked with a responsibility mark. Requests for exception from this requirement will be considered by the Central Office.

4 Precious metal articles

4.1 Composition

All parts of an article made of precious metal must be of the standard of fineness indicated on the mark applied. No minus tolerance is allowed under the Swiss Act.

For goods produced by electroforming the marked standard of fineness shall not be less than that of the alloy obtained by melting the whole article.

4.1.1 Solders

- The soldering of articles of gold must be made with an alloy of the same metal and of at least the same standard of fineness as the article itself.

The following exceptions are permitted:

- Articles made of gold alloys above 750‰ must have a minimum 750‰ solder;
- Gold chains made from wire less than 1 mm diameter may be joined without gold.
- Solders for platinum goods need a minimum of 800‰ of precious metal.
- Solders for palladium goods must be composed of 700‰ precious metal.
- Solders for silver articles need at least 550‰ silver.

A maximum tolerance of 10‰ is accepted on the whole of the molten article for articles produced using the solder accepted above.

4.1.2 Gilded silver (vermilion) and gold plated silver

The gold layer must have a fineness of at least 585‰.

4.1.3 Parts of 750‰ gold permitted on gold articles of 999‰ or 916‰

For technical reasons, the articles made of 999‰ or 916‰ gold may comprise the following -unmarked - parts in 750‰ gold:

- pins and clips, including fasteners and mountings;
- security catches; snap hooks;
- small tubes for box-and-tongue clasps;
- clasps, security buttons;
- pins of hinges;
- pins and threaded pins of buttons and earrings, including the fasteners or retainers;
- clips, including supports for earrings.

4.1.4 White gold parts permitted on platinum goods

On platinum articles, the parts mentioned in paragraph 4.1.3 may be in white gold. They must, whenever possible, bear the mark "GOLD", "ORO" or "OR".

4.1.5 Base metal parts permitted for technical reasons

4.1.5.1 General

Base metal parts are permitted for technical reasons on precious metal articles.

Base metal shall not be used for the purpose of strengthening, weighting or filling.

The base metal parts must, whenever technically possible, be marked "METAL" or with the specific name of the metal or alloy which was used, i.e. "STEEL", "INOX" or "BRASS"; where this is impracticable these shall be readily distinguishable by colour from the precious metal.

The permitted base metal parts may also be made in a precious metal of a lower standard of fineness than the one marked on the article. They must, whenever technically possible, be marked "METAL".

The permitted parts are listed below; the Central Office may, however, grant other exceptions in cases submitted with the support samples or technical drawings.

4.1.5.2 For all precious metals articles

For technical reasons, precious metals articles may comprise base metal mechanisms or elements. This concerns particularly the following parts:

- mechanisms of writing instruments;
- mechanisms of lighters;
- knife blades and similar parts, for example: bottle openers and cork screws;
- springs;
- steel wires for the assembling of necklaces (the steel wires must not be used as decoration);
- magnets for claps;
- security retainers for tie tacks or badge buttons.

4.1.5.3 For silver articles the following parts are also permitted

in base metal:

- Western bootlace tie clasp;
- clasps for bracelets and necklaces;
- locking systems for brooches (joints, catches and pins) and earrings, including supports;
- pins of hinges;
- pins for badge buttons.

in non-allergic metals or alloys only:

- pins and screws of "piercing" jewellery;
- pins and threaded pins of buttons and earrings, including the fasteners or retainers.

4.1.6 Gold nuggets

Native gold in the shape of nuggets is allowed on precious metals articles and multimetal articles, irrespective of the standard of fineness and of criteria for the determination of colours.

4.1.7 Fillings

Precious metal articles and the precious metal parts of multimetal articles may not be filled with base metals - or precious metals with lower standards of fineness - or any other substance differing from the main mass.

It is forbidden to use a filling to make an article seem more substantial, heavier or to contain more precious metal.

Technical exceptions are permitted for the following articles:

- candle holders, flowerpots and similar silver articles: filling the base with non metallic material is permitted for better stability. A base or foot (marked METAL) is permitted if it is attached by screws. The body or arms of candelabras may not be filled;
- cutlery, salad servers, carving knives and forks, dessert knives, manicure sets, toilet sets and similar articles: in which the handles are filled with a mastic are permitted.

The Central Office may grant other exceptions in cases submitted with the support samples or technical drawings.

4.1.8 Parts of non metallic substances

4.1.8.1 General

Parts which are not metallic (glass, precious stones, wood, synthetics, etc.) are permitted as long as they are clearly distinguishable from the precious metal parts, their extent is clear, and they are neither covered or coloured, to resemble precious metals.

4.1.8.2 Silver photo frames

Photo frames made of a stamped out sheet in silver affixed with adhesive on a non-metallic support are permitted even if the silver part is applied, for example, on plaster, plastic or glue.

Base metal reinforcements on silver frames are prohibited.

4.1.9 Mixed articles (Articles containing more than one precious metal)

4.1.9.1 General

The different precious metals constituting a mixed article must be of at least the minimum legal standard of fineness required for each of them under paragraph 1.1.

The precious metal parts which could be confused with a coating can be marked with a fineness mark only if its thickness reaches at least 500 micrometers and is visible. If not, they are considered as surface coating.

4.1.9.2 Colour differentiation in mixed articles

Mechanical surface finishing is not considered as a colour difference (e.g. with one polished section and one brushed section).

The different precious metals of a mixed article must be distinguishable by their colour.

However, articles constituted of

- white gold with platinum,
- white gold or platinum with palladium,
- white gold or platinum with silver or
- palladium with silver

may be considered as mixed articles if the difference of colour between the constituent metals is sufficiently clear and the marking of the article sufficiently explicit to exclude any danger of confusion, or if the colour of one of the metals has been modified by a surface treatment in accordance with paragraph 6.

4.1.9.3 Coating of precious metals articles

The surface treatments are specified under paragraph 6.

4.2 Marking

4.2.1 General

With the exception of the objects mentioned in Art. 45 of the PMCO, the precious metal goods must bear, next to the responsibility mark, the standard of fineness in thousandths written in Arabic numerals. The fineness must be marked in a visible, legible and durable manner and be at least 0.5 mm high.

If the article is composed of different fineness of the same precious metal, the mark must be that of the lowest fineness standard present. There are exceptions for medals and small ingots fixed on a support with a lower fineness; in this case each part bears its own fineness.

On platinum and palladium articles an additional full or abbreviated name, for example "Pt" or "Pd" is applied next to the fineness mark.

Additional marks such as the fineness standard in "carats" for gold or the term "sterling" for silver 925 are permitted.

4.2.2 Gilded and gold plated silver articles

Silver articles which are completely gilded or gold plated must be marked as silver - in addition to the standard of fineness and a responsibility mark.

Examples:

gilded silver: SILVER, VERMEIL, Ag, STERLING

gold plated silver: GOLD PLATED SILVER or
SILVER GOLDELECTROPLATED

4.2.3 Marking of mixed articles

4.2.3.1 Principle

Mixed articles can only be placed on the market if they bear the fineness mark of each constituting precious metal.

4.2.3.2 General

If the precious metal composing an article are clearly distinguished by their colour, their fineness must be marked on each precious metal part.

For goods composed of several different parts of the same precious metal alloy it is sufficient that one of the parts bear the fineness mark.

One responsibility mark is sufficient for each article.

When technical or aesthetic reasons exclude the marking of one of the precious metals, it may be applied on the other. In this case the marking must be completed by the name or the chemical symbol of the concerned metals, i.e. "Ag 925/Au 750". The metal predominant in volume must be mentioned first. Also, the weight of the precious metals may be indicated.

If precious metals are not identifiable by their colour, only the fineness of the least precious metal may be marked. Precious metals are deemed to become more precious in the following order: silver, palladium, gold, platinum.

4.2.4 Marking of parts, findings and semi finished products

Parts and semi finished products are admitted either without marks, with a partial marking (only the responsibility mark or only the mark for the standard of fineness) or with the complete marking.

Whoever finishes and assembles the final article is responsible for the correctness of any description and for composition.

4.3 Supplementary provisions for horology

4.3.1 Fastening principle for watch-cases

On a watch-case made entirely of precious metal, the different constituting parts must be in contact with each other, for example gold back on gold middle.

4.3.2 Permitted base metal parts

- movements and parts of movements such as dials, crowns, winding-shafts and push-pieces;
- bars, pins and screws for fixing the bracelets to the wristwatches and/or the fastener (clasps, buckles, foldover clasps, etc.) to wristwatch bracelets;
- other spring parts;
- screws for fixing the watch back;
- screws for changing the length of the bracelets;
- separable tubes for winding-mechanisms on watch-cases made of gold, platinum and palladium;
- separable or inseparable tubes for winding-mechanisms on silver watch-cases made;
- movement-holders and casing-rings;
- domes (double back covers of pocket-watch-cases) under the condition that they bear the designation of their composition, for example "METAL" or "STAINLESS STEEL".

4.3.3 White gold parts on watch-cases and bracelets made of platinum

White gold tubes for winding-mechanisms fixed in an inseparable manner (solder or pressed in) on platinum watch-cases are permitted.

The Central Office may allow other white gold parts on watch-cases and bracelets made of platinum when their function is to fasten, secure or when they are used as springs, when a case is submitted for consideration with accompanying samples or technical drawings.

4.3.4 Optional marking of parts of precious metals movements

Dials, movements (for example skeletons) and parts of movements (for example rotors), as well as precious metals crowns or push-pieces may be marked with the standard of fineness expressed in parts per thousand or carats. Stamping a responsibility mark is not obligatory.

5 Multimetal articles

5.1 Principle

Multimetal articles as such can only be put on the market if they satisfy the composition requirements and bear the necessary designations. Otherwise they fall in the category of imitations.

5.2 Composition

5.2.1 General

The relative proportions of precious metal parts and base metal parts in multimetal articles must be clearly obvious. If so, the precious metal parts and the base metal parts can be affixed together in an inseparable manner (solder etc.).

Multimetal articles must not contain plated parts or parts which are considered as imitations. The base metal parts must not be coated with gold, silver, platinum or palladium.

Furthermore, multimetal articles should not give the impression of being plated.

If the precious metal part presents the risk of being confused with a coating, it must not be affixed to the base metal in an inseparable manner; only separable assembling is permitted, for example with the use of screws.

Precious metals parts of a thickness of at least 500 micrometers are not considered as having the characteristics of a coating, provided that the layer thickness is visible.

In a multimetal article, precious metal parts of a lower fineness than the minimum legal standard and marked with the word "METAL" are considered as base metal.

The provisions concerning non-metallic parts referred to in paragraph 4.1.8.1 are applicable.

The provisions concerning solder (paragraph 4.1.1) do not apply to the assembling of precious metals with base metals in multimetal articles.

5.2.2 Colour differentiation in multimetal articles

The different metals of multimetal articles must have a difference of colours sufficiently clear and the marking of the article sufficiently explicit to exclude any danger of confusion. The colour of one of the metals can be modified by a surface treatment in accordance with paragraph 6.

5.2.3 Surface finishing on articles of multimetals

The surface treatments are specified under paragraph 6.

5.3 Marking

The precious and base metal parts of multimetal articles must bear separate marks:

- precious metal parts: fineness and responsibility mark;
- base metal parts: the specific indication of the metal or the word "METAL".

If the multimetal goods are made out of several parts of precious and base metals it is sufficient to mark only one part of each composition.

If technical or aesthetic reasons prevent marking on one part, it can be put on another one. In this case the fineness mark must be associated with the name or the chemical symbol of the concerned metal such as "GOLD 750/TITAN" or "STEEL/Ag 925". The metal predominant in volume must be mentioned first. Also, the weight of the precious metal may be indicated.

6 Coating of precious metals articles and multimetals articles

Subject to the provisions of paragraph 4.1.9.2 concerning the differentiation of colours on mixed articles and paragraph 5.2.2 concerning the differentiation of colours in multimetal articles, the following surface coating are permitted:

6.1 On precious metals

a) Metallic surface coating (for example: galvanic) in accordance with the table below:

on	permitted
gold	rhodium, ruthenium, platinum, gold
silver	rhodium, ruthenium, platinum, gold, palladium, silver; gold coating or plating up to 100% of the surface, subject to the marking referred to in paragraph 4.2.2
platinum	rhodium, ruthenium, platinum
palladium	rhodium, ruthenium, platinum, gold, palladium

The precious metals coatings must reach at least the following minimum standards of fineness:

- gold 585‰
- silver 800‰
- platinum 850‰
- palladium 500‰

If the base material and the coating are made of the same metal, the coating's fineness must be not less than the substrate's fineness.

b) Intermediate layers of base metals

The intermediate layers of base metals are prohibited on precious metals articles (jewellery, tableware and cutlery, watch-cases and their supplementary parts, etc.).

The following exceptions are permitted for technical reasons:

- intermediate base metal coatings on silver medals as well as on silver table and hollow-ware which does not enter into contact with foodstuffs (bottle openers, trays, vases, candlesticks, trophies, photo frames, etc.);
- intermediate coatings composed of a greyish Cu-Sn-alloy in the case of gilded or gold plated silver articles.

Coated articles must meet with the marked standard of fineness. Samples of coated articles, tested by a reference method, without removing any coatings, must not fail the legal fineness standard.

c) Chemical or long-lasting thermal treatments

For example: "bluegold", sulphured silver.

d) Non metallic coatings

For example laquer, enamel or niello.

e) Coatings with non metallic character

The coating is usually applied in the gas phase (PVD and CVD), composed of metals and non-metals and having a non-metallic character (e.g. TiC and TiN). The coating must not have the colour of a precious metal or a precious metal alloy.

Such coatings are subject to an authorization of the Central Office.

Articles with such coatings must not fail the indicated fineness standard. If samples of coated articles are tested on fineness by means of a reference method, the coatings must be integrated and shall not be removed.

6.2 On base metal

a. Chemical or long-lasting thermal treatments

For example blue steel.

b. Non metallic coatings

For example laquer, enamel or niello.

c. Base metal coating of another colour

Base metal coating of another colour applied on the base metal part.

7 Coated articles

7.1 Principle

Plated articles can only be placed on the market as plated goods if they are marked in accordance with the requirements of Article 49 of the Precious Metals Control Ordinance and if they are in accordance to the composition requirements. If this is not the case, they fall under the category of imitations.

7.2 Composition

On coated articles the coating must cover at least that part of the surface which is necessary for the appearance or the function of the article. Therefore it is permitted to designate as "plaqué" (= coated) or "gold capped" (for watch-cases) even if the surface is partially covered with precious metal.

The thickness of the precious metal layer must not be less than 80% of the stated thickness.

The unplated parts or surfaces of plated and category "gold capped" articles, must not bear a thinner coating of the same precious metal; for example: to have gilded parts on a partially gold coated article is not permitted.

Likewise, it is not permitted, on non-plated parts or surfaces of partially plated articles, to apply surface treatments the colour or composition of which may lead to confusion with the precious metal coating. For example, a deposit of yellow titanium nitrite on a partially gold plated article is not permitted.

The prescriptions about colour differentiation in mixed articles (paragraph 4.1.9.2) or in multimetal articles (paragraph 5.2.2) are not applicable for coated articles. The requirements of paragraph 6 are however also applicable for surface treatment of coated articles.

7.3 Marking

Plated goods must be stamped as follows:

7.3.1 Marking according to the traditional practice

a) with the word "PLAQUE", together with the type of production:

L for mechanically applied coating

G for electrolytic plating, and

b) with a responsibility mark

The mark may be supplemented by the name of the coating metal, the thickness of the layer in micrometres and the word "MICRONS" in full or abbreviated form.

Examples: "PLAQUE G" + responsibility mark

"PLAQUE OR G 10 MICRONS" + responsibility mark

7.3.2 Marking according to International standards

Instead of the marking under paragraph 7.3.1, gold-plated watch-cases and accessory parts (watch bracelets) in line with the standard ISO 3160-1, may be marked as follows:

a) with two letters that indicate the type of plating, the following letters being used:

GR for laminated coating

GP for all other types of coating

GC for "gold capped" or "coiffe or" on watch-cases and their accessories

b) with digits that specify the thickness of the plating in micrometres, and

c) with a responsibility mark

Examples: "GP 10" + responsibility mark

"GC 250" + responsibility mark

Watch-case marks are applied on the exterior.

Markings must indicate the real composition of every part of an article.

On partially plated articles every part has to be marked individually. The unplated part has to bear the indication of the metal for example: "STEEL" or the word "METAL". If technical or aesthetic reasons do not permit the marking of one particular part, the marking may be applied on the other part. It is allowed to designate the parts concerned (for example: "CARRURE plaquée G 10/fond acier").

When an article has been covered with precious metal layers of different thicknesses, only the lower value should be indicated.

7.4 Forbidden descriptions

On plated articles, as well as in any kind of advertising for such articles, the following indications and designations are prohibited:

- indications of the fineness in parts per thousands or in carat, designations of quality written in full, and expressions combined with words such as "fine..." or "pure...", for example "FINE GOLD" or "PURE SILVER";
- indication of proportion or weight of the precious metal used;
- incorporates designations combined with the names of precious metals (for example "OR AMERICAINE", "GOLDOR");
- all other made-up names which might imply of the composition or the value of the article.

7.5 Indications of sizes, numbers, references

Indications of sizes, numbers, references, etc. on articles such as glasses frames or bracelets clasps must be accompanied by abbreviations such as "mm", "No", "Ref". When they could lead to confusion with the usual indications for standards of fineness or for the thickness of coatings (carat, thousands, micrometers [microns], etc.

Indications in accordance with recognised international standards are permitted without any complement.

7.6 Combined designations

Designations combined with precious metal names are only permitted when they are registered as trademark and complemented with indications such as "S.A.", "AG", "S.a.r.l.", "Co", "Cie", "Marque déposée", "GmbH", "Ltd", "®", "©", "™", □ etc. The Central Office may require an additional marking in misleading cases.

8 Imitations

8.1 Composition

There are no material requirements for imitations.

8.2 Permitted Descriptions

The designation must correspond to the genuine composition of the article.

Imitations coated with precious metals may be described as gold-plated, silver-plated, platinum-plated or palladium-plated.

The English expressions "gold-plated", "silver-plate" and "silver-plated" are permitted as the translation of the words "dorés" and "argentés", subject to the following conditions:

- the designation "gold plated" is permitted on labels, advertisement, prospectus, etc.; it is authorised on the articles themselves only with the addition "DORE";
- the designations "silver plate" and "silver plated" are permitted without addition on labels, advertisement, prospectus, etc. as well as on the articles themselves.

The same rules as for gold are applicable to platinum and palladium.

Paragraphs 7.4 to 7.6 are applicable; designations such as "24K GOLD PLATED", "1/10 12 KGF" are prohibited.

Special marking rules exist for table hollow-ware and silver-plated cutlery.

Other marks such as "Amerikaner" are permitted.

8.3 Table hollow-ware and cutlery

The marks indicating the quality of silver applied is permitted for table ware and cutlery. These articles may be marked in accordance with the appropriate international standards which can be obtained from the Swiss Standard Association (SNV) or from other national standard institutions.

9 Other marking requirements

9.1 Specific designations for certain industrial branches or craft industry

For wares other than articles of watch-making, jewellery, goldsmith's trade and similar articles such as writing instruments, lighters, etc., it is permitted to use special descriptions - particularly combined with precious metal names - when such descriptions are traditional to certain branches or of craft industry. These designations must not be misleading as to the real quality of the product.

Description of fineness in parts per thousands or in carat, marks of quality written in full, and expressions combined with words such as "fine..." or "pure...", for example "FINE GOLD" or "PURE SILVER" are prohibited.

Such articles are in particular articles made of wood, leather, china, glass, etc. decorated with gold, silver, platinum or palladium, beaten, vapour deposited, applied by galvanic method or applied in liquid form or as thermally treated paste.

Examples of permitted designations:

- for picture frames or other wooden, leather objects decorated i.e. with beaten precious metals:

BLATTGOLD (GOLD LEAF), ECHTES BLATTGOLD (GENUINE GOLD LEAF), CADRE OR, GOLDDRAHMEN (GOLD FRAME), BLATTSILBER (SILVER LEAF), FEUILLE D'OR

- Ware made of wood, leather, plastic, etc. gilded under vacuum:

GOLDENE CD, GOLDVERZIERUNG

- Ware made of china or glass with precious metals decorations:

ARGENT SUR PORCELAINE, SILBERPORZELLAN, SILBERRAND, BORD ARGENT, GLANZSILBER, SILBERDEKOR, POLIERSILBER, AUFBRENNGOLD, etc.

- Printed matter, visiting cards, books:

IMPRESSION OR, GOLDDRUCK (GOLD PRINT)

Similar descriptions may be used for the marking or the presentation of the following products:

- other articles which are not likely to be confused with articles of precious metal or plated articles, such as household utensils, furniture, taps, etc.;
- products of foodstuff and cosmetic industry (silver sugar balls, gold almonds, liquor containing beaten gold flakes, etc.).

9.2 Use of precious metals names

The use of precious metals name in advertising is permitted when it applies in solely to the colour but not to the composition of a product, or when it refers generic to precious metal.

9.3 Invoices, correspondence

In their commercial correspondence and invoices, manufacturers and wholesalers are allowed to give information on the effective composition of the articles, semi-manufactures, supplies and products, even if these descriptions are not in accordance with the legal requirements (for example: indication on the thickness for gilded articles).

Descriptions of the quality, such as marks indicating the standard of fineness or thickness stated on invoices must be a true description.

Whoever places the products on the market is responsible for the observance of the legal, material and formal requirements.

9.4 Guarantees

The year(s) guarantees provided when articles are sold - ensuring for example the replacement or the repair of damaged coatings - are permitted when the name and address of the seller is stated on the guarantee.

10 Controlling and official hallmarking

All watch-cases in gold, silver, platinum or palladium, of foreign or local manufacture, sold in Switzerland, are subject to control and compulsory official marking.

For watch-cases composed of precious metals and base metals (multimetals) official hallmarking is optional.

Apart from watch-cases, that is for all other precious metal articles, and multimetals goods, the control procedure is optional.

A single official hallmark will be used for all precious metals and all fineness standards, the "head of a St. Bernhard dog":



Control Office Rules

The articles must be presented complete - watch-cases opened - for official hallmarking. If only parts of the article are being hallmarked, the customer signs a statement accepting responsibility for ensuring that the finished article will comply with the act.

As far as possible, the articles have to be presented at a stage of manufacture to minimize the risks of damage. They must be at a sufficiently advanced stage of finishing, that neither the marks nor the article can be changed.

The control office applies the official hallmark next to the responsibility and the fineness marks. One official hallmark per article is sufficient if visible on the exterior of the product. For watch-cases where the manufacturer marks on the inside, an additional fineness mark must appear on the exterior part. In this case, the control office strikes the official "head of a St. Bernhard dog" mark on both the inside and outside parts of the watch-case.

If the Common Control Mark of the Vienna Convention is requested, the full marking must be placed on the exterior of the case (legal standard of fineness, responsibility mark, "head of a St. Bernhard dog" and Common Control Mark).

For mixed articles, one official mark is sufficient; it is also applied if the complete hallmarks are to be found on one precious metal only.

Multimetal articles may be struck with the official mark as long as the fineness and the responsibility marks are placed on the precious metal part and there is enough room to punch in the official hallmark. This also applies if the base metal marking is placed on the precious metal part.

For hallmarking using the Common Control Mark of the Vienna Convention, the national provisions as well as those of the Vienna Convention must be met. The provisions of the Convention can be found on the official website www.hallmarkingconvention.org.

11 International conventions on precious metals control

Time saving - cost reducing - simplified import procedures - international guarantee

These are the advantages offered by the international conventions on precious metals control which Switzerland has signed with certain other States in order to assist trade. We draw your attention to the fact, that the regulation of the below mentioned conventions does not in every case correspond with the Swiss legislation. The Central Office can provide further information on this matter.





11.1 Convention in the control and marking of articles of precious metals, signed in Vienna on 15 November 1972, "Vienna Convention - Common Control Mark"

The multilateral convention's member states can be found at www.hallmarkingconvention.org.

An article bearing an official mark of one of the contracting States and the "Common Control Mark" of the Convention ("balance") will not undergo further testing and marking in another member country.

A further advantage is that the responsibility mark does not need to be registered in the importing country.

Common Control Marks of the multilateral "Convention on the Control and the Marking of Precious Metals Articles"

Gold	Silver	Platinum	Palladium
			
375 - 585 - 750 916 - 999	800 - 925 - 999	850 - 900 950 - 999	500 - 950 - 999

11.2 Bilateral Convention Switzerland - France

Mutual recognition of official hallmarks by both countries, eliminate a double control of articles.

It is not necessary to register the responsibility mark in the country of destination.

Further informations (in German, French or Italian):
www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_941_334_91.html.

11.3 Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Spain

Mutual recognition of the official hallmarks on watch-cases and their accessory parts (for example watch bracelets).

Further informations (in German, French or Italian):
www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_941_333_2.html.

11.4 Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Austria

Mutual recognition of the official hallmarks on watch-cases.

Further informations (in German, French or Italian):
www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_941_316_3.html.

11.5 Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Italy

Swiss articles with an official hallmark need not bear the identification mark of the importer as required by the Italian act; in exchange the Italian maker's identification mark is recognized as a responsibility mark in Switzerland. Watch-cases with Italian identification marks are not subject to the compulsory official hallmarking.

Further informations (in German, French or Italian):
www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_941_345_4.html.

11.6 Bilateral Convention Switzerland - Russian Federation

Mutual recognition of official hallmarks by both countries on on precious metal articles of the watch industry in gold, silver, platinum and palladium, eliminate a double control of articles. It is not necessary to register the responsibility mark in the country of destination.

Further information's: [Bilateral Convention Switzerland-Russian Federation in English](#).

12 Second-hand gold and silver, materials containing precious metals

12.1 Acquisition and exchange

The purchase or exchange of second-hand gold and silver, such as individual watches and jewellery or other precious, multimetal or plated metal articles or imitations including objects made of gold and silver, lighters, pens and pen holders, glasses and teeth, crowns and materials containing precious metals, are not regulated in precious metals act.

The validity of this rule is subject to any cantonal dispositions concerning the acquisition of second-hand objects.

Trade in second-hand gold or silver is the buyer's sole responsibility. The police should be informed if there is any question concerning the true ownership of such articles.

12.2 Resale

12.2.1 Resale of melted waste

If the second hand precious metals is melted to be resold, the bars must bear the melter's mark. This mark must be registered at the Central Office for Precious Metals Control.

If ingots are not directly sold to holders of a melter's/assayer licence, than the ingots must be tested [by a certified assayer/holder of an assayer's licence] before sale.

12.2.2 Resale of the waste produced by their own activity

For resale, manufacturers melting their own waste (scrap, filings, etc.) from their own company to be sold, must hold an individual melting licence issued from the Central Office for Precious Metals Control. The melted product destined to be sold must be stamped with the individual melter's mark.

If ingots are not directly sold to holders of a melter's/assayer licence, than the ingots must be tested [by a certified assayer/holder of an assayer's licence] before sale.

12.2.3 Resale of second-hand gold and silver in the shop (second-hand jewellery)

Resale of second-hand articles involves risks. Often, these articles do not correspond to the Swiss precious metals control act (sub-standard fineness, prohibited base common metal parts, unrecognized marks or no marks at all, etc.) Before putting them up for sale these have to be tested and if necessary put in order. For this, they may be presented for examination to one of the Precious Metals Control Offices.

12.3 Old gold and silver in the production of new articles

The use of such material carries risks (sub-standard fineness, excess of low standard solders, base metal parts, etc.). Reuse of precious metals from the purchase of second-hand gold and second-hand silver is discouraged.

12.4 List of recognised assayer-melters

The following directories and lists can be found on internet:

- Directory of melter licence holders and assayer licence holders:
www.ezv.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/04062/04942/index.html?lang=de
(available in German, French or Italian).
- Internationally recognised "Good Delivery" lists:
 - gold + silver:
www.lbma.org.uk/pages/index.cfm?page_id=4&title=good_delivery
 - platinum + palladium:
www.lppm.com/display.aspx?type=gooddelivery

13 Inspections

The Precious Metals Control authority inspects all business entities producing, processing or trading goods implied in the precious metals legislation, if the activity is subject to an authorization (works, factories, workshops, wholesalers, retailer, sales by correspondence, department stores, etc.).

Normally such inspections will be advised. Their aim is firstly to permit employees of the precious metals control to verify that the products stocked and placed on the market meet the regulations, and secondly to see that provisions covering the melting of second-hand gold and silver, materials containing precious metals are adhered to. These visits also help to build up personal contact and exchange information.

The employee charged with the inspection may:

- inspect the enterprise;
- check production, stocks and the sales areas;
- take samples for further examination;
- demand information and consult necessary documents, especially invoices and inventories.

The management are expected to collaborate and to provide the information asked for.

14 Final regulation













This information brochure will enter into force on 1st May 2010 and replaces the earlier brochure from 1st November 2009.

15 Addresses of precious metal control offices

The address list can be consulted on the internet at www.ezv.admin.ch/kontakt/04677/index.html?lang=en.

16 Reproduction of official hallmarks used before august 1, 1995

Precious metal articles

750‰	Gold		Silver		Platinum 950‰
	585‰	375‰*	925‰	800‰	
Helvetia	Écureuil	Morgenstern	Canard	Coq de bruyère	Bouquetin
					
					

* only for watch-cases

Imported watch-cases

750‰	Gold		Silver		Platinum 950‰
	585‰	375‰	925‰	800‰	
Lynx 1	Lynx 2	Titre bas	Gentiane 1	Gentiane 2	Tête de lièvre
