The following contribution summarizes from a historical perspective recent developments of Swiss migration policy with a particular focus to the challenges given by the federal system and direct democracy on integration policy. It starts with a comprehensive historical summary on the rationales of immigration to Switzerland and continues with an institutional analysis of Swiss migration and integration policies, setting the focus on federalism, consociationalism and direct democracy.  Deriving from the legal definition of integration - as coexistence between native and foreign population - the state's task of protecting against discrimination is deduced. We highlight how at Cantonal level the prohibition of discrimination and the right to equal opportunities are differently enshrined in law and differently implemented, taking to a variation of realities to reflect on.