



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP  
**State Secretariat for Migration SEM**



# Migration Report 2015

## Imprint

**Published by:** State Secretariat for Migration (SEM),  
Quellenweg 6, CH-3003 Bern-Wabern

**Editing and  
concept:** Information and Communication, SEM

**Realisation:** [www.typisch.ch](http://www.typisch.ch)

**Available from:** SFBL, federal publications, CH-3003 Bern,  
[www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch](http://www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch)  
Art. no. 420.010.E  
© SEM/FDJP August 2016

### Photograph credits

Tomas Wüthrich: cover page and pages 6, 8, 14, 26, 29, 31, 32, 44, 48, 51, 52, 54, 57, 60

David Zehnder: pages 10, 36, 41

Philipp Eyer and Stephan Hermann: pages 4, 13

Christophe Chammartin: pages 17

Fiona Eisenhut: pages 3

SEM: pages 18, 21, 30

## Editorial

In 2015, the intricate and far-reaching correlations between migration and migration policy were made painfully clear. With the conflict in Syria still raging – just to mention only one hot spot – refugees continued to pour into neighbouring countries. With the international community failing to provide adequate support to these countries, their asylum capacities were stretched to breaking point. As a logical consequence, many refugees continued their journey in search of protection in more prosperous European countries. The extent of the influx of asylum seekers to Switzerland in 2015 was not just caused by the conduct of first-host countries and transit countries; the European Union (EU) also played a part and since then has tried to adopt a coordinated approach – thus far with limited success.

More than ever before, Switzerland has had to look beyond its own national borders to establish or intensify cooperation, e.g. helping to ensure that refugees are registered and housed in the first-host country or in transit countries. In such cases, long-term migration partnerships have proven to be a solid foundation. We also continued to work closely with the EU, particularly within the framework of the Dublin Agreement. This proved once again to be a valuable instrument for Switzerland despite certain difficulties and setbacks. In matters pertaining to Dublin/Schengen countries, President Simonetta Sommaruga actively took part in the meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Union. In addition, Switzerland took concrete measures to relieve the burden on exposed countries such as Greece and Italy by accepting resettlement of asylum seekers to our country. At the same time, we benefited from EU activities such as joint EU deportation flights coordinated by Frontex. Finally, the SEM will chair the presidency of the 34-member General Directors of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC) until the end of 2016.

At national level, the SEM was able to rely on good levels of cooperation. Federal, cantonal, municipal and communal authorities all worked closely together to devise an emergency plan for asylum. We are now well prepared for any unexpected surges in the number of asylum seekers. Thanks to the flexibility of various partners and SEM staff, we managed to make it through the tense period in autumn 2015. We were very pleased to see a great willingness on the part of broader swathes of the population to hire asylum seekers and help them to take their first steps towards integration.

Greater attention is now being paid to the topic of integration. In 2015, the SEM afforded protection to over half of all asylum



seekers, either recognising their status as refugees or granting temporary admittance. Here too, issues relating to all foreigners in Switzerland can only be adequately addressed through cooperation. While refugees and temporarily admitted persons bear most of the responsibility when it comes to integration, efforts must also be made by the Confederation and the cantons, migration and labour market authorities, schools and vocational schools, companies and society. One of the key roles played by the SEM is to help all of these actors to work together. Following enactment of the new constitutional article on immigration, the Federal Council now seeks to reduce demand for recruitment of skilled workers from outside of Switzerland by tapping the potential of Switzerland's domestic labour force. And this includes improving the employability of refugees and temporarily admitted persons.

This report clearly illustrates how complex, controversial and fascinating migration issues can be. I hope that you enjoy reading it.

Mario Gattiker  
Director of the State Secretariat for Migration





*The largest community of foreign nationals comes from Italy, followed by Germany and Portugal.*

# Table of contents

<b>A Overview</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1. Key figures 2015 .....	7
2. Main highlights in 2015 .....	9
3. New developments .....	12
<b>B Migration figures for 2015</b> .....	<b>14</b>
1. Foreign resident population .....	15
2. Immigration and employment .....	15
3. Schengen visas .....	18
4. Naturalisations .....	19
5. International cooperation .....	20
6. Key figures for asylum and action strategy .....	22
7. Hardship cases .....	26
8. Returns .....	27
9. Procedures to remove and keep people away .....	31
<b>C Integration</b> .....	<b>32</b>
1. Current situation .....	33
2. Cantonal integration programmes and employability .....	37
3. Area of action, "Finding jobs for refugees and TAPs currently on welfare" .....	38
4. Federal programmes and projects .....	40
<b>D Main highlights in 2015</b> .....	<b>44</b>
1. Migration flows in Europe .....	45
2. Protection in the region .....	46
3. Active measures to bring refugees to Switzerland .....	47
4. Asylum challenges and measures in Switzerland .....	48
5. State of implementation of Art. 121a Cst. (control of immigration) .....	53
<b>E State Secretariat for Migration</b> .....	<b>54</b>
1. Organisation chart .....	55
2. SEM activities .....	56

# A Overview



*On 1 January 2015, the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) became the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).*

## 1. Key figures 2015

- At the end of 2015, there were 1 993 916 legally resident foreigners in Switzerland or 2.4 % more than the previous year (1 947 023). Of these legally resident foreigners, 68 % or 1 363 736 persons (2014: 1 328 318) were EU-28/EFTA nationals. Therefore, the proportion of foreigners to the total Swiss population increased from 23.8 % to 24.1 %.
- In 2015, 106 805 (2014: 110 850) EU/EFTA nationals immigrated to Switzerland. In that same year, 55 111 (2014: 50 669) EU/EFTA nationals left Switzerland.
- Last year, Switzerland issued 452 735 Schengen visas (2014: 439 978). Most Schengen visas were approved by Swiss consulates in India (106 371), China (78 462), Russia (28 667) and Thailand (25 954).
- In 2015, 42 699 persons (2014: 35 187) were granted Swiss citizenship either through the standard or facilitated naturalisation procedure. Those naturalised came chiefly from Italy, Germany, Portugal, France and Kosovo.
- 39 523 persons (2014: 23 765) applied for asylum in Switzerland. The main countries of origin were Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Somalia.
- In 2015, the State Secretariat for Migration handled 28 118 asylum applications (2014: 26 715) at first instance and granted asylum to 6377 persons (2014: 6199). In addition, 7787 asylum seekers (2014: 9367) were temporarily admitted. Combined, this amounts to a protection rate of 53.1 % (2014: 58.3 %).
- 2284 persons (2014: 2287) obtained residence permits as hardship cases.
- Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 8603 foreign nationals (2014: 8590), who were required to leave Swiss territory.
- Switzerland issued 12 539 (2014: 11 414) entry bans.

---

2284 persons (2014: 2287) obtained residence permits as hardship cases.

---





*The economic integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons is not only important for the individuals concerned. It also brings benefits to society and the economy.*



## 2. Main highlights in 2015

### Ongoing crises – migration routes shift

Last year, Europe experienced an unusually high number of asylum seekers and other migrants. Several factors seem to have accumulated or created a chain reaction: the ongoing conflict in Syria once again displaced hundreds of thousands of people; the situation in various parts of Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries remained unstable; in Eritrea, there were no improvements in the human rights situation; and countless people particularly from African countries felt that they lacked adequate prospects in life. Countries bordering Syria reached the limits of their asylum capacities and, on the periphery of Europe, Greece became swamped with refugees transiting through Turkey to the Aegean islands. With waves upon waves of migrants heading primarily to Germany, the Balkan route opened up and established itself over the summer. A large number of irregular migrants also reached Switzerland through Austria. Most asylum seekers reached our country through Libya, the central Mediterranean Sea and Italy.

More than ever before, Swiss migration policies simply could not be limited to our national borders. Switzerland lent support to first-host countries and transit countries, worked with the EU as a Schengen/Dublin country and accepted resettlement of refugees directly from crisis regions. Nonetheless, our asylum system was severely put to the test.

### Provisions for asylum

The number of asylum applications began to increase sharply in the early summer reaching a total of 39,523 applications, a level not seen in Switzerland since the war in Kosovo (1998/99). Thanks to the flexibility of the cantons and communes and additional federal housing, Switzerland was able to accommodate all incoming asylum seekers. A working group comprised of representatives of the various authorities involved devised an emergency plan to handle special or exceptional circumstances. Among other things, this emergency plan sets out which facilities may be used by the Confederation and which ones by the host cantons.

Once again, the State Secretariat for Migration afforded protection to more than half of all asylum seekers, either recognising their refugee status or granting temporary admittance. In this manner, Switzerland abided by its humanitarian commitments; however, by increasing the protection rate, Switzerland now faces the challenge of providing long-term housing and achieving integration.

---

**The number of asylum applications  
reached 39 523, a level not seen  
in Switzerland since the war in Kosovo.**

---

### Evaluation of new asylum procedures

In September, the National Council and the Council of States adopted a bill to restructure the asylum system. The corresponding referendum vote took place on 5 June 2016. Location planning for the future federal asylum processing centres began but work could not be fully completed by year-end. An external evaluation was carried out to assess the test facility in Zurich, which began operation in 2014. This evaluation concluded that the new procedural rules and physical proximity of all stakeholders largely satisfy the established objectives: the new asylum procedure is faster and decisions are more readily accepted. The evaluation reports also mentioned individual aspects in need of improvement.



*As in the previous year, pursuit of economic activity was the main basis for migration in 2015, accounting for around 47% of all cases of migration.*

### Targeted integration

Encouraging the economic and social integration of migrants has long been a continuing task at federal, cantonal and communal level. The rising number of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons now requires specific efforts to be made by stakeholders at these three levels, particularly with regards to the labour market. The aim is not only to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to get asylum seekers and TAPs off of welfare but also to make the most out of their labour potential – particularly within the context of efforts to reduce fresh demand for skilled workers from outside of Switzerland. Through numerous programmes, pilot projects and studies, the SEM helps to foster integration and improve the corresponding range of instruments. However, this is also a joint endeavour shouldered in part by the cantons, vocational schools and the private sector.

### More naturalisations

Obtaining citizenship is the last formal step in the integration process. The number of naturalisations declined from 2008 to 2012 before resuming an upward trend. Last year, the figure increased by 21 % to 42 699 naturalisations. The revised Swiss Citizenship Act contains various new developments. The draft implementation ordinance, which was submitted for consultation in autumn 2015, specifies the criteria for assessment of integration.

---

More than ever before, Swiss migration policies simply could not be limited to our national borders. Nonetheless, our asylum system was severely put to the test.

---

### Implementation of new constitutional article on immigration

On 9 February 2014, Swiss voters adopted the constitutional article on immigration. As a result, both Swiss national legislation and international treaties signed by Switzerland must now be adapted accordingly. The Federal Council therefore proposed amendments to the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA, SR 142.20). Based on input from the consultation procedure, the Federal Council submitted a revised draft to the Swiss Parliament in March 2016. The proposed legislative amendment is to apply quotas on admission (which had thus far only applied to third state nationals) to practically all categories of foreigners. However, the quotas on EU/EFTA citizens would only apply if immigration levels for this category surpass a set threshold. Applied unilaterally, this safeguard clause would violate the terms of the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (AFMP). The Federal Council is currently working with the EU to find a mutually amenable solution. In 2015, the State Secretary for Migration (SEM) engaged in intensive dialogue with a representative of the President of the European Commission to reach agreement on a common interpretation of the AFMP safeguard clause.



### 3. New developments

In 2015, a million people and more reached Europe through Turkey, the Aegean Sea and, to a much lesser extent, across the central Mediterranean Sea. Never before had so many non-European asylum seekers reached our continent in a single year.

This migration flow created virtually insurmountable challenges for the countries affected. Borders were opened up for migrants all along the main migration route through the Balkans. People were quickly transported to Austria and Germany, which lacked the resources needed to register all newcomers. It took quite some time before measures took effect to stem the influx and restore border controls but eventually the number of unregistered persons decreased.

The asylum systems of Germany, Austria and Sweden were no longer able to cope with the incoming flow of asylum seekers. These three countries reviewed their asylum policies and adapted their asylum practices to the current situation. Other countries followed suit. Although Switzerland was comparably less affected by the surge in migration in 2015, its asylum system reached the limits of its capacity towards the end of autumn 2015. Despite this, the SEM was always able to register and house all incoming migrants.

The massive migration flow of 2015 was caused by several factors. There was no end in sight to the civil war in Syria. Both internally displaced persons in Syria and Syrian refugees in Turkey and other countries in the region lost hope of returning home any time soon. They wanted to find a better future for themselves and their families in Europe. In the summer of 2015, the general impression was that anyone who came to Europe would be welcomed with open arms and treated generously. As a result, an increasing number of Iraqi and Afghan nationals also headed for Europe.

The situation on the African continent changed little in 2015. As before, the crisis in Eritrea prompted tens of thousands of Eritrean nationals to leave their country in search of greater freedom and a brighter future in Europe. The lack of a generally recognised and sustainable government in Libya, currently the main transit country in North Africa, made it easier for human smugglers to load migrants on ships bound for Lampedusa in the south of Italy.

However, long-term factors also contributed to the increase in migration to Europe in 2015: the globalisation of communication has enabled people to interact with one another worldwide. In many developing countries, Internet, cell phone and satellite TV are now commonplace. In fact, some emerging countries are actually leading the rest of the world. Therefore, more and more people are now aware of events transpiring on the other side of the globe and also have the possibility of travelling there. Over the past few years, many regions have experienced robust economic growth. However, the highest levels of prosperity can still be found in Western Europe, North America and Australia. In contrast, millions of people in poorer countries remain trapped in a situation of poverty without prospects. This has prompted an increasing number of people to look for a better life elsewhere – thereby increasing migration pressure.

---

Although Switzerland was comparably less affected by the surge in migration in 2015, its asylum system reached the limits of its capacity towards the end of autumn 2015.

---

In addition to these push factors – i.e. the pressure to leave one's home country – there are also pull factors, such as a demand for workers in more prosperous countries. On the Swiss labour market, for instance, there is a demand for skilled workers. At the same time, however, there is a market for labour that is either illegal or borderline legal. Here, we are mainly referring to work done for cash in hand by people who lack a work permit but also to prostitution and drug trafficking.

Switzerland places considerable value on achieving the social integration of legally established migrants. Since migration has now become a global phenomenon, measures must be taken to manage it long before migrants reach national borders. Switzerland has therefore intensified its foreign policy in the area of migration. Through bilateral agreements, Swiss migration policy is now closely aligned with that of the EU. Switzerland therefore works closely with its European partners and often directly with countries of origin and transit outside the EU. Examples include migration partnerships, bilateral agree-

ments with countries of origin as well as return assistance. Switzerland helps countries of origin to adapt their migration management structures, supports programmes to prevent illegal migration and maintains active migration dialogue with key partner countries.

On 9 February 2014, Swiss voters adopted the popular initiative "Against Mass Immigration". As a result, immigration from the EU/EFTA area will no longer be unlimited and will be independently managed by Switzerland. Implementation of this initiative, i.e. the formulation of new laws as well as negotiations with the EU will be a challenge from both a domestic and foreign policy standpoint. This theme will continue to be raised in political discourse in the coming months.



*At the end of 2015, there were 1 993 916 legally resident foreigners in Switzerland. The proportion of foreigners to the total Swiss population increased from 23.8% to 24.1 %.*



# B Migration figures for 2015



*In order to provide the most effective and targeted occupational integration support to recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons, more cantons have started assessing individual potential.*



## 1. Foreign resident population

At the end of December 2015, there were 1 993 916<sup>1</sup> (2014: 1 947 023) legally resident foreigners in Switzerland. A total of 1 363 736 (2014: 1 328 318) people (about 68 % of the usual foreign resident population in Switzerland) are nationals of EU-28/EFTA member states; 630 180 (2014: 618 705) or 32 % are nationals of other states. The number of EU-28/EFTA nationals increased by 2.7 % compared to the previous year. The number of third-state nationals increased by 1.9 %. The largest community of foreign nationals comes from Italy at 313 725 persons (15.7 % of the total foreign resident population), followed by Germany at 301 548 persons (15.1 %) and Portugal at 268,067 persons (13.4 %). The largest increase compared to the previous year was registered by French nationals (+ 6241), Italian (+5,123) and Portuguese nationals (+ 5057).

<sup>1</sup> The State Secretariat for Migration's statistics on foreign nationals are based on data taken from the Central Migration Information System (ZEMIS), but nevertheless exclude the following categories of foreign nationals: international civil servants and their family members, short-term residents < 12 months, asylum seekers and temporarily admitted persons.

<sup>2</sup> The current member states of the European Union are known as EU-28 member states. They are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Croatia joined the EU on 1 July 2013. The Free Movement of Persons Agreement (AFMP) signed by Switzerland and the EU needed to be adapted as had been the case with previous cases of EU enlargement. For this reason, Switzerland and the EU negotiated the terms of an Additional Protocol III. Until this protocol comes into effect, issuance of permits to Croatian nationals wishing to work in the Swiss labour market will continue to be subject to the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA, SR 142.20) and separate quotas will remain in place. Currently, the quota for type B residence permits stands at 50 and the quota for type L short-stay permits stands at 450. The current member states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) are Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

<sup>3</sup> EU-17/EFTA: citizens of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, United Kingdom and Cyprus have enjoyed unrestricted freedom of movement since 1 June 2007.

<sup>4</sup> These values are based on the usual foreign resident population.

<sup>5</sup> EU-8: citizens of Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004, excl. Malta and Cyprus: Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia.

## 2. Immigration and employment

Switzerland draws a distinction between two types of foreign workers when awarding residence and work permits: EU/EFTA nationals and third-state nationals. The first group enjoys all of the benefits of the Swiss-EU bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons and is given priority access to the Swiss labour market in comparison with the second group.

---

In order to satisfy the priority economic needs of regional labour markets despite reduced quotas, various cantons have restricted their issuance practices.

---

### Free movement of persons from the EU

In 2015, a total of 106 805 EU-28/EFTA<sup>2</sup> nationals immigrated to Switzerland – around 63 % (66 713) of whom came for the purpose of taking up employment (usual foreign resident population).

Newly arrived EU-17/EFTA<sup>3</sup> nationals mainly work in the tertiary sector (80 %).<sup>4</sup> Nearly 19 % work in the secondary sector (industry and crafts) and 1 % work in the primary sector. The employment situation for EU-8 nationals is similar: around 71 % work in the tertiary sector and 19 % work in the secondary sector (industry and crafts). Compared to EU-17/EFTA nationals, however, considerably more EU-8<sup>5</sup> nationals (around 10 %) work in the primary sector. For their part, Bulgarian and Romanian nationals (EU-2 nationals) have been able to benefit from the provisions of the Swiss-EU bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons since 1 June 2009. The vast majority of EU-2 nationals (74 %) work in the tertiary sector; around 11 % work in the secondary sector (industry and trade); and 15 % in the primary sector.

### Work permit quotas

Each year the Federal Council establishes quotas for workers from non-EU/EFTA member states (third-state nationals) as well as for service providers from EU/EFTA member states who wish to work for longer than 120 days. 4000 short-stay permits (L) and 2500 normal residence permits (B) were set aside for third-state nationals for 2015. The Federal Council established a separate quota of 2,000 short-stay permits (L) and 250 normal residence permits (B) for service providers from EU/EFTA member states. On 28 November 2014, in response to adoption of the mass immigration initiative, the Federal Council sharply reduced quotas by 1000 for the first three permit categories and by 250 for permits issued to service providers from EU/EFTA member states.

At the start of the year, half of the quotas for third-state service providers were allocated to the cantons on the basis of a pre-defined ratio. Since this basis does not take possible short-term developments (e.g. resettlement) into account nor does it consider fluctuations in cantonal needs for additional permits, the remaining half of the quotas remained with the Confederation as a reserve. This allows the Confederation to allocate additional quotas to individual cantons as needed.

In order to satisfy the priority economic needs of regional labour markets despite reduced quotas, various cantons have restricted their issuance practices. They have also paid closer attention to whether issuance of a permit serves general economic interests. Some cantons, for instance, have decided to restrict issuance of permits in the case of limited added value (e.g. stays intended for traineeships). Thanks to these measures, economically urgent demand from Swiss companies for skilled workers from non-EU/EFTA member states was mostly satisfied. The 2015 quota established by the Federal Council on issuance of type B permits to third-state nationals was fully used up in November 2015. 97 % of the quota established for issuance of type L permits was used up.<sup>7</sup> Compared to 2014, around 60 fewer type B permits and around 1020 fewer type L permits were issued.

---

**85 % of all third-country nationals  
who received a work permit were holders  
of a higher education qualification.**

---

Apart from individual economic branches with limited annual requirements, the quota reduction had a dampening effect on practically all branches of the Swiss economy.

In 2015, most of the permits were issued in the IT field (1931 permits), followed by the chemical and pharmaceuticals industry (659), corporate consulting (608), the food and beverage industry (461), the machine industry (418), research (381) as well as financial and insurance services. In 2015, 85 % of all third-country nationals who received a work permit were holders of a higher education qualification. As in 2014, third-state nationals mainly came from the following countries: India (1786), USA (1120), China (445) and Russia (352).

The quotas for service providers (type L and type B permits) were fully used up in 2015. Permits for service providers were issued mainly in the tertiary sector (financial services, corporate consulting, IT) and the secondary sector (machine industry, electrical engineering, construction).

On 11 November 2015, the Federal Council decided to maintain the quotas for short-stay and residence permits for third-state nationals at the same level for 2016. As a result, 4000 type L permits and 2,500 type B permits were once again available in 2016. The quotas for service providers from EU/EFTA member states also remained the same (2000 short-term stay permits and 250 residence permits). Responding to the will of Swiss voters expressed on 9 February 2014 (Art. 121a and 197 no. 11 of Swiss Federal Constitution), the Federal Council seeks to give Swiss employers even greater incentives to make better and more timely use of Switzerland's domestic labour force.

<sup>6</sup> See no. 1 let. a, Annex 1 and 2 of Ordinance of 24 October 2007 on Admission, Period of Stay and Employment (ASEO, SR 142.201).

<sup>7</sup> Quota usage by the end of 2015: 2,749 B permits and 3,896 L permits.

### Bilateral traineeship agreements

Over the past decade, Switzerland has signed bilateral traineeship agreements with various countries. These agreements give young professionals between the ages of 18 and 35 the opportunity to work in their occupation for up to 18 months in another country and pursue subsequent training. This option is available for all occupations.

In 2015, a total of approximately 300 Swiss nationals took advantage of this opportunity to spend some time abroad. Most of the young Swiss nationals travelled to Canada and the USA. In that same year, a total of 155 permits were issued to foreign nationals for traineeships in Switzerland. Most of the permits were issued to young professionals from Canada (61), the Philippines (25) and the USA (23). Traineeships in Switzerland took place in various branches, mainly in health care, architecture and finance.



*In 2015, 106805 EU-28/EFTA nationals immigrated to Switzerland – around 63% of whom came for the purpose of taking up employment.*



### 3. Schengen visas

Schengen visas are valid for short-term stays within the Schengen Area (i.e. no longer than 90 days within a 180-day period) and are usually required by tourists and business travellers. In 2015, Switzerland issued 452 735 Schengen visas and rejected 33 265 visa applications. A visa application is turned down when the authority examining the application concludes that one or more entry requirements have not been met. For example, if an authority doubts that the visa applicant truly intends to leave Switzerland upon expiry of the visa or if the visa applicant lacks adequate financial resources.

Most of these Schengen visas were issued by Swiss consulates in India (106 371 visas), China (78 462 visas), Russia (28 667 visas) and Thailand (25 954 visas). The number of naturalisation applications has increased. Like other Schengen countries, Switzerland may require fellow Schengen countries to obtain Swiss consent in specific cases before a visa is issued. In 2015, the SEM handled preliminary consultation requests from other Schengen countries in relation to 404 976 persons. At the same time, the Swiss authorities submitted around 68 476 consultation requests to Schengen member countries.

The Central Visa Information System (C-VIS) has been in operation since October 2011. All Schengen member countries store personal and biometric data (10 fingerprints and facial image) of visa applicants in this system. As part of the worldwide rollout of the VIS, the consular missions of all Schengen countries in the highly populated countries of India, China and Russia were all successfully connected to the system in 2015.

Border guards directly compare the fingerprints saved to the C-VIS with the fingerprints of travellers holding a Schengen visa. This control has been systematically carried out at Swiss airports since 11 October 2014.

Furthermore, Switzerland has been comparing the fingerprints of asylum seekers with the C-VIS since December 2012. In 2015, Swiss authorities determined in this manner that 1281 of those who applied for asylum in Switzerland had done so only after already obtaining a Schengen visa from another country. An additional 653 others had submitted an asylum application in Switzerland after their visa application had been denied. Under the Dublin Agreement, the Schengen country that issued the visa is responsible for handling any asylum applications submitted by the visa holder.

Since May 2015, citizens of the United Arab Emirates and since December 2015 citizens of Colombia have enjoyed visa-free travel to Switzerland on a biometric passport. Since 2015, citizens of the following countries have also enjoyed visa-free travel to Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Dominica, Vanuatu, Samoa (West), St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tonga and Palau. With this measure, the Federal Council has aligned itself with a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council. If the EU introduces or waives general visa requirements for a given country, then this change applies to the entire Schengen Area, which includes Switzerland. Citizens of the following countries are no longer subject to visa requirements thanks to changes introduced in recent years: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania and Moldova.



*Last year, Switzerland issued 452 735 Schengen visas.*

## 4. Naturalisations

In 2015, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) received a total of 33 437 naturalisation applications (both ordinary and simplified naturalisations and applications for reinstatement of Swiss citizenship). This figure corresponds to an 8 % increase compared to the previous year (30 961 applications). The year 2015 was surpassed only by the year 2008 (34 965 applications) in terms of the number of incoming naturalisation applications.

In 2015, 42 699 persons were granted Swiss citizenship, +21 % compared to 2014 (35 187 persons). 31 166 acquired Swiss citizenship through the ordinary naturalisation procedure, +30 % compared to 2014 (23 895 persons). The number of simplified naturalisations, however, increased by only 2 % and the number of persons who obtained reinstatement of lost Swiss citizenship increased by 5 %: 11 372 persons for simplified naturalisation (2014: 11 139 persons) and 161 persons for reinstatement of Swiss citizenship (2014: 153 persons).

---

The year 2015 was surpassed  
only by the year 2008 in terms of  
the number of incoming  
naturalisation applications.

---

As in 2014, newly naturalised Swiss citizens have come mainly from Italy (5740) and Germany (5363). This corresponds to an increase of 21 % and 27 % respectively. While Portugal comes in third at 3624 persons naturalised, it accounts for the largest increase at 47 % higher than the previous year. Compared to 2014, the number of French nationals obtaining Swiss citizenship increased by 32 % to 3532 and the number of persons from Kosovo increased by 21 % to 3167. The number of naturalisations of citizens of Turkish origin increased by 29 % to 1813 persons. In contrast, 10 % fewer (1670 persons) citizens from Serbia obtained Swiss citizenship. The number of naturalisations of Spanish citizens increased by 42 % to 1541 persons. In addition, 1303 citizens of Macedonia (+1%) and 1105 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (+15%) obtained Swiss citizenship.

### Swiss Citizenship Ordinance

On 20 June 2014, the Swiss Parliament adopted the revised draft of the Swiss Citizenship Act (SCA). Among the main changes introduced is the requirement that all future applicants under the ordinary naturalisation procedure must hold a type C settlement permit and demonstrate a higher level of integration, namely knowledge of a national language of Switzerland. In the Federal Council Dispatch of 4 March 2011 on complete revision of the Federal Act on the Acquisition and Loss of Swiss Citizenship, the Federal Council pointed out that an implementing ordinance would also need to be enacted. On 19 August 2015, the draft ordinance was submitted for consultation over a three-month period. This draft provides more detailed information concerning the integration criteria mentioned in the SCA, including: no threat to public safety and order, respect for the values of the Swiss Constitution, proof of competence in a national language of Switzerland, participation in economic life, acquisition of education and training, encouraging family members to also integrate in Switzerland, familiarity with Swiss living conditions. As was the case previously, applicants for naturalisation must not constitute a threat to the internal and external security of Switzerland.

The SCA expressly states that the competent authorities must adequately take the applicant's personal situation into account when assessing his/her level of integration. In other words, he/she must not be penalised for any disability, illness or difficult personal circumstances that prevent him/her from fulfilling integration criteria (Art. 12 para. 2 SCA). These exceptional cases are also clarified in the implementing ordinance, which also includes the new fees to be charged by the SEM for processing naturalisation applications. Some of the fees charged for simplified naturalisation, reinstatement of Swiss citizenship, rejection of naturalisation applications as well as the fees for cantonal data collection reports have been increased. Moreover, fees will generally be charged in advance with no refund.

The draft Swiss Citizenship Ordinance was adopted by the Federal Council on 17 June 2016. The Federal Council has stipulated that both the new SCA and SCO will come into effect on 1 January 2018.

## 5. International cooperation

### Migration cooperation in Europe

Switzerland is in the heart of Europe – enclosed by the European Union (EU). For this reason, the EU's migration and asylum policies have a direct impact on Switzerland. Through its signature of the Schengen/Dublin association agreement, Switzerland takes part in political and legal discussions concerning these topics. It is able to express its position and adopts corresponding *acquis* arising from this agreement.

The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) analyses the effects of Schengen/Dublin policies on Switzerland and actively contributes to discussions in EU working groups and committees. In addition, it coordinates with other federal agencies to establish a coherent Swiss position, which is then decided on either by the Federal Council or the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP). Depending on the body, this position is represented by a head of department, the head of SEM, the head of the Swiss Mission to the European Union or another SEM delegate in Brussels.

Since last summer, Europe has experienced levels of migration not seen since the end of World War II. Over 1.25 million people sought asylum in European countries. This development led to numerous meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs Council of the European Union, initially under the Latvian and then under the Luxembourg presidency. As an associated Schengen/Dublin country, Switzerland was represented at those meetings by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Ms Simonetta Sommaruga.

In May 2015, the European Agenda on Migration was adopted, which sets out the various migration policy challenges that the EU wishes to comprehensively address. This framework provides for two relocation schemes that will transfer 160 000 asylum seekers from Italy and other heavily overburdened EU member states to other European countries. Hotspots have been established in Italy and Greece to enable relocation. As part of the first relocation scheme, Switzerland will accept 1500 asylum seekers. The Federal Council has also decided in principle to take part in the second relocation scheme. In addition, the EU has established a voluntary resettlement scheme for 20 000 refugees from third states. Switzerland has agreed to take 519 refugees from the Syrian crisis region.

In December 2015, the European Commission presented a set of measures aimed at managing borders more effectively and establishing a European Border and Coast Guard System. Switzerland generally supports these measures, which are intended to better protect the external borders of the Schengen Area. At the November 2015 meeting in Valletta, the heads of state and government furthermore agreed to set up a trust fund to sponsor projects in countries of origin and transit so as to address the root causes of migration. Switzerland intends to contribute to this fund.

The SEM also works on a bilateral basis with individual EU member states. In Greece, Switzerland provided financial support for a voluntary return project and helped to sponsor UNHCR activities to provide housing and care for migrants. In Italy, the SEM provided funding to support the activities of the Italian Red Cross. The SEM intensified cooperation with Poland to transfer knowledge in the area of asylum, housing practices and integration.

### Migration cooperation with third countries

Cooperation with countries of origin and transit is essential when one considers the long migration routes and the countries outside Europe that provide at least initial refuge to most refugees. In many cases, concrete projects run by the SEM serve to complement efforts made by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), particularly its Humanitarian Aid Unit.

The SEM lent support to first-host countries for those fleeing the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq, reinforcing their admission and processing capabilities. In so doing, the SEM has contributed to measures aimed at efficiently registering refugees, thereby ensuring that they receive basic care. At the same time, the SEM has pursued activities in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey to improve the living conditions for all population groups and to create conditions for peaceful coexistence of the local population and migrants in need of protection (see page 46 for more details).

In 2015, the SEM's international activities were mainly focussed on cooperation with Turkey. The SEM helped the government of Turkey to establish its first migration agency and to prepare a coherent migration policy. The SEM also helped the Turkish government to manage current refugee flows resulting from the Syrian crisis. At the same time, Switzerland negotiated a bilateral readmission agreement, which should be finalised in 2016.



In the Horn of Africa, the SEM was involved in “protection in the region” projects. In October 2015, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Ms Simonetta Sommaruga announced that Switzerland would sponsor a project offering training modules and micro-loans for Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia to enable them to improve their living conditions and build a future for themselves in Ethiopia.

The SEM's international activities were also focussed on North African countries. Many people from Sub-Saharan Africa have tried to reach Europe through Maghreb countries. Often, they are unable to cross the Mediterranean Sea for various reasons. The SEM works with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to help migrants who find themselves in a hopeless situation to willingly and sustainably return to their country of origin. Corresponding projects have been funded in Algeria, Libya and Tunisia. This form of support also reinforces bilateral migration cooperation with national governments.

Over the past few years, Switzerland has signed migration partnerships with five countries – Nigeria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Tunisia. As Switzerland's most comprehensive foreign migration policy instrument, migration partnerships provide for cooperation in all migration-relevant areas. The privileged relations established within the framework

of these migration partnerships have proven quite useful. In 2015, for example, Switzerland was able to make quick and efficient arrangements with the authorities in Serbia to provide food and build shelters for refugees and asylum seekers.

While bilateral cooperation is an important aspect of the SEM's international commitment, multilateral cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination is also important in order to address increasingly complex challenges. And Switzerland plays an active role in this. In November, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Ms Simonetta Sommaruga attended the Valletta Summit on Migration, which was attended by European and African heads of state and government. The purpose of this EU-organised meeting was to establish a partnership between European and African countries to improve the migration situation in the Mediterranean basin. Switzerland also stated its willingness to contribute to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

With a wide range of migration foreign policy instruments at both bilateral and multilateral level, Switzerland seeks to establish partnership dynamics that serve not only its own national interests but also those of partner countries and migrants in equal measure.



*The SEM will chair the presidency of the 34-member General Directors of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC) until the end of 2016.*

## 6. Key figures for asylum and action strategy

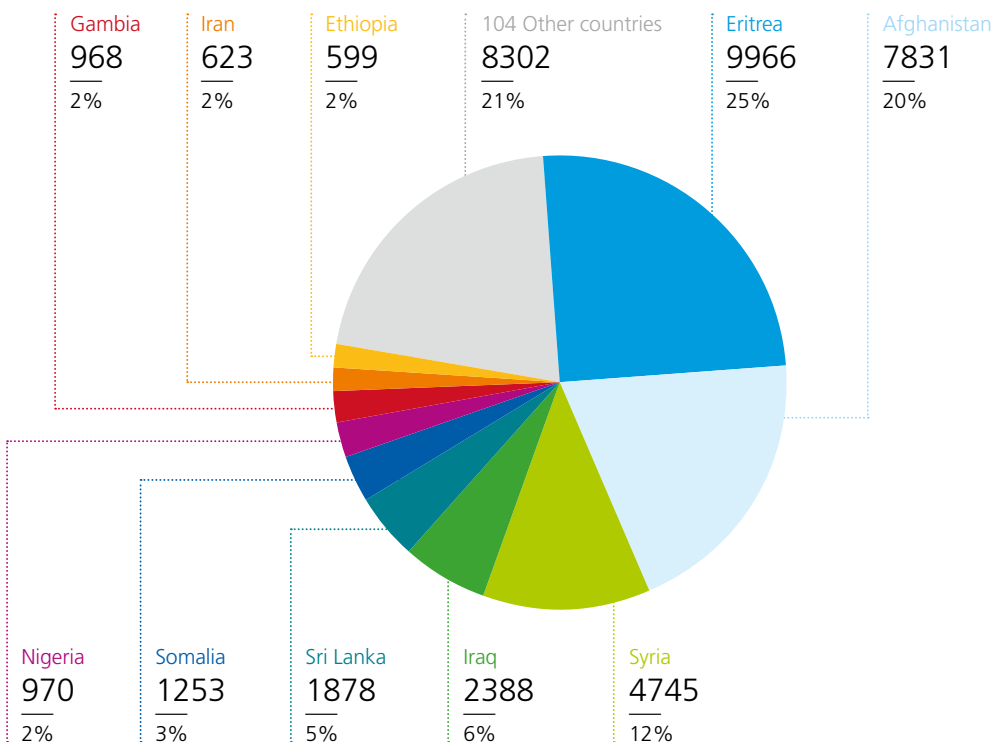
### Asylum applications in Switzerland

In 2015, Switzerland received 39 523 asylum applications. Compared to 2014, this amounts to an increase of 66.3 % (+ 15 758 applications). This 2015 figure was the highest annual figure seen since the end of the Kosovo crisis in 1999. At the time, Switzerland received 47 513 asylum applications. Starting in June 2015, the number of asylum applications in Switzerland rose sharply. The highest monthly figure was observed in November 2015 at 5691 asylum applications. This surge in the second half of the year was unprecedented as asylum seekers from the Near and Middle East streamed into Greece, continuing through the Balkans on their way to Germany and other European destination countries, including Switzerland. Although Switzerland's share of the total number of asylum applications in Europe fell from 3.8 % in 2014 to 2.9 % in 2015, the Swiss average of 4.9 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2014: 2.9) far exceeds the European average of 2.6 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2014: 1.2).

Eritrea was once again the top country of origin in 2015, with 9966 applications and around 44 % more applications compared to 2014. This dramatic increase compared to the previous year is a direct consequence of boatloads of refugees arriving along the southern coast of Italy (+ 15 %). In addition, France and Austria temporarily tightened border control measures, which at times had the effect of channelling migration of Eritrean nationals towards Switzerland. After Germany (11 000 applications), Switzerland was the main country of destination for Eritrean asylum seekers, followed by the Netherlands (7400 applications) and Sweden (7200 applications).

Three main countries of origin (Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq) accounted for around 90% of the 875,000 people who landed in Greece. Starting in August 2015, the number of people who continued their journey from Greece to Switzerland gradually increased but later rose sharply. Compared to Syrian and Iraqi nationals, the proportion of Afghan nationals who

Country of origin of persons seeking asylum in Switzerland in 2015



migrated to Switzerland was comparably high. One explanation for this is that Syrian and Iraqi asylum seekers tended to be more readily and more quickly accepted in Germany or Sweden than Afghan nationals.

### Handling of asylum applications

In 2015, the SEM handled 28,118 asylum applications in the first instance. This amounts to a 5.3% increase over 2014 and the highest number of handled applications since 2000.

This positive outcome was mainly due to the larger number of asylum applications settled more quickly because another Dublin country turned out to be responsible for the asylum application submitted in Switzerland. The larger number of Dublin cases was another reason why the recognition and protection rates for 2015 were somewhat lower than those for 2014.

Despite more effectively handling, Swiss asylum processing capacities reached their limits in the second half of 2015 as a result of developments along the Balkan route. Reception and processing centres therefore devoted most of their attention to registering and accommodating asylum seekers. The number of applications pending in the first instance rose from 16 767 at the end of 2014 to 29 805 at the end of 2015. The longest-pending asylum applications were also handled in 2015. At the end of 2015, there were still 4567 pending in the first instance that had been submitted earlier than a year previously. At the end of 2014, this figure stood at 4697.

In 2015, the SEM granted temporary admission to 7787 persons (2014: 9367), of whom 7109 (2014: 7924) following an asylum decision rendered in the first instance.<sup>11</sup> 3466 cases of temporary admission also reached expiration (2014: 3217).

### In 2015, the main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Switzerland were:

Country	No. of asylum applications 2015	Change 2014–2015 in persons
Eritrea	9966	+3 043
Afghanistan	7831	+7 084
Syria	4745	+926
Iraq	2388	+2 025
Sri Lanka	1878	+601
Somalia	1253	+440
Nigeria	970	+62
Gambia	968	+583
Iran	623	+455
Ethiopia	599	+253

### Cases handled in first instance 2015

Cases handled	2015	Change from 2014–2015	Change from 2014–2015 in %
Asylum granted	6 377	+178	+2,9%
Recognition rate <sup>8</sup>	25,1%	–0,5%	–2,0%
Protection rate <sup>9</sup>	53,1%	–5,2%	–8,9%
Applications dismissed	8 421	+2 548	+43,4%
Of which related to Dublin (incl. other transfer procedures) <sup>10</sup>	8 123	+2 987	+58,2%
Asylum denied	10 602	–1 537	–12,7%
Application cancelled	2 718	+214	+8,5%
<b>Total cases handled</b>	<b>28 118</b>	<b>+1 403</b>	<b>+5,3%</b>
<b>Applications pending in first instance</b>	<b>29 805</b>	<b>+13 038</b>	<b>+77,8%</b>

<sup>8</sup> Proportion of cases where asylum was granted in relation to all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications)

<sup>9</sup> Proportion of all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications) where asylum or temporary admission was granted in the first instance.

<sup>10</sup> Since implementation of the Dublin III Ordinance on 1 January 2014, certain categories of foreign nationals no longer fall within the scope of application of the Dublin III Ordinance; for these foreign nationals, requests for transfer must be made in accordance with readmission guidelines or a bilateral readmission agreement.

<sup>11</sup> Decisions to temporarily admit asylum seekers in the first instance form the basis for the calculation of protection rates indicated in the table above, which is why they are presented here separately.



### Duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance

The mathematically calculated duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance in 2015 stood at 278 days. This figure varies sharply, depending on the volume of incoming asylum applications and SEM's handling strategy. The total duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance in 2014 stood at 401 days. In 2013, the total stood at 258 days and in 2012, 163 days.

However, the average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance is not a very informative indicator for the effective amount of time needed to process an asylum application, since a given handling strategy or rapid processing through the Dublin procedure are not normal cases. The handling strategy can be broken down into two categories of asylum application: priority 1 asylum applications, which are processed the most quickly (in 2015, around 50% to 60% of all asylum applications handled in first instance) and asylum applications that have been pending the longest, which are processed using remaining resources (in 2015 around 40% to 50% of all asylum applications handled in first instance).

### Dublin procedure

The Dublin Association Agreement came into force in Switzerland on 12 December 2008. Experience has shown that another Dublin country turns out to be responsible in around 40% of all asylum applications submitted to Switzerland.

Due to high migration pressures that began in 2014 off the Italian coast, the Italian asylum and accommodation system is overburdened in two main respects. Dublin cooperation with Italy – which is Switzerland's main Dublin partner country – was therefore more challenging and severely hampered mostly in the summer and autumn months. Even Germany encountered organisational difficulties due to the unprecedented immigration that occurred in the second half of 2015. As a result, the German authorities were no longer able to deliver timely fingerprint scans of asylum seekers to the European central fingerprint database Eurodac.

<sup>12</sup> Including other transfer procedures.

<sup>13</sup> The figures are partly based on provisional data taken from Web sites of the various migration authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) and Eurostat.

Nevertheless, in 2015 28.9% of all asylum applications handled fell under the provisions of the Dublin Association Agreement<sup>12</sup> (2014: 19.2%). Considerably more asylum seekers were transferred back to the corresponding Dublin country (2716) than vice versa (564). The average amount of time required to determine that a given applicant was subject to Dublin provisions was 65 days.

### European trends

Asylum applications in 2015 were influenced by migration flows from Turkey through Greece and the Balkans to Austria, Germany, Sweden and, in some cases, to other destination countries. The ongoing conflict in Syria was the main reason why a total of 875 000 people ended up on Greek islands. This situation also fuelled feelings of hopelessness in other refugees who had fled to Turkey or other countries. In August 2015, political signals implied that Europe wanted to help refugees from the war in Syria, which significantly intensified migration pressure as nationals of other countries (particularly Afghanistan and Iraq but also Iran and Pakistan). In some cases, European countries were no longer able to keep the situation under control.

### Main European destination countries for asylum seekers in 2015<sup>13</sup>

Country	Asylum applications 2015	Asylum applications 2014	Change Absolute	Change Relative
Germany	442 000	173 000	+269 000	+155,5%
Hungary	179 000	43 000	+136 000	+316,3%
Sweden	163 000	81 000	+82 000	+101,2%
Austria	88 000	28 000	+60 000	+214,3%
Italy	86 000	65 000	+21 000	+32,3%
France	80 000	65 500	+14 500	+22,1%
Netherlands	45 000	24 000	+21 000	+87,5%
Switzerland	39 523	23 765	+15 758	+66,3%
UK	38 500	31 500	+7 000	+22,2%
Belgium	35 500	17 000	+18 500	+108,8%

In 2015, around 1.36 million asylum applications were filed, nearly twice as many applications as in 2014 (625 000) and around six times more than in 2005 (around 230 000), which was the lowest volume since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

### Asylum Action Plan

The SEM quickly processes asylum applications in a legally correct manner. According to Art. 37b AsylA, the SEM lists the categories of asylum applications that are to be given priority, indicating such things as legal deadlines for processing, the situation in countries of origin, clearly justified/unjustified applications and the behaviour of asylum seekers.

The Asylum Action Plan is intended to ensure effective processing of asylum applications by giving priority to specific categories of applications. Other objectives of the Asylum Action Plan include:

- Reducing the number of clearly unjustified asylum applications
- Easing housing burdens
- Minimising the overall costs of the asylum sector

### Main countries of origin of asylum seekers in 2015<sup>13</sup>

Country	Asylum applications in 2015	Difference compared to 2014	Applications in Switzerland in 2015	Proportion of total asylum applications in Switzerland
Syria	390 000	+264 000	4 745	1,2%
Afghanistan	195 000	+153 500	7 831	4,0%
Iraq	130 000	+112 500	2 388	1,8%
Kosovo	75 000	+39 000	566	0,8%
Albania	68 000	+51 000	451	0,7%
Eritrea	50 000	+3 500	9 966	19,9%
Pakistan	48 500	+27 000	262	0,5%
Nigeria	32 000	+11 000	970	3,0%
Serbia	30 000	+9 000	200	0,7%
Iran	28 500	+17 000	623	2,2%

## The Asylum Action Plan is intended to ensure effective processing of asylum applications by giving priority to specific categories of applications.

In 2012, the State Secretariat for Migration adopted a new procedure for the processing of visa applications from visa-exempt European countries ("48-hour procedure") and in the spring of 2013, extended this procedure to nationals from Kosovo and Georgia.

In December 2012, the SEM also gradually introduced a "fast-track procedure". The main difference between the "48-hour procedure" and the "fast-track procedure" is that the latter is applied to nationals from countries where it is more difficult to enforce removal orders and obtain the necessary documents for departure. Currently, the fast-track procedure applies to nationals from six countries where chances of success in asylum applications are slim: Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria, Gambia and Senegal.

Introduction of the "48-hour procedure" and the "fast-track procedure" has led to a significant reduction in the number of asylum applications from nationals of the corresponding countries of origin and the figure remains stable at a low level. Accelerated processing of asylum applications has lowered Switzerland's appeal as a destination country for citizens of countries whose asylum applications are poorly justified and who are in no need of protection.

In 2015, a surge in incoming asylum applications placed a severe burden on reception centres, prompting the headquarters in Wabern to introduce a prioritisation system for the handling of asylum applications. The headquarters absorbed the overflow, handling only applications that could not be processed at the reception centres due to overload. Asylum seekers remain in federal housing until processing of their asylum application is complete.

## 7. Hardship cases

The Asylum Act (AsylA) and the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA) contain rules on how to handle hardship cases. Under the following conditions, the cantons may issue a type B residence permit subject to approval by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM):

Under Art. 14 AsylA, asylum seekers must have lived in Switzerland for at least five years (their place of residence known by the Swiss authorities at all times) and experience greater personal hardship following intensive efforts to integrate in Switzerland. In 2015, a total of 105 persons received a residence permit by virtue of this provision.

Art. 84 FNA stipulates that applications for a residence permit made by temporarily admitted foreign nationals who have resided in Switzerland for more than five years are closely examined with regard to integration, family circumstances and the reasonableness of return to the country of origin. In 2015, 1,861 temporarily admitted persons were granted a residence permit on this basis.

Finally, Art. 30 FNA enables a residence permit to be granted in the event of serious personal hardship. In 2015, 318 illegal immigrants living in Switzerland were granted residence permits. There is also a special rule whereby a residence permit may be revoked if a person becomes divorced under particular circumstances (e.g. domestic violence, forced marriage).



*In 2015, 2284 persons obtained residence permits as hardship cases.*



## 8. Returns

Asylum seekers whose applications have been legally rejected and who are also not eligible for temporarily admitted person status, must leave Switzerland. Other foreign nationals may also be deported if they have lived in Switzerland illegally. Coercive measures may be taken to enforce removal orders if the foreign national refuses to leave Switzerland after receiving official notice to do so. The SEM offers return assistance to encourage the voluntary return and reintegration in one's country of origin so as to avoid having to take costly and tedious coercive measures.

### Return assistance

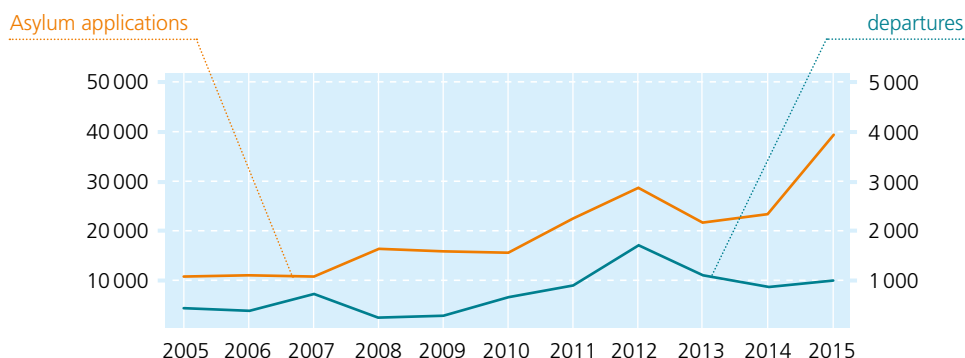
All asylum seekers and certain categories of foreign nationals (e.g. victims of human trafficking) may request return assistance. The following categories of individuals do not qualify for return assistance: foreigners with criminal records, persons who fail to cooperate with the authorities, citizens of EU/EFTA member states and other countries as well as their family members who may enter Switzerland for stays of up to three months. Since the introduction of return assistance in 1997, around 88 000 migrants have returned to their countries of origin on their own.

Ten years ago, the Federal Office for Migration (now SEM) launched a pilot project that offered return assistance to asylum seekers from the very start of the asylum procedure. Following successful completion of the pilot project, a return assistance programme was formally established at asylum reception and processing centres one year later. Since then, return assistance has been a solid component of Swiss return policy.

The aim of the reception and processing centre is to discuss the option of returning to their countries of origin with asylum seekers as soon as possible rather than waiting until after their asylum application has been rejected. Asylum seekers therefore receive information about the possibility of receiving assistance. If the asylum seeker shows an interest in this option, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) can provide him/her with return assistance counselling and can make the necessary arrangements for departure.

Return assistance increases the likelihood that migrants decide to return voluntarily and depart sooner. Without these alternatives, migrants would remain in Switzerland longer.

### Asylum applications and departures (2005–2015)



Since 2005, around 900 foreign nationals have returned to their country of origin under the return assistance programme. Generally speaking, the number of departures is proportional to the number of asylum applications in 2007, 2012 and 2013, the willingness to leave Switzerland was higher than average: in 2007, there was a massive surge in asylum applications from citizens of Bulgaria and Romania (mostly Roma), who quickly realised that their prospects of obtaining asylum were slim and who therefore readily departed with return assistance; In 2012/13, a similar situation occurred with citizens of visa-exempt Macedonia and Serbia (mostly ethnic Roma) and from Tunisia.

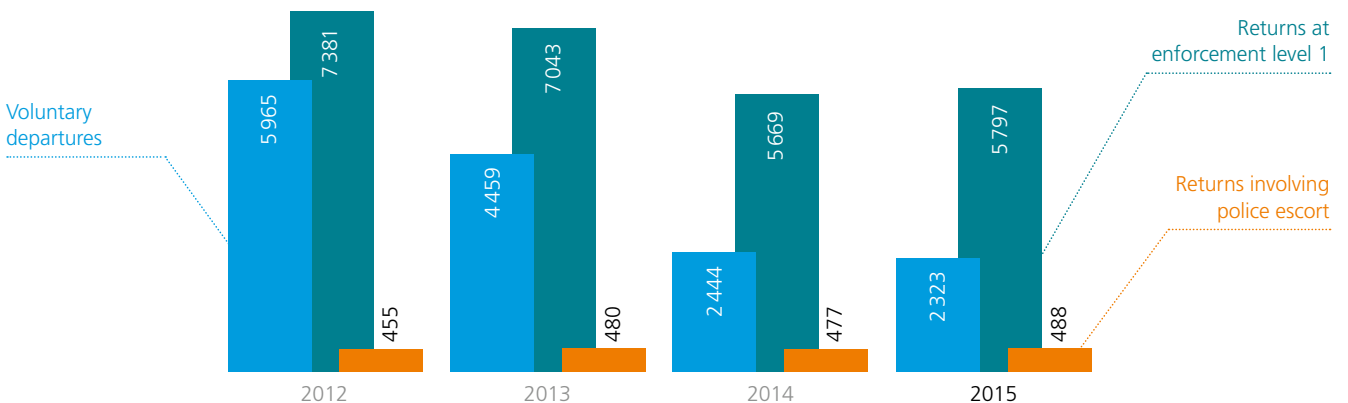
The year 2015 was characterised by a lower-than-average willingness to leave Switzerland. This was due to the relatively high rate of protection afforded to asylum seekers (including citizens of Syria and Eritrea) last year. A quick return for these groups of asylum seekers is out of the question.

**Returns and coercive measures**

In 2014, the Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 8603 persons, including foreign nationals transferred to other Dublin countries. The number of removals is comparable to the previous year (2014: 8590 departures) and considerably lower than in 2013. This is because the SEM also granted asylum or temporarily admitted citizens of Eritrea and Syria in 2015.

Nearly 27 % of those ordered to depart Switzerland left voluntarily. Like last year, many persons failed to comply with removal or expulsion orders; choosing instead to go underground or refusing to leave. In such cases, the police are used. Most of these persons were also returned in 2015 under enforcement level 1 (police escort to the departure gate only to ensure that the person boarded the aircraft). Only 488 persons (6 % of the departures) were accompanied by specially trained security officials to their destination country on standard flights and 228 persons in this group were returned to their countries of origin on 45 special deportation flights, 16 of which were joint EU deportation flights coordinated by the European border control agency Frontex.

**Departures by air (2012–2015)**



### Participation in joint EU deportation flights

Switzerland has been able to take part in joint EU deportation flights since January 2009. These flights are co-coordinated and co-funded by the European border control agency Frontex. Until 2014, the cantons and the Confederation made only limited use of multilateral cooperation in the removal of foreign nationals, mainly due to restrictive intercantonal rules. In 2014/15, the Confederation and the cantons launched a pilot project for unrestricted participation in joint EU deportation flights. The SEM and cantonal police systematically evaluated each operation that Switzerland took part in, particularly the aspect of police security, and came to the conclusion that an adjustment of practices was indeed possible. These joint EU deportation flights were presented to the Conference of Cantonal Justice and Police Directors (CCJPD) in November 2015. At this gathering, the cantons decided, with the support of the SEM, to lift existing restrictions and to change Swiss practices.

In 2015, Switzerland took part in 16 joint EU deportation flights to repatriate 65 illegal immigrants. The countries of origin were mainly African, Eastern European and Asian countries. Each country taking part in a joint deportation flight remains responsible for the repatriated foreign national and sends their own police officers to accompany them on the flight. In order to ensure that Switzerland can take part in as many of these joint EU deportation flights as possible, it has joined the European deportation enforcement system. This system is intended to harmonise deportation and make efficient use of resources through cooperation between countries and support from Frontex.



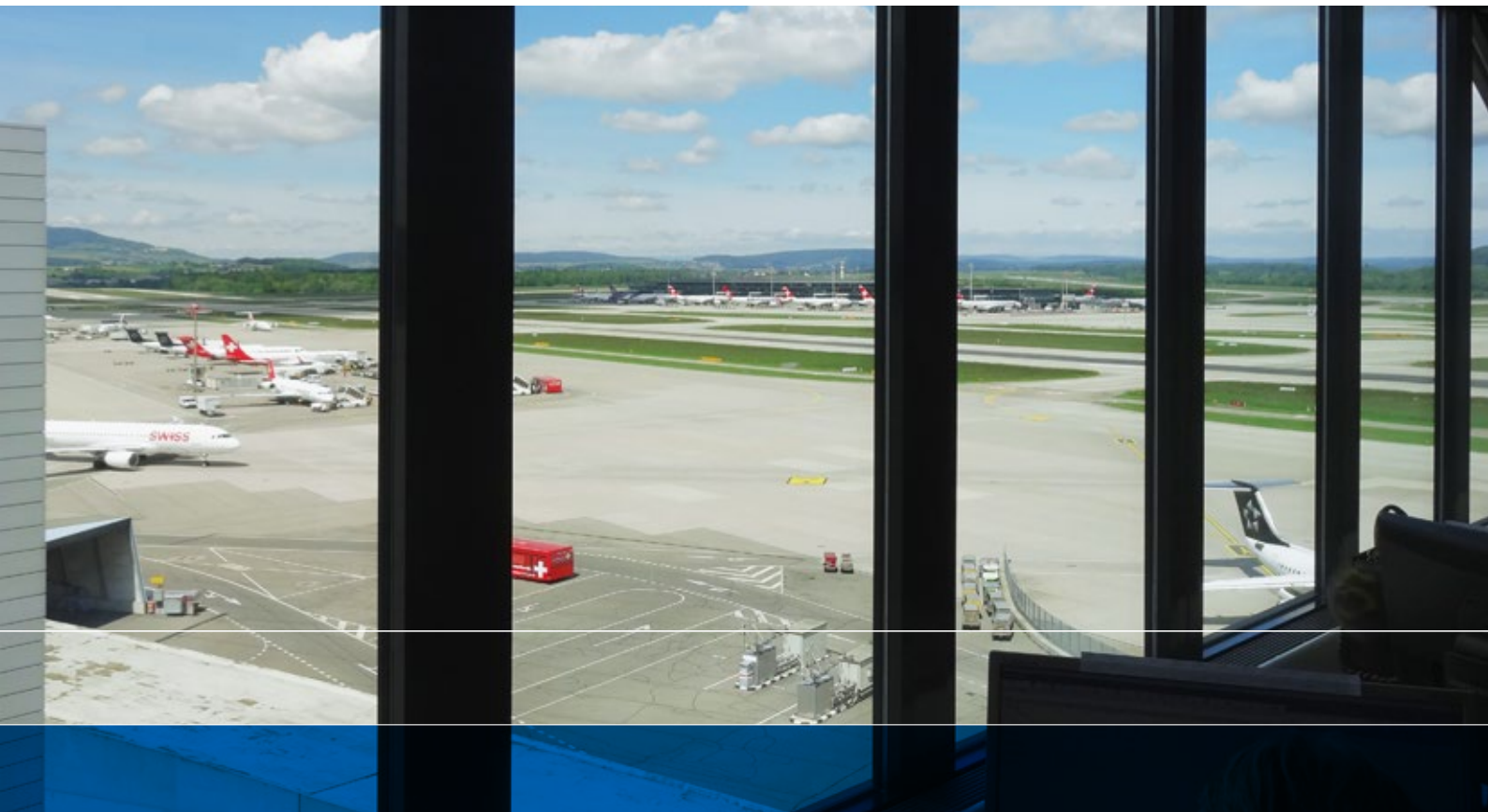


Multilateral cooperation offers numerous benefits: access to the European deportation network allows the Confederation and the cantons to quickly and safely enforce removal orders. Exchanges with European partners also enables Switzerland to learn from experiences and create the best possible conditions when coercion is the only option. There are also financial benefits: the costs of deportation have decreased for Switzerland – because Frontex pays for major costs (chartering of planes) and because several countries all take part in the same flight to the same country. In 2016, the Confederation and the cantons intend to choose this option whenever possible. Joint EU deportation flights are systematically observed by the Swiss authorities in charge.

#### Latest developments in administrative detention

In 2015, a total of 5935 detention orders were issued (2014: 5417 detention orders). The average duration of administrative detention remained practically the same at 23 days (2014: 21 days). Most of the individuals placed in administrative detention in 2015 – as in the previous year – came from Albania, Nigeria and Kosovo.

Following Swiss adoption and implementation of the Dublin III Regulation, on 1 July 2015, a new provision was added to the Foreign Nationals Act (Art. 76a FNA), which governs administrative detention within the framework of a Dublin procedure. The corresponding authorities may only order administrative detention in individual cases if there are specific indications that the person intends to evade removal or go underground. In addition, new maximum durations apply to administrative detention under the Dublin procedure. So far, administrative detention has been ordered by virtue of this new article in 769 cases.



*In 2015, the Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 8603 foreign nationals.*

## 9. Procedures to remove and keep people away

The Foreign Nationals Act (SR 142.20) provides for a range of measures designed to enable the authorities to remove foreign nationals who undermine Switzerland's security and public order or constitute a serious threat to Switzerland's internal or external security. These measures include, in particular, removal orders (Wegweisung), expulsion orders (Ausweisung) and entry bans (Einreiseverbot).

Entry bans and expulsions are aimed at preventing the uncontrolled entry to Switzerland of undesirable foreign nationals. Both measures are preventive rather than penal in nature. As long as they remain in force, the foreign national may not enter our country without obtaining the explicit authorisation (suspension of entry bans) of the competent authority. In the case of EU nationals, the conditions are more restrictive. Indeed, for an entry ban to be ordered, the person in question must represent a real, current and sufficiently serious threat to security and public order. In 2015, 12 539 entry bans were issued (2014: 11 414).

Since the Swiss-EU bilateral agreement on Schengen/Dublin cooperation came into effect, all bans on entry ordered by our country are entered into the Schengen Information System (SIS). This enables undesirable foreign nationals to be barred from entry to the Schengen area.



*All bans on entry ordered by Switzerland are entered into the Schengen Information System (SIS).*





*The number of naturalisations declined from 2008 to 2012 before resuming an upward trend. Last year, the figure increased by 21 % to 42 699 naturalisations.*



## 1. Current situation

Employment and economic independence are important factors for integration in society and social recognition. For migrants, employment and income are essential and concrete concerns. Financial self-sufficiency is more readily and quickly achieved through employment, which in turn facilitates the integration process in many other respects.

Interaction with colleagues at work, establishing contacts and making acquaintances encourages social integration. The active and practical use of languages and alignment with Swiss working culture, its values and standards also have a positive impact on cultural integration.

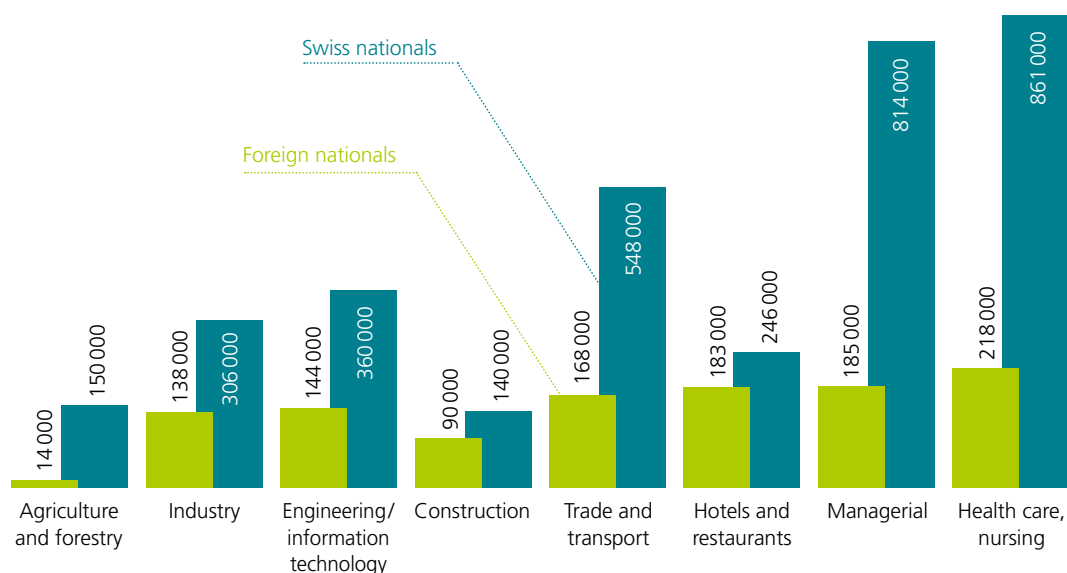
All things considered, foreigners are very much integrated within the Swiss economy. This is illustrated in the figure below, which shows the proportion of foreign workers in various occupational categories.

A recently published study by the OECD entitled "Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015"<sup>14</sup> shows that migrants in Switzerland have achieved a good level of integration in education and employment compared to migrants in other European countries.

Nevertheless, Switzerland still faces certain challenges when it comes to integrating foreigners in education and the labour market. There are several reasons for this:

- The number of asylum seekers has risen dramatically as a result of hot spots around the globe (see box on page 34). In 2015 alone, Switzerland added around 15 000 asylum seekers to its usual resident population. Around half of these recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons were between the ages of 18 and 39.
- According to various studies commissioned by the SEM, a sizeable proportion of migrants work in an occupation for which they are overqualified. This is frequently the case for third-state nationals.
- Each year, an average of around 43 000 adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 and 25 come to Switzerland. Around one-fourth have no post-compulsory schooling.

### Overview of occupational fields in 2015



<sup>14</sup> OECD (2015), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015*, OECD Publishing, Paris.  
[www.dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264238855-de](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264238855-de)

- Generally speaking, many foreign nationals lack post-compulsory schooling (SLFS, 2014: 25.6% for foreign nationals compared to 11.5% for Swiss nationals).
- Foreigners are more greatly affected by unemployment. The employment rate among foreigners is nearly three times higher than among Swiss nationals (SLFS).

This group of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons constitute the greatest challenge for occupational integration. According to a study commissioned by the SEM in 2014, the employment rate of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons of employable age in the first years after arrival in Switzerland stands at a comparably low level of 20–30%; this employment rate rises steadily the longer the person stays in Switzerland but still remains at around 50% after ten years (see figure below).

There are many reasons why refugees or temporarily admitted persons often find it difficult to find employment:

- They generally do not speak a national language of Switzerland
- Many have no or very little general education and/or solid vocational training
- The vocational training, occupation or qualification in the country of origin is not recognised in Switzerland

**Key asylum statistics for 2015**

Immigration by asylum seekers and other foreigners

- 71 495 total immigration (net figures, incl. temporarily admitted persons)
- 14 164 recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons
- 39 523 asylum seekers
- 2 736 unaccompanied minors (7% of asylum seekers)

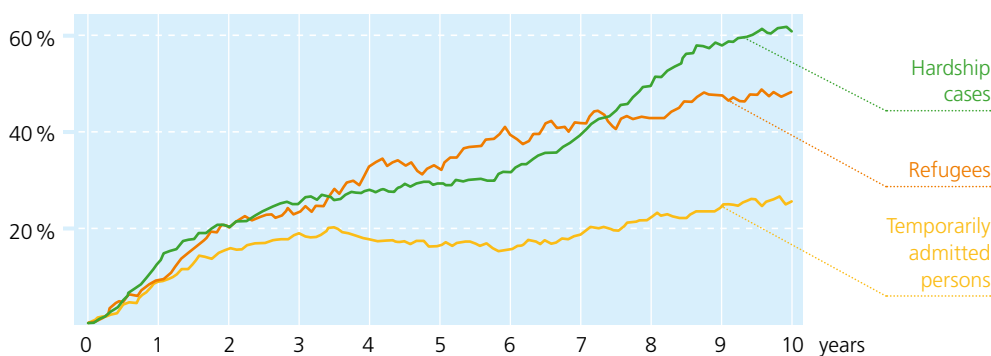
Age of newly recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons in 2015

- 40% or 5 625 persons are 17 years old or younger
- 50% or 6 909 persons are 18 to 39 years old

Estimated potential (based on random sampling)

- 20% hold higher education qualification, upper-secondary general education qualification or upper-secondary vocational qualification
- 50% have several years of work experience
- At least 70% (4 836) of the newly recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons in 2015 were between the ages of 18 and 39 and therefore offer labour market potential.

**Employment rate in the first ten years after arrival<sup>15</sup>**



<sup>15</sup> Study of Swiss labour market participation of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons (in German). KEK – CDC Consultants/B, S, S. Economic consulting mandate from the State Secretariat for Migration. April 2014. [www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/va-flue/studie-erwerbsbet-va-flue-d.pdf](http://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/va-flue/studie-erwerbsbet-va-flue-d.pdf)

- They lack an understanding of Swiss labour market culture, values and standards; they have no work experience in Switzerland or in a comparable economic area
- Refugees and temporarily admitted persons have to deal with a great deal of trauma as a result of persecution, war and their flight to safety
- In addition, there are administrative hurdles that make access to the labour market difficult (work permit requirements, fees, etc.).

For this reason, it is important that suitable measures be taken to facilitate, encourage and require the labour market integration of refugees, temporarily admitted persons and other migrants in general.

**Labour market integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons offers numerous benefits for both the economy and society:**

- It accelerates the integration process
- It offers these people better prospects and meaningful employment
- It leads to financial self-sufficiency and less dependence on welfare
- It taps their labour force potential (helping to reduce shortages of labour and skilled labour)
- Companies are able to train learners, hire workers and lay the foundation for the next generation of skilled workers
- Quick and long-lasting labour market integration is good for the economy (IMF study, January 2016: [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf))

Switzerland's outstanding education and VET system as well as its low levels of unemployment are favourable conditions enabling occupational integration even if immigration levels of asylum seekers remain high over extended periods of time. Previous experiences have shown that close and pragmatic cooperation between the various state actors (migration/integration authorities, vocational schools, labour market authorities, etc.) and the private sector (trade associations and companies) is a decisive prerequisite for the success of occupational integration measures. Here it is important to perceive integration quite generally as a cross-cutting task to be shouldered primarily by established frameworks. This is particularly the case for occupational integration.

State support for labour market integration is therefore focussed on specific – complementary or upstream – measures aimed at helping target groups to become more involved in established frameworks or to prepare for enrolment in vocational training, registration in regional employment centres or job placement.

The occupational integration of migrants, refugees and temporarily admitted persons in particular, is not only important for the individuals concerned. It also brings benefits to society and the economy (see box on the left). It helps to reduce or avoid welfare costs. In addition, it offers the opportunity (in relation to the Skilled Workers Initiative) to better tap the potential of this group of persons and in turn reduce shortages of labour and skilled labour.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the various federal and cantonal measures, activities and projects aimed specifically at achieving occupational integration of migrants, particularly recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons.



ank, deshalb bleibe ich zu Hause.  
zu Hause, weil ich krank bin.



Switzerland's outstanding education and VET system as well as its low levels of unemployment are favourable conditions enabling occupational integration.

## 2. Cantonal integration programmes and employability

Cantonal integration programmes (CIPs) are becoming increasingly focussed on improving employability. In 2014, the Confederation and the cantons allocated around CHF 29.6 million to this area of focus. The cantons play a pivotal role in the occupational integration of migrants: not only do they implement integration programmes, they are also key stakeholders within the Swiss VET system, for transitional options between lower and upper-secondary education and in matters relating to the labour market (job placement/regional employment centres). At the same time, they are responsible for welfare, accommodating refugees and temporarily admitted persons, and enforcement of various provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act.

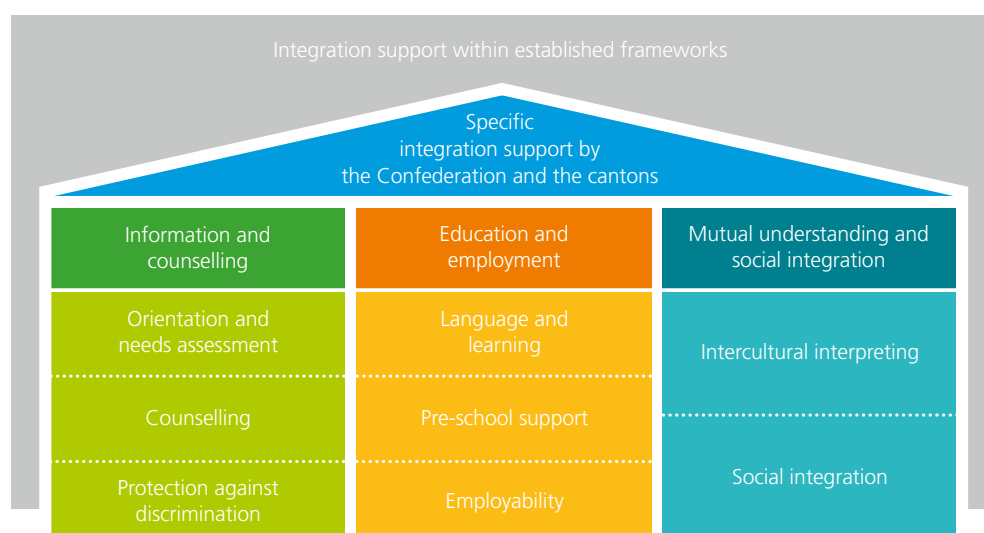
Not only do the cantons implement integration programmes, they are also key stakeholders within the Swiss VET system in matters relating to the labour market.

Therefore, the cantons are able to work with various state players and local partners (e.g. regional trade associations, companies, vocational schools and trade schools) to create customised solutions.

Because CIPs are regionally anchored, implemented by very different local structures and respond to very different needs, corresponding activities, measures and projects carried out by the cantons within the framework of CIPs do not fit into a single mould. Instead, they can be grouped into areas of action. Nevertheless, most of the resources are being used to improve language skills and foster the occupational integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons. In addition, the cantons have established programmes to help adolescents and young adults from a migration background to enrol in training. In addition, cantons are increasingly using assessments of potential as an instrument and are working more closely with employers to improve integration in the workplace.

An extensive report on CIPs can be found here (in German): [www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/berichte/integration.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/publiservice/berichte/integration.html)

### Integration support



- Extensive integration support with uniform objectives
- Integration support according to the needs and requirements of migrants, the authorities and the local population
- Clear application through cantonal integration programmes
- Optimal co-ordination with regular structures

### 3. Area of action, “Finding jobs for refugees and TAPs currently on welfare”

Helping refugees and temporarily admitted persons to become employed is one of the most important areas of action for the cantons in their labour market integration efforts.

Evaluation of cantonal integration programmes shows that most of the cantons offer labour market integration as a standard option. Providers of such services generally have many years of experience. In some cantons, providers are state-run institutions. Following the rise in the number of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons, the service offering has expanded.

---

#### The expansion of training options for refugees and temporarily admitted persons remains a major challenge.

---

In addition, some cantons have developed new offerings: the Canton of Graubünden, for example, has teamed up with social partners to introduce the Teillohn pilot project whereby refugees and temporarily admitted persons would be hired by participating host companies at a reduced, but incrementally increasing salary over a maximum period of two years. During this time, they would gradually improve both linguistic and vocational skills and gain work experience, thereby easing their transition into the labour market (see box on the right). For its part, the Canton of Bern has launched the Social Impact Bond pilot project, which is intended to achieve labour market integration objectives with less financial risk for the public sector. Under this project, a charity issues “social impact bonds” to obtain preliminary funding from participating companies and foundations. The Canton of Bern establishes and monitors achievement of objectives. The charity runs the labour market integration programme and if the established objectives are reached, the Canton of Bern will make a coupon payment to investors and pay a bonus to the charity. If objectives are not reached, then both the charity and investors incur a financial loss. Another feature of this programme is that companies leverage their network of contacts to facilitate the employment of refugees and temporarily admitted persons (see box on page 39).

The expansion of training options for refugees and temporarily admitted persons remains a major challenge. The Canton of Lucerne's response has been to introduce the “Perspektive Bau” training course in construction: the TAK integration dialogue process launched back in 2012 should further support this development (see “TAC dialogue on employment”, page 42).

#### Area of action, “Helping adolescents and young adults to enrol in VET”

Skills development is another key integration concern. Many cantons maintain or intend to introduce training courses to help adolescents and young adults from a migration background to enrol in Swiss dual-track VET programmes. These subsidised training courses can be broken down into two categories: the first category of courses is intended to help young people from a migration background who have completed compulsory education in Switzerland. Here, the aim is to address issues that have hampered their integration in established frameworks. This includes courses for parents, individual tutoring and training for teachers to raise their awareness of migration and integration themes (e.g. in the Canton of Aargau and Graubünden).

#### Canton of Graubünden: “Teillohn” pilot project

The Canton of Graubünden supports the labour market integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons with several standard programmes but also with innovative projects. In 2014, the canton teamed up with social partners to launch the Teillohn pilot project. The aim is to facilitate the transition from a traineeship to employment or enrolment in vocational education and training. Over a period not exceeding two years, refugees and temporarily admitted persons are paid a salary below the minimum levels typically found in the geographical location and branch of activity. An agreement is signed stipulating general and specific objectives to be reached within the given occupational context and requiring the trainee to attend courses while working (language courses, general education, vocational courses relating specifically to the given occupation). The aim is to provide refugees and temporarily admitted persons with the opportunity to improve their skills while gaining work experience, improving their chances for long-term occupational integration.



The second, and much larger, category of training courses is intended for young refugees and temporarily admitted persons who migrated to Switzerland at a later stage. In most cases, the courses are intended to prepare them for enrolment in established frameworks (e.g. transitional education and training options between lower and upper-secondary education). Often, these courses are referred to as integration classes, preparatory courses or introductory courses. The common objective is to enable these young people to acquire basic skills (language skills, mathematics skills, etc.).

#### Area of action, "Working with employers"

Close cooperation with employers is a common feature in all support measures aimed at facilitating labour market integration for the target group. In 2014, various cantons took or planned measures aimed at encouraging employers to play a more active role in integration support.

A few examples: the Canton of Neuchâtel and Fribourg designed a company survey to improve the level of integration at the workplace; the Canton of Geneva has taken steps to raise awareness among temporary employment agencies to help improve the employment prospects of temporarily admitted persons; the Canton of Bern is working closely with employer's associations to reach out more effectively to foreign workers. In addition, the cantons have intensified cooperation with both social partners to encourage more effective language learning at the workplace.

#### Area of action, "Assessing potential"

In order to provide the most effective and targeted support to recognised refugees, temporarily admitted persons and other state actors (e.g. job placement centres, invalidity insurance offices) in the area of occupational integration, an increasing number of cantons have started assessing the potential of each individual. In 2014, nearly half of all Swiss cantons were using or developing a survey to assess immigrant potential.

Case studies are needed to improve existing instruments. For this reason, the SEM commissioned a study "Assessing the potential of refugees and temporarily admitted persons". The study findings and recommendations are now available (see "Assessing potential", page 40).

#### Canton of Bern: "Social Impact Bond" pilot project

The Social Impact Bond pilot project is intended to quickly and lastingly integrate refugees and temporarily admitted persons into the labour market. The project provides the Canton of Bern with a new financing instrument: private investors put up the funding for the project, the public sector establishes the objectives and assesses performance and a charity implements the project. If the project is successful, then all stakeholders derive a financial benefit. The pilot project is innovative since this is the first time that private investors will be providing funding for a public social service in Switzerland. The project will be evaluated on the basis of previously established objectives. This is important because payments to private investors and the charity depend on the extent to which objectives (and corresponding success factors) have been achieved.

Private investors provide the Canton of Bern with the necessary capital (in the form of a loan). In exchange, and provided that the project is successful, they will receive coupon payments and the total amount of their initial investment after the project period (2015-2020) has ended. The charity taking part in this project will also work under comparable financial conditions. In other words, both private investors and the charity will incur a financial loss if objectives are not adequately reached; in contrast, if objectives are largely reached, the Canton of Bern will have saved a considerable amount of money, which it can then share with private investors and the charity for having assumed greater financial risk. In all cases, the financial burden of state budget of the Canton of Bern will be lighter since successful integration within the labour market means lower welfare costs.

Additional information about this pilot project can be found here: [www.be.ch/portal/de/index/mediencenter/medienmitteilungen.meldungNeu.mm.html/portal/de/meldungen/mm/2015/06/20150615\\_1458\\_erstmals\\_finanzierenprivatesozialeleistungenvor](http://www.be.ch/portal/de/index/mediencenter/medienmitteilungen.meldungNeu.mm.html/portal/de/meldungen/mm/2015/06/20150615_1458_erstmals_finanzierenprivatesozialeleistungenvor)

## 4. Federal programmes and projects

The State Secretariat for Migration provides direct funding for “programmes and projects of national importance”. For their part, the cantons pursue cantonal integration programmes and strive to further develop their range of instruments, control quality and innovate. Several such programmes and projects include labour market integration as well as various measures, activities and new projects in the area of occupational integration. Here is a recent selection of activities relating to labour market integration.

### Pilot project, “Tapping potential”

The pilot project “Tapping potential” is intended to facilitate the occupational integration of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons holding foreign qualifications as well as certain skills. In the second phase of implementation of this project (October 2013 to June 2018), the SEM has commissioned three organisations to provide guidance and support to a select group of 56 individuals. As part of this project, Swiss validation of prior learning and equivalence certificates will be evaluated and recommendations will be made on how to improve the situation for all migrants.

An interim report drafted by KEK Consultants for the period October 2013 to June 2015 describes the process of occupational and social integration for six participants. These six portraits illustrate the difficulties encountered by refugees and temporarily admitted persons in the face of the complex system of vocational education and training, subsequent training, recognition of qualifications and the validation of prior learning. The report highlights the following areas that are in need of improvement: provision of information about vocational education and training, remedial adult education, ascertainment and recognition of competences and potential, learning a national language and gaining access to the labour market.

Additional information about this pilot project can be found here (in German): [www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/themen/integration/themen/arbeit.html](http://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/themen/integration/themen/arbeit.html)

### Assessing potential

In early 2015, the SEM commissioned a study on assessments of the potential of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons.

Assessments of potential are generally carried out as soon as possible after an asylum seeker has been granted refugee or temporarily admitted person status. The person is tested for resources such as language skills, training, professional skills and experience as well as his/her state of health and level of motivation. All of these factors can then be taken into account in targeted efforts to achieve long-term occupational integration.

---

In 2015, the SEM commissioned a study on assessments of the potential of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons.

---

The study provides an overview of the current situation and uses examples to illustrate how various cantons go about assessing the potential of this target group. Often, assessments of potential go hand-in-hand with case management. By obtaining feedback from practitioners, the study enables ascertainment of the key elements that should be included when assessing the potential of refugees and temporarily admitted persons. For example, if occupational integration is the aim, then it is important for assessments to be carried out during traineeships so that assessors can see how the person does “on the job”. The study shows that the development and introduction of assessment tools is something that the cantons need. As a follow-up to this study, a general framework will be prepared with recommendations on how to introduce assessments of potential.

### Interinstitutional cooperation to facilitate occupational integration

Interinstitutional cooperation is a common strategy in the area of education and labour market integration. Migrants also need to be successfully and lastingly integrated into the labour market. Among other things, this can be achieved by taking measures to better coordinate education, unemployment and invalidity insurance, welfare and migration/integration aspects with one another.

In consultation with national interinstitutional cooperation bodies, the SEM commissioned a detailed report on the structures, forms and measures associated with post-compulsory cooperation for adolescents and young adults who migrated to Switzerland after completing their compulsory schooling abroad.

The report provides an overview of foreign nationals between the ages of 16 and 25 who moved to Switzerland during the period 2008–2013. The report includes suggestions on how to improve various aspects, e.g. the provision of information and advice, language learning, the dismantling of barriers to enrolment in education and training (e.g. age limits for transitional options between lower and upper-secondary education) or closer interinstitutional coordination and cooperation.

The report can be found here (in German):  
[www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/bestandesaufn-jugend-d.pdf](http://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/bestandesaufn-jugend-d.pdf)

Website of national contact point for interinstitutional cooperation: [www.iiz.ch](http://www.iiz.ch)



*Each year, an average of around 43 000 adolescents and young adults between the ages of 16 and 25 come to Switzerland.*



### TAC dialogue on employment

Launched by the Tripartite Agglomeration Conference (TAC) in October 2012, the integration dialogue “Employment – Offering and Taking Opportunities” is well underway. In January 2015, dialogue partners – which include TAC sponsors at federal, cantonal, municipal and communal levels as well as employers’ associations, trade associations and trade unions – took interim stock of the situation and were pleased with the results achieved. They confirmed the objectives to be reached by the end of 2016 to encourage the integration of migrants in the workplace. In particular, they emphasised the importance of focussing on recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons. Various cantons have already started pilot projects to prepare this target group for enrolment in a VET programme or for employment.

Generally speaking, these projects involve the provision of training lasting between a few months to a year. Examples include construction and nursing in the Canton of Lucerne, construction and woodworking in the Canton of Bern or baking in the Canton of St. Gallen. Social partners representing the cleaning industry in the German-speaking region of Switzerland have done conceptual work for a pilot project to provide not only theoretical and practical content but also job-related language courses.

### Projects for the future

#### Integration apprenticeships; language learning

Given the increase in the number of asylum seekers and the above-mentioned (section 1) difficulties in achieving the occupational integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons, the Federal Council approved a four-year pilot programme on 18 December 2015 aimed at facilitating long-term employment for this target group. The pilot programme includes integration apprenticeships as well as language courses for asylum seekers who are likely to remain in Switzerland. In this manner, the Federal Council seeks to tap the labour force potential of this group more effectively, reduce their dependence on welfare benefits and help to implement Article 121a Cst. (mass immigration initiative).

#### Integration apprenticeships

During one-year integration apprenticeships, refugees and temporarily admitted persons should be able to acquire language skills specifically relating to a given occupation, become familiar with Swiss labour market rules and obtain initial professional competences. The aim is to eventually enrol in a Swiss dual-track VET programme or to find a job in the labour market.

With this pilot programme, the Confederation relies on both the cantons and professional organisations. Close cooperation between the various stakeholders is a pre-requisite for success. The existing allocation of roles within this partnership remains unchanged: the cantons retain their role

as project managers and sponsors and coordinate the various processes. As project partners, professional organisations are actively involved in development and implementation. Vocational schools take operative measures. The pilot programme is expected to create up to 1000 new jobs each year.

#### Language learning

The pilot programme will also focus on helping asylum seekers to learn a national language of Switzerland if it is likely that they will be able to stay here. The aim is to enable up to 1000 people to acquire the language skills that they require (at least level A2) in order to attend intensive preparation (integration apprenticeship) for enrolment in a Swiss dual-track VET programme or for entry into the Swiss labour market.

#### Implementation

The pilot programme will be prepared from 2016 to 2017 in close cooperation with federal agencies, professional organisations, selected companies, cantonal agencies and other project partners. The pilot programme will then be launched in 2018, coinciding with phase II of cantonal integration programmes (CIPs) for the period 2018–2021.

The Federal Council report can be found here (in German): [www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/aktuell/gesetzgebung/teilrev\\_aug\\_integrationsber-br-flue-lehre-d.pdf](http://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/aktuell/gesetzgebung/teilrev_aug_integrationsber-br-flue-lehre-d.pdf)

In 2015, the Swiss Farmers' Association launched an SEM-sponsored pilot project "Working in Agriculture". Under this project, around 15 refugees and temporarily admitted persons are hired each year to carry out typical farming tasks. The number of participants remains intentionally low in order to enable evaluation and ascertainment of optimal general conditions for upscaling of this initiative. The vast majority of experiences have been positive.

Additional information can be found here:  
[www.dialog-integration.ch/de/arbeiten](http://www.dialog-integration.ch/de/arbeiten)

### Mentoring programme for 2014–2016

In projects sponsored by the mentoring programme in 2014–2016, migrants have received support to develop their potential, skills and competences. Mentors provide migrants with informal knowledge and leverage their networks of contacts. Project sponsors are required to work closely with established frameworks, interact with one another and ensure the quality of mentoring through observation of the mentoring pair.

A total of 19 projects, roughly two-thirds, relate to labour market integration as well as educational and social integration. Specific target groups include refugees and temporarily admitted persons, highly qualified migrants as well as children and young people and women. For its part, the SEM helps with networking and ideas among project sponsors. The knowledge gained enables knowledge transfer between the various projects. The first networking event was held on 19 March 2015.

Cooperation is the common feature in all three themes: cooperation with employers and education institutions as well as between mentors and their protégées. Group discussions centre on strategies and cooperation options as well as on challenges and opportunities. In addition, formative and summative programme valuations are carried out to determine whether goals have been reached, whether the programme has been both effective and efficient and if there are any recommendations that can be made on the basis of past experiences. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the sustainability of projects.

## Measures for the future

### Reducing hurdles

The Swiss Labour Market Offices Association (VSAA) and the Swiss Cantonal Migration Offices Association (VKM) have drafted a report on the integration of migrants and temporarily admitted persons in the Swiss labour market. This report contains various recommendations on how reducing legal and administrative hurdles could help to improve the level of employment of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons. Specifically, the following proposals have been submitted for consideration:

- Accelerating the process for the issuance of work permits
- Eliminating the requirement to obtain a work permit and replacing this with a notification procedure
- Eliminating fees for the processing of permit applications
- Eliminating the special charge that is levied on income from employment
- Eliminating the requirement to obtain a permit for traineeships and replacing this with a notification procedure

On 4 March 2016, the Federal Council submitted an additional dispatch to the Swiss Parliament requesting amendment of the Foreign Nationals Act (Integration: 13.030). Once approved, these changes should make it easier for asylum seekers to obtain employment. The special charge will no longer apply and the work permit requirement will be replaced by a notification procedure.

In addition, the State Secretariat for Migration is currently working with cantonal partners to determine whether specific changes can be made to existing legislation to reduce administrative hurdles and facilitate access to the labour market.

# D Main highlights in 2015



*The pilot project "Tapping potential" is intended to facilitate the occupational integration of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons in accordance with their level of education and training.*



## 1. Migration flows in Europe

### Increase in migration along Balkan route/local aid

In 2014, migrants mainly took routes through Northern Africa and the Central Mediterranean Sea to Italy. This situation radically changed in the spring of 2015. Since then, most migrants have sought entry to Europe through the Balkan route – i.e. from Turkey to Greece and through the West Balkans to Western Europe. Last year, over 700 000 entered Europe. Of this total, the number that successfully crossed the Central Mediterranean Sea to Italy decreased only slightly (from around 170 000 to 150 000 people). Most of these individuals – mainly Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi nationals – did not apply for asylum in a Balkan country but instead pushed on to Germany or Sweden.

The sheer scale of this migration flow created a severe challenge for European authorities and west Balkan countries. Thanks to close ties with several countries in the region and its migration partnership agreements with Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, Switzerland was able to provide assistance to these countries early on in the crisis. In the summer of 2015, the SEM allocated CHF 1.5 million in funding. These funds were used primarily for emergency relief, namely the distribution of food, clothing, medical supplies and other basic necessities by UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Switzerland also provided funding for measures aimed at improving the reception and registration of migrants as well as for an early warning system set up by the IOM to improve coordination between the various countries in the region. In addition, funding was provided to map out the routes used by human traffickers and smugglers to help the authorities crack down on these practices.

From the start of the migration crisis, Switzerland also worked with NGOs and civil society. For example, victims of human trafficking were taken to a safe house in Belgrade, where they were provided with psychological and legal counselling. In another project, an NGO provided special care and basic necessities to the many mothers travelling with their children. This project also helped separated family members to come into contact and find each other again.

In addition to the short-term support, Switzerland also stated its willingness to help West Balkan countries to establish effective asylum systems.

---

Since the spring of 2015, most migrants have sought entry to Europe through the Balkan route – i.e. from Turkey to Greece and through the West Balkans to Western Europe.

---

## 2. Protection in the region

The vast majority of refugees currently reside in their regions of origin in Africa and the Near and Middle East. In most cases, the countries where they live lack the capacity to accommodate and afford effective protection to such large numbers of people. Many vulnerable persons are therefore forced to seek refuge in other countries and regions. Consequently, the SEM provides targeted support for programmes aimed at improving the level of protection provided locally to refugees and other migrants (protection in the region). The SEM's commitment serves to complement the efforts of the Humanitarian Aid Unit of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In 2015, attention remained focussed on the two main countries of origin of migration in Switzerland: Syria and its neighbouring countries as well as the Horn of Africa.

### Activities in neighbouring countries of Syria

In 2015, the SEM's efforts to help Syrian refugees in the region took place within the framework of Switzerland's new co-operation strategy for the Middle East for 2015–2018. Swiss activities were focussed on three main areas: provision of basic necessities (water, medical care, food), water management, and protection. The SEM mainly supported the third area. In order to ensure that victims of the Syrian crisis receive effective protection in their regions of origin, capacities of the first-host countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey) need to be reinforced. The SEM therefore helped the Turkish and Jordanian authorities to register refugees and provide humanitarian relief to refugees in urban areas. In Lebanon and Jordan, many communities have had to contend with a doubling of their inhabitants. In both countries, the SEM has supported a World Bank project aimed at helping these communities to address the various problems such as ensuring an adequate supply of water, electricity and other services.

### Activities in the Horn of Africa

Given the steady flow of large numbers of asylum seekers from countries in the Horn of Africa, mostly Eritrea, the SEM once again supported several projects in this region to reinforce the level of protection of refugees. These activities are guided by the Swiss cooperation strategy for the Horn of Africa for 2013–2017. In Ethiopia, the SEM provided funding for a UNHCR project to build facilities for children, supervise refugee camps and bring tangible improvements to two schools for Eritrean nationals. In Sudan, the SEM provided funding for a one-year literacy project for Eritrean refugees. In Eritrea, it sponsored a capacity-building project run by the Norwegian Refugee Council (an NGO). In addition, the SEM pursued regional activities within the framework of a strategic partnership established between Switzerland and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Finally, the SEM provided financial support and dispatched an expert to help build regional and national migration platforms and mechanisms.

---

The SEM provides targeted support for programmes aimed at improving the level of protection provided locally to refugees and other migrants.

---

### 3. Active measures to bring refugees to Switzerland

According to the Asylum Act (AsylA), protection is afforded to those who apply for asylum in Switzerland. In addition, the Federal Council may also accept, at its discretion, the admission of refugee groups currently located in a third country, e.g. Lebanon (first-host country).

#### Resettlement

On 4 September 2013, the Federal Council declared that it would accept 500 refugees from the Syrian crisis region (resettlement in cooperation with UNHCR). On 9 December 2015, this pilot project was successfully completed with the arrival of the last 23 people. A total of 503 people travelled to Switzerland over a period of two years. These refugees were put on a specific two-year cantonal integration programme, which was evaluated on a continuous basis.

On 6 March 2015, given the dire situation in Syria, the Federal Council decided to take additional measures to help the victims of the Syrian conflict. In addition to continued local aid, it announced that it would take an additional 3000 refugees from the crisis region over a three-year period. Particularly vulnerable persons would be resettled and several hundred others in need of protection would receive a humanitarian visa, which would allow them to travel safely to Switzerland. This measure would apply only to close family members of individuals already residing in Switzerland.

Since 18 August 2015, 306 people (287 Syrian nationals from Lebanon as well as 19 Iraqi and Palestinian nationals from Syria) travelled to Switzerland in 11 groups. The 72 families and 17 individuals were then allocated to different cantons on the basis of a distribution rule. Like in the pilot project, these refugees have not undergone an asylum procedure in Switzerland. Integration will nevertheless take place in established frameworks. In 2016, an additional 700 people will be admitted to Switzerland in this manner.

#### Easing of visa restrictions for family members of TAPs

The beneficiaries of the aforementioned easing of visa restrictions are exclusively the spouses and underage children (up to the age of 18) of temporarily admitted persons from Syria who are already living in Switzerland. The family ties must have existed before the person entered Switzerland, i.e. the family members had to have been separated during their flight to safety. Moreover, the beneficiaries must be in Syria at the time when the application is filed or living without a residence permit in Egypt or in a neighbouring country of Syria. There must also be a direct, concrete and serious danger to life and limb. In addition, the financial circumstances of the individual will not be verified nor considered when issuing a humanitarian visa. Upon arrival in Switzerland, the individuals may then apply for temporary admission to a cantonal migration authority or apply for asylum at a federal asylum processing centre. In 2015, a total of 150 humanitarian visas were issued.

---

The Federal Council intends to  
take an additional 3000 refugees from  
the crisis region into Switzerland.

---

#### Relocation

In order for asylum seekers who are likely to remain to be distributed equally among the various member states, the EU decided to implement a relocation plan. On 18 September 2015, the Federal Council announced that Switzerland would take part in the EU's relocation programme and would accept 1500 vulnerable persons from Italy and Greece. This figure will be included in the quota of 3000 people adopted on 6 March 2015. In addition, the Federal Council further stated that Switzerland would also take part in the second relocation programme, without specifying exactly how many people would be admitted. With these measures, Switzerland not only shows solidarity with internally displaced persons in war zones but also with European countries that are currently overwhelmed by the enormous flow of refugees.



## 4. Asylum challenges and measures in Switzerland

The sudden surge in the number of asylum applications, which began at the end of April and continued unabated through the autumn months, placed an extremely heavy burden on the Confederation and the cantons in 2015. Reception and processing centres temporarily reached peak capacity. With help from the cantons in the preliminary processing of newly arriving asylum seekers, the SEM was able to open up these bottlenecks. However, with the massive increase in asylum applications, the number of unresolved cases also increased in the second half of the year.

Some of the cantons also reached the limits of their housing and support capacity. In particular, the increase in the number of asylum applications from unaccompanied minors placed a severe burden on the competent cantonal authorities. In the previous year, many asylum seekers fell into groups with a high protection rate (e.g. Eritrean, Afghan and Syrian nationals). As a result, the authorities are finally giving more serious attention to the question of how to quickly and efficiently integrate these newcomers linguistically, occupationally and socially.

Responding to the tense and volatile situation, the SEM continued to take the following measures in 2015:

- In order to efficiently handle the high volume of incoming asylum applications, the SEM continues to use its proven handling strategy. Priority is given to processing clearly unjustified asylum applications and systematically issuing removal orders. In addition, asylum applications submitted by citizens of West Balkan countries and other countries with low protection rates are handled either by means of the 48-hour procedure or the fast-track procedure. This ensures that asylum seekers who are not in need of protection do not use up limited resources required to process asylum applications from people who truly do need protection in Switzerland ("protect the protection system"). For similar reasons, priority is also given to asylum applications from asylum seekers who have already applied for asylum in another Dublin country, and hence must be transferred back to that Dublin country by virtue of the Dublin Agreement.
- In addition, the SEM felt compelled to increase its housing capacity by opening up additional temporary federal asylum processing centres by the end of the year. This effectively increased capacity from around 2400 (April) to 5000. In early November, a housing facility at the military camp in Glaubenberg (Obwalden) was opened up. This facility was designed to accommodate and support up to 400 people. By the end of the year, this capacity was almost fully used up on a continuous basis. At the same time, flow capacity was improved at existing reception and processing centres by streamlining registration processes and shortening the initial interviewing process. In an effort to further relieve the burden on reception and processing centres, some of the initial interviews took place at the SEM's main headquarters in Bern-Wabern and SEM staff were also dispatched to reception and processing centres. In order to accelerate the registration and decision-making process, the SEM hired additional interpreters to work to/from the individual languages of major countries of origin.



*The SEM had to greatly expand housing capacity, opening more federal asylum processing centres.*

- In September, an asylum task force comprised of federal and cantonal representatives was formed to deal with the asylum situation. The asylum task force met once per week, regardless of how the situation progressed, for the purpose of discussing the various measures that needed to be taken. In addition, an asylum watch group was set up within the SEM to analyse migration developments on a daily basis. The asylum watch group provided the asylum task force and federal and cantonal decision-makers with regular situation updates, thereby enabling adequate and rapid response to changes in the situation.
- In November, the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) and the heads of the Conference of Cantonal Justice and Police Directors (CCJPD) and the Conference of Cantonal Directors of Social Affairs (SODK) decided to work together on a concept whereby the Confederation and the cantons would share responsibility for accommodating asylum seekers in the event of an emergency situation. For this purpose, the Preventive Planning Working Group was established. Chaired by the SEM, this new working group is comprised of SEM representatives, representatives of law enforcement, social workers and military personnel (CCJPD, SODK and RK MZF) as well as observers from the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). The joint concept sets out what facilities (federal or cantonal) will be used in what scenarios.
- Also in November, the Federal Council gave the head of the FDJP and DDPS a mandate to activate the Special Asylum Task Force (SONAS) if necessary in consultation with the heads of the CCJPD and SODK. This option is included in the 2012 Emergency Asylum Concept drafted by the Federal Council and would apply only in the case of an emergency.
- In December, the Federal Council released around CHF 11 million in additional emergency funding to handle the large number of asylum applications. This funding is intended primarily for interpreting, IT equipment, the rental of facilities and other operating costs. The Federal Council also authorised the FDJP to create 75 new jobs to process asylum applications. The corresponding employment contracts are limited in duration and set to expire at the end of 2016.

This package of measures and support from the cantons, enabled the SEM to deal with the various challenges in 2015 and make important preparations for possible future developments. The latter is particularly important since the current asylum situation is likely to continue unabated in Switzerland in 2016.

### Accelerated processing of asylum applications / proposed legislation adopted

On 3 September 2014, the Federal Council adopted its dispatch on restructuring of the asylum system. This reform should enable most asylum applications to be processed quickly at federal asylum processing centres. During the period in which their applications are being processed, and in preparation for enforcement of removal orders, asylum seekers will be housed in federal asylum processing centres. Stays in these asylum processing centres will not exceed 140 days. As a measure accompanying quick processing, asylum seekers will be entitled to free counselling in relation to the asylum procedure as well as pro bono legal representation. If further clarifications are needed, then the given asylum application will receive more extensive handling and the asylum seeker will be assigned to a canton as was the case previously. All asylum applications must be legally settled within a year, including enforcement of any removal orders.

---

### Reception and processing centres temporarily reached peak capacity.

---

At present, the Confederation has five asylum processing centres (including civilian facilities) with a large enough capacity to accommodate 1400 people. With around new 24000 asylum applications coming in each year, reform of the asylum system will require additional housing capacity to accommodate around 3600 more people. Quick implementation of the reform process will also require the lengthy standard building permit procedure to be replaced by a more streamlined federal planning approval procedure.

On 25 September 2015, the Swiss Parliament adopted a bill to restructure the asylum system. The draft legislation was subject to a referendum vote.

### Evaluation of test centre

Following the legislative amendment of 2012, a new asylum procedure has been implemented at a test centre since early 2014. The Ordinance of 4 September 2013 on the Conduct of Test Phases for Accelerated Asylum Measures (OTest) stipulates that the SEM must carry out an evaluation of test centres and submit a report to the FDJP. The SEM therefore commissioned four agencies to evaluate the test centre for the period running from 1 January 2014 to 31. August 2015.

The external evaluation concluded that the test centre works as intended and that the operational model is suited for Swiss-wide implementation.

According to the evaluation, the test centre greatly accelerates processing times compared to standard procedures (around 39 % faster). One of the main reasons for this is that all of the main actors involved in the decision-making process are “under the same roof” and there is no need to send documents back and forth between the Confederation and the cantons. With the increase in federal housing capacity, the share of asylum applications that may be processed “under the same roof” will increase under the new asylum system. An additional factor enabling accelerated processing will be the introduction of processing schedules for asylum applications.

As far as enforcement of removal orders is concerned, applicants who have no chance of remaining in Switzerland are more quickly released (controlled or uncontrolled) from the test centre than with standard processing. Consequently, when removal orders are issued, asylum seekers are less likely to require emergency aid and to require it for a shorter period of time than asylum seekers who have had to wait much longer under the standard procedure. The long-term effects of the high proportion of asylum seekers who have been released uncontrolled (“going underground”), particularly in terms of emergency aid, cannot be ascertained conclusively at the present time. Likewise, the actual impact that the new departure processing centres will have on the Confederation and the cantons is also unknown.

In terms of impact, the evaluation confirmed the assumption that the accelerated processing made possible by the restructured asylum system would lead to significant cost savings for the Confederation in the medium term. For the cantons, the net annual savings are estimated at CHF 91.88 million.<sup>16</sup>

The evaluation report further states that the broader legal protection has a positive impact on the legitimacy, efficiency, credibility and acceptance of the asylum procedure at the test centre. Accelerated processing has no negative impact on the quality of decisions. In fact, the presence of legal representatives and the physical proximity of the actors involved in the test centre actually improved the quality of the asylum procedure. As a result, the level of complaints at the test centre was low. The provision of timely and comprehensive information and advice at the test centre concerning return assistance prompted a greater number of asylum seekers to choose this option.

The external experts see optimisation potential in the introduction of an IT-based scheduling system that could be used by all of the participants in the asylum procedure. They also recommend more targeted management of short-term fluctuations of incoming asylum applications.

The precise nature of the preliminary advisory session still needs to be assessed and possibly modified to ensure processing safeguards and uniform practices.

### Local planning

At the second national asylum conference held on 28 March 2014, representatives of the Confederation, the cantons, towns and communes all agreed that the Confederation would build an asylum processing centre in six asylum regions and up to three departure processing centres with a total capacity for 5000 people. Since the Confederation would be responsible for processing most asylum applications, fewer asylum seekers will need to be assigned to the cantons.

By the end of 2015, the Asylum Restructuring Working Group (AGNA), headed by Cantonal Councillor Hans-Jürg Käser and State Secretary Mario Gattiker, set about selecting sites for construction of the new federal asylum processing centres. Considerably more projects were submitted than expected and each had to be assessed. In addition, building permits, feasibility studies and policy-making processes all took longer than originally planned. As a result, the planning phase for the various sites was not yet complete at the end of the year.

<sup>16</sup> *Asylum Restructuring Working Group (AGNA): General Plan for Restructuring of the Asylum System, 18 Feb. 2014*



- **Status of Western Region of Switzerland:** in the Western Region of Switzerland, the plan is to establish one asylum processing centre and three departure processing centres in four cantons. So far, the asylum processing centre in Boudry (NE) has been confirmed along with the Guglera departure processing centre in Giffers (FR) and the departure processing centre in Grand-Saconnex (GE). The third location still needs to be confirmed.
- **Status of Northwestern Region of Switzerland:** in the North-Western Region of Switzerland, the plan is to establish one asylum processing centre and two departure processing centres. So far, one departure processing centre in Flumenthal SO has been announced.
- **Status of Bern Region:** in the Bern Region, the plan is to use the Zieglerspital as a federal asylum processing centre for at least 8 years. The facility is not yet operational but should be ready very soon. A military barracks is also being considered as a possible location for long-term use as an asylum processing centre and discussions are underway to use an existing reception and processing centre as a federal departure processing centre.
- **Status of Zurich Region:** in the Zurich Region, an agreement has been reached with the Town of Zurich to build an asylum processing centre on the Duttweilerareal site. Planning works are currently underway. There is a cantonal facility in Embrach that could be converted into a departure processing centre; consideration is also being given to the possibility of establishing a second departure processing centre.
- **Status of Central and Southern Region of Switzerland:** in the Central and Southern Region of Switzerland, the Confederation and the cantons agree that an asylum processing centre should be established in Ticino. A memorandum of understanding has been signed by the Confederation and the central Swiss commune of Seewen-Schwyz to establish a departure processing centre there.
- **Status of Eastern Region of Switzerland:** in the Eastern Region of Switzerland, an asylum processing centre will be established in Altstätten SG (popular vote in 2016) and a departure processing centre in Kreuzlingen TG.



*In 2015, 39 523 persons applied for asylum in Switzerland: the main countries of origin were Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Somalia.*





*Helping refugees and temporarily admitted persons to become employed is one of the most important areas of action for the cantons in their labour market integration efforts.*



## 5. State of implementation of Art. 121a Cst. (control of immigration)

On 9 February 2014, Swiss voters and the cantons adopted the popular initiative “Against Massive Immigration”. This led to a systemic shift in immigration policy. The new constitutional Article 121a Cst. contains two requirements: first, the number of residence permits for foreign nationals in Switzerland shall be restricted by annual quantitative limits and quotas, and second, international agreements that breach Art. 121a Cst. must be renegotiated and adapted. Under the terms of transitional provisions, both of these two requirements must be fully met by February 2017.

Following a consultation procedure, the Federal Council decided on 4 December 2015 to implement Art. 121a Cst by invoking the safeguard clause set forth in the bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons. In order to avoid putting all other bilateral agreements signed with the EU at risk, the Federal Council has been working with the EU to find a mutually amenable solution. On 4 March 2016, it confirmed its decision and adopted several legislative drafts to be submitted to the Swiss Parliament. Since no agreement has yet been reached with the EU, the Federal Council has proposed that immigration be controlled by unilaterally applying the safeguard mechanism set forth in the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA). At the same time, it continues its consultations with the EU to find a mutually amenable solution.

Current legislation already sets annual quantitative limits and quotas on the number of work permits issued to citizens of third states. The revised draft would extend these restrictions to include family reunification, residence without economic activity and asylum. In addition, the draft bill proposes that immigration by citizens of EU/EFTA member states be controlled by means of a safeguard mechanism. The Federal Council would therefore impose annual quantitative limits on the number of work permits issued if the number of newcomers exceeds a set threshold. The Federal Council will also take the general economic interests of Switzerland into account together with the recommendations formulated by an (as yet to be formed) immigration board. At the same time, measures will be taken to tap the potential of the domestic labour force more effectively.

Under the constitutional mandate, the Swiss-EU bilateral Free Movement of Persons Agreement (AFMP) must be adapted. On 11 February 2015, the Federal Council adopted the definitive negotiation mandate, which includes two objectives: firstly, to adapt the AFMP so that Switzerland will be able to manage and limit immigration in a way that safeguards its own economic interests, secondly, the bilateral path shall be further consolidated as the basis for relations with the EU. Despite the Federal Council’s decision to manage immigration by unilaterally applying the safeguard clause, Switzerland continues to consult with the EU and other European partners to find a mutually amenable solution.

After the Swiss electorate adopted a popular initiative aimed at stopping mass immigration, the Federal Council was no longer in a position to sign Protocol III on extension of the AFMP to citizens of Croatia. This is because the new constitutional article (Art. 121a Cst.) prohibits the signing of any further international treaties that run counter to this provision. The Federal Council consulted with its EU partners and, in the second half of 2015, managed to establish a new basis on which to move forward: both Switzerland and the EU agree that they should strive for a mutually amenable solution based on a common interpretation of the existing safeguard clause (Art. 14 para. AFMP). With this new basis, the Federal Council signed Protocol III and the corresponding Federal Council Dispatch on 4 March 2016. Protocol III has now been submitted to the Swiss Parliament for ratification, which should occur as soon as a solution has been found that is compatible with the AFMP.

---

In 2014, Swiss voters and the cantons adopted the popular initiative “Against Mass Immigration”. In order to avoid putting all other bilateral agreements signed with the EU at risk, the Federal Council has been working with the EU to find a mutually amenable solution.

---

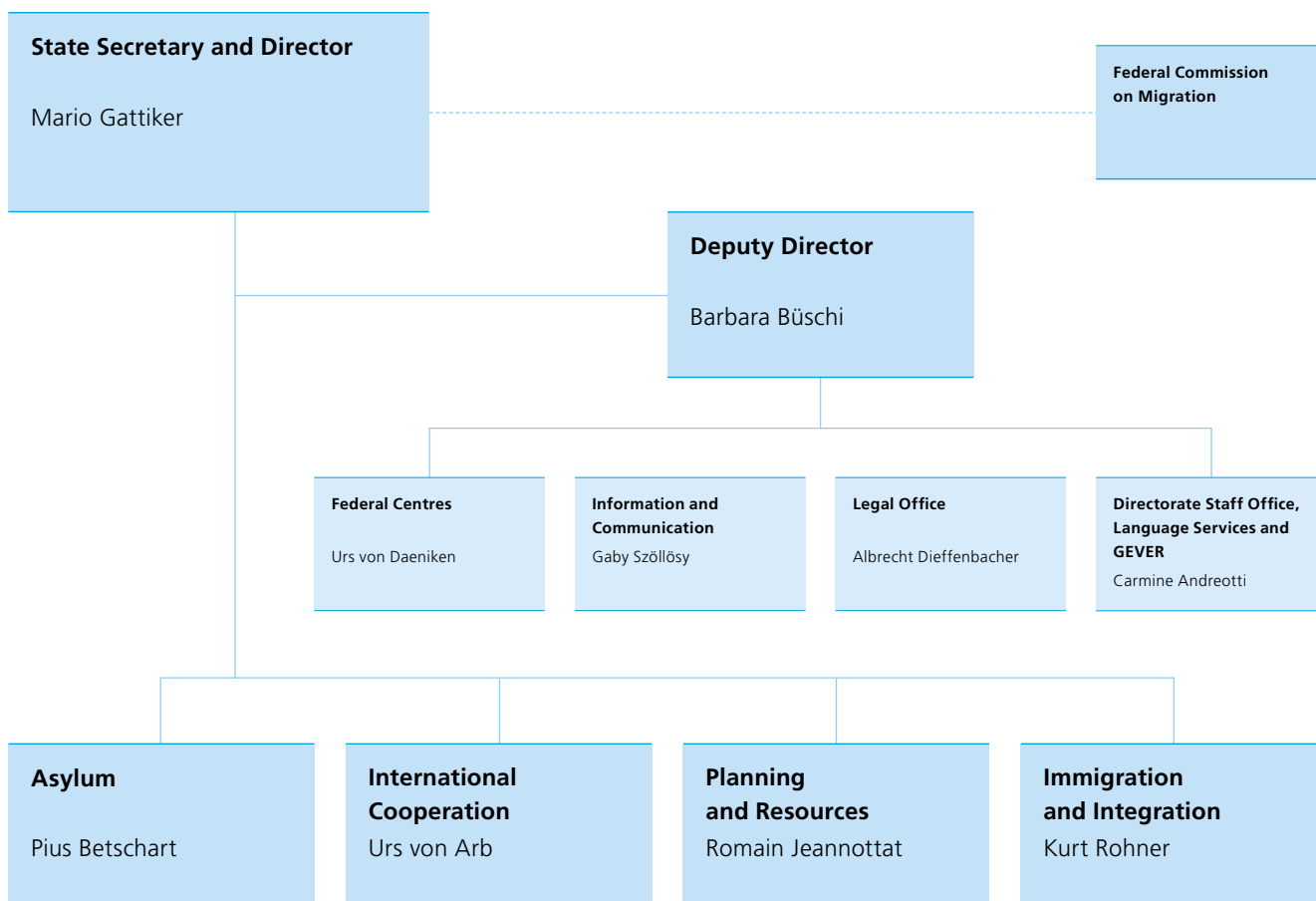


# E State Secretariat for Migration



*In 2015, 39523 persons applied for asylum in Switzerland. This amounts to an increase of 66.3% compared to 2014.*

## 1. Organisation chart



On 1 January 2015, the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) became the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). This change reflects the increasing importance of migration and the range of tasks that it is called upon to handle. The organisation and structure remain unchanged.

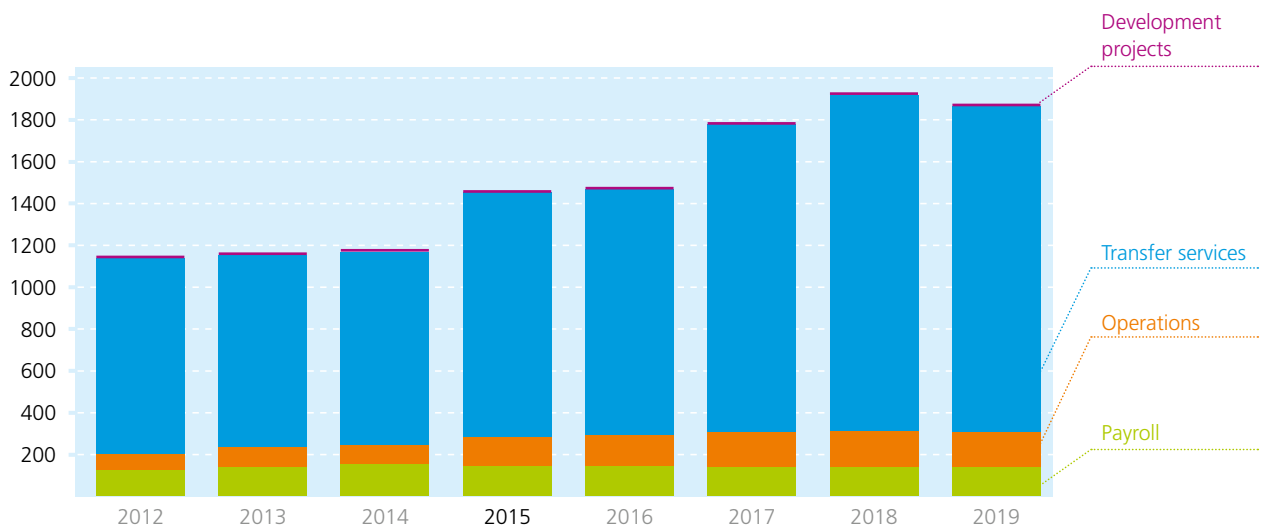
The SEM establishes the conditions whereby a person may enter, live and work in Switzerland and it decides who receives protection from persecution in Switzerland. The FOM coordinates migration activities at the federal, cantonal and communal levels and is responsible for naturalisations at the federal level. In all areas of migration policy, the FOM actively fosters international dialogue with countries of origin, transit or destination as well as with international organisations.

## 2. SEM activities

The SEM's expenditure can be broken down into four categories:

- **Transfer services:** around 80 % of total expenditure relates to support services for asylum seekers, persons admitted on a temporary basis and refugees, costs associated with enforcement of removal orders, costs associated with providing return assistance, costs associated with integration measures for foreign nationals, and costs associated with international cooperation in the area of migration.
- **Payroll:** around 10 % of the total expenditure relates to payroll (including social insurance contributions for all categories of staff) and other associated costs such as initial and continuing education and training.
- **Operations:** around 9% of the total expenditure relates to running reception and processing centres, maintaining and developing IT infrastructure, consultancy, and other operating costs.
- **Development projects:** around 1 % of the total expenditure relates to developing and introducing specialised software applications.

### Expenditure in 2015





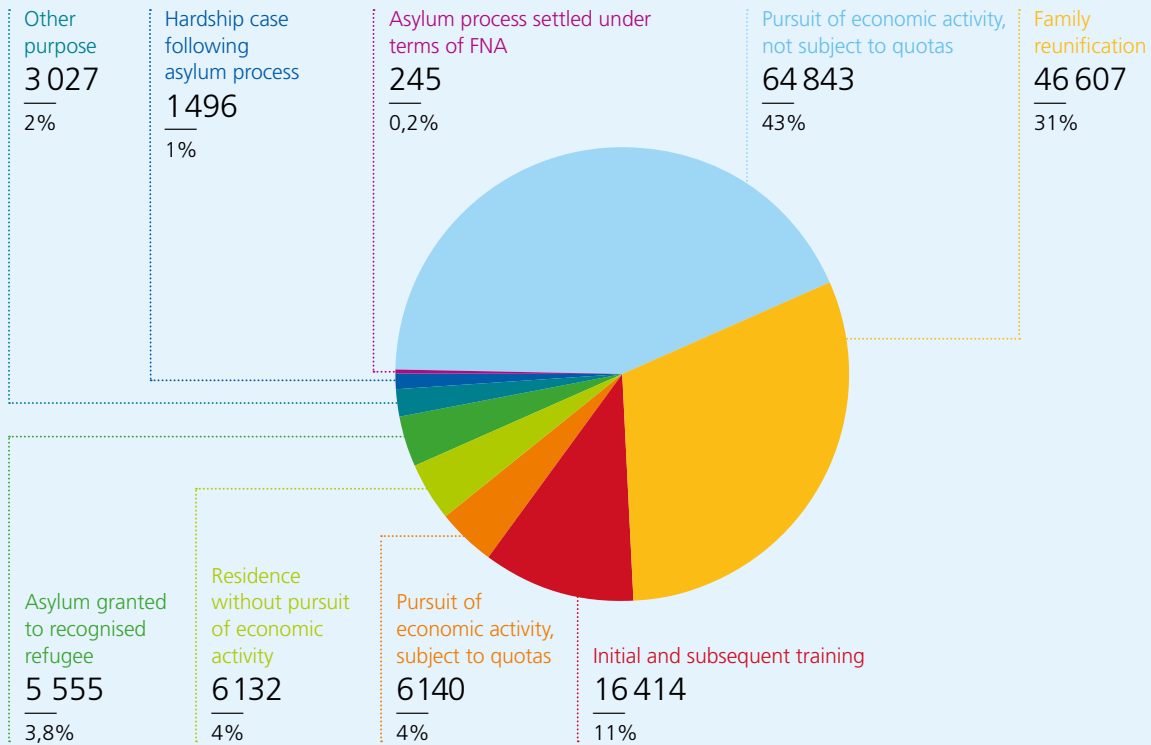


*In 2015, the SEM handled 28 118 asylum applications in the first instance.  
This amounts to a 5.3% increase over 2014.*

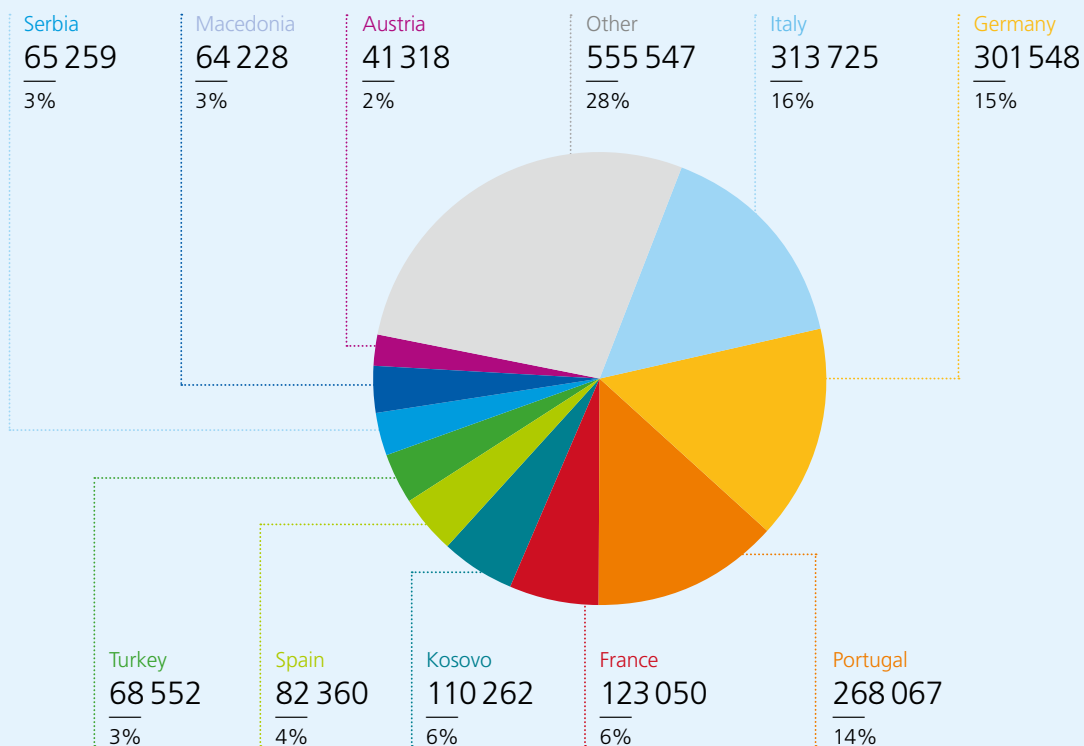


# Annex

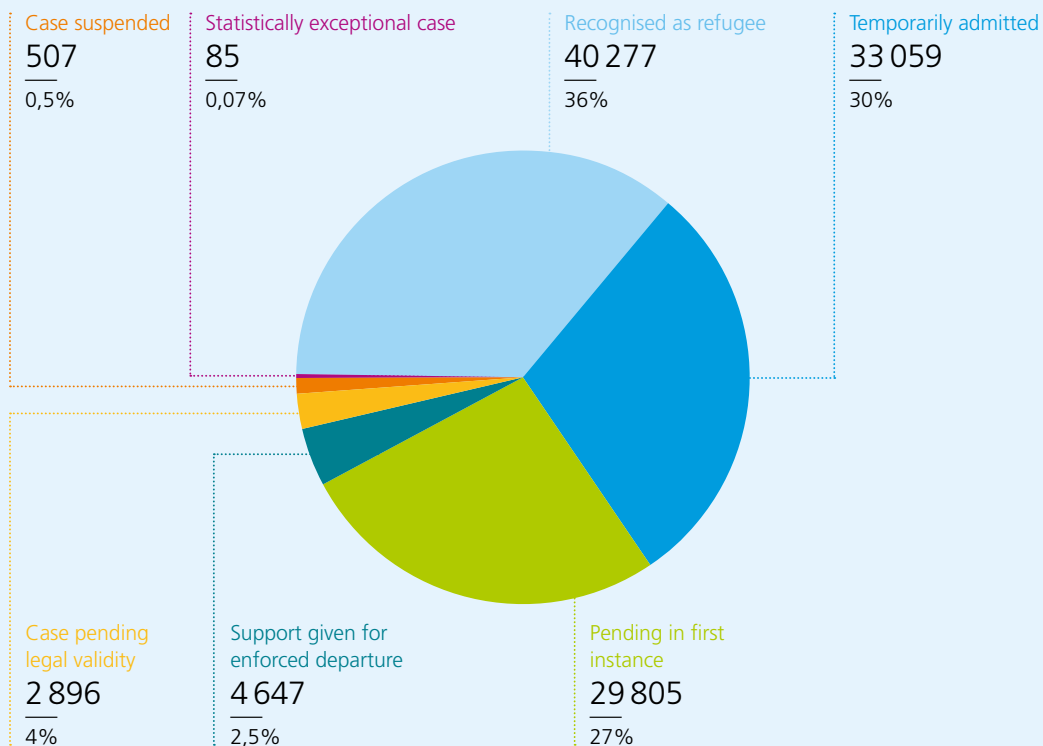
## Basis of migration in 2015



## Usual foreign resident population in 2015



## Asylum seekers (Last update: December 2015)



## No. of temporarily admitted persons by country (Last update: December 2015)

