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# Migration Report 2017

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### Cover page

Jessica Gerber, playgroup leader, from Peru

### Page 60

Farida Nosha, German teacher, from Russia

## Editorial

Regular immigration and asylum applications fell during 2017. Yet, time and the world do not stand still, which meant that the authorities and their partners had a great deal of work to do over the past year. One area on which they focused their efforts was integration – a permanent, and increasingly important, endeavour.

It should be said that not all migrants find it hard to integrate. Among those who do, the reasons differ. People who have the opportunity to move to Switzerland for work benefit from a ready-made place in the economy as soon as they arrive. In contrast, the sole criterion for asylum decisions is whether the person needs our protection or not. Generally, migrant children who grow up in Switzerland are able to integrate well, but other family members may have difficulty adjusting to their new life. While the Swiss take a pragmatic approach to the challenges that co-existence brings, the rapidly-changing Swiss labour market has become an altogether tougher proposition. As a result, finding lasting employment can be difficult not only for foreign workers who have been living in Switzerland but also for those who were born and grew up here.

While government-backed efforts to facilitate integration are no substitute for the efforts of employers, society and the newcomers themselves, they are nonetheless a vital source of support. Over the last few years, the public authorities have adopted a much more systematic approach in this regard. At the top of their agenda is making sure the necessary conditions are in place to facilitate the public health, social and educational inclusion of new arrivals. In terms of overarching integration promotion efforts, the cantons and the Confederation have agreed to launch another series of four-year programmes. However, this encouragement comes with expectations: federal legislation now stipulates that permanent residence permits will only be granted to applicants who can demonstrate that they are well-integrated in Swiss life. Likewise, those wishing to obtain Swiss citizenship must first satisfy a set of integration-specific conditions.

Asylum is another area where more action needs to be taken. Although the number of rejected asylum applications fell sharply (due partly to shorter processing times), Switzerland granted a total of some 13 000 to 14 000 people either asylum or temporary admission in 2017. Given the protracted nature of the conflict in their countries of origin, most of these individuals will probably be allowed to remain indefinitely. Many refugees come from regions where an entirely different, non-Latin language is spoken, and have gaps in their educa-



tion. Given that an increasing number of Swiss employers demand that potential employees have adequate formal education and professional qualifications, the Confederation and the cantons have devised pre-apprenticeships specifically for refugees and temporarily admitted persons; the first of these will start in summer 2018. Integration efforts should begin as early as possible, which is why a second pilot project was launched to enable asylum seekers who stand a high chance of being allowed to remain in Switzerland to attend language classes for the entire duration of the asylum procedure. The cantons and the Confederation have also jointly established the Integration Agenda Switzerland, which will define the necessary standards for the integration process. Here, the focus will be on a clear analysis of skills and potential, coupled with the introduction of appropriate measures, mandatory case management, as well as coaching based on the “expect and encourage” principle. Of course, there are costs associated with these measures. However, the investment will pay off because lifelong dependency on social welfare not only erodes human dignity but is also the much more expensive option in the long run.

Refugees and temporarily admitted persons are part of the potential domestic workforce. Thanks to the new obligation on employers to notify public employment offices of job vacancies, they will be able to enjoy the same benefits as the rest of the resident Swiss and foreign population. Promoting integration and curbing demand for immigration, in this sense, can be considered as complementary aims.

The present report provides a more detailed look at these ties as well as other aspects of Switzerland’s migration policy. I hope that you find what follows informative and thought-provoking.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Gattiker'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mario Gattiker, State Secretary, State Secretariat for Migration



*Sambujang Cessay, group manager for Team Clean work training programme, from Guinea-Bissau*

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# A Overview



*Ahmet Varli, building contractor, from Turkey*

## 1. Key figures 2017

- At the end of 2017 there were 2 053 589 legally resident foreigners in Switzerland (2016: 2 029 527). The permanent foreign resident population therefore grew by 1.2 %. Of these legally resident foreigners, around 68 % are EU/EFTA nationals.
- In 2017, net migration rose, leading to an increase of 53 221 in the resident population. As in previous years, there was a small drop in immigration, while return migration rose slightly. In that same year, 30 799 more EU/EFTA nationals moved to Switzerland than left Switzerland.
- 46 060 persons (2016: 42 974) were granted Swiss citizenship through the regular procedure (34 641), or facilitated procedure (11 260), or through the reinstatement of Swiss citizenship (159). Those naturalised came chiefly from Germany, Italy, Portugal, France and Kosovo.
- In 2017, Switzerland issued 479 465 Schengen visas (2016: 428 463) for visits no longer than 90 days. Most were granted by Swiss representations in India, China, Thailand and Kosovo.
- The number of asylum applications once again fell, from 27 207 to 18 088 (–33.5 %). The five main countries of origin were Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Somalia.
- The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) handled 27 221 asylum applications (2016: 31 299). The number of asylum applications handled in the first instance therefore fell from 27 711 to 20 503.
- Asylum was granted to 6360 persons (2016: 5985). In addition, 7839 asylum seekers (2016: 6850) were temporarily admitted. As a result, the share of positive decisions (protection rate) rose to 57.5 % (2016: 48.7 %). 2297 asylum seekers were transferred to another Dublin state (2016: 3750), while Switzerland received 885 persons from its Dublin partners (2016: 469).
- Under its Resettlement Programme, Switzerland accepted an additional 600 refugees (mostly Syrian nationals) directly from Syria or the first host country where they had sought refuge. It also took in around 1500 asylum seekers under the EU's Relocation Programme.
- 2761 foreign nationals obtained residence permits on the grounds of hardship (2016: 2378). Most (1994) were granted to temporarily admitted persons (2016: 1866).
- Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 7147 foreign nationals (2016: 8781) who had no right (or no longer had the right) to remain in Switzerland.

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Asylum applications fell by  
one third in 2017.

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## 2. Main highlights

### Relieve for the asylum system

The strain on the asylum system eased somewhat in 2017. The number of dangerous sea crossings from Libya to Lampedusa began to fall sharply from the middle of the year as the result of measures taken by Italy and the EU to reduce pressure along the Central Mediterranean migration routes from North Africa to Europe. This was also one of the reasons why Switzerland had fewer incoming asylum seekers in 2017 than in the previous year. Indeed, at 18 088, the number of registered asylum seekers was the lowest level on record since 2010 (15 567). The high share of asylum and temporary admittance applications approved by the SEM is a reminder that countless people around the world are still being forced to flee their homes due to political persecution and violent conflict. Last year, Switzerland once again took in Syrian refugees directly from their region of origin. The challenge now is helping them integrate. SEM also continued to pursue its objective of ensuring that its asylum procedure was both efficient and fair. The amended Federal Asylum Act, which was approved by the 2016 referendum, will enter into force in spring 2019. This will also be when SEM will begin implementing the new accelerated asylum procedure; the preparatory work is already well under way.

### Wide-ranging cooperation

It is imperative that any political response to refugees and migrants considers the entire picture in the countries of origin, as well as the first-host, transit and final-destination countries. This is why Switzerland seeks and fosters international cooperation at many different levels and in many different forms. As an associated Schengen and Dublin partner, Switzerland was involved in joint entry checks, assisting Italy with asylum-seeker registration and relieving some of the strain on Italy and Greece by taking in a contingent of refugees. The appointment of a special delegate, who holds the rank of ambassador, has helped to bolster and improve the coordination of Swiss efforts in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. After reaching a migration agreement with Sri Lanka in October 2016, preparatory work is now under way to establish a migration partnership with this important country of origin. Switzerland was also able to restore discussions with Algeria and Morocco on the issue of returns.



*In 2017, Switzerland once again took in Syrian refugees directly from their region of origin.*



### Fewer new arrivals

The resident foreign population increased for the second year in a row. At the same time, net immigration continued to shrink; there was a total of roughly 53 000 new arrivals in 2017. The Swiss labour market's continuing demand for highly specialised workers from non-EU states prompted the Federal Council to increase the 2018 residence permit quota from 3000 to 3500. To curb demand for imported labour in the longer term, measures were devised to recruit more Swiss nationals and foreign residents. As of mid-2018, employers in sectors with high unemployment rates will be obliged to notify public employment offices of any vacancies they have, thereby giving registered jobseekers a head start over other applicants. To encourage the recruitment of more recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons, social welfare authorities will notify the public employment service of claimants who are fit to work. Furthermore, as of mid-2018 individuals in these two groups will no longer be required to apply for authorisation if they wish to take up a job; they will simply have to notify the competent cantonal authority of their new employment status.

### Targeted expansion of integration promotion efforts

The 2014–2017 period saw the introduction of specific integration programmes which were jointly devised by the federal authorities and all 26 cantons. A second round of four-year programmes will be launched in 2018, and will feature measures specifically targeted at recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons. The cantons will once again receive a one-time lump sum of CHF 6000 per person to help cover the costs of language classes and occupational training. A federal pilot programme has been developed by the cantonal authorities and employers' organisations which will offer both these groups the opportunity to serve a one-year pre-apprenticeship in selected occupations. The first of these practical and theoretical training courses will begin in 2018.

### Fast-track naturalisation for third-generation immigrants

On 12 February 2017, the Swiss electorate and the lower and upper houses of the Swiss parliament approved the facilitated naturalisation of young third-generation foreign nationals who were born in Switzerland. Parliament had previously debated and agreed on the implementing regulations. The Federal Council passed the ordinance on the facilitated procedure, and the new provisions will come into effect on 15 February 2018.



*Refugees and temporarily admitted persons are part of the Switzerland's domestic labour pool. Integrating more of them in the labour market means that fewer workers will have to be recruited from abroad.*

### 3. New developments

Over the past year, the Swiss asylum system continued to deal with the impact of the exceptional events in the latter half of 2015 when well over one million people arrived in Europe, mostly via Turkey and the Aegean but also via the central Mediterranean. Never before had so many refugees from non-European countries reached our continent in the space of one year. Consequently, the capacities of many national asylum systems in Europe were stretched to their limits.

The surge in the number of refugees swiftly fell in 2016 following the closure of the Balkans route. Thanks to this reprieve, by late 2015/early 2016 many European countries were finally able to begin clearing their backlog of asylum applications. In Germany, whose asylum system had come under particularly intense pressure, first-instance processing continued well into 2017.

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There is still heated debate  
on the future direction that European  
asylum policy should take.

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As well as tackling the backlog, several European countries made changes to their asylum system in response to the new circumstances which they now face. For example, several countries now restrict or have partially suspended family reunifications for individuals with subsidiary or humanitarian protection status, and have cut back services for asylum seekers. In addition, “hot spots” (special reception centres) were set up in Greece and Italy. These have worked well to date, with practically all new arrivals now registered and their fingerprints saved in the Eurodac database. Nonetheless, one major challenge remains: repatriating individuals whose asylum application has been rejected by the final instance. Quite a few countries of origin either refuse or limit the readmission of their own citizens who have been expelled from a European state. Efforts by individual countries and by Europe as a whole to negotiate return agreements with key countries of origin have often faltered. Experience has shown that migration partnerships, such as those which Switzerland has with the Balkan states, Tunisia and Nigeria, are one of the most likely means to increase the number of returnees.

Finally, disagreement continues in Europe on how much more immigration the continent can “bear”. While opinions diverge considerably on the subject, the one issue on which there is consensus is that the events of autumn 2015 must never be allowed to happen again. Uncontrolled mass immigration through Europe must become a thing of the past. “Hot spots” and checks at certain internal borders certainly help, even though these measures go against the principles underpinning the Schengen Agreement.

In summer 2017, fewer hazardous crossings were made via the central Mediterranean route. Although the number of new arrivals by mid-July 2017 was up on 2016 figures, the raft of measures the EU and Italy had introduced in relation to Libya and its southern neighbours began to take effect. Consequently, there was a sharp decrease in the number of migrants reaching Europe by sea. By 15 July 2017, 93 000 persons had managed to land on the southern Italian coast; this figure fell to 26 500 by the end of the year. Given the current confusion in Libya caused by the emergence of two opposing governments, it is far from certain whether these preventive measures will significantly curb migration flows from Libya to Europe. Nonetheless, it should be possible to stem migration flows along this route in the medium to long term thanks to measures taken not only in Libya but also in countries situated along the Libya route. Migration through the central Mediterranean is a particular concern for Switzerland as it has become the preferred route in recent years for refugees and other migrants wishing to enter the country.

In September 2017 the EU's Relocation Programme was wound down. The original plan was to relocate up to 100 000 persons from Italy and Greece to another European country. In the end, the number of people who were resettled came to slightly over 33 000. There were two reasons for this: several European states refused to take any, and the programme was restricted to asylum seekers whose country of origin had a very high protection rate across Europe; the only countries that met this criterion in 2017 were Syria and Eritrea. By September of the same year, some 14 000 Syrian and Eritrean nationals had managed to reach the coasts of Italy and Greece.

Compared to the previous two years, 2017 saw a considerable easing in the (asylum) immigration situation in Europe. Yet, at 725 000, the number of registered asylum applications remains very high compared to the long-run average. There is still heated debate on the future direction that European asylum

policy should take. Although many advocate national solutions, the problem is that Europe is a relatively small continent and that countries enjoy very close links. Consequently, the policy of one country has a major bearing on the asylum situation of its neighbours. In the long term, a joint approach will be unavoidable.

According to the UNHCR, by the end of 2017, 65.6 million people had fled their homes. Most were internally displaced persons (IDPs) within their own country. Of the 22.5 million who were forced to leave their homes, the vast majority remained in the region. The UNHCR estimated that in 2017, most refugees had fled to Turkey (2.9 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Lebanon (1.0 million), Iran (980 000), Uganda (940 000) and Ethiopia (790 000). It should be noted that these figures cover only UNHCR-registered persons.



*Migration over the hazardous Central Mediterranean route fell sharply in summer 2017.*

# B

## Migration figures for 2017



*Nozomi Matsuoka, professional dancer, from Japan*

## 1. Foreign resident population

At the end of December 2017, there were 2 053 589<sup>1</sup> (2016: 2 029 527; + 1.2 %) legally resident foreigners in Switzerland. A total of 1 405 771 (2016: 1 390 405) people (about 68 % of the permanent foreign resident population in Switzerland) are nationals of EU-28/EFTA member states; 647 818 (2016: 639 122), or 32 %, are nationals of other states. The number of EU-28/EFTA nationals rose by 1.1 % compared to 2016; the number of third-state nationals rose by 1.4%. At 319 367 persons (15.6 % of the total permanent foreign resident population), the largest community of foreign nationals comes from Italy, followed by Germany with 305 785 persons (14.9 %) and Portugal with 268 012 persons (13.1 %). The largest increase was among foreign nationals from France (+ 4212), Eritrea (+ 3432) and Poland (+ 2238).

<sup>1</sup> SEM's statistics on foreign nationals are based on data taken from the ZEMIS (Central Migration Information System) register. It should be noted that they do not include 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 the EU-28. 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. As a result of the accession of Croatia to the EU, amendments had to be made to the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (AFMP) signed by Switzerland and the EU. The extension of the AFMP to Croatia was negotiated in Protocol III; it came into effect on 1 January 2017. Since then, Croatian nationals benefit from the rights stipulated in the AFMP. However, transitory provisions currently apply to Croatians wishing to enter the Swiss labour market. 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 permanent foreign resident population figures.

<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.

<sup>6</sup> The invoking of the safeguard clause by the Federal Council means that a cap was placed on normal residence permits (B) for workers from EU-2 states as of 1 June 2017; a total of 996 permits will be available for the period 1 June 2017–31 May 2018.

## 2. Immigration and employment

Switzerland makes a distinction between EU-28/EFTA<sup>2</sup> nationals and third-state nationals when awarding residence and work permits. The first group enjoys all the benefits arising from the Swiss-EU bilateral agreement on the free movement of persons (AFMP) and is given priority access to the labour market over the second group.

In 2017, a total of 94 486 EU-28/EFTA nationals immigrated to Switzerland – around two-thirds of whom came for the purpose of taking up employment (permanent foreign resident population). A total of 43 317 third-state nationals immigrated; around 13 % came for the purpose of taking up employment.

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

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### Access to the Swiss labour market under the AFMP

EU-EFTA nationals who want to work in Switzerland enjoy easier access to the Swiss labour market. Newly arrived EU-17/EFTA<sup>3</sup> nationals mainly work in the tertiary (service) sector (80.3 %).<sup>4</sup> A total of 18.2 % of workers from the “old” EU member states (EU-15) are employed in the secondary sector (industry and crafts) and 1.5 % in the primary (agricultural) sector. The employment situation of EU-8<sup>5</sup> nationals who have immigrated to Switzerland differs somewhat: 72.9 % are employed in the tertiary sector, 18.0 % in the secondary sector, and 9.1 % in the primary sector, a considerably higher percentage than their EU-17/EFTA counterparts. As for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals (EU-2),<sup>6</sup> 72.7 % are employed in the tertiary sector, 20.0 % in the secondary sector and 7.3 % in the primary sector.



*Lukasz Strzepak, vegetable farm worker, from Poland*

### 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 transnational service providers from EU/EFTA member states who wish to work for longer than 120 days. In 2017, 4500 short-stay permits (L) and 3 000 normal residence permits (B) were set aside for third-state nationals. This was 1000 more permits (i.e. 500 extra L permits and 500 extra B permits) than in 2016. The Federal Council established a separate quota of 2000 short-stay permits (L) and 250 normal residence permits (B) for service providers from EU/EFTA member states.

The (short-stay and normal residence permit) quotas for service providers from EU/EFTA member states were fully used up in 2017. Permits were issued mainly in the tertiary sector (financial services, corporate consulting, IT) and the secondary sector (machine industry, electrical engineering, construction).

By the end of 2017, almost all (99 %) of the 3000 normal residence permits (B) set aside for third-state nationals had been used; of the 4500 short-stay permits (L), a total of 87 % had been issued.

In 2017, most of the permits were issued in the IT field (approx. 1970), followed by the chemical and pharmaceuticals industry (750), corporate consulting (700), the food and beverage industry (590), research (420), the machine industry (350), as well as financial and insurance services. A total of 86 % of all third-country nationals who received a work permit were holders of a higher education qualification. Third-state nationals mainly came from the following countries: India (approx. 1880), USA (1210), the People's Republic of China (510) and Russia (350).

Despite the 1000-unit increase in the number of short-stay (L) and normal residence (B) permits available to third-state nationals, demand continued to outstrip supply in 2017, particularly as regards B permits for third-state nationals and service providers from EU/EFTA states. In response, the Federal Council announced on 29 September 2017 that it would raise the 2018 B permit quota for specialist labour from third states to 8000; the additional 500 permits, however, will be held in the "federal reserve". As for workers from EU/EFTA states, the quota for 2018 will be raised to 2014 levels (3000 L permits and 500 B permits). In doing so, the federal government aims to address the frequently occurring problem of a permit shortfall on the one hand, and safeguard Swiss economic growth on the other.

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The permit quotas for service providers were fully used up.

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### Bilateral traineeship agreements

Over the past decade, Switzerland has signed bilateral traineeship agreements with various countries. These agreements give young professionals aged between 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 2017, approximately 300 young Swiss nationals took advantage of this opportunity to spend some time abroad. The preferred destination was Canada, followed by the USA. In that same year, a total of 171 permits was issued to foreign nationals for traineeships in Switzerland. Most of the permits were issued to young professionals from Canada (72), the USA (27) and Tunisia (17). Traineeships in Switzerland took place in various sectors, mainly in healthcare, architecture and the tourism industry.

### 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, business travellers and those wishing to visit family and friends. In 2017, Switzerland issued 479 465 Schengen visas (2016: 428 463) and rejected 40 428 visa applications (2016: 34 687). An application for a Schengen visa is turned down when the authority examining the request 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 the Schengen visas were issued by Swiss representations in India (152 252 visas), China (84 067 visas), Thailand (39 352) and Kosovo (30 597).

Like other Schengen countries, Switzerland may require its Schengen partners to obtain Swiss consent in specific cases before a visa is issued. In 2017, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) handled preliminary consultation requests from other Schengen countries in relation to 547 776 persons. At the same time, the Swiss authorities submitted around 91 096 consultation requests to its Schengen partners.

The Central Visa Information System (C-VIS) has been in operation since October 2011. All Schengen countries store numerical and biometric data (ten fingerprints and facial image) of visa applicants in this system. Border guards compare the fingerprints saved to the C-VIS directly with the fingerprints of travellers holding a Schengen visa. This control has been systematically carried out at Swiss airports since 11 October 2014.

Additionally, Switzerland has been comparing the fingerprints of asylum seekers with the C-VIS since December 2012. This process allowed Swiss authorities in 2017 to determine that 2176 of those who applied for asylum in Switzerland had done so only after already obtaining a Schengen visa from another country. Under the Dublin Agreement, the Schengen country that issued the visa is responsible for handling any asylum applications submitted by the visa holder.

Since 28 March 2017, citizens of Georgia have enjoyed visa-free travel to Switzerland on a biometric passport, as have Ukrainian nationals since 11 June 2017. With this measure, the Federal Council has aligned itself with the decisions of the European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union. 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: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia; Colombia, Peru; Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago; the United Arab Emirates; Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, the Solomon Islands, Samoa (West), Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.



*Most Schengen visas were issued by Swiss representations in India, China, Thailand and Kosovo.*



## 4. Naturalisations

In 2017, SEM received a total of 34 799 naturalisation applications, 5% more than the previous year (33 289 applications). It should be noted that several applicants may be covered by one application.

In 2017, 46 060 persons were granted Swiss citizenship, 3086 more than in 2016 (42 974 persons). A total of 34 641 people acquired citizenship through the ordinary naturalisation procedure (2016: 32 155; +8%). The number of simplified naturalisations came to 11 260 (2016: 10 688 persons; +5%), while some 159 had their Swiss citizenship reinstated (2016: 131; +21%).

### Naturalisations from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017 by nationality<sup>7</sup>

Nationality	Total naturalisations	of which persons resident in Switzerland	of which persons resident abroad	Naturalisations		
				Ordinary naturalisations	Simplified naturalisations	Reinstatement of citizenship
Germany	6 174	5 973	201	4 416	1 746	12
Italy	6 000	5 834	166	4 556	1 439	5
Portugal	3 920	3 906	14	3 671	249	0
France	3 713	2 948	765	2 286	1 369	58
Kosovo	3 498	3 498	0	3 104	394	0
Turkey	1 785	1 785	0	1 531	254	0
Macedonia	1 717	1 717	0	1 518	199	0
Spain	1 609	1 577	32	1 296	313	0
Serbia	1 541	1 541	0	1 361	180	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	969	969	0	832	137	0
UK	910	877	33	700	209	1
Sri Lanka	824	824	0	782	42	0
Croatia	728	728	0	628	100	0
Brazil	651	611	40	244	405	2
Russia	587	574	13	363	224	0
USA	465	378	87	224	229	12
Belgium	446	420	26	353	86	7
Austria	363	356	7	248	114	1
Netherlands	342	323	19	224	118	0
Morocco	335	335	0	205	130	0
Other	9 483	8 999	484	6 099	3 323	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>46 060</b>	<b>44 173</b>	<b>1 887</b>	<b>34 641</b>	<b>11 260</b>	<b>159</b>

<sup>7</sup> These figures do not include those who have acquired Swiss citizenship through assessment or adoption.



*Shumay Amaniuel, participant in the Team Clean work training programme, from Eritrea*

## 5. International cooperation

In recent years, Switzerland's foreign policy on migration has come under increasing strain. Issues such as migration flows via the Mediterranean, the Syrian conflict and European cooperation demand an ever swifter response to events as well as greater efforts in the countries concerned.

### Migration cooperation in Europe

Switzerland actively contributes to migration cooperation in Europe, both in its capacity as a party to the Schengen/Dublin Association Agreement, and through its involvement in EU working groups and committees.

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### Switzerland actively contributes to migration cooperation in Europe.

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In accordance with the Federal Council Decision of 18 September 2015, Switzerland has agreed to accept up to 1500 asylum seekers (900 from Italy and 600 from Greece) as part of the first EU Relocation Programme. By 21 December 2017, it had taken in 579 asylum seekers from Greece and 897 from Italy; the remaining 24 are expected to arrive in January 2018, thereby meeting the agreed quota of 1500. In doing so, Switzerland has forcefully demonstrated its solidarity with those Dublin countries which have been most affected by the migrant crisis. It also continued to support the work of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), primarily by loaning out its asylum experts to assist with the registration process at reception centres ("hot spots") in Italy. Last year, a total of 36 experts from SEM were deployed there for roughly three months at a time.

On 7 April 2017, an amendment to the Schengen Borders Code came into effect. The new provision, which aims to reinforce external border controls, obliges member states to carry out systematic checks against relevant databases on all persons, including those enjoying the right of free movement. In autumn 2017, the European Commission proposed a further amendment to the Code in relation to the rules governing the maximum period of time that a country may temporarily reinstate internal border controls.

The adoption of the Regulation on the Establishment of an Electronic Entry and Exit System (EES) is in its final stages, and swift progress has been made during talks on the proposed EU Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). Consequently, a provisional agreement was reached by the end of 2017 during a trilogue meeting of the EU Commission, Council and Parliament. The agreement stipulates that visa-exempt third-state nationals will have to provide advance details of their travel plans and alphanumeric data about themselves online.

As well as entry and border control measures, new initiatives were floated to deal with the issue of returns. In the first half of 2017, EU interior ministers discussed the possibility of linking returns to visa policy. These policy measures would be applied to third states where readmission has proven difficult.

The reform of the Schengen Information System (SIS) will include a provision that will make it mandatory to enter all expulsion orders in the system. The aim here is to improve the efficiency of the repatriation process. In 2017, Switzerland also stepped up its participation in EU joint flights to repatriate individuals who are subject to expulsion orders. It also intends to use its involvement in the European Board and Coastguard Agency (Frontex) to help advance return policy efforts.



*Pascual Marante Rodriguez, hairdresser, from the Dominican Republic*

### Cooperation with third states and multilateral migration dialogue

In its international cooperation activities, Switzerland seeks out and maintains close partnerships with non-EU states. In recent years, it has developed instruments that allow it to pursue its migration policy interests by various means: migration dialogue, various visa-specific agreements, readmission agreements and migration partnerships.

Switzerland has established migration partnerships with five countries: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Nigeria and Tunisia. Work continued in 2017 on the implementation of these partnerships. The main highlight last year was the five-year anniversary of the migration partnership with Tunisia, which Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga commended during her visit to Tunis in October 2017. She also took the opportunity to launch Switzerland's new cooperation strategy for the country (2017–2020); SEM is one of the implementing partners. At two expert meetings on the implementation of the migration agreement concluded with Sri Lanka in 2016, work began on establishing a migration partnership.

In 2017, Switzerland stepped up its migration cooperation with several countries, holding bilateral meetings, conducting migration dialogue and launching projects. As regards the Syrian crisis, exchanges with Lebanon and Jordan on migration issues could be firmed up during political consultations. Also, during a second expert meeting on the implementation of its migration agreement with Cameroon, Switzerland declared its intention to intensify cooperation there. SEM will help tackle the country's urgent need for better practical and technical education opportunities by focussing its efforts on vocational and technical training projects. Following a freeze in migration dialogue with Algeria and Morocco over the last few years, discussions, especially on the issue of returns, could finally get back on track in 2017. Study visits were also organised to allow representatives from different countries to familiarise themselves with specific areas of Swiss migration policy. A delegation from South Korea learnt about Switzerland's integration policy, while an expert meeting with Canada explored ways of integrating migrants in the labour market.

Help for first-host countries which neighbour Syria and the Horn of Africa continued in 2017. SEM's programmes, together with the provision of humanitarian aid, should help to ensure that refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable migrants receive effective and swift protection in their region of origin, and at the same time build the capacities of first-host states. As part of projects led by the UNHCR and other partner organisations, Switzerland assisted the Turkish and Jordanian authorities with the registration of Syrian refugees. In Lebanon, an integrated border control project was launched to make the authorities aware of the importance of having a border control strategy that takes account of the vulnerability and rights of immigrants. In Sudan, Switzerland continued to provide support (which began in 2012) for the implementation of the UNHCR and IOM strategy to combat human trafficking and smuggling. It was also involved in efforts to improve the living conditions and protection of the forcibly displaced.

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### Switzerland has established migration partnerships with five countries.

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Another example of Switzerland's migration cooperation is its decision to offer permanent refuge to extremely vulnerable individuals. In December 2016, the Federal Council announced that it would continue to help victims of the Syrian conflict and that a further 2000 extremely vulnerable Syrians would be resettled in Switzerland, pledging to take in 600 by the end of 2017. Most of these refugees had been living in Jordan and Lebanon.

At the regional and multilateral level, SEM was actively involved in the Central Mediterranean Contact Group, organising its third meeting on 12 and 13 November 2017 in Bern (cf. Section D 2). A further priority in 2017 was preliminary work in connection with the UN process for two global compacts on migration and refugees. The aim here is to have internationally recognised principles and standards for dealing with migration and refugee movements in place by the end of 2018.



*Kassim Adams Nuhu, professional footballer, from Ghana*

## 6. Asylum

### Asylum applications: European trends

Asylum application figures fell in 2017. This was primarily due to a further drop in migration. After the restrictions imposed in 2016 on migration flows from Turkey to Greece, and via the Balkans route, measures were introduced in July 2017 to reduce pressure on the central Mediterranean route. A total of around 725 000 asylum applications were filed in Europe in 2017, some 575 000 fewer (44 %) than in 2016 (1.3 million). However, these numbers do not allow us to directly determine the number of asylum seekers who actually reached Europe. Given that asylum seekers tend to lodge applications in several countries – e.g. first in Italy, then in Switzerland and finally in Sweden; or first in Greece, then Austria and finally Germany – they are recorded in the asylum statistics of each country where they have done so. Furthermore, all relocation cases will have been counted at least twice, e.g. in Italy/Greece and then in the country where the asylum seekers were resettled.

### Asylum applications in Switzerland

In 2017, Switzerland received 18 088 asylum applications, 33.5 % (–9119) fewer than in 2016. During the first half of the year, the number of asylum applications varied relatively little from month to month: from 1201 in December to 1694 in July. In the early part of 2017, onward migration from Italy remained high compared to previous years; this trend continued until March. While Switzerland recorded the lowest volume of incoming asylum applications in April, by the middle of that month the number of landings in southern Italy had increased, albeit much less sharply than in previous years. There were several reasons for this. Compared to past years, arrivals of Eritrean nationals fell dramatically; most of the migrants came from West Africa, i.e. from countries with a very low protection rate. The target destination for many was Germany or France, though a significant share remained in Italy. This meant that Switzerland was deliberately bypassed or attempts were made to cross through the country undetected. Of the migrants intercepted on the country's southern board by the Swiss Border Guard (SBG), only a small minority intended to seek asylum in Switzerland; the remainder were transferred back to Italy.

#### Main European destinations for asylum seekers, 2017<sup>8</sup>

Country	Asylum applications 2017	Asylum applications 2016	Absolute Change	Relative Change
Germany	223 000	745 000	–522 000	–70 %
Italy	130 000	124 000	+ 6 000	+ 5 %
France	100 000	85 000	+ 15 000	+ 18 %
Greece	59 500	58 000	+ 1 500	+ 3 %
Spain	33 500	16 500	+ 17 000	+ 103 %
UK	33 000	38 500	–5 500	–14 %
Sweden	25 500	29 000	–3 500	–12 %
Austria	24 500	42 000	–17 500	–42 %
Belgium	19 500	18 500	+ 1 000	+ 5 %
Switzerland	18 088	27 207	–9 119	–34 %

#### Main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Europe, 2017<sup>8</sup>

Country	Asylum applications in 2017	Difference compared to 2016	Applications in Switzerland in 2017	Proportion of total asylum applications in Switzerland
Syria	110 000	–276 000	1 951	1.8 %
Iraq	50 000	–81 000	653	1.3 %
Afghanistan	48 000	–142 000	1 217	2.5 %
Nigeria	41 000	–7 500	700	1.7 %
Pakistan	32 000	–17 000	145	0.5 %
Eritrea	31 000	–9 500	3 375	10.9 %
Albania	26 000	–6 500	137	0.5 %
Bangladesh	21 000	+ 3 250	11	0.1 %
Guinea	19 500	+ 4 500	797	4.1 %
Iran	18 500	–23 000	318	1.7 %

<sup>8</sup> The figures are rounded and are partly based on provisional data taken from the websites of the various migration authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the IGC (Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees) and Eurostat.

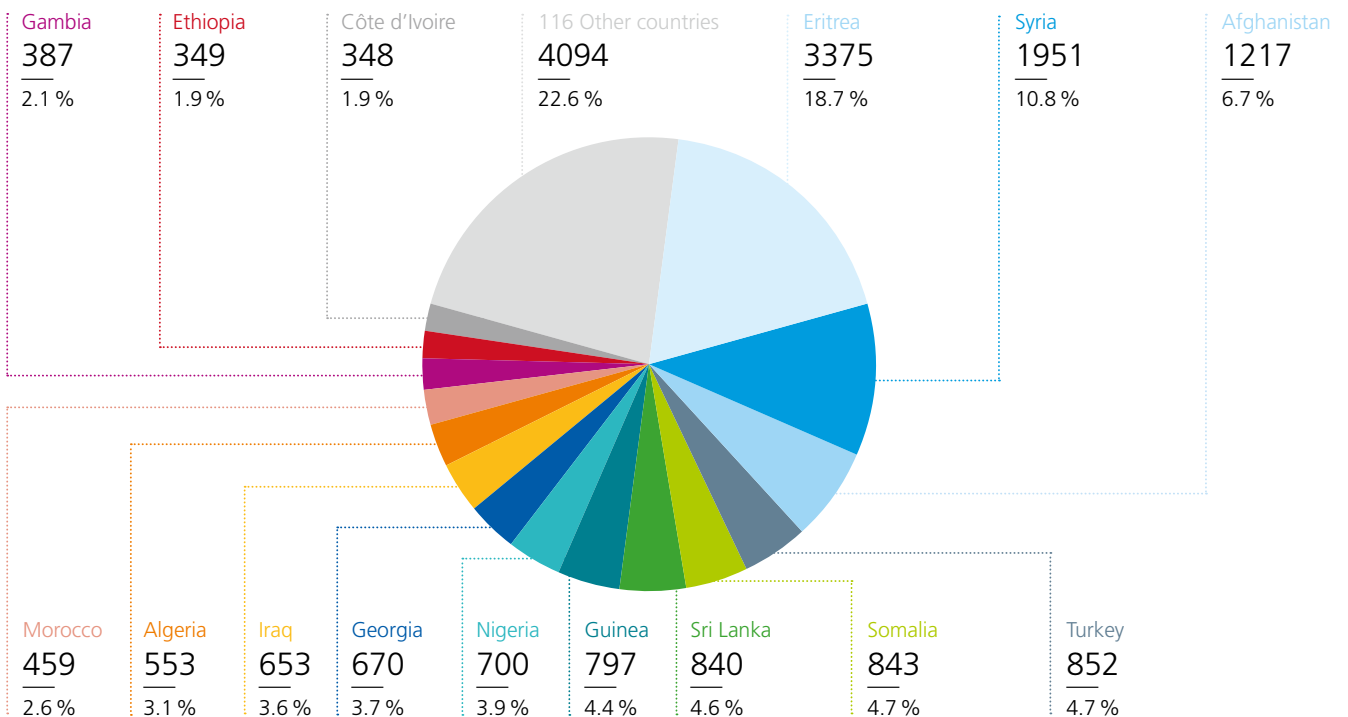
After restrictions were introduced along the central Mediterranean route in mid-July, pressure eased on Switzerland's southern border. The "traditional" autumn spike did not happen in 2017.

Switzerland's share of all asylum applications filed in Europe rose to around 2.5 % in 2017. This is a more realistic figure than the two previous years. In 2015, the figure was too high (9.2 %) because Germany had been unable to register all newly arrived asylum seekers. In 2016, the figure was too low (2.1 %), as hundreds of thousands of asylum applications from 2015 were retroactively registered in Germany. Switzerland's 2.5 % share is the second lowest level since the end of the cold war and is due in part to the fact that the vast majority of migrants who were intercepted by the SBG on the southern border had no intention of requesting asylum in Switzerland.

The Swiss average of 2.2 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2016: 3.4) far exceeds the European average of 1.4 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2016: 2.5). Greece accounted for most of the asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants in 2017 (5.5), followed by Malta (4.6), Liechtenstein (4.1), Luxemburg (4.0), Cyprus (3.4), Iceland (3.2), Austria (2.9), Sweden (2.6) and Germany (2.6).

Eritrea was once again the top country of origin in 2017, with 3375 applications, around 35 % fewer than in 2016. This sharp drop is due to the fact that 66 % fewer Eritrean nationals reached the southern coast of Italy during the past year. Only a small minority of Eritreans spontaneously sought asylum in Switzerland. The 3375 applications also include 1315 births, 818 family reunifications and 616 relocations.

Country of origin of persons seeking asylum in Switzerland, 2017





There are multiple reasons why fewer asylum applications were lodged in Switzerland last year. First, migration via the Balkans route in 2017 had come to a relative standstill. Second, migration via the central Mediterranean route also fell; only one-third as many Eritreans reached Europe as in 2016. Nonetheless, central Mediterranean migration will continue to exert a considerable influence on the volume of asylum applications lodged in Switzerland during 2018.

### Handling of asylum applications

In 2017, SEM handled 27 221 asylum applications in the first instance, 4078 (–13.0 %) fewer than in 2016 (31 299). The main reason for this fall were fewer application withdrawals (–2398 on 2016) and application dismissals (–3182 on 2016).

A total of 6360 persons were granted asylum in 2017 (2016: 5985; +6.3 %). The recognition rate (asylum granted) was 25.8 % in 2017, slightly up on the previous year (22.7 %). In 2017, 8419 persons were granted temporary admission (2016: 7369; +14.2 %), of whom 7839 (2016: 6850; +14.4 %) were admitted following a negative asylum decision by the first instance (2016: 3639; +0.7 %). 3 666 temporary admissions expired (2016: 3639; +0.7 %). The protection rate (proportion of cases where asylum or temporary admissions were granted following first-instance decisions) totalled 57.5 % (2016: 48.7 %). This increase is due to the fact that most of the backlog of substantiated claims for asylum could finally be processed, having been delayed due to the European asylum and migration crisis of 2015 and the resulting strain that these events placed on the Swiss asylum system. That same year, the number of asylum applications that fell under the provision of the Dublin Association Agreement shrank by 7208 to 20 503, a 26.0 % decrease on 2016 figures (27 711).



*In 2017, a total of 27 221 asylum applications were handled in the first instance.*

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

In 2017, the average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance was 340 days. This figure can vary widely depending on the volume of incoming asylum applications, the resources available to process and settle these cases and SEM's case management strategy. In 2016, it was 249 days; in 2015 it was 278 days; in 2014 it was 401 days; in 2013 it was 258 days; and in 2012 it was 163 days.

The average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance is not a very informative indicator. It is more instructive to divide the settlements into three categories: Dublin cases, which in 2017 accounted for 25 % of asylum applications received, with an average processing time of a little over two months (72 days); Priority 1 asylum applications (low protection rate), which accounted for 5% of the incoming asylum applications, with an average processing time of roughly six months (185 days); and Priority 2 asylum applications (high protection rate), which accounted for a share of 70 %, with an average processing time of about one year (445 days).

### Dublin procedure

Since the Dublin Association Agreement came into force in Switzerland on 12 December 2008, experiences have been largely positive as another Dublin country has turned out to be responsible in around 40 % of all asylum applications lodged in Switzerland.

In 2017, 22.1 % of all handled asylum applications fell under the provisions of the Dublin Association Agreement. Switzerland transferred considerably more asylum seekers back to the corresponding Dublin country (2630) than vice versa (890).

Cooperation with partner countries has been smooth. In 2017 Italy (Switzerland's key Dublin partner), in particular, has been very effective at registering incoming migrants. Nonetheless, the high migration pressure on the coast of Italy will continue to pose a serious challenge.

### Cases handled in the first instance 2017

Cases handled	2017	Change from 2016–2017	Change from 2016–2017 in %
Asylum granted	6360	+ 375	+ 6.3 %
Recognition rate <sup>12</sup>	25.8 %	+ 3.1 Percentage points	+ 13.7 %
Protection rate <sup>13</sup>	57.5 %	+ 8.8 Percentage points	+ 18.1 %
Applications dismissed	6211	– 3182	– 33.9 %
Of which related to Dublin (incl. other transfer procedures) <sup>14</sup>	6027	– 3109	– 34.0 %
Asylum denied	12 110	+ 1127	10.3 %
Application cancelled	2540	– 2398	– 48.6 %
<b>Total cases handled</b>	<b>27 221</b>	<b>– 4078</b>	<b>– 13.0 %</b>
<b>Applications pending in first instance</b>	<b>20 503</b>	<b>– 7208</b>	<b>– 26.0 %</b>

<sup>12</sup> Proportion of cases where asylum was granted in relation to all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications)

<sup>13</sup> Proportion of all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications) where asylum or temporary admission was granted in the first instance.

<sup>14</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.

## 7. Hardship cases

The Asylum Act (AsylA) and the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA) provide for three categories of hardship. Under the following conditions, the cantons may issue a residence (B) permit subject to approval by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM):

- Under AsylA, asylum seekers must have lived in Switzerland for at least five years (their place of residence has to have been known by the Swiss authorities at all times) and have experienced great personal hardship following intensive efforts to integrate. In 2017, a total of 160 asylum seekers received a residence permit by virtue of this provision.
- The FNA stipulates that applications for a residence permit made by temporarily admitted foreign nationals who have lived in Switzerland for more than five years be closely examined to determine whether the person falls into the hardship category. In 2017, 1994 temporarily admitted persons were granted a residence permit on this basis.
- In addition, the FNA enables a residence permit to be granted in the event of serious personal hardship. In 2017, 607 illegal immigrants living in Switzerland were granted residence permits on this basis. There is also a special rule whereby a residence permit can be granted, under special circumstances (e.g. domestic violence, forced marriage), to a person who may lose his/her residence status as a result of divorce.



*In 2017, 607 illegal immigrants living in Switzerland were granted residence permits.*



*Charles Eromonsele, participant in the Team Clean work training programme, from Nigeria*



Last but not least, return assistance has also won acceptance at home. The initial scepticism voiced in political debate (“repatriation programme” vs. “a golden handshake for returnees”) has now given way to widespread approval.

**Coercive measures**

Coercive measures include, in particular: detention in preparation for departure; detention pending deportation; coercive detention.

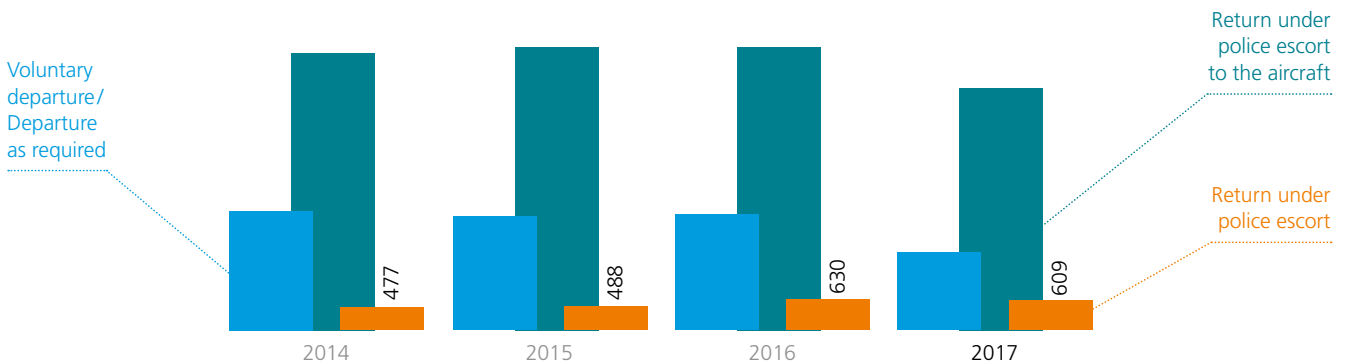
Last year, there was virtually no change in the average duration of administrative detention – 24 days compared to 25 days in 2016. In 2017, a total of 3724 detention orders were issued. As in the previous year, most of the individuals placed in administrative detention during 2017 came from Nigeria and Albania, followed by Algeria and Morocco. In the case of the latter, their administrative detention was mostly ordered under the terms of the Dublin procedure (Art. 76a FNA).

**Removal by air**

In 2017 the Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 7147 persons, 20 % fewer than in 2016 (8 781). This was mainly because of the sharp fall in the volume of incoming asylum applications.

Nearly 22 % of those ordered to leave Switzerland did so voluntarily. However, many persons failed to comply with official removal or expulsion orders. Most of these persons were returned under enforcement level 1 (police escort only to the departure gate to ensure that the person boarded the aircraft). Only 609 persons (8.5% of the departures) were accompanied by specially trained security officials to their destination country on standard flights and 287 persons in this group were returned to their countries of origin on 64 special deportation flights (2016: 64 special deportation flights). Of these, 17 were joint EU deportation flights coordinated and financed by the EU’s border control agency Frontex. (2016: 21 joint EU deportation flights). Switzerland played the lead role in 4 of these 17 flights.

**Departures by air (2014–2017)**



## 9. Procedures to remove people and keep people away

The Foreign Nationals Act (FNA) contains provisions for dealing with foreign nationals who seriously or repeatedly violate or endanger public order and safety, or who pose a threat to the internal or external security of Switzerland. The measures include removal, expulsion and entry bans.

Expulsion and entry bans are preventive measures rather than penal sanctions. As long as these measures are in force, the person to whom they apply may not enter Switzerland unless expressly permitted to do so. Procedures to remove or keep away EU nationals may only be applied if a genuine, actual and sufficiently serious threat to public order and safety exists. In 2017, 18 102 entry bans were imposed by the Swiss authorities (2016: 13 566 entry bans).

As an associated Schengen member, Switzerland registers its entry bans against third-party nationals in the Schengen Information System (SIS). This ensures that the person to whom the ban applies cannot enter any part of the Schengen area.



*In 2017, the Swiss authorities ensured the removal by air of 7147 persons.*



*Enrique Ros, film maker, from Spain*



## 1. Integration plan largely implemented and integration agenda for the asylum sector launched

In keeping with the objectives set out in the integration plan, which was launched back in 2011 and was largely implemented by 2017, the federal, cantonal and communal authorities have been working together over the last few years to lay, and consolidate, the foundations for a nationwide integration promotion policy. Nonetheless, integration continues to pose considerable challenges, in particular because of the high number of persons in need of protection who have entered the Swiss asylum system in recent years. Against this backdrop, the federal and cantonal authorities launched a common integration agenda to remedy these problems and at the same time bolster existing integration promotion efforts.

On 1 February 2011 Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga, together with her cantonal partners, announced their intention to launch an integration plan; it was approved by the Federal Council the following month. Under this plan, efforts would be stepped up to improve the integration of the foreign resident population, while at the same time requiring the latter to make a more concerted effort to integrate (“expect and encourage”). The integration plan was divided into four constituent parts:

- Revision of the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA; new: Foreign Nationals and Integration Act [FNIA])
- Inclusion of integration-specific provisions in special laws
- Strengthening of integration promotion efforts
- Dialogue with non-governmental actors working in the integration field

### Foreign Nationals Act

The Federal Dispatch on the FNA Revision was passed on 8 March 2013. However, work was put on hold (Supplementary Federal Dispatch of 4 March 2016) following the acceptance of the “Stop mass immigration” initiative in February 2014; the revised legislation was finally approved during the 2016 winter session of parliament. The new federal act, the FNIA, which will come into effect in mid-2018, sets down, among other things, the integration criteria governing the award, extension or revocation of residence/permanent residence permits. These include sufficient knowledge of one of Switzerland’s national languages and respect for the values of the Swiss Federal Constitution.

### Special laws

Amendments were also made to the Federal Acts on Vocational Education and Training, Spatial Planning, Invalidity Insurance and Unemployment Insurance with a view to advanc-

ing the integration of the migrant population. The Spatial Planning Act, for example, now provides the legal basis for the provision of support to local neighbourhood projects. Inter-institutional cooperation between the competent authorities and public/private bodies charged with enforcing legislation on asylum, foreign nationals and integration was also enshrined in the special laws.

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**Integration Agenda Switzerland –  
a joint federal and cantonal  
initiative – aims to bolster existing  
integration promotion efforts.**

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### Strengthening integration promotion efforts

The Confederation and the cantons agreed on a set of unified strategic goals that would be implemented through the Cantonal Integration Programmes (CIPs). While these goals apply nationwide, the CIPs nonetheless take local factors into account. This means that the cantons and communes are able to set their own implementation priorities. The first phase of the CIPs began in early 2014 and finished at the end of 2017. The second phase will also run for four years: 2018–2021.

### Dialogue with non-governmental actors working in the integration field

In early 2012, the Tripartite Conference (TC) – the policy platform of the federal, cantonal, communal and city authorities – launched three separate dialogues with a view to intensifying public-private cooperation. Each focuses on a different aspect of integration: employment, early years’ support, and everyday life. Under this initiative, government and private stakeholders formulated goals and recommendations, and launched a number of integration projects.

The following sections will look at each of the three dialogues in greater detail. For more information on the implementation of Article 121a of the Federal Constitution, please see Part D of the present report.

## 2. Working together to make integration a success

The 3rd National Integration Conference, which was held on 19 June 2017, delivered a positive assessment of the dialogue initiative. The 250 or so participants, who were drawn from governmental and non-governmental bodies, discussed priority areas for future cooperation. Based on the conclusions reached by these talks, the Tripartite Conference (TC) approved a series of recommendations, in November 2017, which could serve as a guide for integration policy in the years to come.

Under the “Employment” dialogue, the social partners of the construction industry devised a pilot project entitled “German/French on the construction site” and incorporated occupation-specific language courses in mainstream vocational training programmes. The “Early Years’ Support” dialogue led to the creation and trialling of low-level language classes on specific subjects like pregnancy, childbirth and early childhood. A number of projects were developed as part of the “Everyday life” dialogue, including the project “kontakt-citoyenneté”, with which the initiative Migros Culture Percentage and the Federal Commission on Migration support volunteer work that promotes intercultural integration.

### Football – a universal language

In 2017 the Swiss Football Association (SFV) launched “Together – Fussball vereint” [Together – Football unites], a joint project with the Federal Office of Sport (FOSPO) and SEM. The aim is to support Switzerland’s 1400 football associations with their efforts to integrate refugees and temporarily admitted persons and make it easier for them to become fully-fledged members of society. The associations receive information on the asylum procedure, answers on any licensing issues they may have, and help with integration-specific measures.

The project carries on directly from the SEM-backed, award-winning refugee campaign “Together 2016”, which saw a large number of Swiss Football League (SFL) clubs actively participate in various integration programmes. SEM is also a co-sponsor of “Together – Fussball vereint”. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has incorporated the project in its own diversity campaign “#EqualGame”.

More information at [www.football.ch/together](http://www.football.ch/together)

### New directions

During the conference, the 250 participants from the worlds of politics, government administration and non-governmental organisations also established new priorities for their future cooperation efforts.

As regards the “Employment” dialogue, the primary focus is no longer on encouraging foreign workers to acquire one of Switzerland’s national languages and raising employer awareness of the issue. The main priority now is providing unqualified young and adult migrants with access to basic and advanced vocational education and training (VET). The target group includes recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons, as well as individuals whose move to Switzerland from an EU/EFTA or third state falls under the general legislation on foreign nationals. Conference participants asked that basic and advanced VET be open to people of all ages, and called for better conditions in this regard, such as improved funding of advanced training courses for low-income workers and those with family obligations.

New priorities were also discussed during the “Early Years’ Support” dialogue. Given that the extensive range of information and advice services on childhood development and health have to date been used least by those who could benefit from them the most, it was decided that future efforts should focus on better reaching these families. Calls were also made to provide professionals like GPs, paediatricians, parental counsellors, and childcare staff with opportunities to build on their intercultural skills.

Peaceful coexistence presupposes that the migrant and local populations have opportunities to meet and interact. As a result, voluntary efforts by the local community play an extremely important role, particularly when it comes to the social integration of refugees. During the conference a proposal was put forward which called on the cantons, cities and communes to intensify their coordination and support of volunteer activities, as well as encourage associations to take proactive steps to welcome members of the migrant community.

### Recommendations of the Tripartite Conference ...

The TC drew on the findings of the Integration Dialogue and the 3rd National Integration Conference to formulate a set of recommendations. Issued in November 2017, they are directed at the Confederation, the cantons, communes and cities, as well as employers, early years’ education and care providers, the health care system and civil society.

The dialogue has shown that these actors have an important and proactive role to play in promoting integration. With this in mind, the TC recommends closer cooperation between government agencies. For example, raising the number of young and adult migrants who have a basic or higher vocational training qualification will require the state and the business sector to work together. The recommendation also calls on the public authorities to better coordinate their efforts. For example, the creation and implementation of an “early years” policy that effectively reaches socially disadvantaged families can only be achieved if the cantons, cities and communes join forces.

#### ... in a range of areas

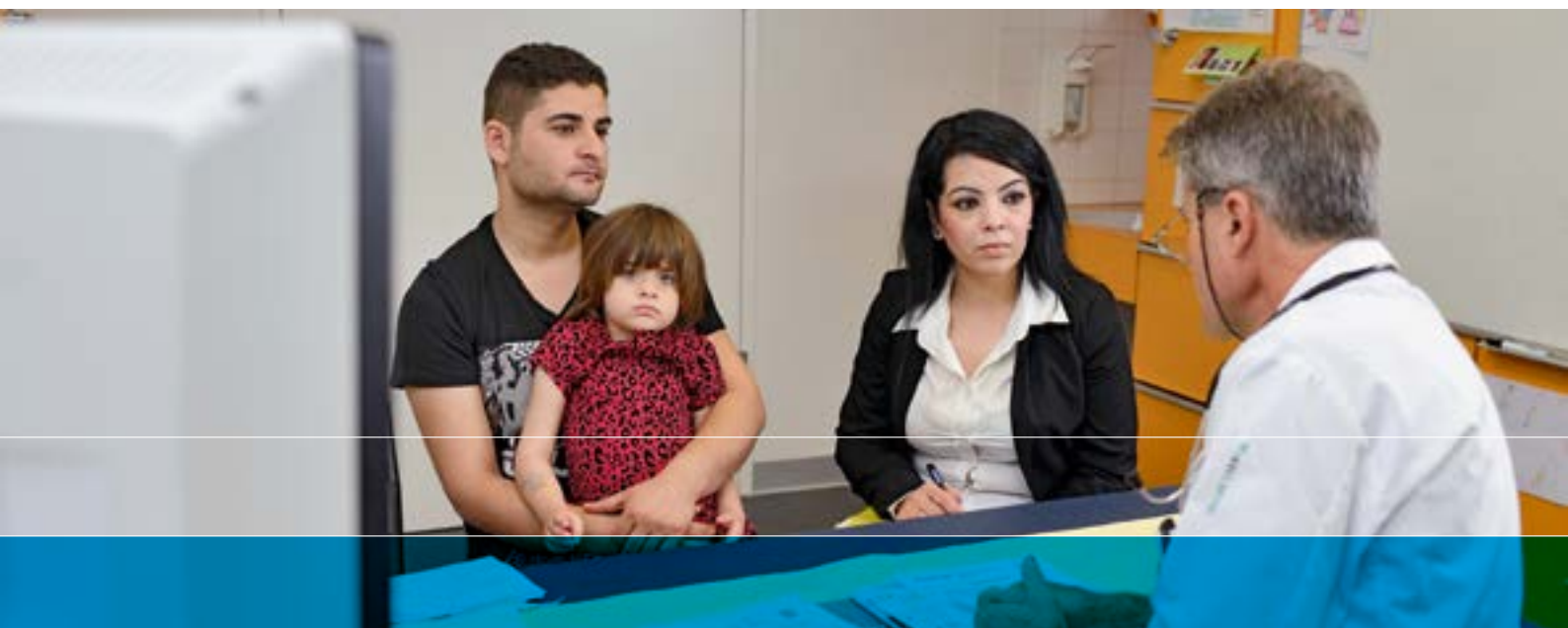
The TC recommendations clearly identify those areas where action needs to be taken. Consequently, systematic efforts should be made to raise social partners’ (employers and employees) awareness of basic education and basic and advanced VET opportunities. The aim here is to prompt firms to take on apprentices who are over 20, and motivate adult workers with no formal qualifications to take advantage of the training options open to them. Another recommendation calls on the Confederation and cantons to guarantee that families with young children in the asylum sector have adequate access to good health care.

#### Implementation already under way

A number of the conclusions reached by the Integration Dialogue and the Integration Conference have informed the national strategic objectives, which were jointly established by the federal and cantonal authorities and are now incorporated in the Cantonal Integration Programmes 2018–2021 (see Section C 3). The reach of the “Early Years” objective now extends to activities aimed at ensuring that migrant families receive information on the support and health services available to them. As for the “employability” objective, it now includes an explicit reference to preparation for admission to a vocational training programme. Likewise, many CIPs have placed greater emphasis on voluntary initiatives.

Other recommendations can be implemented as part of the regular contact that already exists between the various stakeholders, such as interinstitutional cooperation (IIC) activities and fact-sharing/working meetings between government authorities and non-governmental organisations. Although the 2012–2017 TC Integration Dialogue is now over, participants continue to cooperate at national, cantonal and communal level.

For more information on the TC Integration Dialogue, the 3rd National Integration Conference and the TC recommendations, please go to [www.dialog-integration.ch](http://www.dialog-integration.ch).



*Migrant families cannot use support and health promotion services if they have never heard of them.*

### 3. Cantonal Integration Programmes (CIP)

The first phase of the Cantonal Integration Programmes (CIPs) ended in 2017. Launched in 2014, these programmes pursue, for the first time in the history of Swiss integration policy, a set of uniform objectives for all target groups of migrants from EU/EFTA/third states and from the asylum sector. The CIPs provide a flexible framework for the strategic planning and provision of measures that take due account of the differing needs of this section of the population. The cantons and communes therefore have considerable leeway to adapt their integration promotion efforts to local circumstances.

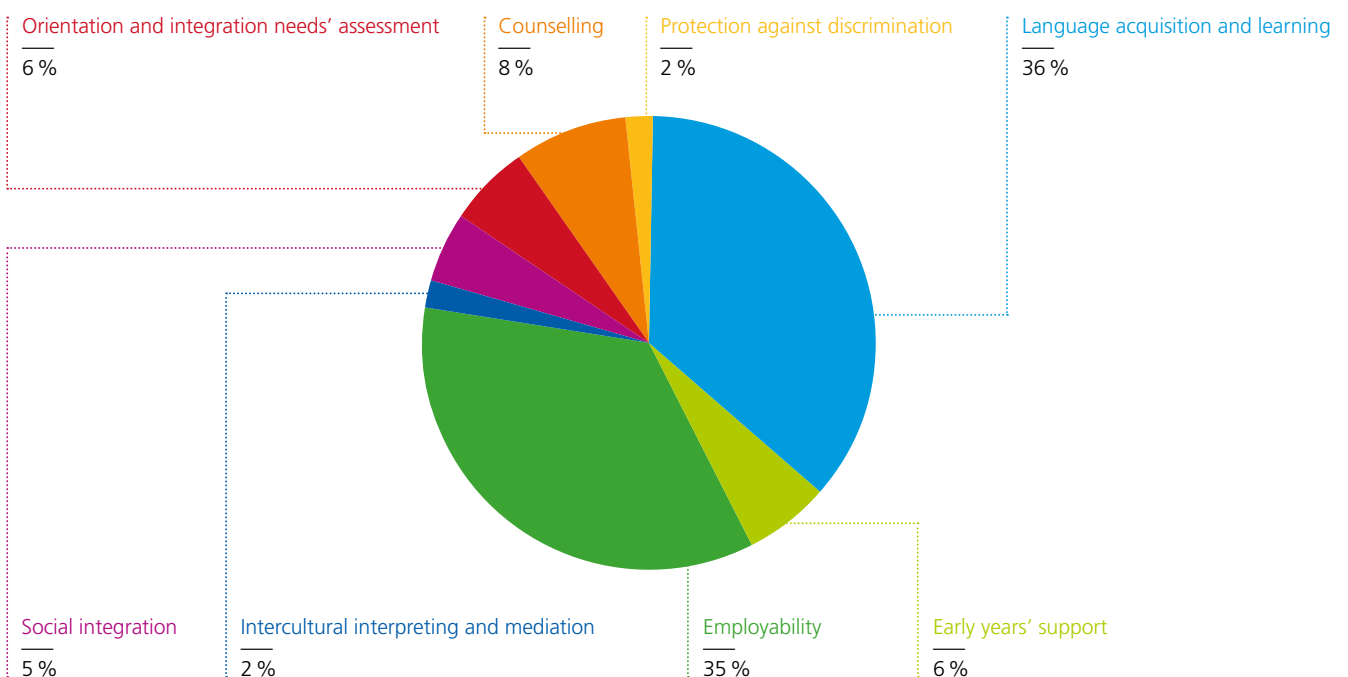
The Confederation and the cantons invested a total of CHF 603 million during the initial four-year phase. This included almost CHF 260 million to fund the “Integrationspauschale”: the Confederation pays the cantons a one-off amount of CHF 6000 for every recognised refugee and temporarily admitted person they accept. These funds are then used, first and foremost, to help finance language classes and labour market integration efforts.

The CIPs have proven to be an effective instrument of integration promotion policy. The same eight priorities (see diagram)

will apply during the second four-year phase. The percentage distribution of resources will also remain largely unchanged, with over two-thirds of total expenditure going on language acquisition, education and employability measures.

During the first phase of their integration programmes, many cantons continued to develop their integration measures. For example, as regards “employability”, potential analyses were conducted and labour market integration assistance measures like job coaching were considerably scaled up. In relation to adolescents and young adult migrants who came late to Switzerland, the principle of “(vocational) education first, employment later”, now applies. In view of the more stringent language acquisition requirements stipulated in the Swiss Citizenship Act (SCA) and the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA), the CIPs now place greater emphasis on language skills and thus on the promotion of language learning. Given that individuals applying for a residence permit or Swiss citizenship will be expected to have a minimum level of proficiency in one of the three national languages, the cantons will have the added responsibility of ensuring the quality of language teaching and the provision of appropriate tests.

#### Planned CIP expenditure 2018–2021



## 4. SEM programmes and projects

In addition to the Cantonal Integration Programmes (CIP), SEM carries out “programmes and projects of national significance”. These aim to build on and guarantee the quality of integration promotion efforts. Examples include the language promotion system fide and quality assurance for intercultural interpreting.

### Programme against forced marriage

In 2017 the five-year programme against forced marriage came to an end. It was launched in 2013 by the Federal Council as a supplement to the Federal Act on Measures against Forced Marriages. During that period, SEM supported close to 40 projects across Switzerland; the Federal Office for Gender Equality was also involved in the project implementation.

The programme centred around prevention workshops in schools and youth clubs, as well as further training courses for professionals who could potentially come across cases of forced marriage in their day-to-day work. Friends, teachers, social workers and the police often do not know how to deal with the victims or to whom they should turn if they suspect or are confronted with such a case. According to an external evaluation, the programme made a considerable contribution to helping those affected, and greatly boosted awareness-raising and networking efforts aimed specifically at the professional community.

In future, the Federal Council also wants to guarantee that those affected receive support, as well as bolster prevention efforts and promote training courses for professionals. Consequently, in October 2017 and after the programme had been wound down, the Federal Council decided to award CHF 800 000 in financial support to the Forced Marriage Unit, a centre of expertise which advises those affected by the issue as well as professionals involved in complex cases. It also organises further training courses, knowledge-sharing sessions, and public awareness campaigns.

### Pilot project on resettlement

As part of a resettlement pilot project the Federal Council decided in 2013 to accept 500 highly vulnerable refugees directly from crisis-hit regions in the Middle East which had been affected by the civil war in Syria. Between 2014 and 2015, the refugees were resettled in one of the project’s eight partner cantons. The federal government provided CHF 12 million in funding for this initiative.

Individual two-year integration plans were drawn up for those in the 15 and over age group; by the end of 2017, they had been fully implemented. The five- to ten-year-olds attended school, while younger children and their parents received early years’ support. Thanks to the pilot project, several cantons developed a number of labour market integration measures; these are now open to other individuals in the asylum sector.

The SEM set up a monitoring system to evaluate the experience gained during the programme. A full evaluation is scheduled for mid-2018. The findings will help to optimise the integration of all recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons. Also, the 2000 resettlement refugees who arrived or will arrive in Switzerland between 2017 and 2019 (600 of them were already admitted in 2017) will benefit from this experience.

### Resettlement refugees: Who are they?

According to Federal Council Decrees, the resettlement programmes are exclusively for highly vulnerable refugees. Families, in some cases with grandparents, and lone mothers with several children were taken in as part of the pilot project. More than two thirds of refugees arrived in family groups of between five and nine; women and girls account for half of those admitted, while children under the age of 15 account for roughly 40 % of the intake. Many of the 500 resettlement refugees are traumatised, disabled, war wounded or victims of torture. Those who were able to work attended vocational training courses and acquired occupational qualifications; some have already gone on to find paid employment.



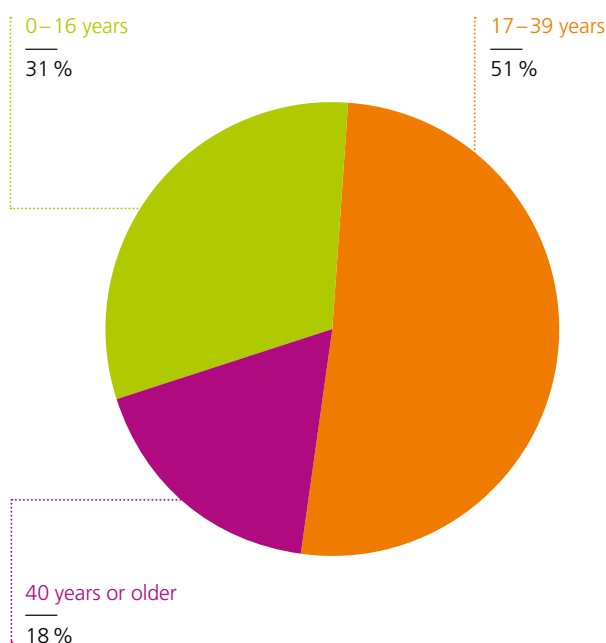
*Fidan Firat, catering service manager, Turkey*

## 5. Further development of integration efforts in the asylum sector

25- or 32-year-olds spending one year at school acquiring basic vocational skills, coupled with two or three days working in a company: as of summer 2018 this will be the opportunity open to 800 recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons. The aim of this measure is to prepare them for a standard apprenticeship.

At the end of 2015, the Federal Council decided to make lasting improvements to the “integration pre-apprenticeship” pilot programme in order to increase the training capacity and employability of individuals in the asylum sector. This move was prompted by three observations: ten years after arriving in Switzerland, only one in every two refugees and one in four temporarily admitted person is in gainful employment; the 17 to 39 age group account for half of those granted the right to stay (see figure); and various sectors of the economy either have difficulty filling apprenticeship vacancies or recruit low-skilled individuals from abroad, which in turn hampers the implementation of Article 121a of the Federal Constitution.

### Age structure of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons 2017



In 2016 the SEM set down benchmarks for the integration pre-apprenticeship. These included job-specific language classes, basic theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and on-the-job work experience. In 2017, the cantonal VET authorities and professional organisations identified which occupations apprenticeships would be offered in. This ensured that there was no mismatch between skills and labour market needs. Both parties jointly developed the pre-apprenticeship programmes. The SEM concluded “letters of consent” with around a dozen national professional organisations and assisted them with establishing documents and skills’ profiles for integration pre-apprenticeships.

Integration pre-apprenticeships offer training in more than a dozen occupations, in a variety of industries including hospitality, construction, logistics and retail. The Confederation helps to cover the costs by providing roughly CHF 13 000 (lump sum) per apprenticeship; the cantons bear the remaining expenses. Between 2018 und 2021 a total of 3600 people will have completed an integration pre-apprenticeship.

### Early language acquisition

In 2018, the Federal Council will launch its “Early language acquisition” pilot programme: asylum seekers who will, in all probability, be granted the right to remain will attend language classes from a very early stage. This will enable them to begin an apprenticeship or enter the labour market soon after a decision has been made on their case. It is expected that roughly 3600 asylum seekers will take part in the programme by 2021.

### Integration Agenda Switzerland

Under the title “Integration Agenda Switzerland”, the Confederation and the cantons held intensive discussions on the conditions underpinning the integration process in the asylum sector. The debate on the impact, measures and funding of targeted integration promotion efforts will continue in 2018. It will focus on labour market integration; the key issues here will be early clarification in terms of resources and potential, as well as advice and job coaching. Another focus will be helping migrants settle into their new environment, support for young children, and the social integration of individuals who will be unable to work for the foreseeable future due to factors such as trauma or family obligations. Like the 2011 integration plan, the Integration Agenda Switzerland for 2018 will set clearly defined, nationwide goals.

# D Main highlights in 2017



*Dr. Gautham Yepuri, senior researcher in cardiology, from India*

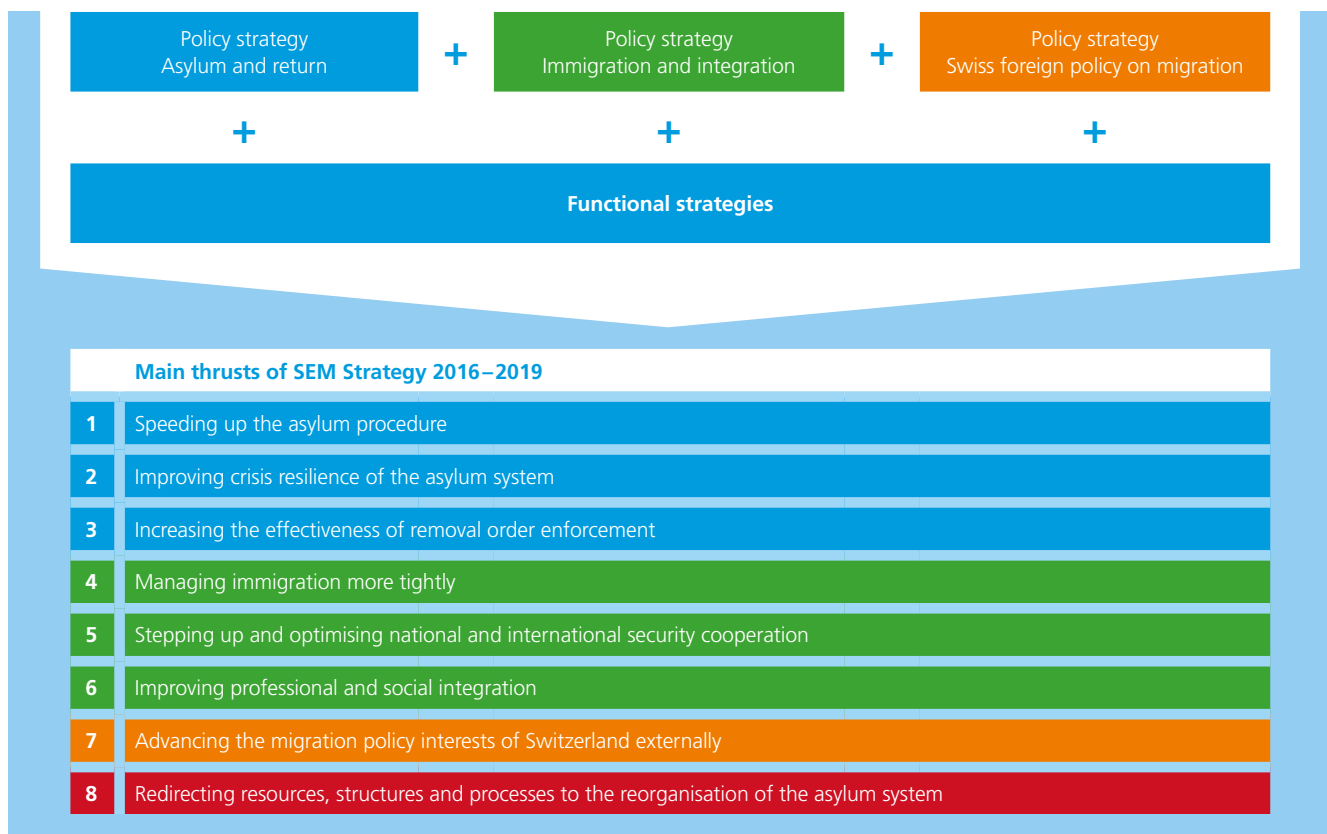


## 1. SEM Strategy 2016–2019

As part of the implementation of the New Management Model for the Federal Administration (NMM), the SEM Board of Management, including all senior staff, developed a strategy which the organisation would follow over the 2016–2019 legislative period. This strategy will enable the SEM Board to lead from the front, and play its part in identifying and addressing any conflicting aims or strategic shortcomings within the organisation. Furthermore, the document stipulates that SEM will be proactive in the performance of its activities, whilst ensuring a competent and professional response to current events and developments of relevance to its work.

The strategy will also serve as a guiding framework for senior staff and all other SEM personnel. It outlines the focal point of the work carried out by the different organisational units within the State Secretariat, how their respective goals and activities are interconnected, and the mutual influence they exert. By providing SEM personnel with a complete picture of the organisation's work, the strategy allows them to see that they are not just members of a specific organisational unit but are also part of a government office that has a clear sense of the direction it wants to move in. This, in turn, should lead to greater and more effective cooperation within the organisation as a whole.

### SEM Strategy 2016–2019



This new strategy draws on Federal Council guidelines (e.g. in the political agenda and budget), legislation produced by parliament and decisions reached by means of the instruments of direct democracy, all of which provide the political and legal framework for Swiss migration policy.

The SEM Strategy 2016–2019 sets out seven main directions for the following policy areas “Asylum and return”, “Immigration and integration” and “Swiss foreign policy on migration”. The cross-cutting activities of the human resources, finances, IT and communication organisational units will also provide valuable support for the implementation of SEM’s new strategic thrust.

Over the coming years SEM intends to speed up the asylum procedure, improve the crisis resilience of the asylum system, increase the effectiveness of removal order enforcement, manage immigration even more tightly, improve security cooperation at both national and international level, further strengthen the professional and social integration process, advance the migration policy interests of Switzerland externally, and redirect resources, structures and processes towards advancing the decentralisation of asylum on the one hand, and towards new procedures on the other.



*The SEM has developed an internal strategy which aims to ensure that the government agency is run in a proactive and forward-thinking way.*

## 2. Migration flows to and within Europe

### The central Mediterranean route

Following the agreement reached between the EU and Turkey, and the closing of the Balkans route in early 2016, migration flows have increasingly shifted from the eastern Mediterranean route to the central Mediterranean. Consequently, relations with North African countries like Libya received greater attention in 2017. The number of migrant landings along the Italian coast in the latter half of the year was extraordinarily low: an average of 880 arrivals per week compared to a weekly average of 3600 between January and June 2017, and 20 % down on figures for 2016. The exact reasons for this downward trend are difficult to determine. The following factors, though, may have played some part:

- support for Libya as regards border management and in the fight against peoplesmuggling;
- support for Niger and Chad as regards the policing of their borders with Libya;
- measures introduced by Italy as regards the Mediterranean migration route, including the adoption of a code of conduct for non-governmental organisations operating at sea.

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The number of migrant landings along the Italian coast in the latter half of 2017 was extraordinarily low.

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### Meeting of the Central Mediterranean Contact Group

The third meeting of the Central Mediterranean Contact Group was held on 12 and 13 November 2017 in Bern. The purpose of this group, which was set up in March 2017 at the initiative of the Italian interior minister, is to facilitate information-sharing among European and African countries most affected by migration via the central Mediterranean route. In close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Switzerland stressed that discussions should focus on measures to protect migrants and refugees who are currently in or en route to Libya. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a declaration aimed at:

- improving conditions in Libyan detention centres and promoting alternatives to detention;
- simplifying the voluntary return procedure and stepping up cooperation in this regard;
- strengthening and improving the protection and support of migrants and refugees;
- combatting people trafficking and smuggling;
- establishing safe and regular migration routes for refugees and migrants.

Through its efforts in Libya, Switzerland is already making a contribution towards the implementation of some of these measures. These commitments include working to ensure that international organisations have access to detention centres in Libya, supporting voluntary returns to countries of origins, setting up information centres along the migration route, building the search and rescue capacities of the Libyan coast-guard, and further developing measures to protect migrants on their return to port. As well as backing peace initiatives aimed at stabilising the situation in Libya, Switzerland is involved in UNHCR urgent humanitarian action to evacuate around 5000 extremely vulnerable people from Libya; it has agreed to take in up to 80 of these evacuees by mid-2018.



*Mbaye Sall, migration specialist, from Senegal*

### 3. New priorities for SEM

#### Delegate for migration issues for the Middle East

Over the last few years, the various conflicts in the Middle East have led to considerable migration flows both within the region and into Europe. Around five million people have fled Syria alone, seeking refuge in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Within the country itself, the number of internally displaced persons has now reached over six and a half million. Several hundred thousand more have fled to Iraq, Egypt and Europe.

This situation also poses many new migration-related challenges for Switzerland. In response, the Federal Council decided in 2016 to appoint a special delegate for migration for the Middle East; Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey come under this remit.

The mission of the delegate is to optimise, intensify and ensure the coherence of migration-related efforts in the Middle East. He coordinates cooperation between SEM and its national and international partners. He is also responsible for monitoring and anticipating new developments in the region, and recommending an appropriate response to these events.

The political, economic and social conditions, and the challenges that ensue, differ across the five countries, in some instances quite considerably. This has a direct impact on many areas, particularly the living conditions of Syrian refugees. For example, it is somewhat harder for them to acquire regular residency status and enjoy access to public services and the labour market in Lebanon than it is for refugees in Jordan or Turkey. With around three million internally displaced persons in need of humanitarian support, as well as roughly 250 000 Syrian refugees Iraq too faces severe challenges.

In 2017, one of the main tasks of the delegate for the Middle East was to review the response that SEM has taken in the region and check that its courses of action take full and proper account of the myriad conditions and differing needs that prevail there. Part of this work also entailed setting well-defined clear focal points and priorities for each of the countries concerned. SEM then developed a Middle East strategy, together with a schedule of the activities it planned to undertake in the region.

Last year, SEM made Lebanon, the country in greatest need of assistance, a focal point of its efforts. Syrian refugees make up more than one quarter of the resident population, which places a considerable burden on the country's already scant resources and threatens its fragile political and religious balance. Consequently, SEM now concentrates its efforts on ensuring that refugees receive better protection, and building the capacities of the Lebanese authorities to manage the current crisis. An integrated border management project which received SEM support also intensified information sharing between the Swiss and Lebanese authorities, thereby paving the way for the extension of bilateral relations in the future.

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#### Lebanon was a top priority for SEM in 2017.

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Another priority in 2017 was the resumption and strengthening of relations between SEM and the Iraqi authorities, which had largely collapsed following the outbreak of conflict there in 2014. In early 2017, a high-ranking Iraqi delegation arrived in Switzerland as part of a study visit. During that time, a joint roadmap was devised, establishing the framework for future cooperation. The delegate for the Middle East also travelled to Baghdad and Erbil in the middle of the year to chair discussions on cooperation, particularly on the issue of returns. These discussions proved extremely positive and both the authorities of Central Iraq and the autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) were open to stepping up cooperation with Switzerland. In the second half of the year, however, a dispute arising from the Kurdish independence referendum meant that the groundwork previously in place no longer applied. Bilateral relations between Switzerland and the KRG are currently suspended.

The volatile political situation in all of the countries concerned demands judicious and flexible planning, and requires Switzerland to follow through on its commitments.



*Rui Manuel Guerreiro Lourenco, polisher, from Portugal*

### **Terrorist threat – SEM appoints an internal security and terrorism prevention advisor**

According to Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) assessments, the risk of jihadi-motivated terrorism in Switzerland remains high.

Migration-related security is becoming an increasingly important and challenging issue. The growing complexity of security issues, the rising number of security-related cases as well as the interfaces within and between departments require greater, cross-cutting coordination. In addition to including this in its 2016–2019 strategy, SEM decided to appoint a special advisor on internal security and terrorism prevention.

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## SEM decided to appoint a special advisor on internal security and terrorism prevention.

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Jean-Martin Berclaz, who took up the post on 1 September 2017, is answerable to the delegate for the Middle East, Urs von Arb, who also has certain security-related responsibilities and deputises for the state secretary on such matters. This organisational arrangement ensures a certain degree of independence from direct line management within SEM.

In addition to devising preventive security measures, the special advisor is tasked with analysing the security risks and needs of SEM, guaranteeing optimal coordination with SEM and encouraging greater interdepartmental collaboration and interaction. Line management within SEM will continue to handle individual cases.

To ensure effective internal coordination, a single point of contact on security-related matters, and a deputy, was designated in each directorate. Dialogue between line management and the advisor takes place via a special informationsharing platform; it met for the first time in October 2017.

Raising awareness among staff of security issues that are of relevance to SEM's activities and providing them with the necessary training is very important. Checks are already carried out on individuals before their planned entry in Switzerland, for example during resettlement interviews or as part of the review process for humanitarian visa applications, or following a successful entry to Switzerland as an asylum seeker. At the same time, the issue is also addressed with regard to the repatriation of potential attackers or during the naturalisation process. The fast-track asylum procedure in the six countries presents a new security challenge.

Given that many federal and cantonal agencies deal with security issues, it is vital that the federal administration coordinates its activities. This is already happening, at operational and strategic levels, within some parts of the administration. Effective communication with partners, such as fedpol the FIS and the FDFA, facilitates information sharing and ensures that appropriate and timely action can be taken.

The migration authorities in other countries have also started to focus more heavily on security matters. In autumn 2017, the General Directors' of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC) addressed the challenges and lessons learnt in relation to security and asylum. This international exchange of practices and experience will continue, and SEM will play an active role in the planned conferences and bilateral meeting scheduled for 2018.

## 4. Implementation of the new immigration article in the Federal Constitution

### Job vacancy notification requirement for employers

On 9 February 2014, the Swiss electorate voted in favour of the popular initiative "Stop mass immigration". It demanded that Switzerland have autonomous control of immigration by means of quantitative limits and quotas, as well as a renegotiation and adaptation of international treaties in breach of the new Article 121a of the Federal Constitution (Cst). Both of these requirements had to be fully met by February 2017.

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Temporarily admitted persons  
and recognised refugees are  
also considered part of the domestic  
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employment potential.

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In response, the Federal Council drafted a bill to put before parliament and declared its intention to seek a mutually amenable solution with the EU that would not jeopardise the bilateral agreements. In the event that this was not possible, the Federal Council put forward on 4 March 2016 a proposed unilateral safeguard clause, which would allow Switzerland to control the immigration of individuals who come under the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP). At the same time, the FDJP and the FDFA, took part in intensive consultations with the EU in summer 2016. Following the outcome of the Brexit referendum in June 2016, it became clear that no agreement could be reached with the EU. Consequently, parliament voted on 16 December 2016 in favour of a legal provision that was compatible with the AFMP and thus allowed for the continuation of the other bilateral agreements. The main aim of these legal amendments is to tap the employment potential of the domestic labour force. The job vacancy notification requirement for employers seeks to encourage the hiring of registered job seekers in Switzerland.

A planned referendum against the implementing legislation was abandoned.

Some of the legal amendments required changes to certain ordinances. Following the consultation procedure on the drafts in summer 2017 and having consulted the Political Institutions Committees of the National Council and Council of States, the Federal Council took note of the findings and subsequently approved the changes to the ordinances.

The requirement to report job vacancies will be rolled out across the country on 1 July 2018, and concerns those occupational groups for which the national employment rate is or exceeds the threshold value of 8%; it will be lowered to 5% as of 1 January 2020. Employers will be required to notify the public employment services of their job vacancies. For five working days, public employment service staff and registered job seekers will have exclusive access to this information, thus giving the latter a head start. The public employment services will then submit suitable applications to the employer concerned within three working days. The employers invite candidates for interview and inform the employment service of the outcome.

The provisions on the implementation of Article 121a Cst will enter into force on 1 July 2018.

During its meeting on 16 December 2016, the Federal Council decided to ratify the Protocol extending the freedom of movement to citizens of Croatia. Parliament had already approved the Croatia Protocol on 17 June 2016 and empowered the Federal Council to ratify it, on condition that "an arrangement could be reached with the EU on managing immigration that is compatible with Swiss law". The implementing legislation on Article 121a Cst, which parliament passed on the same day, met this condition; it entered into force on 1 January 2017.

On 26 April 2017, the Federal Council submitted its dispatch to parliament on the initiative "Get out of this blind alley. Don't reintroduce immigration quotas" (RASA), which calls for Article 121a to be removed completely from the Federal Constitution. Parliament shared the stance of the Federal Council and recommended the rejection of RASA, without any counter-proposal. Subsequently, the authors of the initiative decided on 12 December 2017 to withdraw the initiative because the primary aim – maintaining the bilateral agreements – had been achieved through the implementation of Article 121a Cst as voted for by parliament.



### Job placements for temporarily admitted persons and refugees

Temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees are also considered part of the domestic labour force with untapped employment potential. After they arrive in Switzerland, most initially rely on social welfare due primarily to a lack of proficiency in one of Switzerland's national languages, or insufficient or no occupational qualifications.

It is estimated that around 70 % of temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees of working age have the potential to integrate long term in the labour market. Of the roughly 12 000 successful asylum and temporary admission applicants per year (2016 figures), some 5 000 fall into this category.

The Federal Council and parliament decided on a package of measures to improve the occupational integration of temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees in Switzerland. One concerns cooperation between the social welfare system and the public employment service: in accordance with

the new Article 53 paragraph. 6 of the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA), which will come into force in mid-2018, the social welfare authorities will be required to register all temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees who are fit to work with the regional job centre, provided that the latter do not need to serve an apprenticeship or complete some other form of training before taking up employment. Since most individuals seeking asylum are under 30, the principle of "Education first, employment later" will apply.

The new legal provision aims to step up asylum-related cooperation between the social welfare authorities and the public employment service, thereby affording temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees access to the networks and expertise of the public employment service. SEM estimates that the number of temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees registered with the public employment service is likely to rise by several thousand. An initial assessment of the effectiveness of this measure is planned for 2019.



*All temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees should also be able to benefit from the expertise and networks that public employment offices can provide.*



*Ursula Müller, physiotherapist, from Germany*

### **Gainful employment: from authorisation to simple notification**

In future, temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees wishing to take up gainful employment will be subject to a notification requirement instead of the previous authorisation requirement. This change is part of the revised Foreign Nationals and Asylum Acts, which parliament passed on 16 December 2017. Previously, the authorisation requirement had been cited in several reports, such as that of the joint working group of the Association of Cantonal Migration Authorities (VKM) and the Association of Swiss Labour Market Authorities (VSAA), as one of the main obstacles to the effective integration of temporarily admitted persons and recognised refugees. The new measure aims to get more of this group into work, to simplify the administrative procedure for employers and reduce social welfare expenditure.

After this legal amendment enters into force – scheduled for mid-2018 – foreign nationals in both these categories will be required to simply notify the competent cantonal authority that they have found work. As a general rule, it is the employer who submits the notification, using a form provided by SEM for this purpose. Recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons can take up employment immediately and anywhere in Switzerland. As well as being simpler and faster than its predecessor, the new procedure is free of charge and its scope extends beyond the given canton. At the same time, the employer must pledge to comply with the usual salary and working conditions that apply in the given geographical area, occupation and industry. Checks may also be carried out in the interests of protecting those concerned, with penalties being imposed should employers be found in breach of these conditions.

### **Abolition of the special charge on wages**

Another measure aimed at the labour market integration of temporarily admitted persons and asylum seekers is the abolition of the special charge levied on their earned income. Set to come into effect on 1 January 2018, the measure should provide this population group with a greater incentive to find a job or remain in employment, and at the same time reduce the bureaucratic obstacles faced by employers.



## 5. Asylum challenges

### Speeding up the asylum procedure: Implementation of the revised Asylum Act

At both national asylum conferences (2013 and 2014), federal, cantonal, municipal and city representatives unanimously agreed that measures should be taken to speed up the asylum procedure. In 2015, the resulting revision of the Asylum Act was approved by parliament and, in the subsequent referendum on 5 June 2016, the Swiss electorate voted 66.8 % in favour of these changes.

#### The aim of the revision

The reform of the Asylum Act is intended to ensure that asylum procedures are completed by a brief and mandatory deadline. Over half of these procedures (which fall into one of two categories: “accelerated processing” or “Dublin procedure”), including the enforcement of any removal orders, should be legally completed within the applicant’s maximum 140-day stay at a federal asylum centre. If further clarifications are needed, then an extensive review will be undertaken of the given asylum application. In such cases, asylum seekers will be assigned to a canton, as has been the case thus far. In order to ensure that the expedited processing procedure is carried out legally, asylum seekers will also be entitled to free counselling and pro bono legal representation.

#### Implementation efforts:

##### Ordinances and site planning for future federal asylum centres

Given that some of the requirements of the revised Asylum Act can be directly implemented without amendments to the relevant ordinances, the Federal Council decided that these provisions should enter into force on 1 October 2016. The revised provisions include measures to improve the enforcement of removal orders, as well as the launch of a planning approval procedure at federal level with a view to facilitating the establishment of the planned federal asylum centres; the respective ordinance was passed by the Federal Council and will come into force in early 2018. In addition, at the end of 2017, the Federal Council approved the Sectoral Plan for Federal Asylum Centres. All other ordinances and implementing provisions pertaining to the bill on faster asylum procedures (provisions on the specifics of the procedure, legal protection etc.) were worked out in close cooperation with cantonal and communal representatives. The Federal Council will decide when these provisions shall enter into force (scheduled for some time in 2019).

The implementation of these new accelerated procedures will also require important changes to SEM’s processes and organisational structure. Consequently, the details of the asylum procedure and enforcement process were worked out within SEM. Also, plans were made for a new organisational structure, a staffing process was introduced and the basic concepts were developed for the transitional and introductory phase of the new asylum system. The practical details of the procedures and the operation of the system were also worked out. The site planning process for the future federal asylum centres has made good progress; agreement has already been reached on most of the locations.

#### Information events for the cantons

The Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Justice and Police, the Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Social Affairs and SEM organised a series of information events in September 2017 to help those in charge at cantonal level to prepare for the introduction of the new procedures, to plan budgets and determine future staffing requirements.

#### Homing special groups of refugees (resettlement)

On 9 December 2016, the Federal Council decided that Switzerland would take in 2000 victims of the Syrian conflict over a two-year period. The operational planning and implementation of this decision dominated SEM’s resettlement activities in 2017. According to the plans, 600 refugees would be taken in during 2017, 1 000 in 2018, and the remaining 400 in 2019.

To achieve the contingency for 2017, four missions (three in Lebanon, one in Jordan) were conducted, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) put forward a total of 835 possible resettlement candidates. Switzerland rejected some 30 % due to their relative unwillingness to integrate, on security grounds or because the application was withdrawn. In a further mission in November 2017, 339 potential candidates in Jordan were interviewed and briefed on life in Switzerland; their arrival is scheduled for 2018. Other refugees (primarily Iraqi nationals and Palestinians in Iraq) were interviewed in Damascus via direct video link.

Of the group, 503 arrived in Switzerland via Zurich Airport, 95 via Geneva airport. The refugees spent the first weeks in a federal reception and processing centre, where they underwent medical check-ups and were interviewed again before being sent to their assigned canton. Their asylum status is guaranteed under Article 57 of the Asylum Act.

SEM is also involved in the international exchange of expertise and experience. It is a member of the Syria Core Group, an expert group of resettlement states and the UNHCR. SEM's Asylum Directorate plays an active role in the EU's Frank project (European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge), which is led by Sweden.

#### Relocation of asylum seekers

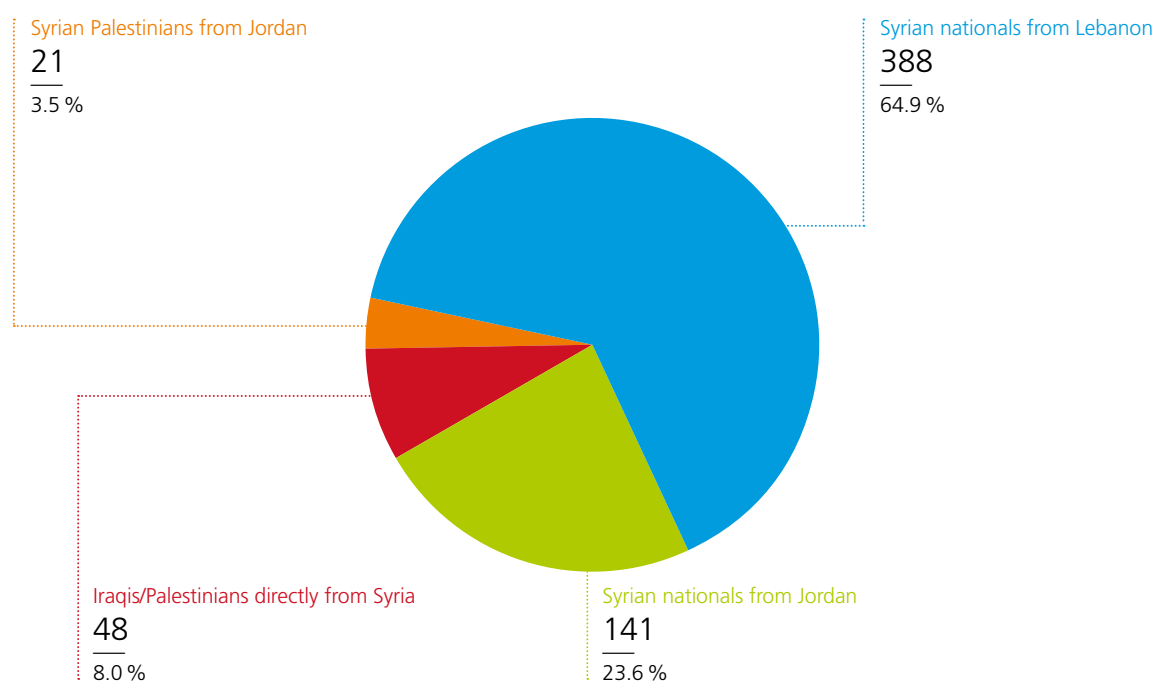
By accepting to take in 1500 vulnerable individuals, Switzerland helps to advance the implementation of the EU's first relocation resolution. Its voluntary contribution to the European Relocation Programme is an expression of its solidarity with not

only those displaced by war, but also Italy and Greece, which face enormous challenges due to the upsurge in refugee movement. Eligibility for the EU relocation scheme is limited to applicants who are in clear need of international protection and are nationals of countries for which the EU-wide average recognition rate is above 75 %. The majority of beneficiaries to date have been Syrians and Eritreans.

By the end of 2017, Switzerland had taken in a total of 1475 asylum seekers as part of the Relocation Programme (579 from Greece and 896 from Italy); They are subject to the normal Swiss asylum procedure.

To assist with the "hot spot" operating plan adopted by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in relation to Italy and Greece, EASO can call on members of SEM personnel to take part in expert missions, which can run for several months at a time. In 2017, Swiss specialist personnel spent a total of 2981 work days – 2913 in Italy and 68 in Greece – on such missions.

#### Numbers of refugee arrivals as part of the resettlement process, 2017



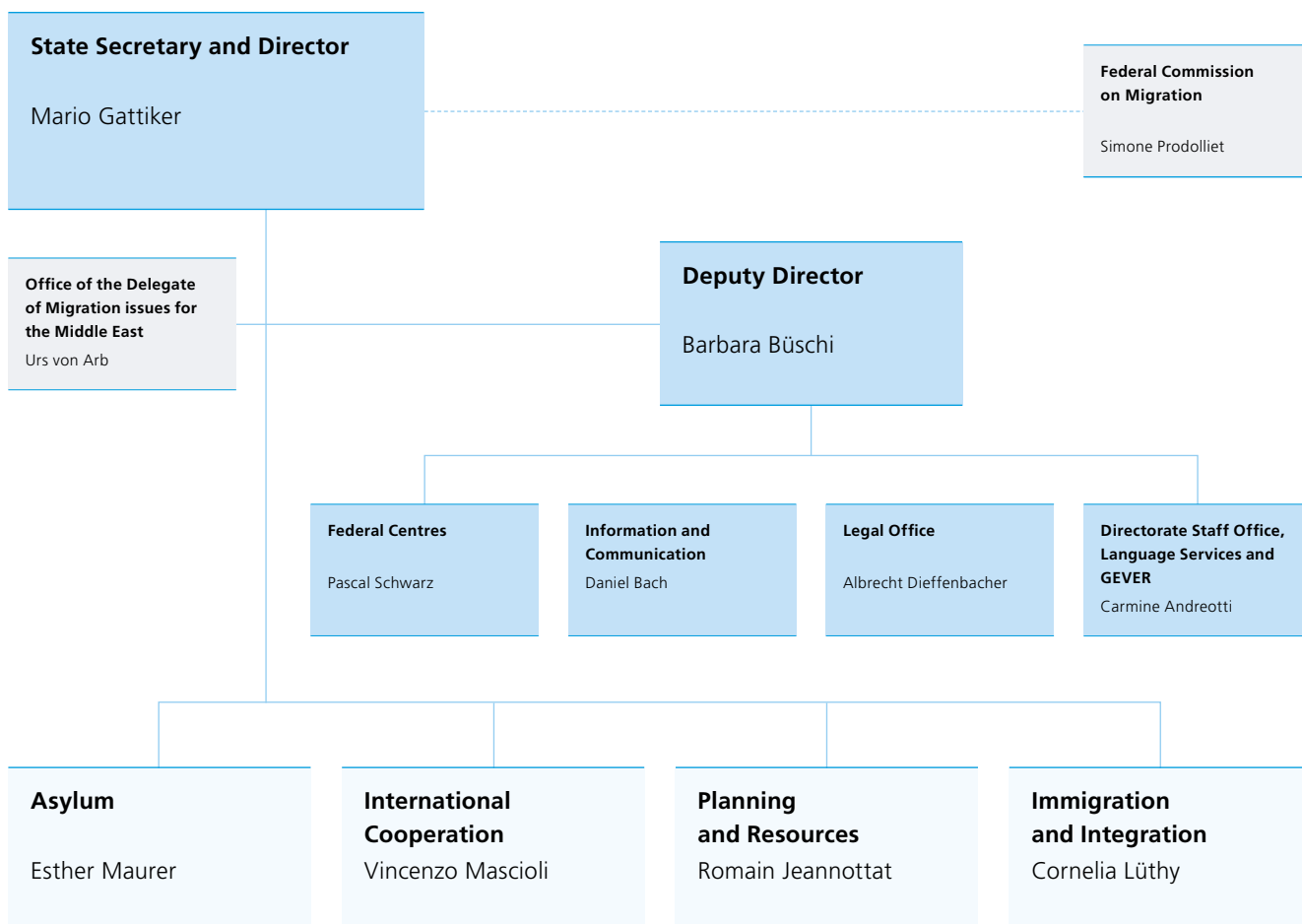


# State Secretariat for Migration



*Christoph Curchod, Head of Migration Analysis, from Switzerland.*

## 1. Organisation chart



*Last update 1 December 2017*

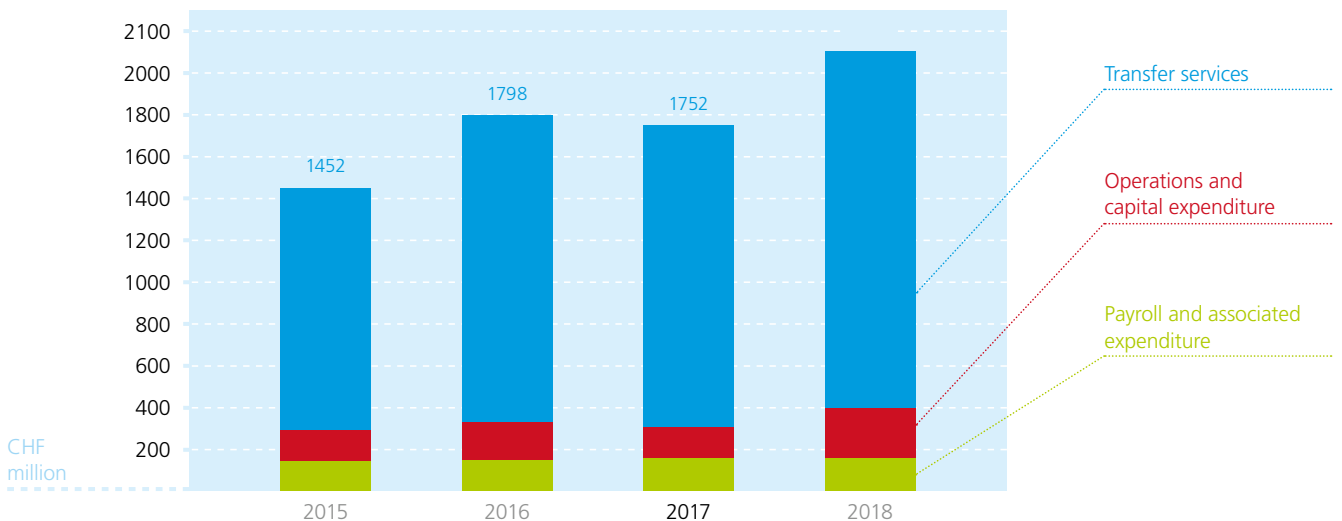
The SEM establishes the conditions whereby a person may enter, live and work in Switzerland and it decides who receives protection from persecution in Switzerland. The FOM coordinates migration activities at the federal, cantonal and communal levels and is responsible for naturalisations at the federal 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. Expenditure

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

- Transfer services: around 83 % of total expenditure relates to support services for asylum seekers, temporarily admitted persons and refugees, as well as the enforcement of removal orders, return assistance, integration measures for foreign nationals, and international cooperation in the area of migration.
- Payroll and associated expenditure: around 9 % of the total expenditure relates to payroll (including social insurance contributions), and associated expenditure on initial and continuing education and training.
- Operations and capital expenditure: around 8 % of the total expenditure relates to running reception and processing centres; IT infrastructure; consultancy; other operating costs; and capital expenditure.

SEM expenditure – only outgoings of financial consequence (government accounts for 2015–2017, budget for 2018)



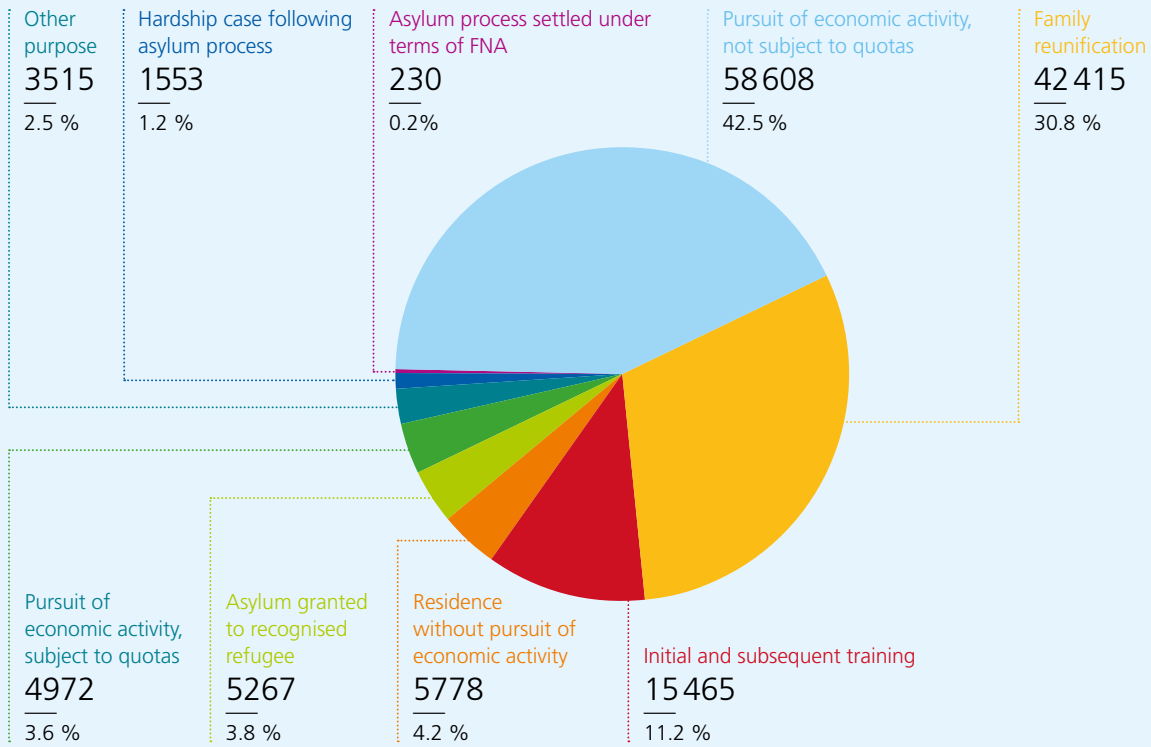




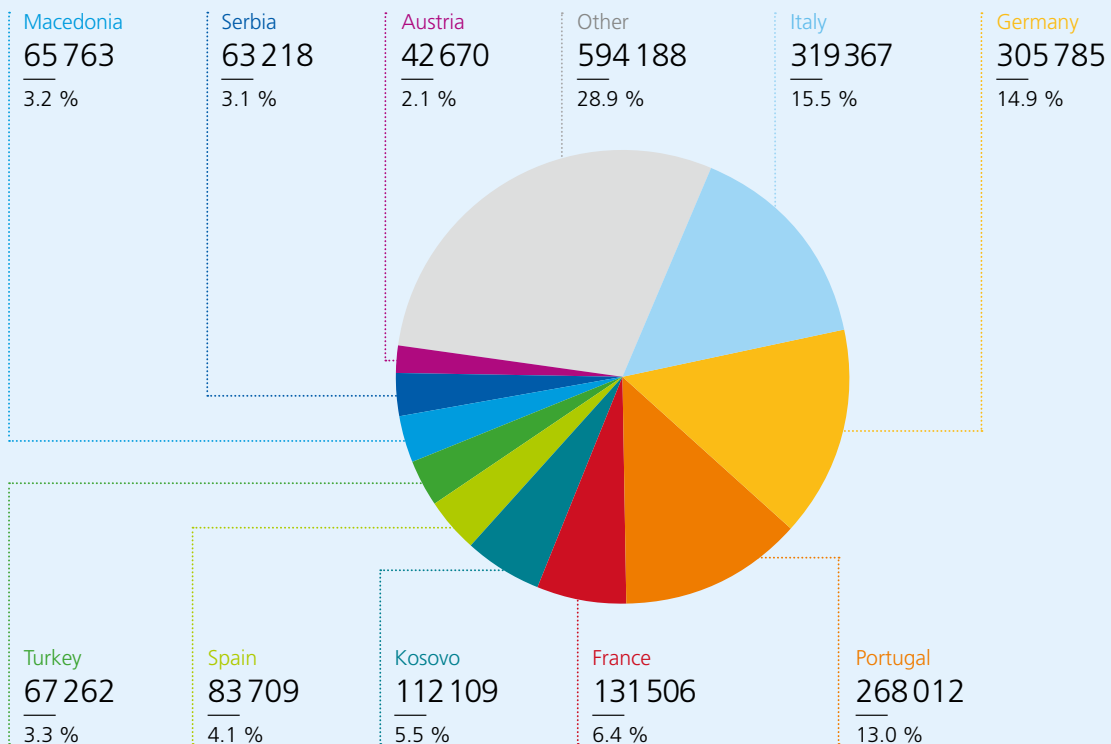
*Dean Celina, baker, from the Seychelles*

# Annex

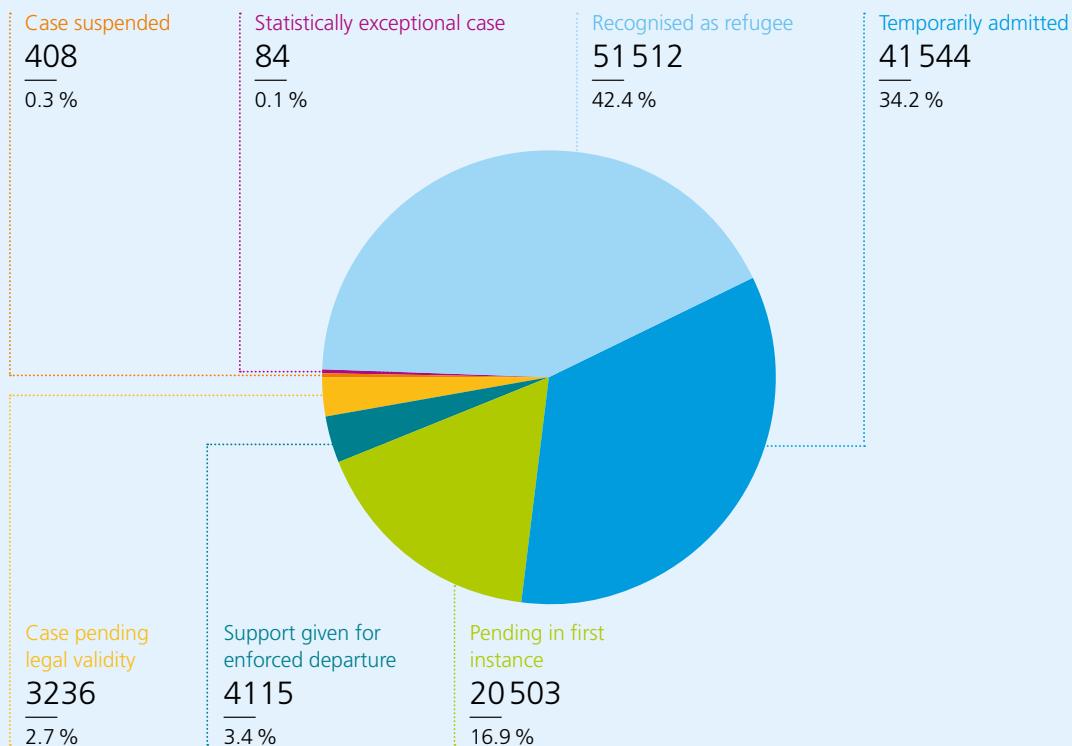
## Basis of migration in 2017



## Usual foreign resident population in 2017



## Asylum seekers 2017



## Numbers of temporarily admitted persons by country 2017

