



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Confederation

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



Migration Report 2018

Imprint

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

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

Realisation: www.typisch.ch

Available from: SFBL, federal publications, CH-3003 Bern,
www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch
Art. no. 420.010.E
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Photograph credits

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Editorial



Going by the figures alone, 2018 was a quiet year. Just over 15 000 people requested asylum in Switzerland: only a few years ago there were more than twice as many asylum seekers. Net immigration to Switzerland has stabilised, and the number of naturalisation requests has continued to fall. There was a similar trend in the number of people returning to their home countries: the number of cases has continued to fall and has reached a record low since the introduction of the Central Migration Information System (ZEMIS) in 2008.

Behind the scenes, however, the State Secretariat for Migration has had a very full and busy year. In the Asylum Directorate in particular, we have been preparing to implement the revised Asylum Act and for the start of the new, accelerated asylum procedure. We needed to ensure that the additional accommodation required in the future federal asylum centres was made available, and also rework, redefine and test all our procedures. Decentralisation meant that many of our staff who work on asylum had to decide on a new role. We needed flexibility and openness and our staff lived up to our expectations. We managed to find a job for almost all our employees in a role and location that suited them. Finally, we had to find external partners who would ensure the correct and efficient implementation of the new procedures – organisations which would provide legal representation and counselling to asylum seekers in this process.

When you read this report, the revised Act will already be in force. Since 1 March 2019, we have been carrying out asylum procedures in the six asylum regions under the new legislation. Our initial experience has been very positive: the processes and the infrastructure work, SEM's employees can carry out high-quality work and our cooperation with partners – including of course the cantons and the communes – has worked reasonably smoothly so far. As the State Secretary, I am proud that we have managed this restructuring using almost exclusively our own resources. This shows that SEM is highly skilled, willing to make changes and highly motivated.

The new procedures ensure that asylum seekers find out quickly whether they have to leave Switzerland or have the right to stay in our country. Everyone who is allowed to build a new life here must be quickly integrated into our society and world of work. By learning one of our national languages, completing professional training and finding a job, newcomers can contribute to social stability and prosperity, and lead an independent and dignified life. Our companies can find the employees they urgently need on the domestic market, and the public purse benefits because social security expenditure does not rise so rapidly.

The Swiss integration agenda has been a major step forward for the federal government and the cantons. The cantons receive more financial support, and in exchange they are expanding their integration programmes to ensure that people admitted temporarily can make a quicker start to their working lives here and become established on the job market. In the future, there will be job coaches who will provide excellent support during the integration process and serve as a point of contact for companies. Language skills and good professional training will be major focus areas from an early stage in the process. Many refugees and people admitted temporarily are young people who do not simply want to earn money as soon as possible, but instead want to find a proper occupation and develop their skills. In addition to the cantonal integration programmes, the federal government provides integration courses which precede vocational education and training and give these young people the chance to gain a foothold in the world of work and make a good start to their professional training.

Migration is a diverse and complex topic. Integration and asylum are important issues, but only two of the many subjects that SEM tackles in its day-to-day work. This report has been written to give readers an insight into these different areas, especially those which are less prominent in the media, but where SEM's employees provide equally important work for the public. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Mario Gattiker
State Secretary, State Secretariat for Migration



Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo, politician from Kenya

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A Overview



Henok Afewerki, logistician from Eritrea

1. Key figures 2018

- At the end of 2018 there were 2 081 169 legally resident foreign nationals in Switzerland – 1.3 % more than in the previous year. EU/EFTA nationals account for 68 % of the foreign resident population.
- 44 141 persons were granted Swiss citizenship in 2018 – 4.2 % fewer than in 2017 but 2.7 % more than in 2016. The majority of the newly naturalised citizens were from Germany, Italy, Portugal, France and Kosovo. Naturalisation applications also fell, from 34 799 in 2017 to 30 621 last year (– 12 %).
- In 2018 Switzerland granted more Schengen visas (517 135) for visits no longer than 90 days than it did during the previous year (479 465). Most were issued by Swiss representations in India, China, Thailand and Kosovo.
- The downward trend in the number of new asylum applications, which began in 2016, continued in 2018. There was a 15.7 % decrease on the previous year, from 18 088 (2017) to 15 255 (2018). The five main countries of origin in 2018 were, in descending order, Eritrea, Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Georgia (Somalia ranked fifth in 2017).
- In 2018 the State Secretariat for Migration SEM processed 26 103 asylum applications (2017: 27 221). As a result, the number of asylum applications handled in the first instance fell, from 20 503 (2017) to 11 594 (2018).
- Asylum was granted to 6358 persons (2017: 6360), while 8568 asylum seekers (2017: 7839) were temporarily admitted following a first-instance decision. When these two sets of figures are taken together, the share of positive decisions (protection rate) in 2018 rose to 60.5 % (2017: 57.5 %). 1760 asylum seekers were transferred to another Dublin state, while Switzerland accepted 1298 persons from its Dublin partners.
- Last year, Switzerland accepted a further 996 Syrian refugees directly from Lebanon and Jordan as part of the resettlement quota set by the Federal Council in 2016. It also took in 80 highly vulnerable refugees who had been evacuated from Libya to Niger.
- 124 asylum seekers and 1949 temporarily admitted persons obtained residence permits on the grounds of hardship.
- Swiss authorities oversaw the supervised removal by air of 6137 persons (2017: 7147).

The number of asylum
applications fell by 15.7 %

2. Main highlights in 2018

Shifting migration routes

In 2018 irregular migration to Europe shifted from the Central Mediterranean to the Western Mediterranean. Sea crossings from Libya to Italy, which had already been curbed by counter-measures introduced along the North African coast, fell further after Italy placed restrictions on migrant rescue missions carried out by private organisations. Migration was particularly heavy along the West Africa–Spain route, whereas the scale of migratory activity from Turkey to Greece was largely the same as in 2017. The shrinking number of sea crossings via the Central Mediterranean – the primary route into Switzerland – meant that, once again, fewer migrants applied for asylum here. Also, applications which stood a high chance of being rejected were processed swiftly and systematically by the authorities. Consequently, migrants with insufficient reasons for seeking protection outside their country of origin are now less likely to choose Switzerland as an asylum destination.

Asylum reform on track

Further progress has been made on the restructuring of the Swiss asylum system. After careful preparation, the revised Asylum Act finally came into effect in early March 2019. Con-

sequently, all asylum-related procedures now take place in the federal asylum centres. Also, extended legal protection for asylum seekers means that Switzerland is well equipped to process applications swiftly and fairly even if the volume of asylum cases were to rise again.

Cooperation networks

Switzerland has stepped up its cooperation efforts with source, first-host and transit countries. In October 2018, for example, it entered into a migration partnership with Sri Lanka. At the European level, the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Regulation provide the legal framework for open borders, fighting crime, combatting irregular migration and establishing which country is responsible for handling an asylum application. Switzerland also took steps to enhance cooperation on returns, particularly with regard to improving the enforcement of removal orders. Switzerland has increasingly been involved, or taken the lead, in arranging deportation flights by the EU's border control agency Frontex. In consultation with UNHCR, Switzerland agreed, on humanitarian grounds and to relieve the pressure on first-host countries, to take in a set number of refugees directly from the Middle East. Having honoured its initial



Since 1 March 2019 asylum proceedings in Switzerland have been decentralised and are conducted in six asylum regions.

commitment in 2016 to take in 2000 Syrian refugees, the Federal Council declared that it was willing to offer a further 800 vulnerable Syrians asylum in Switzerland.

Slight rise in immigration

For the first time in several years, there was a slight increase in net migration – from 53 221 in 2017 to 54 763 in 2018; this rise was observed across different categories and regions of origin. Demand for highly qualified labour from non-EU/EFTA states also remained undiminished in 2018. In response, the Federal Council increased the quantitative limits on residence permits from 3500 to 4500, while reducing the short-stay permit quota to 4000 (2017: 4500). At the same time, Switzerland wants to make better use of its existing labour market reserves (Swiss and foreign-born resident population of working age). Consequently, it introduced a measure in mid-2018, which obliges employers to first notify public employment offices of job vacancies in occupations with high unemployment rates. It is also within this context that Switzerland implements special measures to facilitate the integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons in the domestic labour market.

Clear integration goals

In spring 2018 the Confederation and the cantons established a set of shared quantitative goals on the economic integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons and detailed them in their joint “Integration Agenda Switzerland”. To guarantee the lasting and effective integration of this group in the domestic workforce, priority will be given to promoting education and training opportunities. One-on-one guidance and support should make it possible to identify the most appropriate course of action – vocational education and training or another form qualification – and to respond adequately to any issues that may later arise in the workplace. The Confederation has therefore decided to increase the one-off payment (from CHF 6000 to CHF 18 000) it makes to the cantons for each recognised refugee or temporarily admitted person they accept. The relevant act and ordinance set out the integration requirements that all other categories of migrants must meet to qualify for a residence permit.



Demand for highly qualified labour from non-EU/EFTA states also remained undiminished in 2018.

3. New developments

There was further alleviation in the asylum situation in Europe. The number of sea crossings via the Mediterranean fell again in 2018. Nonetheless, roughly 640 000 asylum applications were lodged in Europe, the fourth highest on record since the end of the Cold War; numbers peaked between 2015 and 2017. The fact that many migrants who first arrived in Europe in 2015 and 2016 are still waiting for their cases to be processed might help to explain the comparatively high number of asylum claims. The reasons why asylum seekers opt to migrate to another European country include a negative asylum decision, the protracted nature of the asylum decision-making process and general dissatisfaction with conditions in the first-host country.

The majority of those wishing to seek asylum in Europe cross the Mediterranean by boat, although some also arrive by air. The latter tend to be individuals who either do not require a visa to travel in the Schengen area (e.g. Georgian nationals) or have the financial means to pay people smugglers to help them enter Europe by plane.

In 2018 differences in migration patterns were observed along the three main Mediterranean migratory routes.

Migration flows via the Eastern Mediterranean route – from Turkey to the Greek Islands – were similar to those observed in 2017. The EU-Turkey Deal continues to curb migration via the Eastern Mediterranean. Nevertheless, a total of 32 500 migrants arrived on the Greek Islands in 2018, almost 3000 more than the previous year. Following an easing-off in recent years, migration via the Turkish-Greek border spiked again in early 2018, leading the Greek authorities to reinforce border security in the affected region. As a result, the number of recorded migrants fell from 3500 in April to around 1500 over the subsequent months. Most new arrivals in Greece intend to travel on to Western Europe, primarily via the overland Balkans route. There was a shift in migration flows to these routes during 2018. Bosnia, for example, which had experienced little transit migration prior to 2018, became a European hotspot of internal onward migration; around 24 000 migrants were intercepted during the course of the year. Few of the migrants who reached Switzerland did so via the Eastern Mediterranean route.

Following an agreement between the EU and the Libyan government, migration via the Central Mediterranean route has steadily fallen since mid-2017. In 2018 the Italian government introduced additional measures to prevent organisations from landing at its ports with migrants they had rescued from inflatable boats off the Libyan coast. NGOs also had their vessels seized temporarily. As a result, migration from Libya to Italy practically ceased in the latter half of 2018; the number of people arriving by sea fell to around 1000 per month. Most of these migrants had started their journey in Tunisia, Turkey or Greece rather than in Libya. A total of 23 370 migrants were intercepted in southern Italy in 2018.

There are indications that
the migration situation will ease
further over the next few years.

Irregular migration via the Western Mediterranean reached an all-time high last year. The surge was highest along the West Africa–Spain route (directly arriving in mainland Europe via Ceuta, Melilla and the Canary Islands); a total of 64 000 migrants arrived in Europe via this route. The main onward destination of these new arrivals was France. Other countries were only marginally affected by onward migration. In recent years, Switzerland has managed to curb irregular onward migration either by systematically sending back individuals at the border who do not lodge an asylum claim, or by swiftly issuing asylum decisions and returning unsuccessful applicants to their countries of origin or to the relevant Dublin state. The lack of uniform standards across national asylum systems coupled with diverging protection rates across Dublin states and differences in the length of asylum procedures continue to drive onward migration.

Developments in 2018 once again demonstrated that curbing migration to Europe is difficult. Strengthening security along particular sections of the border or blocking a migratory route will not deter migrants from leaving their country of origin and attempting to reach Europe. They will simply shift to other routes, which may mean resorting to organised people smuggling services. Nevertheless, measures introduced in 2018 have effectively stemmed the migration flow.

Migratory pressures remain high, particularly in Africa. Population growth in certain countries is high and a large prosperity gap persists between Western Europe and many countries on the African continent. As such, more people from these countries will try to reach Europe in the coming years and decades. Although many countries of origin are becoming more prosperous, albeit at a modest rate, this migratory trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future. In fact, greater wealth will mean that more people will have the necessary means to undertake such a journey.

Measures introduced in recent years along the main migration routes continue to have the desired effect. The likelihood of easing the tense security situation in the Middle East is the greatest it has been in years. Unfortunately, re-escalation cannot be ruled out completely. The ongoing decline in migration to Europe means that the internal onward migration of asylum seekers in Europe will also fall. There are indications that the migration situation will ease further over the next few years. However, as events following the Arab Spring and the migrant crisis of 2015/16 prove, a period of stability can come to an abrupt end. Switzerland and Europe must therefore be ready to respond to a new migrant surge.

According to UNHCR, by the end of 2017, 68.5 million people worldwide had fled their homes. Most were internally displaced (IDPs) within their own country. Of the 25.4 million who were forced to leave their home country, the vast majority remained in the given region. The UNHCR estimated that by the end of 2017, most refugees had fled to Turkey (3.5 million), Uganda (1.4 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Lebanon (1.0 million) and Iran (980 000). It should be noted that these figures cover only UNHCR-registered persons; the number of undocumented refugees worldwide far exceeds these figures.



In 2018 attention focused on the migration route in the Western Mediterranean.

B Migration figures for 2018



Maria Andréa da Rocha Christen, journalist from Brazil

1. Foreign resident population

At the end of December 2018, there were 2 081 169¹ (2017: 2 053 589) legally resident foreign nationals in Switzerland. A total of 1 422 999 (2017: 1 405 771) people (about 68 % of the permanent foreign resident population in Switzerland) are nationals of EU-28/EFTA member states; 658 170 (2017: 647 818), or 32 %, are nationals of other states. The number of EU-28/EFTA nationals rose by 1.2 %; the number of third-state nationals rose by 1.6 %. At 322 127 persons (15.5 % of the total permanent foreign resident population), the largest community of foreign nationals comes from Italy, followed by Germany with 307 866 persons (14.8 %) and Portugal with 265 518 persons (12.8 %). The largest increase was among foreign nationals from France (+ 3753), Eritrea (+ 3031) and Italy (+ 2760).

¹ SEM's statistics on foreign nationals are based on data from the ZEMIS (Central Migration Information System) register. These figures do not include international civil servants and their family members, short-term residents (<12 months), asylum seekers and temporarily admitted persons.

² 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.

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ These values are based on permanent foreign resident population figures.

2. Immigration and employment

Switzerland makes a distinction between EU-28/EFTA nationals² and third-country 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 addition, the issuance of permits to third-country nationals is a highly selective process.

In 2018, a total of 96 292 EU-28/EFTA nationals immigrated to Switzerland; around two-thirds came to take up employment. A total of 43 795 third-country nationals immigrated; around 18 % came to take up employment. (Figures based on permanent resident population statistics.)

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. Since 1 June 2017 nationals from the EU-17/EFTA states³ have enjoyed unrestricted freedom of movement; for EU-8 nationals⁴, this has applied since 1 May 2011. A cap on the number of permits issued to nationals from Bulgaria and Romania has been in place since 1 June 2017. On 18 April 2018, the Federal Council decided to extend this safeguard clause until 31 May 2019; during this period a total of 996 residence permits (B permits) will be made available. Croatian nationals have enjoyed the benefits arising from the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP) since 1 January 2017. Transitional provisions currently apply to workers and service providers in certain fields; a Federal Council decision on 7 December 2018 has prolonged this transitional measure to the end of December 2021.

Newly arrived EU-17/EFTA nationals mainly work in the service sector (80.5 %). 18 % are employed in the industry and commerce sector, and 1.5 % in the agricultural sector.⁵ The employment situation of EU-8 nationals who have recently arrived in Switzerland differs somewhat: 73.3 % are employed in the service sector, 18.2 % in the industry and commerce sector, and 8.5 % in the agricultural sector – a larger share than their EU-17/EFTA counterparts. For Romanian and Bulgarian nationals, the shares were 73.1 %, 16.5 % and 10.4 %, respectively; for Croatian nationals, they were 78.4 %, 19.3 % and 2.3 %.

Work permit quotas

Each year the Federal Council sets quotas for workers from non-EU/EFTA member states (third-country nationals), as well as for transnational service providers from EU/EFTA member states who wish to work in Switzerland for more than 120 days. In 2018, 4500 short-stay (L) permits and 3500 residence (B) permits – 500 more than in 2017 – were set aside for third-country nationals. The Federal Council set a separate quota of 3000 short-stay (L) permits and 500 residence (B) permits for service providers from EU/EFTA member states.

Despite the economic risks,
the demand for highly skilled specialised
labour from third countries remained as
high as in previous years.

In 2018 72 % of short-stay and residence permits (L and B permits) for service providers from EU/EFTA member states had been issued. For the first time since 2011, when separate quotas were introduced for L and B permits, the quota of short-stay permits for service providers from EU/EFTA member states had not been exhausted by the end of 2018. The permits that were granted were issued mainly in the tertiary sector (financial services, corporate consulting, IT) and the secondary sector (engineering, electrical engineering, construction).

The 2018 quota set by the Federal Council of 3500 residence (B) permits for third-country nationals was fully exhausted by the end of the year; by the end of December 2018, 80 % of the short-stay permits had been issued. Compared to the previous year, approximately 530 more residence (B) permits and 330 fewer short-stay (L) permits were issued in 2018. As was the case in the last quarter of previous years, several cantons voluntarily returned unclaimed residual quotas back to the “federal reserve” in 2018. The Confederation (SEM) was therefore able to transfer these unused permits to cantons which had exhausted their permit quota. Although all available B permits were granted in 2018, the flexibility of the quota system ensured that Switzerland’s key national economic interests remained well served.

In 2018 the majority of B and L permits were issued to individuals working in IT (approx. 1720), followed by corporate consulting (1070), the chemical and pharmaceuticals industry (730), research (480), the food and beverage industry (480), engineering (400), as well as financial and insurance services (290). Approximately 87 % of all third-country nationals who received a work permit were holders of a higher education qualification. As in 2017, third-country nationals mainly came from India (approx. 1860), USA (1200), the People’s Republic of China (540) and Russia (430).

Political uncertainties such as the trade war between China and the USA and its global repercussions, as well as the possible fall-out from a no-deal Brexit and uncertainty surrounding the outcome of EU-Swiss negotiations on a framework agreement dampened Swiss economic growth in 2018.⁶ Despite these economic risks, the demand for highly skilled specialised labour from third countries remained as high as it had been in previous years.

Also, the increase in the B permit quota for third-country nationals by 500 units in 2018 was accompanied by an increase in demand. Having consulted with SEM, several cantons adapted parts of their authorisation practices to bring them into line with the lines of the provisions of the Foreign Nationals Act. Residence (B) permits will now be issued more systematically to third-country nationals whose stay is likely to become long term. As a result, demand for B permits has risen but fallen for short-stay (L) permits. In all probability, this trend will continue in subsequent quota periods. Having weighed Switzerland’s socio-political and domestic economy interests, the Federal Council has decided to raise the 2019 residence (B) permit quota for third-country nationals by a further 1000 units but offer 500 fewer short-stay (L) permits. This means that a total of 8500 permits will be available in 2019 for specialists from third countries.

⁶ cf. *Economic forecasts by the Federal Government’s Expert Group – winter 2018/19* (www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/seco/nsb-news.msg-id-73443.html [valid as on 29.01.2019]).

Bilateral traineeship agreements ("stagiaires")

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 2018 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 152 permits were issued to foreign nationals for traineeships in Switzerland (2017: 171). Most of the permits were issued to young professionals from Canada (51), the USA (24) and Tunisia (18). Traineeships in Switzerland were carried out in various sectors, mainly in healthcare, architecture and the tourism industry.



Switzerland has concluded agreements with various countries on exchanges of young professionals in recent decades.

3. Schengen visas

Schengen visas are valid for short-term stays (i.e. no longer than 90 days within a 180-day period) within the Schengen area, and are usually required by tourists, business travellers and those wishing to visit family and friends. In 2018 Switzerland issued 517 135 Schengen visas (2017: 479 465) and rejected 43 921 visa applications (2017: 40 429). An application for a Schengen visa is turned down when the authority examining the request concludes that the applicant has failed to meet one or more entry requirements, for example insufficient financial means or a suspicion that the visa applicant does not intend to leave Switzerland before the visa expires.

Most of the Schengen visas were issued by Swiss representations in India (152 653 visas), China (80 780 visas), Thailand (42 799) and Kosovo (24 647).

Switzerland, like other Schengen countries, may require its Schengen partners to seek its consent on specific applications before issuing a visa. In 2018 the State Secretariat for Migration SEM handled 597 498 of these preliminary consultation requests from other Schengen countries. At the same time, the Swiss authorities submitted around 98 391 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 (10 fingerprints and facial image) of visa applicants in this system. Border guards directly compare the fingerprints saved to the C-VIS with those of the Schengen visa holder. These checks have been carried out systematically at Swiss airports since 11 October 2014.

Since December 2010 Switzerland has checked the fingerprints of asylum seekers on C-VIS. Thanks to this system, Swiss authorities were able to determine that 1695 of those who had applied for asylum in Switzerland in 2018 were already holders of a Schengen visa issued by another country. Under the Dublin Agreement, the Schengen country that granted the visa is responsible for handling the asylum claim.



Swiss representations in India, China, Thailand and Kosovo issued the most Schengen visas.

4. Naturalisations

In 2018 SEM received a total of 30 621 naturalisation applications, 12 % less than the previous year (34 799 applications). It should be noted that several applicants may be covered by one application.

In 2018, 44 141 persons were granted Swiss citizenship – 1919 fewer than in 2017, when 46 060 were naturalised.

The number of people who acquired Swiss citizenship through the ordinary naturalisation procedure was down by 5.6 % on the previous year, while the number of simplified naturalisations was up by 0.5 % and the reinstatement of Swiss citizenship down by 20.1 %. 32 702 persons were granted Swiss citizenship through the ordinary naturalisation procedure (2017: 34 641); 11 312 persons through the simplified naturalisation procedure (2017: 11 260); 127 had their Swiss citizenship reinstated (2017: 159).

Naturalisations from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018 by nationality⁷

Nationality	Total naturalisations	of which persons resident in Switzerland	of which persons resident abroad	Naturalisations		
				Ordinary naturalisations	Simplified naturalisations	Reinstatement of citizenship
Germany	6 333	6 157	176	4 623	1 703	7
Italy	5 377	5 209	168	3 969	1 406	2
Portugal	3 426	3 425	1	2 958	468	0
France	3 350	2 673	677	2 113	1 192	45
Kosovo	3 341	3 333	8	3 116	225	0
Turkey	1 677	1 675	2	1 378	299	0
Macedonia	1 629	1 626	3	1 398	231	0
Spain	1 510	1 478	32	1 171	339	0
Serbia	1 484	1 483	1	1 265	219	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1 048	998	50	827	219	2
UK	992	991	1	826	166	0
Sri Lanka	795	793	2	755	40	0
Croatia	650	647	3	551	99	0
Brazil	635	585	50	263	367	5
Russia	591	446	145	270	298	23
USA	520	511	9	324	196	0
Belgium	373	357	16	290	82	1
Austria	338	338	0	319	19	0
Netherlands	331	327	4	221	108	2
Morocco	326	319	7	204	122	0
Other	9 415	8 854	561	5 861	3 514	40
Total	44 141	42 225	1 916	32 702	11 312	127

⁷ Unlike the official statistics on the granting of Swiss citizenship, these figures do not include those who have acquired Swiss citizenship through assessment or adoption.



Andries Cloete, singer from South Africa

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 a swift response as well as more concerted action 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.

In accordance with the Federal Council Decision of 18 September 2015, Switzerland agreed to accept up to 1500 asylum seekers (900 from Italy and 600 from Greece) as part of the first EU Relocation Programme. The agreed quota was met in early 2018, with the arrival of the remaining group of refugees. In doing so, Switzerland has forcefully demonstrated its solidarity with its Dublin partners at the EU external border. It also continued to work with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), primarily by loaning out its asylum experts from SEM to Italy. Last year, a total of 16 experts from SEM were deployed in the country for two months at a time. Switzerland also supported projects in Greece, including the SEM funding for the creation of a girls-only day care centre for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

The migrant crisis of 2015 and terrorist attacks in various European cities over recent years have prompted the European Commission to propose improvements to the Schengen information architecture. Those affected by these changes include the migration, police and border control authorities.

The Regulation on the Establishment of an Electronic Entry and Exit System (EES) and the corresponding amendment to the Schengen Borders Code came into effect at the end of November 2017; they were notified by Switzerland in January 2018. The EES stipulates that all individuals from non-Schengen states who plan a short-stay in the Schengen area will have their details electronically stored (incl. biometric identifiers) when entering and leaving the Schengen zone. Individuals who stay after their entitlement to do so has expired will be automatically identified and recorded in the central system. This new tool replaces the previous manual visa stamp.

On 12 September 2018 the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union passed the Regulation on the EU Travel Information and Authorisation Systems (ETIAS). According to this system, visa-exempt individuals from non-Schengen states will have to submit their itinerary and personal details in advance via a website, and apply for an ETIAS travel authorisation. This procedure enables a more thorough assessment of the potential security, health and migration risk posed by individuals wishing to enter the EU. The aim is to discourage individuals who do not meet the entry requirements from undertaking the journey in the first place. Should someone attempt to enter, the border control officer will be able to immediately cross-check the traveller's details against information stored in the system.

The new tool replaces the previous manual visa stamp.

SEM is currently working on making the new regulations legally binding in Switzerland (the Federal Council launched consultation proceedings in February 2019) and on the technical implementation of both systems.

In addition, the European Commission is closing loopholes in its existing systems, namely Eurodac, Schengen Information System (SIS) and the Visa Information System (VIS). In future, facial images will also be stored in Eurodac and removal orders entered in the SIS.

Despite the introduction of new systems and planned improvements to existing instruments, the Schengen information architecture still has one major shortcoming in terms of security and migration management: there is no data sharing between the different systems. Data on third-country nationals are recorded separately in each system but are currently only available in isolation. This leads to blind spots that could potentially compromise security in the Schengen area. It is therefore of vital importance that these systems "talk to one another" and are interoperable. The aim of the European Commission Interoperability Framework is to rectify the situation by adding new components. For example, once these changes have been introduced (2021 to 2023), authorised users will be able to carry out a single search and receive results from all systems they are authorised to access. Also, verifications will be conducted

systematically on whether the data being searched exists in multiple systems. This procedure will make it possible to detect multiple identities, as well as counter identity theft. The ultimate aim is to make border controls more effective and the Schengen area safer.

In relation to returns, Switzerland has stepped up its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with its European partners. For example, it is involved in several European committees and working groups, such as the Return Experts Group of the European Migration Network (EMN) and the European Return & Reintegration Network (ERRIN). Switzerland also chairs several of these groups, including the Ethiopian and Iran Working Groups within the European Integrated Approach on Return towards Third Countries Network (EURINT).

At the European level, efforts are currently under way to strengthen common instruments to enforce removal orders. As part of its planned personnel and funding increases, the European Commission wants to expand the tasks and powers of the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex) in relation to return operations. This includes supporting member states not only with the processing of return decisions but also with the acquisition of travel documents and the development of national return management systems. Furthermore, Frontex will step up its cooperation with third countries. On 12 September 2018, the European Commission submitted a corresponding amendment to the Regulation on the European Border and Coastguard Agency, and submitted proposed changes to the Return Directive. The aim of these measures is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all return-related proce-



In relation to returns, Switzerland works closely with European states on a bilateral and multilateral level.

dures. In doing so, the Commission addresses the central shortcomings of the EU return policy identified by the Schengen evaluations. EU member states are currently discussing both proposals.

Through its participation in a range of committees, Switzerland is well placed to keep track of these discussions. Its acceptance of the prevailing Regulation on the European Border and Coastguard Agency on 15 September 2018 demonstrated its commitment to enhancing return cooperation with its European partners.

Cooperation with third states and multilateral migration dialogue

In its international cooperation activities, Switzerland seeks out and maintains close partnerships with non-EU countries. 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, re-admission agreements and migration partnerships.

Switzerland has established migration partnerships with six countries: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Nigeria, Tunisia and Sri Lanka. Thanks to its partnership with Sri Lanka, which began in October 2018, the long-standing cooperation between the two countries on returns now extends to other migration-related areas.

In 2018 Switzerland strengthened its existing contacts or forged new relations with other key migration states. For example, agreement was reached with Ethiopia on the adoption of admission procedures which had been negotiated by the EU and Ethiopian authorities in early 2018. And talks were held with Mali and Gambia on the establishment of bilateral agreements.

Strengthening protective measures in the countries concerned and contributions to managing the various crises in the Middle East remained a priority for SEM in 2018. Military conflict in Syria abated somewhat over the past year, though the conflict is far from resolved. There are still six million internally displaced persons in Syria and a further 5.5 million have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, where the situation remains extremely fragile. Iraq and Lebanon held elections in May 2018; more than eight months later, neither country had formed a government.

Through its efforts in the region, SEM wants to contribute to long-term solutions and preserve the ability to return. This happens through the registration and documentation of undocumented refugees and migration management support for local authorities. A SEM priority continues to be efforts in Lebanon, where social tensions are rife and living conditions are precarious both for refugees and large sections of the local population. In May 2018 the first migration dialogue took place between the two countries, during which an agreement was negotiated on the visa waiver for holders of a diplomatic passport; these talks also explored the possibility of intensifying bilateral cooperation.

Switzerland has established migration partnerships with six countries: Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Nigeria, Tunisia and Sri Lanka.

The second priority for SEM is Turkey, which hosts the largest refugee population in the world – some four million people. The Turkish migration authorities face huge challenges but are committed to finding sustainable solutions. SEM works closely with them and supports their efforts by sharing its migration expertise and best practices. The State Secretariat also funds specific projects that seek to develop and implement long-term integration and development strategies that explicitly address migration-specific issues.

Switzerland is also party to various consultation processes, including the Khartoum and Rabat Processes. The primary aim here is to improve migration cooperation between European and African states. Both processes coordinate Valletta Action Plan projects. These are financed via the EU Trust Fund, which counts Switzerland among its donors.



Ivana Terifay, laundress from Slovakia

6. Asylum

European trends

A further decline in irregular migration had a considerable influence on the volume of asylum applications lodged in Europe during 2018. Migration from Turkey to Greece and then onward migration via the Balkans remained largely unchanged from 2017 levels. Further restrictions were introduced along the Central Mediterranean route; by July 2018 crossings had practically ceased. In contrast, there was an upsurge in migration along the Western Mediterranean route. A total of around 635 000 asylum applications were filed in Europe in 2018, roughly 110 000 fewer than in 2017 (743 000). However, these numbers do not allow us to directly determine the number of asylum seekers who actually reached Europe as they tend to file claims in multiple countries and are therefore recorded in the national asylum statistics of each of the countries concerned.

Asylum applications in Switzerland

In 2018 Switzerland received 15 255 asylum applications, 2 833 fewer than in 2017 (–15.7 %). The number of asylum applications lodged varied relatively little from month to month: from a low of 1 025 in December to a high of 1 447 in October. No major seasonal fluctuations were observed over the course of 2018. In the early part of the year, onward migration from Italy contributed to slightly higher monthly numbers. Given that the number of arrivals by sea in Southern Italy remained low, a spike in the volume of asylum applications normally observed during the early part of the year failed to materialise in 2018. The volume of applications during the summer months was largely the same as at the start of the year; August and September saw the lowest number of applications (1 193 and 1 097, respectively).

The decline in the number of asylum applications lodged in Switzerland was in contrast to trends observed in other European countries. Despite the significant migration potential in Italy, onward migration to Switzerland fell sharply. Once again, Switzerland was deliberately bypassed or attempts were made to cross through the country undetected. Of the migrants intercepted at the country's southern border by the Swiss

Main European destinations for asylum seekers, 2018⁸

Country	Asylum applications 2018	Asylum applications 2017	Absolute Change	Relative Change
Germany	162 000	203 000	–41 000	–20 %
France	117 000	95 000	+22 000	+20 %
Greece	64 500	59 000	+5 500	+9 %
Italy	56 000	134 000	–78 000	–58 %
Spain	54 000	31 000	+23 000	+74 %
UK	35 000	34 000	+1 000	+3 %
Netherlands	22 500	17 500	+5 000	+29 %
Belgium	21 500	18 500	+3 000	+14 %
Sweden	20 500	25 500	–5 000	–20 %
Switzerland	15 255	18 088	–2 833	–15,7 %

Main countries of origin of asylum seekers in Europe, 2018⁸

Country	Asylum applications in 2018	Difference compared to 2017	Applications in Switzerland in 2018	Proportion of total asylum applications in Switzerland
Syria	71 500	–28 000	1 393	1,9 %
Afghanistan	42 500	–5 500	1 186	2,8 %
Iraq	41 000	–8 000	611	1,5 %
Pakistan	27 000	–3 500	132	0,5 %
Iran	25 000	+7 000	504	2,0 %
Turkey	24 500	+8 000	1 005	4,1 %
Nigeria	24 000	–16 500	511	2,1 %
Venezuela	22 000	+10 500	42	0,2 %
Albania	21 500	–3 500	95	0,4 %
Georgia	19 500	+8 000	873	4,5 %

⁸ The figures are rounded and are partly based on provisional data; asylum application data are aggregated differently. They are taken from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) statistics. Data from other sources, e.g. Eurostat and the UNHCR, may deviate from these figures.

Border Guard (SBG), only a small minority lodged an asylum application; the remainder were returned to Italy or expelled.

Switzerland's share of the total number of asylum applications filed in Europe was largely unchanged from the previous year: 2.4 % in 2018 compared to 2.5 % in 2017. This is the second lowest level on record since the end of the Cold War. The Swiss average of 1.9 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2017: 2.2) far exceeds the European average of 1.2 asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants (2017: 1.4). Greece accounted for most of the asylum applications per 1000 inhabitants in 2018 (6.2), followed by Cyprus (6.0), Malta (5.0), Luxembourg (3.7), Sweden (2.1) and Belgium (2.0).

Eritrea was once again the top country of origin in 2018, with 2825 asylum applications lodged by their nationals (2017: 3375). Of these, 797 were family reunifications, 29 as part of the European Relocation Programme, 1444 from births and 63 from multiple applications. This means that only 492 fell into the category of primary applications.

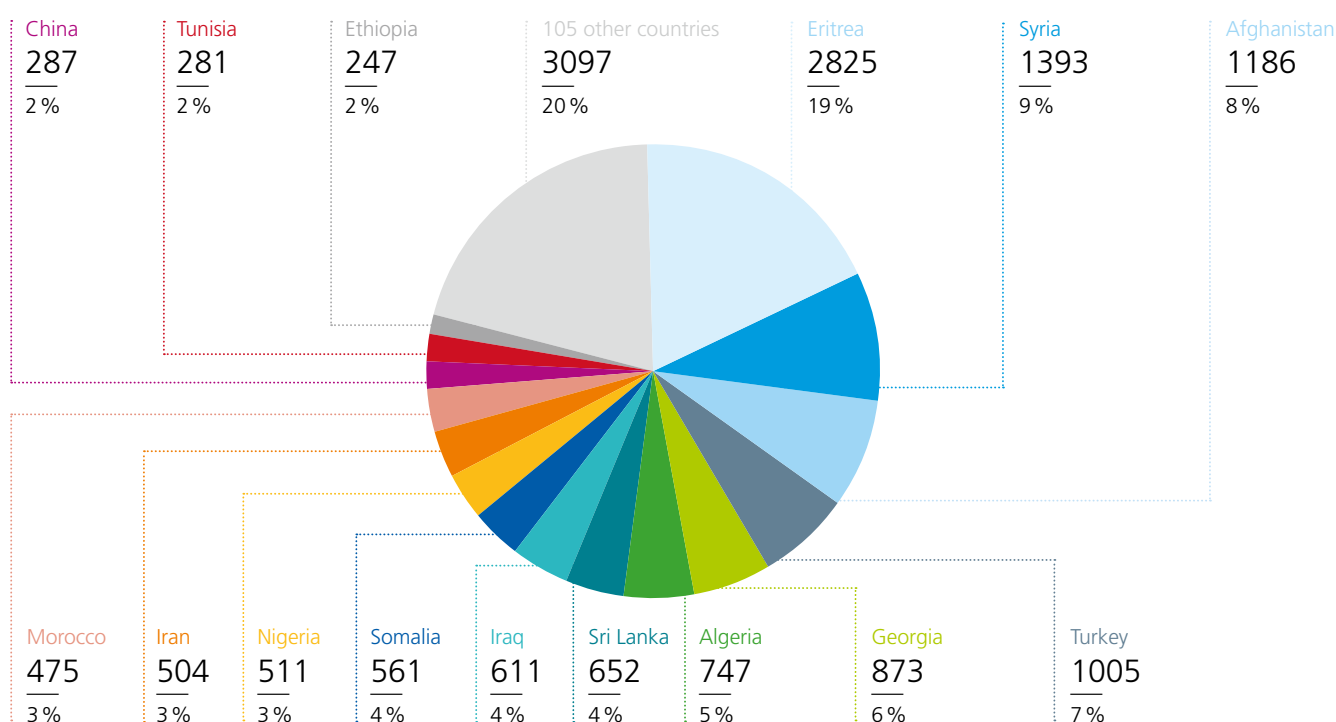
Handling of asylum applications

In 2018 SEM handled 26 103 asylum applications in the first instance, 1118 (–13.0 %) fewer than in 2017 (31 299). The main reason for this decrease were fewer application withdrawals (–1001 on 2017) and application dismissals (–1466 on 2017).

A total of 6358 persons were granted asylum in 2018 (2017: 6360; a drop of 0.03 %). The recognition rate (asylum granted) was 25.9 %, only marginally higher than the previous year (2017: 25.8 %).

A total of 9174 persons were granted temporary admission (2017: 8419, +9.0 %), of whom 8568 (2017: 7839, +9.3 %) were admitted following an asylum decision by the first instance (2017: 3666, +12.8 %). The protection rate (proportion of cases where asylum or temporary admissions were granted following first-instance decisions) totalled 60.5 % (2017: 57.5 %). This increase is due to the fact that most of the backlog of substantiated asylum claims could finally be processed, having been delayed due to the European asy-

Country of origin of persons seeking asylum in Switzerland, 2018



lum and migration crisis of 2015 and the resulting strain that these events had placed on the Swiss asylum system. The number of pending asylum applications at the first-instance level was lower than at the end of 2017 (20 503), shrinking by 8909 to 11 594 (–26.0 %).

Duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance

In 2018 the average duration of asylum applications handled in the first instance was 466 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 2017 it was 340 days; 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. However, settlements can be divided into three categories: Dublin cases, which in 2018 accounted for 18 % of asylum applications received, have an average processing time of two months (61 days); priority 1 asylum applications (low protection rate), which accounted for 7 % of the incoming asylum applications, have an average processing time of roughly six months (151 days); and priority 2 asylum applications (high protection rate), which accounted for a share of 70 %, have an average processing time of 592 days. Many of the priority 2 asylum applications processed in 2018 had been lodged in 2015 and 2016.

Dublin procedure

Since the Dublin Association Agreement came into force in Switzerland on 12 December 2008, experiences have been largely positive; around 40 % of all asylum applications lodged in Switzerland were transferred back to another Dublin state.

In 2018 Switzerland determined that the processing of 6810 asylum applications it had received was in fact the responsibility of another Dublin state. In 4769 of these cases, the requested Dublin partner declared that it was responsible for handling the claim and agreed to the transfer of the asylum seeker; a total of 1760 individuals were returned either by air or by land to the competent Dublin state. During the same period, 1298 individuals were transferred back to Switzerland.

To date, cooperation with partner countries has been smooth. As in previous years, in 2018 most Dublin states honoured their obligation to systematically register incoming migrants. In addition, a number of Dublin partners, in particular Germany and France, were once again in a better position to submit consultation requests to Switzerland.

Legal status review of temporarily admitted Eritrean nationals

Based on the ruling of the Federal Administrative Court on case D-2311/2016 of 31 August 2017 and the response of the FDJP during National Council question time (17.5337) of 18 September 2017, SEM has reviewed the legal status of approx. 3000 Eritrean nationals whose asylum applications were rejected, but who were given leave to temporarily remain in Switzerland on the grounds that their deportation to Eritrea would be unreasonable.



40% of asylum applications lodged in Switzerland were the responsibility of another Dublin state.

Following the implementation and evaluation of a pilot project in early 2018, SEM carried out checks between September and December 2018 on the legal status of nearly 2400 temporarily admitted Eritreans. This group mainly comprised families with children, unaccompanied minors, young adults and individuals who had been residing in Switzerland for at least four years. By the end of 2018, either steps had been taken to revoke temporary admission status in roughly 20 of these cases, or the status had already been revoked.

During the second project phase, which will run until mid-2019, SEM will review the temporary admission status of a further 600 or so Eritrean nationals, primarily lone individuals. Once this work is completed, SEM will evaluate the entire review process and will include its findings in its report to parliament, scheduled for early 2020.

Enforcement of removal orders for Eritreans generally permissible

On 10 July 2018 the Federal Administrative Court issued its ruling on case E-5022/2017, which examined whether impending inscription to the Eritrean compulsory military service makes it impermissible or unreasonable to enforce a removal order to Eritrea in view of Art. 3 (Prohibition of Torture) and Art. 4 (Prohibition of Slavery and Forced Labour) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Court concluded that while conditions are harsh for conscripts, they are not so severe as to make deportation unlawful. Ultimately, the enforcement of removal orders to Eritrea is, in principle, permissible and reasonable. In doing so, the Federal Administrative Court is in line with the revised practices adopted by SEM since 2016. Nonetheless, SEM will continue to thoroughly review each individual case to ensure that there are no elements in the case that would preclude the enforcement of a deportation order.

Cases handled in the first instance 2018

Cases handled	2018	Change from 2017–2018	Change from 2017–2018 in %
Asylum granted	6 358	+ 375	–0.03 %
Recognition rate ⁹	25.9 %	+0.1 percentage points	+0.4 %
Protection rate ¹⁰	60.5 %	+3.0 percentage points	+5.8 %
Applications dismissed	4 745	–1466	–23.6 %
Of which related to Dublin (incl. other transfer procedures) ¹¹	4 440	–1587	–26.3 %
Asylum denied	13 461	+1351	+11.2 %
Application cancelled	1 539	–1001	–39.4 %
Total cases handled	26 103	–1118	–4.1 %
Applications pending in first instance	11 594	–8909	–43.5 %

⁹ Proportion of cases where asylum was granted in relation to all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications).

¹⁰ Proportion of all cases handled (excl. cancelled asylum applications) where asylum or temporary admission was granted in the first instance.

¹¹ 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 and Integration Act (FNIA) 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 the Asylum Act, 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 2018, a total of 124 asylum seekers received a residence permit by virtue of this provision.
- The FNIA 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 2018, 1949 temporarily admitted persons were granted a residence permit on this basis.

- In addition, the FNIA enables a residence permit to be granted in the event of serious personal hardship. In 2018, 716 illegal (undocumented) 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 2018, 1949 temporarily admitted persons were granted a residence permit.



Afram Lahdo, transporter from Syria

8. Returns

Switzerland's return policy promotes, first and foremost, the voluntary or mandatory return of asylum seekers whose application has been rejected through a system of benefits, or "return assistance". SEM funds these benefits as well as the return counselling services provided by the cantons and the federal asylum centres. If unsuccessful applicants fail to comply with the order to leave Switzerland, coercive measures may be taken and arrangements made for their deportation. Likewise, other foreigners who are staying in Switzerland illegally may also be expelled.

Return assistance

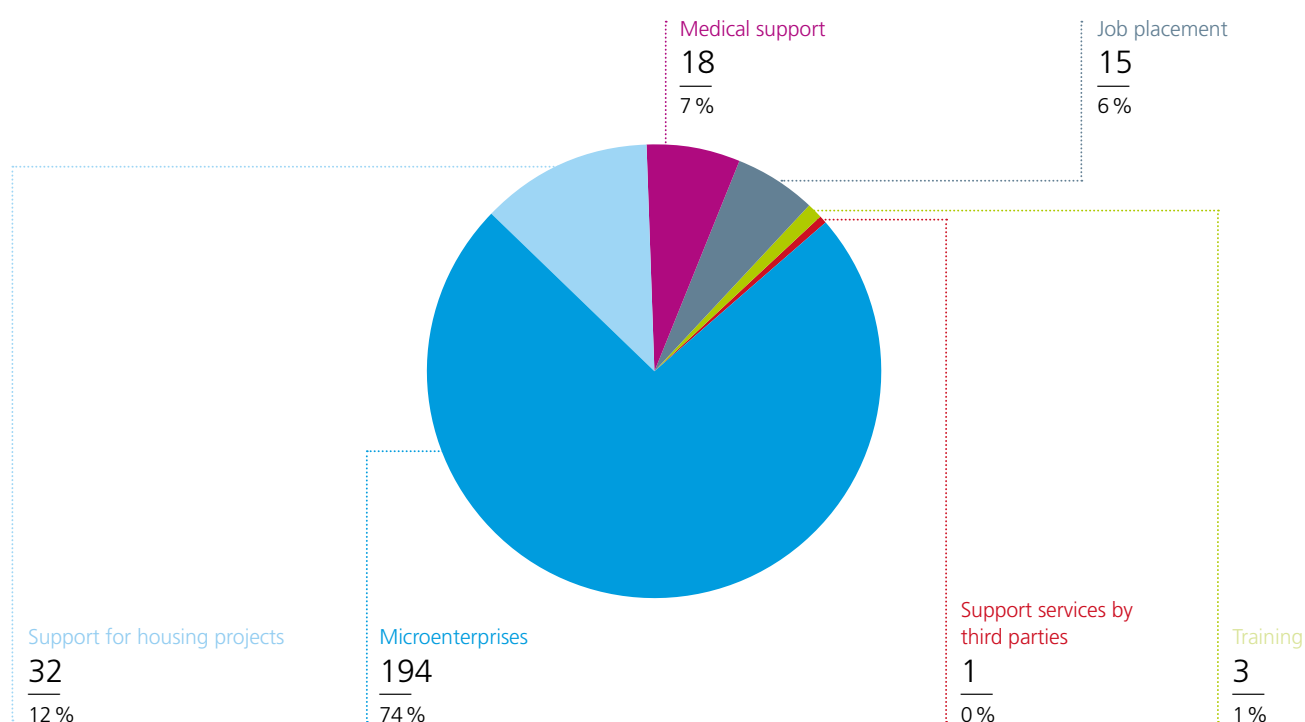
In 2018, 1006 persons from over 60 countries received return assistance. The five countries with the highest number of departees who received return assistance funded by Switzerland were Algeria (73 departees), Iraq (54), Gambia (36), Sri Lanka (35) and Turkey (32).

"When I was in Switzerland, I really didn't believe that I'd actually get this support after I'd left."

This is an example of the feedback received during an internal evaluation of return assistance carried out last year. Some nine months after he left Switzerland, a Gambian national shared what he had thought about return assistance before returning home.

His story reflects the frequent mistrust surrounding support offered by a government agency; many of the returnees come from countries where the authorities enjoy little or no trust. The work of the return assistance counselling services in the cantons and the federal asylum centres is vital for nurturing confidence in the return assistance measure.

Type of reintegration projects



Why do asylum seekers return home despite these qualms? According to the evaluation, the majority (30 %) do so for family reasons, followed by a negative asylum decision (24 %), or a lack of economic prospects in Switzerland (24 %). One in eight respondents agreed to return when they were offered the opportunity to take part in a reintegration project. Most of these projects (around three quarters) concerned the setting up of microenterprises. SEM also supported housing projects, covered medical costs or funded training for returnees. Small grocery stores, farming projects (crops or livestock), trades, transport (taxis) or restaurants (bars) have long been the most popular choices. Nine months after the individuals left Switzerland, three quarters of the projects had been launched and

provided those concerned with a source of income. At the time of the SEM evaluation, the project failure rate was a mere 5 %. Over 90 % of respondents had not relocated, and stated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with their current situation. The most frequently cited reasons for dissatisfaction were financial difficulties, housing problems and the local political situation. However, feedback during the SEM evaluation visits was largely positive.



In 2018, 1006 persons from over 60 countries received return assistance. With the assistance provided to him by the State Secretariat for Migration, Mr D. was able to buy sheep and goats in Mongolia. Now he produces milk, wool, cashmere and meat.

9. Coercive measures

The cantonal migration authorities can take coercive measures to enforce removal orders.

Last year, a total of 3284 detention orders were issued. Most of the individuals placed in administrative detention in 2018 came from Algeria, Nigeria and Albania.

The average duration of administrative detention last year was 25 days, practically unchanged from 2017 (24 days).

Over the last three years, the removal rate was 85 %; the remaining 15 % were released from detention.

On 26 June 2018 the National Council Control Committee passed its report on administrative detention in the asylum system. The report sets out seven recommendations, primarily on the registration of unsupervised departures, the harmonisation of cantonal practices, the detention of minors and data management at federal level.





Anton Begić, police officer from Croatia

On 28 September 2018 the Federal Council responded to the report. It stressed that the priority was promoting voluntary returns. Forced removals from Switzerland should only take place when the person concerned has not complied with the given deadline for their departure. The Federal Council also pointed out that the use of coercive measures against families and minors only occurs in exceptional cases, and that children under the age of 15 may not be held in administrative detention. SEM subsequently instructed the cantons to explore other options for enforcing removal orders in such cases.

Removal by air

In 2018 the Swiss authorities ensured the removal, under official escort, by air of 6137 persons (2017: 7147). This fall of almost 15 % is due primarily to the further drop in the volume of incoming asylum applications.

22 % of those ordered to leave Switzerland did so voluntarily (2017: 22 %). However, many persons failed to comply with 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 boards the aircraft). Only 560 persons (9.1 % of deportees) were escorted by specially trained security officials to their destination country, of whom 214 were returned to their countries of origin on 51 special deportation flights.

Since January 2009 Switzerland has been able to take part in joint EU deportation flights coordinated and financed by the EU's border control agency Frontex. Since 2014, this cooperation has been stepped up. In 2013, Switzerland took part in only three joint EU deportation flights (6 deportees); in 2017 the figure had risen to 17, and last year to 22 flights (82 deportees). Switzerland played the lead role in 16 of these flights over the last year. Participation in joint EU deportation flights is also in Switzerland's financial interests, as Frontex covers flight costs of around CHF 1.5 million on average per year.

Participation in joint EU
deportation flights is also in Switzerland's
financial interests.



Antonia Bosse, alpine herder with a Master of Science in Organic Farming from Germany

1. Integration: “Expect and Encourage”

Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration

On 16 December 2018 the Swiss parliament approved two amendments to the Foreign Nationals Act (FNA) submitted by the Federal Council. The first concerned the implementation of Article 121a Cst (immigration control); these changes came into effect in July 2018.

The second dealt with the introduction of legally binding integration criteria. The Foreign Nationals Act (FNA) was revised accordingly and renamed the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (Foreign Nationals and Integration Act [FNIA]). Its main provisions, which came into effect on 1 January 2019,¹² further reinforce the “Expect and Encourage” principle underpinning Switzerland’s integration policy. While the Ordinance on Admission, Period of Stay and Employment (ASEO) further elaborates on the integration requirements that foreign nationals must meet, the Ordinance on the Integration of Foreign Nationals (FNIntO) primarily governs integration promotion efforts.

The FNIntO contains binding provisions on cooperation among actors involved in integration promotion and on the implementation of cantonal integration programmes. The ASEO provides for tougher penalties if the person refuses, for no acceptable reason, to avail themselves of integration services. Should an individual fail to comply with the integration agreement and can offer no valid excuse for such action, his residence permit may be revoked. Foreign nationals whose level of integration does not meet the legal requirements will forfeit their permanent residence (C) permit and be issued with a residence (B) permit instead.

The ASEO also governs the notification requirement for employers (which replaces the existing authorisation requirement) who wish to hire recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons.

Furthermore, it sets out the integration criteria that migration authorities must take into account when making decisions under the FNIA, such as the issuance of B and C permits. They include respect for public security and order, as well as the values enshrined in the Swiss Constitution; participating in economic life or acquiring an education; and demonstrated proficiency in one of Switzerland’s national languages. These criteria mirror those stipulated in the new Swiss Citizenship Act (SCA), which came into force on 1 January 2018 (see Section C3).

The Foreign Nationals and Integration Act further reinforces the “Expect and Encourage” principle.

Language proficiency is defined as the ability to communicate in a national language; in principle, foreign nationals must be able to communicate orally in the language of their place of residence. Applicants must submit written proof (certificate, diploma or similar qualification) that they have acquired the requisite level of proficiency. The greater the rights arising from the desired legal status, the higher the language requirements are. For example, the ASEO demands a level of proficiency, as per the CEFR,¹³ of at least A1 orally for B permit applicants, and at least A2 orally and A1 written for C permit (permanent residence) applicants. To be granted a permit for the purpose of family reunification, the recently arrived family member must already be able to communicate in the national language of their new place of residence or be enrolled in a language course.

fide – quality language tuition

To ensure that foreign nationals receive quality language tuition, the Confederation introduced the fide programme, which stands for “Français, Italiano, Deutsch in Switzerland”. Since 2015, the fide Secretariat oversees the operational implementation of the programme, and is responsible for information and communication, the fide quality framework and label, teacher qualifications and, since the end of 2017, recognition of the required proof of language proficiency. fide also offers its own proof of proficiency, which is tailored to practical language skills for everyday use in Switzerland and leads directly to the “language passport”, a valid and officially recognised document which details the oral and written proficiency of the

¹² Pursuant to the approved legislative proposal with regard to integration, on 1 January 2018 the special charges levied on wages earned by temporarily admitted persons and asylum seekers were abolished and a technical adjustment was made to the provisions governing the funding and award of integration grants.

¹³ Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe. See also: www.fide-info.ch/en/lsprachniveaus.

2. Integration Agenda Switzerland

holder. Individuals who have already passed a different test may also apply for a language passport. However, only tests that meet fide quality criteria are recognised; SEM has tasked the fide Secretariat with managing an up-to-date list of approved tests. Applicants can also obtain a fide language passport if they are able to prove that they have acquired the necessary language skills by other means, e.g. through a formal educational qualification such as an apprenticeship diploma/certificate.

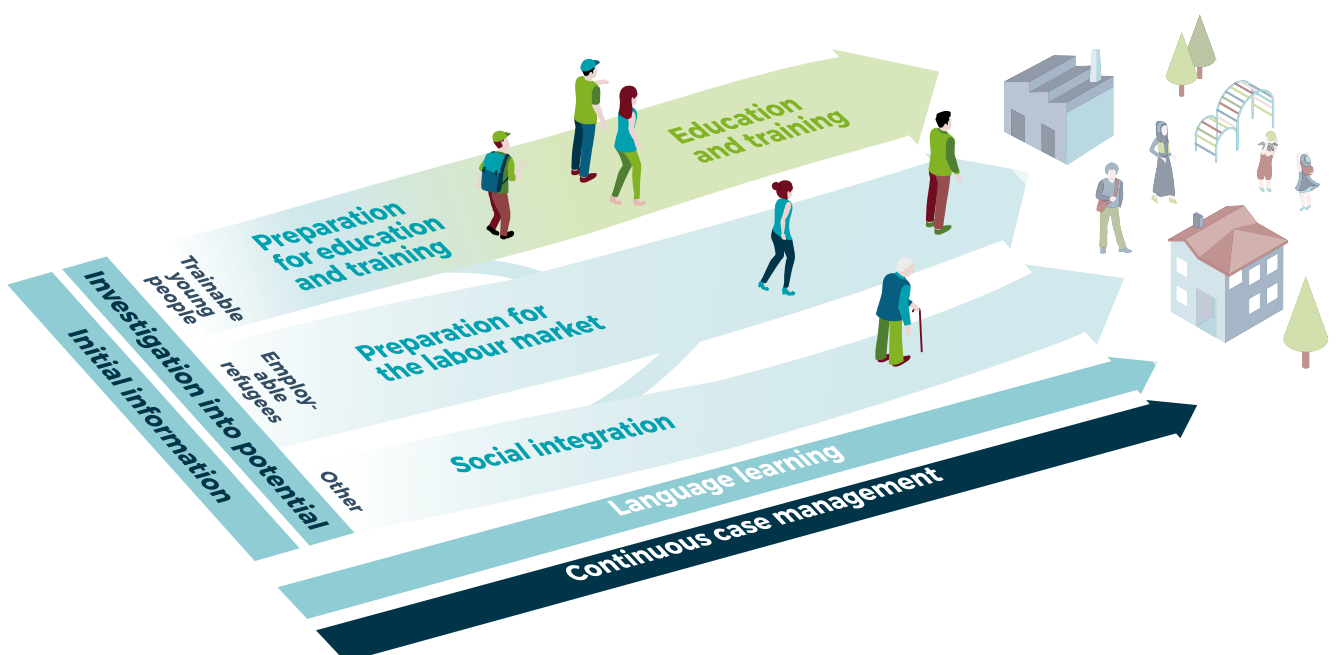
For more information on fide, go to www.fide-info.ch.

For more information on the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, go to www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/aktuell/gesetzgebung.html.

Many refugees and temporarily admitted persons in Switzerland take a long time to find work, are dependent on social welfare and have practically zero contact with the local community. This situation can lead to social tensions and considerable additional costs for the state. In response, the Confederation and the cantons decided in early 2017 to address these challenges by establishing a joint nationwide integration agenda. The development process was broad based, at both the political and technical level, and involved federal, cantonal and communal actors from the integration, vocational education and training, employment and social welfare fields. The result was the "Integration Agenda Switzerland", which was released in spring 2018, 18 months after the process had begun. It was subsequently approved by the relevant intercantonal conferences, as well as by the Federal Council.

Through the adoption of targeted and well-coordinated measures, the integration agenda aims to make the best possible use of the potential of temporarily admitted persons and refugees, thereby ensuring their long-term integration in the domestic labour market and the local community. The cantons already had a framework in place – the cantonal integration programmes (CIP) – which encompasses all available integration promotion measures. The integration agenda builds on this tried and tested instrument and the experiences ac-

This is how the integration agenda works



quired from it in recent years. The integration measures set out in the agenda are binding for all cantons and, by extension, for all refugees and temporarily admitted persons. They should be implemented as early as possible, refined and adapted to the given target group and their specific needs. At the core of all these measures is end-to-end case management. Refugees and temporarily admitted persons will be assigned a coach who will provide them with professional support and guidance throughout the integration process. This ensures that the measures taken are well balanced and that efforts by the relevant integration partners are coordinated effectively. Such an approach prevents unnecessary delays and duplications, takes better account of each individual's specific needs and potential, and makes the integration process clearer and more sustainable.

The Confederation intends to increase the one-time integration payment it gives to the cantons for each refugee or temporarily admitted person they accept, from the current level of CHF 6000 to CHF 18000. In return, the cantons must provide integration services, including initial information, counselling and support, language classes, training and measures to improve employability, as well as guidance on the Swiss way of life and social integration. These measures as well as the higher integration payments are enshrined in the Ordinance on the

Integration of Foreign Nationals (FNIntO) and set out in an SEM circular from 4 December 2018. The revised FNIntO is scheduled to come into effect on 1 May 2019. The integration agenda is implemented through the Cantonal Integration Programmes.

Refugees and temporarily admitted persons now benefit from a clearly structured and ongoing integration process which, depending on the potential of the individual and the vocational education and training or other qualifications they receive, gives them access to the labour market. Social integration is another key component of the integration agenda, and is especially important for individuals who are unable to work on health grounds.

Everyone is guaranteed one-on-one assistance from a qualified professional throughout the entire process, which aids a swifter and successful integration. From the outset, newcomers are officially welcomed to the local community and receive information about life in Switzerland, including their rights and their obligations. In addition, they are briefed on the integration process and what is expected of them in this regard. Language classes should begin as soon as possible and match the specific needs of the person concerned. Refugees and temporarily admitted persons of working age undergo a thorough assess-



One of the goals of the integration agenda is for all refugees and provisionally accepted persons to have basic knowledge of a national language after three years.

ment of their working potential. Based on the results, they are directed to services that best match their needs. For adolescents and young adults, the focus is on preparing them for entry to the vocational education and training system; for adults it is preparing them for entry to the job market via other qualification programmes and supervised placements with a Swiss employer. Regular performance reviews of both groups are conducted by job coaches. They and other professionals are an important point of contact for the refugees and temporarily admitted persons as well as for their employers. Job coaches liaise directly with the latter on matters such as the provision of apprenticeship positions, placements and on-the-job support.

Individuals who are unable to work, for whatever reason, benefit from measures that facilitate and encourage their participation in local community life.

The integration agenda aims to ensure long-term integration in the domestic labour market and the local community.

Until a decision is reached on their application, asylum seekers do not receive intensive integration measures. Nevertheless, to increase the chances of their successful integration in the longer term, the process should begin as early as possible. Therefore, the cantons should be able to use their federal integration payments regardless of the legal status of the recipient of integration services, i.e. to also fund language classes for asylum seekers who stand a high probability of being granted the right to remain in Switzerland. Language classes should start earlier but follow the normal pattern. This is extremely important given Switzerland's currently high protection rate. Research and experiences both in Switzerland and in other countries show that the early introduction of measures boosts the long-term chances of successful integration. Also, decisive to success is the removal of unnecessary obstacles, such as the authorisation requirement for Swiss employers wishing to hire asylum seekers and temporarily admitted persons, and the special charge on wages; these have already been abolished (see Section on the FNIA).

The joint integration agenda of the Confederation and the cantons now contains a set of clearly measurable targets:

- All recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons have basic knowledge of one national language after three years.
- 80 % of children from the asylum system can communicate in the language of their place of residence before they start school.
- Two-thirds of recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons aged between 16 and 25 are enrolled in a vocational education and training course within five years.
- Half of adult refugees and temporarily admitted persons are integrated in the labour market within seven years.
- All recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons are within a few years familiar with the Swiss way of life and have contact with the local community.

Regular reviews are needed to ensure that these targets are being met and to evaluate the impact that integration measures have had. The decision was therefore taken to develop a monitoring system; its introduction is scheduled for mid-2020.

The Confederation and the cantons have also agreed to undertake, at a later date, a review of the entire funding system for asylum seekers and refugees, specifically in relation to support, social welfare and the provision of integration measures. The aim is to facilitate swifter and lasting integration by removing the perverse incentives that currently exist and thereby reduce the dependency of temporarily admitted persons and refugees on the social welfare system.

For more information on the Integration Agenda Switzerland, go to www.integrationsagenda.ch.

3. New Swiss citizenship rules

On 1 January 2018 the new Federal Act on Swiss Citizenship (SCA) and the Ordinance on Swiss Citizenship (SCO) came into force. The primary aims of this reform are greater harmonisation with the integration and language skills requirements set down in the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act, improved decision-making bases and uniform required periods of residence and naturalisation practices at cantonal and communal level. The revised legislation also clarifies the roles of the cantons and the Confederation in the naturalisation procedure.

Ordinary naturalisation

The new Swiss Citizenship Act contains provisions that enable foreign nationals to acquire Swiss citizenship by means of the ordinary procedure if they have a permanent residence (C) permit, have been living in Switzerland for a total of at least ten years (years between the ages of 8 and 18 counts as double, and the required cantonal and communal period of residence is between two and five years), and have integrated in Swiss life. Successful integration is demonstrated in particular by being able to communicate in a national language in everyday situations, orally and in writing (at least to B1 level orally and A2 level written), showing respect for public security and order, and the values enshrined in the Federal Constitution, participating in economic life or acquiring an education and encouraging and supporting the integration of family members. In addition, applicants must be familiar with the Swiss way of life and pose no risk to Switzerland's internal or external security.

The Swiss Citizenship Ordinance sets out the integration criteria in greater detail. The cantons may impose additional integration requirements if they wish.

Naturalisation is a three-stage process. Responsibility for ordinary naturalisation lies with the commune and the canton of residence. If all formal and substantive requirements are met, the State Secretariat for Migration SEM grants the federal naturalisation licence. The applicant acquires communal, cantonal and Swiss citizenship when the cantonal naturalisation decision becomes legally binding.

Simplified naturalisation

Simplified naturalisation is provided for:

- a foreign national who is married to a Swiss man or Swiss woman;
- stateless children; and
- children aged under 22 whose parents are naturalised.

To qualify, applicants who are resident in Switzerland must (just as for the ordinary naturalisation procedure) be successfully integrated. In addition, the relevant cantonal and communal naturalisation authorities investigate all citizenship-relevant aspects, such as the applicant's knowledge of Switzerland (geography, history, politics and society). In addition, the applicant must not pose a risk to the internal and external security of Switzerland.



Since 2018, young third-generation foreign nationals have been able to go through a simplified naturalisation procedure.



Kyra Holt, volleyball player from the USA

Applicants who are resident abroad must have close ties to Switzerland, namely:

- they have spent at least five days in Switzerland on three separate occasions within the six years prior to the application;
- they can communicate orally in everyday situations in one of Switzerland's national languages;
- they have basic knowledge of Swiss geography, history, politics and society, and
- they nurture contacts with Swiss nationals.

SEM decides on simplified naturalisation applications but consults the canton concerned before granting citizenship.

Reinstatement of citizenship

To be eligible for reinstatement of citizenship, the person concerned must have held Swiss citizenship, but has somehow lost it. This can happen in the following cases, for example:

- A child born to a Swiss parent outside Switzerland who has failed to register with the Swiss representation abroad before their 25th birthday; in this case, they forfeit their Swiss citizenship;
- A Swiss citizen living abroad who has become or is assured of becoming the citizen of another country and has been relieved of Swiss citizenship at their own request;
- A female Swiss citizen who has automatically lost her Swiss citizenship by marrying a foreign man.

Individuals who have forfeited, been relieved of or have otherwise lost their Swiss citizenship can apply for their citizenship to be reinstated within ten years. If ten years have already elapsed, persons may apply for citizenship to be reinstated only if they have been resident in Switzerland for three years. In all cases of reinstatement, applicants who live in Switzerland must demonstrate that they are well integrated (as in the ordinary naturalisation procedure); applicants who live abroad must demonstrate close ties to Switzerland. Applicants are also tested on all citizenship-relevant matters, such as their knowledge of Switzerland (geography, history, politics and society). In addition, applicants must not present a risk to Switzerland's internal and external security.

SEM decides on applications for reinstatement of citizenship after consulting the canton concerned.

Simplified naturalisation for third-generation foreign nationals

On 12 February 2017, the people and parliament approved the constitutional amendment to provide for the simplified naturalisation of young third-generation foreign nationals. The corresponding legislative provision came into effect on 15 February 2018. Young third-generation foreign nationals can now apply for simplified naturalisation if:

- at least one grandparent was born in Switzerland or it is credibly demonstrated that he or she acquired a right of residence;
- at least one parent has obtained a permanent residence permit, has been resident in Switzerland for at least ten years, and attended compulsory schooling in Switzerland for at least five years, and
- the child was born in Switzerland, holds a permanent residence permit and has attended compulsory schooling in Switzerland for at least five years.

The applicant must (like in the ordinary naturalisation procedure) be well integrated and pose no risk to the internal and external security of Switzerland. The application must be submitted before the child reaches the age of 25 (exception: children who were aged 25 to 34 on 15 February 2018 can apply within five years).

SEM decides on simplified naturalisation applications after consulting the canton concerned.

SEM decides on applications for simplified naturalisation after consulting the canton concerned.

D

Main highlights in 2018



Reza Alizadah, cheesemaker from Afghanistan

1. Challenges faced by the asylum system

Asylum system reform

At both national asylum conferences (2013 and 2014), federal, cantonal, communal and city representatives unanimously agreed that measures should be taken to speed up the asylum procedure. The resulting revision of the Asylum Act was approved by the people in a referendum held in June 2016.

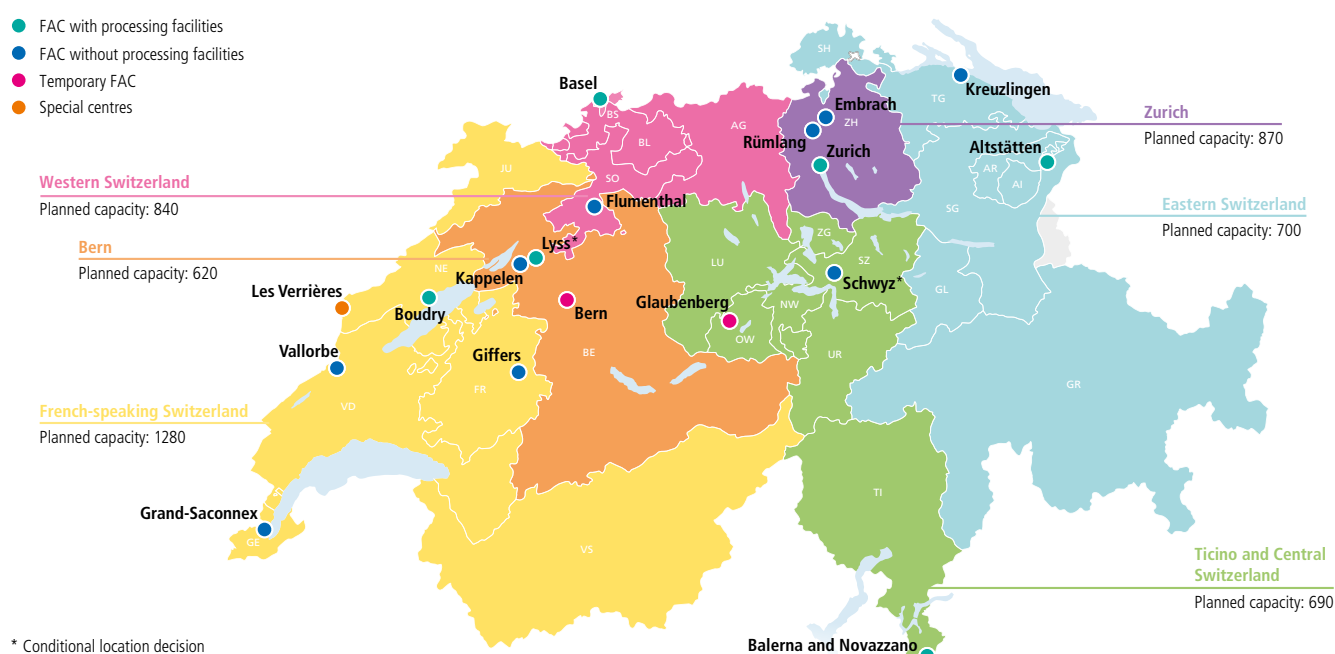
The revision should give all asylum seekers access to free legal protection. Individuals in need of protection should continue to receive the necessary protection and be able to integrate more swiftly in Swiss life. In addition, it should reduce the incentive to lodge manifestly unfounded asylum applications and therefore sustainably strengthen trust in the Swiss asylum system.

While certain provisions were implemented earlier, the lion's share of the amended Asylum Act came into effect on 1 March 2019.

Regarding the federal asylum centres, the Confederation and the cantons agreed on the creation of six asylum regions, while maintaining an asylum head office within SEM. The total capacity of the federal asylum centres will be 5000 places. These are distributed across the six regions in proportion to the population size in the given region. Between two and five federal asylum centres will be established in each of the six regions.

All regions will have a Federal asylum centre with processing facilities. They will also have at least one Federal asylum centre that accommodates individuals who are awaiting a decision on their asylum application or have been ordered to leave Switzerland (i.e. a Federal asylum centre without processing facilities). In addition, there are two Special Centres for asylum seekers who significantly endanger public safety and order or whose conduct massively disrupts the operation of normal federal asylum centres.

The federal asylum centres (FAC) in the six asylum regions



Operations in the six regions and at the asylum head office in Bern-Wabern were extended or restructured to ensure that the changes could be enforced as of 1 March 2019. The creation of six regions and central divisions were well under way at the end of the 2018.

So that the shorter asylum procedure complies with the provisions of the Swiss Constitution, asylum seekers now benefit from free legal protection as soon as the process begins. They receive advice and guidance, in particular on their rights and obligations as regards the asylum procedure, and have access to legal representation throughout the procedure.

The revision of the Asylum Act seeks to establish a significantly faster asylum procedure that still respects the legal rights of all concerned.

SEM launched a public tender for the provision of free legal protection services in the federal asylum centres across the six asylum regions; in October 2018, it awarded the commission to the following organisations:

- asylum region Western Switzerland: Caritas Schweiz
- asylum regions Bern and Zurich: Bietergemeinschaft Berner Rechtsberatungsstelle für Menschen in Not /Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk
- asylum region Ticino and Central Switzerland: Bietergemeinschaft Caritas Schweiz/SOS Ticino
- asylum regions Eastern Switzerland and Northeastern Switzerland: Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz

A procedure for authorising legal protection for asylum seekers in the extended procedure (i.e. in the cantons) is currently being developed.

Resettlement

The decision of the Federal Council in December 2018 to accept 2000 victims of the Syrian conflict from first-host countries continued to dominate SEM resettlement activities in 2018. In 2017 almost 600 were taken in, as planned; the target of 1000 individuals was finally reached in 2018 with the arrival of the 996 Syrian refugees. The remaining 400 or so refugees are scheduled to arrive in early 2019.

To achieve the 2018 contingency of 1000 refugees, five selection missions, starting in November 2017, were conducted in the first-host countries of Lebanon and Jordan. SEM experts interviewed possible resettlement candidates who were put forward by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They were asked about their reasons for fleeing Syria and their current living conditions in the first-host country, and underwent identity and security screening. Finally, they were asked about their readiness to integrate, briefed about the cultural, social and legal situation in Switzerland, and prepared as best as possible for their new life in Switzerland. During the five missions, SEM interviewed 1367 prospective candidates proposed by the UNHCR. Some were rejected (primarily due to a lack of readiness to integrate), while others decided against resettlement for personal reasons.

The new arrivals spend the first weeks in a federal reception and processing centre where they undergo a medical check-up and another interview. Afterwards, they are granted asylum under Art. 56 of the Federal Asylum Act and transferred to the cantons, which have special integration measures in place for resettlement refugees. They see to it that the refugees are assigned a coach from the outset and are given the opportunity to integrate in the local community. The coaches and refugees agree on a set of individual integration goals based on the options open to them and their individual potential. SEM has established service agreements with all of the cantons on the provision of these special measures and grants them a one-off payment of CHF 11 000 per resettlement refugee. Experiences from the federal programmes to integrate resettlement refugees, particularly coaching services, have helped shape the Integration Agenda Switzerland. Since it entered into force, these service agreements have been transferred to the joint federal and cantonal programme.

At the end of 2017 and separate from the ongoing resettlement programme, the Federal Council decided to accept an additional 80 individuals as an urgent humanitarian measure. This action was in response to a request from the UNHCR to take in extremely vulnerable refugees, most of whom had been evacuated from Libya to Niger. The operational implementation of this urgent measure occurred in 2018. The individuals concerned were mainly young Eritrean women who had lived through particularly brutal experiences in Libya and during their escape.

In November 2018 the Federal Council decided to take in up to 800 more highly vulnerable victims of the Syrian conflict. At the same time, it tasked the FDJP with drawing up a proposal for a resettlement programme for both 2020 and 2021. The Plan for the Foreseeable and Manageable Reception of Refugees, which was developed by the federal and cantonal point of contact (FDJP, CDSS and CCJPD), served as a basis.

As well as the implementation of the national resettlement programme, SEM is also part of international knowledge and experience-sharing networks in this particular field. For example, it is a member of the Syrian and Mediterranean Core Groups, participates in expert groups from resettlement states and the UNHCR, and plays an active role in the EU-Frank project (European Union Action on Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge). In 2018 SEM was heavily involved in devising a European training programme for resettlement specialists as part of this EU-Frank project.



In 2018 the Federal Council decided to adopt a further resettlement quota of up to 800 particularly vulnerable victims of the Syria conflict.

2. Improved enforcement of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons

On 16 December 2016 Switzerland's two federal chambers passed a series of legislative amendments designed to improve the enforcement of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (AFMP), which was signed in 1999 by Switzerland, the EU, its member states as well as the EFTA states. The Federal Council proposals were accepted, unchanged, by parliament. The amendments concern the disqualification of job seekers from social welfare, the termination of the right of residence upon the end of an employment contract and the reporting of information on the receipt of supplementary benefits. Some of the changes came into force on 1 July 2018, others on 1 January 2019. These provisions are included in the new Foreign Nationals and Integration Act (FNIA), which came into effect on 1 January 2019.

No social welfare for foreign job seekers

Prior to 1 July 2018, federal legislation had no provisions governing the issue of whether foreign job seekers in Switzerland were entitled to claim social welfare. The law and practice therefore varied from one canton to the other. According to Art. 29a of the new FNIA, foreign nationals who enter Switzerland for the sole purpose of finding employment, and their family members, are not entitled to claim social welfare in any part of the country. The provision does not contravene the AFMP and does not affect the right to emergency assistance for anyone in Switzerland regardless of their status.

Foreign nationals who enter Switzerland for the sole purpose of finding employment are not entitled to claim social welfare.

Expiry of the right of residence after employment

EU/EFTA nationals whose employment contract in Switzerland has come to an end may only remain in the country for a specified period of time. Article 61a of the new FNIA sets out the different expiry periods.

For holders of short-stay permits (L permit, EU/EFTA), the right of residence expires six months from the end of the employment contract. The same applies to holders of a residence permit (B permit, EU/EFTA), if the employment contract ends within the first twelve months of residency in Switzerland. If unemployment benefit continues to be paid on expiry of the six-month period, the right of residence expires when the benefit is no longer paid. During this period, the foreign claimant may not receive social welfare. Residents (B permit, EU/EFTA) whose employment contract ends after more than twelve months are, in principle, entitled to claim unemployment benefit for an additional six months. Their right of residence expires six months after these benefits cease to be paid; in all other cases, the right of residence ends six months after the termination of the employment contract. Within these periods, foreign nationals continue to enjoy the rights arising from their employee status, including the right to social welfare.

There is an *ordre public* (public policy) exception: the right of residence continues if the employment contract ends due to temporary unfitness for work because of illness, accident or invalidity. Even if the employment contract is ended for another reason than those cited above, the foreign national may remain in Switzerland under another legally recognised title, for example as a person without gainful employment, but only if all applicable conditions under the AFMP are met. Before the cantonal authorities issue a removal order, they will review each case to ascertain whether the person has the right to residence under the provisions of the AFMP.

Information sharing on supplementary benefit claimants

The payment of supplementary benefits can have a bearing on the right of residence. If EU/EFTA nationals are not gainfully employed, their right of residence under the AFMP expires from the moment they become eligible to claim supplementary benefits.

So that the cantonal authorities can check whether the conditions for residence are met, the authorities responsible for disbursing supplementary benefits must now share data on the foreign claimant with the migration authorities. This

information is generated when the first payment of supplementary benefits is made or as soon as the reimbursement of health and disability costs exceeds CHF 6000 in a calendar year. Conversely, the cantonal migration offices share information on foreign nationals whose right of residence was revoked or not extended with the authorities responsible for disbursing supplementary benefits. Individuals who are in Switzerland illegally have no right to these benefits. The new provisions enacted by parliament govern the active sharing of these data in their entirety.



EU/EFTA nationals no longer employed in Switzerland are only entitled to remain in the country for a limited time.

3. Internal security: present and future

In response to increasingly complex security concerns and a growing number of isolated security-related cases, SEM established the specialist Internal Security and Counter-Terrorism Unit (RIST) in 2017. After one year in operation, an external performance review was carried out to clarify if the specialist unit had met the expectations of SEM management. The report released in November 2018 found that the RIST has generated considerable added value for SEM and its external partners. The findings also endorsed the decision to create this new unit and make it answerable to the Delegation for Migration Issues in the Middle East. The concrete recommendations set out in the report will be implemented during 2019. They include additional measures to enhance the RIST and ensure that SEM activities take greater account of security matters.

The security policy aspects of migration remained as topical in 2018 as they had been in the previous year. According to Federal Intelligence Service (FIS) assessments, the risk of jihadi-motivated terrorism in Switzerland remains high. Also, the Swiss authorities are faced with more recent phenomena such as the return of radicalised individuals from conflict zones. In order to address these challenges appropriately and effectively, it is vital that all of the agencies concerned work closely together. The RIST is the point of contact for SEM's external federal and cantonal partners on all security-related matters, and coordinates all of the State Secretariat's security-related activities.

It has become increasingly apparent over the last few years that the security policy dimensions of migration are largely trans-border phenomena. For this reason, it is essential that European countries reinforce their networks and intensify cooperation. Switzerland helps to advance these efforts. For example, in autumn 2018 SEM organised the first ever security workshop as part of the General Directors of Immigration Services Conference (GDISC). A decision was taken to establish a European network of contacts in order to streamline and strengthen cooperation with the migration authorities on security-related matters.

In 2019 SEM will introduce additional security-related projects. For example, all SEM personnel will follow an e-Learning security awareness and training module, while improvements will be made to cooperation and coordination between the federal and cantonal authorities. Finally, SEM will carry out the necessary preparatory work for its participation in the Swiss Security Network training exercise (SVU 19), which is scheduled to take place in November 2019.



The Federal Intelligence Service considers the terrorism threat to be high.

4. Integrated border management: end of first strategic cycle

Illegal migration, professional people smugglers and cross-border crime are major challenges for the federal and cantonal authorities. These phenomena can only be effectively combatted if the Confederation and cantons work in lock step. To this end, in February 2011 the Federal Council set up an inter-departmental working group comprising representatives of the federal administration and the cantons, who were tasked with devising an integrated border management (IBM) strategy. In June 2012 the Federal Council took delivery of the final report. This strategy now covers all cantonal and federal activities aimed at combatting illegal migration, professional people smuggling and cross-border crime, while ensuring that legal entry to Switzerland runs as smoothly as possible.

In terms of the implementation of this strategy, the working group put together an IBM Action Plan which contained 68 concrete measures. SEM oversaw the implementation of these measures by the competent authorities and provided the Federal Council and the Conference of Cantonal Justice and Police Directors (CCJPD) with an annual progress report. At the end of November 2018, some four years after implementation process had begun, SEM published its final report on the first Swiss IBM strategy.

The findings were largely positive. Around two thirds of the measures had been implemented and had made a decisive contribution to achieving the strategic goals. Integrated border management could be reinforced by both these measures and the implementation process. The relevant federal and cantonal authorities stepped up and improved their cooperation, and promoted greater awareness of a common integrated approach to border management. The implementation process also generated new ideas and joint solutions.

Before SEM embarked on the development of a follow-up strategy, an external evaluation was carried out on the strategy and the methods that had been adopted to date. The team also identified areas where improvements could be made. It concluded that the strategy was appropriate and should be pursued in the future.

The new version will build on the original strategy but will also address emerging challenges, such as the rise in travel and migratory movements and technical and legal developments at EU level. As per the evaluation recommendations, the measures will be more flexible so as to ensure a more effective response to emerging challenges. As with the first strategy, the new version should be developed in close cooperation with the authorities concerned and submitted to the Federal Council by the end of 2019.

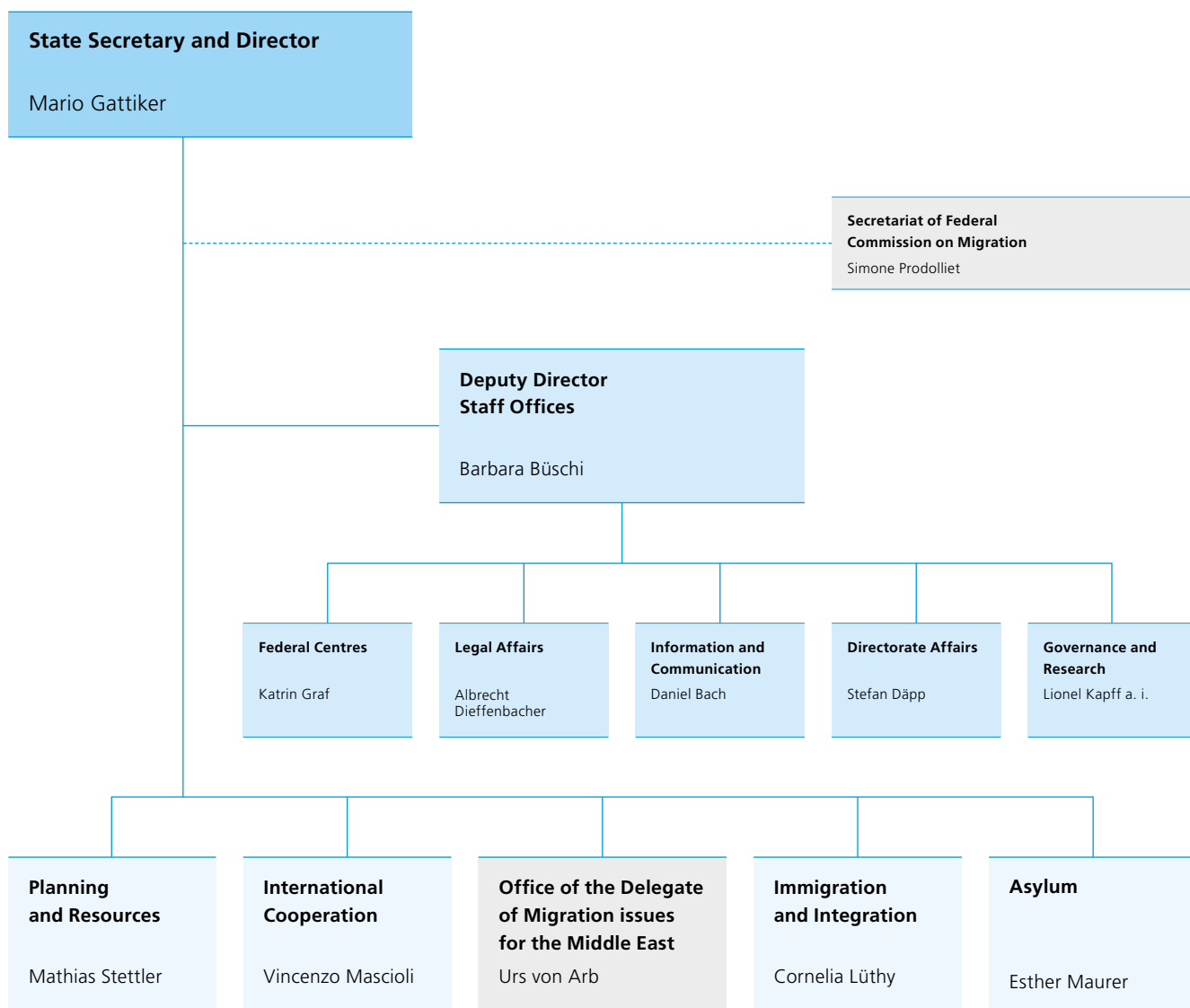
IBM covers all activities aimed at combatting illegal migration, professional people smuggling and cross-border crime.

E State Secretariat for Migration



Samuel Mule, courier from South Sudan

1. Organisation chart



Last update 1 May 2019

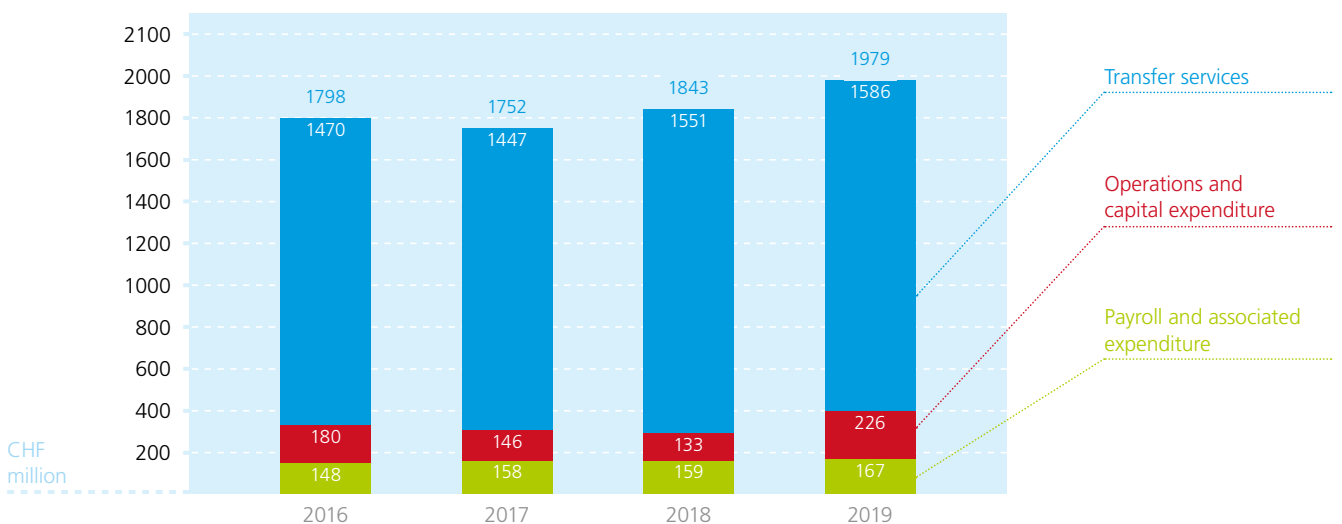
SEM determines under what circumstances a person may enter Switzerland to live and work. It also decides who is granted protection from persecution. It also coordinates integration-related efforts at the federal, cantonal and communal levels and is the federal agency in charge of the naturalisation process. In all areas of migration policy, it fosters international dialogue with source, transit and destination countries, and with international organisations.

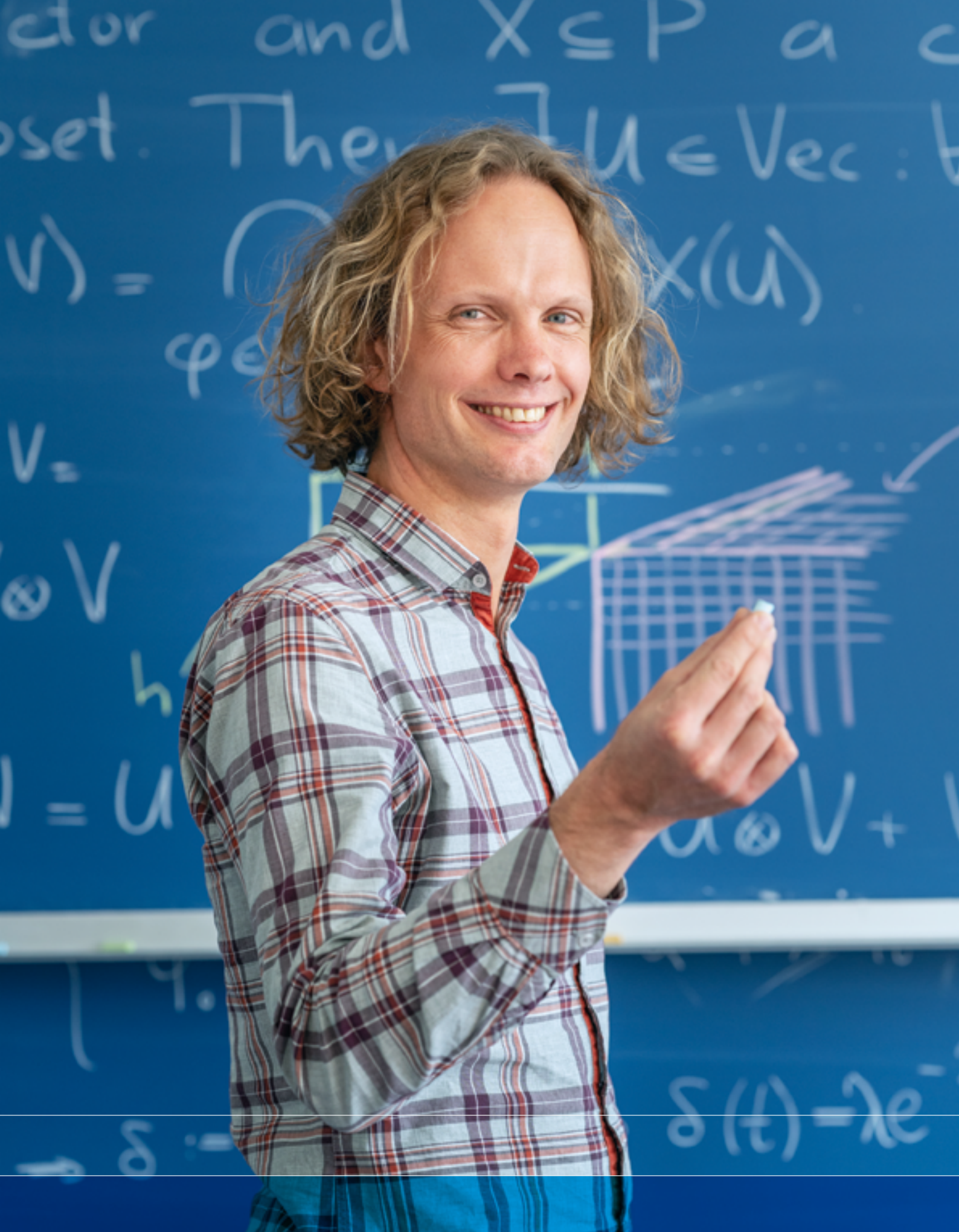
2. Expenditure

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 2016–2018, budget for 2019)

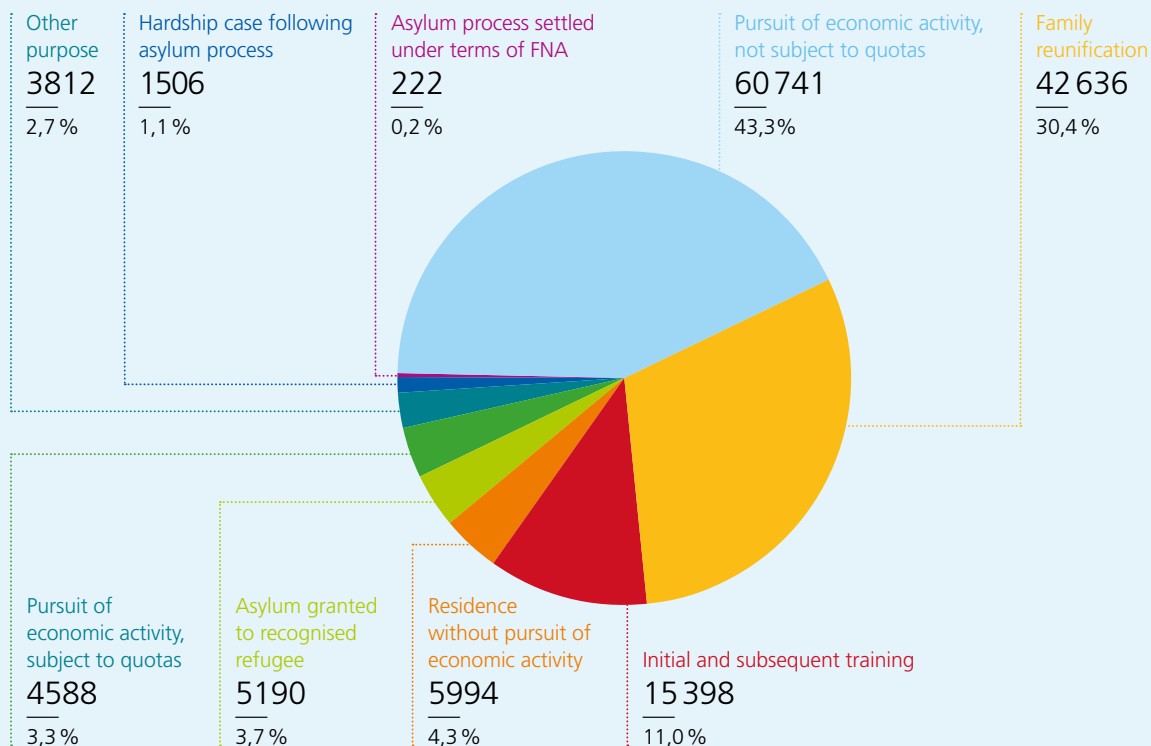




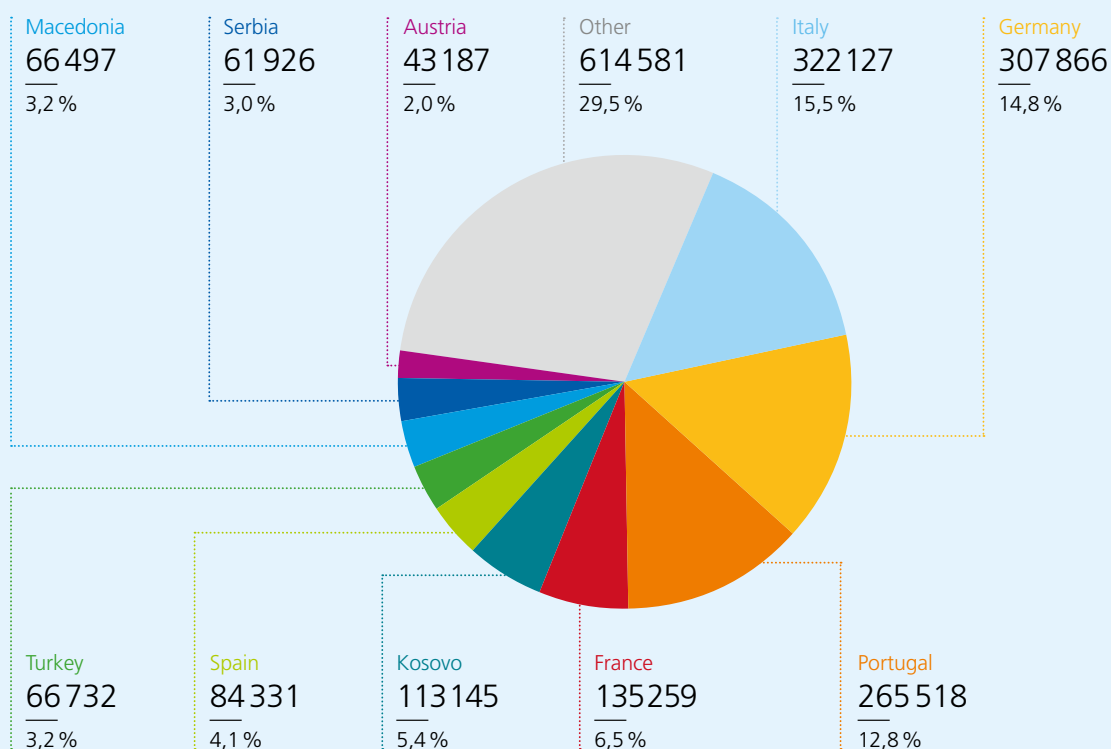
Jan Draisma, professor of mathematics from the Netherlands

Annex

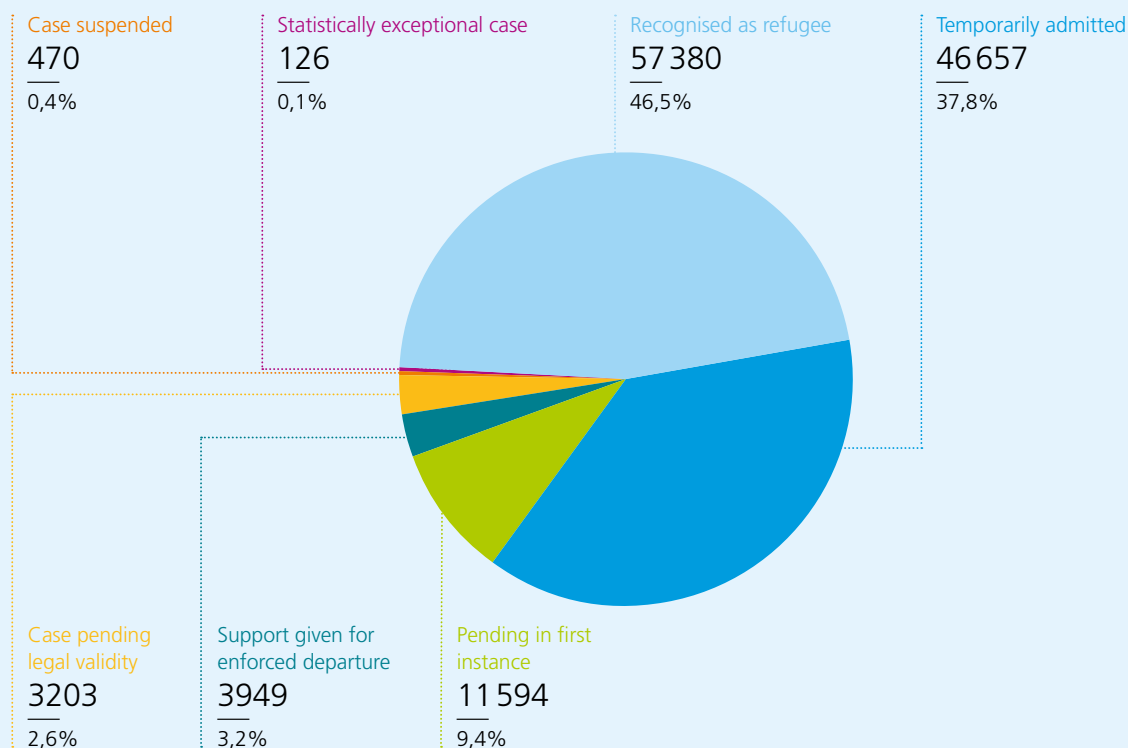
Basis of migration in 2018



Usual foreign resident population in 2018



Asylum seekers 2018



Numbers of temporarily admitted persons by country 2018

