PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС



Switzerland

General Information

Population

9 092 436 (World Bank 2025)

8 861 257 (STAT CH 2024)

Immigration

2 773 840 (UN Immigration Stock 2024)

212 600 (STAT CH 2024)

Emigration

512 547 (UN Emigration Stock 2024)

129 800 (STAT CH 2024)

Working-age population

5 881 391 (World Bank 2025)

5 845 672 (STAT CH 2024)

Unemployment rate

4.8 % (World Bank 2025)

4.6 % (STAT CH 2025)

GDP

1 043 529 899 250.9 current prices USD (World Bank 2025)

1 845 739 000 000 current prices CHF (STAT CH 2024)

Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

208 287 (UNHCR 2025)

10 390 (State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) 2024)

Asylum Seekers

17 039 (UNHCR 2025)

27 740 (State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) 2024)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)

Citizenship

By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2024)

By Descent

Yes (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Years of Residency

10 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Territory

41 277 km^2 (CIA World Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

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

Line Ministries

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

The Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA)

The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)

Agencies

State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

Federal Office of Police (FedPol)

Federal Office of Justice (FOJ)

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

Federal Statistical Office (SDC)

The Federal Commission on Migration (FCM)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Key Policy Documents

Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA) (Status as of 1 August 2025)

Asylum Act (Status as of 1 April 2025)

International Cooperation Strategy 2025–2028

Federal Act on Swiss Citizenship (Status as of 1 September 2023)

National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking 2023–2027

Strategy for Integrated Border Management 2027

Relevant Publications

Exploring the Potential of Digitalisation in Migration Management in the Prague Process Region

Digitalisation and labour migration: the use of modern technology, challenges and opportunities

How will migration to Europe look in the Future?

Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs): The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost

ICMPD Study, Undocumented Migrants: Their Needs and Strategies for Accessing Health Care in Switzerland - Country Report on People & Practices

Switzerland is predominantly a country of immigration, with close to 40% of residents having a migrant background. The country's population has grown steadily – from 8.24 million in 2014 to over 9 million in 2024 – driven primarily by immigration. Out of 9 million residents, nearly 2.5 million were foreigner nationals, the majority originating from EU/EFTA member states. The largest groups among them were Italian (342,400), German (329,000), Portuguese (257,300) and French (171,100) nationals.

According to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, 826,700 Swiss citizens were living abroad at the end of 2024. Almost two thirds of them were living in Europe, with the majority in France, Germany and Italy. A quarter were living in America, mainly in the United States and Canada. In 2024, 129,800 persons left Switzerland for other countries. Of these, over 99,000 were foreigners and 30,000 were Swiss. Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal remained the main destinations among emigrants in 2024. Other popular destinations included the United States, China and the United Kingdom.

Over the past decade, immigration to Switzerland has remained consistently high, averaging 140,000-150,000 persons per year, and peaking at 241,040 in 2023 before declining to 212,600 in 2024. Most 2024 immigrants were foreign nationals, while 11% were Swiss citizens returning home. Immigration for permanent residence in 2024 exceeded 170,000, with the largest immigrant groups coming from Germany, France and Italy. Employment remains one of the main drivers for immigration. According to the 2024 Migration-Mobility Survey, professional reasons, such as work and study, remain the leading motivations for migration, followed by family-related reasons, regardless of country of origin.

To take up employment in Switzerland, EU/EFTA nationals require only a residence permit, which is issued upon presentation of an employment contract. Nationals of other countries must obtain a work permit, and their employment is restricted to highly qualified professionals, such as managers, specialists, and individuals with a university degree and several years of professional experience. In 2024, the cantons and State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) issued 7,061 work permits to non-EU/EFTA nationals, including 739 to UK citizens and 6,322 to nationals of other non-EU countries. More than half of non-EU qualified specialists were employed in the IT, business consultancy, research, and chemical and pharmaceutical sectors. The Federal Council sets annual quotas for workers from non-EU countries, including the UK. In 2024, the quota stood at 12,000, but consistent with previous years, it was not fully utilised.

Over the past two decades, an average of around 40,000 foreigner nationals have acquired Swiss citizenship each year. In 2024, the number reached 41,291, with 16.3% naturalised through the simplified procedure, such as via marriage to a Swiss national. About half of all new citizens originated from Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, or Spain, while one-third came from other European countries.

In 2024, 27,740 people applied for asylum in Switzerland, 8% less than in 2023 and well below the levels recording during the 2015-2016 crisis. Over half of all applicants originated from Afghanistan, Türkiye, or Algeria. During the same year, 5,335 asylum seekers left Switzerland supervised by the authorities, including 2,519 who returned to their country of origin. More than half returned to Türkiye, Algeria, or Georgia. As part of its international protection measures, Switzerland continued to grant temporary 'S' protection status to Ukrainian citizens and eligible family members fleeing the war, providing access to residence, work, and education and social benefits. In 2024, 9,272 people this status, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 68,070 by December 2024. The employment rate among beneficiaries rose from 21.1% in December 2023 to 29.5% a year later.

Switzerland launched a new national asylum strategy process in 2024. Key changes include a new 24-hour fast-track procedure for nationals from certain Northwest African countries, increased access to mobile phone data for identity verification, and measures to facilitate integration of refugees into the labour market. Additionally, in 2025, the resettlement programme was extended until the end of 2027, but the annual quota was halved to 400 people.

In 2024, 17,265 non-EU nationals were found to be illegally present in Switzerland, one of the highest numbers on record since 2009. The rise in irregular stay mirrored the broader increased in regular migration to the country in 2022-2024. The same year, 8,390 persons were ordered to leave and 1,645 non-EU nationals were refused entry at the border, both marking the highest numbers since 2012. Meanwhile, 4,953 persons returned to their country of origin under the voluntary return assistance programme, a 33% decrease from 2023. In early 2025, irregular migration declined sharply: between January to May only 5,396 cases of illegal stay were recorded – half the number registered during the same period in 2024, according to the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security (FOCBS).

According to the US State Department report, the Government of Switzerland does not yet fully meet the minimum standards for the eliminating trafficking, but continues to make significant efforts, remaining on Tier 2. These efforts included convictions, the use of financial investigation techniques in trafficking cases, and increased victim identification by cantonal authorities. The report noted inconsistent victim identification and uneven access to care across the country, as well as the absence of a legal guarantee ensuring full services for victims exploited abroad. In 2024, the Swiss Platform against Human Trafficking identified 201 victims of human trafficking nationwide, while 483 victims received assistance and counselling. The figures remained stable in recent years, showing a slight upward trend.

At the end of 2024, Switzerland and the European Union agreed on a package of new and revised cooperation and market access arrangements. Under the deal, Switzerland plans to incorporate a "protective clause" into national law, allowing it to temporary restrict immigration if it can demonstrate that migration is causing serious economic or social problems, such as rising unemployment, increased cross-border commuting, or higher welfare dependency claimants.

In 2024, several amendments to Swiss asylum laws took effect, aiming to improve employment, housing, and training for refugees and undocumented migrants. The amendments lifted the permit requirement for self-employment among holders of hardship permits and removed the registration obligation for gainful employment for temporarily admitted persons, refugees, and stateless persons, earning up to CHF 600 per month. In addition, young undocumented migrants and rejected asylum seekers gained easier access to

vocational training, with the required prior schooling period reduced from 5 years to 2 years.

Migration partnerships remain a key framework for various instruments of Switzerland's migration policy, typically formalised through memoranda of understanding (MoU). Switzerland has signed such partnerships with Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009), Serbia (2009), Kosovo* (2010), Nigeria (2011), Tunisia (2012), Sri Lanka (2018), Georgia (2022), and North Macedonia (2022). The content of these partnerships varies depending on the partner country, covering such issues as readmission, return assistance, visa policy and prevention of human trafficking, migration & development synergies, and migrants rights.

Switzerland has also concluded bilateral agreements on the exchange of young professionals with Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Ukraine, and the US. These agreements enable young graduates to gain work experience in Switzerland for up to 18 months to enhance their professional and language skills.

As a Schengen/Dublin associate, Switzerland is required to participate in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, aligning its national legislation with the new EU framework on asylum and migration management. In March 2025, the Federal Council adopted a dispatch to Parliament on the necessary legal amendments, to manage migration, streamline asylum procedures, and share responsibility for asylum seekers within the Schengen Area more effectively.

Switzerland is the party to various migration dialogues, including the Prague Process.

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