Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Switzerland

Overview

Content updated on: 18/06/2025

Relevant EU legislation

Switzerland is not bound by the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation (URF).

A similar national legal framework applies under the UNHCR resettlement programme.

National legislation

Asylum Act (AsylA), Article 56 | Loi sur l'asile

Federal Council Decree of 19 May 2021: Resettlement 2022/2023 | Décision du Conseil fédéral du 19 mai 2021: Réinstallation 2022/2023 | Decisione del Consiglio federale del 19 maggio 2021: reinsediamento 2022/2023 | Bundesratsbeschluss vom 19. Mai 2021: Resettlement 2022/2023

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP)

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Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Resettlement Unit within the State Secretariat for Migration |Resettlement-Einheit innerhalb des Staatssekretariat für Migration | Unité de réinstallation au sein du Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Unità di reinsediamento all'interno della Segreteria di Stato della migrazione
Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Resettlement Unit within the State Secretariat for Migration |Resettlement-Einheit innerhalb des Staatssekretariat für Migration | Unité de réinstallation au sein du Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Unità di reinsediamento all'interno della Segreteria di Stato della migrazione Swiss embassies and consulate, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) | Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten (EDA) International Organization for Migration (IOM) The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	State Secretariat for Migration | Staatssekretariat für Migration | Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Segreteria di Stato della migrazione Cantons | Kantone | Cantons | Cantoni

Programmes currently in place

Although Switzerland has approved a National Resettlement Programmes for 2024 – 2025, the programme is currently on hold since 2023.

On 30 April 2025 the Federal Council decided to extend the 2024/25 resettlement programme until the end of 2027. This decision followed consultations with the Resettlement Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the federal government, the cantons, cities, communes, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Swiss Refugee Aid. Implementation will be carried out gradually through the end of 2027, in close cooperation with the cantons, cities, and communes, and with careful consideration of the evolving asylum situation. (Source: Resettlement, State Secretariat for Migration)

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National quotas on resettlement and humanitarian admission

National commitments for resettlement, humanitarian admission and emergency quota

2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2024-2025	1,600 refugees*	N/a	N/a
Period 2026-2027			
Period 2028-2029			

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

Week 1: Identification and referral

UNHCR field offices in the first-asylum countries identify and submit possible resettlement cases to the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). To be eligible for the UNHCR resettlement programme, a candidate has to:

- be granted refugee status by UNHCR;
- neither be able to return to its country of origin nor integrate permanently in the first-asylum country;
- meet one or more of the vulnerability criteria defined by UNHCR (i.e. special protection needs).

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- If a person qualifies for the UNHCR resettlement programme, the field office submits the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) to SEM.

Week 2–8: Selection

Within SEM, the Resettlement Unit under the Asylum Directorate is responsible for assessing each case individually. This includes a pre- and post-mission vetting process in collaboration with other Federal authorities and SEM partner-divisions, as well as a selection mission in the first-asylum country – video interviews are done only in exceptional circumstances.

During the selection mission, SEM employees interview each candidate above the age of 14.

The interview consists of three parts:

1. A candidate's motives for fleeing the country of origin and possible reasons for exclusion;
2. The current living conditions in the first-asylum country (i.e. assessment of their protection needs);
3. And a candidate's willingness to integrate socially and economically in Switzerland.

While part one and two correspond with the UNHCR's requirement to fulfil the refugee status as stipulated in the Geneva convention of 1951 and unmet protection needs in the first-asylum country respectively (see 2.2.1), the third part (willingness to integrate) is an additional criterion introduced by the Federal Council.

During selection missions, the Resettlement Unit is accompanied by a Swiss doctor who examines the candidates' medical history and by identification specialists, who are responsible for the identity verification.

Candidates who committed serious crimes or pose a risk to Switzerland's internal or external security are excluded from the resettlement process.

Week 16 onwards: Assessment

For successful candidates, SEM in close cooperation with IOM, UNHCR, the embassies of Switzerland, organizes the travel from the first-asylum country to Switzerland.

The accepted refugees usually travel in groups of 20 to 40 people.

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(Source: UNHCR, Resettlement Handbook, Country Chapters: Switzerland, last updated: 16 March 2023)

Type of protection granted and residence permit issued after the admission procedure

According to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) page on Selection procedure and entry into Switzerland, resettled refugees are granted asylum in accordance with Article 56 of the Asylum Act. In terms of legal status, there is no different between refugees that are granted asylum through Switzerland's national asylum procedures and refugees that are resettled to Switzerland.

According to UNHCR's Resettlement Country Chapter on Switzerland, refugees are entitled to a residence permit in the canton in which they are legally residing and they receive a residence permit B which is valid of one year. It is usually extended provided that the reasons for granting refugee status continue to exist.

After ten years of residence in Switzerland, a C permit (unlimited settlement permit) can be issued if certain integration criteria are fulfilled and if there are not grounds for revocation.

In exceptional circumstances (successful integration into Swiss society and proof of language level), an application for a permanent settlement permit can be submitted after only five years.

Pre-departure assistance

In case of admission to the Swiss resettlement programme, candidates undergo a series of pre-departure measures: This includes the following:

- Pre-departure medical screening by IOM. Medical information is then sent to SEM.
- Required pre-departure treatment as required. SEM covers all the costs of pre-departure checks and treatment related to the establishment of fitness to travel.
- Pre-departure orientation carried out by IOM covering the topics of work and education, housing, health care, language acquisition, education, integration agreements and permits.

Travel arrangements

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IOM ensures that people are fit to fly and carries out a pre-departure medical screening (PDMS) for refugees with severe medical conditions.

According to UNHCR's Resettlement Country Chapter on Switzerland, it can take several months to prepare the transfer to Switzerland after the decision for admission to Switzerland was reached. Travel arrangements are handled by SEM in cooperation with the IOM and the UNHCR.

Before the refugees can travel, arrangements must be made in order to prepare the Swiss Federal Asylum Centres (FAC) and the respective cantons that can receive the individuals or families, obtain the necessary exit permits from the country of residence's authorities, issue travel documents and visas, and provide the IOM with travel details such as information on final destination and health status. At the time of requesting the IOM to start preparing for the refugees' departure, the UNHCR and the respective Swiss embassy or consulate are also instructed to start preparing for exit permits and to issue travel documents and visas.

Arrival and reception

Upon arrival in Switzerland, SEM receives the groups at the airport and organizes their safe transfer to one of the Federal Asylum Centers, where they spend 2-3 weeks. In the centers, the refugees undergo further medical checks. Based on a pre-defined distribution scheme, they are eventually transferred to one of the 26 Swiss cantons. From this moment onwards, the regional authorities (i.e. the cantons) are responsible for further integration measures and the refugees' accommodation.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

Upon arrival to the cantons, the regional authorities are the responsible authorities to provide integration measures to resettled refugees. Depending on the canton and region, different organisations (civil society organisations, migrant associations etc) are involved. The state (comprising the federal government, cantons, municipalities) and the established structure are responsible for the funding of social assistance (basic needs, housing, health care), and education and training. The assistance provided is similar to that provided to Swiss citizens.

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Resettlement programmes

Based on a number of decrees by the Federal Council, Switzerland has admitted vulnerable refugees and people in need under resettlement as well as humanitarian admission schemes since 2013.

Switzerland has been an active participant in the UNHCR resettlement programme. Since 2013 in particular, it has resettled vulnerable refugees primarily from the Syrian conflict under various national resettlement

Resettlement 2024/2025

At its meeting on 16 June 2023, the Federal Council gave the green light for the resettlement program of the years 2024 and 2025. During this period, Switzerland can receive up to 1600 refugees in need of special protection who are in a precarious situation in countries of first asylum. The geographical priorities are the same as in the 2022/23 program, Middle East and central Mediterranean. The programme also helps to combat human trafficking, having as primary goal to offer protection to women, children and families in particular needs of protection in those areas.

However, the program will only be activated after consultation with the cantons and municipalities and on condition that the situation regarding the accommodation and care of persons from the asylum sector has eased significantly.

More details about the resettlement programmes including evaluations can be found here.

Humanitarian admission programmes

Switzerland does not currently have any humanitarian admission programme in place.

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

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Switzerland does not currently have community sponsorship programmes in place.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to civil society-led humanitarian admission programmes

Switzerland does not currently have community sponsorship programmes in place.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

Switzerland does not currently have community sponsorship programmes in place.

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