Forms of protection - Switzerland

Overview

Content updated on: 4/07/2025

Relevant EU legislation

Switzerland is not bound by the recast Qualification Directive. A similar national legal framework applies, the Asylum Act | Loi sur l'asile | Asylgesetz | Legge sull'asilo

National legislation

Refugee status	Refugees (Geneva Convention) are granted Asylum Status, except in case there are reasons for refusing asylum in accordance with Articles 53 and 54 Asylum Act (they shall be granted temporary admission).
Subsidiary protection	Swiss law does not provide for “subsidiary protection”. See national forms of protection below.
Temporary protection	Article 4 of the Asylum Act states that Switzerland may grant temporary protection to persons in need of protection as long as they are exposed to a serious general danger, in particular a war or civil war as well as situations of general violence. Article 66 of the Asylum Act states that the Federal Council shall decide whether and according to which criteria Switzerland will grant temporary protection to groups of persons in need of protection in accordance with Article 4. Temporary protection status was activated on 12 March 2022 and it is applicable for those affected by the war in Ukraine.

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National forms of protection	Article 83 of the Asylum Act allows the SEM to temporarily admit an alien, inter alia, where enforcement of return is not possible due to the foreign not being able to leave Switzerland for their country of origin or to a third country as it would be contrary to Switzerland's commitments under international law; and where enforcement of a return decision may not be reasonably required if the return or expulsion of the alien to their country of origin would put them in concrete danger, for example in the event of war, civil war, generalised violence or medical necessity. Temporary admission status (TAS) can be granted independently of refugee status, for other reasons which are similar to the EU subsidiary protection (art. 3 ECHR, situation of war in the country of origin, civil war, general violence and medical emergency in their native country or country of origin) or for pure humanitarian reason (e.g. serious illness).

Competent authority and stakeholders

Refugee status	State Secretariat for Migration | Staatssekretariat für Migration | Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Segreteria di Stato della migrazione
Subsidiary protection	Not applicable.
Temporary protection	State Secretariat for Migration | Staatssekretariat für Migration | Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Segreteria di Stato della migrazione
National forms of protection	State Secretariat for Migration | Staatssekretariat für Migration | Secrétariat d'État aux migrations | Segreteria di Stato della migrazione, cantonal authorities (Article 83 of Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration | Loi fédérale sur les étrangers et l'intégration).

Renewal and withdrawal of international protection and national forms of protection

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Refugee status

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of refugee status

Grounds for revocation and expiry of the status are found in Art. 63 and 64 of the Asylum Act

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits:

For refugees with Asylum Status, there are no limits of validity on the residence permit. The validity for a B-permit is for 1 year, a subsequent permit can be prolonged by the relevant Canton, while a C-permit, (permanent residence permit), can be obtained after 10 years, or 5 years if person is well integrated.

Review of the status:

The validity of the residence permits is dependent on the continuation of the refugee and asylum status. The residence permits are not subject of review and are automatically prolonged.

The refugee status and/or asylum can only expire or be revoked according Asylum Act and Refugee Convention. The SEM is the competent authority to decide.

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The impact on the validity of the residence permit B or C depends on the subsequent decision of the canton to continue or not the permit according the Foreign National Act. The end of the refugee status or asylum do not mean automatically the end of the validity of the residence permit.

Exception: in case of criminal deportation, all kind of permits expire.

Renewal of the status:

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An interview is possible in most cases in the cessation and withdrawal procedures. Before the asylum or temporary admission status is withdrawn, the SEM grants the right to submit written statements. The person concerned can submit a written statement within 10 days. New elements can be submitted by applicants while their IP status is being reconsidered, however only documentary evidence is allowed.

Withdrawal of the status:

The refugee status and/or asylum can only expire or be revoked according to the Asylum Act and the Refugee Convention. The SEM is the competent authority to decide.

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Legal aid is usually not provided or limited to appeal procedure.

Grounds for withdrawal of the status:

Grounds for revocation and expiry of the status are found in Art. 63 and 64 of the Asylum Act.

Withdrawal: if the individual concerned has fraudulently obtained international protection, if any of the grounds stated in Article 1 letter C numbers 1–6 of the Refugee Convention of 28 July 1951 apply, if the refugee concerned travels to his or her native country or country of origin. It shall not deprive a person of refugee status if the person concerned credibly demonstrates that the journey to his or her native country or country of origin was made under duress, if s/he has violated or represents a threat to Switzerland’s internal or external security, or if

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s/he has committed particularly serious criminal offence or if s/he has failed to comply with a travel ban under Article 59c paragraph 1 second sentence of the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration.

The revocation of asylum or the deprivation of refugee status applies in relation to all federal and cantonal authorities. The revocation of asylum or the deprivation of refugee status does not extend to the spouse or the children of the person concerned.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

The residence permit is withdrawn. If only the asylum status was withdrawn and not the refugee status, the person concerned could be entitled to a temporary admission as a refugee.

Subsidiary protection status

Switzerland does grant subsidiary protection status.

National forms of protection

Legal provisions relating to the review, renewal and withdrawal of national forms of protection

Articles 83, par. 9, and 84 of the Foreign Nationals and Integration Act.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits

There are no limits of validity for the temporary admission status.

F-permit for valid for 1 year. Subsequently it can be prolonged by the relevant Canton.

The Canton can discretionally grant a B-permit, valid for 1 year, after 5 years from the asylum application or from the F permit, and if the person is well integrated.

A C-permit is granted if the person holds B-permit and wants to apply for permanent residence after 10 years, or 5 years if well integrated.

Review of the status:

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The SEM periodically examines whether the requirements for temporary admission are still met

Renewal of the status:

The SEM is the competent authority for the renewal of status. It periodically examines whether the requirements for temporary admission are still met.

SEM shall revoke temporary admission and order the enforcement of removal or expulsion if the requirements are no longer met.

When the temporary admission is revoked, the F-permit is no more valid.

When a conflict ends, it is possible that cessation is examined for all members of the group related to the conflict.

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Interview conducted in most cases in the cessation and withdrawal procedures.

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status:

In addition to the above grounds, Temporary Admission Status (TAS) expires in case of criminal deportation, definitive departure, unauthorised stay abroad for more than 2 months, or the granting of a residence permit. See Art. 83, par. 9, and 84 Foreign Nationals and Integration Act.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

The SEM shall revoke Temporary Admission Status (TAS) and order the enforcement of removal.

Content of protection

Overview

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Information is currently not available.

Provision of information on the content of protection

Information is currently not available.

Residence permits

Refugees:

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Exception: in case of criminal deportation, all kind of permits expire.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection.

Travel documents

Refugees:

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Travel document for refugees valid for 5 years

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection.

Freedom of movement

Refugees

Freedom of movement unlimited

Right to choose the place to live within the canton, and the right to change the canton

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection.

Access to employment and employment-related education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Recognised refugees in Switzerland are permitted to engage in gainful employment and to change job or profession. The employer must submit a corresponding request and comply with the usual local wage and working conditions for the given profession and industry.

Access to education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Basic education is mandatory until the age of 16 to all children in Switzerland. The cantons are responsible for the system of school education, and state schools are free of charge.

The Federal Constitution states that cantons shall ensure that adequate special needs education is provided to all children and young people with disabilities up to the age of 20.

Recognised refugees have the same rights as Swiss nationals concerning access to apprenticeship.

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Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications and validation of skills

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Information is currently not available.

Social security and social assistance

Refugees:

Information is currently not available.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection status.

Healthcare

Refugees:

Refugees have access to basic health care (illness, accident, and maternity) via compulsory basic health insurance. There is no difference made between asylum seekers, refugees and Swiss citizens.

Access to accommodation

Refugees:

As long as a person depends on social assistance, housing will be provided by the canton. It is possible that this means a collective centre (same as in reception) or a specific allocated housing, but there is no limitation time-wise.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection status.

Access to integration measures

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Refugees:

The Cantonal Integration programs financed by the confederation and the cantons assure coordinated integration measures in the field of language promotion, labour market integration and counselling.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Switzerland does not grant subsidiary protection status.

Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection

Refugees:

According to Article 85 of the Asylum Act, Family reunification is available for spouses or registered partners of refugees, and their minor children. If one of those persons is still abroad, their entry must be authorised on request, provided that they were separated during the flight.

There are no requirements regarding income or health insurance.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

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