

Switzerland



Immigration flows peaked in 2008 prior to the economic downturn, with national statistics recording inflows of more than 157 000 – a further increase of about 18 000 compared with 2007, and more than 60% above the 2005 level. Net migration added almost 1.3% to the Swiss population in 2008.

The vast majority of recent immigration (more than 113 000, or 72% of all long-term immigrants in 2008) were from the EU/EEA, who benefited from the freedom of movement arrangements; since June 2007, the Swiss Labour Market has been open to nationals from the EU15. Germany remained the main origin country, accounting for almost 30% of new immigration, followed by Portugal and France.

Preliminary data for 2009 show a rather significant decline of immigration, in particular of immigrants from the enlarged European Union. Between January and September 2009, long-term immigration from the EU/EEA declined by about 23% compared with the corresponding period in 2008. Overall, net immigration during this period has been at its lowest level since the introduction of free movement in 2002.

In a popular referendum on 2 February 2009, the Swiss voters approved the unlimited prolongation of the treaty on the freedom of movement with the European Union and its member states. In the same referendum, the voters also accepted a gradual extension of the treaty to Bulgaria and Romania. The extension has been in force since 1 June 2009. However, for seven years, immigration from these two countries will remain subject to numerical limits and a labour market test. Wages and working conditions are also being controlled. In case of large inflows, Switzerland can prolong the numerical limits for an additional three years, i.e. until 2019. In May 2009, Switzerland decided to maintain its restrictions with respect to the immigration of workers and service provider from those Central and Eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004.

In February 2010, the Federal Council approved a number of measures aimed at limiting potential abuses in the framework of the freedom of movement. The measures include restrictions of access to the welfare system of persons from the EU/EEA. Likewise, requirements for family reunification have been strengthened; in particular, adequate housing is required. In addition, controls against wage and social dumping and against so-called “pseudo self-employment” have been reinforced.

Following a strong increase in asylum seeking in 2008 (an increase of more than 50% compared with 2007), preliminary data for 2009 show a slight decline. Nigeria replaced Eritrea as the main origin country in 2009.

In December 2008, preparations for a reform of the law on asylum started. The legislation process is still on-going. The main objective of the reform is to accelerate the asylum procedure and to enhance its efficiency.

A modification of the law on foreigners is currently being discussed. The modification envisages that a settlement permit can only be granted in the case of successful integration. Likewise, it is discussed to introduce a possibility to revoke permits in the case of severe crimes.

A comprehensive revision of the law on citizenship is in preparation. The objectives are: i) to improve consistency with the law on foreigners with respect to integration and language knowledge; ii) to strengthen procedures to ensure that only foreigners who are well integrated can naturalise; iii) to harmonise cantonal and local requirements with respect to the length of residency requirements; and iv) to simplify the administrative procedures and to reduce the fees which applicants are charged.

For further information:

www.bfm.admin.ch

www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/en/index/themen/01/07.html

(French version: www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/themen/01/07.html)

Recent trends in migrants' flows and stocks

SWITZERLAND

Migration flows (foreigners)	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level ('000)
					1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
<i>National definition</i>							
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>							
Inflows	12.5	12.2	18.5	20.6	12.2	15.2	157.3
Outflows	9.6	7.8	7.4	7.1	7.9	6.8	54.1
Migration inflows (foreigners) by type	Thousands		% distribution		Inflows of top 10 nationalities as a % of total inflows of foreigners		
<i>Permit based statistics (standardised)</i>	2007	2008	2007	2008			
Work	2.0	3.2	1.6	2.3			
Family (incl. accompanying family)	18.9	18.9	15.4	13.5			
Humanitarian	5.4	6.5	4.4	4.7			
Free movements	93.8	108.6	76.8	78.0			
Others	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.5			
Total	122.2	139.3	100.0	100.0			
Temporary migration	2000	2007	2008	Annual average			
<i>Thousands</i>				2003-2008			
International students	..	10.3	11.0	9.5			
Trainees	..	0.1	0.1	0.2			
Working holiday makers	..	..	..	..
Seasonal workers	49.3	..	..	..
Intra-company transfers	..	6.2	7.3	6.9			
Other temporary workers	..	102.8	91.6	107.4			
Inflows of asylum seekers	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>	2.4	2.5	1.4	2.2	1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
					4.1	1.8	17
Components of population growth	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Per 1 000 inhabitants</i>					1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
Total	6.2	5.5	11.1	14.2	5.5	8.6	108
Natural increase	2.7	2.2	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.7	15
Net migration	2.1	2.8	9.9	12.8	2.8	7.3	98
Stocks of immigrants	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level ('000)
<i>Percentage of the total population</i>					1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
Foreign-born population	..	21.9	..	..	..	..	..
Foreign population	18.9	19.3	20.8	21.4	19.3	20.5	1 639
Naturalisations	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level
<i>Percentage of the foreign population</i>	1.3	2.1	2.8	2.7	1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
					1.8	2.7	44 365
Labour market outcomes	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		
					1997-2002	2003-2008	
Employment/population ratio							
Native-born men	..	..	86.4	86.1	..	85.9	
Foreign-born men	..	..	83.2	83.6	..	82.0	
Native-born women	..	..	74.2	75.8	..	73.8	
Foreign-born women	..	..	64.3	67.5	..	64.4	
Unemployment rate							
Native-born men	..	..	2.0	2.1	..	2.5	
Foreign-born men	..	..	5.8	5.0	..	6.7	
Native-born women	..	..	3.2	2.7	..	3.2	
Foreign-born women	..	..	8.8	7.7	..	9.0	
Macroeconomic indicators	1995	2000	2007	2008	Average		Level
<i>Annual growth in %</i>					1997-2002	2003-2008	2008
Real GDP	0.4	3.6	3.6	1.8	1.9	2.3	
GDP/capita (level in US dollars)	-0.3	3.0	2.8	0.6	1.3	1.5	34 479
Employment (level in thousands)	0.1	0.9	2.3	1.7	0.9	1.1	4 283
<i>Percentage of the labour force</i>							
Unemployment	3.5	2.6	3.6	3.5	3.2	4.0	

Notes and sources are at the end of the chapter.

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