

# SWITZERLAND

February 2021

Switzerland has a **long-lasting humanitarian tradition** and is an important donor and a strategic partner of UNHCR. The country also maintains a **resettlement programme**.

The overall protection rate is high, but many applicants only receive a **provisional admission with restricted rights** which impedes their integration.

UNHCR advocates with governmental and non-governmental partners to **include POCs** into their planning and projects.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Refugees	<b>115,800*</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>6,569</b>
Stateless people	<b>37</b>

\*incl. provisionally admitted persons

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Eritrea	37,769	Afghanistan	844
Syria	20,077	Sri Lanka	809
Afghanistan	14,467	Iran	739

Data source: UNHCR 2020 Mid-Year Statistical report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

## COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

**Advocacy:** UNHCR visited accommodation structures, exchanged with POCs and authorities on the COVID-19-situation of POCs and advocated on the compliance with COVID-19 protection regulations. UNHCR furthermore advocated for access to legal assistance despite restrictions due to the measures against the coronavirus.

**Inclusion of persons of concern:** The authorities took measures to protect asylum seekers, for example by opening additional asylum centers. Information sheets were available in different languages. Asylum seekers are also included in vaccination plans.

**Communication with Communities:** UNHCR stays in contact with governmental partners and refugee communities to ensure that the communities are well informed and participates with a social media campaign on vaccination. More [here](#) and [here](#).

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Community-based

UNHCR started implementing a more [participatory approach](#) and published a [brochure](#) to promote such an approach for all stakeholders.

### Specific needs

UNHCR published a [study](#) on the identification and follow-up to [specific needs](#) in the asylum procedure and suggested improvements.

### Family reunification

UNHCR advocated for [family reunification](#), showing TV-spots and producing an explanatory video with explanations for refugee communities.

### Statelessness

UNHCR continued advocating for a statelessness determination procedure and raised public awareness about the problems faced by stateless persons.



### Torn apart and reunited: the story of a family reunification

Zelalem Demoz had not seen his father for six years. When they finally met again at Zurich airport in 2019, he could hardly believe it. More [here](#).

## Key Priorities

- **Protection (monitoring):** UNHCR visited several cantonal reception centers to monitor the impact of the COVID-19 situation on persons of concern. It participated in various recurring regional meetings with legal aid providers and other stakeholders to monitor the developments of the new asylum system.
- **Access to territory:** UNHCR advocated with governmental stakeholders for the access of asylum seekers to the country while borders were closed due to the measures against the coronavirus.
- **Asylum procedures:** UNHCR together with the CoE organized a training for legal representatives and authorities on asylum applications based on SOGI and/or religion and contributed to a conference on SGBV in the asylum context. The Office provided input into the external evaluation of the new asylum system.
- **Solutions:** UNHCR continued advocating for a more generous family reunification policy. A particular focus was on family members in Ethiopia and Sudan, where around 50 family reunifications were successfully achieved. UNHCR is also actively engaged with the SEM to find solutions for UASC in Libyan detention centers who have family members in Switzerland. 21 UASC were granted entry to Switzerland between May 2019 and August 2020.
- **Resettlement:** In 2013, Switzerland resumed its participation to the UNHCR Resettlement program. Since then, based on several ad-hoc decrees, 4,725 refugees have been resettled to Switzerland in cooperation with UNHCR up until today.
- **Integration:** UNHCR has discussed the integration agenda adopted in 2019 by cantons and federal authorities with various stakeholders. An important aim for UNHCR is to enforce participatory approaches and highlight good practices. Moreover, UNHCR has continued to advocate for further improvements of the legal framework. A particular important point here is the introduction of a subsidiary protection status.

- **Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance:** UNHCR developed a new strategy towards the establishment of participatory working methodologies. The Office established first contacts with refugees and started a broader mapping of communities. As a first step, the Office included persons of concern in several projects. To promote the new concept, a booklet on “participation” was produced and widely shared with stakeholders.
- **Advocacy:** UNHCR advocated for resettlement, family reunification as well as humanitarian visas with positive results for persons of concern. Planned restrictions to family reunification were dropped. UNHCR also published its opinion on a legislative project concerning the right to privacy of asylum seekers and advocated for improvements, especially linked to the new asylum system.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR consistently cooperates with the State Secretariat for Migration, NGO partners and refugee communities and other political players to achieve its objectives. The State Secretariat for Migration is regularly inviting UNHCR to provide its expert advice.

## Statelessness

- Switzerland acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and has a statelessness determination procedure in place. The relevant procedure is governed by general principles of the Federal Administrative Procedure Act and has no special provisions suitable for the specificities of statelessness determination. This complicates the determination of statelessness and leads to an even more restrictive practice in Switzerland.

## UNHCR Presence in Switzerland

### Staff:

7 National Staff

1 International Staff

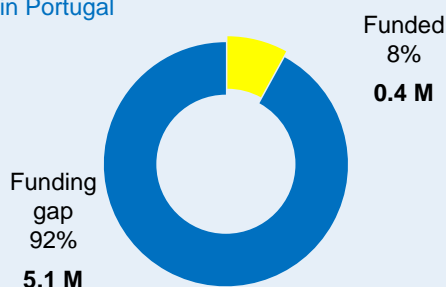
### Offices:

1 Country Office in Bern

## Financial information (28 February 2021)

\*information relates to the Representations for Austria and to the European Institutions in Strasbourg, to the Office for Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the Liaison Office in Vienna and the presence in Portugal

Financial requirements  
**USD 5.2 M**



UNHCR is grateful to the major donors of unearmarked contributions\* to the 2021 global programmes (USD, February 2021):

Norway 80 M | Sweden 66.9 M | Netherlands 36.1 M | Denmark 34.6 M | Germany 22.1 M | Switzerland 16.4 M | Ireland 12.5 M | Belgium 11.9 M

\*Unearmarked contributions allow UNHCR for critical flexibility in how best to reach populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Above are donors of USD 10 million or more.

Switzerland's contribution to UNHCR slightly increased to USD 41.92 m to UNHCR, making Switzerland UNHCR's 12th largest government donor in 2020. Switzerland also supported the JPO programme in 2020 and deployed several experts. The association Switzerland for UNHCR has been created in 2020 to fundraise from the private sector and local authorities.