

**UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION and  
UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**      **STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**  
**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

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**Implementation of the Revised UN Recommendations on Statistics of  
International Migration**

Submitted by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office<sup>1</sup>

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission published a new set of recommendations on statistics of international migration in 1998. The new set of UN Recommendations contains a taxonomy of international inflows and outflows, some of which constitute international immigration and emigration flows.
2. The following tables, developed by the ECE/EUROSTAT Task Force on international migration statistics, identify the various data sources for the various categories of international immigration and emigration flows which exist in Switzerland. The tables also give an indication to which extent the new set of recommendations can be applied in official Swiss migration statistics.
3. An examination of the tables clearly shows that Switzerland cannot fully implement the international recommendations. Some of the gaps that exist in official Swiss migration statistics and some of the practical problems encountered when attempting to adhere to the recommendations are briefly described in the following paragraphs. Due to the different type of existing data sources a clear distinction between citizens and non-citizens has to be made when discussing official Swiss migration statistics.

**Arrivals and departures of Swiss citizens**

4. There is a general lack of detailed data on immigration and emigration of Swiss citizens. As there is no equivalent at the national level to the central registers of foreigners, data on Swiss citizens have to be collected from about 2,900 municipal or cantonal population registers. The federal political system of Switzerland grants each canton – sometimes even each municipality – considerable authority in setting its own standards for the establishment of a population register. The registers being used in the individual municipalities are therefore very heterogeneous as far as content and quality are concerned and – given the fact that for

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Marcel Heiniger

the time being the Federal Government has no legal right to mandate the harmonization of local registers - only of limited use for migration statistics.

5. The purpose of stay abroad of Swiss citizens is not known (this information is generally not entered into the municipal population registers). Therefore, international migrant citizens cannot be classified according to the individual categories of inflows and outflows. Moreover, a clear distinction between long-term and short-term migrants is impossible as there is no information available on the duration of stay abroad. As a general rule every Swiss citizen announcing his or her arrival from abroad or his or her departure to a foreign country at the municipal population register is considered to be a long-term migrant. The underlying assumption is that only people who intend to change their usual place of residence for a longer period of time will undergo the deregistration or registration procedures which require the withdrawal or the deposit of certain legal documents.

### **Establishing duration of stay of non-citizens**

6. The UN recommendations define a long-term migrant as a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months). Consequently, a short-term migrant is a person who moves for a period of less than a year (but at least 3 months). It must be assumed that this time constraint should be determined by either the actual or the intended duration of stay. However, the distinction between long-term and short-term foreign migrants in official Swiss migration statistics is solely based on the duration of validity of the residence or work permit that the person holds upon arrival. Even though the actual duration of stay can be calculated retrospectively for departing non-citizens, such calculations are not used to adjust or revise the official, validity of permit based migration statistics.

7. Even though attempts have been made in the past to adhere more strictly to the UN recommendations when providing data to international organizations by eliminating from the category of 'long-term migrants' those foreigners with a long-term permit whose duration of stay did not exceed 12 months, they have not been satisfactory from a methodological point of view.

### **Foreigners seeking asylum**

8. The distinction between short-term and long-term migration proves especially difficult for the category 'entry to seek asylum'. Even though most asylum-seekers' intended duration of stay may be long-term, the actual duration of stay is uncertain or unknown at the time of arrival. Neither the concepts of 'intended duration of stay', 'actual duration of stay' nor 'length of validity of permit' provide a completely adequate framework for classification. So far Switzerland has avoided dealing with this problem by not including in its official migration statistics those migrants who arrive in the country under the provisions of the asylum law. Only those (former) asylum-seekers who obtain permanent residence status are counted as migrants. Permanent residence permits are issued when an asylum case is decided positively, either by granting Convention refugee status or by allowing admission on humanitarian grounds or other provisions of the aliens police law (e.g. marriage with a Swiss citizen)<sup>2</sup>. It is important to note, however, that such positive decisions are counted as arrivals of the calendar year in which the decision was granted. In most cases there is a considerable time lag between

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the rather arbitrary legal distinction between alien law and asylum law asylum-seekers who are given non-permanent residence status ('provisional admission') are never included in official migration statistics even if their temporary residence permits are valid for at least 12 months.

the year of actual arrival (i.e. year of submission of the asylum application) and the year of admission. Migration statistics, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the correct chronology of arrivals; they can be particularly distorted in years with a flurry of positive asylum decisions.

### **Calendar-year based migration statistics**

9. Official Swiss migration statistics are calendar-year based. Only those migratory movements which have taken place within a given calendar year are taken into account. This approach has a major drawback when trying to separate long-term from short-term migration based on the concept of 'actual duration of stay'. Only those short-term migrants (i.e. people with a stay of less than 12 months) whose arrival and departure dates fall within the same calendar year can be correctly identified. Short-term migrants with arrival and departure dates in different, i.e. two subsequent, calendar years are therefore always counted as long-term migrants.

10. Ideally not only asylum-seekers but all foreigners changing from short-term to long-term status should be classified by year of actual arrival. Therefore, the number of persons making such a transition should be added to the number of long-term migrants recorded in previous years.

11. A more or less strict adherence to the UN recommendations requires an annual revision of already published data from previous years. Yearly migration statistics have to be updated in subsequent years based on any kind of supplementary information which is only available when taking additional calendar years into account. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office has so far refrained from revising once published migration data – even for international data collection efforts such as the 'Joint UNSD-Eurostat-ECE-Council of Europe-ILO questionnaire on international migration statistics'. This data dissemination policy might have to be reevaluated in order to make Swiss data more comparable at the international level.

## Flow or Migration Data (Inflows)

INFLOWS - ARRIVALS	SHORT - TERM MIGRATION			LONG - TERM MIGRATION			TOTAL MIGRATION		
	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL
(9,10) Entry linked to education and training	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(11) Entry linked to employment	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(12) Entry of international civil servants	not applicable	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	not applicable	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	not applicable	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality
(13) Entry with free establishment	not applicable	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable
(14) Entry for settlement	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(15) Entry linked to family reunification or family formation	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(17) Entry to seek asylum	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality
(16,18) Other entries (please specify) Foreigners whose entry or stay is not sanctioned		administrative data, collected by Ministry of Finance (Federal Customs Administration, Border Patrol), low quality							
<b>TOTAL ENTRIES</b>							only total number of arrivals available (no breakdown by category), administrative data from municipal population registers, time constraint not respected, good quality		

## Flow or Migration Data (Outflows)

O U T F L O W S - D E P A R T U R E S	S H O R T - T E R M M I G R A T I O N			L O N G - T E R M M I G R A T I O N			T O T A L M I G R A T I O N		
	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL	Citizens	Non-citizens	TOTAL
<i>Categories of outflows in the country</i> (9,10) Departure linked to education and training	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(11) Departure linked to employment	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(12) Departure of international civil servants	no data available	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, medium quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(13) Departure with free establishment	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable (no existing treaties or agreements between Switzerland and foreign countries)	not applicable	not applicable
(14) Departure for settlement	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(15) Departure linked to family reunification or family formation	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")	no data available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	data only available for non-nationals (see column "non-citizens")
(17) Departure of a former asylum seeker	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, good quality
(16,18) Other departures (please specify)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL DEPARTURES</b>							only total number of departures available (no breakdown by category), administrative data from municipal population registers, time constraint not respected, good quality		

## Migrant Stock

<b>Categories of migrants stock</b>	<b>CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD</b>	<b>NON CITIZENS LIVING IN THE COUNTRY</b>
For education and training	not available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
For employment on a permanent base (long term)	not available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
For employment on a temporary or seasonal base	not available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
International civil servants	potentially available, administrative data, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quality unknown (never statistically exploited)	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available for 31 December, medium quality
With free establishment	not available	not applicable
For settlement	not available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
For family reunification or family formation	not available	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
Admitted refugees	not applicable	administrative data (Central Aliens Register), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every calendar month, good quality
For seeking asylum	not applicable	administrative data (Register of Refugees and Asylum Seekers), collected by Ministry of Justice and Police, available for the end of every trimester, good quality
Diplomatic or consular status	potentially available, administrative data, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quality unknown (never statistically exploited)	administrative data source, collected by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available for 31 December, medium quality
Military personnel	not applicable	not applicable
Other migrant stock (please specify)	-	-
<b>TOTAL MIGRANT STOCKS</b>	administrative data, collected by Swiss embassies and consulates abroad, medium quality; does not cover entire population as registration is not mandatory; no link between data collection on migrants stocks and the related flow statistics	available for 31 December of every year (compiled by the Federal Statistical Office); systematic link between stock and flow data, good quality

COUNTRY: Switzerland

Person to be contacted for clarification: Marcel Heiniger, e-mail: marcel.heiniger@bfs.admin.ch