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# Rhetoric, Power, and the Legitimization of Asylum Policies

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Swiss Parliamentary Speech Across Three Refugee  
Movements

Author: Chiara Estrella Aguilar Ruiz  
Supervisor: Josip Glauric

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## **Abstract**

This thesis critically explores Swiss parliamentary discourse on refugees during three key moments: the Balkan refugee movements of the 1990s, the 2015 refugee movements, and the Ukrainian refugee movement starting in 2022. The project employs qualitative content analysis as a starting point. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the study examines how political language shapes perceptions of different refugee groups, legitimizes policy decisions through language, and thereby reproduces power dynamics. The portrayal of the three refugee movements at stake reveals contrasting results. During the Balkan wars, refugees were often described as victims. Religion dominated the discourse in 2015, with Muslims often depicted as threats. In 2022, Ukrainian refugees were framed in more neutral terms, suggesting a closer identification with the Swiss “in-group”. This thesis also highlights the notion of conditional solidarity that Switzerland uses, mirroring Switzerland’s past as a transmigration country. A critical finding is the Federal Council’s contradictory legal reasoning for the permit S, which reveals how inequality is reproduced and normalized through political discourse. While this thesis provides an in-depth case study on Switzerland, it contributes to broader discussions on how political discourse influences human rights compliance, social inclusion of refugees, and the justification of exclusionary policies.

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## Introduction

When the war commenced in Ukraine, many had to flee their country and sought protection abroad. The reaction of European countries to Russia's attack on Ukraine was straightforward: Ukrainian refugees have been accepted with open arms by other countries on the European continent. This feeling was mirrored through Ursula von der Leyen's statement, "*all those fleeing Putin's bombs are welcome in Europe*" (Apelblat, 2022), which was followed by the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainian refugees (European Parliament Research Service, 2025). Switzerland saw a similar reaction, as the government activated the protection permit S for all Ukrainians fleeing the war against Russia. This type of permit, which was already codified into law in the 1990s, was implemented for the first time in history in March 2022 (State Secretariat for Migration SEM, 2025a). In 2015, however, the permit was never applied for.

This advantageous legal treatment of Ukrainian refugees compared to other refugee groups has triggered many scholars to explore contrasting portrayals of different refugee groups. Alsbeti (2023) described it as a *double standard*. Sales (2023) argues that these double standards are evident in media framing, particularly in the cases of the Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises within the EU (see also El-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024, for an analysis of refugee narratives in American newspapers). Others have investigated the diverging depiction of Ukrainian and African refugees in the media (Iberi & Saddam, 2022). Hersperger (2023) studied the media narratives used for Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in Switzerland.

Similarly, scholars have examined parliamentary discourse on different refugee groups. While there are some contributions on refugee discourse in parliaments in Australia, the UK, or more comparative studies on Western Europe (e.g., Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Kirkwood, 2017; Van Dijk, 1997; Wodak et al., 2013), there are no studies that look into the portrayal of refugee groups in the Swiss Parliament in particular. Wodak et al. (2013, pp. 72-74) address political discourse in Switzerland; however, their analysis is restricted to the discourse on Islam, for instance, through the 2009 minaret ban (see also Cheng, 2015). It is, therefore, crucial to further explore parliamentary discourse on various refugee groups in Switzerland.

Some studies in the area of unequal treatment of refugees focus on the comparative aspect between Ukrainian and Syrian refugees, or more generally, European and non-European refugees (e.g., De Coninck, 2023; Iordache & Blanchard, 2024). This thesis aims to add another component, which includes the Balkan refugee movements. As the majority of Muslims in Switzerland originate from the Balkans (Federal Statistical Office FSO, n.d.-a), studying this former refugee group provides a fascinating addition to other existing research. Also, the study of refugee groups from the Balkans in the 1990s, the 2015 refugee movement, and the Ukrainian refugee movement enables us to add a historical component to Swiss parliamentary refugee discourse.

While the legal differential treatment between various refugee groups is evident through the protection permit S, this thesis aims to move beyond legal application and delve into discourse and its implications for legal decisions, as well as the reinforcement of power dynamics through language. Because migration processes are complex, dominant narratives are highly influential in shaping policy decisions (Boswell et al., 2011). Consequently, critically exploring discourse on refugee groups is crucial to get deeper insights into implications of varying refugee portrayal, legal discrepancies and power relations reinforced through language. More precisely, this thesis asks the following research questions to address this puzzle:

- How did the Swiss Parliament depict different refugee movements between the 1990s and 2022, namely the Balkan refugee movements, the 2015 refugee movements, and the Ukrainian refugee movements?
- How were policy decisions on refugee measures justified and contested in parliamentary discourse, namely the activation of the permit S or the lack thereof?
- How and to what extent are power dynamics reproduced through the language of asylum politics in Swiss parliamentary debates?

## Structure and Approach

This thesis uses a qualitative approach, with qualitative content analysis as the foundation. The primary methodological approach involves the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze Swiss parliamentary speeches from the 1990s, around 2015, and 2022. The data stems

from the Official Bulletin of the Swiss Federal Assembly. This thesis contains four more chapters. The following chapter investigates Switzerland's context. The theoretical framework chapter follows, and subsequently, the empirical part of the research, where the analysis of Swiss parliamentary discourse takes place, is presented. A discussion of the results and limitations of this study follows the analysis. Lastly, the thesis ends with the conclusion.

## Why Refugee Discourse Matters to Human Rights

This thesis studies discourse on refugees in the Swiss parliament. Why does discourse play an important role when we talk about human rights?

This thesis's interest is interconnected with human rights as it is based on the general assumption that all individuals are equal and must have the same rights. Therefore, this thesis postulates that each person on the move should and must be treated equally. These convictions of equality can be seen, for instance, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations (UN, 1948) or, more specifically, in the case of refugees, as outlined in the Geneva Refugee Convention (UN, 1951). A relevant article for this thesis is Art. 3 (non-discrimination) of the Geneva Convention, which states:

*“The Contracting States shall apply the provisions of this Convention to refugees without discrimination as to race, religion or country of origin.”* (UN, 1951)

While these legal principles provide a solid foundation for compliance with human rights for refugees *de jure*, we can see instances of double standards in the application of law *de facto* (Alsbeiti, 2023), most recently seen in Switzerland through the activation of the protection permit S in 2022 for Ukrainian refugees and the lack thereof during the 2015 refugee movement.

We know that human rights are, therefore, not applied neutrally. Valentini argues that human rights have a plausible reason to be political as they entail “*a moral concern with public justifiability*” (2012, p. 192). Consequently, the moral aspect of human rights leads to a broader political conversation and how the ethical component is legitimized in the public sphere.

These insights support the study of the political arena, specifically the Swiss Parliament. Language shapes our reality and has implications for power dynamics and social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1991). As we will see during the thesis, discourse is not neutral and reinforces social structures (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). Political discourse influences policy making, and conversely, the lack thereof. Boswell et al. (2011) argue that prevailing narratives in migration politics heavily influence policy-making. These dynamics lead to the de facto selective application of human rights. Consequently, discourse helps us understand societal, political, and legal topics at the core.

This thesis argues that discourse reflects our core beliefs, which are often influenced by colonial legacies, notions of deservingness, and the common framing of certain groups. These notions have implications for power dynamics and social inequality, which the CDA approach aims to uncover. Consequently, these narratives influence and legitimize the conformity with or violation of human rights principles.

## Switzerland's Context

This chapter argues that Switzerland's political, historical, social, and cultural background significantly impacted the portrayal of different refugee movements, which consequently affected policy decisions. The political, historical, social, and cultural circumstances in Switzerland are crucial starting points to understand how and why language in discourse is instrumentalized in a particular manner. This chapter begins with Switzerland's history of dealing with refugees in general, as well as the three refugee movements of interest in this thesis. The chapter continues with legal asylum provisions and concludes with a research of attitudes toward migration in Switzerland.

### Switzerland's History with Refugees

Switzerland's approach to refugees has undergone significant evolution since the 19th century. Originally a country of emigration, Switzerland became attractive to asylum seekers with the onset of industrialization, which created a demand for labor. By the late 1800s, humanitarian principles became deeply embedded in the national identity, most notably through the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) by Henri Dunant in 1863 (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 5). The First Geneva Convention followed soon after, establishing Switzerland as a cornerstone of international humanitarian law. These developments connected the notion of neutrality with humanitarianism, values that continue to influence asylum debates today.

The establishment of the ICRC in Switzerland and the subsequent adoption of IHL are an attest of the profound interconnection between the ICRC as an institution and Switzerland. The symbol of the ICRC, which is congruent with the national emblem of Switzerland, serves as a visual representation of this affiliation. In a speech by Schneider-Ammann (2016) for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICRC, the former Federal Council of Switzerland referred to the Red Cross as “standing for Swiss values”.

Brühwiler et al. (2019) also emphasize the connection between the ICRC and Switzerland when looking at their corresponding principles, which include neutrality, consensus, independence,

work ethics, reliability, and participation. Swiss neutrality, rooted both in strategic geography and internal diversity (linguistic, religious, and cultural), shaped its early asylum responses, such as during the First World War (Schindler, 1998; Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 7). These elements, therefore, implied the necessity of maintaining neutrality for long-lasting peace within Switzerland and beyond its borders.

In connection with asylum politics, the principle of neutrality in Switzerland was evident during the First World War, when the country welcomed over 700,000 refugees (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 7). The start of the Cold War reinforced Switzerland's principle of neutrality, which was largely replaced by a principle of morality after the end of the Cold War (Schindler, 1998, p. 163).

Following the First World War and during the Second World War, Switzerland underwent a significant repositioning regarding migration. Switzerland now prioritized maintaining its national identity and was considered a transit country rather than a country where refugees were welcomed to stay for an unlimited period (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 7). Erlanger (2006) argues for the case of Jewish refugees during the Second World War that the Swiss authorities omitted granting asylum through *transmigration*, which sees Switzerland for refugees only as a temporary place to remain until further migration takes place. Although the *transmigration* practices were suspended during the Second World War, they were reinstated after the war ended (Erlanger, 2006). Following the Second World War, the Swiss government's approach to refugees underwent significant changes, and Switzerland's ratification of the Refugee Convention in 1955 (SWI, 2021a) marked a new era for refugees in the country.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Switzerland primarily granted asylum to Hungarians and Czechoslovaks fleeing communist Eastern Europe. The primary reason Switzerland welcomed these refugees with open arms was its essentially anti-communist stance during that time (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 9), as well as the assumption that refugees seeking protection in Switzerland were system opponents (Salis Gross, 2004, p. 152). The acceptance of refugees fleeing communist countries during that time is, therefore, due to the political ideology that Switzerland wanted to push into the international sphere.

Starting in the 1970s, Switzerland mainly gave asylum to refugees who had fled from Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, and the Middle East. Salis Gross argues, however, that these refugees did not have the same advantages as the “anti-communist” refugees who had found protection in Switzerland in the decades before. On the contrary, asylum policies, which began in the 1970s, were applied more firmly (2004, p. 152).

## Refugee Movements Starting in the 1990s

### The Balkan Refugee Movement

Migration from the Balkans to Switzerland began in the 1960s, driven primarily by seasonal labor. Although economic factors initially drove migration, the 1990s were marked by violent conflict that forced many to flee. The collapse of the Iron Curtain at the end of the 1980s resulted in a new movement of refugees to Switzerland. While people fleeing from other countries around the world, such as Sri Lanka and Turkey, were still seeking protection, the majority of new arrivals now came from Southeastern Europe (Burri Sharani et al., 2010; Iseni et al., 2014).

Refugees fleeing the Balkan wars, primarily from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, mostly received temporary admission status and were required to leave Switzerland once conditions in their home countries improved (Burrani Sharani et al., 2010; Iseni et al., 2014). During this period, Switzerland began reviewing asylum requests on a case-by-case basis and tightened its asylum policies (Salis Gross, 2004, p. 153). This thesis focuses specifically on refugees from Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as they represent the most prominent groups of migrants from the former Yugoslavian areas to arrive in Switzerland (Burrani Sharani et al., 2010; Iseni et al., 2014).

Between 1990 and 2002, Switzerland received 146,587 asylum applications from the Balkans (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006). These arrivals came in two major waves, linked to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later Kosovo. Pre-existing migrant communities and the possibility of family reunification partly explain why Switzerland saw such a high number of arrivals during the Yugoslav wars (Iseni et al., 2014, p. 30).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the war erupted in March 1992 following the declaration of independence. Between 1992 and 1995, around 1.2 million civilians fled, including 24,500 who came to Switzerland (Iseni et al., 2014, p. 30; Valenta & Strabac, 2013, p. 9).

While the absolute number of 24,500 refugees in Switzerland may not appear extremely high at first glance, the picture changes when comparing incoming refugees with the population numbers of different recipient countries. Table 1 puts the incoming refugee numbers in perspective with the population numbers at the start of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian war in 1992. For this table, I chose to list only Western European countries as they share a similar political and social landscape to Switzerland.

<b>Recipient country of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992</b>	<b>Population of recipient country in 1992</b>	<b>Ratio between refugees and population (refugees/population)</b>
Austria	86,500	7,842,712	1.10%
Sweden	58,700	8,667,574	0.69%
Germany	320,000	80,934,898	0.40%
Switzerland	24,500	6,875,050	0.36%
Denmark	17,000	5,171,367	0.33%
Norway	12,000	4,286,260	0.28%

**Table 1<sup>1</sup>.** *Bosnian Refugees compared to the Population of Recipient Countries.* Source: *database.earth, n.d.; Valenta & Strabac, 2013, p. 9.*

<sup>1</sup> Refugee numbers are taken from Valenta & Strabac (2013, p. 9) and divided through population numbers of 1992 from *database.earth* (n.d.)

Looking at the ratios, Switzerland does not have the highest ratio of refugees per population. However, it still received a larger number of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina compared to countries such as Denmark or Norway.

After the 1995 Dayton Agreement ended the war in Bosnia, asylum requests in Switzerland declined but remained steady through the early 2000s (Iseni et al., 2014, p. 30).

Tensions in Kosovo had been building already before the 1990s. Kosovar Albanians began applying for asylum in Switzerland in the 1980s, following ethnic tensions and political unrest, including protests in 1981 and the rise of Milosevic's Serbian nationalist agenda in 1989 (Burri Sharani et al., 2010; Wintrobe, 1999). These changes led to escalating discrimination against Kosovo Albanians and conflict. Other European countries such as Germany, Austria, and the Scandinavian states also saw an influx of Albanian Kosovar asylum seekers, including political dissidents (Pichler et al., 2021).

The Kosovo war broke out in 1998, prompting hundreds of thousands to flee. While numbers vary for refugees from Kosovo (e.g., Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 25), according to Human Rights Watch, around 863,000 people from Kosovo had left the country in the spring of 1999 (HRW, 2001, p. 4). Over half sought protection in Albania, with 320,000 in Macedonia, of which 80,000 were relocated (HRW, 2001, p. 134), and around 50,000 Kosovars sought refuge in Switzerland. Swissinfo, the multilingual information provider, stated that Switzerland hosted the highest per-capita share of Kosovar refugees among Western European countries (SWI, 2023). The high ratio of refugees from Kosovo makes this group highly relevant for this thesis.

However, the Kosovar refugees did not stay in the long term. After the war, most of them returned to Kosovo (Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 30). Still, the end of the millennium marked a turning point in Swiss asylum policy, leading to the conceptualization of Permit S, which would not be activated until March of 2022 (SWI, 2023).

<b>Recipient country of refugees from Kosovo</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees from Kosovo in 1998</b>	<b>Population of recipient country in 1998</b>	<b>Ratio between refugees and population (refugees/population)</b>
Switzerland	50,000	7,110,291	0.70%
Austria	8,918 <sup>2</sup>	7,978,466	0.11%
Germany	54,379 <sup>3</sup>	82,011,939	0.07%
Sweden	2,843 <sup>4</sup>	8,850,608	0.03%
Denmark	288	5,304,262	0.005%

*Table 2<sup>5</sup>. Kosovar Refugees compared to the Population of Recipient Countries. Sources: database.earth, n.d.; SWI, 2023; United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), 1999a; USCRI, 1999b; USCRI, 1999c; USCRI, 1999d.*

The number for Norway was inconclusive for refugees from Kosovo in the year 1998. However, it had the largest number of asylum seekers in general compared to other European countries, along with Switzerland (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR, 1999).

The ratio of refugees from Kosovo was considerably higher in Albania and Macedonia (see Table 3). This observation suggests a contrast in sentiments of solidarity between Western European countries and Macedonia and Albania.

<sup>2</sup> Report does not specify for Kosovars, only Yugoslav, therefore, the number for refugees from Kosovo is likely slightly lower (USCRI, 1999a).

<sup>3</sup> Number for Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Therefore, the number for refugees of Kosovo is lower (USCRI, 1999d).

<sup>4</sup> 3'446 Yugoslav asylum seekers, of which between 80 and 85 percent were Kosovars (calculation:  $0.85 \times 3,446 = 2,842.95 = 2,843$ ) (USCRI, 1999b).

<sup>5</sup> Refugee numbers are taken from SWI (2023), USCRI (1999a), USCRI (1999b), USCRI (1999c), USCRI (1999d), and divided through population numbers of 1998 from database.earth (n.d.)

<b>Recipient country of refugees from Kosovo</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees from Kosovo in 1998</b>	<b>Population of recipient country in 1998</b>	<b>Ratio between refugees and population (refugees/population)</b>
Albania	440,000	3,210,133	13.71%
Macedonia	320,000	2,037,568	15.70%

**Table 3<sup>6</sup>.** *Kosovar Refugees compared to the Population of Albania and Macedonia. Sources: database.earth, n.d.; HRW, 2001, p. 4/9.*

### Diaspora

The Kosovo diaspora, estimated at 150,000 to 170,000 in 2010, primarily stems from economic migration and family reunification of workers that occurred before the war (Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 25). By 2023, this population had grown to about 250,000 (SWI, 2023). Today, people of Balkan origin play a significant role in Swiss society. Many are Swiss nationals as of today (Iseni et al., 2014), and several high-profile Swiss athletes, such as Xherdan Shaqiri or Granit Xhaka, are of Balkan descent. This group of people also constitutes a vital part of the workforce. In 2010, most people of Bosnian descent were employed in the construction, hospitality, and industry sectors (Iseni et al., 2014, p. 75). Similar trends are visible among workers originating from Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro between 2003 and 2007 (Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 62). The high presence of the Balkan diaspora has potential implications for how these individuals are perceived in Swiss society and, consequently, how political figures speak about them.

### The 2015 Refugee Movement

In the year 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that approximately one million people reached the continent's coasts that year, many perishing in the Mediterranean in the attempt (UNHCR, 2015), one of the most prominent reasons for individuals to flee being the war in Syria. The Arab Spring had initially sparked hope across the region. Still, in Syria, the uproars of the Arab Spring escalated into a civil war, leading to the rise of the

<sup>6</sup> Refugee numbers are taken from HRW (2001, p. 4/9) and divided through population numbers of 1998 from database.earth (n.d.)

*Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) (see Chulov et al., 2016 for an overview). These unbearable conditions forced millions to flee.

Angela Merkel’s famous quote “*Wir schaffen das*”<sup>7</sup> in an August 2015 press conference marked a crucial moment for the 2015 refugee movement and emphasized the former Chancellor’s willingness to open Germany’s doors to refugees (e.g., Oltermann, 2020). Merkel’s statement highlights the potential power and reach of language.

Table 4 shows that Germany and Sweden emerged as the primary European destinations for Syrian refugees. Germany received 158,655 asylum requests from Syrians, while Sweden received more than 50,000 Syrian asylum requests in 2015 (European Commission, 2016).

<b>Recipient country of refugees from Syria</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees from Syria in 2015</b>	<b>Population of recipient country in 2015</b>	<b>Ratio between refugees and population (refugees/population)</b>
Sweden	50,890	9,799,482	0.51%
Germany	158,655	82,077,550	0.39%
Austria	24,720	8,644,038	0.28%
Norway	10,535	5,189,771	0.20%
Denmark	8,850	5,683,701	0.16%
Switzerland	4,745	8,283,933	0.06%

**Table 4<sup>8</sup>.** *Syrian Refugees compared to the Population of Recipient Countries. Sources: database.earth, n.d.; European Commission, 2016; SEM, 2016b.*

<sup>7</sup> German for “we can do it”, own translation.

<sup>8</sup> Refugee numbers are taken from the European Commission (2016) and SEM (2016b) and divided through population numbers of 2015 from database.earth (n.d.)

Switzerland received only 4,745 asylum applications from Syrians in 2015 (SEM, 2016b), a relatively low number compared to other Western European countries. These relatively low numbers of Syrian asylum requests raise the question beyond the law, such as how this refugee group was portrayed in political discourse.

Apart from Syrians, other significant groups seeking protection across Europe included people from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, and Sudan (Kingsley, 2015). In Switzerland, most asylum applications came from Eritrea, followed by Afghanistan and Syria (SEM, 2016a).

According to a 2015 report, danger for civilians in Afghanistan had sharply increased, and widespread human rights abuses were present (UN, 2015). Similarly, Eritrea was identified as a country with severe human rights violations, including forced military service and arbitrary detention (HRW, 2015). These conditions contributed to a high number of asylum applications from both countries in 2015. Switzerland received a total number of 39'500 asylum requests in 2015 (SEM, 2025b).

How did Switzerland react to this sudden rise in asylum requests? As of today, most refugees with temporary admission (Permit F) originate from Eritrea, Afghanistan, and Syria (Swiss Refugee Council SRC, 2025c). These are the same main nationalities that were requesting asylum during the 2015 refugee movements (SEM, 2016a). Permit F is a temporary admission status, with two different specifications: Permit F as a refugee or Permit F as a foreigner<sup>9</sup>.

According to the State Secretariat of Migration, the recognition rate for refugees with Eritrean, Afghan, and Syrian nationality in 2015 ranged from 9.7%, 37.7%, and 35.4% (SEM, 2016a, p. 16). The recognition rate is the share of granted (non-temporary) asylum out of all asylum decisions.

*Recognition rate = Granted (non – temporary) asylum requests ÷ total asylum requests*

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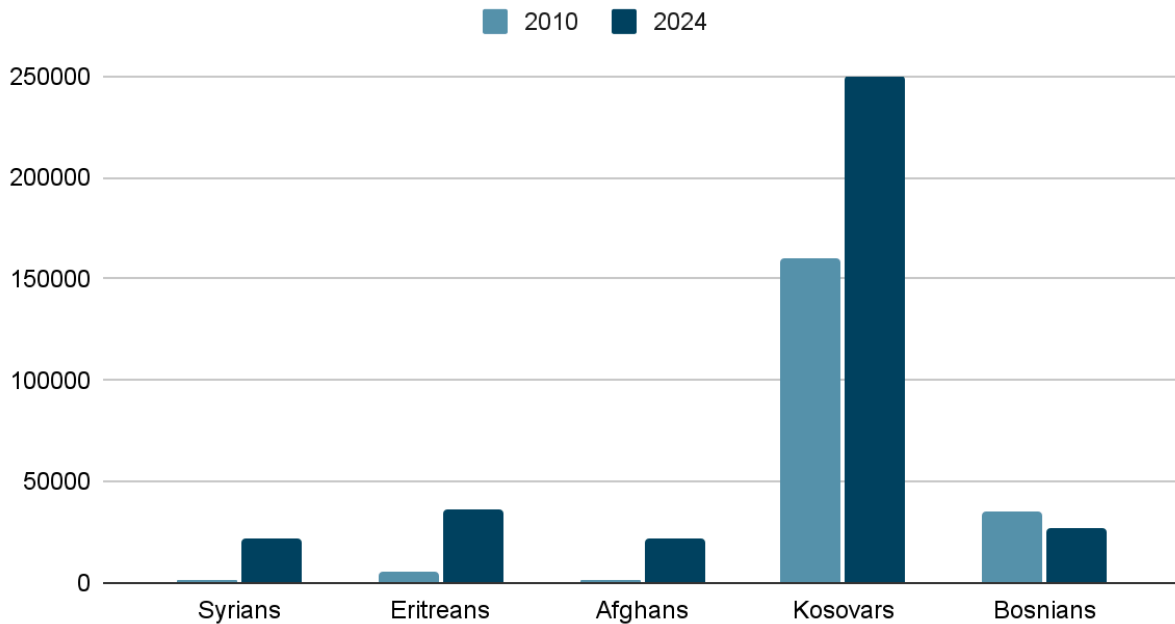
<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A for an overview on permits.

The recognition rate for Afghan, Eritrean, and Syrian nationals was relatively low, considering the known dangers and ongoing conflicts, people from these countries were fleeing. This low rate implies that the Swiss state granted non-temporary asylum (Permit B) to only a small portion of applicants, mirroring the pattern seen during the Yugoslav wars. As Parak's report shows, most asylum seekers from the Balkans received provisional admission (2020, pp. 85–87), implying that these refugee groups had relatively low recognition rates as well. It is, therefore, highly relevant to dig deeper into the portrayal of these refugee groups in discourse to find potential answers for these discrepancies.

### Diaspora

Comparing the more recent diaspora of refugees from countries such as Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan with the earlier Kosovar diaspora in Switzerland reveals an interesting dynamic. Salis Gross argues that although refugees from the Middle East and Africa began seeking protection in Switzerland as early as the late 1960s, they had limited opportunities to integrate, remaining a visible minority (2004, p. 152). In September 2010, 1,089 Syrians, 5,465 Eritreans, and 1,936 Afghans lived in Switzerland (SEM, 2010). Fourteen years later, in September 2024, the numbers had grown to 21,811 Syrians, 36,515 Eritreans, and 21,643 Afghans (SEM, 2024).

## Diaspora per country



**Figure 5.** *Diaspora per Country.* Sources: Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 25; SEM, 2010; SEM, 2024; SWI, 2023.

The figures of the Syrian, Eritrean, Afghan, and Bosnian diaspora remain relatively low compared to the Kosovar diaspora, as shown in Figure 5. This smaller presence in society suggests that refugees from Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan face more obstacles to get used to their lives in Switzerland. Unlike the Kosovar diaspora, they often lack established family networks and communities to guide them through everyday life in Switzerland. While many Bosnians acquired citizenship between 1998 and 2006, the number of naturalizations has since decreased (Iseni et al., 2014, p. 55), and for the most recent period, the data is less conclusive (FSO, n.d.-b). It is, therefore, challenging to make a definite statement on the Bosnian diaspora in Switzerland.

## The Ukrainian Refugee Movement

The year 2022 damaged the sense of security in Europe. On February 24, Russia launched a full-scale war that has continued into the present. Since then, nearly 7 million Ukrainians have

fled, the vast majority seeking protection in Europe, while around 500,000 found refuge elsewhere (UNHCR, 2025).

As of September 2021, before the war, 6,793 Ukrainians were permanently living in Switzerland (SEM, 2021). Between 2022 and December 2024, a total of approximately 112,000 Ukrainians requested protection under Permit S<sup>10</sup>, which guarantees temporary protection for one year and allows the federal government to renew (SEM, 2025c; SRC, 2025a). The Permit S has been prolonged yearly since 2022, most recently extending it until March 2026 (SRC, 2025b). At the end of 2022, the first year of permit S activation, 62,820 Ukrainian refugees had received it (SEM, 2023a).

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<sup>10</sup> Some sources such as Eurostat report lower numbers for Switzerland. This chapter uses the higher SEM estimate, as it is the official national source for asylum data.

<b>Recipient country of refugees from Ukraine</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees from Ukraine from 2022 to 2025<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Population of recipient country in 2022</b>	<b>Ratio between refugees and population (refugees/population)</b>
Norway	79,555	5,456,801	1.46%
Germany	1,170,250	84,086,227	1.40%
Switzerland	112,000	8,792,182	1.27%
Austria	85,135	9,064,677	0.94%
Denmark	34,675	5,902,904	0.59%
Sweden	47,020	10,487,338	0.45%

**Table 6<sup>12</sup>.** *Ukrainian refugees compared to the Population of Recipient countries. Source: database.earth, n.d; Eurostat, 2025; SEM, 2025c.*

The Ukrainian refugee movement marked a turning point in Swiss asylum policy. Although permit S was codified in the 1990s, it was activated for the first time in response to this group of refugees (SEM, 2025a). Permit S offers significant advantages over Permit F in different areas (SRC, 2020; SRC, 2025b).

These differences reflect a contrasting approach to previous responses to large refugee movements, raising questions about consistency and equity in Swiss asylum practices. While refugees from Syria, Eritrea, and the Balkans faced complex legal hurdles and restrictive permit conditions, Ukrainians encountered a much more streamlined and generous framework. While

<sup>11</sup> Due to data availability, this table one entails the time period 2022 until March 2025. Therefore, the numbers must be put into perspective (data used from Eurostat, 2025). If we take the 2022 number of Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland (SEM, 2023a) and divide it through the population, the percentage equals 0.7%, similar to the intake of refugees from Kosovo at the end of the 1990s.

<sup>12</sup> Refugee numbers are taken from Eurostat (2025) and SEM (2025c) and divided through population numbers of 2022 from database.earth (n.d.)

the legal inequality is evident, this thesis digs deeper into the justifying arguments that manifest through language in parliamentary discourse and explores how power dynamics are reproduced through language in Swiss parliamentary debates.

## Synthesis: Comparative Patterns

When examining the various refugee movements that have arrived in Switzerland since the 1990s, differences can be observed with other European countries, the ratio of arrivals and how the Swiss government responded.

Most people from the Balkans in the 1990s and the 2015 refugee movement received temporary admission and were consequently treated as individuals who would eventually leave again. The implementation of permit S indicates a clear shift in asylum politics in recent years and raises questions about why some refugee groups are treated differently. It provokes reflection of how discourse might have influenced and legitimized certain policy decisions, thereby potentially reproducing power dynamics and social inequality.

There is a variation between the ratio of refugees to population in Switzerland as compared to other European countries over time. For instance, during the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland's intake was markedly lower than Austria's, Sweden's, and Germany's refugee admissions. However, in 1998, Switzerland hosted the highest per-capita share of Kosovar refugees among Western European countries (SWI, 2023). The disparity widened in 2015, when Switzerland recorded the lowest ratio among other listed European countries (see Table 4). With the start of the Ukrainian refugee movement in 2022, Switzerland's relative intake was similar to the one during the Kosovo refugee movement, and protection permit S was activated for the first time.

The protection permit S does not entail an asylum process (SRC, 2025b); therefore, a recognition rate cannot be established. Permit S provides significantly more generous conditions than Permit F<sup>13</sup>:

- Easier family reunification

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<sup>13</sup> For a more in depth comparison of permits see Appendix A.

- Better access to social services, education, and the labor market
- Fewer bureaucratic hurdles
- Freedom to travel home without losing the permit
- Greater international mobility

(SRC, 2020)

The contrasting procedure of permit S offers an additional advantage compared to those who must undergo the asylum process, which was part of earlier refugee movements. The asylum process in Switzerland has been found to be highly challenging, even for individuals with a legitimate claim. This issue was highlighted in the Swiss documentary *The Hearing* (Gerig, 2023), which reenacts asylum interviews with four former asylum applicants. The film highlights the asymmetry of power between interviewers and asylum seekers, as well as the immense challenge of reciting trauma within a rigid bureaucratic process. Gerig's documentary, therefore, hints at the power dynamics in asylum systems and adds to the necessity of exploring these dynamics in parliamentary discourse on refugees.

This chapter also revealed a contrasting ratio of Switzerland between different refugee groups (see Table 7). These findings further call for a more in-depth analysis on power asymmetries in asylum politics and what influence parliamentary speech potentially has had on it.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Recorded number of refugees</b>	<b>Population of Switzerland</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
1992	Bosnia and Herzegovina	24,500	6,875,050	0.36%
1998	Kosovo	50,000	7,110,291	0.70%
2015	Syria	4,745	8,283,933	0.06%
2022	Ukraine	112,000	8,792,182	1.27%

**Table 7.** Comparison of Ratio between Refugees and Population in Switzerland.

## Switzerland's Legal Provisions Regarding Refugees

This chapter provides an overview of Switzerland's legal landscape regarding refugees and key international declarations signed by Switzerland. It also examines the mechanisms of popular initiatives and referenda, which are central features of the Swiss political system and significantly shape national laws and public discourse.

### Overview of Switzerland's Political System

Switzerland became a Federal Republic in 1848, marking the union of its cantons. It functions as a federal state with a system of direct democracy and entails the following branches:

- **Executive:** The Federal Council, a seven-member collegial body with decision-making based on consensus
- **Legislative:** The Federal Assembly, a bicameral system composed of
  - The National Council (representing the public)
  - The Council of the States (representing the cantons)
- **Judiciary:** The Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland, with judges elected by the Federal Assembly

(see Linder & Müller, 2017 for an overview of the Swiss political system).

Switzerland is a rigid system due to the numerous institutionalized veto players that make rapid change difficult (e.g., Mach et al., 2003). However, in recent decades, the use of popular initiatives has increased significantly among major political parties. Rochat et al. (2022) note that the most active parties using this political catalyst today are the Social Democratic Party (SP) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the two parties representing very contrasting ideologies.

### Direct Democracy: Popular Initiatives and Referenda

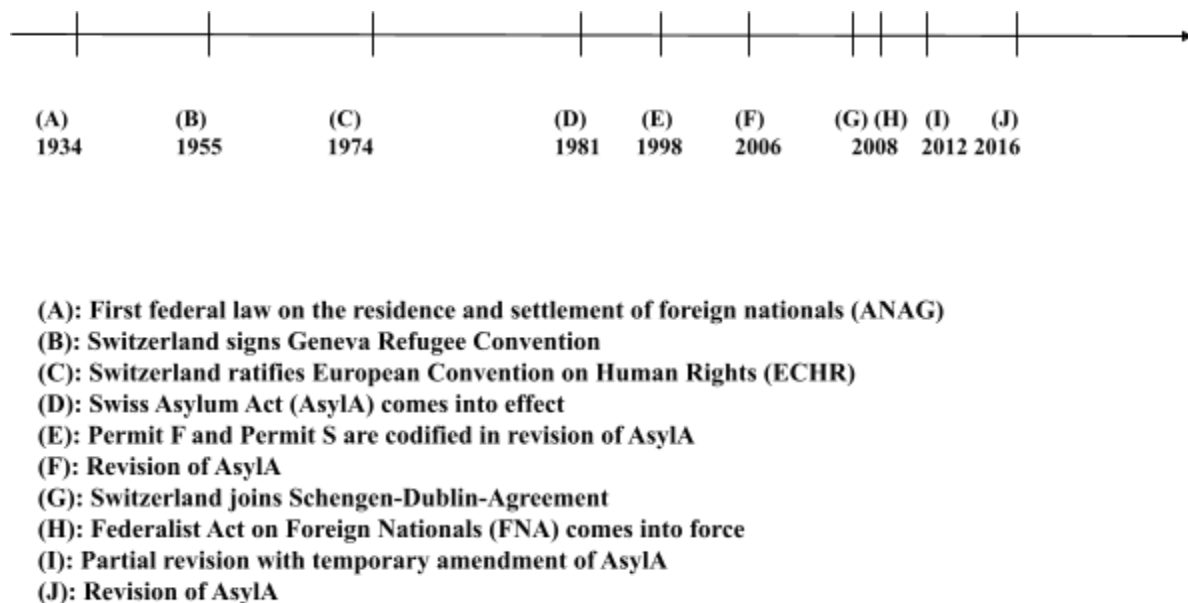
Referenda allow voters to approve or reject legal changes, while popular initiatives enable citizens to propose constitutional amendments. Introduced in 1891, initiatives have been used over 200 times, with approximately 10% of them passing. To launch one, its initiators must collect 100,000 signatures within 18 months (Swiss Confederation, 2025). Popular initiatives are

particularly relevant to this thesis, as they are a tool of direct democracy that engages with the public and reflects prevailing public sentiments on political topics.

Leemann (2015) notes a rise in initiatives since the 1970s, driven by lower launch costs and increased party competition. Bochsler et al. (2015) add that population growth has made the signature threshold less of a barrier. Today, political parties primarily drive initiatives, suggesting a shift away from their original purpose of acting as a tool of the people. In Switzerland's typically slow-moving political system, they can catalyze change, also in asylum policy.

### Legal Provisions on Migration

This section follows a chronological structure of legal provisions in the area of asylum policies. To understand how policy decisions were contested and justified through political discourse, it is crucial to explore Swiss asylum policies in a previous step. The timeline is visible in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** *Timeline of Legal Provisions on Migration.*

In 1934 the first federal law on the residence and settlement of foreign nationals (ANAG) came into force (Beobachtungsstelle für Asyl- und Ausländerrecht SBAA, n.d.). After World War II, international legal frameworks concerning refugee protection evolved. In 1955, Switzerland

signed the Geneva Refugee Convention, which universally defines the term *refugee* (Art. 1) and establishes the principle of *non-refoulement*.

In 1974, Switzerland ratified the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), drafted by the Council of Europe, which is widely regarded as the cornerstone of European human rights law (SRC, n.d.-a).

Key articles from the ECHR were later incorporated into Switzerland's Federal Constitution in 1999. In 1981, the Swiss Asylum Act (AsylA) came into effect, governing asylum for individuals persecuted on the basis of race, religion, nationality, social class, or political ideology (SBAA, n.d.). Permit F and Permit S were both codified in the 1998 revision of the Asylum Act. That same decade, the EU sought to harmonize asylum policy through the Amsterdam Treaty, which introduced minimum standards for asylum procedures in line with the ECHR. Switzerland responded by adapting its legislation to align with the Schengen and Dublin Agreements (SRC, n.d.-a; Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, n.d.).

In September 2006, the Federal Council revised the Asylum Act (SWI, 2006), introducing stricter measures (Al Jazeera, 2006; HRW, 2006). These changes triggered significant backlash from leftist parties, who launched a referendum in opposition (SWI, 2006). Despite the pushback, the reforms passed with 68% voter approval (Federal Chancellery, 2025a).

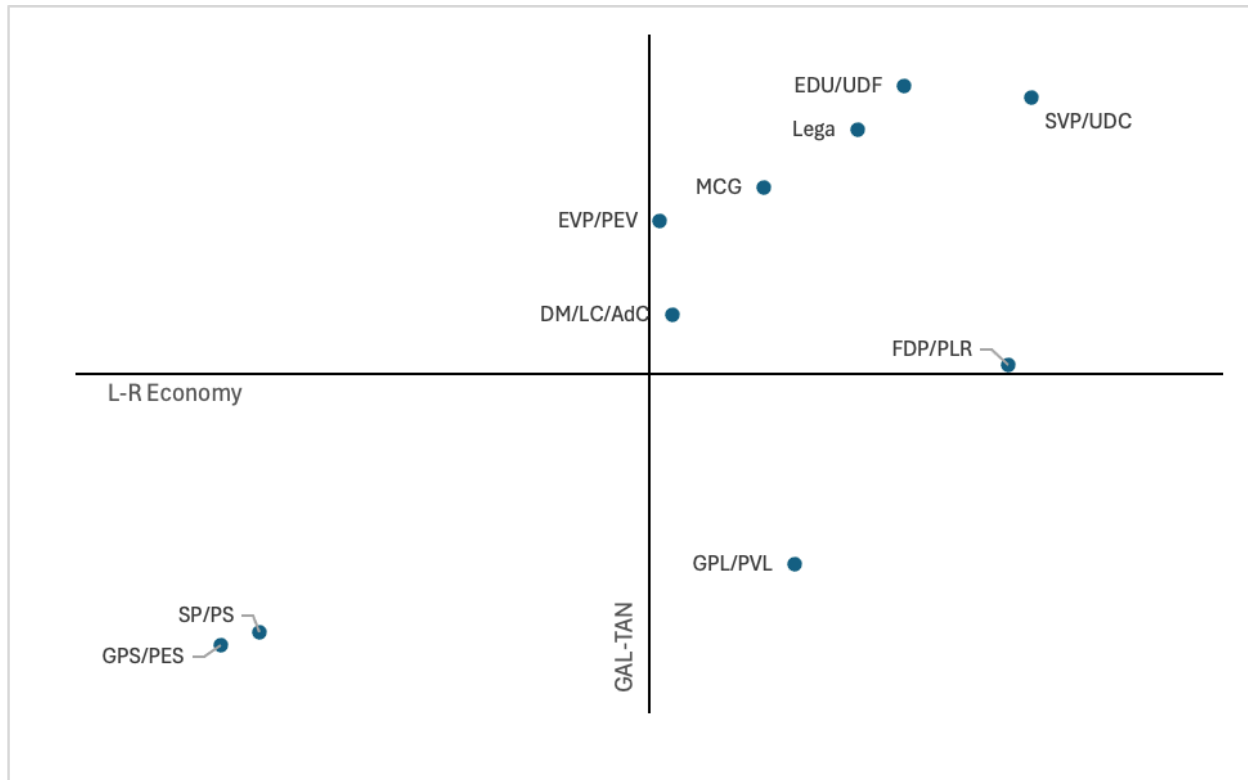
In 2008, the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals (FNA) came into force. A partial revision in 2012 temporarily amended the Asylum Act, abolishing the option to request asylum at embassies, excluding military deserters from refugee status, centralizing asylum centers, and accelerating procedures. These changes were in effect until September 2015 (Swiss Confederation, 2012).

In 2016, voters approved another revision to the Asylum Act through a referendum, which was implemented in 2019. It introduced shorter processing times, centralized federal asylum centers, and guaranteed free legal representation for asylum seekers. In the same year, FNA was revised to improve labor market access for recognized refugees (SBAA, n.d.).

## Attitude on Migration in Switzerland

This chapter provides an overview of Switzerland's institutional and non-institutional attitudes on migration.

### Introduction to the Political Landscape



**Figure 9.** Ideological placement of Swiss parties. Source: Rovny et al. (2024).

The political parties' landscape of Switzerland has many players. The main political parties in Switzerland and their general positions are visible in Figure 9<sup>14</sup>.

The Social Democratic Party (SP) and the Green Party (GP) both advocate for inclusive asylum and migration policies (Sozial Democratic Party of Switzerland, n.d.; Green Party of

<sup>14</sup> Note: Each party is listed with the German and the French abbreviation. This thesis only uses the German abbreviation. The EVP, MCG, Lega, and EDU are not described more detailed as they are not major political parties. If parliamentary discourse from these parties is used in the analysis, more detail on respective parties will be mentioned there.

Switzerland, n.d.). As visible in Figure 9, their ideologies are almost congruent, which has implications for their power in Parliament.

The SVP adopts a restrictive stance on migration (Afonso, 2013). *Die Mitte* (DM, formerly CVP) was once a moderate political party that emphasized Christian values. Their migration policy aims at balancing humanitarian responsibilities with integration (DM, n.d.).

The FDP advocates for a liberal immigration policy that balances economic needs with integration efforts, claiming their migration policy to be “strict, but fair” (FDP.Die Liberalen, n.d.). The FDP has shifted more towards the right spectrum in recent years (Afonso & Papadopoulos 2015, pp. 623-624).

The Green Liberal Party (GLP) advocates for migration that balances the country's humanitarian tradition with its economic interests (SRC, 2023a).

### Popular Initiatives on Migration since the 1990s

As previously mentioned, popular initiatives are a special feature of Swiss direct democracy. Committees of individual Swiss citizens usually initiate them and require a popular vote, so they mirror the sentiments of the public sphere. The framing of issues in media, politics, and the public sphere is highly interconnected (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Druckman et al., 2004; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Entman, 2004; Fridkin & Kenney, 2005; Riker, 1996; Scheufele, 1999). Popular initiatives are not only present within political arenas but also extend into the public sphere.

Since the 1990s, the Swiss People's Party has consistently utilized popular initiatives to advocate for more restrictive asylum policies, reflecting the core right-wing sentiment of its voters. Over the last thirty years, the cultural dimension, particularly issues related to migration and national identity, has become a central topic around which the SVP mobilizes its support in Switzerland (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 33).

In 1996, voters narrowly rejected the SVP's “Against Illegal Immigration” initiative, aimed at tightening entry procedures (53.7% no) (Federal Chancellery, 2025b; Federal Chancellery,

2025c). In 2002, the SVP launched the “Against Asylum Abuse” initiative, which called for sanctions against transportation carriers, restricted welfare for asylum seekers, and a ban on work for rejected or non-compliant applicants. It was narrowly defeated, with 50.1% of voters opposing it (SRC, n.d.-b).

In 2010, voters approved a counter-proposal to the Deportation Initiative (*Ausschaffungsinitiative*) after Parliament had previously rejected the original SVP version (Federal Chancellery, 2025d). The campaign poster the SVP used for this popular initiative can be seen in Figure 10.

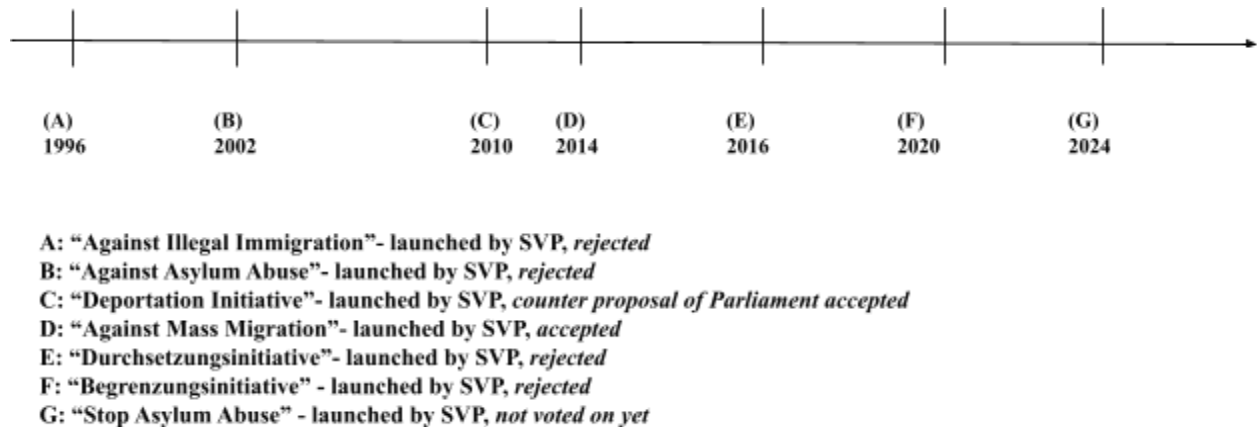


**Figure 10.** SVP original Campaign Poster on their Popular Initiative “For the Criminal Foreigner’s Deportation”. Translation: “Deportation Initiative YES, Counter Proposal NO”. Source: SVP, 2014.

Over the last decade, the SVP has launched numerous other popular initiatives that restrict migration and asylum rights (EJDP, 2014; Federal Chancellery, 2016; KOF, n.d.). A timeline of all these popular initiatives is provided in Figure 10.

As of August 2024, the SVP began collecting signatures for its latest initiative, “Stop Asylum Abuse”. The campaign website promotes an end to what it labels “asylum chaos”, advocating

against so-called abuse of the system, illegal migration, and crimes committed by asylum seekers (Grenzschutz-Initiative, n.d.).



**Figure 11.** *Timeline of Popular Initiatives on Migration.*

The continuing use of popular initiatives in asylum and migration policy highlights the importance and controversy surrounding this topic in Swiss politics. Through these initiatives, the SVP has regularly promoted stricter asylum laws and has contributed a negative image of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Their campaigns often use strong emotional language and focus on national identity, which helps them gain public support. SVP's rhetoric has influenced not only laws but also the general political climate around migration. Arguably, political discourse is more prevalent in the public sphere in Switzerland compared to other democracies, as these initiatives often come with nationwide, omnipresent campaign posters. These initiatives provide us with our first glimpse into how political figures portray different refugee movements, both within and outside parliamentary discourse.

As Perkowska (2020) states, the fear of "over-foreignization" still plays a significant role in how migration is discussed in Switzerland. NGOs and progressive parties have opposed these popular initiatives, but have not launched successful popular initiatives in favor of more open asylum policies. For example, in 2012, Amnesty International and other leftist groups campaigned against the "Against Mass Immigration" initiative (AI, 2012), and in 2006 and 2022, coalitions of human rights actors and political parties launched referenda against changes to asylum laws

and increased Frontex funding (SWI, 2006; SWI, 2022). But these efforts did not succeed. These observations suggest that politically left actors do not seem to prioritize advocating for more progressive migration policies.

Bornschiefer (2015) argues that the SP's strong emphasis on universalistic values has led to a decline in working-class support, much of which has shifted to the populist right. As a result, left-wing parties like the SP tend to prioritize economic issues to avoid losing part of their electorate. The lack of popular initiatives on migration topics could, therefore, also have strategic reasons. The overrepresentation of SVP's popular initiatives on migration topics in the public sphere could potentially lead to a normalization of discourse opposing immigration as SVP is using.

## Stereotypes and Group-Specific Attitudes

While previous chapters outlined general attitudes toward migration in Switzerland, this section focuses on refugee group-specific perceptions relevant to this thesis, specifically refugees from the Balkans, common beliefs about Muslim refugees, and the dichotomy between European and non-European refugees.

### Balkans

Kosovars have faced persistent negative stereotypes in Swiss society since the 1990s. These are partly rooted in the overlap between the Balkan refugee movement and Switzerland's drug crisis during that time. Zurich was among Europe's largest open drug scenes in the mid-1980s (SRF, 2022), and Albanian networks were involved in the drug trade. These networks' involvement in the drug market contributed to the image of Balkan refugees as criminals. Simultaneously, an economic downturn and increased family reunification from Balkan-origin workers fueled social tensions. These stereotypes are particularly pronounced in the German-speaking regions, and to a lesser extent in Romandie and Ticino (Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 41).

### Muslims

Cheng (2015) argues that Muslims are often perceived as non-European, non-White, and reluctant to integrate, framing them as a threat to Swiss identity. However, around 58% of Muslims in Switzerland are of Balkan origin (FSO, n.d.-a), which shows a mismatch in the

statistical facts and perceived realities of the public. Various political initiatives have echoed the perceived danger of Muslims in Switzerland. For instance, the SVP-led minaret ban (2009) was passed with 57.5% of the vote, making Switzerland the first European country to implement such a ban, which was justified as a measure to curb the spread of Islam (Abdeleli, 2019). In a critical discourse analysis of the Islamization of Switzerland, Wodak et al. (2013) demonstrate that the case of Switzerland illustrates how right-wing populists can package the perceived danger of cultural change into a moral-panic narrative of Islamization, exploit the procedural openness of direct democracy, and thereby translate discursive exclusion into concrete legal restrictions.

Figure 12 shows the main train station hall in Zurich during rush hour. At the line of sight, there are campaign posters for the proposed minaret ban. The placement of these campaign posters demonstrates the significant presence that the SVP usually takes up for their anti-immigration campaigns and how normalized Islamophobia is in the Swiss public sphere.



**Figure 12.** *SVP Campaign Poster for Minaret Ban at the Zurich Train Station. Translation: “Stop. Yes to Minaret Ban”. Source: Schmitt, 2009.*

In 2021, the burqa ban passed with 51.2% support and took effect at the beginning of 2025 (SWI, 2024). Its campaign imagery linked burqas with extremism and terrorism (see Figure 13). Scholars such as Eskandari and Banfi (2017) confirm the notion of normalized Islamophobic narratives, promoting undifferentiated portrayals of Muslims. They note that the minarets in SVP posters resembled missiles, reinforcing associations with violence. Both campaigns, they contend, also cast Muslim women as subordinate and voiceless, further entrenching stereotypes.



**Figure 13.** *SVP Campaign Poster on the Burqa Ban. Translation: “Stop Extremism! Ban on Face Covering Yes”. Source: SVP, 2021.*

Despite the success of both initiatives at the ballot box, which implies considerable public support, these initiatives were not without significant opposition. In the case of the minaret ban, a broad coalition of political and civil society actors publicly rejected the initiative (SWI, 2009). The Federal Council and Parliament also opposed the ban, warning that it violated religious freedoms and contravened Switzerland’s constitutional and international human rights obligations (AI, 2009; SWI, 2009).

Similarly, the burqa ban faced resistance from the political center to the left, human rights and women's groups, as well as church committees and trade unions, all of which condemned the measure as discriminatory and unnecessary (SWI, 2021b). The Federal Council again voiced its disapproval, arguing that the proposed law was unreasonable and should be decided at the regional level (NPR, 2021).

This institutional and civic opposition underscores that while Islamophobic rhetoric was mobilized effectively in popular campaigns, it was not uniformly accepted across Swiss political and social structures. Still, the Federal Council's statement to leave the final word to regional governments discursively hints at a certain unwillingness to take responsibility for the issue. This sentiment may connect to the deeply entrenched subsidiarity principle in the Swiss government, which is potentially a result of Swiss federalism. Subsidiarity in Swiss politics refers to the principle that power is allocated to the lowest possible governmental level. Communes, as the most minor political units, are granted maximum autonomy to handle tasks independently. Responsibilities are only passed on to higher levels when necessary (Swiss Confederation, 2024).

#### Double Standards

The Ukrainian refugee movement was met with unprecedented solidarity in Switzerland, primarily through private housing offers. At the onset, nearly two-thirds of Ukrainian refugees were hosted in private accommodations (SRC, n.d.-c; SEM, 2023b), a stark contrast to the standard procedure for asylum seekers from other regions, who are typically held in federal asylum centers for up to 140 days before moving into collective or shared housing with other asylum seekers and/or refugees (Asylum Information Database AIDA, 2023). The unprecedented willingness to accept strangers into one's home implies empathy with Ukrainians and, therefore, suggests positive stereotypes of Ukrainians.

Comparative research confirms that European citizens tend to view Ukrainians more favorably than refugees from countries like Afghanistan. This differential treatment is often attributed to perceived ethnic and religious similarity (Iordache & Blanchard, 2024), as well as beliefs about who is more deserving of protection (De Coninck, 2023). Ukraine's geographical proximity and Russia's perceived threat further reinforced humanitarian responses across Europe (De Coninck, 2022). Scholars like Alsbeti (2023) describe this unequal treatment as a double standard where

states apply international legal protections selectively, often depending on the perceived identity of the refugee group.

### Media Framing

Only a few scholars have dedicated their research to the media framing of refugees in Switzerland. Although research on the media framing of the three refugee movements in the Swiss context remains limited, existing studies indicate clear trends. People from the Balkans have been negatively portrayed in Swiss media. Wyssmüller (2005) documents this pattern in print media from 1990 to 2000. Maillard and Shabani (2016) highlight how Swiss soccer players of Balkan origin are identified as “Swiss” when they win a match, but their ethnicity is emphasized when they lose. This differential news coverage suggests a conditional sense of belonging tied to achievement.

According to a recent contribution by Hersperger (2023) on the media narrative used for Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in Switzerland, the author shows differential news coverage for these two groups. Syrian refugees are portrayed more distantly in Swiss media coverage, whereas media outlets describe Ukrainian refugees in a more personal and approachable way.

International studies show similar double standards. El-Nawawy and Elmasry (2024) found that elite U.S. newspapers portrayed Ukrainian refugees more empathetically than Syrians, featuring personal details, quotes, and humanizing narratives. Similarly, Iberi and Saddam (2022) argue that in Turkey, Greece, Hungary, and Italy, Ukrainian refugees are depicted more empathetically in media, while media coverage of refugees originating from the African continent often portrays them as a danger to European society.

Sales (2023) argues that these double standards are evident in media framing, particularly in the cases of the Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises within the EU. Furthermore, the author argues that the media's attention at the beginning of the refugee crisis was especially influential in shaping policy decisions within the EU. The main factor that formed this decision was “*by highlighting the human stories and suffering of refugees*” (Sales, 2023, p. 7).

This chapter on attitudes on migration shows that Switzerland's migration debate is highly influenced by the recurring SVP-led politics of threat and identity, which constantly spills over from popular initiative campaigns into legal decisions. Mapping the parties' ideologies clarifies why certain politicians discuss refugee movements so differently. Stereotypes provide us with a sense of salient attitudes, also in parliamentary discourse. This chapter, therefore, provides a baseline for the three research questions.

Having outlined the historical, political, legal, social, and cultural contexts of refugee reception in Switzerland, this chapter establishes the contextual foundation for analyzing how the country has responded to different refugee movements over time. The following chapter introduces the theoretical and methodological approach for critically examining Swiss parliamentary discourse.

## Theory and Approach

This chapter presents different theoretical frameworks that play a crucial role in the understanding of discourse on refugees and provides the foundation for the analysis of the portrayal of varying refugee groups in the Swiss Parliament, the legitimization of policy decisions on refugee measures through discourse as well as the presence of power dynamics in the language of asylum politics in Swiss parliamentary debates.

### Why Study Discourse on Refugees?

Why should we specifically study discourse on different refugee groups? How can discourse explain existing inequalities of and between refugees in Switzerland?

Firstly, studying discourse on refugees is essential to uncover the colonial continuities embedded in contemporary migration politics. Drawing on scholars such as Mayblin (2014), Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018), and Said (1977), this thesis argues that political and media discourse cannot be separated from colonial legacies that continue to shape categories of deservingness, legitimacy, and crisis in migration governance. Contributions, such as Gutiérrez Rodríguez's (2018) *coloniality of migration* framework, reveal that European asylum policies and public narratives are not neutral but are shaped by enduring colonial hierarchies that define who is perceived as a legitimate refugee. These discourses often present people on the move from formerly colonized states as disconnected from Europe, denying historical ties shaped by imperial entanglements and global capitalism.

Secondly, scholars who study the perceived deservingness of asylum seekers have shown that *settlement deservingness*, referring to public judgments about whether a refugee group deserves to stay and become part of the national community, often influences support for specific policies and rights of these refugee groups (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020).

Thirdly, various studies have examined discourse on different refugee groups in the media, arguing, for instance, that Ukrainians should be depicted more empathetically in media reporting compared to Syrians (El-Nawawy and ElMasry, 2024) or African refugees, who are perceived as

a danger to European society (Iberi & Saddam, 2022). These contributions highlight the contrasting framing of media for different refugee groups and depict the importance of language in the public sphere's perception of various refugee groups. The media's power to shape what is put on the agenda in public discourse and politics has been demonstrated through the agenda-setting theory, as proposed by various scholars (e.g., McCombs & Shaw, 1993). The interconnectedness between media framing, political discourse, public opinion (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Druckman et al., 2004; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Entman, 2004; Fridkin & Kenney, 2005; Riker, 1996; Scheufele, 1999) as well as the effect of media on support or opposition to migration and asylum policies (Van Gorp, 2005) makes the study of discourse crucial.

Lastly, language is a tool of power in society. Pierre Bourdieu's contribution, *Language and Symbolic Power*, underlines the implications of language in discourse, in general, and its political aspects. Language creates and maintains social reality, reproducing belief systems and depicting social positions and power structures (Bourdieu, 1991). Language is responsible for shaping discourse. Public conversations are one of the most powerful tools for maintaining influence and control (Van Dijk, 2013, pp. 91-92). How asylum seekers and refugees are perceived is highly influenced by 'micro-linguistic mechanisms'; however, the meanings of the language do not stem from the language itself but the social context (Khosravini, 2009, p. 494). Discourse and social structure are inherently intertwined (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). As the author put it, discourse is a political tool. It "*establishes, sustains and changes power relations*" (1992, p. 67). It is, thus, crucial to seek potential answers to persistent social inequalities between refugee groups in political discourse.

## Power Dynamics...

### Postcolonial Theory

Colonialism and Switzerland: How do these two connect?

We cannot discuss refugee movements without acknowledging how colonialism destabilized the countries that many asylum seekers flee to in Europe. At first glance, it may seem counterintuitive to consider the implications of colonialism for Switzerland, as it never had any

colonies. However, recent scholarship has demonstrated Switzerland's significant involvement in colonial systems through economic, scientific, and cultural means. Purtschert et al. (2016) have referred to Switzerland as a case of *colonialism without colonies*. The authors argue that in the Swiss context, debates on racism, colonialism, and their effects on society are non-existent. The lack of confrontation with these topics is then used as a justification for the perpetuation of colonial imagery. These findings make it crucial for this thesis, which examines discourse, to consider the potential colonial legacy present in public debates.

More recently, there have been projects on the local level that have addressed Switzerland's complicity in colonial structures. In 2023, the city of Zurich held an exhibition titled *Blind Spots - Zurich and Colonialism*, which aimed to uncover the city's colonial ties. It revealed that Zurich's colonial links spanned Latin America, Africa, and Asia (Stadt Zürich, 2023).

#### Emergence of Post-Colonial Studies

Post-colonial studies emerged towards the end of the 20th century in various areas of the humanities (Gandhi, 2020). Multiple scholars, such as Nkrumah (1970; 1994) and Williams (1970; 1994), have demonstrated how the legacy of racism, perpetuated through European colonialism, continues to impact modern life in various aspects, including labor market access, education, political engagement, and other areas of life. These spheres are still influenced by a "us vs. them" paradigm, which differentiates between citizens and non-citizens.

Mayblin (2014) argues that the decolonization process, which essentially took place in the mid-20th century, marked a period of change, but not a shift in racial hierarchy. Instead, racial hierarchy was here to stay. Additionally, she states that policy-making is not always logical or neutral, as is often commonly believed. Regarding today's asylum seekers, Mayblin argues that formerly colonized people tend to be excluded from having de facto access to the asylum procedure. Although asylum politics may appear modern, nowadays, they are still deeply intertwined with colonialism, exclusion, and "othering". Mayblin goes so far as to call the situation regarding asylum seekers today "colonial modernity" (2014, p. 439). History is, therefore, highly relevant to understanding the challenges faced by asylum seekers today.

### Coloniality of Migration

In her fundamental contribution to the intersection between colonialism and migration. Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018) creates a framework, which she calls the *colonality of migration*. As previously stated by Mayblin (2014), Gutiérrez Rodríguez agrees with the argument that European asylum and migration policies do not just emerge out of a vacuum. Instead, they are deeply influenced by colonial legacies. Her framework comes after an incident that took place on New Year's Eve in 2015 in Cologne, where African and Muslim men had sexually assaulted some white German women in the central train station, and the media reacted by portraying all Muslim men as a danger to European women (Jazmati & Studer, 2017, p. 89).

Through her *colonality of migration* framework, Gutiérrez Rodríguez shows that asylum policies reinforce colonial power struggles by producing hierarchies of refugees, thereby drawing on orientalist and racialized practices. These orientalist and racialized practices were most prominently described by Edward Said's contribution *Orientalism* back in the 1970s. In this book, Said argues that the West has portrayed the East as "the Orient" and drawn a reduced and backward image of it. He argued that the Orient was contrasted with the Occident (the West) in stating that:

*"[...] the universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours', which is 'theirs', is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary."* (1977, p. 167)

But what does Said mean by 'arbitrary' here? Said argues that this definition is one made by the West, which does not require "the barbarians" to acknowledge that they are from a "barbarian land" (1977, p. 167). He argues that the perception of the so-called Orient can be discerned in our language, perception, and the dynamic between the West and the East (1977, p. 172). The main takeaway from this thesis in Said's work lies in the fact that the West has always believed it had a legitimate claim on countries in the East. Said shows that academic contributions, literature, and political discourse have contributed to a system that justified Western dominance by constructing the "Orient" as inferior. Again, this is reflected in rhetoric, traditions, and society itself, as well as representations that are deeply rooted in colonial structures.

Returning to Gutiérrez Rodríguez's framework of *coloniality of migration*, the author problematizes the narrative that refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, and Syria have no connection to Europe (2018, p. 18). Additionally, Gutiérrez Rodríguez states that discourse on migration waves nowadays is often portrayed as a phenomenon that has nothing to do with Europe's history. However, transatlantic European migration played a significant role in the 18th and 19th centuries (2018, p. 21).

This observation portrays a double standard. It exemplifies how migration was perceived as legitimate when undertaken by colonizing states. However, now that formerly colonized people migrate to Europe, it is distinguished as a "crisis". These narratives undermine entirely the implications of European colonialism, arguing that global capitalism, as it is played out today, perpetuates a racial pattern that assists the coloniality of power, a concept that was established by Quijano (2000) and explains the persisting power imbalance between the formerly colonized and colonizers as a consequence of colonialism. Gutiérrez Rodríguez's framework builds on this framework. In summary, the situation in the EU is described by the author as follows:

*"[...] the coloniality of migration operates within [a] matrix of social classification on the basis of colonial racial hierarchies."* (2018, p. 24)

The colonial aspect of migration has also been reflected by scholars in the context of refugee camps located in Europe. Davies and Isakjee (2019) state that European refugee camps can be seen as a postcolonial entity, being a result of racial policies.

But what are the consequences of these frameworks for this thesis? Said's concept of *Orientalism* reveals the West's sense of entitlement over a reduced "Orient", erasing distinctions between countries, cultures, languages, and traditions. This lens reduces refugees from formerly colonized regions to a single category, stripping them of individuality and identity. In contrast, white refugees are seen as part of the European "us" and are thus more easily accepted.

Mayblin's notion of *colonial modernity* points to racialized asylum policies. Those from formerly colonized nations are effectively excluded from having fair access to the asylum

procedure, while white individuals are not affected by these racialized barriers. Gutiérrez Rodríguez's idea of *coloniality of migration* shares a similar view. Asylum policies produce hierarchies of refugees: Some refugees are perceived as better, more in need, all in all, more deserving of refuge. The next chapter examines the deservingness framework, which is also crucial for understanding the perceptions of different refugees.

Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018, p. 18) also highlights how refugees from countries like Syria, Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan are perceived as lacking a connection to Europe. This perceived disconnection may further delegitimize their right to remain in Europe.

### Deservingness Framework

The notion that certain individuals were considered more human than others is not a new phenomenon and is observable throughout history. At the turn of the century, Van Oorschot (2000) laid the groundwork for deservingness theory. In his contribution, he examines the criteria that influence perceptions of deservingness and introduces the concept of conditional solidarity within the public sphere. He establishes five key criteria that influence whether individuals are considered worthy of receiving welfare benefits. According to Van Oorschot, identifying these criteria is instrumental for policymakers and political actors, such as interest groups, as it provides insights into how public narratives can be framed (2000, p. 34).

The five dimensions proposed by Van Oorschot (2000) are:

1. **Control:** The extent to which people are seen as responsible for their vulnerable situation. The less control they are perceived to have, the more deserving they appear.
2. **Attitude:** A compliant and grateful disposition increases perceived deservingness
3. **Reciprocity:** The more individuals are perceived as capable of giving back to society, the more deserving they are judged to be.
4. **Identity:** The closer an individual is perceived to be to the in-group ("us"), the more deserving they are considered.
5. **Need:** The greater the perceived urgency of need, the stronger the sense of deservingness.

These criteria are now commonly referred to as the CARIN criteria (e.g., De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Laenen et al., 2019; Meuleman et al., 2020). They help to explain the multidimensional nature of welfare state solidarity, which cannot be explained unidimensionally (Van Oorschot, 2000).

Meuleman et al. (2020) argue that deservingness studies have primarily employed proxy variables, which may fail to accurately measure the concept due to their vagueness. To address this, they propose a refined operationalization of the CARIN criteria through a multi-item survey instrument using Likert-type scales (e.g., 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) to measure each dimension.

Having emerged initially in quantitative methodology (Van Oorschot, 2006), which still dominates deservingness research (e.g., De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020; Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2019), the field has more recently seen calls for qualitative approaches to address the framework's limitations. Laenen et al. (2019) question the accuracy of the CARIN model, noting three major concerns: first, public perceptions of deservingness may not align with the deductively derived criteria; second, the criteria themselves are abstract and complex to define precisely; and third, perceptions of deservingness are shaped by institutional context. Their analysis implies that deservingness criteria are context- and potentially language-specific. Van Oorschot (2006) supports this view, showing that cultural norms shape deservingness attitudes. These observations suggest that discourse reveals the moral and normative assumptions underpinning deservingness. Additionally, as deservingness criteria are not rigid, a qualitative approach enables a more in-depth understanding of the deservingness of individuals.

The deservingness framework emerged from the interest in studying welfare deservingness (Van Oorschot 2000, 2006). In the latter contribution, Van Oorschot (2006) utilized the European Values Study to examine public perceptions of various groups in need, including the elderly, the sick and disabled, the unemployed, and immigrants. His findings revealed a common pattern of deservingness in Europe that is consistent across states and social categories. Additionally, immigrants are perceived as the least deserving among the four mentioned groups (Van Oorschot, 2006). With this contribution, Van Oorschot (2006) highlighted the need to study the deservingness of migrants and refugees further. Although initially centered on welfare benefits,

these findings have broader implications for the portrayal of refugees in politics, their impact on policy decisions, and the potential reproduction of power asymmetry.

### Deservingness and Refugees

The deservingness theory quickly gained momentum and expanded beyond the realm of the welfare state, connecting deservingness with the logic of social rights (Meuleman et al., 2020). In recent years, scholars have increasingly turned to the deservingness framework to examine how the public sphere perceives refugees. Amid rising numbers of refugees arriving in Europe over the past decades, various studies have explored the binary of ‘undeserving’ and ‘deserving’ refugees (see Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; De Coninck, 2023; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016; Huschke, 2014; Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2019; Sales, 2002).

The framework has also evolved to include what De Coninck and Matthijs (2020) define as *settlement deservingness*. They argue that Van Oorschoot’s welfare deservingness framework also applies to how migrants are judged in their desire to settle outside their countries of origin. Their findings provide insight into the public’s conditional solidarity toward migrant settlement.

In this quantitative analysis, De Coninck and Matthijs (2020) find that three of the five CARIN criteria apply to the concept of settlement deservingness; namely, attitude, reciprocity, and identity. Among these, attitude appears to be the most significant, while identity is the least significant, but the latter has gained relevance over time. Muslim refugees, in particular, are disadvantaged under this criterion. Migrants who speak the language of the country of arrival receive more favorable settlement evaluations from locals. The main variation between “deservingness preference” can be seen over time and between countries (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020). These findings diverge from Van Oorschoot’s (2006) analysis, which suggests that welfare deservingness has a typical pattern across Europe. These differing results imply that settlement deservingness, although following a similar principle as welfare deservingness, does not follow the same logic. These contrasts may be due to the fact that migrants and refugees tend to be the most isolated group in society. Flyvbjerg describes migrants as an ‘extreme case’ when looking at deservingness (2006, p. 229).

Additional demographic factors also shape attitudes toward migrant settlement. Older individuals, males, and Christians tend to be more restrictive when it comes to accepting migrants compared to their counterparts (women, younger people, and Muslims). Education also plays a role: For lower-educated individuals, identity criteria are more relevant, whereas for higher-educated individuals, attitude and (future) reciprocity are more critical (De Coninck & Matthijs, 2020). Some authors have also shown that people with lower education prefer to apply restrictions to social rights based on the deservingness criteria of reciprocity, attitude, and identity. In a survey of 23'000 Dutch respondents, Reeskens and Van der Meer (2019) find that solidarity based on deservingness drastically declines when the recipients are foreign. Additionally, refugees perceived as culturally distant are seen as less deserving. These findings are critical in understanding public attitudes during recent refugee movements in Europe.

Nielsen et al. (2020) add another layer by identifying a moral dimension to settlement deservingness. In their comparative study across the UK, Slovenia, Denmark, and Norway, they find that the logic of deservingness competes with broader moral reasoning when looking at migrants' entitlements. The authors argue that the deservingness criteria may potentially undermine people's ability to make moral judgments without relying on this framework. Deservingness criteria are not detached tools; they help to reduce our surroundings and categorize people into groups (2020, pp. 26-27).

Additionally, Huschke argues that existing stereotypes often influence perceptions of deservingness rather than the actual circumstances of migrants, such as their socio-economic status and biography. Additionally, lack of information, such as the threat of deportation, and one's own biases influence perceived deservingness (2014, p. 358). Others have argued that the 'immigration penalty' might not be an active decision (Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2019). Huschke's (2014) ethnographic study on humanitarian health care for undocumented Latin American immigrants shows that while medical volunteers aim to treat patients equally, structural power imbalances persist. As a result, patients often feel compelled to perform their deservingness.

Another vital contribution looks into the perceived legitimacy of people on the move receiving protection in European countries connected to the linguistic use of the categories “refugee” and “migrants” (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). The authors conclude that these existing binary categories are insufficient to capture the complex dynamics between the political, social, and economic aspects of migration. In other words, people on the move get reduced and put into one of the two categories mentioned above. This dichotomy does not adequately portray the situation of these people. Also, dichotomy often implies a hierarchy between the two categories. Especially in feminist approaches, scholars have argued that binary constructs often imply a superiority of one category over the other (see Charlesworth, 1999; Krivenko, 2017). These findings suggest that one type of group in the migration discourse tends to receive better treatment than the other.

Crawley and Skleparis (2018) further show how European politicians label refugees from conflict and war countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq as “economic migrants”, thereby delegitimizing the refugees’ rights. This aspect is highly relevant, again, in the context of colonial legacies. The fact that the term “economic migrant” can be used to discredit protection and is seen by European actors as a valid disqualification to settle in their countries, heavily underlines the missing confrontation of European actors of colonial heritage that still affects other countries today.

Crucially, these categories are not merely linguistic; they have concrete implications for access to rights and resources (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018, p. 59). This observation emphasizes the importance of analyzing discourse to understand why some refugees are treated differently compared to others.

In light of the above discussion, the deservingness framework offers a vital lens through which we can better understand the differing social, political, and ultimately, legal reactions to refugee movements in Switzerland. By examining how the public and political actors assess refugees along criteria such as control, need, identity, attitude, and reciprocity, we gain insight into the moral and cultural logic that shapes parliamentary debates. The concept of settlement deservingness provides a bridge between abstract policy principles and concrete social attitudes,

revealing how certain refugee groups are systematically constructed as more or less deserving of protection.

## ... and Discourse

This chapter turns to the discursive dimension of this thesis. The following frameworks will theoretically underscore the relevance of political discourse to understand how policy decisions were discursively constructed and justified. Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will demonstrate how power dynamics are reproduced through language.

### Framing Theory

Goffman's contribution, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974), laid the foundation for framing theory. Although Goffman did not attribute framing to a specific discipline, Entman (1993) later argued that framing should be applied in political science, sociology, psychology, and other fields concerned with race, gender, and class. Framing is a way of organizing and interpreting information that helps societies understand and assign meaning to the world around them (Goffman, 1974). It creates salience for specific angles of life, highlighting particular issues in the public sphere (Entman, 1993), and depicts how people conceptualize problems (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104).

While frameworks are socially constructed, shaped by both producers and observers, they may also possess an "exploitative" characteristic, referred to as fabrications (Goffman, 1974). In the context of media and political discourse, this can manifest in exaggerating the number of refugees or diminishing their suffering. When voters lack strong or clear opinions on a particular topic, framing can significantly shape their views. In contrast, well-informed individuals are less susceptible to the influence of political framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

These insights underline the close interconnection between media framing, political discourse, and public opinion. Research indicates that media often adopt frames from politicians, activists, civil society, or other media sources (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Entman, 2004; Fridkin & Kenney, 2005; Scheufele, 1999). Politicians, in turn, are influenced by other politicians, the media, or the public sphere in their communication frames (Druckman et al., 2004; Edwards & Wood, 1999;

Riker, 1996). The media also play a significant role in producing public support or opposition for policies concerning migration and asylum (Van Gorp, 2005). Given the complexity of migration processes, prevailing narratives heavily influence policymaking (Boswell et al., 2011).

De Vreese (2005) distinguishes between two types of frames: issue-specific frames, which relate to specific issues, and generic frames, which transcend individual issues and are applicable across time and cultural contexts. While research on framing was viewed as an evolving instrument for media analysis in the early 2000s (De Vreese, 2005), it has since become a well-established area of research. Of particular relevance for this thesis is the large body of literature on the framing of refugees.

### Framing and Refugees

When looking at how the media and politics portray refugees, certain common frames appear. Van Gorp (2005), in a study on Belgian newspapers, identified two dominant frames: the ‘innocent victim’ and the ‘intruders’ frames, with the latter being more common. If asylum seekers are portrayed as victims, this implies the likelihood of protection as a refugee under the 1951 United Nations Convention (Van Gorp, 2005). In Austrian news coverage, Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) recognize two prevalent frames, the security threat frame and the economization frame. Humanitarian frames are used occasionally but are generally overshadowed by the latter. Khosravinik (2009), who analyzed portrayals of Kosovar refugees in the British press, found more sympathetic representations, arguing that proximity and perceived urgency shaped these depictions.

Lawlor and Tolley (2017), in a Canadian context, found that society distinguishes between “economic immigrants” and “humanitarian refugees”, with the latter often portrayed more negatively in the media. Their observation contrasts with Crawley and Skleparis’s (2018) findings, which suggest that the term “economic migrant” can be used to discredit protection in European countries.

There are also significant variations between media outlets. Conservative newspapers are more likely to reproduce negative stereotypes of asylum seekers and refugees. In contrast, more liberal

sources tend to highlight the diversity of refugee groups, human rights, and ethical concerns (Khosravinik, 2009). Additionally, criminality frames are often used to an exaggerated degree (Blumell et al., 2019) and are more prevalent in tabloid media compared to most elite media (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Iberi and Saddam (2022) argue that African refugees are more often portrayed as security threats, while Ukrainian refugees are framed more empathetically.

Temporal and regional shifts also influence the framing of refugees. Some studies suggest that the phase of a crisis affects framing patterns. For instance, in the early stages of the 2015 European refugee movement, humanitarian frames were more prominent but became less prevalent over time (Heidenreich et al., 2019). Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) also find that framing patterns depend on the stage of the 2015 refugee movement. Heidenreich et al. (2019) similarly found that during the acute moment of the crisis, refugees were generally not framed as criminals.

Framing is a powerful analytical tool that “[...] *helps illuminate many empirical and normative controversies, most importantly because the concept of framing directs our attention to the details of just how a communicated text exerts power.*” (Entman, 1993, pp. 55-56)

Framing is inherently tied to power dynamics, and these power structures have implications for society. The power relations can be linked to broader frameworks, such as Gutiérrez Rodríguez’s concept of the coloniality of migration.

Chouliaraki and Zaborowski (2017) identify linguistic practices, which they term *bordering practices* in media discourse, whereby European journalists reproduce social hierarchies that result in the exclusion of refugees from the imagined “in-group” of European society. Refugee narratives that focus on suffering often categorize individuals into victims, perpetrators, and saviors, thereby reinforcing geopolitical hierarchies (Chouliaraki, 2015).

Current journalistic practices are also criticized for denying refugees agency. Ozdora-Aksak et al. (2021) argue that framing refugees as ‘victims’ or ‘threats’ casts them as passive actors, thereby reinforcing Western dominance in cultural and political spheres (Ramasubramanian & Miles,

2018). This absence of agency is further reproduced in political discourse and policy-making (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021).

Framing also shapes public perceptions of governmental responsibility. The political and cultural context also plays a relevant role in framing. As Van Gorp (2005) argues, framing is embedded in culture; this can be seen in the different framings of refugee movements depending on the country at stake. Ozdora-Aksak et al. (2021) show how national context and political climate influence refugee framing in Turkey, Bulgaria, and the UK. For instance, Bulgaria aligned with EU criticism by denying accusations of ill-treatment at the EU external borders. The UK distanced itself from the European refugee crisis altogether as it coincided with the Brexit movement, and Turkey emphasized protecting ‘fellow Muslims’.

Ramasubramanian and Miles (2018) compare Arabic and English news coverage of Syrian refugees, with Arabic outlets adopting more humanitarian frames, interpreted as symbolic resistance to Western representations. English sources, on the other hand, frame refugees often as victims, underlining their helplessness and issues that arise during the asylum procedure. This framing undermines people on the move as ‘passive and in need of saving’ (2018, p. 4501). As discussed before, this has implications for the agency of refugees. These findings suggest that Arabic news outlets may feel a greater cultural affinity with Syrian refugees, which could in turn foster higher levels of empathy in their coverage. Another study shows that in the European discourse of 2015, media outlets in countries closer to the Balkan routes tended to frame refugee movements as *border issues*, focusing on whether borders should remain open or be closed (Heidenreich et al., 2019).

The framing theory provides a valuable tool for examining discourse on refugee groups. This chapter demonstrates that news reporting is inherently political. There seems to be a disparity of refugee framing across ideological lines (Khosravinik, 2009), by refugees’ country of origin (Iberi & Saddam, 2022), by the country of the media outlet (Heidenreich et al., 2019; Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021), and by cultural context (Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018; Van Gorp, 2005). These findings highlight the contextual nature of framing and emphasize the importance of analyzing the portrayal of different refugee movements in Swiss politics.

As news and politics are intertwined (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Druckman et al., 2004; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Entman, 2004; Fridkin & Kenney, 2005; Riker, 1996; Scheufele, 1999) and affect policy making (Boswell et al., 2011), how refugees are framed has significant consequences for policy outcomes. How political actors describe people on the move in public discourse is not static, however. Rather, these framings can shift during a so-called ‘crisis’ with a more empathetic attitude at the start of a refugee wave, which later fades (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Heidenreich et al., 2019). Another crucial aspect to consider is the existing power dynamics. Many frames depict refugees as objects rather than subjects, which denies them agency (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). This reproduces a hierarchical “us vs. them” narrative. Framing, therefore, is not only a discursive tool but also a conceptual bridge linking discourse to material outcomes.

## Critical Discourse Analysis

### Emergence and Main Arguments

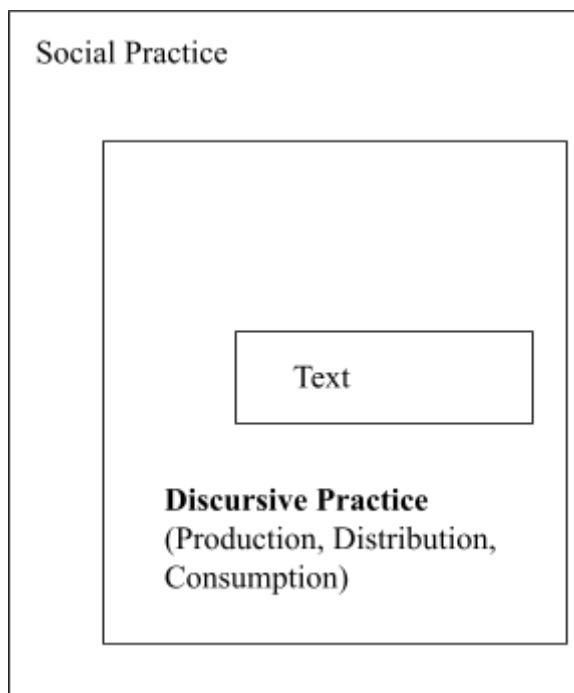
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) first emerged in the mid-1980s (Van Leeuwen, 2009; Wodak, 2014), gaining traction through the work of Fairclough, Van Dijk, Wodak, and others. A pivotal moment occurred in 1992 during a meeting in Amsterdam that transformed CDA into a more formalized movement and marked its evolution into an interdisciplinary approach (Van Leeuwen, 2009).

That same year saw the publication of *Discourse and Social Change* by Norman Fairclough, widely regarded as a foundational work in CDA (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). In this contribution, Fairclough defines the field of interest of discourse analysis as follows:

*“Discourse analysis is concerned not only with power relations in discourse [...] but also with how power relations and power struggle shape and transform the discourse practices of a society or institution.”* (Fairclough, 1992, p. 36)

Fairclough’s key insight is that discursive norms are rooted in power dynamics and ideologies. He views language as a social practice with profound societal implications, drawing on theorists

such as Foucault and Bourdieu. Foucault (1972) emphasized how discourse shapes what can be said or thought, while Bourdieu (1991) argued that language reproduces belief systems and portrays social power dynamics. Fairclough posits a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, in which they mutually influence one another (see also Wodak, 2014). Discourse not only reflects but also sustains and can challenge power relations. To capture this dynamic, Fairclough proposed a three-dimensional model of discourse (1992, p. 78).



**Figure 14.** *Three-dimensional Model of Discourse.* Source: Fairclough, 1992, p. 78.

The dimension of discursive practice encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, which vary according to the social context. Since discursive practice occurs within the public sphere, it has implications for society as a whole (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 78–79). Texts serve as sites of negotiation between competing discourses (Wodak, 2014).

CDA investigates how discourse reflects, maintains, and reproduces power relations and social inequalities. Factors such as class, socio-economic status, relations to institutions, and norms all influence discourse (Fairclough, 1992). Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to uncover abuse of power in social settings and social inequality through language. CDA wants to gain a holistic

understanding of social inequality with a certain ‘attitude’ towards it in connection with language (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 466).

Analysts of CDA want to understand how discourse reproduces social power dynamics as well as how marginalized groups may be able to escape this hierarchical discourse (Wodak, 2014). According to Van Leeuwen (2009), language is often used to legitimize inequality and injustice. CDA is grounded in the concepts of ideology and hegemony. Ideologies are embedded in discursive practices and help reproduce and transform power relations (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87; Wodak, 2001a, p. 10). Hegemony is “*leadership as much as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society*” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 92). These concepts are central to understanding how discourse operates as a mechanism of control.

Although Fairclough initially located CDA within linguistics, others soon challenged this view. The approach has since expanded and now attracts scholars from various disciplines, including social sciences. CDA is also increasingly applied in multimodal contexts (Van Leeuwen, 2009). Scholars such as Van Dijk (2015) and Wodak (2014) emphasize that no single disciplinary lens is sufficient; instead, an interdisciplinary approach is better suited to capture the complexities of discourse. Fairclough (2013) later acknowledged this, arguing that CDA incorporates principles from critical social theory to analyze language and its use. As CDA goes beyond a mere description of the status quo and tries to find an explanation for it by dismantling existing power structures, the interdisciplinary approach is suited. Additionally, to conduct a coherent analysis, CDA is one of multiple approaches needed to answer broader scientific questions (Wodak, 2001b).

CDA is part of and shaped by society, aiming to uncover social inequality in various domains, including political, ideological, institutional, and economic discourse, while taking into consideration factors such as racism, advertising, promotional culture, media language, and gender (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). Since the emergence of CDA, its analysts have addressed a wide range of topics. Scholars like Wodak and Van Dijk have devoted significant attention to themes like racism, antisemitism, immigration, and asylum. In addition, there has been an increasing interest in the discourse of neoliberalism and its relationship to contemporary economic and institutional practices. Additionally, the field has also expanded to explore areas

such as healthcare, conflict, social welfare, right-wing populist discourse, and societal trauma (Van Leeuwen, 2009, p. 166; Wodak, 2014). Wodak (2014) states that the structured use of discourse analysis to explore institutions, daily practices, and decision-making within (political) organizations has recently become a central area of interest in CDA.

CDA also examines who has access to discourse. Van Dijk (2013) argues that power abuse is not an issue that only occurs on the street, through, i.e., police misconduct, but instead starts in the minds of people. An important aspect of power dynamics in discourse, therefore, is its access, which acts like a ‘social resource’ (2013, p. 85). In other words, Van Dijk (2013) raises the questions of who is allowed to speak or write to whom, about what, at what time, and in which setting. These questions have valuable implications for Switzerland. Who sits in Parliament and decides on a refugee’s fate?

Politicians, as members of the societal elite, shape public opinions (Wodak, 2001b). Van Dijk notes that most people in power, who have access to important discourse, are de facto white. The prevalence of white people in power has a duplication effect: firstly, white people obtain special privileges and access to social resources, and secondly, these white elites also control the prevalent discourse on existing stereotypes, prejudices, and ideologies, as they are at the source of communication. On the other hand, people on the move cannot or can hardly access communication areas such as governmental, bureaucratic, mass media, scientific, or corporate discourses (2013, pp. 91-92). As Wodak states:

*“For CDA, language is not powerful on its own - it gains power by the use powerful people make of it.”* (Wodak, 2001a, p. 10)

A defining feature of CDA is that its analysts must be aware of their ideological positions and should aim for socially responsible research. In this approach, ‘critical’ stands for maintaining distance towards the data unit at stake, considering one’s biases, not pulling data out of context, and, lastly, initiating social change (Wodak, 2001a, 2014). Unlike other approaches, the critical approach argues that the social status quo is ‘humanely produced’ (Fairclough, 2013, p. 10). However, CDA should not dictate what is ethically correct or not. Instead, it seeks to explain why a specific diagnosis in discourse is the most valid one (Wodak, 2001b). By disclosing their

ideological positions, CDA practitioners promote deliberation, a cornerstone of democratic societies (Van Leeuwen, 2009). The ultimate goal of CDA is to expose power dynamics and ideologies through systematic analysis of language (Wodak, 2014). Baker et al. go one step further and see CDA as an “*academic movement, a way of doing discourse analysis from a critical perspective, which often focuses on theoretical concepts such as power, ideology and domination.*” (2008, p. 273)

### CDA and Refugees

CDA is an established approach for investigating refugee discourse in media and political speeches. Several academic contributions have conducted critical discourse analyses to gather evidence on refugee discourse. While most of the following contributions focus on analyzing news coverage, only a few have investigated parliamentary discourse. The lack of knowledge on parliamentary debates on refugees, as examined through a critical discourse analysis approach, highlights the relevance of this thesis’s research questions.

Examining the public sphere, various authors have conducted critical discourse analyses to examine how refugees are publicly portrayed. While European citizens seem to be divided in their opinions on whether refugees pose a danger to the recipient country, studies on media debates suggest a stance that is overwhelmingly more negative (O’Regan & Riordan, 2018).

Categories matter. Goodman and Speer (2007) argue that the situation would be very different if refugees were categorized depending on their reason for fleeing, rather than the commonly used classifications of ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’, ‘economic migrant’, and ‘illegal migrant’. The authors examine various linguistic categorizations of refugees. The term ‘economic migrant’ is mainly used to invalidate asylum seekers’ requests. By making classifications based on legitimacy, asylum seekers are no longer considered as humans.

Furthermore, the authors argue that the term ‘asylum seeker’ itself is already problematic. The fact that the common name is ‘asylum seeker’ rather than ‘asylum applicant’ suggests that these people withdraw something from ‘us’. This sentiment, thus, leads to a different view on the recipient countries’ moral responsibility.

Khosravinik (2010) argues that, generally, RASIM (refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants) are represented negatively in the news, even though there are different groups under this umbrella term. However, there is a difference between liberal, conservative, and tabloid news coverage. Conservative newspapers often put RASIM in one pot, without individual coverage, whereas liberal news coverage portrays RASIM on a more personal level. While tabloid media is openly xenophobic, conservative newspaper narrates their xenophobia in a more ‘sophisticated’ way. Newspapers, overall, tend to give more space to “in-group” members of society (Khosravinik, 2010). For instance, Ukrainian refugees, who are often portrayed by newspapers as sharing European values, have a significant presence in news coverage. Conversely, this implies a clear dividing line for people without this European identity, thereby reinforcing the notion that European values are superior to those outside (Mäenpää, 2022).

In a study on newspaper framing of Greek outlets, the racist narratives towards refugees appear, no matter the ideological background of the media outlet. The authors also note that the term ‘wave’ implies a natural disaster (Serafis et al., 2020). In a study on refugee discourse in German newspapers in 2015 and 2016, Vollmer and Karakayali (2018) state that the discourse was initially positive, mainly driven through the media, but eventually these positive attitudes started to erode. Germany has seen a redemonization of refugees through labelling them as ‘economic migrants’ in discourse.

Turkish media depict Syrian refugees as criminals or economic burdens who take advantage of governmental benefits, whereas Turks are perceived as the ‘victims’ of the large Syrian population in Turkey (Onay-Coker, 2019). At the same time, the UK frames refugees more often as intruders; Irish media coverage tends to use the ‘victim’ frame (O’Regan & Riordan, 2018). In a critical discourse analysis of the British press, Baker et al. argue that the media bears responsibility for the ‘moral panic’ surrounding refugees and asylum seekers (2008, p. 33). This panic ultimately influenced the outcome of Brexit (O’Regan & Riordan, 2018).

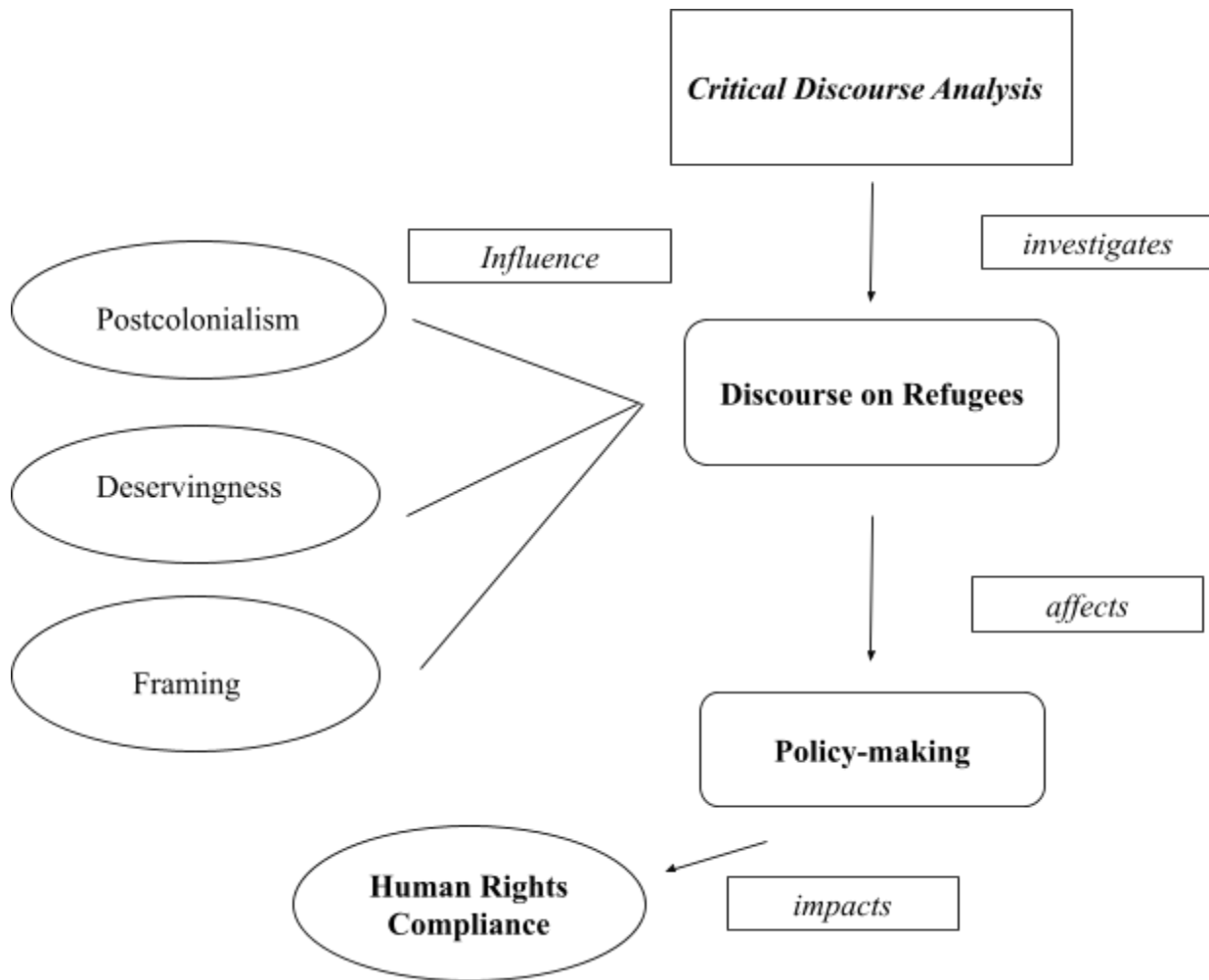
Although the refugee topic is commonly framed negatively on the national level, regional news coverage frames refugees and asylum seekers more positively and humanizes them in a study on Australia. Local journalists are primarily responsible for this distinct trend on the local level, as

they serve as a community glue. These more positive stories on refugees may change negative attitudes towards them (Cooper et al., 2017). However, Cooper and colleagues (2017) argue that although refugees and asylum seekers in this context are often framed more positively, they still lack the voice to advocate for themselves, as journalists usually speak on their behalf. Kirkwood (2017) looks at humanizing discourse in parliamentary debates. While humanizing discourse may appear to be an ethically considerate approach, the author argues that some forms of humanization strengthen paternalistic dynamics between those who demand and those who supply asylum. Additionally, he argues that the portrayal of refugees and asylum seekers as human is, however, not sufficient for government support.

Racism and national identity are central topics in parliamentary debates on refugees. Every and Augoustinos (2017, pp. 428-429) identify four rhetorical strategies used by politicians to construct exclusionary narratives about asylum seekers: categorical generalizations, unequal comparisons with other ‘illegal’ immigrants, nationalistic framing, and emphasizing cultural differences. Politicians also strategically deploy anti-racism and claims of ‘reversed racism’, the latter relates to politicians reacting to critics by framing them as anti-Australian.

Van Dijk (1997), who examines elite racism, made another striking observation. He argues that in parliamentary and elite discourse in Western countries, racism often manifests subtly, through implicit presuppositions, tone, and coded language. These subtle strategies of derogation are especially powerful because they appear moderate, but upon closer examination, they reveal underlying beliefs and cognitive frameworks that sustain racial hierarchies. Populists see minorities as a danger to Western culture; meanwhile, the “in-group” is idealized. This phenomenon even occurs among liberal and centrist politicians. Furthermore, elite discourse is not just symbolic; it has concrete institutional effects. The discursive marginalization of Others becomes a tool of social control and exclusion (Van Dijk, 1997).

## Logic of the Theoretical Frameworks



*Figure 15. Logic and Argumentation of the Study.*

Figure 15 shows the logic and argumentation of this thesis. The theoretical frameworks reflected upon in this chapter provide a foundation for analyzing parliamentary discourse on refugees. This thesis argues that concepts such as post-colonial theory, deservingness logics, and framing influence discourse on refugees, which ultimately affects policy decisions in the Swiss Federal Assembly. Indeed, these frameworks are not the only concepts that influence discourse on refugees. Arguably, public discourse is influenced by many more factors. However, to analyze parliamentary discourse, we must be able to simplify the world around us to start somewhere.

The mentioned concepts provide a solid foundation for understanding the factors that influence discourse on refugees.

The study follows a theory-driven (deductive) CDA: the discussed theoretical frameworks guide the interpretation of parliamentary discourse. However, this thesis treats these frameworks as overlapping heuristics rather than sealed compartments. The goal is not to assign each sentence of a speech to a single causal logic, but to show how the lenses, taken together, reveal interconnected rationales through which different refugee groups are linguistically constructed. Because of this intersectionality, the CDA is heuristic, not diagnostic: it explores how specific patterns in language co-occur, and, crucially, how these patterns in discourse vary between different refugee groups. CDA functions as the investigator to uncover how discourse reflects, maintains, and reproduces social inequalities between refugee groups in Switzerland.

Before turning to the critical discourse analysis, this thesis draws on selected procedures from qualitative content analysis to organize the data. More precisely, qualitative content analysis is only used for the preparatory steps. These routines provide the study with transparency; however, this thesis deliberately sets aside a classic qualitative content analysis, as its goal is to uncover underlying power dynamics.

### Qualitative Content Analysis

Mayring argues that qualitative content analysis is well-suited for combination with other qualitative approaches (2000, p. 9). The lack of a more critical approach to qualitative content analysis allows critical discourse analysis to provide a more reflexive view in this approach. This thesis argues that the critical aspect is needed, as Valentini (2012) argues that human rights are inherently political. Therefore, their application is not neutral either. Schreier had already mentioned the benefit of reaching for critical discourse analysis to compensate for the lack of critical interpretation in the rather descriptive approach of qualitative content analysis (2012, p. 19).

The act of analyzing content can be traced back to the 18th century in Scandinavia (Rosengren, 1981). Predecessors of qualitative content analysis can be observed in various text-analytical,

text-comparative, or geographical analyses, as seen in examples such as Bible analysis or early newspaper analyses (Mayring, 2000). In the 19th century, content analysis was primarily used as a tool to analyze advertisements, political speeches, and articles (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The foundation of quantitative analysis of mass media under the label of *content analysis* emerged in the 1920s and 1930s with scholars such as Lazarsfeld or Lasswell (Mayring, 2000).

With the expansion of the media landscape, interest in media effects research has grown. Additionally, the US government showed interest in studying Nazi Germany propaganda after the devastating occurrences of the Second World War (Schreier, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, the 20th century marked the broadening of content analysis worldwide. These events led to the development of content analysis, which was initially conceptualized as a quantitative approach. The first textbook published on content analysis, which depicted content analysis as a quantitative approach, was published by Berelson in 1952 (Mayring, 2000).

This publication, which employed a quantitative approach, was most prominently criticized by Kracauer, who advocated for a qualitative approach. He argued against the common belief that quantitative content analysis is also prone to subjective and personal definitions (1952, p. 636). Additionally, Kracauer stated that “*quantitative analysis is in effect not as objective and reliable as they believe it to be*” (1952, p. 637).

Why is a qualitative approach to content analysis necessary? Firstly, a quantitative approach is not suited to depict more complex forms of communication materials. Secondly, qualitative content analysis not only examines frequencies but also focuses on selecting and organizing categories that reflect the meaning of a given text (Kracauer, 1952). These classifications are made more accurately through a qualitative approach, providing a more situational analysis of meaning in texts (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 2). Thirdly, while qualitative content analysis is inherently subjective and cannot provide the accuracy and validity of a quantitative lens, this subjectivity does not imply a “lawlessness” (1952, p. 641) as the method does not arbitrarily go about its analysis. Instead, if executed properly, qualitative content analysis can mitigate subjectivity and serve as a valuable tool to produce convergent results. Lastly, text analysis

always comes with implications that are not readily illustrable through exact science (Kracauer, 1952, pp. 636-641).

Qualitative content analysis has previously been defined as:

*“a research method for the subjective interpretation of content of text data through the systematic classifications process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”* (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278)

Qualitative content analysis can be applied to a wide range of materials and disciplines due to its inherent flexibility (Schreier, 2012, p. 19). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) mention three different approaches to qualitative content analysis: the conventional content analysis, directed content analysis, and the summative content analysis. The main differences between these approaches are visible in Table 16.

<i>Type of content analysis</i>	<i>Study Starts With</i>	<i>Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords</i>	<i>Source of Codes of Keywords</i>
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

**Table 16.** *Major Coding Differences Among Three Approaches to Content Analysis. Source: Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1286).*

Various scholars have described the steps involved in a qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Taking these various contributions into account, the process can be organized as follows:

1. Prepare the Data
2. Define the Analysis Unit / Select Material
3. Develop Categories
4. Test Coding Scheme on a Sample of Text
5. Code all the Texts
6. Assess the Coding Consistency
7. Trustworthiness
8. Draw Conclusions

There are two distinct approaches to developing categories: the inductive and the deductive approach. Deductive categories are defined before the analysis and are based on theoretical frameworks. In other words, deductive categories are extracted from existing theories. On the other hand, inductive categories are defined through the existing materials of interest (Mayring, 2000, p. 4).

This subchapter has shown various attributes of qualitative content analysis. Having been used for centuries to analyze multiple material types in different disciplines, this approach allows for a great range of flexibility (Rosengren, 1981; Mayring, 2000; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Schreier, 2012). Due to its innate qualitative characteristic, it can grasp complex communication forms and interpret the meaning of context, which is otherwise not illustrable with a quantitative approach (Kracauer, 1952).

#### Limitations of Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis has gained in popularity since the 1950s. While this approach serves as a robust method for analyzing text, it does come with downsides. Schreier describes the approach as “naive” as this method has a descriptive nature and lacks a more critical component (2012, p. 19). The strength of its flexibility might, therefore, also have negative implications.

Mayring argues that the method sees its weaknesses in cases of very open research questions, which a rigid category selection would undermine (2000, p. 9). Schreier adds that critical discourse analysis serves as a good addition to qualitative content analysis, adding a more critical component (2012, p. 19).

# Empirical Part

## Material Selection and Category Definition

While this thesis examines Swiss parliamentary speeches through the lens of critical discourse analysis, some aspects of qualitative content analysis are implemented. The eight steps established in the previous chapter to approach qualitative content analysis will serve as a guideline for starting the parliamentary speech analysis. This analysis first identified relevant keywords before proceeding with the analysis. Additionally, the keywords are derived deductively from the review of the literature. Therefore, it somewhat fits into Hsieh and Shannon's *summative content analysis* category (2005, p. 1286).

### Preparation of Data

This thesis uses data from the Swiss Parliament's Official Bulletin (see The Federal Assembly, n.d.-a). Parliamentary speeches since 1891 are available on that website. Speeches held after 1999 are sorted into the different parliamentary sessions of the year in Switzerland. The Swiss Parliament has four ordinary sessions a year, each lasting three weeks (Swiss Parliament, n.d.). The data before the year 2000 was digitally archived, and the way to access these speeches was slightly different; to find parliamentary speeches, one has to type in keywords. These differences are worth keeping in mind for future steps. The parliamentary texts used were either interpellations, motions, postulates, questions, or requests. These are all parliamentary tools in the Swiss Parliament, with which members of Parliament can request measures, new legal provisions, information, or reports. Generally, in these parliamentary texts, the Federal Council is addressed (The Federal Assembly, n.d.b).

### Definition of Analysis Unit and Selection of Material

The analysis unit and the reasons for the chosen parliamentary speeches on refugees stem from Switzerland's background chapter. Table 17 shows the relevant topics and their time frame for the analysis of this thesis.

<b>Topic Relevant to Research</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>
Start of the Bosnia and Herzegovina War	April 1992
Dayton Agreement / End of Bosnia and Herzegovina War	November 1995
Kosovo War	1998 - 1999
Refugee Movement (primary trigger: Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War)	2015
Russia attacks Ukraine	February 2022

**Table 17.** *Relevant Time Units for Analysis.*

This analysis primarily used data from the National Council Chamber. These time frames serve as a guideline for selecting the text units. During the selection of parliamentary speeches, texts were initially chosen based on keywords and were not read beforehand. This step mitigates a potential confirmation bias. Also, the specific nature of this thesis's topic in politics overall resulted in a body of text that was not overwhelming.

This thesis employs a qualitative method and therefore adopts a small-N approach. As CDA wants to achieve a holistic understanding of social inequality (Van Dijk, 2015) and language is a social practice (Fairclough, 1992), which creates and maintains social reality (Bourdieu, 1991), this project argues for a certain consistency within the use of language about refugees between different discourse groups. Therefore, a certain degree of “randomly choosing” is valid, as power dynamics are arguably deeply entrenched in people's minds and speech. Additionally, the small-N approach through CDA is well-suited for this analysis, as it does not aim to find frequencies or merely describe the text, but instead seeks to understand the reproduction of social power dynamics and explain them (e.g., Wodak, 2001b, 2014).

## Development of Categories

This analysis does not focus on frequencies, as the goal is not to quantify specific categories or keywords, but rather to engage critically with the text units. Still, it is crucial to keep in mind the keywords used to find the analysis unit. To avoid biases, the categories are kept as broad as possible. The categories originate from the theoretical framework and are, thus, defined deductively. An umbrella term used by various scholars to examine the situation of people on the move is RASIM (e.g., Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008; Khosravini, 2009, 2010; O'Regan & Riordan, 2018). RASIM stands for *refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants*. Therefore, this research uses these key terms. Additionally, it will use the terms *asylum* and *migration* to search for parliamentary discourse, as these are the overarching concepts that encompass the individuals within them.

The coding steps (*test coding, coding of all texts, and assessment of coding consistency*) introduced in the qualitative content analysis approach become redundant for this critical discourse analysis. This is due to CDA's holistic approach to understanding text (Van Dijk, 2015). Thus, a codification of texts would defeat the purpose of the chosen critical discourse approach.

Once the preselection of texts was made, I chose those that specifically referenced the refugee movements of interest for this thesis, or discourse voiced during the same time that could be contextually linked to one of these refugee movements. Additionally, the analysis aimed to balance different political views. Afterwards, an online translation machine (DeepL) translated the French and German texts. In some specific cases, where the meaning got lost in translation, I, the author of this project, translated certain expressions.<sup>15</sup>

## Analysis of Parliamentary Speeches

This chapter analyzes parliamentary speeches in Switzerland during the three distinct refugee movements previously discussed in earlier chapters. Especially during these moments of intensified displacement, such as the outbreak of the Bosnia and Kosovo war in the 1990s, the

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<sup>15</sup> The author of this thesis is a first language German speaker and full proficient French speaker.

2015 refugee movement primarily triggered by the conflict in Syria, or the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, parliamentarians were compelled to respond to the visible consequences of conflict. These moments serve as key points to examine, firstly, tracing how discourse in the Swiss Parliament has constructed varying refugee groups; secondly, examining justifications and challenges to policy decisions on refugees in parliamentary discourse; and lastly, exploring the reinforcement of power dynamics in refugee politics through the use of language. This chapter is sorted by the three different refugee movements in question.

### The Balkan Refugee Movements of the 1990s<sup>16</sup>

After the start of the Bosnia and Herzegovina war in the Spring of 1992, a motion by Jürg Scherrer (Freedom Party of Switzerland) demanded changes to existing asylum policies. While Scherrer did not directly mention refugees from the Balkans, the timing of this motion is still crucial. The former member of the National Council, who was part of a minor right-wing party, asked for a remodeling of the existing Geneva Convention on Refugees, claiming that this was needed to “*make it possible to distinguish between victims of genuine persecution and those who leave their country for economic reasons*” (Scherrer, 1992, p. 100). This statement claims, firstly, that the Geneva Refugee Convention is not a legitimate treaty for the legal management of people on the move. Secondly, Scherrer’s sentiment towards migrants who want to settle in Switzerland due to economic reasons has the following implications: the feeling of undeservingness towards people who seek to find a better life for themselves and their families, without being forced to flee a raging war.

Various scholars have researched the delegitimization of refugee rights through economic argumentation (e.g., Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Goodman & Speer, 2007). Crawley and Skleparis (2018) state that the term “economic migrants” for the case of Iraqi, Syrian, and Afghan refugees serves to discredit refugees’ rights to asylum. Interestingly, the fact that economic reasons suffice to disqualify the right to asylum, at least in the semiotic sense, implies a worldview of people fleeing due to economic reasons as an immoral act of taking away resources in the country of arrival. It also suggests an understanding of economic issues abroad that is detached from the West. As Gutiérrez Rodríguez’s (2018) framework on the coloniality of

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<sup>16</sup> For complete parliamentary speeches during that time, see Appendix B.

migration shows, refugee movements are de facto not detached from the legacy of the West, but instead can be seen as a result of former colonial systems. Thus, although some refugees may want to settle elsewhere despite a conflict in their country of origin, economic reasons are often a result of the West's involvement in these countries, which has destabilized them.

Also, Scherrer's (1992, p. 100) emphasis on categorization of an 'economic group' of refugees and '*victims of genuine persecution*' has implications for people on the move. This binary differentiation into '*victims*' and '*those who leave their country for economic reasons*' fails to capture the complex dynamics of the concept of migration (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

Additionally, framing refugees in a certain way portrays these individuals as objects rather than subjects, which prevents them from advocating for themselves (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). Furthermore, while Scherrer's (1992) wording of '*victims of genuine persecution*' most likely meant well towards this group, humanizing discourse can underline existing paternalistic dynamics (Kirkwood, 2017).

In the same week, on June 19, 1992, Andreas Iten (FDP) requested an explanation from the Federal Council regarding the idea of provisional admission of Bosnian refugees. Iten was a member of the Council of the States<sup>17</sup>. In this request, he advocated for Switzerland to welcome refugees who were suffering from a war, by highlighting Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and solidarity. Additionally, he urged the Federal Council to set an example in Europe by allowing higher numbers of Bosnian refugees (Iten, 1992, pp. 1023-1024). Interestingly, Iten stated that he still agreed with restrictive asylum measures and noted the following:

*"However, a restrictive asylum policy calls for an active refugee policy, especially when European countries are affected."* (Iten, 1992, p. 1023)

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<sup>17</sup>While this analysis primarily focuses on debates in the National Council, it often mentions the Federal Council's response as the Federal Council is mainly addressed (The Federal Assembly, n.d-b). Only Iten's (1992) speech stems from the Council of States. This choice is grounded in the understanding that certain influential framings and political positions move beyond individual chambers, especially when they significantly shaped national refugee discourse. Moreover, because this study also engages with cross-chamber party group (Fraktionen) discourse, inclusion of this discourse in the Council of States is consistent with the study's broader aim: to understand how refugee-related narratives and policy positions were constructed within parliamentary politics as a whole.

The speaker therefore draws a line between asylum and refugee measures, in other words saying that, even if Switzerland keeps a strict stance on asylum, it must help people fleeing a war in Europe.

The notion of European solidarity as an argument for refugees' deservingness of protection in Switzerland can be traced back to cultural proximity. Studies have shown that refugees perceived as culturally distant are viewed as less deserving compared to refugees who share similar cultural values (Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2019). Sharing cultural norms can, therefore, be seen as being part of the “in-group” in Swiss society. The European identity can, in this case, also be viewed as superior to outside ones as Iten specifically stated ‘*especially when European countries are affected*’, suggesting a special case *because* the refugees are European. Mäenpää (2022) also explored the perceived superiority of European values.

In December 1995, former Member of Parliament (MP) Rolf Engler (Die Mitte, formerly of the CVP) asked the Federal Council to provide funds for reconstruction in the former Yugoslavia. In this interpellation, various former members of Parliament had the opportunity to speak on the matter, including Ernst Mühlemann (FDP).

*“With everything that is happening in Bosnia now, I believe that humanitarian aid is still the top priority. In the Bihac [Bosnia] area, you can see that the apostate Muslims are not accepted by the Croats, the Serbs or the Bosnians. Today there are 20’000 people - children, women, old people - who have to spend their lives in the open without any protection because they are completely outcast.”* (Mühlemann, 1995, p. 2605 in Swiss Federal Assembly, 1995)

Mühlemann (1995) emphasizes that children, women, and the elderly are commonly regarded as the most vulnerable groups in society. The emphasis on these vulnerable groups underlines Mühlemann’s aim to provoke empathy within the Federal Assembly.

In this paragraph, he also mentioned the situation of Muslims at a time when Switzerland was planning on how to repatriate refugees to former Yugoslavia. Mühlemann (1995, in Swiss Federal Assembly, 1995) highlights the precarious situation of Muslims in the region of Bihac

among Croats, Serbs, and Bosniacs, who are ‘*completely outcast*’. The mention of the poor living conditions of this group underlines Mühlemann’s empathy for the ‘*apostate Muslims*’. Apostate, according to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), is defined as “*someone who has given up their religion or left a political party*”. Given the fact that the Bihac situation resulted in an intra-Muslim conflict (e.g., Christia, 2008), it is possible that Mühlemann used the term ‘*apostate*’ to describe impartial people, consequently those who did not take a side in this conflict, namely civilians, including children, women, and old people.

While the 1995 Dayton Agreement ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 1990s included other conflicts in the Balkans, one of them being the Kosovo War that started in February 1998. In December 1998, while the Kosovo War was still ongoing, former MP Ernst Hasler (SVP) asked the Federal Council about the repatriation of refugees from Kosovo. He stated:

*“Mr. Gerber, Director of the Federal Office for Refugees, has announced that the repatriation of refugees from Kosovo could begin next spring, provided the situation in the area has calmed down. What measures does the Federal Council intend to take to facilitate this repatriation?”* (Hasler, 1998, p. 2583)

An intriguing observation that is visible here is the conditional solidarity voiced in Hasler’s statement. The former MP expresses the sentiment that immediate repatriation should occur as soon as the situation in Kosovo improves. Considerations about the potential hurdles for refugees returning to their (through war destroyed) origins are not taken into account.

Although this statement appears drastic given the fact that the Kosovo war was still ongoing during that time, Hasler (SVP), arguably, still used a relatively neutral language with ‘*refugees from Kosovo*’, considering his right-wing party affiliation. This finding is especially compelling compared to later statements on refugee movements by right-wing politicians in Switzerland, which will be discussed below.

Other statements made during the Kosovo War employed a more catastrophic narrative. In April 1998, Roland Borer (SVP) raised his concern about a large number of individuals settling in Switzerland. While he did not specifically mention people from the Balkans, his attitudes arguably represent his general feeling towards people on the move:

*“The massive increase in illegal immigrants from areas with no or very poor medical care raises questions regarding the health protection of the Swiss resident population.”* (Borer, 1998, p. 1663)

While Borer’s concern most likely pertains to people from the Global South, Borer did not mention any specific country in his discourse, nor did he indicate that this exclusion applied to European refugees. It is still crucial to include this notion as such statements often influence the media and can lead to major headlines, which affect the public sphere (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Druckman et al., 2004; Edwards & Wood, 1999; Entman, 2004; Fridkin & Kenney, 2005; Riker, 1996; Scheufele, 1999) and can influence support or opposition to asylum and migration policies (Van Gorp, 2005).

The Federal Council responded to Borer’s concern that most infections enter Switzerland through mass tourism rather than foreign nationals bringing them in (Federal Council, 1998, in Borer, 1998, p. 1663).

In Borer’s statement, we see the term *‘illegal immigrants’* that has been identified in other academic contributions. This term results in differential treatment compared to asylum seekers (Every & Augoustinos, 2017). The use of this categorization also implies a lower social standing and, therefore, worse treatment in society. Goodman and Speer (2007) argue that the situation of these individuals would be different if refugees were categorized based on their reason for fleeing, rather than the commonly used classifications *‘refugee’*, *‘migrant’*, *‘economic migrant’*, or *‘illegal migrant’*.

A closer examination of Borer’s statement about migrants *from areas with no or very poor medical care* enables the connection of the coloniality of migration framework (Gutiérrez

Rodríguez, 2018). This statement implies a feeling of superiority towards countries that are not European. Said's (1977) contribution showed that the West formerly portrayed the East as "the Orient", thereby reducing other non-Western countries and drawing an inferior image of them. Borer's (1998) statement also denies historical connections between Europe and the Global South, shaped by imperial entanglements and global capitalism. While Europe may not have been directly responsible for illnesses on other continents during the 1990s, it likely brought many illnesses during its colonizing times.

In June 1998, a few months after the start of the Kosovo war, Ernst Mühlemann (FDP) had asked the Federal Council about its support for refugees from Kosovo abroad as well as the management of these refugees domestically. Mühlemann had stated:

*"Unfortunately, the situation in Kosovo is deteriorating to such an extent that an escalation of violence must be expected. The aggressive policy of the responsible government in Belgrade is provoking a confrontation that could lead to civil war-like clashes. The escalation of the conflict is already causing refugee flows that are also affecting our country and making humanitarian aid necessary."* (Mühlemann, 1998, p. 1672)

Mühlemann's (1998, p. 1672) statement reveals various aspects. Firstly, he categorizes Serbia as the perpetrator and Kosovo as the victim. Secondly, in this excerpt, the 'refugee flows' justify a (although mild) security threat *affecting our country*, and legitimize the need for humanitarian aid. The classifications into victims and perpetrators hint at a needed savior protecting these refugees.

The Federal Council answered as follows:

*"However, should the flow of refugees increase massively, the Federal Council is prepared to provide emergency shelters immediately in consultation with other organizations. [...] The extension of the deadlines for leaving the country takes account of the possible danger to persons from the province of Kosovo who are obliged to leave the country."* (Federal Council, 1998 in Mühlemann, 1998, p. 1672)

This answer shares a similar tone to Hasler's statement in terms of conditional solidarity. The Federal Council, here, voices its disposition to support, *if 'the flow of refugees increases massively'*. Notably, the emphasis lies on outsourcing support, rather than metaphorically welcoming everyone who is in danger.

### The 2015 Refugee Movements<sup>18</sup>

In 2015, many people left their home countries due to conflicts, unrest, and wars. During that year, around one million people reached the European continent's coast, many perishing in the Mediterranean on their attempt to a better life (UNHCR, 2015). These high numbers of refugees also led to many debates in politics on how to handle these large numbers of people seeking protection in Europe.

In Switzerland, the potential activation of protection status S was discussed at that time. However, as we know today, this protection status was not activated ten years ago. In March 2015, National Councillor Isabelle Moret (FDP) asked the Federal Council the following: firstly, how many arriving Syrian refugees would be needed to trigger Article 4 of the Asylum Act, the provision that activates protection status S, and more generally, under what circumstances this article should be applied (Moret, 2015, p. 779).

The answer of the Federal Council to Moret's questions (2015) is revealing in light of this thesis's framework. The Federal Council, which rejected the activation of protection status S for Syrians, answered as follows:

*"[...] the Federal Council is of the opinion that the existence of an exceptionally large influx cannot be determined by a specific number of asylum seekers. Rather, it depends on Switzerland's reception capacity and the capacity of the Swiss asylum system to deal with pending asylum applications. This view is also shared by the UNHCR, which argues similarly in its statement of August 2003 on Council Directive 2001/55/EC of July 20, 2001."* (Federal Council, 2015 in Moret, 2015, p. 780)

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<sup>18</sup> For complete parliamentary speeches during that time, see Appendix C.

Firstly, the Federal Council uses a bureaucratic logic to legitimize the denial of the protection status S activation. Additionally, the Federal Council's response does not specify the exact amount of resources that have been exceeded or provide evidence of Switzerland's financial deficit at that time. The Federal Council tries to highlight the legitimacy of its decision with the UNCHR statement:

*“What constitutes a “mass or large-scale influx” cannot be defined in absolute terms, but must be defined in relation to the resources of the receiving country. The expression should be understood as referring to a significant number of arrivals in a country, over a short time period, of persons from the same home country who have been displaced under circumstances indicating that members of the group would qualify for international protection, and for whom, due to their numbers, individual refugee status determination is procedurally impractical.” (UNCHR, 2003, pp. 5-6)*

The Federal Council arguably used the UNHCR statement strategically. The UNHCR is internationally regarded as a neutral organization that looks out for the rights of refugees all over the world.<sup>19</sup> The Federal Council's argumentation, backed up by a UNCHR statement, is used to solidify and legitimize its decision, thereby avoiding potential solutions or problem-solving strategies for the issue at stake.

Additionally, the Federal Council's use of a statement that was nearly 15 years old at the time, given the scale of the refugee movement (UNHCR, 2015), seems outdated and inadequate. Furthermore, the Federal Council stated:

*“Even if the decisions to grant temporary protection become legally binding, the asylum procedure must be resumed upon application at the earliest five years later (Art. 69 para. 3 and Art. 70 AsylA). This shows that although the regulations on persons in need of protection is a suitable instrument for being able to act quickly in an acute crisis situation from a procedural*

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<sup>19</sup> Ongenaert et al. (2023) have recently shown that the UNHCR, however, uses deservingness logics towards Syrian and Central African refugees that fled in 2015, while also not enabling them agency.

*point of view, it could entail considerable additional work in the asylum procedure as a possible long-term consequence.*” (Federal Council, 2015 in Moret, 2015, p. 780)

While the Federal Council mentions the core idea of the protection status to act as a reaction to an ‘*acute crisis*’, judging from its lack of implementation, this statement implies that the 2015 refugee wave was not a critical enough for the amount of bureaucratic and financial burdens that would have come out of an activation of the protection status.

Another argument that hints at the unwillingness to activate the protection status for Syrian refugees is the reasoning that the protection status “only” grants five years of protection. This remark suggests that Permit B provides better protection compared to Permit S<sup>20</sup>, as it allows for five to ten years of protection (Legal Expat Switzerland, n.d.; SEM, 2020; SEM, 2023a). Given the low protection rate that Syrians received in 2015, a humble percentage of 35.4% (SEM, 2016a, p. 16), this statement seems hypocritical.

These arguments seem hypocritical, given that during the Ukrainian refugee movement, around two-thirds of these refugees were hosted in private accommodations (SRC, n.d.-c; SEM, 2023b). The private housing option alleviates the workload of Swiss authorities. Firstly, Ukrainians living in host families are exposed to the local language and culture, as well as receive support from the host families in any bureaucratic matters, leading to an overall faster integration with minimal support from the government. In 2022, furthermore, the allocation of Ukrainian refugees to host families was primarily organized by the Swiss Refugee Council, which arguably disburdened the Swiss government (SRC, n.d.-c). Comparing the number of people seeking protection from Syria in 2015 (4,745) and from Ukraine in 2022 (74,661), the resource argument is therefore questionable (SEM, 2016b; SRC, 2023b, p. 8).

Additionally, it is uncertain to what extent a collective protection status would entail more work for the Swiss authorities compared to a case-by-case assessment.

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<sup>20</sup> For a more general overview of the different permits of Switzerland see Appendix A.

*“Furthermore, for security reasons, it would not be appropriate in the present context to dispense with a case-by-case examination, as this would make it more difficult to identify persons who may have committed crimes under international criminal law or pose a threat to public security in Switzerland.”* (Federal Council, 2015, in Moret, 2015, p. 780)

This sentence, in light of this analysis, is most compelling for the argumentation of denying Syrians access to permit S. The Federal Council suggests that Syrians endanger Switzerland due to ‘*committed crimes*’ or because they might ‘*pose a threat to public security*’.

The perceived threat seems to be a religious one. Although some Syrians are not Muslims (Deutsche Welle, 2024), they are often reduced in their diversity, leading to a familiar narrative of all Syrians being Muslims and all Muslims being the same. For instance, in June 2015, MP Walter Wobmann (SVP) posed a question to the Federal Council on the risk of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists who request asylum in Switzerland. Wobmann’s question titled, “*Islamic extremists disguised as refugees,*” demanded the following (2015, p. 993):

*“[...] the risk of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists is also increasing in Switzerland. They can come to Switzerland relatively easily via the asylum route and settle here. Wouldn’t the best solution be to stop allowing Muslim refugees into Switzerland and instead support them in neighboring countries in war zones?”* (Wobmann, 2015, p. 993)

While Wobmann (2015) does not directly address Syrians in his question, his remark is a general attitude on Muslim refugees, framing them as faking their reasons for fleeing to plan “terrorist” attacks in Switzerland. Although Wobmann (2015) does not explicitly state that all Muslims are terrorists, the paragraph above, which first mentions ‘*Islamic extremists*’ and then ‘*Muslim refugees*’, has a linguistic implication for the reader/listener: Wobmann portrays these groups as somewhat congruent. Also, his question hints at a felt superiority of Switzerland, suggesting ‘*neighboring countries in war zones*’ should live with ‘*Islamic extremists*’. As Wobmann sees Muslims as terrorists, it implies that Switzerland is more deserving of living in peace compared to other countries in the Middle East.

Federal Council's answer to Wobmann's question (2015) appears to be more neutral, emphasizing that security threats are performed by '*individual perpetrators or groups*'. Additionally, the Federal Council supports its argument through legal provisions, such as the Geneva Convention and the Swiss Federal Constitution, which signal its compliance with national and international rights and its rejection of discrimination against Muslims.

*"The federal and cantonal security authorities take any threat to Switzerland's internal or external security posed by individual perpetrators or groups very seriously, analyze the situation on an ongoing basis and take the necessary measures. A general entry ban for asylum seekers of Muslim faith contradicts central principles of the Swiss Federal Constitution and the Geneva Refugee Convention."* (Federal Council, 2015 in Wobmann, 2015, p. 993).

In April of 2016, Jean-Luc Addor (SVP) proposed the idea of housing Muslim refugees in Saudi Arabia who were fleeing to Europe to the Federal Council (Addor, 2016, p. 756). In his text, Addor stated:

*"[...], providing protection is one of the most important principles of Islam. One could therefore expect Saudi Arabia - a state that is not afraid to intervene in the Syrian conflict and in which the religion of the Muslim "migrants" who are streaming into Europe is predominant, although they share neither the dominant culture in Europe nor its religion, to fulfill its responsibility and take in these millions of brothers and sisters in faith."* (2016, p. 756)

This paragraph encompasses several aspects that need to be addressed. The English translation initially seemed unclear. After revisiting the German original text, it became apparent that the nuance of the meaning got lost in translation due to the confusing sentence structure in German that later got translated to English.<sup>21</sup> This paragraph wants to disclose that Saudi Arabia should take in Syrian refugees, because they share the same religion, which is different from Europe's predominant religion and culture. This notion creates an '*us vs them*' sentiment and semiotically delegitimizes any responsibility to protect these refugees due to their differentness.

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<sup>21</sup> See Addor, 2016, in Appendix C for original text.

The Federal Council's response to the question regarding Saudi Arabia emphasized the country's sovereignty in deciding on asylum policy. It did not, however, mention Switzerland's obligations under the Geneva Refugee Convention (Federal Council, 2016, in Addor, 2016, p. 756). For instance, Article 3 states that there shall be no discrimination against any person on the basis of race, religion, or country of origin (UN, 1951).

Another speech in Parliament that appeared during that time was an Interpellation by Maja Ingold, whose party affiliation is the Evangelical People's Party (EVP). Ingold stated that "*Christians on the run report death threats and forced conversions when they visit a refugee camp*" (2015, p. 576).

Throughout her statement, Ingold advocates against the discrimination of Christian refugees within Syria and Iraq, trying to reach Europe, arguing that the UNHCR, as compared to refugees belonging to other religions, excludes them. According to Ingold's statement, Muslims are the ones who try to convert them to Islam or even threaten to kill this religious minority (2015, p. 576). Through this text, it becomes clear that shared religion serves as a reason to advocate for refugees' rights. It might diminish perceived cultural distance towards Syrians.

Other members of Parliament have used a more humanitarian language that avoids emphasizing religion or reinforcing negative Muslim stereotypes. For instance, MP Barbara Schmid-Federer (Die Mitte) requested that the Federal Council provide emergency aid and reconstruction aid on the ground in Syria and its surroundings in 2015. For these people on the move, she used terms such as '*Syrian refugees*', '*refugees from Syria*', and '*displaced persons in Syria*', thereby emphasizing the status of people who have fled (Schmid-Federer, 2015, p. 467).

Likewise, in the linguistic aspect, the Federal Council answered to Schmid-Federer's request by referring to Syrians as '*victims of the Syrian conflict*' (Federal Council, 2015 in Schmid-Federer, 2015, p. 468). The use of '*victims*' as opposed to other common terms used for refugees, such as '*intruders*', '*illegal migrants*', or '*economic migrants*', benefits these people on the move. They are perceived as more legitimate in asylum requests as compared to the '*economic migrant*'

narrative (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Goodman & Speer, 2007; Van Gorp, 2005). Therefore, the Federal Council's framing arguably helps to portray refugees in a more deserving manner.

While these findings indicate a less discriminatory use of language as compared to the paragraphs above, it is crucial to consider the topic discussed in this discourse. Schmid-Federer (2015, pp. 467-468) did not ask the Federal Council to take in Syrian refugees, but rather it provided aid on the ground. Despite the member of Parliament describing the conflict in Syria as '*the great tragedy*', the idea of letting these refugees in does not come up.

Schmid-Federer's language use, which emphasizes suffering, is also visible in Alois Gmür's (Die Mitte) (2015) demand to the Federal Council to organize an international refugee and asylum conference in Switzerland. Gmür frames the conflicts following the Arab Spring and the migration movement as '*a life-threatening journey*' (2015, p. 689), stating that:

*"The suffering caused by the war in Syria and the brutal conquests of the self-proclaimed jihadist militia "Islamic State" (IS) is triggering huge flows of refugees that can no longer be absorbed in the surrounding countries."* (Gmür, 2015, p. 689)

The Federal Council's answer to Gmür describes the Middle East as being confronted with a '*security situation*' while underlining the importance of "*management of migration flows and prevent irregular departures to Europe and Switzerland*" (Federal Council, 2015 in Gmür, 2015, pp. 689-690). The Swiss Executive's answer, here, visibly mirrors sentiments in line with securitization theory, by depicting refugees as contributing to security risks.

Still, as Chouliaraki (2015) notes, this narrative of suffering has implications for the reinforcement of geopolitical hierarchies. These categorizations into '*victims*' hint at a counterpart in the story, namely a '*savior*' as well as an actor who made these people become victims. Refugees, therefore, become agency-less actors, whose lives depend on the savior, namely Western states such as Switzerland here (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018).

The initial search for texts on the 2015 refugee movements yielded predominantly references to Syrian refugees, suggesting greater overall interest in this group. To broaden the scope, a second round of analysis specifically targeted the keywords ‘*Eritrea*’ and ‘*Afghanistan*’, as they, together with Syria, comprised the top countries of asylum requests in Switzerland in 2015 (SEM, 2016a). While relevant results emerged for Eritrea and are discussed below, references to Afghanistan were less direct, mainly appearing in broader discussions, such as development aid.

In an interpellation, Vitali Albert (FDP) questioned the legitimacy of Eritreans seeking asylum in Switzerland. His interpellation was titled ‘*Do all Eritreans face imminent danger to life and health?*’<sup>22</sup>. The Federal Council answered as follows (Federal Council, 2015, in Albert, 2015, p. 583):

*“As the Federal Council has already stated [...], deserters and draft evaders in Eritrea are regularly judged by military commanders without trial and punished at their own discretion. The corresponding punitive measures are often inhumane and degrading in nature and are characterized by exceptional harshness. Sanctions imposed on deserters and conscientious objectors in Eritrea may therefore constitute torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment within the meaning of Article 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR; SR 0.101<sup>23</sup>).”*

The Federal Council used its legal standards to back up Eritreans’ asylum requests, which Albert questions. Here, the Federal Council emphasizes crucial principles of human rights, specifically referencing Article 3 of the ECHR. Furthermore, the Federal Council stated:

*“Which protection people from Eritrea receive in Switzerland is not a political question, but a legal one.”* (Federal Council, 2015 in Albert, 2015, p. 583)

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<sup>22</sup> Literal translation: ‘*Are all Eritreans persecuted for life and limb?*’. The original German phrase, ‘*an Leib und Leben verfolgt*’, can be translated as an imminent danger to life and health. The original terminology in German ‘*an Leib und Leben verfolgt*’ is often used in criminal areas such as in the case of a physical injury, in the Swiss Criminal Code.

<sup>23</sup> European Convention on Human Rights embedded in the Swiss Constitution.

This phrase hints at the potential politicization of parliamentary debates on refugees and asylum seekers. The Federal Council rejects political ideologies in this matter and emphasizes the rule of law, avoiding the perpetuation of power asymmetry through language. Politicians, as members of the societal elite, shape public opinions (Wodak, 2001b). The Federal Council, by clearly stating the law and emphasizing human rights, thereby becomes a powerful tool to combat social inequalities produced by discourse in politics.

The Federal Council used a similar approach to answer a request by the Coalition of the Liberals (FDP) a few weeks earlier:

*“[A blanket directive on refugees rather individual case examination for Eritreans] would also be in conflict with the constitutional guarantees of legal equality and the prohibition of discrimination, as well as other constitutional and international law guarantees.”* (Federal Council, 2015, in FDP - Liberale Fraktion, 2015, p. 479)

### The 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Movement<sup>24</sup>

In February of 2022, Russia started to invade Ukraine, and the war has been ongoing ever since. The war in Ukraine, resulting in many Ukrainians becoming refugees and having to leave their homes, certainly did not go unnoticed in European politics.

On the 2nd of March 2022, a few days after the initial Russian attack on Ukraine, the Coalition of the Center made a statement, urging the Federal Council to react quickly to the emerging war in Ukraine.

*“How can coordination be ensured with all European countries so that people from Ukraine can be granted protection quickly and effectively and a reception in solidarity can be made possible? With the regard to Ukraine, the Federal Commission on Migration (FCM) believes that the conditions are in place for the rapid application of protection status S.”* (Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022a, p. 1184).

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<sup>24</sup> For complete parliamentary speeches during that time, see Appendix D.

In this text, the emphasis on the need for Europe to unite is visible. As seen during the Balkan wars, a war in Europe results in Members of Parliament emphasizing European solidarity. While this excerpt does not question the legitimacy of Ukrainians needing protection, and solidarity is mentioned immediately, it remains unclear whether this solidarity entails a specific conditionality.

Also here, Ukrainians are not reduced into categories such as ‘*victims*’, ‘*refugees*’, or let alone ‘*economic migrants*’. Different academic contributions have shown that media coverage portrays Ukrainians more empathetically (e.g., El-Nawawy & ElMasry, 2024). Another factor that provides an interesting observation is the quick demand for a protection status for Ukrainians, only a few days after the start of the Russian invasion by the coalition of the center. In 2015, when many individuals sought protection from conflict and war in Europe in the hope of a better life, requests for protection status for refugees were also raised, though rejected by the Federal Council as seen in its answer to Moret (2015).

Neither in the question of the Center Coalition nor in the Federal Council’s response was the topic of religion raised. Is there no mention of it due to the perceived similar culture and religion? Or is religion secondary, if refugees are European?

On the same day, the Center Coalition also demanded that the Swiss Executive provide a quick aid package to support Ukrainians on the move. They stated:

*“Switzerland has a historic obligation to do all it can to support the people of Ukraine. At the same time, the West needs a clear and consistent response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and its violation of international law. The West must stand united against this policy of power and brute force.”* (Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022b, p. 1182)

Here, the Ukrainian refugees are not categorized, which would lead to a reduction of them as people to ‘*refugees*’, ‘*victims*’, or ‘*migrants*’. Moreover, the term ‘*people of Ukraine*’ describes precisely what it is without any linguistic undertone. This text excerpt shows no victimization of Ukrainians while still condemning Russia (Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022b, p. 1182). Therefore, it can

be contended that Ukrainian refugees do not lose agency through semiotic practices by certain politicians in Switzerland, as they do not get classified.

Apart from the linguistic categorization of Ukrainian refugees, there are other remarks to be made. Firstly, with the phrase of the West standing together, the Coalition of the Center addresses the idea of Russia as the common enemy of (at least) Switzerland and Ukraine. Through this statement, the Coalition of the Center includes the Ukrainian people in the “in-group”. This sentiment aligns with various studies that show the increased solidarity with one's own “in-group”. In his deservingness theory, Van Oorschot (2000) noted 25 years ago that the perceived closeness to identity was a crucial criterion for deserving welfare state benefits. An identity that is close to one's own leads to a higher perceived deservingness. Later, De Coninck and Matthijs (2020) confirmed the relevance of perceived closeness of identity to the “in-group” in their concept of settlement deservingness.

Secondly, the mention of *the West* also has compelling implications. The West hints at the other side being the East, and we can, therefore, connect it to the Cold War. Back in the 1950s and 1960s, Switzerland had welcomed refugees mostly from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the main reason being the essentially anti-communist attitude during that time in Switzerland and the belief that refugees seeking protection in Switzerland were system opponents (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 9; Salis Gross, 2004, p. 152). The sympathy of Switzerland towards perceived anti-communist refugees at the time also implies a possible attitude against (former) communist countries, which might still be ingrained in politicians' minds today.

Thirdly, in this paragraph, the Center Coalition justifies the need for action by the Swiss government due to a *'historic obligation'*. The reference to Switzerland's *'historic obligation'* emphasizes the country's humanitarian legacy. These humanitarian principles began to be embedded in national identity by the late 1800s, most prominently through the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Switzerland (Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006, p. 5). Also, the Red Cross has been referred to as *“standing for Swiss values”* in the past by former Federal Chancellor Schneider-Ammann (2016).

The Federal Council's response to the Coalition of the Center shares a similar tone:

*“Switzerland regularly calls on all parties to the conflict to protect the civilian population and people who are no longer taking part in the fighting and to ensure humanitarian access.”* (Federal Council, 2022, in Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022b, p. 1182)

Using the term *‘civilian population’* to describe Ukrainians forced to flee evokes a different image than the terms used in other contexts, such as *‘huge flows of refugees’*, *‘victims’*, or *‘Muslim migrants’*. Firstly, the term *‘civilian population’* has a static character, meaning it does not imply movement from one place to another. Secondly, it does not contain stereotypical descriptions. These observations, on the one hand, suggest the agency of Ukrainians and their previous everyday lives as humans, just like other people, and, on the other hand, allow the reader or listener to understand Ukrainians as a people with diverse lives, jobs, hometowns, and so forth.

As previously stated, some categorizations and, consequently, reductions of various refugee groups result in refugees becoming passive actors without agency (Ozdora-Aksak et al., 2021; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). In reverse, this implies that Ukrainians are framed as *‘civilian population’*, manage to keep their agency, and remain more active actors in the public sphere.

The Federal Council's answer to the request by the Coalition of the Center also emphasized solidarity with Ukrainians:

*“The Federal Council is also prepared to show solidarity in taking in people seeking protection from Ukraine.”* (Federal Council, 2022 in Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022b, p. 1183)

This statement by the Federal Council on March 2, 2022, hinted at the later activation of protection status S, which was enacted only ten days later (Federal Council, 2024).

When shifting our glance to the right of the political spectrum, we can make the following observations regarding the categorization or description of Ukrainians. In his question to the Federal Council, Lorenzo Quadri (SVP) raised the following concern:

*“The Russian invasion of Ukraine will lead to large flows of refugees from the regions attacked by the army; the movement of refugees is already underway. Switzerland will also be affected. So that these refugees can be taken in: Does the Federal Council intend to speed up the repatriation of the too many economic migrants who have not fled any war and yet continue to place an unjustified burden on our asylum system?”* (2022, p. 1257)

Quadri’s choice of wording for Ukrainians shows a deviation compared to the terms used by the Coalition of the Center. When comparing Quadri’s (2022) wording of *‘flows of refugees’* to the terms *‘civilian population’* and *‘people of Ukraine’* that were mentioned above (Die Mitte, 2022b), Quadri used a less neutral categorization for Ukrainians. While the term *‘flow’* is defined as *“to move in one direction, especially continuously and easily”* (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), it is the linguistic nuance here that is decisive. Quadri used the German term *‘Flüchtlingsströme’*, which can be translated to *‘refugee streams’*, thereby having a slightly more aggressive tone as compared to *‘flows’*. These types of words hint at large amounts of, for example, water. Some authors have noted that the term *‘wave’* for refugees implies a natural disaster (Serafis et al., 2020). It can, consequently, be contended that the description of *‘flows of refugees’* has a more negative undertone.

Also, in Quadri’s statement, there is no questioning of the legitimacy of the Ukrainian refugees. He, more so, emphasizes the hurdles he saw at the time that needed to be removed, *‘so that these refugees can be taken in’* (2022, p. 1257). Quadri feels the Swiss government needs to *“speed up the repatriation of the too many economic migrants”* (2022, p. 1257), so they can make space for Ukrainian refugees. This statement mirrors theoretical frameworks on refugees’ deservingness to settle in a recipient country. Quadri feels that Ukrainian refugees are more deserving of receiving protection compared to *‘economic migrants’* (according to Quadri, the less deserving of the two).

While Quadri's statement, firstly, entails a dichotomy that fails to depict the reality of refugees adequately, it also hints at potential colonial legacies. The term '*economic migrant*' is used to discredit these individuals from living in Switzerland. It portrays a detached image of these people and discursively absolves Switzerland of any responsibility. This notion thereby undermines the lasting effects of colonial times in the countries of origin of refugees. Additionally, the *economic migrant* term per se can be viewed as a missing confrontation with these colonial legacies that still affect countries today.

Still, it is not clear who Quadri is referring to by '*economic migrants*'. If he is referring to, for example, neighboring countries, then the above explanation in connection with colonial legacies would not apply. Still, his statement underlines that people in need of protection due to war, as opposed to economic reasons, are perceived as more deserving of protection in Switzerland.

It is striking that Ukrainians are not questioned in their legitimacy at all, even by an MP such as Quadri of the right-wing SVP. Still, some SVP politicians did not like the activation of the protection status S whatsoever. In December 2022, MP Mike Egger (SVP) requested that the Federal Council abolish the protective status granted to Ukrainians. His main arguments to put an end to the protection status S were (Egger, 2022, p. 276):

*“The possibility of unrestricted entry and unconditional residence has led to overstretched reception structures at all levels of government. In addition, the compulsory schooling of Ukrainian children and young people places a heavy burden on school communities. The automatic entitlement to social welfare also for wealthy people from Ukraine is met with great incomprehension and means unequal treatment compared to the Swiss population. Asylum seekers who do not come from Ukraine are also at a disadvantage compared to people with S protection status. The abolition of protection status S is necessary for the acceptance and credibility of the welfare state and the asylum system. Origin alone should not be the sole criterion for admission to Switzerland, but actual grounds for asylum on the basis of a proper asylum procedure. “*

Throughout Egger's (2022) whole discourse, it became visible that he used a very legal language without reducing Ukrainian refugees into 'intruders', 'illegal migrants', or a similar categorization. This observation seems somewhat unusual when compared to other discourses on refugees by a right-wing politician.

Strikingly, Egger (2022) uses an argument that has been used to advocate against the discrimination of certain refugees, specifically not differentiating between origin when deciding whether a refugee is admitted or not. This attitude reminds us of findings in settlement deservingness theory or even the coloniality of migration: who is allowed the permit S status should be neutral and not shaped by who is seen as a legitimate refugee by origin, but rather by enduring colonial legacies. Egger, however, uses this argument not to advocate for other refugees acquiring protection status S, too, but to abolish it altogether.

The Federal Council backed its decision not to abolish the protection status S with reasons such as the need for solidarity with other European countries, which also faced a large number of Ukrainian refugees:

*"The Swiss asylum system is designed to handle around 24'000 asylum applications per year. Carrying out an ordinary asylum procedure for the more than 70'000 asylum seekers from Ukraine would have led to an overload of structures. The refugee movements from Ukraine pose enormous challenges not only for Switzerland but for the whole of Europe. A coordinated approach at European level was therefore crucial."* (Federal Council, 2022 in Egger, 2022, p. 276)

Furthermore, the Federal Council added:

*"Thanks to the application of this status, it has been possible to ensure that the asylum system continues to function and that refugees from Ukraine still receive protection quickly and unbureaucratically."* (Federal Council, 2022 in Egger, 2022, p. 276)

This sentence is particularly compelling, after previously having analyzed the Federal Council's response to Moret's (2015) inquiry about a potential activation of status S for Syrians. In 2015, the Federal Council justified its decision not to implement status S due to a higher workload for the asylum system. Indeed, the numbers in the case of Ukraine were much higher compared to the number of Syrian refugees in 2015. Still, these differing responses portray a contradictory legitimization.

Members of Parliament Sibel Arslan (GP) and Mustafa Atici (SP), who are ideologically left-wing and originally from Turkey, had also posed questions about Ukrainian refugees in the spring of 2022. In her question, Arslan asked about "*third-country nationals who are currently fleeing Ukraine [...]*" (2022, p. 1503). Atici's questions addressed the equal rights of people leaving Ukraine, referring to them as '*people in need of protection from Ukraine*' (2022, p. 1227).

The questions posed by Arslan and Atici reflect an ostensibly humanizing approach, emphasizing equal rights and referring to displaced individuals in neutral or inclusive terms. However, such humanizing discourse that seems progressive can reinforce paternalistic dynamics by framing refugees as passive recipients of protection (Kirkwood, 2017), similarly, portraying third-country nationals as "people in need of protection" risks reproducing geopolitical hierarchies and the savior narrative, even among actors on the ideological left (Chouliaraki, 2015; Ramasubramanian & Miles, 2018). Even well-intentioned parliamentary discourse may unwillingly sustain asymmetrical power relations.

The analyzed texts above did not include any references to religion in connection with Ukrainian refugees. Therefore, to double-check, the keywords *religion*, *Christian*, and *Christianity* were used in the National Council Spring Session 2022 and Summer Session 2023. These keywords, however, did not score any matches connected with Ukrainian refugees.

## Synthesis and Discussion

This analysis focused on answering three main research questions. Firstly, how did the Swiss Parliament depict different refugee movements between the 1990s and 2022, namely the Balkan refugee movements, the 2015 movements, and the Ukrainian refugee movements? Secondly, how were policy decisions on refugee measures justified and challenged in parliamentary discourse, namely the activation of the protection permit or the lack thereof? Thirdly, how and to what extent are power dynamics reproduced through the language of asylum politics in Swiss parliamentary debates? As we have seen, parliamentary discourse about refugees has been a recurring theme in Switzerland throughout various refugee movements. The analysis revealed various overarching topics that will now be discussed.

### Description of People on the Move

Firstly, categories vary and have substantial implications for the legitimacy of refugees' rights in Switzerland. We have seen differing categorizations during the analysis. During the Balkan Wars, people on the move from Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina were framed as '*refugees from Kosovo*' (Hasler, 1998), '*victims*' of Serbia's aggressions, or '*refugee flows [from Kosovo]*' (Mühlemann, 1998). More generally, during the 1990s, a distinction was made between '*genuine victims*' and '*economic migrants*' (Scherrer, 1992). '*Illegal immigrants*' were associated with having a '*poor*' background and being carriers of illnesses (Borer, 1998). The narrative of people from the Balkans being drug dealers, or more generally, criminals (Burri Sharani et al., 2010, p. 41), was not confirmed in this research.

During the 2015 refugee movement, people on the move were often categorized into '*Islamic extremists*' (Wobmann, 2015), '*Muslim migrants*' (Addor, 2016), '*Christians on the run*' (Ingold, 2015), '*victims*', '*refugees from Syria*', '*displaced persons in Syria*' (Schmid-Federer, 2015) or '*deserters*' for Eritreans (Albert, 2015).

The Ukrainian refugee movement entailed classifications such as '*people from Ukraine*' (Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022a), '*civilian population*', '*people seeking protection [originating] from*

*Ukraine*’ (Federal Council, 2022b), *‘refugees from Ukraine*’ (Federal Council, 2022 in Egger, 2022, p. 276), and *‘people in need of protection from Ukraine*’ (Atici, 2022).

The term *‘flow*’ in connection with refugees was used during all three refugee movements, which hints at the perceived danger for Switzerland in any case, regardless of the specific attributes of the individuals fleeing.

Throughout these three refugee movements, people on the move have been categorized in different ways. In the 1990s, the terms *‘refugees*’ and *‘victims*’ were predominantly used. These frames emphasize the savior role Switzerland has in this situation and thereby reinforce geopolitical hierarchies (Chouliaraki, 2015). Additionally, it suggests a perceived superiority of Switzerland concerning these “helpless” people.

Around the year 2015, although not the only refugees at the time, Syrians were heavily present in parliamentary discourse in Switzerland. The increased emphasis on religion, especially from right-wing politicians, hints at the importance of felt cultural and religious proximity. Eritreans were often questioned about the legitimacy of their asylum requests. Judging from discourse on these individuals, it is most likely due to the absence of a full-scale war, and at the same time, fleeing from the military does not seem like a good enough reason (see Albert, 2015).

For Ukrainians, the narrative was different: in many cases, the political discourse avoided terms such as *‘refugees*’ or *‘victims*’. Instead, the Federal Assembly used terms such as *‘people*’ or *‘civilians*’. This terminology enables Ukrainians to keep their agency and has potential implications for their future in Switzerland. By framing Ukrainian refugees as *‘people*’, they are seen on a level playing field with Swiss society and, therefore, acquire more respect and empathy. Additionally, they are welcomed into the “in-group”, arguably making it more accessible for them to find jobs, build social circles, or just generally, stay long-term in Switzerland as compared to people from Kosovo, Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Eritrea, who are consequently put into another group of society through discourse.

## Importance of Religion

Religion was a prominent and recurring topic, especially during the 2015 refugee movement. During the Balkan Wars, Mühlemann (in Swiss Federal Assembly, 1995) showed empathy for *'apostate Muslims'*, emphasizing the most vulnerable groups of society.

Around the year 2015, the religious threat of Islam to Swiss society in parliamentary discourse became highly visible. This does not come as a surprise, as the strong presence of SVP popular initiatives has been visibly Islamophobic. Many politicians, including the Federal Council, equated Muslims with (potential) extremists or a security threat (Federal Council, 2015 in Moret, 2015; Wobmann, 2015), or who should instead settle in countries such as Saudi Arabia due to the proximity in their culture (Addor, 2016). For Christian Syrians, there seemed to be an exception (Ingold, 2015).

Cheng (2015) has shown that Swiss society often perceives Muslims as threats. This sentiment is mirrored in, e.g., the SVP-led minaret ban of 2009. Various Swiss political campaigns have, therefore, normalized Islamophobic narratives (Eskandari & Banfi, 2017). This thesis argues that the Federal Council has added to this negative image in some cases. Although the Federal Council has tried to appeal to people's sense of reason over and over when it comes to discrimination against Muslims, e.g., seen in response to Wobmann (2015) or against the Minaret ban (AI, 2009; SWI, 2009), it has not always done so consequently and proactively. In its response to Addor's (2016) idea for Saudi Arabia to take in Syrian refugees as opposed to Switzerland, the Federal Council had merely noted Saudi Arabia's sovereignty over its policies. It did not, whatsoever, mention Switzerland's obligations under the Geneva Refugee Convention, such as non-discrimination. This lack of proactiveness was also reflected in the Federal Council's statement that the burqa ban needed to be decided on the regional level (NPR, 2021). The Executive has enormous power to shape public opinions (Wodak, 2001b). By not consequently strengthening a narrative of non-discrimination of refugees, it thereby indirectly reinforces power asymmetries through language.

There were no references to religion in the case of Ukrainian refugees, even after actively searching for the keywords *religion*, *Christian*, and *Christianity* in a second round of research,

which was not conducted for the 1990s and 2015 refugee movements. There are various potential reasons for this discrepancy. Refugees perceived as culturally close are regarded as more deserving than those perceived as culturally distant, and this may be a passive decision (Reeskens & Van der Meer, 2019). It is possible that, for Ukrainians, religion did not even have to be mentioned, as their deservingness was already subconsciously clear in society due to the felt closeness. These findings are also in line with a large body of literature on the deservingness framework, specifically the *identity* criterion in Van Oorschot's (2000) CARIN concept, which states that an individual is perceived as closer to the "in-group"; consequently, they are considered more deserving.

The perceived threat of Islam by many Swiss politicians in Parliament can be attributed to various potential reasons. Islamophobia was already prevalent in Switzerland before 2015, visible through, e.g., the Minaret Ban campaign in 2009 that was passed. The perceived superiority of Christianity in the West as opposed to religions such as Islam in "the Orient" is not a new phenomenon (Said, 1977, p. 183). Discrimination towards Muslims in the West has been present for centuries. However, Elver (2012) noted that since 9/11, Islamophobia has worsened. This deterioration stems from a combination of racism and fear, fueling a vicious cycle that deepens fright and tension on all sides. Also, ISIS's rise to power in Syria potentially affected the image of Syrians as a society in a negative way overall. This reduction of individuals can be attributed to a general erosion of identity among those perceived as being from the "out-group", and among people on the move (e.g., Said, 1977; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018).

Lastly, terrorist attacks such as the ones in Paris in 2015 led to a notable decline in attitudes toward immigrants, particularly among those who are well-educated and politically left-leaning (Ferrín et al., 2020). If left-leaning people start to see immigrants more negatively, too, this implies an overall more xenophobic attitude in the public sphere. While these results do not include Switzerland, they still have implications for the Swiss context. The deterioration of immigrants' image due to attacks, combined with Switzerland's direct democracy, making popular initiatives obvious in the public, arguably catalyzed the bad image of Muslims. This dynamic was also previously supported by Wodak et al. (2013), who examined discourse on Islam in Swiss politics.

## Is Solidarity Conditional?

Parliamentary discourse repeatedly used the concept of solidarity. While not always mentioned explicitly, this thesis argues that terminology such as '*especially when European countries are affected*' (Iten, 1992, p. 1023) also reflects the notion of solidarity, as empathy is evident in this statement. The idea of solidarity was predominantly visible during the 1990s, and for the Ukrainian refugee movement used in contexts such as Switzerland's humanitarian tradition, solidarity with other European countries and solidarity with Ukrainians *because* they are European by MPs and the Federal Council's answers (e.g, Die Mitte Fraktion, 2022a, 2022b; Hasler, 1998; Iten, 1992).

In some cases during the 1990s a type of conditional solidarity came to light, such as a request to repatriate refugees from Kosovo *as soon as* the situation gets better (Hasler, 1998) or the Federal Council's response to Mühlemann (1995 in Swiss Federal Assembly), which had stated to support the affected areas with emergency aid *if* the situation declined.

The notion of solidarity, however, was not evident in the 2015 analysis. As this thesis employed a qualitative approach and the keywords were initially confined to umbrella terms related to migration, it would be insufficient not to further reflect on this observation. To enhance accuracy, a second search included the keyword *solidarity* for the winter session of the National Council in 2015<sup>25</sup>. Although it became apparent that politicians from the left had raised proposals concerned with solidarity towards refugees in 2015 (politicians such as Claudia Friedl (SP), 2015; Bea Heim (SP), 2015), the Federal Council's answers were most compelling. While the Federal Council's answer during the 2015 refugee movement highlighted the need for Switzerland to show solidarity (in Friedl, 2015), this solidarity was directed toward the EU due to '*the current scale of the humanitarian crises and the associated refugee flows*' (Federal Council, 2015 in Friedl, 2015, p. 494)<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Three political proposals with the term solidarity, were found, including Friedl (2015), Heim (2015) Quadri (2015) about stopping Switzerland's financial aid to the EU.

<sup>26</sup> For complete parliamentary speeches of Friedl (2015) and Heim (2015) and the Federal Council's answers see Appendix E.

The analysis found a similar tone in the Federal Council's response to Quadri (2015, p. 484), where the Executive underlined solidarity with Europe through financial aid to Frontex.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the solidarity of the Federal Council during the 2015 refugee movements was present with institutions but not with refugees whatsoever.

These findings have crucial implications for the deservingness of different refugee groups in Switzerland. For refugees from the Balkans and Ukraine, solidarity with them was present in the discourse. For refugees who arrived during the 2015 movements, however, only leftist politicians showed solidarity for refugees. In contrast, the Executive was only in solidarity with the institutions that were "struggling" with the large numbers of refugees. These notions, as seen through discourse, highlight the higher deservingness of protection for refugees from the Balkans in the 1990s and Ukraine more recently.

While this analysis did not reveal conditional solidarity towards Ukrainian refugees, a recent press release by the Federal Council from June 2025 hints at conditional solidarity in connection with Ukrainians, too. This statement entailed future restrictions on the eligibility for protection status S, such as requiring holders to come from especially dangerous areas, and restrictions on traveling to Ukraine (Federal Council, 2025).

This news has implications for Swiss solidarity towards refugees in general. If this solidarity is conditional even for the "good" refugees, who have received permit S, this conditionality hints at the focus on temporal protection for refugees in Switzerland. More bluntly, refugees must always leave again, no matter their origins. This sentiment can be attributed to Switzerland's past with refugees, where the country often used asylum policies of transmigration, and permanent asylum was denied (Erlanger, 2006). This thesis argues that solidarity towards refugees in Switzerland is employed, either strategically or subconsciously, in a conditional manner, and therefore reproduces existing power dynamics between refugee groups. Additionally, the transmigration attitude implies a perceived superiority of Swiss nationals compared to refugees in general.

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<sup>27</sup>This argument is also highly problematic as of today. Frontex is facing widespread criticism for its involvement in human rights violations, amongst other things illegal pushbacks of refugees at the EU's external borders (HRW, 2021).

## Legal Justifications in Discourse

Throughout this analysis, legal justifications have been particularly evident in the Federal Council's responses to requests from members of Parliament.

The codification of Article 4 of the Asylum Act regarding the protection permit S was a result of the Balkan refugee movements in the 1990s. However, it had not been activated at the time (SEM, 2025a). In 2015, FDP politician Moret (2015) raised the issue in connection with the Syrian refugee movements, and the Federal Council addressed it. During that time, the Federal Council had various arguments to legitimize the rejection of the protection status. Firstly, it used a somewhat outdated communication from the UNHCR that stated each country should define, according to its resources, how many refugees a large influx entails. Secondly, the Federal Council added the '*considerable amount of additional work in the asylum procedure*' as well as the fact that the protection permit S is 'only' valid for five years (2015, p. 780). Thirdly, the Federal Council argued for a case-by-case examination of asylum requests, rather than a collective protection measure, due to safety concerns.

The Federal Council's statement in 2015 highly contrasts with its response to Egger's (2022) request to abolish the permit S for Ukrainians. There, the Federal Council backed its decision for the permit S, citing the high workload that would arise from a case-by-case examination. Additionally, the Executive emphasized the need for solidarity among European countries to address the challenge of Ukrainians fleeing. Lastly, the Federal Council stated that the protection status was an adequate measure as it enables Ukrainians '*protection quickly and unbureaucratically*' (Federal Council, 2022 in Egger, 2022, p. 276).

Strikingly, the case-by-case argument (due to security reasons) and the reasoning of workload are some of the exact arguments used *against* the activation of the protection status in 2015 (Federal Council, 2015, in Moret, 2015, p. 780). While the number of Ukrainian refugees was significantly higher compared to Syrian refugees in Switzerland (SEM, 2016b; SRC, 2023b, p. 8), this can also be attributed, in part, to Switzerland's restrictive measures in 2015. The contradictory use of argumentation by the Federal Council, therefore, reinforces power dynamics through language, depending on the refugee group.

These findings are crucial for this thesis. Through this paradoxical reasoning in the two instances, this analysis confirms a double standard between Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in Switzerland, which has been observed in other European countries in media (El-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024; Iberi & Saddam, 2022; Sales, 2023), and also in the selective application of international legal protections (Alsbeti, 2023). Language discursively legitimized the contradictory procedural and legal outcomes. Drawing on the framework of CDA, this contradiction can be understood as part of a broader discursive strategy in which language serves to normalize inequality and reinforce hegemonic power structures (Fairclough, 1992; Van Leeuwen, 2009). The flexible interpretation of the law to serve particular interests reflects how those with institutional and discursive power, such as the Executive here, shape public discourse in ways that legitimize exclusionary practices (Van Dijk, 1997; Wodak, 2001a). This selective legitimization, often concealed behind the supposed legal neutrality, reveals an underlying ideological framework in which some are discursively included and others marginalized. In line with Van Dijk's (1997) notion of elite racism, the seemingly legal discourse surrounding refugee status thus operates as a powerful tool of social control and symbolic domination. These findings have substantial implications for compliance with human rights principles.

There were other instances where the Federal Council used legal standards to legitimize its decisions through discourse. The Federal Council rejected discrimination against Muslims highlighting the Geneva Refugee Convention (2015, in Wobmann, 2015, p. 993), and it backed up Eritrean's right to request asylum discursively linking it to human rights and rule of law (2014 in Albert, 2014, p. 583; 2015, in FDP - Liberale Fraktion, 2015, p. 479). However, in an answer to Addor's request (2016) to let Muslim refugees settle in Saudi Arabia, the Federal Council did not, whatsoever, mention Switzerland's obligation under the Geneva Refugee Convention and only stated Saudi Arabia's sovereignty to make its own decision.

These observations give a clear answer for the discourse of the Federal Council. While the Swiss Executive did, in some cases, mention its legal obligation, this thesis argues that the lack of proactive advocacy for refugees' rights consequently reinforces power dynamics through language. Although this sentiment may be utopic, the political elite should be well aware of its scope and influence. Given the omnipresence of right-wing politicians in refugee discourse (see

below), the Federal Council should more strictly and boldly highlight refugees' rights to counteract the normalization of discrimination through language.

### Who is Speaking about Refugees in the Swiss Parliament

While this analysis focused on providing a balanced overall picture with discourse of the whole political spectrum, one could criticize the prevalence of discourse from right-wing politicians during the Balkan Wars and the 2015 refugee movements in this analysis. However, these supposedly unbalanced findings have different reasons.

Wodak argues that right-wing parties frequently capitalize on societal fears. They construct identifiable scapegoats, often framed as racial, religious, or linguistic "Others" to channel public anxieties. These scapegoats are depicted as responsible for society's perceived decline. In many cases, migrants and asylum seekers become central figures in these narratives, allowing right-wing parties to make migration their key campaign issue by linking it to broader concerns about identity, security, and national sovereignty (2015, p. 4). Additionally, over the last thirty years, migration and national identity issues have become central topics around which the SVP mobilizes its support in Switzerland (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 33).

Starting around the 2000s and 2010s, SVP has found more support among the working class, while maintaining some of its old electorate. Therefore, the SVP's electorate is split in economic matters (Rennwald, 2014). Politicizing on the economic sphere would, thus, imply losing voters for the SVP. Bornschieer (2015) demonstrates that the SP's strong focus on universalistic values has contributed to its loss of working-class support, much of which has shifted toward the populist right. Therefore, left-wing parties such as the SP or the Green Party in Switzerland tend to prioritize economic concerns, resulting in a lack of popular initiatives by left-wing parties on asylum and migration topics. These observations back up the salience of the right-wing politicians in political discourse on asylum seekers and refugees.

During the Ukrainian refugee movement, the parliamentary discourse was more balanced between different political parties. This trend can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, the rapid activation of permit S within weeks of the war's start (Federal Council, 2024) left little

room for discussion. Secondly, as Ukrainians were seen as part of the European ‘in-group’, they were arguably less susceptible to being framed as a threat.

## Limitations

This thesis also comes with limitations. Firstly, due to the varying availability of data, some constraints appeared. Until 1999, all political speeches in the Official Bulletin have been digitized. Unfortunately, they are not sorted chronologically, and to find political speeches and texts, one must always search for specific keywords. With these keyword searches, there were also not that many results as compared with the later period, where everything is neatly and chronologically organized by chamber and session.

In some cases, before the year 2000, answers of the Federal Council could also not be found, which makes it more challenging to make a statement on the Federal Council’s attitude on the refugee movements from the Balkans in the 1990s. Secondly, no relevant speeches could be found for Afghan refugees during the 2015 time frame. It remains inconclusive why Afghan nationals were not a more salient topic during that time.

Additionally, this thesis utilized theoretical frameworks as a foundation for heuristic diagnoses. The used frameworks are necessary and their choice was argued for (see Chapter: Why Study Discourse on Refugees?), but they are still insufficient to explain the complex discourse on migration entirely. Other frameworks might contribute to a slightly varying diagnosis.

Various scholars have voiced limitations of CDA. Widdowson argues that CDA engages in cherry-picking, for example, by selecting single sentences from their original context to highlight what suits their argument. This selective approach makes CDA appear one-sided and closer to personal commentary, rather than research. Lastly, Widdowson mentions the problem of *functional fallacy*, which refers to the mistake of assuming that one can determine social and political meaning solely by examining the words on the page (2008). Tenorio (2011) also criticizes the approach's partiality. Billig (2003) states that CDA is genuinely critical because it questions power structures and the scholarship that ignores them. He values its interdisciplinary stance and its reminder that most research leaves dominance unchallenged. Yet he cautions that,

once institutionalized, CDA could become the next dominant approach and thereby lose its critical approach. It is, therefore, crucial to take the results with a pinch of salt and under consideration of the author's political ideologies.

Still, this thesis argues that its results should not be taken out of context, as a whole chapter was dedicated to Switzerland's historical, political, cultural, and legal background. Additionally, the research questions did not aim to uncover concepts vaguely related to discourse, but rather questions that are, at their core, concerned with language use. In other words, this thesis did not ask whether language was the sole driver of a better or worse life for a certain refugee, but rather how language itself was used in different contexts. Lastly, this thesis chose phenomena that are legally proven to be different (e.g., whether a protection permit is activated or not). It, therefore, makes sense to look beyond the law and move towards discourse to understand better why, in some cases, laws were applied or not.

As the analysis followed a qualitative approach and thus entails a small-N approach, the findings are limited in making general statements beyond their scope. Still, they provide in-depth observations for the case of Switzerland and can help future research to get a more thorough picture of parliamentary discourse on refugees. Additionally, the findings contribute to existing research on parliamentary discourse, which remains limited to date.

Lastly, this thesis is limited in its ability to conclude the discourse on refugees of other governments. This project, while examining the comparative aspects of different refugee movements, focused on Switzerland and arguably yielded country-specific results.

#### Addressing the Researcher Bias

CDA advocates for responsible research, which entails its analysts being aware of their ideological positions and thereby maintaining distance from the data unit at stake. These steps entail considering one's biases and contextualizing the chosen data. Still, CDA's goal is to expose power dynamics and ideologies through the systematic analysis of language (Wodak, 2001a, 2014). Moreover, CDA should not dictate what is ethically correct or not, but instead it should explain why a specific diagnosis in discourse is the most valid one (Wodak, 2001b). When CDA

scholars make their ideological perspectives explicit, it encourages deliberation - a fundamental element of a democratic society (Van Leeuwen, 2009). In keeping with this methodological imperative for transparency, this analysis is grounded in a deep commitment to human rights compliance, social justice, and refugee rights. It views structural inequalities as a reflection of colonial legacies, deservingness logics, and framing, among many other potential influences. This project embodies personal views that are consistent with a deep shared empathy towards people on the move and rejects any form of discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or country of origin. Additionally, this analysis acknowledges that everyone is shaped by their own experiences and personal beliefs.

## Conclusion

This thesis presents a critical analysis of refugee discourse in the Swiss Parliament during three pivotal refugee movements. More precisely, this study examined parliamentary discourse during the Balkan refugee movements, focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, as well as the 2015 and Ukrainian refugee movements. By employing a mixed-methods approach, which combined qualitative content analysis as a starting point for this analysis, the study then proceeded with a Critical Discourse Analysis of Swiss Parliamentary discourse during the defined crucial time frames for refugee movements. By employing CDA, this thesis explored the portrayal of varying refugee movements, looked into discursive justifications on policy decisions (or the lack thereof) related to refugees, and examined how power dynamics are reproduced through the language of asylum politics in Swiss parliamentary debates. This study enabled a deeper insight into Swiss parliamentary discourse through a critical lens. It provides crucial findings on the description of people on the move, the relevance of religion in refugee discourse, Switzerland's solidarity towards different groups of refugees, the legal justifications used in discourse, who is particularly prominent in the discourse on refugees, and, lastly, how power dynamics are reproduced through discourse in Switzerland.

The terminology often used during the Balkan refugee movements implies the perceived savior role and superiority of Switzerland compared to other countries. During the 2015 refugee movements, Syrians were heavily present in Swiss parliamentary discourse: An increased emphasis on religion was visible, especially coming from right-wing politicians. Starting in 2022, the political discourse on Ukrainian refugees emphasized wording such as *'people'* or *'civilians'*. This contrasting use of terminology maintains Ukrainian's agency. As they are perceived to be on a level playing field with Swiss society, it potentially makes it easier for Ukrainian refugees to build social circles, find jobs, and ultimately stay long-term in Switzerland compared to the other two refugee groups.

Religion was a recurring topic in parliamentary discourse, especially during the 2015 refugee movements: Muslims are often seen as a threat, whereas Syrian Christians were perceived to deserve special treatment. These findings suggest a positive effect of perceived proximity,

consistent with the deservingness framework. The Federal Council also added to this negative image, thereby indirectly reinforcing power asymmetries through language. Other events in the international sphere potentially influenced the deterioration of the image of Muslims. In connection with the Ukrainian refugee movement, there was no mention of religion. The omission of religion for Ukrainians could be attributed to a perceived cultural proximity, which led to a higher sense of deservingness.

Switzerland's parliamentary discourse voices conditional solidarity towards refugees. This conditionality is visible during the refugee movement in the 1990s. The concept of conditional solidarity involves refugees returning to their country of origin *as soon as* the situation improves. This trend is also apparent for Ukrainian refugees. This conditional solidarity most likely mirrors the former sentiment of transmigration in Switzerland, which does not show much mercy or a strong sense of responsibility towards refugees. The absence of Switzerland as a former colonial power could have led to this lack of responsibility. Astonishingly, during the 2015 refugee movements, the analysis unit did not exhibit (conditional) solidarity with refugees whatsoever, contrasting with the other analyzed movements. Swiss parliamentary discourse during that time only voiced solidarity with institutions such as the EU and Frontex.

We saw that right-wing parties were prevalent in refugee discourse, especially during the 1990s and 2015, as they capitalize on so-called 'scapegoats' and have been using migration and national identity topics as key issues in their political program over the last thirty years. In 2022, the political discourse was more balanced between political parties, which can be attributed to the quick permit S activation and the perceived cultural proximity, which arguably influenced the political elite.

The use of legal justifications in discourse was especially prevalent in the Federal Council's answers to MPs. One of the most striking results is the paradoxical nature of reasoning for and against the permit S in 2015 for Syrians and 2022 for Ukrainians. The conflicting argumentation of the Federal Council regarding this legal measure leads to the normalization of inequality through language, which ultimately reinforces hegemonic power structures. This finding underlines the discriminatory behavior of the Federal Council through language. Although the

Federal Council occasionally highlighted its commitment to human rights and legal obligations (e.g., for Eritrean's right to request asylum), this thesis argues that, given the Executive's significant power, the Federal Council did not sufficiently stress these commitments through political discourse.

This study also has limitations. Firstly, the time frame might be too narrow to fully understand the larger trends in the depiction of different refugee groups. Therefore, this thesis cannot address specific shifts in the perception of one refugee group, but can instead make observations between refugee groups. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks used cannot provide an exhaustive explanation of political discourse on refugees or pinpoint causality in a straightforward manner, as political language is more complex to dismantle. Therefore, the results must be understood to a certain extent, albeit heuristically.

Additionally, the findings of the 1990s refugee movements remain limited, as access to data proved to be more complex: answers from the Federal Council were often missing, and no statements could be made regarding a discursive justification for the lack of activation of permit S in the 1990s, immediately after its codification. Lastly, no discourse on Afghan refugees in the Swiss Parliament was found. It would be interesting for further research as to why Afghan refugees were not as salient in parliamentary discourse in Switzerland during the 2015 refugee movements.

Overall, this thesis presents a rich and in-depth case study of Switzerland, which can support future research on parliamentary discourse regarding refugees. Ultimately, this thesis highlights the political and ethical necessity of examining how refugee narratives are constructed in parliamentary discourse. As language shapes perception of refugees and has shown to reproduce social inequality between refugee groups, a more inclusive and participatory approach may help reorient asylum politics toward a framework of genuine solidarity and human rights compliance. In other words, asylum politics where politicians do not talk *about* refugees but *with* them. This study calls for ongoing reflection on who holds the power to speak and make decisions in politics and how these definitions could be reimagined toward greater justice and social equality.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A Resident Permits of Switzerland

<i>Permit Name</i>	<i>Permit Type</i>	<i>Permit Duration</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>N permit</b>	Asylum-seeker permit	From the start of the asylum process until asylum decision	This permit is issued for individuals who are currently in the asylum process as a confirmation of registration
<b>B permit</b>	Recognized refugees (granting of asylum)	Five to ten years. *can be transferred into permanent residency after five or ten years (Permit C)	This permit is granted to individuals who have a convincing reasoning for persecution and are thus recognized as a refugee
<b>F permit</b>	Recognized refugees ( <i>F permit as refugee status</i> )	Temporary admission as a refugee until the situation in the origin country improves	If the SEM denies the asylum request and issues an expulsion, which is unlawful under international law due to the <i>non-refoulement principle</i> , the deportation will be deferred
	Temporarily admitted foreigners ( <i>F permit as foreigner status</i> )	Temporary admission as a foreigner until the situation in the origin country improves	If the SEM denies the asylum request due to the applicant not meeting the provisions under the Geneva Refugee Convention but the expulsion to the country of origin would be unlawful, unreasonable,

			or impossible, the applicant will receive the F Permit
<b>S permit</b>	Vulnerable persons	Temporary protection until dissolution from Federal Council	This permit is granted to individuals who are part of “large-scale refugee situations” and in instances when the government needs to react fast
<b>C permit</b>	Permanent residency	permanent	This permit allows permit holders to reside and work in Switzerland unrestrictedly
<b>Naturalization</b>	Swiss citizenship	Unlimited	After ten years with Permit B, C or F (half period is counted), naturalization can be requested. Ages between 8 and 18 count double. Time spent with permit N is not counted.

Sources: Legal Expat Switzerland, n.d.; SEM, 2020; SEM, 2023a; SRC, 2025b; SRC, 2025c.

## Appendix B Parliamentary Speeches for the Balkan Refugee Movement

**Scherrer Jürg, Member of Parliament**

**National Council, 18.06.1992**

### *Original Text*

**TITLE: Nouvelles mesures à prendre en matière d'asile**

Le Conseil fédéral est chargé de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour que le problème toujours grave de l'entrée illégale d'immigrants poussés par la misère puisse être résolu. Le Conseil fédéral doit notamment prendre les mesures suivantes: . 1. Dénoncer la convention de Genève concernant les réfugiés et le cas échéant d'autres conventions multilatérales ou bilatérales, qui empêchent la réalisation des demandes présentées sous les chiffres 3 et 5 ci-après. 2. Elaborer une convention moderne sur les réfugiés, qui, par les définitions qu'elle donne, permette de distinguer entre les personnes victimes de persécutions véritables et celles qui quittent leur pays pour des raisons économiques, de telle sorte qu'une procédure d'asile soit superflue pour ces dernières, dont l'expulsion pourrait alors se faire sur-le-champ. 3. Expulser sans autre forme de procès tous les requérants d'asile ayant pénétré en Suisse illégalement. 4. Expulser sur-le-champ les requérants d'asile qui se rendent coupables d'infractions, que leur demande ait été déjà traitée pu soit encore en suspens. 5. Annuler toutes les autorisations de séjour B délivrées aux requérants d'asile pour «raisons humanitaires» et traiter les demandes conformément aux chiffres 3 et 4 de la présente motion. 6. Charger exclusivement les autorités fédérales de l'expulsion immédiate des requérants d'asile dont la demande a été rejetée.

Cosignataires: Aubry, Binder, Bischof, Borer Roland, Borradori, Bortoluzzi, Dreher, Giezendanner, Jenni Peter, Keller Rudolf, Kern, Maspoli, Maurer, Miesch, Moser, Müller, Neuenschwander, Reimann Maximilian, Ruf, Stalder, Steffen, Steinemann

### *English Translation*

**TITLE: New measures to be taken on asylum**

The Federal Council has been instructed to take the necessary measures to solve the serious problem of illegal entry of immigrants driven by poverty. In particular, the Federal Council is to take the following measures: 1. to denounce the Geneva Convention on Refugees and, where applicable, other multilateral or bilateral conventions, which prevent the fulfillment of requests submitted under numbers 3 and 5 below. 2. To draw up a modern refugee convention whose definitions make it possible to distinguish between victims of genuine persecution and those who leave their country for economic reasons, so that an asylum procedure would be superfluous for the latter, who could then be expelled immediately. 3. Expel all asylum seekers who have entered Switzerland illegally, without further legal proceedings. 4. immediate deportation of asylum seekers who have committed offences, regardless of whether their application has already been

processed or is still pending. 5. Cancel all B residence permits issued to asylum seekers on “humanitarian grounds”, and process applications in accordance with points 3 and 4 of this motion. 6. To entrust the federal authorities exclusively with the immediate deportation of rejected asylum seekers.

Co-signatories: Aubry, Binder, Bischof, Borer Roland, Borradori, Bortoluzzi, Dreher, Giezendanner, Jenni Peter, Keller Rudolf, Kern, Maspoli, Maurer, Miesch, Moser, Müller, Neuenschwander, Reimann Maximilian, Ruf, Stalder, Steffen, Steinemann

Source: Swiss Parliament Official Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc/110001632.pdf?ID=110001632>

**Iten Andreas, Member of Parliament  
Council of States, 19.06.1992**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Vorübergehende Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen aus Bosnien-Herzegowina**

Wortlaut der Interpellation vom 19. Juni 1992 Täglich erreichen uns grauenvolle Bilder aus dem Bürgerkriegsgebiet in Bosnien-Herzegowina Das Elend der Bevölkerung nimmt erschreckende Ausmasse an. Tausende von Menschen sind auf der Flucht vor den Kriegsgreueln, vor Tod und Hunger. In dieser Situation ist dringend Hilfe gefordert Die Schweiz hat in den letzten Jahren eine leistungsfähige Infrastruktur für die Betreuung von Asylbewerbern aufgebaut Durch den drastischen Rückgang der Gesuche sind die Asylzentren stark unterbelegt und das Betreuungspersonal nicht ausgelastet In dieser Situation würde sich der Schweiz die einmalige Chance bieten, eine aktive Flüchtlingspolitik zugunsten der Bevölkerung von Bosnien-Herzegowina zu betreiben. Mit dem Angebot, Flüchtlinge aus dem kriegsversehrten Land aufzunehmen, könnte die Schweiz-getreu ihrer Tradition-einen grossen humanitären Beitrag zur Milderung des Elends leisten. Die Kantone sind in der Lage, sofort und im Rahmen ihrer Infrastruktur zu helfen. Ich stelle dem Bundesrat daher folgende Frage: Ist der Bundesrat bereit, im Sinne einer aktiven (anstelle einer passiven) Flüchtlingspolitik den an Leib und Leben bedrohten Menschen aus Bosnien-Herzegowina vorübergehend Zuflucht zu gewähren, und zwar bis zu den Limiten der bestehenden Infrastruktur? Die Schweiz kann mit dieser Geste ein Zeichen der internationalen Solidarität setzen. Ein solches Zeichen ist nicht zuletzt auch im Hinblick auf die Grenzländer zu Jugoslawien notwendig, die ebenfalls gefordert sind. Ich bitte den Bundesrat, meine Interpellation umgehend zu behandeln und meine Frage positiv zu beantworten. Texte de l'interpellation du 19 juin 1992 La guerre civile qui fait rage en Bosnie-Herzégovine nous livre chaque jour son lot d'images d'horreur. La détresse qui accable la population prend une ampleur effrayante. Des milliers de personnes fuient les affres de la guerre, la faim, la mort. Aussi une telle situation exige-t-elle une aide d'urgence. Au cours de ces dernières années, la Suisse a mis sur pied une infrastructure efficace destinée à accueillir les

requérants d'asile. Le nombre des demandes ayant fortement chuté, les centres d'hébergement connaissent un faible taux d'occupation et le personnel d'encadrement n'est pas occupé à plein temps. Une telle situation offre à la Suisse une chance unique de mener une politique active en matière de réfugiés, en faveur de la population bosniaque. En se proposant d'accueillir ces réfugiés en provenance d'un pays ravagé par la guerre, la Suisse - fidèle à sa tradition humanitaire - pourrait grandement contribuer à atténuer leur détresse. Les cantons sont en mesure d'apporter une aide immédiate en mettant leur infrastructure à disposition. C'est pourquoi je pose la question suivante au Conseil fédéral: Est-il disposé à mener une politique humanitaire active - et non passive - et à accueillir provisoirement les Bosniaques dont la vie est en péril, en utilisant toute la capacité disponible des infrastructures existantes? Un tel geste de la part de la Suisse serait un témoignage de sa solidarité internationale. De plus, il permettrait d'apporter un soutien aux pays voisins de la Yougoslavie, déjà fortement sollicités. Je prie le Conseil fédéral de traiter promptement mon interpellation et de donner une réponse favorable à ma question.

Iten Andreas: Ich muss Sie leider noch einmal um Aufmerksamkeit bitten. Die beiden Vorstösse sind zeitlich zusammengefallen. Ich hätte gerne gehabt, wenn der erste Vorstoss bereits früher behandelt worden wäre. Er war hier auch einmal traktandiert; wir haben ihn aus Zeitgründen abgesetzt. Ich habe in der Sommersession eine Interpellation betreffend vorübergehende Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen aus BosnienHerzegowina eingereicht. Leider musste ich zur Kenntnis nehmen, dass diese Interpellation nicht mehr als dringlicher Vorstoss behandelt werden konnte. Sie hätte in der ersten Woche der Sommersession eingereicht werden müssen. Im Juni dieses Jahres zeichnete sich eine gewaltige Flüchtlingskatastrophe ab. Berichte von schrecklichen Vertreibungen erreichten uns. Es wurden Mütter und ihre Kinder bedroht, gefoltert und umgebracht. Diese Greuel trieben Hunderttausende in die Flucht. Das war von den kriegstreibenden Serben beabsichtigt. Sie konnten so - um das hässliche Wort zu gebrauchen - die «ethnische Säuberung» durchführen. Diese Situation bewog mich, den Bundesrat aufzufordern, sich aktiv an der Lösung der Flüchtlingsfrage zu beteiligen. Er sollte meines Erachtens nicht warten, bis ein internationaler Zwang zu solidarischer Hilfe entstehen würde. Mit einer aktiven Flüchtlingspolitik hätte der Bundesrat frühzeitig ein humanitäres Zeichen setzen können, das auch in anderen Ländern Beachtung gefunden hätte. Er hätte die zögernden europäischen Staaten, die sich im Jugoslawienkonflikt schwertaten und keine einheitliche Politik zu formulieren vermochten, aufrütteln können. Wie Sie alle wissen, entwickelte sich das Flüchtlingselend dramatisch. Im Juli riefen unsere Ratspräsidentin, Frau Josi Meier, und der Nationalratspräsident, Hans-Rudolf Nebiker, die zuständigen Behörden auf, im Sinne einer humanitären Aktion eine Anzahl Vertriebener rasch aufzunehmen. Der Bundesrat entschied am 20. Juli 1992 über die Aufnahme von 1000 Personen, nachdem die Kantone auf eine frühere Anfrage positiv geantwortet hatten. Man darf aber heute die weiteren vom Bundesrat beschlossenen Massnahmen auch nicht vergessen. Ich denke an die Hilfe vor Ort und an die Lockerung der Visumpflicht für bosnische Flüchtlinge, die Angehörige in der Schweiz haben. Ich nehme an, Bundesrat Arnold Koller wird daraufhinweisen. Er hat übrigens vorhin bereits einige Bemerkungen dazu im Zusammenhang mit der Frage der Gewaltflüchtlinge gemacht. Da

die Interpellation in einem Zeitpunkt behandelt wird, wo sie ihre grösste Aktualität verloren hat, möchte ich zusammenfassend nur noch einige Anmerkungen machen: 1. Die restriktive Asylpolitik des Bundesrates ist richtig. Wir können in der Schweiz den Ausländern nicht Tür und Tor öffnen. Das gilt vor allem auch in der Zeit der Rezession. Eine restriktive Asylpolitik ruft aber nach einer aktiven Flüchtlingspolitik, vor allem wenn europäische Länder betroffen sind. Hier hätte der Bundesrat rascher und konstruktiver handeln können. Es wäre dadurch legitimiert, als die Länder Europas, die sich In der Jugoslawienkrise nicht sehr kooperativ und nicht sehr solidarisch verhalten haben, an ihre humanitäre Pflicht erinnert worden wären. 2. Wäre meine Interpellation vom Bundesrat rechtzeitig zur Kenntnis genommen worden, hätte sich Bundesrat Ogi wohl zum Jugoslawienkrieg vorsichtiger geäußert Ich gebe meine Kritik an seinem Verhalten in der ruhigen, sachlichen, aber entschiedenen Diktion der «NZZ» vom 27. Juni wieder: «Bundesrat Adolf Ogi, der als politischer Kommunikator gilt, hat mit seinen Äusserungen über den Jugoslawienkrieg und die schweizerische Flüchtlingspolitik dem Land geschadet, zumal seine populistischen Worte nicht in einer ungezwungenen kleinen Runde fielen, sondern in einem Interview des Oesterreichischen Fernsehens, also durch ein grosses Fenster in den Nachbarstaat gesprochen wurden, der trotz vielen Aehnlichkeiten und enger Zusammenarbeit ohnehin, zum Beispiel in europapolitischer Hinsicht, nicht nur Freude über die Schweiz empfindet Das Verhalten des als 'Aussen- und Asylminister' improvisierenden Vizepräsidenten der Landesregierung war allerdings so eindeutig ungeschickt, dass es sich erübrigen könnte, darüber weitere Gedanken zu verlieren. Der Klarheit halber ist jedoch nicht zuletzt festzuhalten, dass die schweizerische Haltung gegenüber den Kriegsflüchtlingen aus Jugoslawien in Wirklichkeit nicht so abweisend ist, wie Ogis Begründungen sie erscheinen Hessen.» Ich muss Ihnen nicht ausführlich beschreiben, dass ich mich über das Interview von Bundesrat Adolf Ogi geärgert habe: Die Asyl- und Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz war auch in den letzten Jahren stets an den humanitären Zielen unseres Landes und der Menschenrechtskonventionen ausgerichtet Bundesrat Koller hat, auch unter grossem Druck der Öffentlichkeit, diese Ziele nie aus den Augen verloren. Für seine feste und klare Haltung verdient er Anerkennung. Er wäre wohl der richtige Mann gewesen, um im Oesterreichischen Fernsehen über unsere Flüchtlingspolitik zu sprechen. 3. Die Not in Bosnien-Herzegowina verdient auch heute noch unsere volle Aufmerksamkeit Wir sind nach wie vor gefordert Eine aktive Flüchtlingspolitik muss mithelfen, dass die Zivilbevölkerung überleben kann. Ich bitte Bundesrat Koller, uns mitzuteilen, wie er die aktuelle Situation beurteilt Zum Schluss: Wir verurteilen alle den sinnlosen und grauenhaften Bürgerkrieg in Jugoslawien. Die Kriegsparteien, und vor allem die Serben, tragen die moralische Verantwortung für das Hinmorden von Menschen. Mit Abscheu vernehmen wir von den von Rachsucht und Aggressivität gesteuerten Vertreibungs- und Vernichtungsaktionen. Jugoslawien hätte ein Beispiel friedlichen Zusammenlebens in einem Vielvölkerstaat werden können, wenn nicht hasserfüllte, besitzgierige und machthungrige Anführer das Volk in den Krieg getrieben hätten. Ich darf wohl annehmen, dass wir alle im Ständerat diesen Krieg aufs schärfste verurteilen und die Hoffnung nicht aufgeben, dass in Jugoslawien Frieden einkehren wird. Bundesrat Koller: Zunächst kurz zur

Vergangenheit: Bereits am 1. Juli 1992 hat der Bundesrat im Sinne einer humanitären Geste die befristete Aufnahme von 1000 Kindern aus Kroatien und Bosnien-Herzegowina genehmigt und am 20. Juli zur Entlastung der Erstaufnahmeländer, vor allem von Kroatien, die Aufnahme von weiteren 1000 Personen aus dem Bürgerkriegsgebiet von Bosnien-Herzegowina beschlossen. Wir haben auch immer erklärt - und halten uns daran -, dass der Bundesrat bereit ist, weitere derartige Aufnahmeaktionen zu beschliessen, sofern Notlagen dies erneut gebieten. Diese sollten aber möglichst mit den übrigen europäischen Aufnahmestaaten koordiniert werden. Herr Iten Andreas hat gesagt, der Bundesrat hätte schon früher, also offenbar vor dem 20. Juli, handeln und damit ein Zeichen für alle anderen Staaten setzen sollen. Ich möchte Sie nochmals daran erinnern, weshalb wir erst am 20. Juli gehandelt haben: Wir waren seit Mai in ständigem Kontakt mit den Behörden von Kroatien und Slowenien. Wir haben ständig in vollständiger Uebereinstimmung mit diesen Behörden gesagt: Wir halten uns an das Prinzip «Hilfe vor Ort», weil diese Hilfe erstens die menschlichste und zweitens erst noch die ökonomischste ist; wir haben festgestellt, dass wir mit einem Schweizerfranken vor Ort siebenmal mehr bewirken können als in unserem eigenen Land. Erst am Wochenende vom 19./ 20. Juli kam der Hilfeschrei der kroatischen Behörden - und übrigens auch das Schreiben bzw. der Telefonanruf der beiden Ratspräsidenten -, der den Bundesrat zur Aufnahme von 1000 per Zug ausgereisten Flüchtlingen bewogen hat. Wenn wir etwas Gutes tun, so ist es an sich gut, wenn dieses Gute viele Väter und allenfalls Mütter hat. Aber ich glaube, Sie überschätzen unsere Möglichkeiten doch, wenn Sie meinen, wir hätten mehr bewirkt, wenn wir früher gehandelt hätten. Einmal hätte das klar gegen die mit den anderen Staaten abgesprochene Politik verstossen, Hilfe so lange wie möglich vor Ort zu leisten. Im übrigen muss ich Ihnen, Herr Iten Andreas - ich weiss, Sie sind ein Idealist -, doch eine eher negative Erfahrung mitteilen: An der Genfer Flüchtlingskonferenz, die ich Ende Juli in Genf zu leiten die Ehre hatte, habe ich eine fast brutale Ablehnung von selten der anderen westeuropäischen Staaten erleben müssen. Man hat innerhalb der Europäischen Gemeinschaft Deutschland, das bereits ähnliche Aktionen wie die unsrige eingeleitet hatte, vollständig isoliert stehen gelassen und hat mir in aller Klarheit und mit Bestimmtheit gesagt, die anderen westeuropäischen Staaten seien zurzeit zu solchen Aufnahmeaktionen nicht bereit. Daraus ersehen Sie die begrenzte Wirkung solcher positiver Signale. Das ist aber für uns kein Grund, von unserer bisherigen Politik abzurücken. Wir halten nach wie vor am Prinzip fest, Hilfe so lange als möglich vor Ort zu leisten. Wir erklären aber auch nach wie vor: In ausserordentlichen Notlagen, wenn vor Ort nicht mehr geholfen werden kann, ist es tatsächlich unsere edle Pflicht, weiterhin Aufnahmeaktionen in unserem Lande zu realisieren. Wir haben im Zusammenhang mildem Hilferuf des Internationalen Komitees vom Roten Kreuz und der Uno-Hochkommissarin vom letzten Wochenende bereits entsprechende Kontakte aufgenommen. So haben wir auch gehandelt. Denn nach den Sommerferien haben wir noch einmal einen Kredit von 15 Millionen Franken für Hilfe vor Ort gesprochen, vor allem zur Bereitstellung von wintersicheren Unterkünften. Ich hege ernsthafte Sorgen, dass demnächst, vor allem wenn es zu einem frühen Wintereinbruch käme, diese zweite Variante - dass wir bereit sein müssten, wieder Flüchtlinge aus Jugoslawien in unser Land zu übernehmen - rascher aktuell würde, als viele jetzt glauben.

An dieser konsequenten Politik wird der Bundesrat festhalten. Ich bin Ihnen in einer auf dem Gebiet der Flüchtlingspolitik nach wie vor schwierigen Zeit dankbar, wenn Sie unsere Politik beim Volk entsprechend unterstützen. In diesem Sinne danke ich auch dem Interpellanten. Iten Andreas: Ich bin von der Antwort auf die Interpellation befriedigt Ich bin lediglich enttäuscht darüber, dass die anderen europäischen Staaten in dieser schwierigen Situation nicht eine gewisse Solidarität bekundet haben; dass Sie hier sogar sagen müssten, Sie hätten eine fast brutale Ablehnung Ihres Appells erfahren müssen. In einer Zeit, wo wir über EWR und EG sprechen, scheint mir das ein bisschen frustrierend zu sein. Ich danke Ihnen, Herr Bundesrat, für Ihre Antwort. Ich meine, dass auch in Zukunft der Gleichschritt mit den anderen europäischen Ländern gesucht werden muss. Wir können nicht allein handeln; es müssen auch die anderen solidarisch mithelfen.

### ***English Translation***

#### **TITLE: Temporary admission of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Every day we receive horrific images from the civil war zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina The misery of the population is taking on appalling proportions. Thousands of people are fleeing the horrors of war, death and hunger. In recent years, Switzerland has built up an efficient infrastructure for the care of asylum seekers Due to the drastic decline in applications, the asylum centers are severely undercrowded and the support staff are not working to capacity. This situation would offer Switzerland a unique opportunity to pursue an active refugee policy for the benefit of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. By offering to take in refugees from the war-torn country, Switzerland - true to its tradition - could make a major humanitarian contribution to alleviating the misery. The cantons are in a position to help immediately and within the framework of their infrastructure. I therefore put the following question to the Federal Council: Is the Federal Council prepared, in the spirit of an active (rather than a passive) refugee policy, to grant temporary refuge to people from Bosnia-Herzegovina whose lives are threatened, up to the limits of the existing infrastructure? With this gesture, Switzerland can send a signal of international solidarity. Such a sign is necessary not least with regard to the countries bordering Yugoslavia, which are also called upon to act. I would ask the Federal Council to deal with my interpellation immediately and to answer my question positively.

Iten Andreas: Unfortunately, I have to ask for your attention once again. The two interpellations have coincided. I would have liked the first initiative to have been dealt with earlier. It was also on the agenda here at one point; we dropped it due to time constraints I submitted an interpellation in the summer session concerning the temporary admission of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina Unfortunately, I had to note that this interpellation could no longer be dealt with as an urgent motion. It should have been submitted in the first week of the summer session. In June of this year, a huge refugee catastrophe loomed on the horizon. Reports of terrible expulsions reached us.

Mothers and their children were threatened, tortured and killed. These atrocities drove

hundreds of thousands to flee. This was the intention of the warmongering Serbs, who were able to carry out - to use the ugly word - "ethnic cleansing". This situation prompted me to call on the Federal Council to play an active role in resolving the refugee issue. In my opinion, it should not wait until there is international pressure to provide solidarity-based aid. With an active refugee policy, the Federal Council could have sent out a humanitarian signal at an early stage, which would also have attracted attention in other countries. It could have shaken up the hesitant European states that were struggling in the Yugoslavian conflict and unable to formulate a unified policy. As you all know, the plight of the refugees developed dramatically. In July, our President of the Council, Ms. Josi Meier, and the President of the National Council, Hans-Rudolf Nebiker, called on the relevant authorities to quickly take in a number of displaced persons as part of a humanitarian action. On July 20, 1992, the Federal Council decided to take in 1000 people after the cantons had responded positively to an earlier request. Today, however, we must not forget the other measures decided by the Federal Council. I am thinking of the aid on the ground and the easing of visa requirements for Bosnian refugees who have relatives in Switzerland.

I assume that Federal Councillor Arnold Koller will point this out. Incidentally, he already made a

few comments on this earlier in connection with the issue of refugees fleeing violence. Since the interpellation is being dealt with at a time when it has lost most of its topicality, I would just like to summarize a few remarks: 1. The Federal Council's restrictive asylum policy is correct. We cannot open the floodgates to foreigners in Switzerland. This is especially true in times of recession. However, a restrictive asylum policy calls for an active refugee policy, especially when European countries are affected. The Federal Council could have acted more quickly and constructively here. It would have been legitimized by reminding the countries of Europe, which were not very cooperative and did not show much solidarity during the Yugoslavian crisis, of their humanitarian duty. 2) If the Federal Council had taken note of my interpellation in good time, Federal Councillor Ogi would probably have been more cautious in his comments on the war in Yugoslavia. I am expressing my criticism of his behavior in the calm, objective but firm diction of the "NZZ" of 27 June:

"Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi, who is regarded as a political communicator, has damaged the country with his statements about the war in Yugoslavia and Switzerland's refugee policy, especially as his populist words were not spoken in an informal small group, but in an interview on Austrian television, i.e. through a large window into the neighboring state, which, despite many similarities and close cooperation, is not only happy about Switzerland anyway, for example in terms of European policy. The behavior of the Vice President of the national government improvising as 'Foreign and Asylum Minister' was so clearly clumsy that there is no need to dwell on it. For the sake of clarity, however, it should be noted that Switzerland's attitude towards the war refugees from Yugoslavia is in reality not as dismissive as Ogi's justifications make it appear to Hesse." I don't need to tell you in detail that I was annoyed by Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi's interview: Even in recent years, Switzerland's asylum and

refugee policy has always been aligned with the humanitarian goals of our country and the human rights conventions Federal Councillor Koller has never lost sight of these goals, even under great pressure from the public.

He deserves recognition for his firm and clear stance. He would probably have been the right man to talk about our refugee policy on Austrian television. 3. the plight in Bosnia-Herzegovina still deserves our full attention today We are still called upon to pursue an active refugee policy to help the civilian population survive. I would ask Federal Councillor Koller to let us know how he assesses the current situation: We all condemn the senseless and horrific civil war in Yugoslavia. The warring parties, and above all the Serbs, bear moral responsibility for the murder of people. We hear with disgust about the acts of expulsion and extermination driven by vindictiveness and aggression. Yugoslavia could have been an example of peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic state if hateful, possessive and power-hungry leaders had not driven the people to war. I can only assume that all of us in the Council of States condemn this war in the strongest possible terms and do not give up hope that peace will return to Yugoslavia.

Federal Councillor Koller: First of all, a brief look at the past: on July 1, 1992, the Federal Council approved the temporary admission of 1,000 children from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as a humanitarian gesture, and on July 20 it decided to admit a further 1,000 people from the civil war zone in Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to relieve the initial host countries, above all Croatia. We have also always stated - and continue to do so - that the Federal Council is prepared to decide on further admission measures of this kind if emergencies make this necessary again. However, these should be coordinated as far as possible with the other European host countries. Mr. Iten Andreas said that the Federal Council should have acted earlier, apparently before 20 July, and thus set an example for all other states. I would like to remind you once again why we did not act until July 20: We had been in constant contact with the authorities in Croatia and Slovenia since May.

We have always said, in complete agreement with these authorities, that we adhere to the principle of "local aid" because this aid is firstly the most humane and secondly the most economical; we have established that we can achieve seven times more locally with one Swiss franc than in our own country. It wasn't until the weekend of July 19/20 that the Croatian authorities called for help - and incidentally also the letter or phone call from the two Council presidents - which prompted the Federal Council to take in 1,000 refugees who had left by train. When we do something good, it is good in itself if this good has many fathers and possibly mothers. But I think you overestimate our capabilities if you think we would have achieved more if we had acted earlier. On the one hand, this would have clearly contravened the policy agreed with the other countries of providing aid on the ground for as long as possible. Incidentally, Mr. Iten Andreas - I know you are an idealist - I have to share a rather negative experience with you: At the Geneva Refugee Conference, which I had the honor of chairing in Geneva at the end of July, I experienced an almost brutal rejection from a rare number of other Western European countries.

Within the European Community, Germany, which had already initiated actions similar to ours, has been left completely isolated and has told me clearly and firmly that the other Western European states are not prepared to take such measures at present. However, this is no reason for us to abandon our current policy. We continue to adhere to the principle of providing aid on the ground for as long as possible. But we also continue to declare: In extraordinary emergencies, when help can no longer be provided locally, it is indeed our noble duty to continue to carry out reception operations in our country. We have already made contact with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner in connection with their mild appeal for help last weekend. After the summer vacations, we granted a further credit of CHF 15 million for aid on the ground, primarily for the provision of winter-proof accommodation. I have serious concerns that this second option - that we would have to be prepared to accept refugees from Yugoslavia into our country again - would soon become a reality more quickly than many now believe, especially if an early onset of winter were to occur. The Federal Council will adhere to this consistent policy.

In what continues to be a difficult time in the area of refugee policy, I am grateful to you for supporting our policy with the people. With this in mind, I would also like to thank the interpellant.

Iten Andreas: I am satisfied with the answer to the interpellation. I am only disappointed that the other European states have not shown a certain solidarity in this difficult situation; that you would even have to say that you have experienced an almost brutal rejection of your appeal. At a time when we are talking about the EEA and the EC, this seems a little frustrating to me. Thank you, Mr. Federal Councillor, for your answer. I believe that we must continue to seek to keep pace with the other European countries in the future. We cannot act alone; the others must also help in solidarity.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc/20021927.pdf?ID=20021927>

**Swiss Federal Assembly (Speakers Engler Rolf and Mühlemann Ernst amongst others)  
Swiss Federal Assembly, 05.12.1995**

***Original Text***

**TITLE: Interpellation Engler: Wiederaufbau in Ex-Jugoslawien und Rückführung von Kriegsflüchtlingen**

Wortlaut der Interpellation vom 5. Dezember 1995

Ist der Bundesrat bereit, einen ausserordentlichen Beitrag an den Wiederaufbau der Infrastrukturen und der Wirtschaft in Ex-Jugoslawien zu leisten und damit den in der Schweiz verweilenden Kriegsvertriebenen eine rasche Rückkehr zu erleichtern?

Ist er damit einverstanden, die Hilfe nach folgenden Kriterien zu leisten? – Es sind jene Gebiete in Ex-Jugoslawien zu bevorzugen, aus welchen die meisten der rund 40 000 Gewaltflüchtlinge in der Schweiz stammen und wo eine Niederlassung möglich ist. – Der Umfang der Hilfe orientiert sich an den heutigen Fürsorgeleistungen für die Kriegsvertriebenen in der Schweiz, womit der effektive Nutzen der schweizerischen Aufwendungen – durch die vor Ort grössere Wirksamkeit – vervielfacht wird. – Es ist in Abstimmung mit dem Uno-Hochkommissariat für Flüchtlinge (UNHCR) ein zeitlicher Plan für die Rückführung festzulegen.

**Mühlemann Ernst (R, TG):** Ich setze mich seit 1984 für die Flüchtlingshilfe vor Ort ein und habe die Ergebnisse der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit des Bundes in Ex-Jugoslawien auch selber gesehen. Ich bin der Ansicht, dass die Antwort des Bundesrates auf die dringliche Interpellation Engler angemessen, richtig und gut ist.

Wir haben bis heute an drei Stellen in Ex-Jugoslawien in vorbildlicher Weise Aufbauarbeit geleistet, nämlich in der Gegend von Dubrovnik, westlich von Mostar und in Istrien. Wenn wir unsere Mittel in Beziehung zu den finanziellen Möglichkeiten setzen, dann können wir – so glaube ich – wahrscheinlich noch eine vierte Stelle ausfindig machen, wo wir solche Wiederaufbauarbeiten der Infrastruktur vornehmen können; aber mehr liegt nicht drin. Ich glaube, das erste Ziel besteht darin, den Flüchtlingen, die dort geblieben sind und sich innerhalb des Landes wieder an ihren Wohnort zurückbegeben möchten, diese Möglichkeiten zu erleichtern. Es ist wesentlich, dass jene Menschen, die den Mut hatten, in ihrer Heimat zu bleiben, die Chance haben, aus dem Flüchtlingsdomizil wieder in ihr Dorf oder in ihre Stadt zurückzukehren. Hier haben wir aussergewöhnlich gute Beispiele erlebt. Die Idee von Herrn Engler halte ich für unterstützungswürdig. Frau Fankhauser, es ist durchaus sinnvoll, dass viele Menschen, die zu uns ausgewichen sind, zurückkehren können. Diese Rückkehr kann aber tatsächlich nicht ziellos erfolgen, sondern muss in die Gegend gehen, wo wir tatsächlich Infrastruktur und auch begleitende Fürsorge anbieten können. Es handelt sich nicht um Rückschaffungen mit Polizei, sondern tatsächlich um eine sinnvolle Rückführung. Ich würde nur davor warnen, den Rückkehrern Handgeld mitzugeben, denn das würde erneut Anreiz geben, um in die Schweiz zu flüchten. Bei dieser ganzen Übung, die hier durchgeführt wird, gilt es sehr viel Subtilität zu zeigen. Bei allem, was man jetzt in Bosnien erlebt, glaube ich, dass aber nach wie vor die humanitäre Hilfe erste Priorität hat. In der Gegend von Bihac stellen Sie fest, dass die abtrünnigen Muslims weder von den Kroaten noch von den Serben oder den Bosniern akzeptiert sind. Heute sind das 20 000 Menschen – Kinder, Frauen, alte Menschen –, die ihr Leben auf freiem Feld ohne jeden Schutz verbringen müssen, weil sie völlig ausgestossen sind. Ich glaube, Herr Bundesrat, dort wäre allererste Priorität zu setzen. Wenn kein anderes Land das tut, dann müsste wahrscheinlich die Schweiz einspringen. Ich bitte Sie, dieses ganze Problem subtil und sorgfältig anzugehen und den Bundesrat bei seinem künftigen Vorgehen zu unterstützen.

***English Translation*****TITLE: Interpellation Engler: Reconstruction in former Yugoslavia and repatriation of war refugees**

Text of the interpellation of December 5, 1995

Is the Federal Council prepared to make an extraordinary contribution to the reconstruction of infrastructure and the economy in the former Yugoslavia and thus to facilitate the rapid return of war displaced persons staying in Switzerland?

Does it agree that aid should be provided in accordance with the following criteria? - Priority should be given to those areas in the former Yugoslavia from which most of the approximately 40,000 forcibly displaced persons in Switzerland originate and where it is possible to settle. - The scope of the aid is based on the current welfare benefits for war displaced persons in Switzerland, which multiplies the effective benefit of Swiss expenditure - due to the greater effectiveness on the ground. - A timetable for repatriation must be drawn up in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

**Mühlemann Ernst** (R, TG): I have been involved in refugee aid on the ground since 1984 and have also seen the results of federal development cooperation in the former Yugoslavia myself. I believe that the Federal Council's response to the urgent interpellation by Mr. Engler is appropriate, correct and good.

To date, we have carried out exemplary reconstruction work in three places in the former Yugoslavia, namely in the Dubrovnik area, west of Mostar and in Istria. If we put our resources in relation to the financial possibilities, then I believe we can probably find a fourth place where we can carry out such infrastructure reconstruction work, but that is as far as we can go. I believe that the first objective is to facilitate these opportunities for the refugees who have remained there and wish to return to their place of residence within the country. It is essential that those people who had the courage to stay in their home country have the chance to return to their village or town from their refugee home. We have seen exceptionally good examples of this. I think Mr. Engler's idea is worthy of support. Ms Fankhauser, it makes perfect sense that many people who have fled to us should be able to return. However, this return cannot take place aimlessly, but must be to an area where we can actually offer infrastructure and accompanying care. We are not talking about repatriations with police, but actually about a sensible return. I would only warn against giving returnees handouts, because that would give them another incentive to flee to Switzerland.

This whole exercise that is being carried out here requires a great deal of subtlety. With everything that is happening in Bosnia now, I believe that humanitarian aid is still the top priority. In the Bihac area, you can see that the apostate Muslims are not accepted by the Croats,

the Serbs or the Bosnians. Today there are 20,000 people - children, women, old people - who have to spend their lives in the open without any protection because they are completely outcast. I believe, Mr. Federal Councillor, that this should be the top priority. If no other country does this, then Switzerland would probably have to step in. I ask you to approach this whole problem subtly and carefully and to support the Federal Council in its future approach.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc/20039634.pdf?ID=20039634>

**Hasler Ernst, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 14.12.1998**

*Original Text*

**TITEL: Rückführungen von Flüchtlingen aus Kosovo**

Wortlaut der Frage vom 14. Dezember 1998

Herr Gerber, Direktor des Bundesamtes für Flüchtlinge, hat angekündigt, dass man im nächsten Frühling mit der Rückführung von Flüchtlingen aus Kosovo beginnen könne, sofern sich die Lage in diesem Gebiet beruhigt habe. Mit welchen Massnahmen will der Bundesrat diese Rückführung ermöglichen? Texte de la question du 14 décembre 1998 Le directeur de l'Office fédéral des réfugiés, M. Gerber, a annoncé que le rapatriement des réfugiés du Kosovo pourrait débiter au printemps prochain si la tension dans la région a décrû d'ici là. Quelles mesures le Conseil fédéral entend-il prendre pour que ces personnes puissent être rapatriées? Koller Arnold, Bundesrat: Um einer möglichen Gefährdung von weggewiesenen Asylsuchenden aus der südjugoslawischen Provinz Kosovo bei der Rückkehr Rechnung zu tragen, hat der Bundesrat eine Erstreckung der Ausreisefristen bis zum 30. April 1999 angeordnet. Dies betrifft rund 15 000 rechtskräftig weggewiesene Personen. Sofern die politische Situation und die Entwicklung der allgemeinen Lage vor Ort es dann zulassen, werden diese Personen ab Anfang Mai 1999 wieder zurückkehren müssen.

Die Schweiz hat im Rahmen der humanitären Hilfe des Bundes unmittelbar nach Ausbruch der im Frühsommer dieses Jahres eskalierenden militärischen Aktionen zwischen den serbischen Sicherheitskräften und der UCK bisher über 10 Millionen Franken für Nothilfprogramme vor Ort zur Verfügung gestellt. Davon stammen 2,5 Millionen Franken aus dem Budget des Bundesamtes für Flüchtlinge. Der Bundesrat ist willens, die Prinzipien, welche nach Aufhebung der gruppenweisen vorläufigen Aufnahme und Repatriierung der Kriegsvertriebenen aus Bosnien-Herzegowina zur Anwendung gelangten, auch bei der Rückführung nach Kosovo eingehend zu prüfen. Dies gilt insbesondere für die Förderung der pflichtgemässen und selbständigen Rückkehr im Rahmen des geltenden Rückübernahmeabkommens mit der Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien, die gesonderte Behandlung von möglichen Härtefällen sowie die

allfällige Umsetzung eines Rückkehr- und Strukturhilfeprogrammes. Der Bundesrat ist überzeugt, dass die grosszügige humanitäre Aufnahmepolitik für Kriegsvertriebene aus dem Kosovo nur unter der Voraussetzung aufrechterhalten werden kann, dass die verantwortlichen Behörden von Bund und Kantonen die vorübergehend aufgenommenen Personen nach Eintritt der Befriedung in der Krisenregion konsequent zurückführen. Hasler Ernst (V, AG): Ich habe Sie so verstanden, dass 15 000 Gesuche von Asylbewerbern, die schon länger zurückliegen, in dieser kritischen Phase sistiert werden. Das ist mir klar.

Hingegen ist mir nicht klar, auf welcher Rechtsgrundlage die Aussage basiert, dass man diejenigen Kriegsflüchtlinge, die seit dem Sommer in unser Land eingewandert sind, ab nächstem Frühling – vorausgesetzt, die Lage hat sich beruhigt – zurückführen kann. Darauf zielt meine Frage: Wo liegt dort die Rechtsgrundlage? Denn bisher geht es ja nicht um vorläufige Aufnahmen, es geht um eine – man kann fast sagen – Sistierung dieser Verfahren. Aber was passiert nach einer Beruhigung in dieser Region? Koller Arnold, Bundesrat: Es kommt entscheidend auf den Zeitpunkt der Rückführung an. Sie wissen, wir haben noch einen Referendumskampf betreffend die Totalrevision des Asylgesetzes zu bestehen, den wir – dessen bin ich fast sicher – gewinnen werden. Es ist vorgesehen, das revidierte Asylgesetz auf den 1. Juli 1999 in Kraft setzen. Rückführungen vor dem 1. Juli 1999 werden wir nach dem alten Asylgesetz und Rückführungen nach dem 1. Juli 1999 nach dem neuen Asylgesetz realisieren können. Das neue Asylgesetz sieht diesbezüglich gewisse Erleichterungen vor.

### *English Translation*

#### **TITLE: Repatriation of refugees from Kosovo**

Wording of the question of 14 December 1998

Mr. Gerber, Director of the Federal Office for Refugees, has announced that the repatriation of refugees from Kosovo could begin next spring, provided the situation in the area has calmed down. What measures does the Federal Council intend to take to facilitate this repatriation? Text de la question du 14 décembre 1998 Le directeur de l'Office fédéral des réfugiés, M. Gerber, announced that the repatriation of refugees from Kosovo could begin next spring if the tension in the region had eased by then. What measures does the Federal Council intend to take to ensure that these people can be repatriated? Koller Arnold, Federal Councillor: In order to take account of the possible danger to asylum seekers from the southern Yugoslavian province of Kosovo who have been deported, the Federal Council has extended the deadline for leaving the country until April 30, 1999. This affects around 15,000 persons who have been legally expelled. If the political situation and the development of the general situation on the ground allow, these persons will have to return from the beginning of May 1999.

As part of Swiss humanitarian aid, Switzerland has so far provided over CHF 10 million for emergency aid programs on the ground immediately after the outbreak of the escalating military actions between the Serbian security forces and the KLA in early summer this year. CHF 2.5 million of this comes from the budget of the Federal Office for Refugees. The Federal Council is willing to examine in detail the principles that were applied to the repatriation of displaced persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina following the abolition of the temporary admission and repatriation of groups. This applies in particular to the promotion of compulsory and independent return within the framework of the current readmission agreement with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the separate treatment of possible cases of hardship and the possible implementation of a return and structural assistance program. The Federal Council is convinced that the generous humanitarian admission policy for war displaced persons from Kosovo can only be maintained on the condition that the responsible federal and cantonal authorities consistently return the temporarily admitted persons once peace has been achieved in the crisis region. Hasler Ernst (V, AG): I understood you to mean that 15,000 applications from asylum seekers who have been here for some time will be suspended during this critical phase. That is clear to me.

On the other hand, it is not clear to me on what legal basis the statement is based that those war refugees who have entered our country since the summer can be repatriated from next spring - provided the situation has calmed down. My question is: what is the legal basis for this? Because so far it's not about temporary admissions, it's about - you could almost say - suspending these procedures. But what will happen once things have calmed down in this region? Koller Arnold, Federal Councillor: The timing of the repatriation is crucial. As you know, we still have to fight a referendum on the total revision of the Asylum Act, which I am almost certain we will win. It is planned to bring the revised Asylum Act into force on July 1, 1999. We will be able to carry out returns before July 1, 1999 under the old Asylum Act and returns after July 1, 1999 under the new Asylum Act. The new Asylum Act provides for certain simplifications in this respect.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from <https://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc/20044983.pdf?ID=20044983>

**Borer Roland, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 29.04.1998**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Illegal zugereiste Personen. Ansteckende Krankheiten**

Die massive Zunahme illegal Zugereister aus medizinisch nicht oder sehr schlecht versorgten Gebieten wirft Fragen bezüglich des Gesundheitsschutzes der schweizerischen Wohnbevölkerung auf. Ich bitte den Bundesrat deshalb um die Beantwortung der nachfolgenden Fragen: 1. Gibt es nach seinen Erkenntnissen Fälle, wo illegal in die Schweiz eingereiste

Personen unter Umgehung der sanitärischen Eintrittsuntersuchungen akut ansteckende Krankheiten haben? 2. Sind ihm Fälle bekannt, wo Personen verschiedenster Vollzugsstellen (Polizei, Krankenpflege, Betreuung, Administration etc.) Ansteckungsgefahren ausgesetzt waren? 3. Sind in der Schweiz die notwendigen rechtlichen Mittel vorhanden und ausreichend, um die Zugereisten einer medizinischen Kontrolle und solche mit ansteckenden Krankheiten einer Behandlung zuzuführen? 4. Mit welchen Massnahmen gedenkt er sicherzustellen, dass alle Asylsuchenden, Flüchtlinge u. a. m. – auch die illegal Eingereisten –, bei einem Erstkontakt mit den Behörden oder Hilfsorganisationen auf ansteckende Krankheiten untersucht werden? 5. Kann eine Ansteckung der schweizerischen Wohnbevölkerung mit lebensbedrohenden Krankheitserregern auf diesem Weg ausgeschlossen werden, bzw. was machen die zuständigen Stellen, um derartige Krankheitserreger und ihre Träger zu isolieren und damit die Ansteckungsgefahr für die Wohnbevölkerung auf ein Minimum zu reduzieren?

Antwort des Bundesrates vom 1. Juli 1998 1. Bekannte Fälle von illegal eingereisten Personen mit akut ansteckenden Krankheiten Die grenzsanitätsdienstliche Untersuchung auf ansteckende Krankheiten ist auf die Tuberkulose beschränkt, da sich Untersuchungen auf andere Krankheiten als nicht effizient zur Verhütung einer Übertragung erwiesen haben. Im Verhältnis zur Einschleppung von anderen Krankheiten durch den Massentourismus in tropische Länder (ca. eine Million Reisen von Schweizerinnen und Schweizern pro Jahr) steht die Gefährdung durch Ausländerinnen und Ausländer weit im Hintergrund. Es sind jedoch einzelne Fälle bekannt, in denen eine Tuberkulose bei Asylbewerbenden schon vor der Einreichung eines Asylgesuchs und damit der grenzsanitärischen Untersuchung bekannt wurde. 2. Bekannte Fälle von Krankheitsexposition bei Vollzugsstellen Die Gefahr einer Ansteckung ist auch im beruflichen Umgang mit Tuberkulosekranken klein. Dies gilt sogar für medizinisches Personal, insbesondere aber für Betreuende anderer Berufsgruppen. Einzelne Fälle von Ansteckung sind aber auch hier bekannt. Dabei ist zu bedenken, dass die Tuberkulose bei uns heute eine behandelbare Krankheit ist, die im allgemeinen heilbar ist und keine schwerwiegenden Folgen hinterlässt. 3. Rechtliche Mittel Die rechtlichen Mittel zur Verhinderung von eingeführten Infektionen sind ausreichend.

Nach Artikel 7 des Epidemiengesetzes (SR 818.101) trifft der Bundesrat Massnahmen, um zu verhüten, dass übertragbare Krankheiten aus dem Ausland eingeführt werden. Er kann die Kantone beauftragen, einzelne Massnahmen durchzuführen. Nach Artikel 15 und 16 kann die ärztliche Überwachung und die Absonderung von Personen mit übertragbaren Krankheiten angeordnet werden, was jedoch kaum je nötig ist. Die Behandlung von Erkrankten ist die wichtigste Massnahme gegen die Übertragung. Sie liegt in der Regel auch im Interesse des Erkrankten und führt z. B. bei der Tuberkulose innert zwei Wochen dazu, dass sie nicht mehr übertragen wird. Gestützt auf Artikel 14 des Tuberkulosegesetzes (SR 818.102) gewährt der Bund der Lungenliga Schweiz Beiträge für Massnahmen zur Kontrolle der Tuberkulose. Eine wichtige Aufgabe der flächendeckenden Lungenligen ist dabei die direkt überwachte Medikamenteneinnahme bei infektiösen Fällen, sei es bei Schweizern und Schweizerinnen oder

bei Ausländern und Ausländerinnen. 4. Sicherstellung der Untersuchungen Die Untersuchung aller Asylsuchenden auf Tuberkulose ist in der Schweiz gewährleistet. Pro 500 Asylsuchende wird ein infektiöser Fall von Tuberkulose entdeckt und der Behandlung zugeführt. Die logistischen Probleme sind dabei nicht unerheblich und mit finanziellem Aufwand verbunden, obwohl zum Zeitpunkt des Asylgesuchs jede asylsuchende Person für die Untersuchung zur Verfügung steht.

Eine systematische Untersuchung von illegal Eingereisten wird in keinem westlichen Land als durchführbar erachtet. Falls sie durchführbar wäre, würde sie gemäss verwaltungsinternen Schätzungen Kosten in der Grössenordnung von einer Million Franken pro verhinderter Erkrankung verursachen, während eine Behandlung im allgemeinen wenige tausend Franken kostet. Das Bundesamt für Gesundheit unterstützt aber ein Pilotprojekt in Genf, in dem die Apotheken Gutscheine für eine Schirmbilduntersuchung an hustende, möglicherweise tuberkulosekranke ausländische Personen ohne Krankenversicherung abgeben. Damit dies funktionieren kann, muss dabei die Anonymität der Personen gewahrt werden, denn eine Instrumentalisierung gesundheitspolitischer Massnahmen für migrationspolitische Zwecke würde den präventionsmedizinischen Zweck verhindern. Eine Analyse des Pilotprojekts wird zeigen, ob sich eine Ausdehnung des Programms lohnt. Auch dieser mögliche Beitrag zur Tuberkulosebekämpfung soll aber nicht überschätzt werden, da die Tuberkulose schon mit den bisherigen Massnahmen in der Schweiz gut unter Kontrolle ist. 5. Ansteckungsgefahr mit lebensbedrohlichen Erregern Die Tuberkulose wird vor allem innerhalb der Risikogruppen übertragen und ist im allgemeinen nicht lebensbedrohlich. Lebensbedrohliche Krankheiten wie Aids oder Hepatitis sind hingegen nicht ohne weiteres übertragbar, und die bekannten Schutzmassnahmen dagegen sind allgemein bekannt.

Im übrigen geht wegen der im internationalen Vergleich relativ hohen und hauptsächlich auf einheimische Ursachen zurückzuführenden HIV-Infektionsrate der Schweizer Bevölkerung gerade auch von ihr eine nicht zu unterschätzende Gefährdung der Migranten und Migrantinnen aus. Die Propagierung der entsprechenden Massnahmen ist eine Hauptaufgabe des «Projet Santé Migrants» des Bundesamts für Gesundheit. Daneben werden asylbewerbende Personen gegen Hepatitis B geimpft. Einen grundlegend eindämmenden Einfluss auf die Häufigkeit von Hepatitis B wird die Impfung haben, die jetzt für alle Jugendlichen in unserem Land empfohlen wird.

### ***English Translation***

#### **TITLE: Illegal immigrants. Infectious diseases**

The massive increase in illegal immigrants from areas with no or very poor medical care raises questions regarding the health protection of the Swiss resident population. I would therefore ask the Federal Council to answer the following questions: 1. to its knowledge, are there any cases of people who have entered Switzerland illegally and have contracted acute infectious diseases

without undergoing the necessary health checks? 2. is it aware of cases where people from various law enforcement agencies (police, nursing, care, administration, etc.) have been exposed to the risk of infection? 3. are the necessary legal means available in Switzerland and are they sufficient to ensure that new arrivals undergo medical checks and those with infectious diseases receive treatment? 4. what measures does it intend to take to ensure that all asylum seekers, refugees, etc. - including those who have entered illegally - are tested for infectious diseases when they first come into contact with the authorities or aid organizations? 5. can infection of the Swiss resident population with life-threatening pathogens be ruled out in this way, or what are the competent authorities doing to isolate such pathogens and their carriers and thus reduce the risk of infection for the resident population to a minimum?

**Response of the Federal Council of July 1, 1998** 1. Known cases of illegal immigrants with acute infectious diseases The border medical service screening for infectious diseases is limited to tuberculosis, as screening for other diseases has not proved effective in preventing transmission. Compared to the introduction of other diseases through mass tourism in tropical countries (approx. one million trips by Swiss nationals per year), the risk posed by foreign nationals is far less significant. However, there are known individual cases in which tuberculosis in asylum seekers became known before an asylum application was submitted and thus before the border sanitary examination. 2. known cases of exposure to the disease at law enforcement agencies The risk of infection is also low in professional contact with tuberculosis patients. This even applies to medical staff, but especially to caregivers in other occupational groups. However, individual cases of infection are also known here. It should be borne in mind that tuberculosis is a treatable disease in our country today, which is generally curable and has no serious consequences. 3. legal means The legal means of preventing imported infections are sufficient.

According to Article 7 of the Epidemics Act (SR 818.101), the Federal Council shall take measures to prevent the introduction of communicable diseases from abroad. It may instruct the cantons to implement individual measures. Under Articles 15 and 16, medical supervision and isolation of persons with communicable diseases may be ordered, although this is hardly ever necessary. The treatment of infected persons is the most important measure against transmission. As a rule, it is also in the interest of the infected person and, in the case of tuberculosis, for example, leads to it no longer being transmitted within two weeks. Based on Article 14 of the Tuberculosis Act (SR 818.102), the federal government grants the Swiss Lung League contributions for measures to control tuberculosis. An important task of the nationwide lung leagues is the directly monitored intake of medication in infectious cases, whether in Swiss or foreign nationals. 4. ensuring that all asylum seekers are tested for tuberculosis in Switzerland. One infectious case of tuberculosis is detected and treated for every 500 asylum seekers. The logistical problems are not insignificant and are associated with financial expenditure, although every asylum seeker is available for testing at the time of the asylum application.

Systematic screening of illegal immigrants is not considered feasible in any Western country. If it were feasible, it would, according to internal administrative estimates, cost in the region of one million francs per prevented illness, whereas treatment generally costs a few thousand francs. However, the Federal Office of Public Health is supporting a pilot project in Geneva in which pharmacies give vouchers for a screening test to foreign people without health insurance who have a cough and may be suffering from tuberculosis. For this to work, the anonymity of the individuals must be preserved, as instrumentalizing health policy measures for migration policy purposes would prevent the preventive medical purpose. An analysis of the pilot project will show whether an expansion of the program is worthwhile. However, this potential contribution to the fight against tuberculosis should not be overestimated, as tuberculosis is already well under control in Switzerland with the existing measures. 5. risk of infection with life-threatening pathogens Tuberculosis is mainly transmitted within risk groups and is generally not life-threatening. Life-threatening diseases such as AIDS or hepatitis, on the other hand, are not readily transmissible, and the known protective measures against them are generally known.

Moreover, due to the relatively high HIV infection rate in the Swiss population compared to other countries, which is mainly attributable to domestic causes, the risk to migrants should not be underestimated. One of the main tasks of the Federal Office of Public Health's "Projet Santé Migrants" is to promote the appropriate measures. In addition, asylum seekers are vaccinated against hepatitis B. The vaccination, which is now recommended for all young people in our country, will have a fundamentally curbing effect on the incidence of hepatitis B.

**Mühlemann Ernst, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 09.06.1998**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Lage in Kosovo**

Wortlaut der Einfachen Anfrage vom 9. Juni 1998 Leider spitzt sich die Lage in Kosovo so zu, dass mit einer Eskalation der Gewalt gerechnet werden muss. Die aggressive Politik der verantwortlichen Regierung in Belgrad provoziert eine Konfrontation, die in bürgerkriegsähnliche Auseinandersetzungen ausmünden kann. Die Verschärfung des Konflikts bewirkt jetzt schon Flüchtlingsströme, die auch unser Land erfassen und humanitäre Hilfe notwendig machen. Angesichts dieses Handlungsbedarfs wird der Bundesrat eingeladen, folgende Fragen zu beantworten: 1. Welche Massnahmen trifft er, um in Albanien und Mazedonien durch Hilfe vor Ort die Flüchtlinge in Auffanglagern unterzubringen und zu betreuen? 2. Wie gestaltet er die Rückführung von abgewiesenen Asylbewerbern in die gewaltfreien Gebiete von Kosovo? 3. Welche Vorkehren plant er an den Landesgrenzen, um einen verstärkten Ansturm von Flüchtlingen zu meistern? 4. Welche Möglichkeiten sieht er, um eine Eskalation der Gewalttätigkeiten in Kosovo im Rahmen internationaler Zusammenarbeit einzudämmen?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 1. Juli 1998** 1. Der Bundesrat unterstützt alle Bemühungen, die dazu führen können, dass Flüchtlinge in der Nähe ihrer Heimat betreut werden können und nicht in weiter entfernte Länder weiterreisen. Das Schwergewicht liegt dabei auf der Unterbringung in Gastfamilien.

Eine wichtige Alternative ist die Unterbringung in öffentlichen Gebäuden. Wie bereits in den verschiedenen Regionen Ex-Jugoslawiens praktiziert, ist die Schweiz bereit, öffentliche Gebäude für diesen Zweck herzurichten. Das Schweizerische Katastrophenhilfekorps (SKH) prüft bereits, welche öffentlichen Gebäude dafür benutzt werden können. Dies entspräche gleichzeitig dem Wunsch der albanischen Regierung, ihr bei der Instandstellung der Infrastruktur behilflich zu sein. Zusammen mit allen in Albanien tätigen Organisationen ist der Bundesrat der Auffassung, dass im heutigen Zeitpunkt von der Errichtung von eigentlichen Auffanglagern (auch im Sinne von Zeltstädten) abzusehen ist, weil dafür noch keine Notwendigkeit besteht. Sollte sich der Strom der Flüchtlinge indessen massiv verstärken, ist der Bundesrat bereit, in Absprache mit den anderen Organisationen sofort Notbehausungen zur Verfügung zu stellen. 2. Der Vollzug von Wegweisungen abgewiesener Asylsuchender aus der Provinz Kosovo wird im Rahmen des Rückübernahmeabkommens zwischen der Schweiz und der Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien vom 3. Juli 1997 durchgeführt. Das Abkommen sieht vor, dass Rückführungen im Einzelfall mit der jugoslawischen Fluggesellschaft JAT nach Belgrad erfolgen. Unter der Koordination des Bundesamtes für Flüchtlinge (BFF) können die Kantone im Rahmen von Sonderflügen kollektive Rückführungen nach Pristina organisieren.

An seiner Sitzung vom 8. Juni 1998 hat der Bundesrat im Sinne einer Sofortmassnahme beschlossen, auf weitere Sonderflüge in die Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien zu verzichten. Gleichzeitig beauftragte er das BFF, verschiedene Optionen in bezug auf die Behandlung abgewiesener Asylsuchender zu prüfen und dem Bundesrat entsprechende Vorschläge zu unterbreiten. Zudem sollte die Politik der Schweiz mit den Nachbarstaaten koordiniert werden. Am 12. Juni 1998 hat der Vorsteher des Eidgenössischen Justiz- und Polizeidepartementes entschieden, die Ausreisefristen für abgewiesene Asylsuchende aus der Provinz Kosovo bis Ende Juli 1998 zu erstrecken. Der Entscheid erfolgte gestützt auf die Einschätzung, dass eine erhebliche Gefahr einer weiteren Eskalation des Konflikts besteht. Diese Einschätzung wurde von unseren Nachbarstaaten und der Nato geteilt und hat sich inzwischen bestätigt. Mit der Erstreckung der Ausreisefristen wird einer möglichen Gefährdung von ausreisepflichtigen Personen aus der Provinz Kosovo Rechnung getragen. Ausgenommen von der Fristerstreckung sind Personen, die in der Schweiz straffällig geworden sind. 3. Das Eidgenössische Departement für Verteidigung, Bevölkerungsschutz und Sport (VBS) hat eine vorsorgliche Einsatzplanung zur Verstärkung des Grenzwachtkorps (GWK), namentlich an der Südgrenze, abgeschlossen.

Zurzeit wird zudem eine Machbarkeitsstudie zu den Möglichkeiten der Unterstützung der Zivilbehörden bei der Betreuung Schutzsuchender durch Angehörige der Armee erstellt. Nach

Auffassung des Bundesrates ist ein Truppeneinsatz allerdings erst in Betracht zu ziehen, wenn die Situation an der Grenze mit den ordentlichen Mitteln der Grenzpolizeiorgane – einschliesslich allfälliger zusätzlicher professioneller Mittel wie z. B. Angehörige des Festungswachtkorps (FWK) – ausser Kontrolle geraten würde. Angesichts der Situation an der Südgrenze hat der Bundesrat am 22. Juni 1998 beschlossen, das GWK auch weiterhin – vorerst bis Ende 1998 – mit 100 Personen (Angehörige des FWK und des VBS) zu verstärken. 4. Die Möglichkeiten der Schweiz, eine Eskalation der Gewalttätigkeiten in Kosovo im Rahmen internationaler Zusammenarbeit einzudämmen, sind begrenzt. Mit der zunehmend gewalttätigen Form des Konflikts konzentrieren sich die Hauptaktivitäten der internationalen Gemeinschaft auf internationale Organisationen und Gremien wie Uno, Nato, EU und Kontaktgruppe, welchen die Schweiz nicht angehört. In der OSZE, die sich seit Jahren darum bemüht, eine politische Lösung der Kosovo-Frage zu erreichen, hat die Schweiz Anfang März 1998 den Vorschlag eingebracht, eine internationale Kosovo-Konferenz unter Mitwirkung der Bundesrepublik Jugoslawien durchzuführen.

Obschon der schweizerische Vorschlag trotz Interesse als verfrüht beurteilt wurde, hält die Schweiz ihr Angebot der Guten Dienste nach wie vor aufrecht. Auch trägt sie die Sanktionen der internationalen Staatengemeinschaft mit, um mittels Druckausübung auf Belgrad die jugoslawische Regierung zum Dialog mit Pristina anzuhalten.

### *English Translation*

#### **TITLE: Situation in Kosovo**

Wording of the simple question of June 9, 1998 Unfortunately, the situation in Kosovo is deteriorating to such an extent that an escalation of violence must be expected. The aggressive policy of the responsible government in Belgrade is provoking a confrontation that could lead to civil war-like clashes. The escalation of the conflict is already causing refugee flows that are also affecting our country and making humanitarian aid necessary. In view of this need for action, the Federal Council is invited to answer the following questions: 1. what measures it is taking to accommodate and care for refugees in reception camps in Albania and Macedonia through local assistance? 2. how does it organize the return of rejected asylum seekers to the non-violent areas of Kosovo? 3. what measures does it plan to take at the country's borders to cope with an increased influx of refugees? 4. what possibilities does it see to contain an escalation of violence in Kosovo within the framework of international cooperation?

**Federal Council reply of July 1, 1998** 1 The Federal Council supports all efforts that can lead to refugees being cared for close to home and not having to travel on to more distant countries. The emphasis here is on accommodation in host families. One important alternative is accommodation in public buildings. As already practiced in various regions of the former

Yugoslavia, Switzerland is prepared to prepare public buildings for this purpose. The Swiss Disaster Relief Corps (SHA) is already examining which public buildings can be used for this purpose. This would also be in line with the Albanian government's wish to help it repair its infrastructure. Together with all organizations active in Albania, the Federal Council is of the opinion that the construction of actual reception camps (also in the sense of tent cities) should be refrained from at the present time, as there is still no need for them. However, should the flow of refugees increase massively, the Federal Council is prepared to provide emergency shelters immediately in consultation with the other organizations. 2. the execution of expulsions of rejected asylum seekers from the province of Kosovo is carried out within the framework of the readmission agreement between Switzerland and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of July 3, 1997. The agreement provides for repatriations in individual cases to be carried out by the Yugoslav airline JAT to Belgrade. Under the coordination of the Federal Office for Refugees (BFF), the cantons can organize collective repatriations to Pristina within the framework of special flights.

At its meeting on June 8, 1998, the Federal Council decided, as an immediate measure, to refrain from further special flights to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. At the same time, it instructed the Federal Office of Foreign Affairs to examine various options with regard to the treatment of rejected asylum seekers and to submit corresponding proposals to the Federal Council. In addition, Switzerland's policy was to be coordinated with neighboring countries. On June 12, 1998, the head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police decided to extend the departure deadlines for rejected asylum seekers from the province of Kosovo until the end of July 1998. The decision was based on the assessment that there is a considerable danger of a further escalation of the conflict. This assessment was shared by our neighboring states and NATO and has since been confirmed. The extension of the deadlines for leaving the country takes account of the possible danger to persons from the province of Kosovo who are obliged to leave the country. Persons who have committed criminal offenses in Switzerland are exempt from the extension. 3 The Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) has completed a precautionary deployment plan to reinforce the Border Guard Corps (BG), in particular on the southern border.

In addition, a feasibility study is currently being carried out into the possibilities of supporting the civilian authorities in assisting people seeking protection by members of the armed forces. In the opinion of the Federal Council, however, the deployment of troops should only be considered if the situation at the border would get out of control with the ordinary resources of the border police - including any additional professional resources such as members of the Fortress Guard Corps (FWK). In view of the situation on the southern border, the Federal Council decided on June 22, 1998 to continue to reinforce the GWK with 100 persons (members of the FWK and the DDPS), initially until the end of 1998. 4 Switzerland's ability to contain an escalation of violence in Kosovo within the framework of international cooperation is limited. As the conflict becomes

increasingly violent, the main activities of the international community are concentrated on international organizations and bodies such as the UN, NATO, the EU and the Contact Group, of which Switzerland is not a member. In the OSCE, which has been trying for years to find a political solution to the Kosovo question, Switzerland put forward a proposal at the beginning of March 1998 to hold an international Kosovo conference with the participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Although the Swiss proposal was considered premature despite the interest shown, Switzerland continues to uphold its offer of good offices. It also supports the sanctions imposed by the international community in order to exert pressure on Belgrade to encourage the Yugoslav government to engage in dialog with Pristina.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from  
<https://www.amtsdruckschriften.bar.admin.ch/viewOrigDoc/20044351.pdf?ID=20044351>

## Appendix C Parliamentary Speeches for the 2015 Refugee Movement

**Moret Isabelle, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 19.03.2015**

### *Original Text*

**TITEL: Asylgesetz. Gewährung vorübergehenden Schutzes speziell für Menschen aus Syrien?**

### Eingereichter Text

Ich bitte den Bundesrat, die folgenden Fragen zu beantworten: 1. In seiner Antwort auf die Interpellation 13.3776, eingereicht von der FDP Liberalen Fraktion, erklärt der Bundesrat, dass "aufgrund der vergleichsweise geringen Zahl" von syrischen Asylsuchenden zurzeit keine Situation bestehe, für welche der Gesetzgeber die Schutzbedürftigenregelung nach Artikel 4 des Asylgesetzes (AsylG) vorgesehen hat. Ab welcher Zahl von syrischen Asylsuchenden hält der Bundesrat die Anwendung von Artikel 4 AsylG für möglich? 2. Kann der Bundesrat grundsätzlich umreissen, in welchen Situationen nach seiner Ansicht Artikel 4 AsylG anwendbar ist? 3. Das Bundesverwaltungsgericht kommt in seinem Urteil vom 25. Februar 2015 (D5779/2013), das am 19. März 2015 veröffentlicht wurde, zum Schluss, mittels der Anwendung von Artikel 4 AsylG "auf Asylsuchende syrischer Herkunft liesse sich insbesondere angemessen auf den Umstand der unsicheren Entwicklung der Lage in Syrien reagieren". Wie steht der Bundesrat zu dieser Aussage?

*Antwort des Bundesrates vom 13.05.2015* Der Entscheid über die Gewährung vorübergehenden Schutzes für Personen, die einer schweren allgemeinen Gefährdung ausgesetzt sind und die nicht unbedingt Flüchtlinge sind (Art. 4 AsylG), liegt im Ermessen des Bundesrates (vgl. BBl 1996 II 43). Der Entscheid wird nach Prüfung aller massgeblichen Umstände getroffen und ist subsidiär zu den aussenpolitischen Massnahmen zu verstehen, welche der Bund im Herkunftsstaat oder in der Herkunftsregion der schutzbedürftigen Personen durchführen kann (vgl. BBl 1996 II 79). Das System des vorübergehenden Schutzes wurde während des bewaffneten Konflikts in ExJugoslawien geschaffen, um auf einen ausserordentlich grossen Zustrom von Personen in die Schweiz reagieren zu können. Insbesondere mit Blick auf das weiterhin relativ tiefe Niveau der Gesuchszahlen von Asylsuchenden aus Syrien hält der Bundesrat an seiner bisherigen Beurteilung fest (vgl. Antworten des Bundesrates auf die Interpellation der FDP Liberalen Fraktion 13.3776 sowie auf die Interpellation der Fraktion der Schweizerischen Volkspartei 14.3689). Zudem ist der Bundesrat der Auffassung, dass das Vorliegen eines ausserordentlich grossen Zustroms sich nicht an einer bestimmten Zahl von Zufluchtsuchenden festmachen lässt. Vielmehr kommt es auf die Aufnahmekapazität der Schweiz und die Kapazität des schweizerischen Asylsystems zur Bewältigung der hängigen Asylgesuche an.

Dieser Ansicht ist im Übrigen auch das UNHCR, welches in seiner Stellungnahme vom August 2003 zur Richtlinie 2001/55/EG des Rates vom 20. Juli 2001 ähnlich argumentiert. In Ergänzung der Bundesratsantworten auf die beiden erwähnten Interpellationen ist speziell auf die Nachteile einer heutigen Anwendung der Schutzbedürftigenregelung hinzuweisen: Bei der Schutzbedürftigenregelung können allfällige erst oder zweitinstanzliche Verfahren nicht ausgeschlossen werden, in welchen die betroffenen Personen die Zuerkennung der Flüchtlingseigenschaft und die Gewährung von Asyl beantragen. Selbst wenn die Verfügungen der vorübergehenden Schutzgewährung in Rechtskraft erwachsen, muss auf Antrag hin frühestens fünf Jahre danach das Asylverfahren wieder aufgenommen werden (Art. 69 Abs. 3 und Art. 70 AsylG). Dies zeigt, dass die Schutzbedürftigenregelung zwar ein geeignetes Instrument ist, um in einer akuten Krisensituation in verfahrensrechtlicher Hinsicht rasch handeln zu können, jedoch als allfällige langfristige Folge einen beträchtlichen Mehraufwand im Asylverfahren mit sich bringen könnte. Ferner wäre es im vorliegenden Kontext auch aus Sicherheitsgründen nicht angebracht, auf eine Einzelfallprüfung zu verzichten, denn dies würde die Identifizierung von Personen, die sich möglicherweise Verbrechen des Völkerstrafrechts zuschulden haben kommen lassen oder eine Gefahr für die öffentliche Sicherheit der Schweiz darstellen, erschweren.

Der Bundesrat wurde im Übrigen mit dem Postulat der Staatspolitischen Kommission des Nationalrates 14.3008, "Überprüfung xdes Status der vorläufigen Aufnahme und der Schutzbedürftigkeit", vom 14. Februar 2014 beauftragt, Sinn und Zweck des Status der Schutzbedürftigkeit näher zu prüfen. Der Bundesrat wird den entsprechenden Bericht noch dieses Jahr verabschieden. Vor diesem Hintergrund lehnt der Bundesrat die Anwendung des Schutzbedürftigenstatus für vertriebene Personen aus Syrien zum heutigen Zeitpunkt weiterhin ab. Im Falle eines ausserordentlich hohen Zustroms an Schutzsuchenden kann die Anwendung dieses Status unter Berücksichtigung der europäischen Praxis jedoch erneut geprüft werden.

### ***English Translation***

#### **TITLE: Asylum Act. Granting temporary protection specifically to people from Syria?**

##### Submitted text

I would ask the Federal Council to answer the following questions: 1. in its response to interpellation 13.3776, submitted by the Liberal FDP parliamentary group, the Federal Council states that "due to the comparatively small number" of Syrian asylum seekers, there is currently no situation for which the legislator has provided for the regulation on persons in need of protection under Article 4 of the Asylum Act (AsylG). From what number of Syrian asylum seekers does the Federal Council consider the application of Article 4 AsylA to be possible? 2 Can the Federal Council outline the situations in which it considers Article 4 AsylA to be applicable? 3) In its ruling of February 25, 2015 (D5779/2013), which was published on March 19, 2015, the Federal Administrative Court concluded that the application of Article 4 AsylA "to

asylum seekers of Syrian origin would be an appropriate response to the uncertain development of the situation in Syria". What is the Federal Council's position on this statement?

**Response of the Federal Council of 13.05.2015** The decision to grant temporary protection to persons who are exposed to a serious general threat and who are not necessarily refugees (Art. 4 AsylA) is at the discretion of the Federal Council (see BBl 1996 II 43). The decision is made after examining all relevant circumstances and is subsidiary to the foreign policy measures that the Confederation can implement in the country or region of origin of the persons in need of protection (cf. BBl 1996 II 79). The system of temporary protection was created during the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia in order to be able to react to an exceptionally large influx of people into Switzerland. Particularly in view of the continuing relatively low level of applications from asylum seekers from Syria, the Federal Council stands by its previous assessment (see the Federal Council's responses to the interpellation of the FDP-Liberal parliamentary group 13.3776 and to the interpellation of the parliamentary group of the Swiss People's Party 14.3689). In addition, the Federal Council is of the opinion that the existence of an exceptionally large influx cannot be determined by a specific number of asylum seekers. Rather, it depends on Switzerland's reception capacity and the capacity of the Swiss asylum system to deal with pending asylum applications.

This view is also shared by the UNHCR, which argues similarly in its statement of August 2003 on Council Directive 2001/55/EC of July 20, 2001. In addition to the Federal Council's responses to the two interpellations mentioned above, particular reference should be made to the disadvantages of the current application of the regulation on persons in need of protection: With the regulation on persons in need of protection, any first or second instance proceedings in which the persons concerned apply for refugee status and the granting of asylum cannot be ruled out. Even if the decisions to grant temporary protection become legally binding, the asylum procedure must be resumed upon application at the earliest five years later (Art. 69 para. 3 and Art. 70 AsylA). This shows that although the regulation on persons in need of protection is a suitable instrument for being able to act quickly in an acute crisis situation from a procedural point of view, it could entail considerable additional work in the asylum procedure as a possible long-term consequence. Furthermore, for security reasons, it would not be appropriate in the present context to dispense with a case-by-case examination, as this would make it more difficult to identify persons who may have committed crimes under international criminal law or pose a threat to public security in Switzerland.

The Federal Council was also instructed to examine the meaning and purpose of the status of need for protection in more detail with the postulate of the National Council's Political Affairs Committee 14.3008, "Review of the status of temporary admission and need for protection", dated February 14, 2014. The Federal Council will adopt the corresponding report this year. Against this background, the Federal Council continues to reject the application of the status of

need for protection for displaced persons from Syria at the present time. However, in the event of an exceptionally high influx of people seeking protection, the application of this status may be reconsidered in the light of European practice.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_4919\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_4919_Annex_D.pdf)

**Wobmann Walter, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 10.06.2015**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Islamische Extremisten getarnt als Flüchtlinge**

Eingereichter Text

Laut Aussagen des schweizerischen Nachrichtendienstes und von Verteidigungsminister Ueli Maurer nimmt die Gefahr von Terroranschlägen durch islamische Extremisten auch in der Schweiz zu. Solche können auf dem Asylweg relativ leicht in die Schweiz kommen und sich hier einnisten. Wie will der Bundesrat dieses Problem angehen? Wäre nicht die beste Lösung, gar keine muslimischen Flüchtlinge mehr in die Schweiz zu lassen und stattdessen diese in Nachbarstaaten der Kriegsgebiete zu unterstützen?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 15.06.2015** Bezugnehmend auf die gestellten Fragen kann vollumfänglich auf die Antwort auf die Frage 15.5030 vom 9. März 2015 (AB 2015 N 158) verwiesen werden. Das Staatssekretariat für Migration ist verpflichtet, staatschutzrelevante Aspekte aus Asyldossiers dem Nachrichtendienst des Bundes zu melden und die Fälle zur Prüfung zu unterbreiten. Der Nachrichtendienst des Bundes prüft, ob allfällige Verdachtsmomente vorliegen oder nicht. Die Sicherheitsorgane von Bund und Kantonen nehmen eine allfällige Bedrohung der inneren oder äusseren Sicherheit der Schweiz durch einzelne Täter oder Gruppierungen sehr ernst, analysieren die Lage laufend und treffen die nötigen Massnahmen. Ein generelles Einreiseverbot für Asylsuchende muslimischen Glaubens widerspricht zentralen Grundsätzen der Schweizerischen Bundesverfassung sowie der Genfer Flüchtlingskonvention. Zudem ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass sich die weit überwiegende Mehrheit aller Asylsuchenden in der Schweiz an die geltende Rechtsordnung hält. Für die Schweiz hat die Hilfe vor Ort oberste Priorität. So hat die Schweiz alleine für die Opfer aus der syrischirakischen Krisenregion seit 2011 insgesamt Hilfeleistungen in der Höhe von 145,8 Millionen Franken getätigt. Am 6. März 2015 hat der Bundesrat beschlossen, die Hilfe vor Ort um weitere 50 Millionen Franken für die Opfer des SyrienKonflikts zu verstärken. Die dringend nötige Hilfe vor Ort entbindet die Schweiz jedoch nicht von der Pflicht, Asylgesuche im Inland zu prüfen und Schutzbedürftigen Asyl oder eine vorläufige Aufnahme zu gewähren.

***English Translation*****TITLE: Islamic extremists disguised as refugees**

## Submitted text

According to the Swiss intelligence service and Defense Minister Ueli Maurer, the risk of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists is also increasing in Switzerland. They can come to Switzerland relatively easily via the asylum route and settle here. How does the Federal Council intend to tackle this problem? Wouldn't the best solution be to stop allowing Muslim refugees into Switzerland and instead support them in neighboring countries in war zones?

**Answer from the Federal Council dated 15.06.2015** With regard to the questions posed, reference can be made in full to the answer to question 15.5030 dated March 9, 2015 (AB 2015 N 158). The State Secretariat for Migration is obliged to report aspects of asylum dossiers that are relevant to state security to the Federal Intelligence Service and to submit the cases for examination. The Federal Intelligence Service examines whether or not there are any grounds for suspicion. The federal and cantonal security authorities take any threat to Switzerland's internal or external security posed by individual perpetrators or groups very seriously, analyze the situation on an ongoing basis and take the necessary measures. A general entry ban for asylum seekers of Muslim faith contradicts central principles of the Swiss Federal Constitution and the Geneva Refugee Convention.

It should also be noted that the vast majority of all asylum seekers in Switzerland comply with the applicable legal system. Switzerland's top priority is to provide assistance on the ground. For example, Switzerland has provided a total of CHF 145.8 million in aid to victims from the Syrian-Iraqi crisis region alone since 2011. On March 6, 2015, the Federal Council decided to increase aid on the ground by a further CHF 50 million for the victims of the Syrian conflict. However, the urgent need for assistance on the ground does not release Switzerland from its duty to examine asylum applications in Switzerland and grant asylum or temporary admission to those in need of protection.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_4919\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_4919_Annex_D.pdf)

**Addor Jean-Luc, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 24.04.2016**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Unterbringung muslimischer Flüchtlinge. Warum nicht in Saudi-Arabien?**

Eingereichter Text Ist der Bundesrat bereit, SaudiArabien darum zu ersuchen, die gigantische Zeltstadt in Mina denjenigen muslimischen "Migrantinnen und Migranten", die heute nach Europa strömen, zur Verfügung zu stellen? Begründung SaudiArabien stellt in Mina, das nahe von Mekka gelegen ist, permanent rund 100 000 klimatisierte Zelte, die über eine Küche und ein Bad verfügen, zur Verfügung. Während der grössten Zeit des Jahres, ausserhalb des Hadsch, scheint diese Infrastruktur kaum genutzt zu werden. Nun ist aber die Schutzgewährung einer der wichtigsten Grundsätze des Islam. Man könnte also erwarten, dass SaudiArabien ein Staat, der sich nicht scheut, im SyrienKonflikt zu intervenieren, und in dem die Religion der muslimischen "Migrantinnen und Migranten" vorherrschend ist, die nach Europa strömen, obwohl sie weder die in Europa dominierende Kultur noch dessen Religion teilen seiner Verantwortung nachkommt und diese Millionen von Glaubensbrüdern und schwestern aufnimmt.

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 17.08.2016** Die Asylpolitik fällt grundsätzlich unter die nationale Souveränität jedes einzelnen Staates. Dazu gehört auch die Wahl der Aufnahmestrukturen für Flüchtlinge. Vorbehalten bleiben nur die völkerrechtlichen Verpflichtungen, namentlich die Einhaltung des Grundsatzes des NonRefoulement. Das Königreich SaudiArabien ist folglich souverän bei der Wahl der Aufnahmestrukturen, die es für die Flüchtlinge bereitstellen will. 2012 erliess es gemäss eigener Rechtsordnung ein königliches Dekret, das die Aufnahme und Niederlassung von syrischen Staatsangehörigen im Königreich erleichtern soll. Das Königreich SaudiArabien hat zwar das Übereinkommen von 1951 über die Rechtsstellung der Flüchtlinge und das entsprechende Protokoll von 1967 nicht ratifiziert, aber es muss anderen Menschenrechtsverpflichtungen nachkommen. So muss es z. B. den Zugang zu einer angemessenen Unterkunft für alle auf seinem Territorium befindlichen Gruppen in gleicher Weise und ohne Diskriminierung gewährleisten.

***English Translation***

**TITLE: Housing Muslim refugees. Why not in Saudi Arabia?**

Submitted text Is the Federal Council prepared to ask Saudi Arabia to make the gigantic tent city in Mina available to those Muslim "migrants" who are currently streaming into Europe? Reason Saudi Arabia permanently provides around 100,000 air-conditioned tents with a kitchen and bathroom in Mina, which is located near Mecca. During the main part of the year, outside of Hajj, this infrastructure seems to be hardly used. However, providing protection is one of the most important principles of Islam. One could therefore expect Saudi Arabia, a state that is not

afraid to intervene in the Syrian conflict and in which the religion of the Muslim “migrants” who are streaming into Europe is predominant, although they share neither the dominant culture in Europe nor its religion, to fulfill its responsibility and take in these millions of brothers and sisters in faith.

**Response from the Federal Council dated 17.08.2016** Asylum policy is fundamentally a matter for the national sovereignty of each individual state. This also includes the choice of reception structures for refugees. Only obligations under international law remain reserved, namely compliance with the principle of non-refoulement. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is therefore sovereign in its choice of the reception structures it wishes to provide for refugees. In 2012, it issued a royal decree in accordance with its own legal system to facilitate the admission and settlement of Syrian nationals in the Kingdom. Although the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has not ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, it must comply with other human rights obligations. For example, it must ensure access to adequate housing for all groups on its territory in an equal manner and without discrimination.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/01-NR\\_5005\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/01-NR_5005_Annex_D.pdf)

**Ingold Maja, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 12.03.2015**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Irak und Syrien. Christliche Flüchtlinge und Binnenflüchtlinge nicht diskriminieren**

**Eingereichter Text**

Christen auf der Flucht berichten über Todesdrohungen und Zwangskonvertierungen, wenn sie ein Flüchtlingscamp aufsuchen. Sie haben offenbar dort keinen sicheren Ort, weil die Flüchtlingslager islamistisch unterwandert seien. Das UNHCR organisiert das Auswahlverfahren für die Kontingente von Flüchtlingen für europäische Staaten. Die Christen ausserhalb der grossen Camps befürchten, vom UNHCR gar nicht registriert werden zu können. Seit dem Sommer letzten Jahres sind Hunderttausende irakische Christen, Jesiden und andere religiöse Minderheiten in den irakischen Norden geflüchtet. Das UNHCR registriert und versorgt aber keine Binnenflüchtlinge, sondern nur solche, die über Landesgrenzen in anderen Ländern Zuflucht suchen. Damit sind alle intern Vertriebenen, unter denen auch Christen sind, ausgeschlossen. Gemäss Verfassung dürfen Christen unter den Flüchtlingen Andersgläubigen nicht vorgezogen werden. Sollte aber der Zugang der Christen zur Registrierung mit der Perspektive auf einen Platz in einem Kontingent aufgrund der Religion erschwert oder verunmöglicht werden, käme das einer Diskriminierung gleich, die korrigiert werden müsste.

Unter Deutschlands etwa 30 000 Aufgenommenen sollen kaum Christen sein. Nun hat der Bundesrat bekanntgegeben, dass er endlich eine Aufnahmeaktion für 3000 syrische Staatsangehörige plant, die von der Uno selektioniert werden. Dazu stellen sich die folgenden Fragen: 1. Sind dem Bundesrat solche Vorkommnisse von fraglicher Diskriminierung bekannt, und wenn ja, was unternimmt er, um Benachteiligungen christlicher Flüchtlinge und religiöser Minderheiten zu vermeiden? 2. Wie kann er sicherstellen, dass unter den 3000 "besonders schutzbedürftigen Personen aus der Krisenregion", deren Aufnahme er beschlossen hat, die Christen bei der Auswahl nicht aufgrund ihres Glaubens diskriminiert werden?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 08.05.2015** Der Bundesrat ist sehr besorgt über die humanitäre Situation und die systematischen Verletzungen des humanitären Völkerrechts und der Menschenrechte in Irak und in Syrien. Der Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung muss in jedem Fall ohne Diskriminierung gewährleistet sein. Der Bundesrat fordert die betroffenen Länder auf, die Rechte religiöser und ethnischer Minderheiten zu respektieren. Weiter fordert er, dass Staaten, in welchen extremistische Gruppierungen Attentate und Massaker gegen Christen und andere Minderheiten verüben, alles unternehmen, um solche Taten zu verhindern und die Verantwortlichen vor Gericht zu bringen. Ein grosser Teil dieser Übergriffe, auch auf Minderheiten, wird in Regionen begangen, zu denen die humanitären Organisationen aus Sicherheitsgründen wenig oder gar keinen Zugang haben. Sowohl in Irak wie auch in Syrien ist diese Tatsache eine der grössten Herausforderungen für die humanitäre Antwort der internationalen Gemeinschaft. Der Bundesrat ruft in Erinnerung, dass alle Konfliktparteien die Verpflichtung haben, den humanitären Akteuren raschen und ungehinderten Zugang zu ermöglichen sowie die Menschenrechte und das humanitäre Völkerrecht zu respektieren. 1. Dem Bundesrat ist nicht bekannt, dass Christen der Zugang zur Registrierung als Flüchtlinge erschwert oder verunmöglicht wäre. Das Auswahlverfahren des UNHCR ist strikte bedürfnisorientiert und folgt dem Prinzip der Nichtdiskriminierung. 2. Die humanitäre Hilfe der Schweiz richtet sich unterschiedslos an alle Opfer der humanitären Krisen in Syrien und in Irak. Dabei spielt die religiöse oder gemeinschaftliche Zugehörigkeit der hilfsbedürftigen Menschen keine Rolle. Das Engagement der Schweiz wie auch anderer humanitärer Akteure, wie dem IKRK oder dem UNHCR, richtet sich nach den humanitären Prinzipien von Neutralität, Unparteilichkeit und Unabhängigkeit. Das UNHCR betreut und versorgt in Syrien und in Irak auch im Rahmen der vom Bundesrat am 6. März 2015 beschlossenen Aufnahme von grundsätzlich 3000 schutzbedürftigen Personen aus Syrien, wovon 2000 Personen über ein klassisches Resettlement einreisen sollen, bedeutet dies, dass bei der Auswahl der Flüchtlinge einzig ihr Schutzbedarf ausschlaggebend ist. Soziale oder religiöse Zugehörigkeit werden weder im Sinne einer positiven noch im Sinne einer negativen Diskriminierung berücksichtigt. Der Auswahlprozess erfolgt in enger Zusammenarbeit mit dem UNHCR, welches der Schweiz besonders schutzbedürftige Personen zur Aufnahme vorschlägt. Zudem ist festzuhalten, dass die vom Bundesrat im Grundsatz beschlossene Aufnahme auf syrische Flüchtlinge ausgerichtet ist. Die humanitäre Hilfe der Schweiz zugunsten der irakischen Binnenvertriebenen konzentriert sich

auf die Unterstützung vor Ort. 2014 belief sich diese für die IrakKrise auf 13,3 Millionen Franken. Seit Beginn des Jahres 2015 wurden 4,5 Millionen Franken zusätzlich an die Partner vor Ort bereitgestellt. Der Einsatz weiterer Mittel ist vorgesehen (total etwa 9,5 Millionen Franken für 2015). Dabei unterstützt die Schweiz Organisationen, welche die humanitären Prinzipien in allen Fällen einhalten.

***English Translation***

**TITLE: Iraq and Syria. Do not discriminate against Christian refugees and internally displaced persons**

Text submitted to

Christians on the run report death threats and forced conversions when they visit a refugee camp. They apparently have no safe place there because the refugee camps are infiltrated by Islamists. The UNHCR organizes the selection process for the refugee contingents for European countries. The Christians outside the large camps fear that they will not be registered by the UNHCR. Since last summer, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians, Yazidis and other religious minorities have fled to the north of Iraq. However, the UNHCR does not register and care for internally displaced persons, but only those who seek refuge across national borders in other countries. This excludes all internally displaced persons, including Christians. According to the constitution, Christians among the refugees may not be given preference over people of other faiths. However, if access to registration for Christians with the prospect of a place in a quota were to be made more difficult or impossible on the basis of religion, this would be tantamount to discrimination, which would have to be corrected. There are said to be hardly any Christians among Germany's 30,000 or so refugees. The Federal Council has now announced that it is finally planning an admission campaign for 3,000 Syrian nationals selected by the UN.

The following questions arise: 1. is the Federal Council aware of such incidents of questionable discrimination, and if so, what is it doing to prevent discrimination against Christian refugees and religious minorities? 2. how can it ensure that Christians are not discriminated against on the basis of their faith in the selection of the 3,000 “particularly vulnerable persons from the crisis region” that it has decided to admit?

**Federal Council's answer of 08.05.2015** The Federal Council is very concerned about the humanitarian situation and the systematic violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in Iraq and Syria. The protection of the civilian population must be guaranteed in all cases without discrimination. The Federal Council calls on the countries concerned to respect the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. It also demands that states in which extremist groups carry out attacks and massacres against Christians and other minorities do everything possible to prevent such acts and bring those responsible to justice. A large proportion of these attacks, including on minorities, are committed in regions to which humanitarian organizations have little or no access for security reasons. In both Iraq and Syria, this is one of the biggest challenges for

the international community's humanitarian response. The Federal Council recalls that all parties to the conflict have an obligation to allow humanitarian actors rapid and unhindered access and to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. 1. the Federal Council is not aware that Christians would find it difficult or impossible to register as refugees. The UNHCR's selection procedure is strictly needs-based and follows the principle of non-discrimination. 2. Switzerland's humanitarian aid is directed indiscriminately at all victims of the humanitarian crises in Syria and Iraq. The religious or community affiliation of the people in need is irrelevant. Switzerland's commitment, as well as that of other humanitarian actors such as the ICRC and the UNHCR, is based on the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. The UNHCR also provides care and assistance in Syria and Iraq. As part of the Federal Council's decision on March 6, 2015 to accept 3,000 people in need of protection from Syria, 2,000 of whom are to enter the country via a classic resettlement process, this means that the only decisive factor in selecting refugees is their need for protection. Social or religious affiliation is not taken into account in the sense of either positive or negative discrimination. The selection process is carried out in close cooperation with the UNHCR, which proposes particularly vulnerable persons to Switzerland for admission. It should also be noted that the admission decided in principle by the Federal Council is geared towards Syrian refugees. Switzerland's humanitarian aid for Iraqi internally displaced persons focuses on providing support on the ground. In 2014, this amounted to CHF 13.3 million for the Iraq crisis. Since the beginning of 2015, an additional CHF 4.5 million has been made available to partners on the ground. The use of further funds is planned (a total of around CHF 9.5 million for 2015). Switzerland supports organizations that adhere to humanitarian principles in all cases.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_4919\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_4919_Annex_D.pdf)

**Schmid-Federer Barbara, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 03.03.2015**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Förderung des Schutzes der Flüchtlinge aus Syrien mittels Hilfe vor Ort**

Eingereichter Text Der Bundesrat wird gebeten, konkrete Massnahmen in den Bereichen Nothilfe und Wiederaufbauhilfe auszuarbeiten, um eine Verbesserung der Situation der Vertriebenen in Syrien und der Flüchtlinge aus Syrien in den Nachbarländern zu erreichen. Falls die Finanzierung dieser Massnahmen mit den bestehenden Rahmenkrediten nicht möglich ist, ist eine Zusatzfinanzierung mittels eines ausserordentlichen Rahmenkredits zu prüfen. Begründung Am 28. März 2014 reichte die SPKNR ein Postulat ein, mit dem der Bundesrat gebeten wurde, zusammen mit anderen europäischen Staaten Massnahmen zu überprüfen, wie grössere Flüchtlingsgruppen als bis anhin aufgenommen werden können, damit auch die an Syrien

angrenzenden Staaten entlastet werden können. Das Postulat wurde vom Bundesrat zur Annahme beantragt und am 12. Juni 2014 vom Nationalrat gutgeheissen. Mit dem Wintereinbruch im Libanon ist die Unterbringungs und Versorgungslage in den Flüchtlingslagern innerhalb und ausserhalb Syriens äusserst labil geworden. Andere Indizien für die angespannte Flüchtlingssituation in den Nachbarstaaten sind beispielsweise die Einführung von Visa für syrische Staatsangehörige im Libanon oder gemäss dem Schweizerischen Roten Kreuz die Information des UNHCR, dass die Wartefrist für syrische Flüchtlinge in der Türkei für die Registrierung momentan 16 Monate betrage. Die konkrete und nachhaltige Unterstützung der Nachbarstaaten sowie der in Syrien tätigen internationalen Organisationen im Bereich der Nothilfe ist deshalb von entscheidender Bedeutung. Trotz des kaum absehbaren Endes des Bürgerkriegs in Syrien sind nebst der raschen Umsetzung von konkreten Nothilfemassnahmen die Planung und Umsetzung von Massnahmen wichtig, die auf einen Wiederaufbau Syriens ausgerichtet sind. Mit Massnahmen in den Bereichen Bildung und Gesundheitsversorgung oder mit Massnahmen zur Stützung der wirtschaftlichen Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe können Perspektiven für die syrischen Flüchtlinge aufgebaut werden, die mittelfristig mithelfen können, den hohen Migrationsdruck nach Europa zu entschärfen. Solche Massnahmen sollten in den Nachbarstaaten und in Syrien umgesetzt werden und sowohl auf die Flüchtlinge aus Syrien als auch auf die Aufnahmegesellschaft dieser Flüchtlinge ausgerichtet sein. Sie würden die Umsetzung des Postulates der SPKNR vom 28. März 2014 sinnvoll ergänzen. Angesichts der grossen Tragödie muss die humanitäre Hilfe vor Ort massiv verstärkt werden.

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 08.05.2015** Die Schweiz beteiligt sich seit 2011 stark am internationalen Engagement zugunsten der Opfer des Syrienkonflikts und hat bis Ende 2014 dafür 128 Millionen Schweizerfranken eingesetzt. Sie setzt sich zudem für die Einhaltung des humanitären Völkerrechts sowie für die Lösung des Konflikts ein. Die Nothilfe ist auf die betroffenen Personen in Syrien und in den Nachbarstaaten ausgerichtet und umfasst auch Massnahmen in den Bereichen Bildung, Wasserversorgung und Gesundheitsversorgung. Die UnoHilfspläne für dieses Jahr beinhalten neu auch Massnahmen zur Steigerung der Widerstandsfähigkeit der betroffenen Bevölkerung. Die Schweiz engagiert sich bereits in diesem Bereich. Angesichts der aktuellen Lage ist aber an Wiederaufbauhilfe in Syrien selber noch nicht zu denken. Der Bundesrat hat am 6. März 2015 zusätzliche Massnahmen für die Opfer des Syrienkonflikts beschlossen. Die Hilfe vor Ort wird durch Umverteilung von Mitteln innerhalb der humanitären Hilfe um weitere 50 Millionen Franken verstärkt. Des Weiteren sollen in den nächsten drei Jahren im Grundsatz zusätzlich 3000 schutzbedürftige Personen aus der Krisenregion aufgenommen werden. Der Bundesrat überprüft weiterhin laufend die konkret zu treffenden Massnahmen im Sinne des Anliegens des Postulates sowie deren Finanzierung und wird gegebenenfalls darüber Bericht erstatten. Antrag des Bundesrates vom 08.05.2015 Der Bundesrat beantragt die Annahme des Postulates.

*English Translation***TITLE: Promoting the protection of refugees from Syria by providing assistance on the ground**

Text submitted The Federal Council is requested to draw up concrete measures in the areas of emergency aid and reconstruction aid in order to improve the situation of displaced persons in Syria and refugees from Syria in neighboring countries. If it is not possible to finance these measures with the existing framework credits, additional financing by means of an extraordinary framework credit should be examined. Justification On March 28, 2014, the SPKNR submitted a postulate asking the Federal Council, together with other European countries, to examine measures to take in larger groups of refugees than previously, so that the countries bordering Syria could also be relieved. The postulate was proposed for adoption by the Federal Council and approved by the National Council on June 12, 2014. With the onset of winter in Lebanon, the accommodation and supply situation in the refugee camps inside and outside Syria has become extremely unstable. Other indications of the tense refugee situation in neighboring countries include the introduction of visas for Syrian nationals in Lebanon and, according to the Swiss Red Cross, information from the UNHCR that the waiting period for Syrian refugees to register in Turkey is currently 16 months. The concrete and sustainable support of neighbouring countries and international organizations working in Syria in the area of emergency aid is therefore of crucial importance. Despite the fact that the end of the civil war in Syria is hardly foreseeable, it is important to plan and implement measures aimed at rebuilding Syria in addition to the rapid implementation of specific emergency aid measures. Measures in the areas of education and healthcare or measures to support economic aid for self-help can create prospects for Syrian refugees, which can help to alleviate the high migration pressure to Europe in the medium term. Such measures should be implemented in the neighboring countries and in Syria and should be geared towards both the refugees from Syria and the host society of these refugees. They would usefully complement the implementation of the SPKNR's postulate of March 28, 2014. In view of the great tragedy, humanitarian aid on the ground must be massively increased.

**Statement of the Federal Council of 08.05.2015** Since 2011, Switzerland has been heavily involved in international efforts to help the victims of the Syrian conflict and had committed 128 million Swiss francs to this end by the end of 2014. It is also committed to ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law and to finding a solution to the conflict. Emergency aid is targeted at the people affected in Syria and neighboring countries and also includes measures in the areas of education, water supply and healthcare. The UN aid plans for this year now also include measures to increase the resilience of the affected population. Switzerland is already involved in this area. In view of the current situation, however, reconstruction aid in Syria itself is not yet on the cards. On March 6, 2015, the Federal Council decided on additional measures for the victims of the Syrian conflict. Aid on the ground will be increased by a further CHF 50 million through the redistribution of funds within humanitarian aid. Furthermore, an additional

3,000 people in need of protection from the crisis region are to be admitted over the next three years. The Federal Council will continue to review the specific measures to be taken in line with the concerns of the postulate as well as their financing on an ongoing basis and will report on them if necessary. Proposal of the Federal Council dated 08.05.2015 The Federal Council proposes that the postulate be accepted.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_4919\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_4919_Annex_D.pdf)

**Gmür Alois, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 19.03.2015**

*Original Text*

**TITEL: Flüchtlings- und Asylkonferenz in der Schweiz**

Eingereichter Text Der Bundesrat wird beauftragt, in der Schweiz eine internationale Flüchtlings und Asylkonferenz durchzuführen. Begründung Die Flüchtlings und Asylströme nehmen seit dem arabischen Frühling in ganz Europa ständig zu. Aufgrund von anhaltenden Konflikten auf dem arabischen Kontinent wird es weiterhin so bleiben. Immer wieder kommen Flüchtlingsboote über das Mittelmeer und landen in Italien und Malta. Für zahlreiche Flüchtlinge wird die Überfahrt zu einer lebensbedrohlichen Reise. Die durch den Krieg in Syrien und die brutalen Eroberungen der selbsternannten Dschihadmilizen "Islamischer Staat" (IS) verursachten Leiden lösen gewaltige Flüchtlingsströme aus, welche in den umliegenden Staaten nicht mehr aufgefangen werden können. Hunderttausende von Menschen sind auf der Flucht. Der Zustrom nach Europa wird jeden Tag grösser. Handlungsbedarf ist dringend angesagt. Die südeuropäischen Staaten sind mit der aktuellen Situation überfordert. Die Staaten in Europa und im Mittleren Osten sind aufgefordert, Lösungen zu suchen.

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 20.05.2015** Der Bundesrat hat mit Bestürzung von den neuerlichen Schiffsunglücken im Mittelmeer erfahren, bei denen eine grosse Anzahl von Migrant\*innen ums Leben gekommen ist. Auch die Sicherheitslage im Nahen und Mittleren Osten bietet weiterhin Anlass zur Sorge. Der Bundesrat räumt dem Engagement der Schweiz zur Bewältigung der humanitären Folgen und der Auswirkungen auf die Migration aufgrund der instabilen Lage in der Region Vorrang ein und sieht im Bestreben nach Koordination mit den internationalen und europäischen Partnern eine Reihe von Massnahmen und Aktionen vor. Die enge Zusammenarbeit mit den Mitgliedstaaten der Europäischen Union und gemeinsame Aktionen sind unerlässlich, um Tragödien, wie sie sich in den letzten Wochen auf dem Mittelmeer abgespielt haben, in Zukunft verhindern zu helfen. Die Schweiz prüft derzeit, in welchem Masse sie sich am Zehn-Punkte-Plan der EU-Aussen und Innenminister beteiligen kann. Aber auch die Gewährung des Schutzes für Flüchtlinge und verletzte Personen, die auf

europäischem Gebiet ankommen, die angemessene Verwaltung der gemeinsamen Grenzen sowie eine bessere Steuerung der Migrationsströme erfordern eine intensive Abstimmung mit unseren europäischen Partnern. Im Rahmen der Schengen und DublinZusammenarbeit ist die Schweiz in den verschiedenen Koordinationsorganen wie an den Treffen des Rates für Justiz und Inneres (JI) sehr aktiv.

Im Asylbereich hat sich die Schweiz entschieden, sich an den Aktivitäten des Europäischen Unterstützungsbüros für Asylfragen (Easo) zu beteiligen. Die Schweiz hat im Übrigen mehrere Angehörige des Grenzwachtkorps zur Teilnahme an der Marineoperation "Triton" der Grenzschutzagentur Frontex vor den italienischen Küsten entsandt und prüft inwieweit dieses Engagement noch ausgebaut werden kann. Die Schweiz engagiert sich im Mittleren Osten im Rahmen ihres Programms "Protection in the Region" durch Massnahmen zum Schutz und zur Unterstützung der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen in den Erstaufnahmeländern. So kann sie nachhaltige Lösungen erarbeiten und der Weiterwanderung vorbeugen. Im Zusammenhang mit der SyrienKrise hat der Bundesrat am 6. März 2015 weitere Unterstützungsmassnahmen beschlossen. Seit Ausbruch des Konflikts wurde mit 128 Millionen Franken Hilfe vor Ort geleistet, unter anderem für Nahrungsmittel und medizinische Unterstützung. Diese Hilfe soll 2015 noch verstärkt werden. Neben den bereits geplanten 30 Millionen Franken sind im Rahmen der vorhandenen Mittel der Deza weitere 20 Millionen Franken für die Hilfe vor Ort vorgesehen. Nach der Aufnahme eines ersten Kontingents von 500 Personen im Rahmen eines Pilotprojekts hat der Bundesrat die Aufnahme von weiteren 3000 Schutzbedürftigen aus dem Krisengebiet verteilt auf einen Zeitraum von drei Jahren im Grundsatz gutgeheissen. 2015 sollen maximal 1000 Personen auf dieser Basis in die Schweiz einreisen. Im Herbst wird der Bundesrat die Situation neu beurteilen.

Mittels Migrationsdialogen und partnerschaften mit den Ländern Nordafrikas, durch welche die meisten Migrantinnen und Migranten reisen, unterstützt die Schweiz den Ausbau lokaler Kapazitäten und Strukturen, um einen Beitrag zum Schutz der Flüchtlinge und der verletzlichsten Personen vor Ort zu leisten, eine bessere Steuerung der Migrationsströme zu ermöglichen und irreguläre Ausreisen nach Europa und in die Schweiz zu verhindern. Im Rahmen der Migrationspartnerschaft mit Tunesien wurde zum Beispiel die materielle und technische Unterstützung der Schweiz für die Umsetzung eines Projekts zur integrierten Grenzverwaltung angefordert. Die Schweiz beteiligt sich aktiv an den regionalen Dialogen wie dem RabatProzess (Mittelmeer) und dem KhartumProzess (Horn von Afrika), in denen die Herkunfts-, Transit- und Zielländer gemeinsam Strategien und Massnahmen zur besseren Steuerung der Migrationsströme zu entwickeln suchen. Auf internationaler Ebene ist der Schutz der Flüchtlinge die Hauptaufgabe des UnoHochkommissariats für Flüchtlinge (UNHCR). Die Schweiz unterstützt den UNHCR bei seinen Tätigkeiten am Hauptsitz und bei seinen zahlreichen Missionen vor Ort. Der UNHCR koordiniert insbesondere jedes Jahr verschiedene Konsultationen und Konferenzen zum Flüchtlingsschutz. So zum Beispiel die Konferenz vom

28. Oktober 2014 in Berlin zur Situation der syrischen Flüchtlinge, anlässlich welcher Bundesrat Didier Burkhalter die Unterstützung der Schweiz für die Opfer der SyrienKrise bekräftigt hat. Angesichts der zahlreichen bilateralen Aktivitäten der Schweiz sowie der bestehenden europäischen und multilateralen Koordinationsstrukturen, an denen sie sich aktiv beteiligt, sieht der Bundesrat zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt keinen Bedarf für die Organisation einer internationalen Flüchtlings und Asylkonferenz.

### *English Translation*

#### **TITLE: Refugee and asylum conference in Switzerland**

Text submitted The Federal Council is instructed to organize an international refugee and asylum conference in Switzerland. Justification Since the Arab Spring, the flow of refugees and asylum seekers has been steadily increasing throughout Europe. This will continue due to ongoing conflicts on the Arab continent. Refugee boats keep coming across the Mediterranean and landing in Italy and Malta. For many refugees, the crossing becomes a life-threatening journey. The suffering caused by the war in Syria and the brutal conquests of the self-proclaimed jihadist militia “Islamic State” (IS) is triggering huge flows of refugees that can no longer be absorbed in the surrounding countries. Hundreds of thousands of people are on the run. The influx to Europe is growing every day. There is an urgent need for action. The southern European countries are overwhelmed by the current situation. The states in Europe and the Middle East are called upon to find solutions.

**Federal Council statement of 20.05.2015** The Federal Council was shocked to learn of the recent shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, in which a large number of migrants have lost their lives. The security situation in the Middle East also remains a cause for concern. The Federal Council is prioritizing Switzerland's commitment to dealing with the humanitarian consequences and the impact on migration due to the unstable situation in the region and is planning a series of measures and actions in an effort to coordinate with international and European partners. Close cooperation with the member states of the European Union and joint action are essential to help prevent future tragedies such as those that have occurred in the Mediterranean in recent weeks. Switzerland is currently examining the extent to which it can participate in the EU Foreign and Home Affairs Ministers' ten-point plan. However, the granting of protection to refugees and vulnerable persons arriving on European territory, the appropriate management of common borders and better management of migration flows also require intensive coordination with our European partners. Within the framework of Schengen and Dublin cooperation, Switzerland is very active in the various coordination bodies such as the meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA). In the area of asylum, Switzerland has decided to participate in the activities of the European Asylum Support Office (Easo). Switzerland has also deployed several members of the Border Guard Corps to participate in the “Triton” naval operation of the Frontex border protection agency off the Italian coast and is examining the extent to which this

commitment can be expanded. Switzerland is involved in the Middle East as part of its “Protection in the Region” program through measures to protect and support refugees and displaced persons in the initial host countries. This enables it to develop sustainable solutions and prevent onward migration. In connection with the Syrian crisis, the Federal Council decided on further support measures on March 6, 2015. Since the outbreak of the conflict, CHF 128 million in aid has been provided on the ground, including for food and medical support. This aid is to be increased in 2015. In addition to the CHF 30 million already planned, a further CHF 20 million has been earmarked for aid on the ground within the framework of the SDC's existing resources. Following the admission of an initial contingent of 500 people as part of a pilot project, the Federal Council has approved in principle the admission of a further 3,000 people in need of protection from the crisis region over a period of three years. In 2015, a maximum of 1000 people are to enter Switzerland on this basis. The Federal Council will reassess the situation in the fall. Through migration dialogues and partnerships with the countries in North Africa through which most migrants travel, Switzerland supports the development of local capacities and structures in order to contribute to the protection of refugees and the most vulnerable people on the ground, enable better management of migration flows and prevent irregular departures to Europe and Switzerland. As part of the migration partnership with Tunisia, for example, Switzerland's material and technical support was requested for the implementation of an integrated border management project. Switzerland is actively involved in regional dialogues such as the Rabat Process (Mediterranean) and the Khartoum Process (Horn of Africa), in which the countries of origin, transit and destination seek to jointly develop strategies and measures to better manage migration flows. At international level, the protection of refugees is the main task of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Switzerland supports the UNHCR in its activities at its headquarters and in its numerous missions in the field. In particular, the UNHCR coordinates various consultations and conferences on refugee protection every year. For example, the conference on October 28, 2014 in Berlin on the situation of Syrian refugees, at which Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter reaffirmed Switzerland's support for the victims of the Syrian crisis. In view of Switzerland's numerous bilateral activities and the existing European and multilateral coordination structures in which it is actively involved, the Federal Council sees no need to organize an international refugee and asylum conference at this time.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_4919\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_4919_Annex_D.pdf)

**Albert Vitali, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 23.09.2015**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Sind alle Eritreer an Leib und Leben verfolgt?**

Eingereichter Text 1. Mit welcher Begründung wird asylsuchenden Eritreern überdurchschnittlich häufig der Flüchtlingsstatus gewährt? 2. Auf welche Grundlagen zur Beurteilung der Lage in Eritrea stützt sich der Bundesrat? 3. Wenn die Lage eines Landes mangels verlässlicher Quellen nicht zuverlässig beurteilt werden kann, wie werden die Asylsuchenden in der Regel aufgenommen? Als Flüchtlinge oder als "vorläufig Aufgenommene"? Begründung In Anbetracht der Tatsache, dass die Meinungen darüber auseinandergehen, ob alle Eritreer an Leib und Leben gefährdet sind, forderte der Luzerner Regierungsrat Guido Graf, eritreischen Asylsuchenden nicht den "Flüchtlings"Status zu verleihen, sondern den "Vorläufig aufgenommen"Status. Es ist bekannt, dass die Lage in Eritrea mangels verlässlicher Quellen (wie das Staatssekretariat für Migration auf seiner Website zugibt) nicht zuverlässig beurteilt werden kann. Antwort des Bundesrates vom 25.11.2015 1. Wie der Bundesrat bereits ausgeführt hat (vgl. bspw. Antwort des Bundesrates zur Interpellation der FDP Liberalen Fraktion 15.3094 vom 11. März 2015), werden in Eritrea Deserteure und Wehrdienstverweigerer regelmässig ohne Gerichtsverfahren von Militärkommandanten beurteilt und nach eigenem Ermessen bestraft. Die entsprechenden Strafmassnahmen haben häufig einen unmenschlichen und erniedrigenden Charakter und zeichnen sich durch ausserordentliche Härte aus. Entsprechende Sanktionierungen von Deserteuren und Wehrdienstverweigerern in Eritrea können daher unter Umständen Folter und andere grausame, unmenschliche oder erniedrigende Behandlung oder Strafe im Sinne von Artikel 3 der Konvention zum Schutze der Menschenrechte und Grundfreiheiten (EMRK; SR 0.101) darstellen. Die Sanktionierungen erfolgen grundsätzlich aus politischen Gründen, insbesondere wegen oppositioneller Haltung, und können deshalb die Flüchtlingseigenschaft begründen (vgl. Art. 3 Abs. 1 und 2 AsylG). Ausserdem werden Zuwiderhandlungen eritreischer Staatsangehöriger gegen die eritreischen Ausreisebestimmungen bzw. Versuche, die Grenze illegal zu überqueren oder Personen dabei zu unterstützen, mit bis zu fünf Jahren Haft, einer hohen Busse oder beidem bestraft. Tatsächlich erfolgt die Bestrafung bei illegaler Ausreise aber in der Regel aussergerichtlich und im Ergebnis oft willkürlich. Auch diese Umstände können, wie oben erläutert, die Flüchtlingseigenschaft begründen. 2. Das Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM) wertet laufend Erkenntnisse des UNHCR und anderer UN Organisationen, internationaler Menschenrechtsorganisationen und weiterer vertrauenswürdiger Quellen aus. Zusätzlich führt es einen intensiven Austausch mit internationalen Experten aus Wissenschaft, Politik und internationalen Organisationen, mit den Migrationsämtern anderer Staaten und mit dem Europäischen Asylunterstützungsbüro (Easo).

Nach Möglichkeit beschafft das SEM auch Informationen bei Vertretern der Behörden Eritreas und dessen Nachbarstaaten. So führte das SEM im November 2013 eine Dienstreise nach Eritrea sowie zwei Reisen in die Lager der eritreischen Flüchtlinge in Sudan (Januar 2012) und Äthiopien (September 2014) durch. Auf dieser Quellenbasis überprüft das SEM seine Praxis laufend bei der Beurteilung eritreischer Asylgesuche. Der aktuelle Erkenntnisstand wurde im Mai 2015 in einem ausführlichen Bericht des Easo veröffentlicht (<https://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/aktuell/news/2015/20150611.html>). Derzeit besteht kein Anlass zur Annahme, dass sich die Lage in Eritrea verbessert hat. 3. Welchen Schutz Menschen aus Eritrea in der Schweiz erhalten, ist keine politische, sondern eine rechtliche Frage. Das SEM 583 Sie sind hier: Das Schweizer Parlament > Suche > Geschäfte prüft jeden Fall einzeln. Im ersten Halbjahr 2015 wurde 47 Prozent der eritreischen Asylsuchenden Asyl gewährt. 34 Prozent wurden als Flüchtlinge, 9 Prozent wegen Unzumutbarkeit der Wegweisung vorläufig aufgenommen. 4 Prozent wurden aus der Schweiz weggewiesen. Der Vollzug einer Wegweisung ohne vorläufige Aufnahme wird angeordnet, wenn eine Person im Falle einer Rückkehr nach Eritrea keine Verfolgungsmassnahmen seitens der eritreischen Regierung zu befürchten hat. Schliesslich erhielten 6 Prozent im Rahmen der Dublin-Verordnung einen Nichteintretensentscheid. Die Asylpraxis der Schweiz für eritreische Staatsangehörige ist mit derjenigen der europäischen Staaten vergleichbar.

### ***English Translation***

#### **TITLE: Are all Eritreans persecuted for life and limb?**

Submitted text 1. on what grounds are Eritreans seeking asylum granted refugee status with above-average frequency? 2. on what basis does the Federal Council assess the situation in Eritrea? 3. if the situation in a country cannot be reliably assessed due to a lack of reliable sources, how are asylum seekers usually received? As refugees or as “temporarily admitted persons”? Justification In view of the fact that opinions differ as to whether all Eritreans are at risk to life and limb, Lucerne Cantonal Councillor Guido Graf called for Eritrean asylum seekers to be granted “temporarily admitted” status rather than “refugee” status. It is well known that the situation in Eritrea cannot be reliably assessed due to a lack of reliable sources (as the State Secretariat for Migration admits on its website). Federal Council response of 25.11.2015 1 As the Federal Council has already stated (see, for example, Federal Council response to the interpellation of the FDP-Liberal parliamentary group 15.3094 of 11 March 2015), deserters and draft evaders in Eritrea are regularly judged by military commanders without trial and punished at their own discretion. The corresponding punitive measures are often inhumane and degrading in nature and are characterized by exceptional harshness. Sanctions imposed on deserters and conscientious objectors in Eritrea may therefore constitute torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment within the meaning of Article 3 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR; SR 0.101). The sanctions are generally imposed for political reasons, in particular because of an oppositional stance, and can

therefore justify refugee status (see Art. 3 para. 1 and 2 AsylA). In addition, violations of Eritrean exit regulations by Eritrean nationals or attempts to cross the border illegally or to assist persons in doing so are punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, a heavy fine or both. In reality, however, the punishment for illegal departure is usually extrajudicial and often arbitrary. As explained above, these circumstances can also justify refugee status. 2 The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) continuously evaluates the findings of the UNHCR and other UN organizations, international human rights organizations and other trustworthy sources. In addition, it maintains an intensive exchange with international experts from academia, politics and international organizations, with the migration offices of other countries and with the European Asylum Support Office (Easo). Where possible, the SEM also obtains information from representatives of the Eritrean authorities and its neighboring countries. In November 2013, for example, the SEM conducted an official trip to Eritrea and two trips to the Eritrean refugee camps in Sudan (January 2012) and Ethiopia (September 2014). Based on these sources, the SEM continuously reviews its practice when assessing Eritrean asylum applications. The current state of knowledge was published in May 2015 in a detailed report by Easo (<https://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/de/home/aktuell/news/2015/20150611.html>). There is currently no reason to believe that the situation in Eritrea has improved. 3 Which protection people from Eritrea receive in Switzerland is not a political question, but a legal one. The SEM 583 You are here: Swiss Parliament > Search > Geschaefte examines each case individually. In the first half of 2015, 47 percent of Eritrean asylum seekers were granted asylum. 34 percent were granted refugee status and 9 percent were granted temporary admission due to the unreasonableness of their removal. 4 percent were expelled from Switzerland. Removal without temporary admission is ordered if a person has no reason to fear persecution by the Eritrean government if they return to Eritrea. Finally, 6 percent received a non-entry decision under the Dublin Regulation. Switzerland's asylum practice for Eritrean nationals is comparable to that of European countries.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5001\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5001_Annex_D.pdf)

**FDP-Liberale Fraktion, Coalition  
National Council, 07.09.2015**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Nur noch vorläufiger Schutz für Asylsuchende aus Eritrea**

Eingereichter Text Der Bundesrat wird beauftragt, Massnahmen zu treffen, damit Eritreer grundsätzlich nur noch als "Schutzbedürftige" oder als "vorläufig Aufgenommene" in der Schweiz bleiben dürfen. Nur in begründeten Ausnahmefällen, welche eng auf der Definition der Flüchtlingseigenschaft in der Flüchtlingskonvention basieren, dürfen diese Personen als

Flüchtlinge anerkannt werden. Begründung Es gibt unterschiedliche Ansichten zur menschenrechtlichen Situation in Eritrea auch von profunden Kennern des Landes. So berichtete beispielsweise die "Rundschau" des SRF am 1. Juli 2015, dass die prekäre Menschenrechtslage in Eritrea von verschiedener Seite her infrage gestellt wird. Die FDP hat den Bundesrat bereits in der Frühjahrssession 2015 via Interpellation gefragt, ob die Aufnahmepraxis nicht kritisch hinterfragt werden müsste (Interpellation 15.3094). Eine Wehrdienstverweigerung allein ist gemäss Schweizer Recht kein Grund, um als Flüchtlinge anerkannt zu werden. Gemäss Artikel 54 des Asylgesetzes sollten Asylsuchende, welche erst durch ihre illegale Ausreise Sanktionen im Herkunftsland drohen, nicht als Flüchtling anerkannt werden. Die Wegweisung ist allerdings so lange nicht zumutbar, bis sicher ist, dass der Asylsuchende im Heimatland nicht gefährdet ist. Es ist zu vermuten, dass in vielen Fällen von Eritreern erst die Ausreise aus dem Land und die damit einhergehende Wehrdienstverweigerung dazu führt, dass die Person bei der Heimreise Sanktionen drohen. Es ist gut möglich, dass sich die Menschenrechtslage in Eritrea verbessert und die Rückreise somit in Zukunft ohne Risiko möglich sein wird. Daher sollten diese Asylsuchenden grundsätzlich nicht als Flüchtlinge anerkannt werden. In klar durch die Flüchtlingskonvention begründeten Fällen kann noch der Status als Flüchtling vergeben werden. In der Regel sollten die Personen jedoch nur vorläufig aufgenommen werden als Schutzbedürftige oder dann als vorläufig Aufgenommene. Die Menschenrechtslage in Eritrea sollte regelmässig überprüft werden, um allenfalls die Rückreise dieser Personen in Zukunft wieder zu ermöglichen.

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 11.11.2015** Welchen Schutz eine asylsuchende Person in der Schweiz erhält, ist keine politische, sondern eine rechtliche Frage. Wie bereits in der Antwort auf die Motion Fehr Hans 15.3566 vom 16. Juni 2015 ausgeführt, verpflichtet die Genfer Flüchtlingskonvention (FK) dazu, jedes Asylgesuch individuell zu prüfen, was in der Praxis auch konsequent so gehandhabt wird. Eine pauschale Weisung, asylsuchende Personen aus bestimmten Herkunftsstaaten grundsätzlich nicht als Flüchtlinge anzuerkennen, wäre mit dieser Vorgabe unvereinbar. Sie stünde ferner im Konflikt mit den verfassungsrechtlichen Garantien der Rechtsgleichheit und des Diskriminierungsverbots sowie weiteren verfassungsrechtlichen und völkerrechtlichen Garantien. Zudem sieht das Asylgesetz vor, dass im Rahmen des Asylverfahrens geprüft werden muss, ob eine Person die Voraussetzungen für die Zuerkennung der Flüchtlingseigenschaft erfüllt oder nicht (vgl. Antwort auf die Interpellation der FDP Liberalen Fraktion 15.3094 vom 11. März 2015). Erfüllen eritreische Asylsuchende die gesetzlichen Voraussetzungen der Flüchtlingseigenschaft, werden sie als Flüchtlinge anerkannt und erhalten grundsätzlich Asyl. Personen, welche jedoch erst durch ihre illegale Ausreise aus Eritrea zum Flüchtling wurden, werden gemäss Artikel 54 des Asylgesetzes (AsylG) von der Asylgewährung ausgeschlossen. Da der Vollzug ihrer Wegweisung aus der Schweiz aber unzulässig wäre, werden sie vorläufig aufgenommen. Bei den seit 2014 erledigten Asylgesuchen von Personen aus Eritrea wurde in rund 40 Prozent der Fälle nur eine vorläufige Aufnahme erteilt. Das Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM) verfolgt die Lage in Eritrea sehr genau. Den

aktuellen Erkenntnisstand hat das SEM im Mai 2015 in einem ausführlichen Bericht für das Europäische Unterstützungsbüro für Asylfragen (EASO) veröffentlicht. Der 479 Sie sind hier: Das Schweizer Parlament > Suche > Geschäfte EASO Bericht ist heute in Europa die massgebliche Grundlage für die Beurteilung der aktuellen Situation in Eritrea. Die Möglichkeit zur Gewährung von vorübergehendem Schutz (sogenannten SStatus) wurde im Jahr 1998 im Zusammenhang mit den BalkanKriegen eingeführt, um das Asylsystem im Fall einer Massenzuflucht kurzfristig entlasten zu können. Bisher ist der SStatus noch nie angewendet worden. Die Asylgesuchszahlen in der Schweiz sind zurzeit zwar höher als in vergangenen Jahren, lassen sich jedoch in den Regelstrukturen bewältigen. Die Einführung des SStatus kann langfristig zu einem erheblichen Mehraufwand führen. Liegt offensichtlich eine Verfolgung im Sinne von Artikel 3 AsylG vor, muss trotzdem Asyl gewährt werden (vgl. Art. 69 Abs. 2 AsylG). Zudem werden Asylgesuche von Personen, denen vorübergehender Schutz gewährt wird, lediglich sistiert; nach fünf Jahren können die Betroffenen verlangen, dass ihr Asylgesuch weiter behandelt wird. Personen mit SStatus haben ferner wie anerkannte Flüchtlinge mit Asyl Anspruch auf Zusammenführung mit ihren Familienangehörigen. Sie sind somit bessergestellt als vorläufig Aufgenommene, die ihre Angehörigen frühestens nach drei Jahren nachziehen können. Der Bundesrat wurde mit dem Postulat der Staatspolitischen Kommission des Nationalrates 14.3008, "Überprüfung des Status der vorläufigen Aufnahme und der Schutzbedürftigkeit", vom 14. Februar 2014 beauftragt, Sinn und Zweck des Status der Schutzbedürftigkeit näher zu prüfen. Der Bundesrat wird den entsprechenden Bericht noch dieses Jahr verabschieden. Im Übrigen verweisen wir auf die Ausführungen in der Antwort auf die Interpellation Moret 15.3294 vom 19. März 2015. Antrag des Bundesrates vom 11.11.2015 Der Bundesrat beantragt die Ablehnung der Motion.

### ***English Translation***

#### **TITLE: Only temporary protection for asylum seekers from Eritrea**

Text submitted The Federal Council is instructed to take measures to ensure that Eritreans are only allowed to remain in Switzerland as "persons in need of protection" or as "temporarily admitted persons". Only in justified exceptional cases, which are closely based on the definition of refugee status in the Refugee Convention, may these persons be recognized as refugees. Justification There are differing views on the human rights situation in Eritrea, even among those with in-depth knowledge of the country. For example, SRF's "Rundschau" reported on July 1, 2015 that the precarious human rights situation in Eritrea is being questioned from various sides. The FDP already asked the Federal Council in the 2015 spring session via an interpellation whether the admission practice should not be critically scrutinized (Interpellation 15.3094). According to Swiss law, conscientious objection alone is not a reason to be recognized as a refugee. According to Article 54 of the Asylum Act, asylum seekers who only face sanctions in their country of origin as a result of their illegal departure should not be recognized as refugees. However, removal is not reasonable until it is certain that the asylum seeker is not at risk in their

home country. It can be assumed that in many cases, it is only when Eritreans leave the country and refuse to perform military service that they are threatened with sanctions when they return home. It is quite possible that the human rights situation in Eritrea will improve and that the return journey will therefore be possible without risk in the future. Therefore, these asylum seekers should generally not be recognized as refugees. In cases clearly justified by the Refugee Convention, refugee status can still be granted. As a rule, however, the persons should only be admitted temporarily as persons in need of protection or then as temporarily admitted persons. The human rights situation in Eritrea should be regularly reviewed in order to enable the return of these persons in the future if necessary.

**Federal Council statement of 11.11.2015** Which protection an asylum seeker receives in Switzerland is not a political question, but a legal one. As already explained in the response to the Fehr Hans motion 15.3566 of June 16, 2015, the Geneva Refugee Convention (GR) requires that each asylum application be examined individually, and this is consistently applied in practice. A blanket directive not to recognize asylum seekers from certain countries of origin as refugees would be incompatible with this requirement. It would also be in conflict with the constitutional guarantees of legal equality and the prohibition of discrimination, as well as other constitutional and international law guarantees. In addition, the Asylum Act stipulates that the asylum procedure must examine whether or not a person meets the requirements for being granted refugee status (see response to the interpellation of the FDP-Liberal parliamentary group 15.3094 of March 11, 2015). If Eritrean asylum seekers meet the legal requirements for refugee status, they are recognized as refugees and are generally granted asylum. However, persons who only became refugees as a result of their illegal departure from Eritrea are excluded from being granted asylum in accordance with Article 54 of the Asylum Act (AsylG). However, as it would be illegal to remove them from Switzerland, they are provisionally admitted. Around 40 percent of asylum applications from Eritreans that have been processed since 2014 have only been granted temporary admission. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) is monitoring the situation in Eritrea very closely. In May 2015, the SEM published the current state of knowledge in a detailed report for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). The 479 You are here: Swiss Parliament > Search > Business EASO report is the authoritative basis for assessing the current situation in Eritrea in Europe today. The possibility of granting temporary protection (so-called S status) was introduced in 1998 in connection with the Balkan wars in order to provide short-term relief to the asylum system in the event of a mass exodus. SStatus has never been applied to date. Although the number of asylum applications in Switzerland is currently higher than in previous years, it can be managed within the normal structures. The introduction of SStatus can lead to considerable additional work in the long term. If there is obvious persecution within the meaning of Article 3 AsylA, asylum must still be granted (see Art. 69 para. 2 AsylA). In addition, asylum applications from persons who are granted temporary protection are only suspended; after five years, the persons concerned can request that their asylum application be processed further. Persons with S status are also entitled to be reunited

with their family members, just like recognized refugees with asylum. They are therefore in a better position than temporarily admitted persons, who can only be joined by their family members after three years at the earliest. The Federal Council was instructed by the National Council's Political Affairs Committee postulate 14.3008, "Review of the status of temporary admission and need for protection", dated February 14, 2014, to examine the meaning and purpose of the status of need for protection in more detail. The Federal Council will adopt the corresponding report this year. Please also refer to the comments in the response to interpellation Moret 15.3294 of March 19, 2015. Motion of the Federal Council of 11.11.2015 The Federal Council proposes that the motion be rejected.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5001\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5001_Annex_D.pdf)

## Appendix D Parliamentary Speeches for the Ukrainian Refugee Movement

**Die Mitte Fraktion, Coalition  
National Council, 02.03.2022a**

### *Original Text*

**TITLE: Krieg gegen die Ukraine. Rasch Schutzstatus für Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer einführen.**

### **Eingereichter Text**

Wir haben wieder Krieg in Europa. Die Mitte-Fraktion erwartet jetzt vom Bundesrat, dass er sich darauf vorbereitet, den Menschen, die aus der Ukraine fliehen müssen, schnell und wirksam zu helfen. Die Schweiz hat eine historische Verpflichtung, sich mit aller Kraft für die Unterstützung der Bevölkerung in der Ukraine stark zu machen. – Wie lässt sich mit allen europäischen Ländern eine Koordination sicherstellen, dass den Menschen aus der Ukraine schnell und wirksam Schutz gewährt und eine solidarische Aufnahme ermöglicht werden kann? – Mit Blick auf die Ukraine sieht die Eidgenössische Migrationskommission EKM die Voraussetzungen für die rasche Anwendung des Schutzstatus S gegeben, der eine kollektive Aufnahme und ein Aufenthaltsrecht auf Zusehen hin gewährt. Die Mitte-Fraktion unterstützt diese Forderung. Wie will der Bundesrat sicherstellen, dass die Anwendung des Schutzstatus S rasch und wirksam eingeführt wird? Wie will der Bundesrat zudem sofortige und grosszügige Familienzusammenführung für Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer in der Schweiz ermöglichen?

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 11.03.2022** Der Bundesrat hat sich ab dem ersten Tag des Krieges mit der ukrainischen Bevölkerung solidarisch erklärt und sich in der Folge unverzüglich dafür eingesetzt, die Reaktion und die Unterstützung der Schweiz mit den europäischen Ländern zu koordinieren. Es liegt im Interesse der Schweiz, dass auf europäischer Ebene ein harmonisierter Ansatz in Bezug auf den Schutz von Personen aus der Ukraine gewährleistet wird. Nach Konsultation der Kantone, Städte, Gemeinden und betroffenen Organisationen hat der Bundesrat entschieden, den Schutzstatus S anzuwenden (Art. 4 und 66 AsylG). Der Status kommt dem auf europäischer Ebene in der Richtlinie 2001/55/EG vorgesehenen Status am nächsten. Nach den vom Bundesrat vorgenommenen punktuellen Anpassungen, zum Beispiel in Bezug auf den Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt oder die Reisefreiheit, kann der Status als gleichwertig mit dem von der Europäischen Union verabschiedeten Status betrachtet werden. Der Bundesrat ist ausserdem bereit, sich solidarisch an der Aufnahme von Personen aus der Ukraine zu beteiligen und verfolgt in diesem Zusammenhang die Diskussionen der EU-Mitgliedstaaten von Nahem. Die ukrainischen Staatsangehörigen können visumsbefreit in die Schweiz einreisen und ab ihrer Ankunft vom Staatssekretariat für Migration den Schutzstatus S erhalten. Es sind deshalb keine weiteren Massnahmen zur Erleichterung von Familienzusammenführungen notwendig. Chronologie 16.03.2022 Nationalrat Erledigt

***English Translation*****TITLE: War against Ukraine. Quickly introduce protection status for Ukrainians**

We have war in Europe again. The Center Group now expects the Federal Council to prepare to help the people who have to flee Ukraine quickly and effectively. Switzerland has a historic obligation to do all it can to support the people of Ukraine. - How can coordination be ensured with all European countries so that people from Ukraine can be granted protection quickly and effectively and a reception in solidarity can be made possible? - With regard to Ukraine, the Federal Commission on Migration (FCM) believes that the conditions are in place for the rapid application of protection status S, which grants collective admission and a right of residence on sight. The Center Group supports this demand. How does the Federal Council intend to ensure that the application of protection status S is introduced quickly and effectively? How does the Federal Council also intend to enable immediate and generous family reunification for Ukrainians in Switzerland?

**Statement of the Federal Council of 11.03.2022** The Federal Council has expressed its solidarity with the Ukrainian population from the first day of the war and immediately worked to coordinate Switzerland's response and support with European countries. It is in Switzerland's interest to ensure a harmonized approach at European level with regard to the protection of people from Ukraine. After consulting the cantons, cities, municipalities and organizations concerned, the Federal Council has decided to apply protection status S (Art. 4 and 66 AsylA). This status comes closest to the status provided for at European level in Directive 2001/55/EC. Following the selective adjustments made by the Federal Council, for example with regard to access to the labor market or freedom of travel, the status can be considered equivalent to the status adopted by the European Union. The Federal Council is also prepared to show solidarity in the admission of persons from Ukraine and is closely following the discussions of the EU member states in this regard. Ukrainian nationals can enter Switzerland without a visa and receive S protection status from the State Secretariat for Migration upon arrival. No further measures to facilitate family reunification are therefore necessary. Chronology 16.03.2022 National Council Done

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5113\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5113_Annex_D.pdf)

**Die Mitte Fraktion, Coalition  
National Council, 02.03.2022b*****Original Text*****TITEL: Die Schweiz muss mit einem "Hilfsprogramm Ukraine" rasch und wirksam helfen und Entscheide antizipieren**

Eingereichter Text Wir haben wieder Krieg in Europa. Die Mitte-Fraktion erwartet jetzt vom Bundesrat, dass er sich darauf vorbereitet, den Menschen, die aus der Ukraine fliehen müssen, schnell und wirksam zu helfen. Es war unverständlich, wie zögerlich und ratlos sich der Bundesrat zu Beginn dieser Krise gezeigt hat. Die Schweiz hat eine historische Verpflichtung, sich mit aller Kraft für die Unterstützung der Bevölkerung in der Ukraine stark zu machen. Gleichzeitig braucht es eine klare und konsequente Antwort des Westens auf die russische Aggression gegen die Ukraine und den Bruch des Völkerrechts durch Russland. Der Westen muss dieser Politik der Macht und rohen Gewalt geschlossen entgegenstehen. 1. Wie stellt der Bundesrat gemeinsam mit der europäischen Gemeinschaft sicher, dass den Menschen, die in der Ukraine an Leib und Leben gefährdet sind, möglichst rasch humanitäre Hilfe erbracht werden kann? 2. Die Bevölkerung der Nachbarländer der Ukraine zeigt sich hilfsbereit und haben bereits eine halbe Million Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainern bei sich aufgenommen. Ist der Bundesrat bereit, dem Parlament umgehend ein "Hilfsprogramm Ukraine" zu unterbreiten, damit die Finanzierung der Soforthilfe in angemessenem Umfang sichergestellt werden kann? 3. Der Bundesrat hat richtigerweise entschieden, sich den EU-Sanktionen gegen Russland anzuschliessen. Wie stellt der Bundesrat nun sicher, dass diese effektiv umgesetzt und auch eingehalten werden? Welche Massnahmen hat der Bundesrat bereits ergriffen, um rasch in der Lage zu sein, allfällig nötige – sogar wahrscheinlich nötige – Entscheide zu weiteren Sanktionen der EU oder auch der USA zu fällen?

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 11.03.2022** 1. Nach Ausbruch des russischen Militärangriffes auf die Ukraine hat das EDA (DEZA) unmittelbar reagiert und ein Hilfspaket im Umfang von 8 Millionen Schweizer Franken zur Unterstützung der ukrainischen Bevölkerung geschnürt. Dieses Paket besteht aus Finanzbeiträgen an humanitäre Partnerorganisationen und Hilfsgüterlieferungen via Polen. Diese werden direkt vor Ort durch ein Soforteinsatzteam des Schweizerischen Korps für Humanitäre Hilfe (SKH) koordiniert und an die entsprechenden Partnerorganisationen an der Grenze zur Ukraine übergeben. Die Koordination wird eng mit den polnischen und ukrainischen Behörden abgestimmt. Die Schweiz ruft alle Konfliktparteien regelmässig zum Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung und von Personen, die nicht mehr an den Kampfhandlungen teilnehmen, sowie der Sicherstellung des humanitären Zugangs auf. 2. Die UNO sowie die Rotkreuz- und Rothalbmondbewegung beziffern in ihren jüngst lancierten Hilfsaufrufen den Finanzierungsbedarf für die Ukraine und Nachbarstaaten auf knapp 2 Milliarden US-Dollar. Vor diesem Hintergrund beschloss der Bundesrat am 11. März 2022, sein

humanitäres Engagement in der Ukraine und der Region für 2022 auf insgesamt 80 Millionen Franken zu erhöhen. Das EDA trägt 21 Millionen Franken aus bestehenden Krediten bei, das EJPD beteiligt sich mit 6 Millionen Franken. Die restlichen 53 Millionen Franken sind zusätzliche Mittel und werden dem Parlament zur Bewilligung unterbreitet. Die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Schweiz (DEZA und SECO) passt auch laufende Programme an die akuten Bedürfnisse und Möglichkeiten vor Ort an. Ausserdem setzt sich die Schweiz in den multilateralen Entwicklungsbanken (Weltbank, Europäische Bank für Wiederaufbau und Entwicklung) und im Internationalen Währungsfonds IWF für eine substantielle Unterstützung der Ukraine ein. Der Bundesrat ist zudem bereit, sich solidarisch an der Aufnahme von schutzsuchenden Personen aus der Ukraine zu beteiligen. So hat er nach Konsultation der Kantone und anderer interessierter Parteien entschieden, den Schutzstatus S anzuwenden

3. Die Bundesverwaltung verfolgt die Entwicklung in der EU eng und arbeitet mit Hochdruck daran, dass der Bundesrat zeitnah über die Übernahme der Massnahmen der EU entscheiden kann. Als Drittstaat erhält die Schweiz erst bei deren Publikation Kenntnis von Rechtstexten der EU. Eine detaillierte Analyse der konkreten Verordnungsbestimmungen für eine Umsetzung in der Schweiz ist deshalb erst ab diesem Zeitpunkt möglich. Bei der Verordnung über Massnahmen im Zusammenhang mit der Situation in der Ukraine (SR 946.231.176.72) handelt es sich um einen Rechtstext, der Personen, Unternehmen und Organisationen in der Schweiz konkrete Pflichten und Verbote auferlegt. Eine sorgfältige Umsetzung dieser Massnahmen in die Schweizerische Rechtsordnung ist somit unerlässlich. Am 4. März 2022 wurde die bestehende Verordnung totalrevidiert, womit sich die Schweiz den Sanktionen der EU angeschlossen hat. Die beteiligten Bundesstellen koordinieren sich eng bei Fragen zur Umsetzung dieser Massnahmen. Im EDA wurde eine Task Force eingesetzt, die die Lage fortlaufend analysiert.

## ENGLISH

### **TITLE: Switzerland must help quickly and effectively with a “Ukraine aid program” and anticipate decisions**

Text submitted We are at war again in Europe. The Center Group now expects the Federal Council to prepare to help the people who have to flee Ukraine quickly and effectively. It was incomprehensible how hesitant and clueless the Federal Council was at the beginning of this crisis. Switzerland has a historic obligation to do all it can to support the people of Ukraine. At the same time, the West needs a clear and consistent response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its violation of international law. The West must stand united against this policy of power and brute force. 1. how does the Federal Council, together with the European community, ensure that humanitarian aid can be provided as quickly as possible to people whose lives are at risk in Ukraine? 2. the people of Ukraine's neighboring countries are willing to help and have already taken in half a million Ukrainians. Is the Federal Council prepared to submit a “Ukraine aid program” to Parliament without delay so that an appropriate level of funding for emergency aid can be secured?

3 The Federal Council has rightly decided to join the EU sanctions against Russia. How does the Federal Council now ensure that these are effectively implemented and complied with? What measures has the Federal Council already taken to ensure that it is in a position to take any necessary - even probably necessary - decisions on further EU or US sanctions quickly?

**Federal Council statement of 11.03.2022** 1 Following the outbreak of the Russian military attack on Ukraine, the FDFA (SDC) reacted immediately and put together an aid package worth CHF 8 million to support the Ukrainian population. This package consists of financial contributions to humanitarian partner organizations and the delivery of relief supplies via Poland. These will be coordinated directly on the ground by a rapid response team from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) and handed over to the relevant partner organizations on the border with Ukraine. Coordination is closely coordinated with the Polish and Ukrainian authorities. Switzerland regularly calls on all parties to the conflict to protect the civilian population and people who are no longer taking part in the fighting and to ensure humanitarian access. 2. in their recently launched appeals for aid, the UN and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement put the funding requirement for Ukraine and neighboring countries at just under USD 2 billion.

Against this backdrop, the Federal Council decided on March 11, 2022 to increase its humanitarian commitment in Ukraine and the region to a total of CHF 80 million for 2022. The FDFA is contributing CHF 21 million from existing loans, while the FDJP is contributing CHF 6 million. The remaining CHF 53 million are additional funds and will be submitted to Parliament for approval. Switzerland's international cooperation (SDC and SECO) also adapts current programs to the acute needs and opportunities on the ground. In addition, Switzerland is advocating substantial support for Ukraine in the multilateral development banks (World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Federal Council is also prepared to show solidarity in taking in people seeking protection from Ukraine. After consulting the cantons and other interested parties, it has decided to apply protection status S 3. The Federal Administration is closely monitoring developments in the EU and is working hard to ensure that the Federal Council can decide on the adoption of EU measures in the near future. As a third country, Switzerland only becomes aware of EU legal texts when they are published. A detailed analysis of the specific provisions of the ordinance for implementation in Switzerland is therefore only possible from this point in time. The Ordinance on Measures in Connection with the Situation in Ukraine (SR 946.231.176.72) is a legal text that imposes specific obligations and prohibitions on individuals, companies and organizations in Switzerland. Careful implementation of these measures in the Swiss legal system is therefore essential. On March 4, 2022, the existing ordinance was completely revised, bringing Switzerland into line with the EU sanctions. The federal agencies involved coordinate closely on issues relating to the implementation of these measures. A task force has been set up within the FDFA to analyze the situation on an ongoing basis.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5113\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5113_Annex_D.pdf)

**Quadri Lorenzo, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 02.03.2022**

*Original Text*

**TITEL: Platz schaffen für die echten Flüchtlinge aus der Ukraine**

Eingereichter Text Die russische Invasion in der Ukraine wird zu grossen Flüchtlingsströmen aus den von der Armee angegriffenen Regionen führen; die Fluchtbewegung ist schon im Gang. Davon wird auch die Schweiz betroffen sein. Damit diese Flüchtlinge aufgenommen werden können: Hat der Bundesrat die Absicht, die Rückführung der zu vielen Wirtschaftsmigrantinnen und Wirtschaftsmigranten zu beschleunigen, die vor keinem Krieg geflüchtet sind und trotzdem weiterhin unberechtigterweise unser Asylsystem belasten?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 07.03.2022** Der effektive und rasche Vollzug der Wegweisung von rechtskräftig abgewiesenen Asylsuchenden ist ein ständiges Ziel der Schweizer Asyl- und Migrationspolitik, unabhängig von der aktuellen Krise in der Ukraine. Das Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM) legt gemäss Asylgesetz in einer Behandlungsstrategie fest, welche Asylgesuche prioritär behandelt werden. Es berücksichtigt dabei insbesondere die gesetzlichen Behandlungsfristen, die Situation in den Herkunftsstaaten, die offensichtliche Begründetheit oder Unbegründetheit der Gesuche sowie das Verhalten der asylsuchenden Personen. Über Gesuche von Personen, die den Schutz der Schweiz offensichtlich nicht benötigen, wird im Rahmen des beschleunigten Asyl-Verfahrens bereits während deren Aufenthalt in einem Bundesasylzentrum (BAZ) von maximal 140 Tagen entschieden. Danach wird der schnellst mögliche Vollzug der Wegweisung bereits ab BAZ in die Wege geleitet. Der Wegweisungsvollzug ist grundsätzlich eine Aufgabe der kantonalen Behörden. Seine Durchführbarkeit hängt massgeblich von der Kooperation der weggewiesenen Personen sowie des Staates ab, in den die Wegweisung bzw. die Überstellung erfolgt.

*English Translation*

**TITLE: Making room for the real refugees from Ukraine**

Submitted text The Russian invasion of Ukraine will lead to large flows of refugees from the regions attacked by the army; the movement of refugees is already underway. Switzerland will also be affected. So that these refugees can be taken in: Does the Federal Council intend to speed up the repatriation of the too many economic migrants who have not fled any war and yet continue to place an unjustified burden on our asylum system?

**Federal Council's answer of 07.03.2022** The effective and swift enforcement of the removal of legally rejected asylum seekers is a constant goal of Swiss asylum and migration policy, regardless of the current crisis in Ukraine. In accordance with the Asylum Act, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) determines in a treatment strategy which asylum applications will be prioritized. In doing so, it takes particular account of the statutory processing periods, the situation in the countries of origin, the obvious merits or unfounded nature of the applications and the behavior of the asylum seekers. As part of the accelerated asylum procedure, decisions on applications from persons who clearly do not require Swiss protection are made during their stay in a Federal Asylum Center (BAZ) for a maximum of 140 days. The fastest possible execution of the removal order is then initiated from the BAZ. In principle, the cantonal authorities are responsible for enforcing removal orders. Its feasibility depends largely on the cooperation of the removed persons and the state to which the removal or transfer takes place.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5113\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5113_Annex_D.pdf)

**Egger Mike, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 16.12.2022**

*Original Text*

**TITEL: Änderung des Asylgesetzes. Abschaffung des Status S**

Eingereichter Text Der Bundesrat wird beauftragt, das Asylgesetz dahingehend zu ändern, dass die Bestimmungen zur Gewährung von vorübergehendem Schutz gemäss den aktuellen Artikel 4 und 66 ff. AsylG aufgehoben werden. Begründung Das geltende Asylgesetz sieht den Status S für Personen vor, die vom Bundesrat aufgrund der Lage in ihrem Heimatland als schutzbedürftig eingestuft werden. Die Aufnahme dieser Personen in der Schweiz erfolgt ohne Asylverfahren und ist befristet, kann aber immer wieder verlängert werden. Der im Februar 2022 ausgebrochene Ukraine-Krieg war der Auslöser für die Anwendung des Schutzstatus. Gemäss dem Staatssekretariat für Migration wurden bis Ende November rund 70 000 Personen aus der Ukraine der Schutzstatus S gewährt. Die Möglichkeit zur uneingeschränkten Einreise und bedingungslosem Aufenthalt hat zu einer Überbeanspruchung der Empfangsstrukturen auf allen Staatsebenen geführt. Zudem bedeutet die obligatorische Beschulung von ukrainischen Kindern und Jugendlichen eine grosse Belastung für die Schulgemeinden. Der automatische Anspruch auf Sozialhilfe auch für vermögende Personen aus der Ukraine stösst auf grosses Unverständnis und bedeutet eine Ungleichbehandlung gegenüber der Schweizer Bevölkerung. Benachteiligt gegenüber den Personen mit Schutzstatus S sind ebenfalls diejenigen Personen des Asylbereichs, die nicht aus der Ukraine stammen. Die Abschaffung des Schutzstatus S ist notwendig für die Akzeptanz und die Glaubwürdigkeit des Sozialstaats und des Asylwesens. Nicht die Herkunft

allein soll das Kriterium für die Aufnahme in der Schweiz sein, sondern tatsächliche Asylgründe auf der Basis eines ordentlichen Asylverfahrens.

**Stellungnahme des Bundesrates vom 15.02.2023** Der Schutzstatus S wurde vom Bundesrat aktiviert, um den Betroffenen rasch und unbürokratisch Schutz zu gewähren. Dadurch soll zugleich eine Überlastung des Asylsystems verhindert werden. Das Schweizerische Asylsystem ist auf rund 24'000 Asylgesuche pro Jahr ausgerichtet. Die Durchführung eines ordentlichen Asylverfahrens für die über 70'000 Schutzsuchenden aus der Ukraine hätte zu einer Überlastung der Strukturen geführt. Die Fluchtbewegungen aus der Ukraine stellen nicht nur die Schweiz, sondern ganz Europa vor enorme Herausforderungen. Deshalb war eine auf europäischer Ebene abgestimmte Vorgehensweise entscheidend. Gemäss dem Zwischenbericht der von der Vorsteherin des EJPD eingesetzten externen Evaluationsgruppe zum Schutzstatus S (Medienmitteilung EJPD vom 01.12.2022) hat sich die Anwendung des Schutzstatus S in der aktuellen Situation als notwendig erwiesen. Dank der Anwendung dieses Status konnte gewährleistet werden, dass das Asylsystem weiter funktioniert und die Geflüchteten aus der Ukraine trotzdem rasch und unbürokratisch Schutz erhalten.

Personen mit Schutzstatus S haben nur dann einen Anspruch auf Sozialhilfeleistungen, wenn sie ihren Lebensunterhalt nicht aus eigenen Mitteln bestreiten können (Art. 81 Asylgesetz; SR 142.31). Dieses in der gesamten Sozialhilfe geltende Subsidiaritätsprinzip gilt unabhängig von Nationalität und Aufenthaltsstatus für alle in der Schweiz wohnhaften Personen und sorgt entsprechend für eine rechtsgleiche Behandlung. Bei der Eruiierung der Bedürftigkeit von schutzbedürftigen Personen aus der Ukraine müssen daher die Kantone vorhandenes Vermögen – wie bei allen übrigen Sozialhilfebeziehenden – berücksichtigen. Im Übrigen müssen die Kantone für alle in der Schweiz wohnhaften Kinder, so auch für schutzbedürftige Personen oder Asylsuchende, den in der Bundesverfassung (Art. 19) vorgesehenen unentgeltlichen Grundschulunterricht sicherstellen. Betreffend die rechtlichen Unterschiede zwischen den verschiedenen Status im Asylbereich hält der 22.4548 277 Nationalrat Sommersession 2024 Zwischenbericht der externen Evaluationsgruppe fest, dass diese vom Gesetzgeber bewusst so geschaffen oder infolge der Entwicklungen in den vergangenen Jahren entstanden sind. Die Evaluationsgruppe wird im Hinblick auf ihren Schlussbericht prüfen, welche Differenzierungen sich unter dem Aspekt der Rechtsgleichheit aufrechterhalten lassen. Der Bundesrat beantragt die Ablehnung der Motion. Antrag des Bundesrates vom 15.02.2023 Der Bundesrat beantragt die Ablehnung der Motion. Chronologie 06.06.2024 Nationalrat Ablehnung

## ENGLISH

### **TITLE: Amendment of the Asylum Act. Abolition of S status**

Text submitted The Federal Council is instructed to amend the Asylum Act to the effect that the provisions on the granting of temporary protection in accordance with the current Articles 4 and

66 et seq. AsylA are repealed. Justification The current Asylum Act provides for S status for persons who are classified by the Federal Council as being in need of protection due to the situation in their home country. These persons are admitted to Switzerland without an asylum procedure and are admitted for a limited period of time, but can be extended at any time. The Ukraine war that broke out in February 2022 was the trigger for the application of protection status. According to the State Secretariat for Migration, around 70,000 people from Ukraine had been granted S protection status by the end of November. The possibility of unrestricted entry and unconditional residence has led to overstretched reception structures at all levels of government. In addition, the compulsory schooling of Ukrainian children and young people places a heavy burden on school communities. The automatic entitlement to social welfare also for wealthy people from Ukraine is met with great incomprehension and means unequal treatment compared to the Swiss population. Asylum seekers who do not come from Ukraine are also at a disadvantage compared to people with S protection status. The abolition of protection status S is necessary for the acceptance and credibility of the welfare state and the asylum system. Origin alone should not be the sole criterion for admission to Switzerland, but actual grounds for asylum on the basis of a proper asylum procedure.

**Statement of the Federal Council dated 15.02.2023** The Federal Council activated protection status S in order to grant protection to those affected quickly and unbureaucratically. This should also prevent the asylum system from becoming overloaded. The Swiss asylum system is designed to handle around 24,000 asylum applications per year. Carrying out an ordinary asylum procedure for the more than 70,000 asylum seekers from Ukraine would have led to an overload of structures. The refugee movements from Ukraine pose enormous challenges not only for Switzerland, but for the whole of Europe. A coordinated approach at European level was therefore crucial. According to the interim report of the external evaluation group on protection status S appointed by the Head of the FDJP (FDJP media release dated 01.12.2022), the application of protection status S has proven to be necessary in the current situation. Thanks to the application of this status, it has been possible to ensure that the asylum system continues to function and that refugees from Ukraine still receive protection quickly and unbureaucratically. Persons with protection status S are only entitled to social welfare benefits if they are unable to support themselves from their own resources (Art. 81 Asylum Act; SR 142.31). This principle of subsidiarity, which applies to all social assistance, applies to all persons residing in Switzerland regardless of their nationality and residence status and ensures equal treatment under the law. When determining the neediness of vulnerable persons from Ukraine, the cantons must therefore take existing assets into account - as with all other social welfare recipients. Furthermore, the cantons must ensure that all children residing in Switzerland, including vulnerable persons or asylum seekers, receive the free primary education provided for in the Federal Constitution (Art. 19). With regard to the legal differences between the various asylum statuses, the 22.4548 277 National Council Summer session 2024 interim report of the external evaluation group states that these have been deliberately created by the legislator or have arisen as a result of developments

in recent years. In view of its final report, the evaluation group will examine which differentiations can be maintained in terms of legal equality. The Federal Council proposes that the motion be rejected. Proposal of the Federal Council dated 15.02.2023 The Federal Council proposes that the motion be rejected.

Chronology 06.06.2024 National Council Rejection

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5204\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5204_Annex_D.pdf)

**Arslan Sibel, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 09.03.2022**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Schutz für Drittstaatsangehörige, die aus der Ukraine flüchten**

Eingereichter Text Gemäss Art. 4 AsylG kann die Schweiz Schutzbedürftigen für die Dauer einer schweren allgemeinen Gefährdung, insbesondere während eines Krieges oder Bürgerkrieges sowie in Situationen allgemeiner Gewalt, vorübergehenden Schutz gewähren. – Ist vorgesehen, dass auch Drittstaatsangehörige, die zurzeit aus der Ukraine flüchten, als Schutzbedürftig eingestuft werden? – Wenn nein, wie begründet der Bundesrat diesen Entscheid? – Welche Massnahmen sind vorgesehen, um spezifisch diesen Flüchtenden Beistand zu leisten?

***English Translation***

**TITLE: Protection for third-country nationals fleeing Ukraine**

Submitted text According to Art. 4 AsylA, Switzerland may grant temporary protection to persons in need of protection for the duration of a serious general threat, in particular during a war or civil war and in situations of general violence. - Is it envisaged that third-country nationals who are currently fleeing Ukraine will also be classified as persons in need of protection? - If not, how does the Federal Council justify this decision? - What measures are planned to specifically assist these refugees?

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5113\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5113_Annex_D.pdf)

**Atici Mustafa, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 01.03.2022**

***Original Text***

**TITEL: Alle Schutzbedürftigen aus der Ukraine gleich behandeln**

Eingereichter Text

– Kann der Bundesrat Nachrichten bestätigen, wonach Polen und andere Nachbarländer der Ukraine schutzbedürftige Menschen aus der Ukraine je nach Pass und Aussehen zurückweisen?  
– Nutzt er gegenüber der EU sein Mitspracherecht im Schengen/Dublin-Fragen, um darauf hinzuwirken, dass alle Schutzbedürftigen aus der Ukraine gleich behandelt werden? – Wird die Schweiz alle schutzbedürftigen Menschen, die sich bisher in der Ukraine aufgehalten haben, rasch, grosszügig und unterschiedslos aufnehmen?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 07.03.2022** Der Bundesrat hat Kenntnis von Medienberichten, in denen den polnischen Behörden vorgeworfen wird, aus der Ukraine fliehenden Personen – etwa aufgrund ihrer Hautfarbe – die Einreise zu verweigern. Diese Anschuldigungen werden von den polnischen Behörden zurückgewiesen. Dem Bundesrat sind keine konkreten Hinweise bekannt, welche die Aussagen der polnischen Behörden in Frage stellen würden. Für den Bundesrat ist klar, dass ein effizienter Schutz der Schengen-Aussengrenzen jederzeit unter Einhaltung der Grundrechte der Migrantinnen und Migranten erfolgen muss. Dabei ist insbesondere das Gebot des non-refoulements als zwingendes Völkerrecht zu beachten. Die Schweiz setzt sich auf verschiedenen Ebenen – sowohl in europäischen Gremien, in denen sie aufgrund ihrer Schengen-Assoziierung Einsitz hat, als auch bei bilateralen Kontakten mit Mitgliedsstaaten – dafür ein, dass die Grundrechte eingehalten werden. Der Bundesrat befürwortet für schutzsuchende Ukrainerinnen und Ukrainer die Anwendung des Schutzstatus S gemäss den Artikeln 4 und 66ff. Asylgesetz, sofern die Kantone und weiteren Partner dies ebenfalls unterstützen. Diese Konsultation ist aktuell im Gange. Der Bundesrat wird danach definitiv über die Anwendung des Schutzstatus S entscheiden. Nach Erteilung des Schutzstatus erfolgt die Unterbringung in den Kantonen.

**English Translation**

**TITLE: Alle Schutzbedürftigen aus der Ukraine gleich behandeln**

Submitted text

Can the Federal Council confirm news that Poland and other countries neighboring Ukraine are rejecting people in need of protection from Ukraine depending on their passport and appearance?  
- Will it use its right to have a say vis-à-vis the EU on Schengen/Dublin issues to ensure that all persons in need of protection from Ukraine are treated equally? - Will Switzerland quickly,

generously and indiscriminately admit all people in need of protection who have been in Ukraine to date?

**Federal Council's answer of 07.03.2022** The Federal Council is aware of media reports accusing the Polish authorities of refusing entry to people fleeing Ukraine, for example on the basis of their skin color. These accusations are rejected by the Polish authorities. The Federal Council is not aware of any concrete evidence that would call the Polish authorities' statements into question. It is clear to the Federal Council that the Schengen external borders must be protected efficiently at all times while respecting the fundamental rights of migrants. In particular, the principle of non-refoulement must be observed as mandatory international law. Switzerland is committed to ensuring that fundamental rights are respected at various levels - both in European bodies, in which it has a seat due to its Schengen association, and in bilateral contacts with member states. The Federal Council will then make a final decision on the application of protection status S. Once protection status has been granted, accommodation will be provided in the cantons.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5113\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5113_Annex_D.pdf)

## Appendix E Parliamentary Speeches on Solidarity

**Friedl Claudia, Member of Parliament**

**National Council, 09.09.2015**

### *Original Text*

**TITEL: Budget 2016. In der aktuellen prekären humanitären Situation die Beiträge für die internationale Zusammenarbeit kürzen?**

Eingereichter Text Gemäss UNHCR sind rund 60 Millionen Menschen weltweit auf der Flucht, mehr als jemals seit 1945. Die aktuellen Flüchtlingsströme nach Europa zeigen uns tagtäglich, wie verzweifelt die Menschen sind und Hilfe benötigen. Die Nachbarländer von Syrien haben bereits 4 Millionen Flüchtlinge aufgenommen. Andere Konfliktregionen sind aus dem Fokus der Berichterstattung verschwunden, so beispielsweise Darfur/Sudan oder Yemen. In Darfur wachsen die Flüchtlingsströme laut UNHCR nach wie vor massiv an. Allein in Sudan sind 6,9 Millionen Menschen dringend auf humanitäre Hilfe angewiesen. Ganz zu schweigen von Yemen, wo laut IKRK 2 Millionen Menschen inzwischen vollkommen von humanitärer Hilfe von aussen abhängig sind. In dieser prekären Situation schlägt der Bundesrat im Budget 2016 gegenüber 2015 eine massive Kürzung der humanitären Hilfe, der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und der Friedensförderung und Stärkung der Menschenrechte zwischen 4 und 7 Prozent vor. Über die politischen Lager hinweg wird jedoch mehr Ursachenbekämpfung und mehr humanitäre Hilfe vor Ort insbesondere im SyrienKonflikt gefordert. Bei abnehmenden Mitteln kann dies nur auf Kosten anderer Regionen oder aber anderer Bereiche der internationalen Zusammenarbeit geschehen. Das ist kontraproduktiv, denn erwiesenermassen sind Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Friedensförderung die wichtigsten Massnahmen, um die Ursachen der Migration zu bekämpfen. 1. Wie rechtfertigt der Bundesrat angesichts der dramatischen humanitären Lage in zahlreichen Weltregionen eine derart massive Kürzung der humanitären Hilfe und der internationalen Zusammenarbeit? 2. Besteht nicht die reelle Gefahr, dass innerhalb der humanitären Hilfe ein Verteilungskampf zwischen den verschiedenen Weltregionen, wo die Schweiz Hilfe leistet, entsteht? 3. Wie beurteilt er die Auswirkungen der Budgetkürzungen auf Projekte der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit oder Friedens und Gouvernanzförderung? Ist dies nicht kontraproduktiv, indem Projekte, die Fluchtursachen mindern könnten, eingestellt würden? 4. An der Konferenz von Addis Abeba hat der Bundesrat bekräftigt, den Beitrag der Entwicklungsgelder auf einen Anteil von 0,7 Prozent des Volkseinkommens (BNE) zu erhöhen. Bis wann will er diesen Anteil erreichen? Ist er in Anbetracht der aktuellen Situation bereit, dieses Ziel rasch zu erreichen?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 18.11.2015** 1. Das aktuelle Ausmass der humanitären Krisen und der damit verbundenen Flüchtlingsströme erfordert die Solidarität und das Engagement der internationalen Gemeinschaft inklusive der Schweiz. Die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Schweiz wird auch weiterhin einen bedeutenden Beitrag zur Linderung von Not, zur Reduktion

von Armut und zur Förderung von Frieden und menschlicher Sicherheit leisten, dies auch unter finanziell erschwerten Bedingungen. Aufgrund der negativen Entwicklung der Bundeseinnahmen hat der Bundesrat Anpassungen im Budget 2016 sowie im Rahmen des Stabilisierungsprogramms 2017-2019 Massnahmen zur Entlastung des Bundeshaushaltes beschlossen, die zur Einhaltung der Schuldenbremse notwendig sind. Davon sind auch die Kredite betroffen, die mit den Botschaften über die internationale Zusammenarbeit (IZA) 2013/2016 (BBl 2012 2485) und 2017/2020 anbegehrt werden. Im Jahr 2016 werden diese gegenüber 2015 um 4,4 Prozent zurückgehen, um im Vergleich zum Vorjahr ab 2017 jeweils wieder im Schnitt um etwa 2,7 Prozent zu wachsen. Der Bundesrat hat auf die überregionalen Auswirkungen der aktuellen Flüchtlingskrise und die massive Unterfinanzierung der Hilfe vor Ort im Zusammenhang mit den Krisen in Syrien, in Irak und am Horn von Afrika reagiert.

Am 18. September 2015 hat er angekündigt, die Unterstützung der Schweiz um 70 Millionen Franken zu erhöhen, wovon 40 Millionen Franken EDAintern kompensiert werden. Die Kosten für Asylsuchende im ersten Jahr ihres Aufenthaltes werden gemäss Richtlinien der OECD der öffentlichen Entwicklungshilfe (APD) angerechnet. Im Rahmen des Voranschlags 2016 hat der Bundesrat deshalb bei der Festlegung der Höhe der IZAKredite berücksichtigt, dass die Zahl der Asylgesuche und die dafür notwendigen Mittel stark zugenommen haben. 2. In Anbetracht der aktuellen Krisen wird die humanitäre Hilfe der Deza in den kommenden Jahren einen verstärkten Fokus auf die Nothilfe legen. Diese beinhaltet den Schutz und die Unterstützung (Grundversorgung mit Trinkwasser, Nahrungsmitteln, temporären Unterkünften und medizinischen Hilfsgütern) der am stärksten betroffenen Bevölkerung wie beispielsweise Frauen und Kinder, Flüchtlinge und intern Vertriebene. Die Vorsorge, der Wiederaufbau und die Nothilfe in weniger betroffenen Regionen werden im Rahmen der möglichen Aktivitäten und Prioritäten weiterhin verfolgt. 3. Es ist unbestritten, dass die Kürzungen der ursprünglich vorgesehenen Mittel Auswirkungen auf die Programme haben werden. Die zuständigen Verwaltungseinheiten werden sich jedoch bemühen, die Auswirkungen durch kontinuierliche Weiterentwicklung von Synergien und wirksamen Partnerschaften so gering wie möglich zu halten. Nachhaltige soziale, wirtschaftliche und ökologische Entwicklung, Frieden und Menschenrechte sind miteinander verknüpft. Neben der humanitären Nothilfe, dem Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung und der Vermittlung in Konflikten darf auch das mittel und langfristige Engagement der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und der Friedensförderung nicht vernachlässigt werden. Nur so kann die Schweiz einen Beitrag zur Verhinderung künftiger Krisen und Konflikte und damit zu einer Reduktion von Fluchtursachen leisten, etwa durch Vergangenheitsarbeit, Stärkung der lokalen Gouvernanz, die Schaffung von Möglichkeiten für Arbeit und Einkommen, den Schutz der Menschenrechte oder die Minderung von globalen Risiken. Kooperationsstrategien der gesamten Bundesverwaltung, wie sie beispielsweise am Horn von Afrika existieren, sind Ausdruck der verstärkten Zusammenarbeit und des kombinierten Instrumenteneinsatzes. 4. Die Schweiz hat am Weltgipfel zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung 2012 und an den Uno-Entwicklungsfinanzierungskonferenzen (Monterrey 2002, Doha 2008 und im Juli 2015 in

Addis Abeba) wiederholt ihren politischen Willen zum Erreichen des 0,7 ProzentZiels ausgedrückt. Dadurch unterstellt sich die Schweiz jedoch keinen rechtlich verbindlichen Massnahmen. Eine konkrete Zielmarke für die öffentliche Entwicklungshilfe wurde im Februar 2011 vom Parlament beschlossen, nämlich die Erhöhung der Mittel bis 2015 auf 0,5 Prozent des Bruttonationaleinkommens. Dieses Ziel wurde bereits im Jahr 2014 erreicht (0,51 Prozent) und wird auch im Jahr 2015 übertroffen werden. In den Folgejahren dürfte sich die Quote aufgrund des Stabilisierungsprogramms 2017/2019 voraussichtlich bei etwa 0,48 Prozent einpendeln. Dabei ist jedoch zu berücksichtigen, dass die APDQuote mehreren nichtsteuerbaren Einflussfaktoren unterliegt (Entwicklung BNE, Anzahl Asylgesuche usw.), die von Jahr zu Jahr stark schwanken können. Der Zeitpunkt für das Erreichen der 0,7 Prozent wurde noch nicht festgelegt. Allerdings erscheint angesichts der Lage des Bundeshaushalts das Erreichen des 0,7ProzentZiels in den nächsten Jahren nicht realistisch.

### *English Translation*

#### **TITLE: Budget 2016: Cutting contributions for international cooperation in the current precarious humanitarian situation?**

Text submitted According to the UNHCR, around 60 million people worldwide are on the run, more than at any time since 1945. The current flow of refugees to Europe shows us on a daily basis how desperate people are and how much help they need. Syria's neighboring countries have already taken in 4 million refugees. Other conflict regions have disappeared from the focus of reporting, such as Darfur/Sudan or Yemen. According to the UNHCR, the flow of refugees in Darfur is still growing massively. In Sudan alone, 6.9 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid. Not to mention Yemen, where, according to the ICRC, 2 million people are now completely dependent on humanitarian aid from outside. In this precarious situation, the Federal Council is proposing a massive cut in humanitarian aid, development cooperation, peacebuilding and strengthening human rights of between 4 and 7 percent in the 2016 budget compared to 2015. However, there are calls across the political camps for more action to tackle the root causes and more humanitarian aid on the ground, particularly in the Syrian conflict. With diminishing resources, this can only happen at the expense of other regions or other areas of international cooperation. This is counterproductive, as it has been proven that development cooperation and peacebuilding are the most important measures for combating the causes of migration. 1. how does the Federal Council justify such a massive cut in humanitarian aid and international cooperation in view of the dramatic humanitarian situation in many regions of the world? 2. is there not a real danger of a distribution war arising within humanitarian aid between the various regions of the world where Switzerland provides aid? 3. how does it assess the impact of budget cuts on development cooperation projects or peace and governance promotion? Is this not counterproductive, as projects that could reduce the causes of flight would be discontinued? 4 At the Addis Ababa Conference, the Federal Council reaffirmed its intention to increase the contribution of development funds to 0.7 percent of national income (GNI). By

when does it intend to achieve this percentage? In view of the current situation, is it prepared to achieve this target quickly?

**Response of the Federal Council dated 18.11.2015** 1 The current scale of the humanitarian crises and the associated refugee flows require the solidarity and commitment of the international community, including Switzerland. Switzerland's international cooperation will continue to make a significant contribution to alleviating need, reducing poverty and promoting peace and human security, even under difficult financial conditions. Due to the negative trend in federal revenue, the Federal Council has decided on adjustments to the 2016 budget and, as part of the 2017 2019 stabilization programme, measures to ease the burden on the federal budget, which are necessary to comply with the debt brake. This also affects the credits requested in the Dispatches on International Cooperation (IC) 20132016 (BBl 2012 2485) and 20172020. In 2016, these will fall by 4.4% compared to 2015, only to grow again by an average of around 2.7% from 2017 onwards compared to the previous year. The Federal Council has responded to the supra-regional effects of the current refugee crisis and the massive underfunding of aid on the ground in connection with the crises in Syria, Iraq and the Horn of Africa. On September 18, 2015, he announced that Switzerland's support would be increased by CHF 70 million, of which CHF 40 million would be offset within the FDFA. The costs for asylum seekers in the first year of their stay are counted towards official development assistance (ODA) in accordance with OECD guidelines. In the 2016 budget, the Federal Council therefore took into account the sharp increase in the number of asylum applications and the resources required for this when determining the amount of IC credits. 2 In view of the current crises, the SDC's humanitarian aid will focus more strongly on emergency aid in the coming years. This includes protection and support (basic supplies of drinking water, food, temporary accommodation and medical supplies) for the most affected populations, such as women and children, refugees and internally displaced persons. Preparedness, reconstruction and emergency aid in less affected regions will continue to be pursued within the scope of possible activities and priorities. 3. it is undisputed that the cuts in the originally planned funds will have an impact on the programs. However, the responsible administrative units will endeavor to minimize the impact by continuously developing synergies and effective partnerships. Sustainable social, economic and ecological development, peace and human rights are interlinked. In addition to humanitarian emergency aid, the protection of the civilian population and mediation in conflicts, the medium and long-term commitment of development cooperation and peacebuilding must not be neglected. Only in this way can Switzerland contribute to the prevention of future crises and conflicts and thus to reducing the causes of displacement, for example by dealing with the past, strengthening local governance, creating opportunities for work and income, protecting human rights and reducing global risks. Cooperation strategies of the entire federal administration, such as those that exist in the Horn of Africa, are an expression of increased cooperation and the combined use of instruments. 4 Switzerland has repeatedly expressed its political will to achieve the 0.7 percent target at the 2012 World Summit on Sustainable Development and at the UN Development Finance Conferences (Monterrey 2002, Doha 2008 and in July 2015 in Addis Ababa). However, this

means that Switzerland is not subject to any legally binding measures. A specific target for official development assistance was set by Parliament in February 2011, namely to increase funding to 0.5% of gross national income by 2015. This target was already achieved in 2014 (0.51%) and will also be exceeded in 2015. In subsequent years, the ratio is likely to level off at around 0.48% due to the stabilization programme 2017/2019. However, it should be noted that the ODA ratio is subject to several non-controllable influencing factors (development of GNI, number of asylum applications, etc.), which can fluctuate significantly from year to year. The date for reaching 0.7 percent has not yet been set. However, in view of the federal budget situation, achieving the 0.7% target in the next few years does not appear realistic.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5001\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5001_Annex_D.pdf)

**Heim Bea, Member of Parliament  
National Council, 10.09.2015**

*Original Text*

**TITEL: Solidarität mit Flüchtlingen. Privates Engagement mit positiven Anreizen erkennen und fördern.**

Eingereichter Text Überall zeigt sich in der Zivilgesellschaft eine immer grösser werdende Solidarität mit den Flüchtlingen, die hier Schutz suchen. Immer mehr Bürgerinnen und Bürger wollen helfen und suchen nach Möglichkeiten, Hilfe zu leisten. Solch privates Engagement ist eine grosse Chance. Das beste Mittel gegen Ängste und fremdenfeindliche Tendenzen sind reale Kontakte. Die Hilfsbereitschaft geht so weit, dass manche auch bereit sind, Flüchtlinge bei sich zu Hause aufzunehmen und zu betreuen. Bislang ist dies erst in vier Kantonen möglich. Hilfswerke stehen dort sowohl den Logisanbietenden wie den Flüchtlingen beratend zur Seite. In anderen Kantonen aber sehen sich jene, die Unterkünfte anbieten möchten, vor Hürden gestellt, die mehr mit Administration als mit verständlichen Voraussetzungsbedingungen zu tun haben. Deshalb stelle ich folgende Fragen: 1. Schätzt der Bundesrat den Wert des zivilgesellschaftlichen Engagements auch so ein, dass er es begrüßen würde, wenn der Weg für adäquate, geeignete Möglichkeiten möglichst einfach gestaltet würde? 2. Welche Möglichkeiten sieht der Bundesrat, dass das zivilgesellschaftliche Engagement noch einfacher und besser fruchtbar gemacht werden kann? 3. Welche Möglichkeiten sieht der Bundesrat, um zusammen mit den Kantonen darauf hinzuwirken, dass insbesondere in den Bereichen Wohnen und Bildung eine Ausweitung privater Angebote stattfinden kann? 4. Welche Möglichkeiten sieht der Bundesrat, um zusammen mit der Wirtschaft darauf hinzuwirken, dass die Menschen, die hier Schutz erhalten, Möglichkeiten zur Erwerbsarbeit erhalten?

**Antwort des Bundesrates vom 04.11.2015** 1./2. Der Bundesrat begrüsst das Engagement der Bevölkerung und die damit verbundene Solidarität mit Personen aus dem Asylbereich

ausdrücklich. Er ist insbesondere der Ansicht, dass dieses zivilgesellschaftliche Engagement einen wichtigen Beitrag bei der gesellschaftlichen Integration schutzbedürftiger Personen in der Schweiz leisten kann. Personen, welche in die Schweiz einreisen und ein Asylgesuch stellen, werden zuerst in einem Empfangs und Verfahrenszentrum (EVZ) des Bundes untergebracht. In dieser Phase ist der Bund für die Betreuung, Unterstützung und Unterbringung der Asylsuchenden zuständig. Die durchschnittliche Aufenthaltszeit in einem EVZ beträgt 29 Tage (Stand erstes Halbjahr 2015). Während dieser kurzen Zeit, in welcher zudem viele administrative Aufgaben wie Registrierung, Untersuchung des Gesundheitszustandes und Erstbefragung erledigt werden müssen, ist die direkte Zusammenarbeit mit Privaten (insbesondere eine private Unterbringung) nicht zielführend und kaum organisierbar. Nach dem Aufenthalt im EVZ werden die Asylsuchenden gemäss Verteilschlüssel von Artikel 21 der Asylverordnung 1 (SR 142.311) auf die Kantone verteilt. Aufgrund der verfassungsmässigen Zuständigkeit der Kantone hat der Bund ab diesem Zeitpunkt nicht mehr die Kompetenz, auf die Ausgestaltung der Unterbringung, Versorgung und Betreuung Einfluss zu nehmen. Diese liegt dann ausschliesslich bei den Kantonen. Die Kantone entscheiden daher auch selber über die Zusammenarbeit mit Privaten im Asyl und Flüchtlingsbereich. Sie sind daher die richtigen Ansprechpartner für Initiativen zur privaten Unterbringung von Personen aus dem Asylbereich. 3. Die von staatlicher Seite unterstützte und koordinierte Integrationsförderung ist nur wirksam und erfolgreich, wenn vonseiten der Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft Offenheit gegenüber den Zuwandernden besteht. Im Rahmen der vom Bund mitfinanzierten Kantonalen Integrationsprogramme (KIP) werden Angebote namentlich der Hilfswerke gefördert, welche zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement von Freiwilligen unterstützen. Dieses besteht beispielsweise in der Begleitung bei sozialen und schulischen Herausforderungen, in der Anwendung der Sprache oder allgemein in der Begegnung und Verständigung. Auch das Staatssekretariat für Migration und das Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft unterstützen im Rahmen ihres Programmes "Mentoring 2014 bis 2016" zurzeit 27 Mentoringprojekte, von welchen namentlich auch Personen aus dem Asylbereich profitieren. 4. Die Förderung der Erwerbsintegration ist ein wichtiges Ziel der KIP. Bund, Kantone und Gemeinden sind mit den Spitzenverbänden der Arbeitswelt und einzelnen Branchenverbänden im Dialog ([www.dialogintegration.ch/arbeiten](http://www.dialogintegration.ch/arbeiten)). Sie haben sich darauf geeinigt, verstärkt Arbeitskräfte im Inland zu rekrutieren und dabei auch Flüchtlinge und vorläufig Aufgenommene zu berücksichtigen. Schliesslich verweist der Bundesrat auch auf die vorgesehenen Massnahmen im Zusammenhang mit der Umsetzung von Artikel 121a der Schweizerischen Bundesverfassung. Der Bundesrat will die administrativen Hürden für anerkannte Flüchtlinge und vorläufig aufgenommene Personen abbauen, so dass diese leichter arbeiten können. So soll die Bewilligungspflicht für die Erwerbstätigkeit abgeschafft und durch ein einfaches Meldeverfahren ersetzt werden.

### ***English Translation***

**TITLE: Solidarity with refugees. Recognizing and promoting private commitment with positive incentives.**

Submitted text Civil society everywhere is showing increasing solidarity with refugees seeking protection here. More and more citizens want to help and are looking for ways to provide assistance. Such private commitment is a great opportunity. Real contact is the best way to combat fears and xenophobic tendencies. The willingness to help goes so far that some people are even prepared to take in and look after refugees in their own homes. So far, this has only been possible in four cantons. In these cantons, aid organizations are on hand to advise both those offering accommodation and the refugees. In other cantons, however, those who want to offer accommodation are faced with hurdles that have more to do with administration than with understandable prerequisites. I would therefore like to ask the following questions: 1. does the Federal Council also consider the value of civil society involvement to be such that it would welcome it if the path to adequate, suitable opportunities were made as simple as possible? 2. what possibilities does the Federal Council see for making civic engagement even easier and more fruitful? 3. what options does the Federal Council see for working with the cantons to ensure that private services can be expanded, particularly in the areas of housing and education? 4. what options does the Federal Council see for working with the private sector to ensure that the people who receive protection here are given opportunities for gainful employment?

**Federal Council response of 04.11.2015** 1./2. The Federal Council expressly welcomes the commitment of the population and the associated solidarity with asylum seekers. In particular, it believes that this civic engagement can make an important contribution to the social integration of people in need of protection in Switzerland. People who enter Switzerland and apply for asylum are first accommodated in a federal Reception and Processing Center (RPC). During this phase, the federal government is responsible for the care, support and accommodation of asylum seekers. The average length of stay in an EVZ is 29 days (as of the first half of 2015). During this short period, in which many administrative tasks such as registration, health checks and initial interviews must also be completed, direct cooperation with private individuals (in particular private accommodation) is not expedient and can hardly be organized. After their stay in the EVZ, asylum seekers are distributed to the cantons in accordance with the distribution key in Article 21 of the Asylum Ordinance 1 (SR 142.311). Due to the constitutional responsibility of the cantons, the federal government no longer has the authority to influence the organization of accommodation, care and support from this point onwards. This will then lie exclusively with the cantons. The cantons will therefore also decide for themselves on cooperation with private individuals in the area of asylum and refugees. They are therefore the right contacts for initiatives for the private accommodation of asylum seekers. 3. state-supported and coordinated integration promotion is only effective and successful if there is openness towards immigrants on the part of society and the economy. As part of the cantonal integration programs (KIP) co-financed by the federal government, offers are promoted, particularly by aid organizations, which support the civic engagement of volunteers. This includes, for example, support with social and educational challenges, the use of the language or general encounters and communication. The State Secretariat for Migration and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs are also currently supporting 27 mentoring projects as part of their “Mentoring 2014 to

2016” program, from which people from the asylum sector in particular also benefit. 4 Promoting integration into employment is an important goal of the CIP. The Confederation, cantons and municipalities are in dialog with the umbrella organizations of the world of work and individual industry associations ([www.dialogintegration.ch/arbeiten](http://www.dialogintegration.ch/arbeiten)). They have agreed to recruit more workers domestically and also take refugees and temporarily admitted persons into account. Finally, the Federal Council also refers to the measures planned in connection with the implementation of Article 121a of the Swiss Federal Constitution. The Federal Council wants to reduce the administrative hurdles for recognized refugees and temporarily admitted persons so that they can work more easily. The permit requirement for gainful employment is to be abolished and replaced by a simple registration procedure.

Source: Swiss Official Bulletin. Retrieved from [https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR\\_5001\\_Annex\\_D.pdf](https://www.parlament.ch/centers/documents/de/NR_5001_Annex_D.pdf)