

SWITZERLAND 2015 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swiss Confederation is a constitutional republic with a federal structure. Legislative authority resides in a bicameral parliament (Federal Assembly) consisting of the 46-member Council of States and the 200-member National Council. Federal elections were held on October 18 and were generally considered free and fair. Parliament elects the executive leadership (the seven-member Federal Council) every four years, and did so on December 9. A four-party coalition made up the Federal Council. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most significant problems included the occasional use of excessive force by security forces, particularly in connection with the arrests and deportations of asylum seekers and in detention facilities for the canton of Geneva. Authorities sometimes subjected asylum seekers to lengthy detention and mistreatment. Societal discrimination against Roma, members of other minorities, and immigrants also occurred.

Other human rights problems included overcrowded prisons, violence against women, forced marriages and female genital mutilation/cutting in some immigrant groups, child abuse, disparities in pay and unemployment rates for women and minorities, hostility toward Muslims, anti-Semitic incidents, and trafficking in persons.

The government took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed violations, whether in the security services or elsewhere in the government.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution prohibits such practices. There were reports individual police officers used excessive force and engaged in degrading treatment while making arrests.

In June Zurich's high court rejected the appeal of two police officers whom the district court of Dietikon sentenced in 2013 to suspended prison sentences of 16 months each for abuse of authority and causing grievous bodily harm to a pensioner in 2011. Following a reinvestigation of the case, the high court sentenced the officers to separate suspended fines of 230 Swiss francs (\$230) per day for 270 days and 60 Swiss francs (\$60) per day for 270 days.

In October Bern's regional court sentenced two police officers to suspended fines for kicking an unruly man at a train station's police post and for dragging him through a pool of his own urine and throwing his jacket in it.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Notwithstanding some inadequate facilities, prison and detention center conditions frequently met international standards.

Physical Conditions: Prison overcrowding remained a problem, especially in the French-speaking part of the country. The canton of Vaud's La Croisee prison had an occupancy rate of 152 percent in 2014, while Geneva's Champ-Dollon Prison continued to be the most crowded facility, with a population of more than 200 percent of design capacity. As of August 2014, more than 900 inmates occupied the prison's 390 available spaces.

In January the federal court ordered Geneva's justice department to reopen a criminal investigation against four wardens of the Champ-Dollon Prison accused of encouraging an inmate to commit suicide in 2011. The federal court based its decision on the previously unsatisfactory examination of the case's circumstances and doubts about the wardens' behavior.

In May the federal court rejected two complaints of a Champ-Dollon inmate, who claimed the 38 body searches he was subjected to over 12 months following visitation hours were degrading and that his overcrowded cell compromised his human dignity. While the federal court agreed that the prolonged occupancy of a

three-person cell with six inmates could lead to a breach of human rights, it found the satisfactory hygiene conditions did not justify such criticism. The complainant was living on less than four square meters during two separate time periods of 53 and 57 days.

In Lausanne authorities forced prisoners to spend parts of their sentences in small cells at police stations for longer than the legal maximum of 48 hours.

While conditions for female prisoners generally were comparable to those for men, there were exceptions. The National Commission for the Prevention of Torture (NCPT) found female foreigners awaiting deportation in administrative detention in the Sennhof prison in Graubunden who were incarcerated up to 21 hours a day, while the Dielsdorf prison in Zurich was deemed inappropriate for female minors due to a lack of physical exercise opportunities and social programs.

Some facilities, however, lacked work and recreational facilities as well as outdoor areas, and offered insufficient fresh air and daylight.

According to the Federal Office for Statistics, there were 10 deaths in confinement, including two suicides, in 2013, the last year for which data were available. Press sources reported at least three suicides during the year.

On June 23, the NCPT issued its fifth annual report. The commission focused on conditions in pretrial detention centers, citing insufficient consideration for the presumption of innocence due to excessive incarceration periods of more than 20 hours a day, lack of physical exercise opportunities, and restrictive access to external contacts. The commission noted incidents of prison overcrowding, poor air quality and insufficient daylight, inadequate separation of different types of prisoners, lengthy pretrial detention, and a shortage of prison guards. As in previous years, the commission also reported that foreigners awaiting deportation and individuals in administrative detention often faced harsher treatment than did others in pretrial custody.

In 2014 the NCPT visited 21 prisons in 11 cantons, including first-time inspections of six juvenile detention facilities in the cantons of Fribourg, Aargau, Bern, Vaud, Valais, and Zurich. While the commission deemed overall conditions at the institutions to be adequate, it found some prisons to be underresourced, overcrowded, and lacking in sufficient fresh air and daylight. The committee deemed overall detention conditions at the Porrentruy prison in Jura

“inappropriate” due to overcapacity, lack of an outdoor area, and nonseparation of different types of inmates.

In February the president of the expert committee Sante Prison Suisse concluded that medical care in primarily smaller detention facilities was partially insufficient. In August the UN Committee against Torture criticized the overcrowding and often poor detention conditions and medical care in prisons.

Administration: There was no ombudsman or comparable authority available at the national level to respond to complaints, but a number of cantons instituted cantonal ombudsmen and mediation boards that acted on behalf of prisoners and detainees to address complaints related to their detention. Such entities were more readily available in the larger, more populous cantons than in smaller, less populated ones.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted independent monitoring of conditions in prisons and asylum reception centers by local and international human rights groups, the media, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture carried out its latest periodic visit to the country between April 13 and 24. Local groups enjoyed a high degree of independence.

Improvements: In October authorities opened an extension of Geneva’s La Brenaz prison containing an additional 100 spaces to relieve the pressures facing the Champ-Dollon prison.

In November Zurich’s law enforcement office extended the use of provisional buildings in the inner courtyard of Zurich’s cantonal prison by an additional eight years to provide more cell spaces.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The federal police maintain internal security. The army is responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. The police report to the Federal Department of Justice and Police, while the army reports to the Federal

Department of Defense. The State Secretariat for Migration reports to the Federal Department of Justice and Police and is responsible for granting immigrant visas and residence/work permits, evaluating asylum and refugee applications, and managing deportations. The Swiss Border Guard reports to the Federal Department of Finance and is responsible for registering asylum seekers and fighting illegal migration and transborder crime. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the police and the army, and the government had effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption. Cantonal state prosecutors and police generally investigated security force violence; in some cantons, however, the ombudsman's office investigated such cases. In addition to its coordination and analytical responsibilities, the Federal Office of Police may pursue its own investigations under the supervision of the attorney general in cases of organized crime, money laundering, and corruption.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

By law police must apprehend criminal suspects based on warrants issued by a duly authorized official unless responding to a specific and immediate danger. In most instances, authorities may not hold a suspect more than 24 hours before bringing him or her before a prosecutor or investigating magistrate, who must either formally charge a detainee or order his or her release. Immigration authorities may detain asylum seekers and other foreigners without valid documents up to 96 hours without an arrest warrant. There is a functioning bail system, and courts granted release on personal recognizance or bail unless the magistrate believed the person charged to be dangerous or a flight risk. Authorities may deny a suspect legal counsel at the time of detention or initial questioning, but the suspect has the right to choose and contact an attorney before being charged. The state provides free legal assistance for indigents charged with crimes with a possible sentence of imprisonment. Authorities may restrict family members' access to prevent evidence tampering, but authorities require law enforcement officials to inform close relatives promptly of the detention.

The law allows police to detain young offenders for a "minimal period" but does not explicitly state the length. In actuality without an arraignment or arrest warrant, police may detain young offenders for a maximum of 24 hours (48 hours during weekends). Sentences for youths up to age 15 may be no longer than one year. For offenders 16 or older, sentences could be up to four years.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were occasional reports of arbitrary arrest. In August the Zurich public prosecutor's office suspended criminal proceedings against two

police officers for abuse of authority after they arrested a Kurdish man in 2013 for feeding his three-year-old son an apple slice in a no-food zone on a ship in Zurich. The public prosecutor's office deemed the officers' handcuffing of the man "reasonable" under the circumstances.

Pretrial Detention: In some instances lengthy pretrial detention was a problem. In 2014 approximately 27 percent of all prisoners were in pretrial detention. The country's highest court ruled pretrial detention must not exceed the length of the expected sentence for the crime for which a suspect is charged.

Protracted Detention of Rejected Asylum Seekers or Stateless Persons: According to the NCPT, measures against asylum seekers awaiting deportation were often harsher than against individuals in pretrial detention. In a 2014 report, Terre des Femmes noted female asylum seekers housed in overcrowded co-ed facilities risked becoming victims of sexual harassment and violence, due to the nonseparation of men and women. The report further cited a lack of recreational rooms, work opportunities, and social activities.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence.

Trial Procedures

The constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence. Trials are public and held without undue delay. Defendants have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges (with free interpretation as necessary), and may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt. The courts use juries only in the most serious cases, such as murder. Defendants have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense and the right to be present and consult with an attorney in a timely manner, and the courts may provide an attorney at public expense if a defendant faces serious criminal charges. Defendants have the right to confront or question witnesses, present witnesses and evidence, and to access government-held evidence. They have the right to appeal, ultimately to the Federal Tribunal, the country's highest court. Authorities generally respected these rights and extended them to all citizens.

Military courts may try civilians charged with revealing military secrets, such as classified military documents or classified military locations and installations. There were no reports that military courts tried any civilians during the year.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters. Citizens have access to a court to bring lawsuits seeking damages for or cessation of a human rights violation. Persons who exhaust their right of appeal in domestic courts may apply to the European Court of Human Rights for redress of alleged violations by the state of the European Convention on Human Rights.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions, and there were no reports the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press, although the law restricts speech involving racial hatred and denial of crimes against humanity. The government generally respected these rights. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of speech and press.

Freedom of Speech and Expression: The law prohibits hate speech through public incitement to racial hatred or discrimination, spreading racist ideology, and denying crimes against humanity, including via electronic means, and provides for punishment of violators by monetary fines and imprisonment of up to three years. There were several convictions under this law during the year (see section 6, Anti-Semitism and National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

Press and Media Freedoms: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction. The law’s restrictions on hate speech and denial of crimes against humanity apply to print, broadcast, and electronic media. According to federal law, it is a crime to publish information based on leaked “secret official discussions.”

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. According to the Federal Office of Statistics, 88 percent of the population more than 14 years of age used the internet during the year.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution provides for the freedoms of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State’s *International Religious Freedom Report* at www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government established a system for providing protection to refugees.

In September 2014 parliament extended by an additional four years asylum policies scheduled to expire in September. The measures stipulate that Swiss embassies abroad may no longer accept asylum requests and that conscientious objectors and army deserters no longer automatically qualify for refugee status.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) relied on a list of “safe countries.” Asylum seekers who originated from or transited these countries generally were ineligible for asylum.

Refoulement: The constitution prohibits the deportation of refugees who face persecution in their countries of origin and also states that no one can be sent to a country where they might face torture or other degrading and cruel acts. While the government generally did not force asylum seekers to return to countries where their lives or freedom may be threatened, there were reportedly exceptions. For example, in August the UN Committee against Torture condemned the country’s forcible return of refugees and reprimanded the means used for deporting individuals to Sri Lanka and Somalia. Committee members found that not enough official guarantees were in place to ensure that returning refugees would not be tortured in their home countries.

Refugee Abuse: The government required asylum applicants to provide documentation verifying their identity within 48 hours of completing their applications; authorities refused to process applications of asylum seekers unable to provide a credible justification for their lack of acceptable documents or to show evidence of persecution. Authorities may detain uncooperative asylum seekers, subject to judicial review, for up to six months while adjudicating their applications. The government may detain rejected applicants for up to three months to ensure their departure or up to 18 months if repatriation posed special obstacles. The government may detain minors between the ages of 15 and 18 for up to 12 months pending repatriation. Authorities generally instructed asylum seekers to leave voluntarily but could forcibly repatriate those who refused.

To accommodate increasing numbers of asylum seekers, the State Secretariat for Migration continued to house hundreds of asylum seekers in remote rural areas or in decommissioned military establishments, several of them underground, that were retrofitted to serve as short-term housing. For example, in May the secretariat opened a temporary asylum center with a capacity of 120 residents on

the military grounds of Menzingen for the duration of three years. In other cases, migration authorities of the cantons of Vaud, Aargau, and Bern worked with the Swiss Refugee Aid to house asylum seekers in private homes, while other cantons placed migrants in former hotels, churches, monasteries, and civil defense installations. The cantons of Aargau and Bern also temporarily set up outdoor tents to accommodate 140 male asylum seekers. In November the canton of Bern opened civil defense installations to house asylum seekers against the will of the municipalities by drawing on the cantonal constitution.

On July 9, the NCPT released its annual report on deportation flights. Between May 2014 and April, the country forcibly deported 231 persons, including 36 children, to their countries of origin on 41 repatriation flights. NCPT observers on each flight noted an overall improvement in treatment of individuals being deported but criticized isolated instances of Tasers being used against deportees and the separation of family members prior to deportation. There was one report of authorities using tranquilizers against the will of an allegedly disturbed female asylum seeker prior to her deportation. While there was less frequent use of body shackles and wheelchairs to immobilize asylum seekers who threatened resistance, the NCPT noted isolated instances of minors being restrained with hand- and handcuffs. Observers also viewed the frequent restraint of women by male personnel as inappropriate. There were two cases of deportees being kept on leashes while going to the lavatories during the flight.

In January a fire at an asylum center in Zurich's Dietikon district resulted in the relocation of asylum seekers to a civil defense installation. Police initially stressed there were no indications the incident resulted from xenophobia. As of December police stated the fire was most likely caused by "human error" from either inside or outside the building. In February a special police unit overpowered an Iraqi-Iranian husband and wife in the Steinhausen asylum transit center in Zug after the couple threatened to harm themselves and their four-year-old son during a three-hour standoff. The couple was taken to a hospital, while the boy was placed in external care. In August a middle-aged rejected asylum seeker was found dead in his single room in Lucerne's emergency asylum housing. The man reportedly committed suicide a month prior.

In November 2014 authorities arrested two individuals on suspicion of intentionally setting a fire at Geneva's Tattes asylum center earlier in the month. The fire left one Eritrean national dead and injured 40 other persons. In July 2014 a female Syrian asylum seeker suffered a stillbirth while being deported to Italy due to the alleged refusal of Swiss officials to provide medical assistance. The

woman, who was seven months pregnant, was part of a migrant group picked up by Swiss authorities on a train transiting the country from Milan to Paris. En route, the woman suffered heavy bleeding; Swiss officials reportedly did not react to her repeated calls for help, but instead locked her in a cell in the town of Brig for four hours. After arriving in Italy, she delivered a stillborn child. In October a postmortem report confirmed the child died 12 hours before the stillbirth, which according to media reports, supported claims of misconduct and neglect by Swiss border patrol officers. Authorities turned the case over to a military tribunal, where it was pending as of year's end.

NGOs working with refugees continued to complain that officials often effectively denied detained asylum seekers proper legal representation in deportation cases due to their financial inability to hire an attorney. Authorities provided free legal assistance only during the initial phase of the asylum application and in cases of serious criminal offenses, deeming deportation of asylum seekers an administrative, rather than a judicial, process.

Employment: The law prohibits asylum seekers from working during the first three months following their arrival in the country, and authorities can extend that prohibition for an additional three months if the State Secretariat for Migration rejects the asylum application within the first three months. Afterward, asylum seekers could seek employment in industries with labor shortages, such as in the hospitality, construction, health care, or agricultural sectors.

In August media reports claimed the canton of Zurich occasionally refused to grant work permits to temporarily admitted refugees with job offers. A local lawyer who specialized in national foreigner legislation called the canton's actions "arbitrary."

Access to Basic Services: The cantons assumed the main responsibility for providing housing, general assistance, and care to asylum applicants during the processing phase. Several NGOs and left-wing political parties complained about insufficient and inappropriate housing for refugees. Housing shortages for asylum seekers remained a problem. Asylum seekers had the right to access basic medical care, and the children of asylum seekers were entitled to attend school until ninth grade (the last year for which school is mandatory). NGOs and volunteers generally conducted language classes for asylum seekers.

Durable Solutions: In March the government decided to take an additional 3,000 Syrian refugees over three years as part of a UNHCR resettlement program run in parallel to the 500 Syrian refugees the government decided to accept between 2013

and 2015. As of September, 68 Syrian refugees had arrived in the country under the program.

Temporary Protection: The law allows for the provision of temporary protection to a specific group of persons affected by civil war and general violence. The government has not granted any group temporary protection since the law's enactment in 1998, but it granted temporary admission to 9,367 individuals, 2,494 of whom the government designated as refugees.

Amnesty International and UNHCR criticized the country for primarily granting temporary admission to Syrian refugees because the government only awarded 40 percent of Syrians refugee status. Others were admitted as “temporarily admitted refugees.” Those awarded temporary refugee status faced more restrictions on family reunification and work permits.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government through free and fair periodic elections based on universal and equal suffrage, and citizens exercised that ability.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: On October 18, voters elected parliamentary representatives for the National Council (House) and the Council of States (Senate). Runoff elections for the Council of States continued throughout November in 12 of the 26 cantons. Observers considered the elections free and fair.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.

Corruption: In its second interim report, the Group of States against Corruption referred to the government's progress on fighting corruption as “overall unsatisfactory.” The report reprimanded the government's continued lack of statutory regulations on political party financing. In September parliament passed legislation making bribery in the private sector a criminal offense. Federal police

and public prosecutors also adopted an anonymous whistleblower hotline for members of the public to report suspicious activities to state authorities.

In March authorities dismissed, without notice, an employee of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) for accepting money and gifts worth thousands of Swiss francs in exchange for granting inflated and favorable business contracts to select information technology companies over the course of several years. The case received considerable media attention. The employee reportedly granted one company a six million Swiss franc (\$6 million) contract in 2013. In February police arrested a SECO executive in connection with the case but released him shortly thereafter without charge. The Office of the Attorney General ordered the pretrial detention of one business manager connected to the case and continued investigations of two other individuals; these investigations were pending as of November.

Financial Disclosure: Members of the Federal Assembly must disclose annually their financial interests, professional activities, supervisory board or executive body memberships, and activities as consultants or paid experts. Investigating and prosecuting government corruption is a federal responsibility. A majority of cantons required members of cantonal parliaments to disclose their financial interests.

Public Access to Information: The constitution requires the government to inform the public about its activities, and government information was available to all persons living in the country, including foreign media. A transparency law provides for public access to government documents. Authorities enforced the law, and access to public information was readily available.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The Swiss Center for Human Rights (SCHR), created by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Department of Justice and Police, consists of a network of universities and human rights experts responsible for strengthening and supporting human rights capacities and

bridging gaps between federal and cantonal authorities on human rights problems. The SCHR hosted presentations and published reports on human rights themes, such as on the criminalization of torture, the temporary admission of asylum seekers, the right to freedom of assembly, and the right to privacy.

There were 14 ombudsman offices located in the cantons of Basel-Land, Basel-Stadt, Zug, and Zurich, and in the cities of Bern, St. Gallen, Rapperswil-Jona, Winterthur, and Zurich that also assessed cases of police misconduct.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin, social origin, disability, gender, age, and language. Although there were no explicit protections in the constitution or law for sexual orientation or HIV-positive status, the constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of one's way of life and physical and mental disability. The government generally enforced these prohibitions.

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: Rape, including spousal rape, is a statutory offense. Penalties for rape range from one to ten years in prison. The government effectively prosecuted individuals accused of such crimes.

NGOs such as Terre des Femmes, Vivre Sans Violence, and the umbrella organization for women's shelters noted that violence against women remained a serious problem. Domestic violence resulted in the deaths of 23 individuals in 2014. In 2014 police registered 15,650 cases linked to domestic violence or domestic abuse. The law penalizes domestic violence as well as stalking. A court may order an abusive spouse to leave the family home temporarily.

Specialized government agencies, numerous NGOs, and nearly a dozen private or government-sponsored hotlines provided help, counseling, and legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. Official women's shelters had average occupancy rates between 70 and 90 percent, and many shelters reached 100 percent of capacity, particularly in the northwest of the country. Demand for shelter space regularly exceeded capacity, with some victims turned away and housed in alternative accommodations, such as in hotels or specialized institutions. The Ministry of Interior's Federal Office for Gender Equality had a special unit that focused on domestic violence. Most cantonal police forces included specially

trained domestic violence units. A majority of cantons had administrative units to coordinate the activities of law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and victims assistance groups.

In November 2014 the conference of cantonal social directors published a report on local women's shelters. The report concluded that most victims were foreign women from low-income families and that a three-fold increase in shelter spaces was needed nationally to adequately assist all survivors. The report further cited a lack of financial resources and a discrepancy in services offered across the cantons.

On November 25, the organization Christian Peace Service initiated a government-supported campaign showcasing the different types of violence in a relationship, including physical, social, and economic oppression, that included approximately 50 participating organizations and 70 public awareness events across the country.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): FGM/C is illegal and punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. In 2012 the federal government worked with several NGOs to establish the National Action Group against Female Genital Mutilation to develop a framework of best practices to protect and care for women and girls affected by FGM/C. There were no cases brought to court in 2014. According to government estimates, there were approximately 14,700 women and girls, primarily from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Egypt, living in the country who were affected by, or at risk of, FGM/C.

In October the Federal Council tasked the Federal Office of Health and State Secretariat for Migration with establishing and cofinancing a counseling and preventive activities network for raising awareness of FGM/C among potential victims and health specialists.

In February 2014 the women's human rights organization Terre des Femmes, in conjunction with the Federal Office of Public Health, published an assessment of FGM/C in the country. The report stated that FGM/C affected approximately 13,000 migrant women and girls in 2013. Several federal offices, in collaboration with NGOs and academic institutions, implemented educational and preventative measures aimed at vulnerable communities and relevant authorities, including a mediation service. The cantons of Geneva, Neuchatel, Vaud, and Fribourg carried out cantonal awareness strategies and campaigns, while other cantons engaged in similar awareness raising activities.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: The law prohibits forced marriage and provides for penalties of up to five years in prison, and denies permission to enter the country to visa applicants suspected of involvement in a forced marriage. Victims of forced marriage already residing in the country may remain and may change their marital status from “married” to “single” without a requirement to record a divorce. According to police statistics, three individuals were victims of forced marriage in 2014. This was in contrast to local media reports, which estimated there were 250 victims of forced marriage each year. A 2012 University of Neuchatel study estimated that 1,400 women were victims of forced marriages or unwanted relationships between 2010 and 2012. The Federal Coordination Unit against Forced Marriages implemented a nationwide program aimed at combating forced marriages for the period 2013-17. One NGO working with victims of forced marriage assisted on average five victims each week.

In April the high court of Zurich confirmed the six-year prison sentence of a 51-year-old Kurdish man who incited his former brother-in-law to kill his sister, the man’s ex-wife, and her new partner in an honor killing.

Sexual Harassment: The law prohibits sexual harassment and facilitates legal remedies for those claiming discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Special legal protection against the dismissal of a claimant, however, was only temporary. Employers failing to take reasonable measures to prevent sexual harassment were liable for damages up to the equivalent of six months’ salary.

Reproductive Rights: The government recognized the basic right of couples and individuals to decide the number, spacing, and timing of their children; manage their reproductive health; and have the information and means to do so, free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.

Discrimination: Women enjoy the same rights as men under the constitution and law, including in family, labor, education, property, nationality, and inheritance law. During the year parliament passed revisions to the civil law ensuring a more equitable division of pension funds during divorce that will be retroactive for all divorces entered into as of 2000.

In an October 2014 report, the Federal Office for Gender Equality and the Federal Commission on Women outlined progress in women’s education levels and earning potential over the previous 15 years. Despite advances, the report concluded educated women were twice as likely to be poor than educated men, mostly because women remained the primary family caregivers and were not

monetarily compensated for the time spent caring for their children or other relatives. The report highlighted that 19 percent of women (compared to 7 percent of men) were low wage earners in 2010, which, coupled with their primary caregiver responsibilities, exposed them to a high poverty risk and negative consequences in the labor market and social security system. Many cantons and some large cities had equality offices to handle gender problems.

Discrimination against women in the workplace is illegal, but a disproportionate share of women held jobs with lower levels of responsibility. Employers promoted women less frequently than they did men, and women were less likely to own or manage businesses (see section 7. d.).

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship derives from one's parents; a single parent may convey citizenship. Authorities registered births immediately. There are no negative repercussions for delayed registration in cases of home delivery.

Child Abuse: Child abuse was a significant problem. In 2014 the children's hospital in Zurich registered 450 cases of child abuse; 33 percent involved sexual abuse and 35 percent physical abuse. The hospital noted the severity of physical abuse cases increased significantly over the previous year, with one child dying from having been throttled. Approximately 16 percent of cases involved psychological abuse and 12 percent of cases involved neglect. Doctors filed charges against uncooperative parents in 11 instances.

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal minimum age of marriage is 18 years. Forcing a person to marry is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: See information for girls under 18 in women's section above.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The production, possession, distribution, or downloading of internet pornography that involves children is illegal and punishable by fines or a maximum sentence of one year in prison. With few exceptions, the law designates 16 as the minimum age for consensual sex. The law permits consensual sex below the age of 16 in cases where one partner is not more than three years older than the other. The maximum penalty for statutory rape is imprisonment for 10 years. The National Coordination Unit to Fight Internet Crime focused its investigations on preventing and prosecuting crimes involving

the sexual exploitation of children online. In 2014 Zurich's cantonal police increased the number of staff in its sexual crimes and child protection units to better focus on monitoring and investigating pedophiles operating in online chat rooms.

The law prohibits prostitution of persons under the age of 18 and punishes pimps of underage prostitutes with prison sentences of up to 10 years. It provides for sentences of up to three years in prison for persons engaging in commercial sex with an underage prostitute.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report on compliance at www.travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/en/legal/compliance.html and country-specific information at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/switzerland.html.

Anti-Semitism

According to the Swiss Israelite Association (SIG), there were approximately 18,000 Jewish individuals residing in the country as of November. The largest Jewish communities were in Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, Basel, and Bern.

SIG recorded an increase in anti-Semitic statements and acts, but observed a shift away from Muslim perpetrators to right-wing extremists during the year. SIG also noted perpetrators increasingly disclosed their identity, particularly on social media. The *2014 Anti-Semitism Report*, produced jointly by SIG and the Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism, cited 66 anti-Semitic incidents (excluding anti-Semitic hate speech online) in the German-speaking part of the country in 2014, three times as many as in 2013. Although the report identified young Muslim men as responsible for most of the 2014 incidents, it also stressed that these individuals represent a minority and there are no far-reaching anti-Semitic sentiments among the general Muslim population in country. Anti-Semitic statements on social media were particularly aggressive, with at least several hundred persons in the German-speaking part of the country having posted and/or "liked" anti-Semitic comments. SIG linked the escalation of anti-Semitic incidents in 2014 to the conflict in Gaza. In 2014 the Geneva-based Intercommunity Center for Coordination against Anti-Semitism and Defamation reported 270 anti-Semitic incidents in the French-speaking region, 21 of which it deemed serious. The report

recorded the most cases ever during its 11-year existence and called the escalation of anti-Semitic incidents “very troubling.”

During the year the Zurich state prosecutor’s office sentenced 10 of 15 individuals against whom SIG pressed charges in July 2014 following the circulation of violent anti-Semitic statements on several Swiss Facebook pages in the days before a pro-Palestine demonstration in Zurich. Social media postings included comments such as “we must annihilate the Jews” or “the only good Jew is a dead Jew.” According to SIG anti-Semitic comments such as these received more than 1,000 “likes” on Facebook. The prosecution suspended three investigations due to the inability of investigators to identify the perpetrators.

In October the state prosecutor’s office of Zurich-Sihl launched criminal proceedings against several right-wing extremists who attacked an orthodox Jew in July. One of the main perpetrators, a 27-year-old singer in the neo-Nazi band Amok, reportedly spat in the Jewish man’s face and yelled “Heil Hitler!” The accused faced up to three years in prison for violating the country’s antiracism law.

As part of the national census, the Federal Council undertook a five-year pilot project to survey racist and discriminatory sentiments nationwide, including racism, anti-Muslim sentiment, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and intolerance. Anti-Semitic attitudes remained stable throughout the test period, with one participant in 10 admitting to negative opinions about Jews in each of the biannual surveys.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and federal law prohibit discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, and the government generally enforced the prohibition. The law mandates access to public buildings and government services for persons with disabilities, and the government generally enforced these provisions.

The Federal Equal Opportunity Office for Persons with Disabilities promoted awareness of the law and respect for the rights of individuals with disabilities

through counseling and financial support for projects to facilitate their integration in society and the labor market.

There were significant problems, however, integrating persons with psychological ailments into the labor market (see section 7.d.).

Procap, one of the country's largest organizations for persons with disabilities, criticized the high costs and shortage of wheelchair-accessible apartments. According to the director of the special needs division for children and youth at the Curaviva Association of Homes and Institutions for Disabled Persons, reports of suspected abuse were rising.

In June the Bern University of Applied Sciences released a study citing the lack of a direct and nonbureaucratic national contact point for reporting abuse against persons with disabilities. The report concluded that, despite the existence of a broad and diverse range of specialist units, the availability of services for such persons was confusing and unclear. Also in June several NGOs criticized the canton of Zurich for being unprepared to deal with and care for an increasing number of disabled persons reaching retirement age.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Right-wing extremists, including skinheads, who expressed hostility toward foreigners, ethnic and religious minorities, and immigrants, continued to be active.

In February the district court of Andelfingen in the canton of Zurich acquitted a former national councilor of the right-wing Swiss People's Party of racial discrimination charges. The former national councilor referred to Palestinians as "scum" who did not deserve the right to asylum on the website of a security and safety association. His comments came after reports of a brawl at the asylum center in Flaach.

In April Zurich's high court sentenced the former president of the Swiss Democrats of Thurgau to a suspended fine of 90 Swiss francs (\$91) per day for 40 days for breaching the racial antidiscrimination law. Between 2009 and 2011, the man wrote several prejudicial interpretations of the Quran, which were published in the right-wing magazine *Schweizerzeit* and on the website of the Swiss Democrats of Thurgau. In his writings, the man called for the mass deportation of Muslims in order to protect the country from its demise and remarked that "not all Muslims are rapists, but most rapists are Muslims."

In April the criminal court of Bern-Mittelland sentenced two members of the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) to suspended fines of 60 Swiss francs (\$60) per day for breaching the antidiscrimination law following the publication of a poster in 2011 titled "Kosovars slice up Swiss citizens." The poster was used to collect signatures for the anti-immigration initiative and referred to a Kosovar having badly injured a Swiss citizen in a violent incident several days prior to the launch of the anti-immigration campaign. The two SVP members took the ruling to the high court of Bern, where it was pending as of November.

In June the Consulting Network for Racism Victims released its report for 2014, noting an increase in racism against black persons and incidents involving right-wing populism or extremism. It also noted that most incidents of racial discrimination were verbal and occurred primarily in the workplace. The report examined 249 incidents compiled by 15 different consulting services. Also in June the Federal Commission against Racism launched a six-month awareness campaign aimed at preventing racist comments and hate speech on the Internet. The campaign was directed mainly at youths and school classes.

During the year the Federal Police and Coordination Office for Combating Internet Crime observed a noticeable rise in racism on social media.

Ethnic minorities experienced discrimination in the labor market (see section 7.d.).

In September 2014 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its fifth report on racism and discrimination in the country. The report observed that individuals continued to use xenophobic and racist political discourse to target minority groups, such as Muslims, blacks, refugees, the Jenisch, and Romani groups, thereby exacerbating their negative image and poor living conditions. Racial profiling subjected the black community in particular to police controls, such as public arrests and body searches for drugs.

While the government recognized the Jenisch as a minority group with approximately 35,000 residents in the country, ECRI noted a persistent lack of proper camping facilities and transit areas.

In June the Jenisch association Schaeft Qwant submitted a complaint to the Swiss Press Council for breaching the right to the protection of personal privacy and the protection of children after images of Jenisch youths were used by the publications *Weltwoche* and *Der Bund* during the year.

The Swiss Roma Foundation estimated 80,000 Roma resided in the country. In April several NGOs sent an open letter to the Federal Council demanding greater political participation and more transit areas for minorities like the Roma. In November 2014 the foundation published the results of a five-year study on the treatment of Roma by eight of the country's German-language newspapers. The study concluded that all of the 297 articles it analyzed were highly prejudiced and perpetuated negative stereotypes that portrayed Roma as poor, uneducated, criminal, and badly integrated into society. The study found the country's German-language newspapers predominantly branded local Roma as perpetrators of crime while portraying Roma in other countries mainly as victims.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The country's antidiscrimination law does not specifically apply to sexual orientation or specifically address lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) problems.

There were occasional reports of societal violence or discrimination based on opposition to LGBTI orientation. According to the organization Pink Cop (gay and lesbian police officers), the extent of physical violence was difficult to gauge, in view of the absence of official statistics on LGBTI-oriented violence or discrimination. Pink Cop noted authorities did not specifically prosecute hate crime. While the LGBTI umbrella organization Pink Cross did not record any physical assaults in 2013, it documented two to three workplace discrimination cases a week, and approximately 100 instances during the year of individuals citing problems with the legal system. In October six disguised individuals attacked the clientele and staff of a gay bar in Zurich, punching them and assaulting them with pepper spray. Pink Cross filed charges shortly after; the case was pending as of year's end.

During the year NGOs continued to criticize the government's restrictive asylum policy, which requires LGBTI refugees to provide substantiated evidence of oppression in their countries of origin in order to receive asylum.

The NGO Transgender Network Switzerland criticized the requirement that sex and name changes for transgender individuals needed prior diagnosis of a psychological disorder and medical procedures, such as sterilization. The NGO also noted authorities often denied name changes on documents and transgender

asylum seekers were frequently accommodated in co-ed facilities instead of single-sex wings. Workplace discrimination was a further problem.

In November a gay couple appealed to the European Court of Human Rights after the Federal Court overturned a 2014 verdict in May by the St. Gallen Administrative Court that recognized the couple as the rightful fathers of a child born to a foreign surrogate, despite surrogacy being prohibited in the country. The Federal Court ruled that the paternity of the father with no biological link to the child was unlawful, but that the name of the biological father would remain in the civil registry.

In July the city of Geneva financially supported the opening of a shelter for young LGBTI persons rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation. The shelter offered affected individuals refuge for up to three months.

In August Pink Cross and the Lesbian Organization of Switzerland filed charges against the bishop of Chur for inciting violence against LGBTI persons following a presentation, given in Germany, during which he recited a passage of the Bible that read, “And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.” According to Pink Cross, the organizations received many hateful telephone calls and letters from supporters of the bishop following the filing of charges. Charges were pending at the Graubunden state prosecutor’s office as of year’s end.

In 2014 the Federal Office for Gender Equality funded its first project on problems affecting transgender persons, which was still ongoing at year’s end. The project focused on the situation of transgender persons in the workplace and was led by the NGO Transgender Network Switzerland. Also in 2014 the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich became the second university (after the University of Lucerne) to adopt internal guidelines to allow transgender individuals to change their name and gender marker, regardless of legal gender recognition.

During the year LGBTI activists sought to establish a central office tasked with collecting data and publishing statistics on verbal or physical attacks on LGBTI individuals.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

There were occasional reports of discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. In 2014 the Swiss AIDS Federation registered 117 cases of discrimination against individuals suffering from HIV and answered 365 legal enquiries. Some 20 of the complaints concerned employment discrimination or other discrimination in the workplace (see section 7.d.). To combat harassment and unfair behavior, the Swiss AIDS Federation conducted multiple campaigns to sensitize the public to the problem.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right for all workers, including foreigners, to form and join independent unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements. The law also provides for the right of unions to conduct activities, including the right to strike, without interference, although strikes must be linked to industrial relations. The government may curtail the right of federal public servants to strike for reasons of national security or to safeguard foreign policy interests. No specific laws prohibit antiunion discrimination or employer interference in trade union activities. The law does not require employers to reinstate an employee whom employers unjustly dismissed.

Although the government generally protected these rights, no law defines penalties for violations of freedom of association or collective bargaining. According to union representatives, the length of administrative and judicial procedures varied from case to case. Collective bargaining agreements committed the social partners to maintain labor peace, thereby limiting the right to strike for the duration of an agreement, which generally lasted several years.

Employers at times unfairly dismissed trade unionists and used the legal system to limit legitimate trade union activities. Laws prohibited public servants in some cantons and many municipalities from striking. Trade unions continued to report discriminatory behavior against their members.

In July the commercial court of Bern confirmed a provisional injunction issued in April against the trade union Unia for prohibiting nonstriking employees from entering work areas at various Zurich construction sites. The Unia strike was against plasterer company Goger-Swiss AG for paying foreign workers salaries that were below domestic standards. The court ordered Unia to assume 5,000

Swiss francs (\$5,000) in court costs and compensate Goger-Swiss AG for lost contracts.

In September a report by the International Trade Union Confederation criticized the government for the country having repressive laws on striking.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced and compulsory labor, and the government effectively enforced such laws. Penalties for forced labor violations were up to 20 years' imprisonment and were sufficiently stringent to deter violations. The government conducted several training programs for relevant authorities on labor trafficking aimed at awareness raising and reducing such exploitation. In 2013 the government extended until the end of 2016 the Private Household Employees Ordinance, which governs working conditions for private household employees and defines minimum salary requirements. The government intended the ordinance to curb forced labor and the exploitation of foreign workers.

There were reports that forced labor occurred. Women were trafficked for domestic labor; traffickers forced many victims to work in salons or clubs. The International Organization for Migration noted that cases of labor exploitation were also prevalent in the construction, hospitality, tourism, and health care sectors. There were also reports of forced labor in the agricultural and restaurant sectors.

Also see Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The minimum age for full-time employment is 15. Children who are 13 or 14 may engage in light duties for no more than nine hours per week during the school year and 15 hours at other times. Employment of youths between the ages of 15 and 18 is also restricted. Cantonal inspectors strictly enforced these provisions. The minimum age for work under hazardous conditions is 16. Children may not work on Sundays, under hazardous conditions, or at night. The 2014 report of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) noted that the penal code prohibits the production of pornography involving children, but the relevant provisions only cover persons under 16 years of age.

The government effectively enforced laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace. The Ministry of Economics monitored the implementation of child labor laws and policies, and cantonal labor inspectors effectively inspected companies to determine whether there were violations of child labor laws. Violation of child labor laws is punishable by six months' imprisonment.

There were isolated reports of trafficking of children to beg and commit theft and financial scams.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

Labor laws prohibit discrimination with respect to certain types of employment on the basis of gender. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions. There was no labor law that explicitly prohibits discrimination with respect to employment on the grounds of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, language, political opinion, HIV-positive status or other communicable diseases, gender identity, age, or national and social origin. The ILO observed that the country lacked easily accessible mechanisms for workers to seek remedy or compensation for discrimination in employment and vocational training.

A significant difference existed between men and women in pay and professional promotions, and women were heavily underrepresented in top-level management positions, particularly in private industry. Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to national, racial, and ethnic minorities, as well as on the basis of a disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, HIV-positive status, and age.

The law entitles women and men to equal pay for equal work, but this was not effectively enforced. In 2012 the median monthly income for women in the private sector was 5,317 Swiss francs (\$5,300), while men earned 6,553 Swiss francs (\$6,600). The difference in pay between men and women was 15.2 percent for nonexecutive positions, while the difference for executive positions was 26.5 percent. Women received salaries that were on average 18.9 percent less than those of men. The pay for female university graduates was as much as 25 percent less than that of male peers.

According to Procap, one of the country's largest organizations for persons with disabilities, there remained significant problems in integrating individuals with

psychological ailments into the labor market, since most employers did not consider psychological illnesses a disability.

In October 2014 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a report on the employment of senior citizens in the country. The report found the country's long-term unemployment rate for persons over the age of 55 was 58.6 percent in 2012, 11.4 percent above the OECD average. The OECD suggested the exclusion of age from the country's antidiscrimination law was a potential reason behind the high long-term unemployment rate of senior citizens.

In September 2014 ECRI published its fifth report on racism and discrimination in the country. The report expressed concern that ethnic minorities, such as Muslims, blacks, refugees, and the Jenisch and other Romani groups, experienced considerable discrimination in the labor market. According to ECRI, the unemployment rate among migrants was 6.6 percent, compared to 2.3 percent among citizens. The report emphasized that young migrants from countries outside the EU suffered substantial discrimination, even when they had successfully completed their education in the country.

There were occasional reports of labor discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. In 2014 the Swiss AIDS Federation registered 117 cases of discrimination against individuals suffering from HIV and answered 365 legal enquiries. An estimated 20 of those complaints concerned employment discrimination or other discrimination in the workplace. Examples of workplace discrimination included isolated reports of discontinued job interviews, public information sharing about an employee's HIV-positive status, and blackmail.

Migrant workers in low-wage jobs were more likely than other workers to face exploitative labor practices and poor working conditions. This was especially true in the construction, hospitality, tourism, and agricultural sectors.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There was no national minimum wage. Work contracts covering approximately 40 percent of (citizen) wage earners included minimum wage provisions, although average wages for workers and employees covered by these contracts, particularly in the clothing, hospitality, and retail industries, remained relatively low. A majority of voluntary collective bargaining agreements, reached on a sector-by-sector basis, contained minimum compensation clauses. Numbers varied slightly

from canton to canton to reflect differences in the cost of living but remained the same overall during the year.

The law sets a maximum 45-hour workweek for blue- and white-collar workers in industry, services, and retail trades and a 50-hour workweek for all other workers. The rules exclude certain professions, such as taxi drivers and medical doctors. The law prescribes a rest period of 35 consecutive hours, plus an additional half-day per week. Premium pay for overtime must be at least 25 percent; overtime is generally restricted to two hours per day. The law limits annual overtime to 170 hours for those working 45 hours a week and 140 hours for those working 50 hours a week.

In October the government approved an accord between trade unions and employers to ease regulations on registering the working hours of employees who earn more than 120,000 Swiss francs (\$121,000) per year.

Employers must grant workers at least four weeks of paid vacation per year and at least five weeks to workers up to the age of 20 unless the worker performs work for a third party to the detriment of the employer's legitimate interests. Workers are also entitled to one day off per week. In exceptional circumstances, an employer could grant a worker two half-days free instead of a full day, if required by specific work conditions and the worker consented to it.

The law contains extensive provisions to protect worker health and safety. Workers can remove themselves from situations that endangered health or safety without jeopardy to their employment.

The Ministry of Economics and cantonal labor inspectorates effectively enforced laws related to hours of work and occupational safety and health. The ministry also had oversight over collective bargaining agreements. Approximately 100 labor inspectors worked in the country. Each of the 26 cantons maintained a labor inspectorate office with approximately six to eight employees. Observers did not consider penalties for labor infractions sufficient to deter violations. The courts determined fines according to the personal and economic situation of the perpetrator at the time of sentencing.

In August 2014 the trade union Unia submitted a complaint against the cantonal authorities of Graubunden following the authorities' decision to disregard a Federal Court ruling that called on Graubunden to respect federal labor laws that prohibit working on Sundays. In response, in February the Federal Department of

Economic Affairs modified the law making it easier for cantons to authorize businesses in tourist areas to remain open on Sundays.

Migrant workers in low-wage jobs were more likely to experience exploitative labor practices. This was especially true in the construction, hospitality, tourism, agricultural, and health care sectors. During the year several local NGOs and international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, expressed concern authorities were not adequately addressing labor exploitation prevalent in the construction, hospitality, health-care, and domestic labor sectors.

Immigrants may work and have the same rights as other workers. There were no special provisions or requirements for noncitizen workers, apart from having legal immigration status and a valid work permit. The government did not allow individuals without legal status or work permits to work. Individuals who obtained legal status could request a work permit. Asylum seekers were usually not allowed to work during the first three to six months after they had applied for asylum but in exceptional cases could work as self-employed as needed.

During the year the government decided to establish a roundtable to discuss the possibility of extending the 10-year statute of limitations for bringing suit and compensation for asbestos victims following trade unions' demands for such a forum in 2014. In April the Federal Court ceased compensation proceedings for asbestos victims and referred the cases to the roundtable for deliberation.

In November the Federal Court approved an appeal of two family members of a deceased asbestos victim to have their compensation claim of 213,000 Swiss francs (\$214,000) reassessed by the labor court of Baden. The courts had rejected the family's claim several years earlier due to the suit being brought after the 10-year statute of limitations had expired. The family successfully appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, which decided in March 2014 that the family should be awarded a total of 21,180 euros (\$23,300). The court also noted statutes of limitations on claims should take into account the number of years it takes for a disease caused by exposure to a hazardous substance to be diagnosed.