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## Poverty in Switzerland

590,000 people were classified as poor in Switzerland in 2012, according to the official definition. That equates to a proportion of 7.7%, according to the Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO). This figure has fallen by 1.6% since 2007. It has nonetheless risen by 0.3% compared to the previous year. Anyone with less than 2,200 Swiss francs a month to live on as an individual is considered poor in Switzerland. The threshold stands at 4,050 Swiss francs for two adults with two children. As might be expected, the unemployed are particularly affected by poverty. The poverty rate is 20% here. Other risk groups are single parents (16.5%) and adults living alone (17.9%).

## Federal Council opposed to unconditional basic income

The Federal Council believes that the popular initiative for an unconditional basic income would jeopardise the social contract and solidarity in Switzerland and have an adverse impact on the economy. The Swiss government therefore decided at the end of August to present the popular initiative to Parliament without a counterproposal. The initiative had been submitted in October 2013. It calls upon federal government to ensure a basic income for all persons living in Switzerland of 2,500 Swiss francs a month for adults and 625 francs for children and young people.

## How are income and wealth distributed?

Switzerland remains an island of prosperity in Europe for the majority of the population. This is according to the Federal Council report on the distribution of wealth published at the end of August. This indicates that average incomes in Switzerland are very high and have increased further over the past 10 to 15 years. The discrepancy between the highest and lowest incomes is below average by European comparison. The report states that the disparities have been relatively stable since the end of the 1990s.

## Sites for travellers

Four new transit sites will be made available to Swiss travellers for their caravans in the canton of Berne from this autumn onwards. These sites are nevertheless temporary. Permanent residential and transit sites will not be provided for another two to three years. The new temporary residential and transit sites are located in Sumiswald, Interlaken, Rohrbach and Muri near Berne. They will replace the sites which the cities of Biel and Berne provided for the Yeniche people at the end of April after they had occupied part of the exhibition grounds in Berne.

I wonder about the way we can lie, putting reason on our side.

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (1905–1980),

FRENCH AUTHOR AND PHILOSOPHER

It is disgraceful that people in Switzerland can hold barbecues against refugees of war.

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR SIMONETTA SOMMARUGA AFTER 400 RESIDENTS IN AARBURG ORGANISED A BARBECUE AGAINST ASYLUM CENTRES

There has never been such a dramatic situation since the Second World War.

MARIO GATTIKER, HEAD OF THE FEDERAL OFFICE FOR MIGRATION, ON THE FLOW OF REFUGEES

The passport is the noblest part of a person. It is not created as easily as a person is. A person can be created anywhere, in the most frivolous way and without good reason, but a passport cannot. It will be recognised if it is good, but a person can be as good as a passport and not receive any recognition.

BERTOLT BRECHT (1898–1956), GERMAN DRAMATIST

Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.

ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879–1955), PHYSICIST AND NATURALISED SWISS CITIZEN

The truly good man first practises what he preaches and then preaches what he practises.

CONFUCIUS (551–479 BC), CHINESE PHILOSOPHER

Let us leave nothing untried for nothing happens by itself. All men's gains are the fruit of adventure.

HERODOTUS (484–425 BC), GREEK HISTORIAN

