

Asylum and mass migration: how Switzerland is tackling the problem

These two articles from Swiss News have been passed on by CIB Vice Chairman Anthony Scholefield. They depict a very different, much tougher attitude. Are there, perhaps, lessons for the UK here?

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/army-exercise_swiss-troops-train-for-mass-migration-scenario/41674004

As thousands of migrants continue to cross land and sea to reach western Europe, Switzerland is making sure it is prepared if groups mass at its borders.

This weekend, thousands of migrants were stuck at the Hungarian/Austrian border, while more than 4,000 people fleeing their homelands were rescued in the Mediterranean on one single day.

It coincided in Switzerland with a large-scale army exercise codenamed "Conex 15". Soldiers are training with border police so they know what to do if large groups head for the alpine country.

The army has been planning the exercise for several years: it is not specifically in response to the present crisis. But defence minister, Ueli Maurer, says Switzerland has a pool of 800 soldiers who could be sent to borders at any time to help question new arrivals, carry out patrols and assist with transport.

Several hundred people demonstrated against the Conex army exercise in Basel over the weekend, leading to clashes between police and protestors.

http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/asylum-price_why-switzerland-takes-asylum-seekers-assets/41896774

Denmark's decision to confiscate valuables from asylum seekers is similar to the practice in Switzerland, which has been in effect for more than 20 years. It is coming in for criticism too.

Swiss law states that asylum seekers have to disclose their assets. According to certain criteria – such as the amount and/or lack of proof of the origin of the assets – the authorities can demand that it be handed over. According to Léa Wertheimer from the State Secretariat for Migration, the law says that asylum seekers – that have some means – contribute towards the costs they incur in Switzerland. These are the costs from asylum request procedures and receiving shelter.

More than 100 asylum seekers had to hand over their savings to the Swiss authorities last year. Those arriving without money or valuables will also have to pay eventually. When working, they must give up to 10 per cent of their wages during the first 10 years of their stay or until they have paid back a total of 15.000 francs. The Swiss Refugee Council is critical of the practice.