Mayors Dialogue on Growth and Solidarity
City profile: Zurich, Switzerland

Population: 433,733 (2020)

GDP per capita: $91,760 (2017)

Major industries: finance, creative industries

Percentage of migrants: 32% (2018)

Mayor's name: Corine Mauch | **Next election date:** 2022

Socioeconomic profile

Zurich, the largest city in Switzerland, is located on the north-western tip of Lake Zurich. It has a population of 433,733 (Stadt Zurich, 2020a). The City of Zurich has 12 districts and 34 quarters, while the agglomeration of Zurich consists of the City of Zurich and 130 other municipalities. Around 1.4 million people live in the wider metropolitan area (Stadt Zurich, n.d.a). The city's population grew by 20% between 2000 and 2019, with stronger growth from 2015 (Stadt Zurich, 2020a).

Labour force participation is high in Zurich – accounting for more than 9% of total jobs in Switzerland (Stadt Zurich, n.d.a). The city is an internationally renowned financial centre and the country's economic motor. Per capita GDP was $91,760 in 2017.[1] The financial sector generates around a quarter of economic output and 16% of all employment in the city (ibid.). Creative industries are also important, accounting for 11% of jobs (ibid.). According to the 2019 Swiss Skills Shortages Index, Zurich is experiencing labour shortages in engineering, IT and fiduciary/trust occupations (European Commission, 2019).
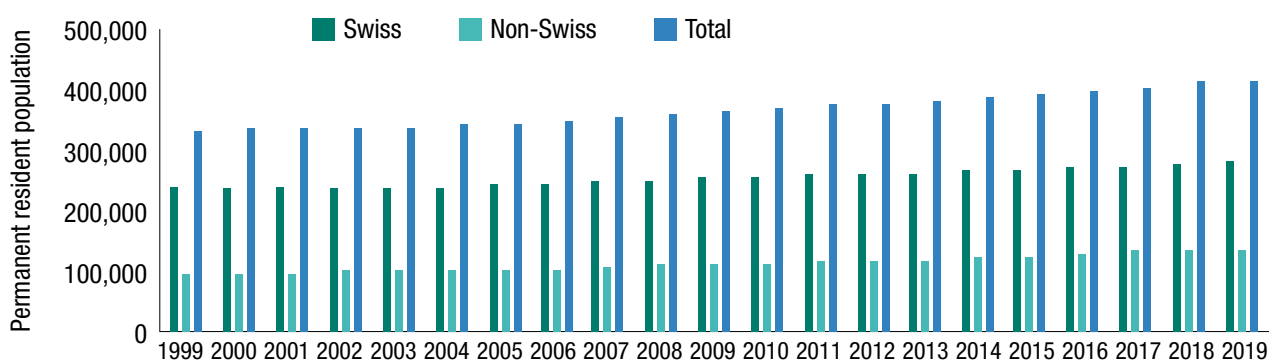
Transport links to Europe and more widely are excellent. Zurich airport is an important hub and the busiest airport in Switzerland, and Zurich central station is a major European rail interchange (CAPA, n.d.; Stadt Zurich, n.d.a). There are 30 farms in the City of Zurich and about 10% of the urban area is used for agriculture (Stadt Zurich, 2020b). The city invests in sustainable food production, supporting the marketing of products by city farmers and innovative initiatives related to food production, distribution and marketing via weekly markets and farm shops.

Migration profile

At the end of 2018, 32% of the city's population were recorded as foreign (non-Swiss), with immigrants from 172 different countries (Stadt Zurich, n.d.a). The largest proportion of immigrants were German (33,579), followed by Italian (15,080) and Portuguese (7,826) (ibid.).

Nationalities of resident population in Zurich

Source: Bundesamt für Statistik (2019)

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1   This figure is provided in nominal US$ and is not comparable with other cities profiled. See OECD Stats (2017). Information is extracted in USD$, constant prices, constant PPP, converted into local currency using OECD PPP-local currency conversion rate, then converted into nominal US$ using OECD's local currency to US$ conversion rate.

As the chart illustrates, the percentage of non-Swiss nationals has gradually increased, from 28% in 1999 to 32% in 2019. There are more migrants living in the City of Zürich than the European average, giving the city a reputation as open, tolerant and multicultural (Stadt Zurich, n.d.b). Zurich hosts a small proportion of refugees/asylum-seekers, which stood at 0.5% of the population in 2016 (Council of Europe, 2019). The city is at the forefront of support for 'first countries of refuge' in the Middle East and is participating in the 'city of initial refuge' project, financing community support programmes in Lebanese municipalities receiving Syrian refugees (Stadt Zurich, 2016a).

Governance structure

The City of Zurich enjoys significant decision-making power and autonomy within Switzerland's political system. The administration is run by a nine-member city council, elected by voters every four years. Each member presides over a department, with the president of the executive department acting as mayor. The current mayor, elected in 2009, is the first woman to hold the position. Zurich City Council is currently made up of three representatives of the Social Democratic Party, one of whom is the mayor, two members of the Free Democratic Party, two members of the Green Party, one member of the Green Liberal Party and one member of Alternative Liste (Stadt Zurich, n.d.c). Council members carry out all departmental tasks and projects, implementing laws decreed by the City Parliament.

The long-term policies of the city are based on the 'Zurich 2035 strategies'. The strategies focus on sustainable development and social cohesion. Towards this end, the city council has set a goal of increasing the proportion of social housing apartments among all rental apartments from 25% to 33% by 2050 (Stadt Zurich, 2016b). Similarly, the city council is committed to cutting energy consumption from 4,200 watts per person at present to 2,000 in the long term. It also aims to reduce CO_2 emissions to one tonne per person per year by 2050 (ibid.). The city administration has also implemented a standard ensuring at least 30% participation of under-represented gender groups in every administrative division. It is the first Swiss administration to sign the 'trans welcome initiative' – encouraging trans people in the workforce (Mercer, n.d.).

References

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