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Switzerland votes for tougher asylum laws

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0609/060925-switzerland.html>

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Ideas and Activities by David Robinson

THE ARTICLE

What is your view on asylum seekers? Do you think countries should have tougher laws to limit people seeking asylum? These are the questions people in Switzerland answered in a recent national referendum. The Swiss people sent a strong message to their government that they wanted stricter laws for asylum seekers. Almost 70 per cent of Swiss voters supported new measures that make it more difficult for people to be given asylum in Switzerland.

Why are countries becoming more worried about asylum seekers? A few decades ago, many countries welcomed with open arms refugees from Cambodia, Uganda, Eastern Europe and many other countries where human rights were ignored. Has compassion disappeared? The new laws in Switzerland cut welfare payments to those whose asylum applications are rejected. Swiss authorities will now only accept people who can produce identity documents.

Is it fair for a rich country like Switzerland to make things tougher for asylum seekers? The alpine nation now has some of the strictest immigration laws in the world. The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, described the referendum results as “regrettable”. So why did a country like Switzerland, with strong humanitarian traditions, vote for tougher asylum laws? The Swiss Justice Minister said the nation needed to be stricter to prevent abuse of the asylum system. Only then, he said, could they protect real refugees.

Are Swiss people and other Europeans becoming too worried about asylum seekers? Do people believe media stories that say refugees will turn to crime? It seems that in Switzerland, people have little reason to worry. The numbers of refugees trying to enter the country has dropped sharply in recent years. Perhaps a better question to have asked in the referendum is this – How can we help more of the world’s refugees? Are asylum seekers a problem in your country?

START

1. DICTATION: The teacher will read to you slowly and clearly the first paragraph, repeating passages where necessary. Students will write down the speech. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again.

Self correct your work. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total no of errors. 10 are acceptable. Any more is room for improvement!

2. READING: Get students to read the passage aloud. Swap readers every paragraph.

3. VOCABULARY: Students circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

4. ASYLUM SEEKERS: With your partner(s), imagine you are asylum seekers. Stand up and do this exercise! Talk about how you got to the country you are in, the journey you made, the risks you took, the people you left behind, the country you hope to end up in, etc... When you have finished, find a new partner and describe what you talked about.

The teacher can select some pairs to role play their exercise to the class.

5. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Authorities / United Nations / media / Switzerland / Eastern Europe / asylum seekers / Swiss people / welfare payments / human rights / documents / vote / referendum / refugees / alpine nation / rich

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Swap partners! Student A believes asylum seekers should be sent home to their native country. Students B believes asylum seekers should be allowed to stay in your country. Debate this with your partners. Change partners often.

7. OPINIONS: Swap again! With your partner(s), talk about the following opinions on asylum seekers. Change partners and share your findings.

- a. The United Kingdom is a favorite destination for refugees.
- b. Switzerland's new asylum laws are now too harsh.
- c. Holland is a stop off point for refugees.
- d. Swiss people are unfriendly towards refugees.
- e. The Swiss Government shouldn't have been as strict as they have been with their new asylum law.
- f. The United Nations should do more to assist refugees.
- g. Nations need to be stricter with asylum seekers.
- h. Has compassion disappeared from the people of Switzerland?

8. ONE MINUTE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with asylum seekers. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

9. SPEAKING : ROLE PLAY

IN PAIRS

Student A

You work for the Swiss Government. With your partner(s), think of three questions you want to ask refugees trying to enter your country. Ask student B

- 1 Why they left one of the countries listed below?
- 2 Why they chose Switzerland to go to for political asylum?
- 3 Ask the three questions you thought of.

Student B

You are a refugee from one of the below countries. With your partner(s), write down three major reasons why you want to leave your country. Reply to the questions student A will ask you.

ROLE PLAY: To class

The teacher will select pairs to give a presentation of their role play.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• China• Iraq• Somalia• North Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• East Timor• Cuba• Haiti• Sudan
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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. UNHCR described the referendum results as "fantastic" | T / F |
| b. Switzerland is a rich country. | T / F |
| c. The number of refugees entering Switzerland has increased significantly in recent years. | T / F |
| d. Swiss authorities will now only accept people who can produce ID. | T / F |
| e. 60% of Swiss voters supported the new measures. | T / F |
| f. The alpine nation has the weakest immigration laws in Europe. | T / F |
| g. Switzerland has strong humanitarian traditions. | T / F |
| h. The new laws cut welfare payments for rejected asylum seekers. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. problem | anxious |
| b. prevent | not listen to |
| c. ignored | opinion |
| d. view | harder to do |
| e. worried | ballot |
| f. regrettable | challenge |
| g. tougher | stop |
| h. protect | sympathy |
| i. referendum | look after |
| j. compassion | shameful |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| a. The Swiss Justice Minister | people have little reason to worry |
| b. The new laws | media stories... |
| c. Do people believe | a rich country like Switzerland... |
| d. Is it fair for | other countries |
| e. It seems that in Switzerland | a problem in your country? |
| f. Swiss authorities | said the nation needed to be stricter |
| g. Are asylum seekers | in Switzerland |
| h. The Swiss people | Swiss voters |
| i. Almost 70 per cent of | sent a strong message |
| j. Eastern Europe and many | will now only accept people |

READING GAP FILL:

Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Switzerland votes for tougher asylum laws

What is your view on _____ seekers? Do you think countries should have tougher laws to limit people seeking asylum? These are the questions people in Switzerland answered in a recent national _____. The Swiss people sent a strong _____ to their government that they wanted stricter laws for asylum seekers. Almost 70 per cent of Swiss _____ supported new measures that make it more difficult for people to be given asylum in Switzerland.

Why are countries becoming more worried about asylum seekers? A few decades ago, many countries welcomed with open arms _____ from Cambodia, Uganda, Eastern Europe and many other countries where human rights were ignored. Has compassion disappeared? The new laws in Switzerland cut _____ payments to those whose asylum applications are rejected. Swiss _____ will now only accept people who can produce _____ documents.

Is it fair for a rich country like Switzerland to make things _____ for asylum seekers? The alpine nation now has some of the strictest immigration _____ in the world. The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, described the referendum results as "regrettable". So why did a country like Switzerland, with strong _____ traditions, vote for tougher asylum laws? The Swiss Justice Minister said the _____ needed to be stricter to prevent abuse of the asylum system. Only then, he said, could they protect real refugees.

Are Swiss people and other Europeans becoming too worried about asylum seekers? Do people believe _____ stories that say refugees will turn to crime? It seems that in Switzerland, people have little reason to worry. The _____ of refugees trying to enter the country has dropped sharply in recent years. Perhaps a better question to have asked in the _____ is this – How can we help more of the world's refugees? Are asylum seekers a _____ in your country?

refugees
welfare
identity
message
asylum
voters
authorities
referendum

humanitarian
nation
problem
Referendum
laws
media
numbers
tougher

LISTENING GAP FILL

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Switzerland votes for tougher asylum laws

What is your view on asylum _____? Do you think countries should have tougher laws to limit people seeking asylum? These are the questions people in Switzerland _____ a recent national referendum. The Swiss people sent a strong message to their government that they wanted stricter _____ asylum seekers. Almost 70 per cent of Swiss voters supported new measures that make it more difficult for people to be given asylum in Switzerland.

Why are countries becoming _____ about asylum seekers? A few decades ago, many countries welcomed with open arms refugees from Cambodia, Uganda, _____ many other countries where human rights were ignored. Has _____ disappeared? The new laws in Switzerland cut welfare payments to those whose asylum applications are rejected. Swiss authorities will now only accept people who can produce identity documents.

Is it fair for a rich country like Switzerland to make things _____ asylum seekers? The alpine nation now has some of the strictest immigration laws in the world. The _____ refugee agency, the UNHCR, described the referendum results as "regrettable". So why did a country like Switzerland, with strong humanitarian traditions, vote for tougher asylum laws? The Swiss Justice Minister said _____ needed to be _____ prevent abuse of the asylum system. Only then, he said, could they protect real refugees.

Are Swiss people and other Europeans becoming too worried about asylum seekers? Do people believe media stories that say refugees will turn to crime? It seems that in Switzerland, people have little reason to worry. The _____ refugees trying to enter the country has dropped sharply in recent years. Perhaps a better question to have asked in the referendum is this – How can we help more of the _____ refugees? Are asylum seekers a _____ in your country?

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'refugee' and 'agency'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. STUDENT "ASYLUM SEEKER" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions you would ask an asylum seeker seeking a new life in your country.

- Ask other classmates to pretend to be refugees. Get them to answer your questions. Note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| • human | • Swiss |
| • alpine | • laws |
| • justice | • people |
| • real | • identity |
| • media | • results |
| • rich | • agency |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
2. What is your view on asylum seekers?
3. What are the asylum laws like in your country?
4. Do you think countries should have tougher laws to limit people seeking asylum?
5. Why are countries becoming more worried about asylum seekers?
6. Has compassion disappeared?
7. Is it fair for a rich country like Switzerland to make things tougher for asylum seekers?
8. Are there many asylum seekers in your country?
9. Should there be the same strict rules in the European Union?
10. Do you know any refugees?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

1. Did you like reading this article?
2. What do you think about what you read?
3. Have you ever assisted any refugees in your country?
4. So why did a country like Switzerland, with strong humanitarian traditions, vote for tougher asylum laws?
5. Are Swiss people and other Europeans becoming too worried about asylum seekers?
6. Do people believe media stories that say refugees will turn to crime?
7. How can we help more of the world's refugees?
8. Are asylum seekers a problem in your country?
9. In the future do you think it will be harder for people seeking asylum in your country?
10. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information on the new asylum laws in Switzerland. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. REFUGEES: Write a newspaper article on asylum seekers in your country. Describe meeting a group of them and how it changed your life. Add where they come from and the difficulties they are experiencing. (minimum 100 words) Show your article to your classmates in the next lesson. Talk about which articles you liked and why?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the Swiss Justice Minister. Tell him what you think about the new laws. Give him advice on what he should do with any future refugees who arrive on his doorstep. Ask him three questions. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions. Which letter did you like best and why?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. problem	challenge
b. prevent	stop
c. ignored	not listened to
d. view	opinion
e. worried	anxious
f. regrettable	shameful
g. tougher	harder to do
h. protect	look after
i. referendum	ballot
j. compassion	sympathy

PHRASE MATCH:

a. The Swiss Justice Minister	said the nation needed to be stricter
b. The new laws	in Switzerland
c. Do people believe	media stories...
d. Is it fair for	a rich country like Switzerland...
e. It seems that in Switzerland	people have little reason to worry
f. Swiss authorities	will now only accept people...
g. Are asylum seekers	a problem in your country?
h. The Swiss people	sent a strong message
i. Almost 70 per cent of	Swiss voters
j. Eastern Europe and many	other countries

GAP FILL:

Switzerland votes for tougher asylum laws

What is your view on **asylum** seekers? Do you think countries should have tougher laws to limit people seeking asylum? These are the questions people in Switzerland answered in a recent national **referendum**. The Swiss people sent a strong **message** to their government that they wanted stricter laws for asylum seekers. Almost 70 per cent of Swiss **voters** supported new measures that make it more difficult for people to be given asylum in Switzerland.

Why are countries becoming more worried about asylum seekers? A few decades ago, many countries welcomed with open arms **refugees** from Cambodia, Uganda, Eastern Europe and many other countries where human rights were ignored. Has compassion disappeared? The new laws in Switzerland cut **welfare** payments to those whose asylum applications are rejected. Swiss **authorities** will now only accept people who can produce **identity** documents.

Is it fair for a rich country like Switzerland to make things **tougher** for asylum seekers? The alpine nation now has some of the strictest immigration **laws** in the world. The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, described the referendum results as "regrettable". So why did a country like Switzerland, with strong **humanitarian** traditions, vote for tougher asylum laws? The Swiss Justice Minister said the **nation** needed to be stricter to prevent abuse of the asylum system. Only then, he said, could they protect real refugees.

Are Swiss people and other Europeans becoming too worried about asylum seekers? Do people believe **media** stories that say refugees will turn to crime? It seems that in Switzerland, people have little reason to worry. The **numbers** of refugees trying to enter the country has dropped sharply in recent years. Perhaps a better question to have asked in the **referendum** is this – How can we help more of the world's refugees? Are asylum seekers a **problem** in your country?