



Resettlement Country: Ireland

Last updated: Jan 2023

1. Resettlement Policy and Programme Description

1.1 Programme Year/Cycle:

- Start date: 01-Jan-20 End Date: 31-Dec-23

1.2 Resettlement Policy and Programme

Provision for participation in the UNHCR led resettlement programme was made in section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015.

1.3 Ministries and Departments

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (in consultation with other relevant Government Departments) has responsibility for resettlement policy.

1.4 Process for Determining the Resettlement Admission Targets

The Resettlement Admission Targets are determined by Government. Decisions regarding the country of origin/ country of first asylum are made by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Justice and UNHCR.

2. Eligibility for Refugee Status and other forms of International Protection

2.1 National Legislation defining refugee status eligibility

Persons admitted into Ireland under the resettlement programme are not granted refugee status within the meaning of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees. They are considered as “programme refugee” under section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015.

Section 59 of the **International Protection Act 2015**, states that:

- (1) a “programme refugee” means a person to whom permission to enter and remain in the State for resettlement, or for temporary protection other than temporary protection provided for in section 60, has been given by the Government or the Minister and whose name is entered in a register established and maintained by the Minister, whether or not such person is a refugee within the meaning of the definition of “refugee” in section 2.

Persons that do not satisfy Article 1F of the Geneva Convention are not accepted for resettlement. Programme refugees do not have to satisfy the Geneva Convention criteria. In the majority of cases, UNHCR grant refugee status in the country of asylum before submission to a resettlement country.

2.2 Additional Information

In response to the crisis in Afghanistan in August 2021, Ireland, through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), has seen the arrival of approximately 570 humanitarian cases from Afghanistan. The number of envisaged admissions is limited to 100 for 2023.



3. Resettlement Decision-Making

3.1 Resettlement Admissibility and Public Interest Criteria

- a) Does the beneficiary require resettlement? Have all other options been explored including repatriation and local integration?
- b) Beneficiary for resettlement must meet the definition of a “programme refugee” as defined in section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015 but do not have to satisfy the Geneva Convention requirements. (See 2.1 above)
- c) Priority is given to cases with legal or physical protection needs.
- d) Ireland requires a "balanced" caseload. This may include persons with disabilities, women and children at risk, special needs cases but must also include community leaders and, where possible, spiritual leaders.
- e) Having satisfied a) and b) above, other issues may influence the decision to accept a case for resettlement:
 - i. Medical cases must be referred to the Health Service Executive to confirm that the health matter can be effectively treated in a timely manner;
 - ii. Persons with special educational needs must be referred to the Education Authorities to ensure that appropriate provision can be made in a timely manner;
 - iii. While integration potential is not a primary consideration, the beneficiary and family members must indicate a willingness to participate in their own resettlement and integration and must accept that Irish Law takes precedence over religious or cultural practices;
 - iv. Ireland does not accept unaccompanied children or unaccompanied elders.
- f) The following will cause a case to be rejected:
 - i. Exclusion by reference to Article 1F of the Geneva Convention;
 - ii. A threat to public order, public health or national security;
 - iii. Serious concerns regarding a beneficiary’s declared identity or that of his/her family members or their stated relationship;
 - iv. Serious concerns or discrepancies in the beneficiary’s’ claim;
 - v. Serious concerns that the beneficiary has not been truthful during the interview.

Admissibility criteria

- a) Beneficiaries must possess a valid travel document; Beneficiaries are required to travel on their own passports where they are valid, current and available. Beneficiaries who are not in possession of valid passports may apply to the Irish Government for a travel document. Processing usually takes six to eight weeks. Alternatively, a beneficiary may use a travel document issued by the Government of the country of asylum or the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- b) Resettled refugees who are holders of Irish Travel Documents do not require a visa to enter Ireland. Holders of all other types of travel documents, including valid passports from their country of origin, must have a valid entry visa unless there are existing reciprocal arrangements. Applications for Irish Entry visas must be submitted online. Entry visas are issued by the appropriate Irish Embassy or Consulate in the region.

3.2 Requests for Reconsideration



Not applicable.

3.3. Dependency

Not applicable.

4. Legal Status on Arrival and Citizenship

4.1 Legal Status on Arrival

The status of a person admitted under the Resettlement programme is "**programme refugee**" as provided for in section 59 of the International Protection Act 2015. Programme refugees have, in general, the same rights and entitlements as a person granted refugee Status under the Geneva Convention.

4.2 Eligibility for Citizenship

Programme refugees may apply for Irish Citizenship after three years of continuous residency in the State. Residency is calculated from the date of arrival in the State.

5. Processing Priorities

5.1 Processing Priorities

Ireland accepts refugees identified as having priority for resettlement by UNHCR while taking account of national considerations.

In exceptional circumstances, Ireland may accept cases following bilateral consultations with other governments.

6. Special Considerations

6.1 Unaccompanied and Separated Children

Ireland does not accept unaccompanied children.

6.2 Minor Marriage

Under the Family Law Act 1995 in Ireland, the minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years.

6.3 Refugees with psychosocial, intellectual, sensory or physical disabilities or a serious medical condition

Special needs and medical cases are referred to various Government Departments/ agencies for consideration and are assessed on a case-by-case basis. The Irish Health Services (HSE) will endeavor to provide all services and care required for most cases, even complex ones. In very



complex cases, special advice will be sought from specialist services whether they will be able to provide the care required.

6.4 Large families and single adults

Ireland requests that the number of family sizes of six and over be kept to a minimum. The accommodation model for resettled refugees in Ireland relies on social housing which creates difficulties in sourcing housing for larger family groupings. Similarly difficulties exist in providing housing for single adults due to accommodation constraints in the market.

6.5 Polygamous Marriage

Polygamous marriages are not valid under Irish law.

6.6 Other

7. Dossier Selection Processing

Cases submitted on a dossier basis do not involve resettlement country selection interviews. Acceptance decisions are based on the documentation submitted by UNHCR. If the programme does not include dossier selection processing indicate "N/A."

7.1 Dossier Selection Policies

Currently, Ireland is not considering selecting refugees on a Dossier basis.

7.2 Additional Information

8. Interview Selection Processing

Resettlement country interview selection processing means that the resettlement country conducts an interview as part of the selection process. If the programme does not include a resettlement country interview, indicate "N/A."

8.1 Interview Selection Policies

All RRFs should be submitted to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Contact details will be provided for the above at the time of each selection period.

Each RRF is examined to ensure that Ireland can offer a durable solution to the beneficiary. Applications are submitted to other Government Departments or service providers as considered appropriate, e.g. cases with serious medical issues are referred to the Health Service Executive and cases with special educational needs are referred to the Department of Education for consideration.

Three months processing time is ideally required between the submissions of RRFs to carrying out the interviews on the Mission.



Selection Interview Process

Selection interviews are carried out in the host country and the form of two interviews, a security interview with Ireland's Police Force and an interview with members of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, each of which take approximately 1.5 hours.

A brief introduction is provided to the beneficiaries and their families prior to the interviews taking place to inform the beneficiary of the interview process and to allow for questions and answers. All members of the family being resettled must attend the interview together.

The interview process provides an includes opportunity to;

- check information provided in the dossier and to make necessary corrections;
- ensure that all persons present agree to resettlement;
- impart information on the resettlement process - including rights and responsibilities and to manage expectations;
- gather information which may not be available on the RRF;
- gather information that may assist service providers to prepare for their arrival; and
- consider whether, in the opinion of the interviewers, there is a threat to public health, public order or national security.

Decisions

Beneficiaries who do not satisfy Ireland's resettlement criteria will not be accepted for resettlement.

Preliminary recommendations are made at the time of the interview. Special needs and medical cases are referred to various Government Departments/ agencies for consideration. All cases are referred for security clearance by the Irish Police force.

The final decisions are taken following a full case review upon return to Ireland.

8.2 Additional Information

9. Processing Timeframes

9.1 Policies for receiving emergency and/or urgent submissions

Ireland does not accept emergency cases.

9.2 Average Processing Times for Emergency Cases

9.3 Average Processing Times for Urgent Cases

9.4 Average Processing Times for Normal Cases

From interview to decision: decisions on cases are available within three to four months.

From decision to departure - once a positive decision is indicated, the transfer of the refugees will be organized as soon as suitable accommodation becomes available in Ireland, pending appropriate pre-departure health screening and treatment when required, procurement of travel documents, entry and exit visas and travel arrangements.



9.5 Additional Information

10. Pre-departure Arrangements

10.1 Pre-departure Medical Screening

The Irish Health Service Executive (HSE) specifies on an annual basis the extent and type of pre-departure medical screening required and communicates the requirements to IOM. IOM must issue a fitness to travel certificate before transfer to Ireland.

10.2 Required Pre-departure Treatment

Beneficiaries must be declared fit to travel, from a physical and mental health perspective. Beneficiaries diagnosed with active TB can be allowed to travel after minimum of two months of treatment if cultures become negative, regardless of drug susceptibility. Persons with a medical condition should travel with one month's medication.

10.3 Pre-departure Orientation

IOM in conjunction with the IRPP provides a 3-day pre-departure orientation for beneficiaries accepted for resettlement to Ireland. The presentations cover topics such as the resettlement process, lifestyle and culture, rights and responsibilities, management of unrealistic expectations, the education system, access to health services, housing, income, and employment. Sessions are conducted in the language of beneficiary in order to maximize effective learning. Some of the PDO sessions are delivered to the whole group; others are presented to men, women and teenage children separately. Each session allows for a question and answer period.

10.4 Travel Arrangements and Documents

IOM makes the necessary arrangements for movement and transfer of refugees selected for resettlement in Ireland. This includes transport, transit visas, and entry visas, in country transit support and assistance, medical escorts, flight arrangements, fitness to travel examinations etc. from point of departure to port of arrival. UNHCR organises exit visas in Lebanon. Costs of travel and transfer are covered by the Irish Government.

11. Reception and Integration

11.1 Overview

A multi-faceted approach was adopted to the implementation of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). This has three broad phases:

1. Overseas selection missions in collaboration with the UNHCR.
2. Placement of refugees in dedicated Reception and Orientation Centre's (ROCs) for the purposes of acclimatisation, orientation, etc.



3. Settlement in communities in Local Authority areas, coordinated by an inter-agency working group chaired by the relevant Local Authority with accommodation allocated to programme beneficiaries.

4. Reception and integration managed through Irelands Community Sponsorship Programme.

The implementation of the resettlement programme requires a high level of coordination among service delivery agencies at both national and local level. The programme is coordinated overall by the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) Other integration models such as Community Sponsorship are increasingly being used as an option to state centered integration and re-settlement. Unlike traditional refugee resettlement models, where the state or state-supported actors provide settlement and integration services directly to refugees in their country of resettlement, community sponsorship invites members of the community to play a role in the delivery of those supports. Private citizens and community organisations, rather than government officials, become the face of welcome for refugees arriving to our country. Sponsors commit to providing financial, emotional and settlement support to help newcomers as they settle into their new communities.

11.2 Placement

A key element of Irelands 'whole of government' approach to integration begins with resettlement in the community. Local Authorities, having been allocated a quota of refugees, consider how best families can be housed and integrated in their area. A Grant Agreement is signed with for the dispersal of EU and exchequer funds allocated for this purpose. An Interagency Working Group (IAWG) is established by the Local Authority to oversee preparation for refugee arrivals in the county. The IAWG comprises key service delivery personnel, representatives from IRPP and those with a role in providing support for resettlement.

11.3 Reception

Upon arrival, Programme refugees are generally accommodated in Reception and Orientation Centre's (ROCs). This allows for initial orientation and assessment for access to services such as health and social welfare. Adults are provided with English language lessons and children attend primary school in the ROC and local secondary schools.

11.4 Orientation

IRPP staff and interpreters meet families and individuals upon arrival and accompany them to their initial accommodation in the Reception and Orientation Centre. As the name suggests, a ROC is largely about reception and orientation for those who are to be subsequently settled around the country. IRPP staff hold regular clinics in the ROCs, often at weekly intervals, at which individuals and families may discuss their needs and requirements.

This period provides refugees with an opportunity to acclimatise in cultural terms, as well as to recover from trauma associated with their journey to that point. It also provides refugees with an



opportunity to access necessary basic services in advance of their resettlement within the wider community.

11.5 Support Services

The integration of refugees is supported through the provision of access to mainstream State services. The IRPP works in conjunction with other Government Departments in the Departments of Health, Housing, Social Protection & Education to ensure that refugee's basic needs are met on arrival.

11.6 Housing

Refugees arriving in Ireland under the Resettlement strand of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme are initially accommodated in Reception and Accommodation Centre's.

IRPP works with Local Authorities engaged in resettling refugees. Local Authorities, having been allocated a quota of refugees, consider how best families can be housed and integrated in their area. When housing is made available with the support of the Local Authority, the refugees will be resettled in the community with the support of the IRPP and volunteers in the local community. Each family has the support of an assigned full-time Resettlement Support Worker and an Intercultural Support Worker employed usually by an implementing partner under the auspices of the Local Authority. Local authorities also receive some funding to provide for certain exceptional needs such counselling, transport and other supports.

11.7 Health

All programme refugees arriving in Ireland will be provided with a medical card through the Health Service Executive (HSE). A medical card allows the holder to access medical services, prescription medicines and hospital care for free. A GP is assigned to the individuals and families to ensure that their immediate medical needs are met including referral to dental and optical services.

11.8 Language

IRPP liaise with the Department of Education and Skills and the local Education and Training Board (ETB) in each catchment area to ensure that groups receive a Language Training and Cultural Orientation programme and to facilitate access to education. Education provision is ensured for school age children by the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla where appropriate.

11.9 Education

Education is compulsory for children in Ireland from the ages of **6 to 16** or until students have completed three years of post-primary education. The ETB provide appropriate accommodation for



classes in an accessible location close to the ROC. An Education and Welfare Officer will then assist in sourcing school places in a timely manner before people move to the community.

11.10 Employment

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) is responsible for supporting access to employment opportunities and training opportunities. The DSP will work with re-settled refugees who are jobseekers to support them into employment. This can include education or training schemes or employment support schemes to help the refugee into the workplace or other supports. There is no cost associated with these supports.

11.11 Financial Assistance

Basic income provision for re-settled refugees arriving in Ireland is the responsibility of the Department of Social Protection. The DSP sets up weekly payments in line with Irish social welfare rates and guidelines for each refugee. The DSP also assists with the furnishing of houses once allocated and additional one-off grants for household needs. There is no loan system in place in Ireland currently.

11.12 Supporting Specific Needs

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth funds local resettlement support teams by way of grants to Local authorities. Each Support Team consist of a Resettlement Support Worker with social care and integration experience, and an Arabic-speaking Intercultural Support Worker. No unaccompanied minors are accepted in Ireland. The role of the Resettlement Support Worker during the initial months is to ensure that the resettled refugees can move seamlessly into their new homes, that they are linked with the local service providers, that they have a point of contact should issues arise and that they are in receipt of applicable benefits and entitlements.

11.13 Family reunification

Family Reunification applications are administered by the Department of Justice in Ireland. A refugee will need to be permanently settled in Ireland before making an application for an immediate family member. Under the 2015 International Protection Act, the law in Ireland may only allow for limited family reunification for spouses or minor unmarried children. In the majority of cases the family you re-settle with through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme will be the only family members eligible for re-settlement to Ireland.

12. References & Resources on resettlement



In response to the crisis in Afghanistan in August 2021, Ireland, through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, has seen the arrival of approximately 560 humanitarian cases from Afghanistan. The Department co-operated with a wide range of organisations, including Amnesty International, the Irish Refugee Council, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the UNHCR, to identify individuals and families whom we could welcome to Ireland under the IRPP. Priority was given to human rights defenders, people supporting women’s organisations, LGBTI+ activists, journalists and judges.

Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was established in 2018 as a complementary integration and resettlement stream to the traditional state-centered model. The unique feature of the programme is that it enables a willing population to engage locally by directly supporting a refugee family. This funding is supported through the EU’s Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).