

**COUNTRY  
CHAPTER**

**URU**

# **URUGUAY**

**BY THE GOVERNMENT OF  
URUGUAY**



**Overview Uruguay:**

Resettlement Programme Since: <b>2009</b>	Selection Missions: <b>Yes</b>	Dossier Submissions: <b>No</b>
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**Resettlement Admission Targets for 2016:**

Admission targets for <b>UNHCR submissions:</b>	30
Total Resettlement Admission Target:	30

**Resettlement Admission Targets for 2017:**

Admission targets for <b>UNHCR submissions:</b>	30
Total Resettlement Admission Target:	30

**Regional Allocations for 2016:**

Africa	
Asia	
MENA	
Europa	
America	30

**Sub-quota characteristics:**

Emergency resettlement procedures	
Medical cases	
Cases of women at risk	
Unaccompanied minors	
Family reunification (within the programme)	

**1. Resettlement Policy****1.1 Description of the country's resettlement policy**

The government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, within the framework of respect and protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in observance of international laws for the protection and integration of refugees, in the interest of strengthening international solidarity and finding lasting solutions to problems facing refugees, has agreed in conjunction with UNHCR to establish a refugee resettlement programme in Uruguay. The programme aims to meet the needs of refugees whose life, safety, freedom and other fundamental human rights are threatened in their country of asylum, and to facilitate their integration into Uruguayan society based on self-reliance and a positive contribution to local society.

The Framework Agreement was approved in June 2007 by Law N° 18.382. It envisaged an initial two-year resettlement pilot stage, taking into account the Regional Solidarity Resettlement Programme, and with particular consideration for Latin American refugees, followed by an evaluation of the programme by Uruguay and UNHCR; and a second resettlement stage which could consider receiving refugees for resettlement from other regions outside Latin America.

The resettlement programme priorities are guided by a number of considerations - both domestic as well as international protection; UNHCR's it is very important in this process.

Since 2009 different kinds of programmes have been implemented, as outlined below.

## **1.2 Ministries or departments responsible for resettlement policy**

Uruguay is a State party to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The Law N° 18.076, adopted in 2006, establishes the principles and rights governing the matter, and created the Refugee Commission (CORE); the authority in charge of defining the profiles of people to be resettled, the selection of families, and the adjudication of the Refugee Status in the country, and it's Permanent Secretariat.

The CORE consists of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior (National Directorate of Immigration), the University of the Republic, the legislative branch and one representative from an NGO appointed by the Regional Representative of UNHCR and another from an NGO whose aim and practice is focused on human rights. UNHCR or its representative will act as guests, with voice but no vote.

The Ecumenical Service for Human Dignity (SEDHU), UNHCR's implementing partner in Uruguay, is charged with monitoring, supporting and providing services to resettled refugees.

In early 2014, in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries, President Mujica offered resettlement to Syrian refugees and designed a specific resettlement programme for five families (42 people) in which the Human Rights Secretariat in the Presidency was tasked with its leadership and implementation.

## **1.3 Process of determining the annual resettlement quota and composition**

Resettlement applications are submitted by UNHCR to the CORE on the basis of the resettlement criteria laid out in Chapter six of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2011). The number of people to resettle and resettlement criteria are established within the Framework Agreement on Refugee Resettlement concluded between UNHCR and Uruguay in 2006. The selection mission process, from receiving applications through the arrival of refugees in the country, takes around six months.

## **2. Eligibility Criteria for Recognition of Refugee and Asylum Status**

### **2.1 National legislation that defines eligibility for refugee status**

Law 18.076 on the Refugees' Right to Asylum of December 19, 2006 defines and regulates refugee status in accordance with the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

The beneficiaries of the resettlement programme signed with UNHCR must be refugees under the terms of the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the Cartagena Declaration of 1984.

## 3. Resettlement Criteria

### 3.1 Eligibility criteria for refugee resettlement

The eligibility criteria for resettlement are set out in Chapter six of the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2011. The resettlement programme in Uruguay focused on profiles in need of legal and physical protection and refugees without local integration prospects. In 2011 the Government included the Women at Risk category into the programme, and in the second half of the 2013, Uruguay started a pilot programme for Rural resettlement.

The profiles of resettled refugees have been varied, depending on the programme under which they arrived. In the case of the regular resettlement programme, there were families with children under the age of 18, with at least two adults of working age, with an urban or semi-urban profile, complete basic secondary education, and with some skills and/or working experience.

Regarding the Women at Risk (WAR) programme, it consisted of women refugees who were heads of households, in a vulnerable situation, with an urban profile, high school education and a trade or relevant working experience.

The Rural resettlement programme involves people with a rural profile and working experience relating to farming, with a desire to settle in small towns in semi-rural areas outside Montevideo.

In the case of Syrian refugees, the criteria was to include 60 per cent of persons under the age of 18 and at least one adult of working age with experience in agricultural work.

### 3.2 Admissibility criteria

There are no special criteria for admissibility.

## 4. Resettlement Allocations/Processing Priorities

### 4.1 Resettlement allocations

In its original stage, the government provided resettlement for 15 persons a year during the first two years of the programme, with the possibility of extending the quota, which is now 30 persons a year.

Uruguay received the first refugees resettled through the Solidarity Resettlement programme in 2009. Between 2009 and 2014, 68 individuals, in 18 family units, have arrived in total. Under the programme for Syrian refugees, 42 individuals, in five family units, arrived in October 2014.

### 4.2 Processing priorities

Priority is given to the resettlement needs of refugees from Latin America.

## 5. Refugee Presentation and Processing Through Dossier Selection

### 5.1 Policies on dossier case presentation

UNHCR will present the dossier, duly completed and signed by the individual, to CORE, together with all the documentation that is relevant and appropriate. CORE will review cases and decide whether an exception will take place and the parties may be selected without a personal interview. So far, this procedure has not been applied.

## 5.2 Processing deadlines

CORE will make decisions on cases, based on the available information, in a period not exceeding 60 days from receipt of the application, which it will then communicate to UNHCR. UNHCR may request a review of the case if it is rejected, on the basis of additional information provided by the latter.

The departure and arrival of those accepted for resettlement is coordinated by UNHCR and SEDHU, with the former responsible for travel expenses.

The State will provide all necessary resources to resettled refugees with respect to entry and legal residency. The Interior Ministry will streamline entry procedures and documentation for refugees. The Permanent Secretariat of CORE, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and SEDHU, is responsible for providing documents.

## 6. Presentation and Processing of Refugees Through Selection Missions

### 6.1 Selection Mission policies

The selection process missions shall be performed in the first country of asylum to facilitate the case assessments, provide information on the scope of the programme and living conditions in Uruguay, and to start the process of integration. These selection missions follow the process described in section 5 after CORE screens cases from among candidates nominated by the UNHCR.

## 7. Emergency/Urgent Cases

When there is an urgent need for legal and physical protection, UNHCR may present cases to CORE to be analyzed on the basis of existing documentation. The corresponding decision must be made within a month. So far, this procedure has not been applied.

## 8. Special Categories/Specific Needs

There are no sub-quotas assigned for cases with special needs.

## 9. Medical requirements

There are no pre-departure medical requirements. However, due to humanitarian reasons, in the case of Syrian refugees, a medical check was completed before departure from Lebanon in order to ensure that they were in good condition to travel.

## 10. Orientation

Information on living conditions in Uruguay, the general characteristics of the country's population, climate, cost of living, job prospects, education, health, and other aspects of interest is provided during the interviews. An educational video is shown and questions and concerns are addressed.

## 11. Travel

In the Solidarity Resettlement Programmes implemented, UNHCR assumed responsibility for the coordination of travel and costs. This organization works with SEDHU to coordinate dates of departure and arrival, and reception of refugees at the port of entry.

In the case of the specific resettlement programme for Syrian refugees, the government of

Uruguay, in coordination with IOM and UNHCR, took responsibility of this matter.

Refugees accepted for resettlement only have access to the travel document issued by the country of asylum with the support of UNHCR.

## 12. Situation on Arrival and Paths for Obtaining Citizenship

### 12.1 Situation facing immigrants on arrival

Resettled persons enter the country with refugee status granted by CORE and are under its and the government's protection.

Pursuant to Law N° 18.076, refugees are entitled to and may exercise civil, economic, social and cultural rights and every other right inherent to human individuals that are inhabitants of the Republic.

### 12.2 Documentation issued

Entering refugees will be granted an identity card and a travel document, the first issued by the National Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Interior, and the second by the Bureau of Consular Affairs, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to Article 74 of the Constitution, men and women born anywhere in the territory of the Republic are considered citizens. As such, children born to refugees after their arrival are given identity cards issued by the National Civil Identification Bureau.

### 12.3 The requirements for obtaining citizenship

Resettled persons can obtain legal citizenship by meeting the conditions of Section 75 of the Constitution: good behavior, with a family established in the country, having capital or property in the country or skilled in any science, art or industry and with three years of residence in the Republic; good behavior, without a family established in the country, some of the above qualities and residing for five years in the Republic; or obtain special permission from the legislature for outstanding service or outstanding merit. An individual may exercise the full rights of citizenship three years after legal citizenship papers have been issued.

## 13. Settlement in the Country and Community Services

### 13.1 Services and actors

For those refugees under the Solidarity Resettlement Programme Scheme, once they are in the country, support services and assistance are provided by SEDHU, which offers them guidance and information needed to start their life in the country, as well as legal advice in various areas of interest.

As it is explained throughout this document, the Syrian refugee resettlement programme has had a different approach and has received more engagement from the government, also regarding the local integration process. The Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency, hired a team of professionals to bring support and orientation to each family.

### 13.2 Reception

Upon arrival in Uruguay, refugees are received by SEDHU staff, which accompanies them to their temporary accommodations.

Upon arrival, the Syrian families were met at the airport by President Mujica, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and senior Government officials. The refugees were transferred to a facility in the outskirts of Montevideo where they could stay until they were moved to individual homes.

### **13.3 Guidance**

Guidance is provided in all areas of interest at any point after arrival.

### **13.4 Housing**

There are some different situations regarding accommodation. In the regular resettlement and WAR programmes, preliminary housing is provided, consisting of a centrally located hotel in the city of Montevideo, until permanent housing is found. Information is provided on real estate and rental options. SEDHU usually prepares a list of options for house or apartment rentals in coordination with local real estate agencies, and, if necessary, SEDHU staff accompanies refugees on visits to choose a home. People are free to choose the home that best suits their needs and expectations, within the budget they have available as part of the aid they receive from the programme.

For refugees who participated in the rural resettlement programme, for the first time the Government, through an agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MEVIR, a housing agency, does provide houses for resettle refugees. The commitment is for the first two years, and after that period the family is expected to pay a very low rent.

In the Syrian refugees resettlement programme, after spending approximately two months in a transit centre, the families were subsequently moved to their individual homes in different parts of the country (provided by MEVIR or the Ministry of Housing), and even for a large family, a house was built especially for them by MEVIR. The level of financial assistance that was provided was substantially higher than what had been provided to other resettled refugees in Uruguay.

### **13.5 Health**

Refugees can access public health services available to the entire population.

### **13.6 Language learning**

Until the resettlement for Syrian refugees was implemented, as only Spanish-speaking refugees had been resettled, there was no need for language instruction.

The Syrian families received Spanish lessons and were supported by a team of professionals. Also, UNHCR provided a full-time member of its staff who is fluent in Arabic, Spanish and English to support the refugees for one year.

### **13.7 Education**

Children and adults have full access to the public education system, from elementary school through college, on an equal basis with the local population.

### **13.8 Vocational training and employment**

The same as the previous applies for training and refresher courses. Financial assistance is provided for adult job training as deemed necessary and useful for insertion into the labor market.

There are no special employment programmes for resettled refugees, which must seek employment under the same conditions as the local population.

Although in the resettlement programme for Syrian families efforts were made by the Secretary for Human Rights in order to provide vocational training and assist the refugees in finding employment, the programme lacked a formal employment placement programme.

### **13.9 Financial assistance**

In the case of Solidarity resettlement programme (regular and rural), UNHCR provides

financial support to refugees for their first year to meet basic needs, such as food and clothing, in order to facilitate their integration into local society. Thereafter, they must support themselves.

In the case of Women at Risk, monetary assistance was given for a period of two years. This is a full monthly stipend for the first 12 months, and a gradually decreasing monthly stipend for the remaining 12 months. Considering the vulnerability of Women at Risk and the enhanced challenges that they face as heads of household and/or single parents, it is deemed that, in their case, reaching the necessary level of empowerment to claim self-sufficiency requires longer than other regular cases.

The Syrian refugee resettlement programme is a State-funded programme, where the Government assumed the totality of the financial costs of the project and where UNHCR provided technical support. In this case, the five families are given monthly financial subsidies for a period of two years.

## 14. Refugee Family Reunification

### 14.1 Legislation related to rights and restrictions on family reunification

The right to family reunification is awarded to the refugee's spouse, partner, children and other relatives by consanguinity within the fourth degree, and to the second degree by marriage, in accordance with article 21 of Law 18.076 on the Refugees' Right to Asylum. To the extent that article 6 of the Framework Agreement for the Resettlement of Refugees with UNHCR refers to the current rules for granting this right to the family of resettled refugees, the definition of family reunification embodied in Law 18.076 is considered applicable to resettlement.

Article 21 of Law 18.076 Act determines the eligibility of family members for reunification, within the limits defined by application of exclusion clauses or cessation of refugee status.

Family reunification cases are not considered within the resettlement quota. Applications for family reunification are filed by the refugee in the Uruguay, and are channeled through the Regional Office of UNHCR. The annual quota of 15 people has currently been met by family groups, so there have been no cases of family reunification.

### 14.2 Case documentation

The required documentation consists of the information requested on the UNHCR Family Reunification Form and of the photocopied documents verifying the family ties with the refugee seeking reunification. As there have been no cases of refugees applying for family reunification, a time frame cannot be estimated. However, since requests are transmitted through UNHCR offices, the time will depend largely on the latter, while with respect to application processing within the country, once CORE receives the request and documentation, it will provide a resolution as quickly as possible.

### 14.3 Rights of family members

Upon arriving for family reunification, family members are also recognized as refugees in Uruguay.

## 15. References, Resources

- Law N° 18.382 on the Framework Agreement for Refugees Resettlement: <https://www0.parlamento.gub.uy/Leyes/Ley18382.htm>
- Law 18.076 on the Refugees' Right to Asylum: <http://www.parlamento.gub.uy/leyes/AccesoTextoLey.asp?Ley=18076&Anchor>