

Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Iceland

Overview

Relevant EU legislation

Iceland is not bound by the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation (URF). A similar national legal framework applies. Currently, Iceland [has paused](#) the resettlement programme in cooperation with UNHCR until further notice. However, the information in this section describes all aspects of the national resettlement and humanitarian admissions policy.

National legislation

15/03/2025: Foreign Nationals Act (Article 43. Entry of groups of refugees at the invitation of the authorities.) | [Lög um útlendinga](#) (43. gr. Koma hópa flóttafólks í boði stjórnvalda.)

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	The annual quota of refugees is suggested to the government by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, following a proposal by the Icelandic Refugee Committee and a cost estimate proposal. The Icelandic Refugee Committee is comprised of members from: the Ministry of Justice (Dómsmálaráðuneytið) the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing (Félags- og húsnæðismálaráðuneytið), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Utanríkisráðuneytið) and three observers from the Directorate of Immigration, the Icelandic Red Cross and the Association of Icelandic Local Authorities.
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<p>Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes</p>	<p>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)</p>
<p>Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes</p>	<p>The Icelandic Refugee Committee is comprised of members of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Ministry of Justice Dómsmálaráðuneytið • The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing Félags- og húsnæðismálaráðuneytið • the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Utanríkisráðuneytið <p>and the following observers from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Directorate of Immigration Útlendingastofnun • The Icelandic Red Cross Rauði krossinn á Íslandi and • The Association of Icelandic Local Authorities.
<p>Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes</p>	<p>International Organization for Migration (IOM)</p>
<p>Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Organization for Migration (IOM) • United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

<p>Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate of Immigration Útlendingastofnun • Icelandic Refugee Committee, comprised of members of: • the Ministry of Justice Dómsmálaráðuneytið • The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing Félags- og húsnæðismálaráðuneytið • the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Utánríkisráðuneytið • Municipalities and local authorities • Icelandic Red Cross Rauði krossinn
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Programmes currently in place

Until 2022, Iceland implemented the following programme:

- National resettlement programme is based on an annual quota decided by the government.
- [Humanitarian admission programme for Afghan nationals.](#)

Currently the resettlement and humanitarian admissions programme with UNHCR is suspended.

National quotas on resettlement and humanitarian admission

National commitments for resettlement, humanitarian admission and emergency quota

2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2024-2025	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.

2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2026-2027	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.
Period 2028-2029	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.	Information is currently not available due to suspension of the programme.

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

Referral: Cases should be submitted by UNHCR.

Selection: The majority of refugees who are resettled in Iceland are selected following a selection mission in the first country of asylum. All cases subject to resettlement are evaluated by the Icelandic Refugee Committee and the Directorate of Immigration. There are no integration criteria or any assessments of medical needs.

Each time, a delegation from the Icelandic government goes to the country where the refugees have been granted asylum and assesses which families and individuals should be invited to settle in Iceland. The committee works in close consultation with UNHCR representatives in the country of residence. At the end of the selection mission, the delegation submits its proposals to the Icelandic Refugee Committee, which then presents them to the Minister responsible for Social Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During a selection mission, the delegation may also include representatives of the ministries who are members of the Icelandic Refugee Committee, a representative of the Icelandic Red Cross and a representative of the Directorate of Immigration.

Since 2010, UNHCR has sent the Icelandic Refugee Committee Resettlement Registration Forms (RRFs) for individuals and families recommended by the respective UNHCR office. The numbers of

cases that are sent are higher than who is offered asylum in Iceland. The committee studies all the cases thoroughly and has in some cases interviewed the ones who are likely to be offered asylum in Iceland. The interviews were most often conducted by computer with the assistance of UNHCR and sometimes the local Icelandic embassy.

In recent years, Iceland has focused on particular vulnerable groups, such as women at risk and refugees with medical needs. Resettlement places were offered to all family members, generally spouses and children less than 18 years of age.

Assessment of cases: Before a decision is reached, all cases are interviewed by the refugee committee by video conference. It is stressed that all family members participate in the interview, even the youngest ones. The main objective of the interview is to assess the individual's or the family's present situation and how they feel about moving to Iceland. The committee usually does not ask about the past or the information already documented by UNHCR; the focus is on the present and future. A decision is finally taken based upon the overall evaluation of the need for asylum, as well as on prospects for successful integration.

The Refugee Committee informs the Minister responsible for Social Affairs of its recommendation. The Ministry of Welfare notifies UNHCR headquarters and the UNHCR field office of its decision by sending a list with the names of every individual who is offered the right to settle in Iceland as soon as possible after the decision

Type of protection granted and residence permit issued after the admission procedure

Refugees accepted for resettlement are granted refugee status according to the 1951 Convention and Foreign Nationals Act. The process takes less than 4 weeks. The Directorate of Immigration, municipality and the Red Cross in Iceland assist the refugees to fill in the necessary forms. Refugees receive travel documents from the Icelandic government. The refugee will receive a permit to stay in Iceland for 3 years and can then renew and apply for a permanent residence permit after 4 years. Refugees are subsequently granted residence and work permits.

Pre-departure assistance

Resettled refugees receive cultural orientation from the IOM before travelling to Iceland. The 2.5-day cultural orientation includes information on rights and duties, the resettlement programme, Icelandic society and culture, climate and geography. The cultural orientation also covers information on

challenges refugees may face in the new local community. They also receive general information packages

Travel arrangements

Travel arrangements are prepared by the IOM according to a contract, in close cooperation with UNHCR. The cost of travel is paid by the Icelandic government.

No specific medical check-ups are required before departure. Upon arrival in Iceland, quota refugees receive a health examination, the necessary medical care and offered psychological assistance.

Arrival and reception

The reception and integration of refugees is coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in cooperation with the Icelandic Red Cross and the municipality where the refugees will be resettled. An agreement is made between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Red Cross regarding preparation and assistance during the first year for the refugees.

Another agreement is made between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the local authority chosen for the reception of the refugees. The local authorities organise a comprehensive programme for 1 year, in cooperation with the Red Cross and the Refugee Committee.

When the age and number of refugees to be received is known, the Refugee Committee informs the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of the age and number of young people who will attend upper secondary school in the first year of residence with the aim of ensuring them suitable study opportunities.

Detailed rules on the reception of and assistance to resettled refugees are laid out in the Refugee Committee Guidelines on the Reception and Assistance of Refugee Groups (2014) [[Leiðbeinandi reglur fyrir sveitarfélög um móttökuþjónustu og aðstoð við félagslega þátttöku flóttafólks. \(2014\)](#)].

Rights and entitlements: The Social Service office in each municipality receiving resettled refugees provides a case worker who assists the person in taking an active part in the labour market or to seek further education.

Timeframe: Average processing time is approximately 3 months between the date a decision is issued by the Icelandic authorities and the arrival of the refugees. However, the Icelandic authorities are making effort to process entry visas as fast as possible.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

According to information published by Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, local authorities [organise](#) a comprehensive programme for the refugees for 1 year, in cooperation with the Red Cross and the Refugee Committee.

Resettlement programmes

The national resettlement programme is based on an annual quota decided by the government.

Humanitarian admission programmes

No humanitarian programmes are currently implemented.

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

Currently Iceland does not implement community sponsorship programmes.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to civil society-led humanitarian admission programmes

Currently Iceland does not implement community sponsorship programmes.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

Currently Iceland does not implement community sponsorship programmes.