

Access to procedures and non-refoulement - Finland | DIP EUAA

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Overview

Relevant EU legislation

Finland is bound by the recast Asylum Procedures Directive and has transposed its provisions through the [Aliens Act | Ulkomaalaislaki](#) (30 April 2004) and [Border Guard Act](#) (15 July 2005).

National legislation

[Aliens Act | Ulkomaalaislaki](#) (30 April 2004)

[Border Guard Act](#) (15 July 2005).

Competent authority and stakeholders

Area	Competent national authority	Assistance to competent authority (if applicable)
Screening at the external border	The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos	Not applicable
Biometric data	At the border: The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos Police Poliisi	Not applicable
Making an application	At the border: The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos On the territory: Police Poliisi Finnish Immigration Service Maahanmuuttovirasto Finnish Customs Tulli In detention: Police Poliisi (on site) The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos (on site)	Not applicable
Registering an application	Police Poliisi The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos	Not applicable

Area	Competent national authority	Assistance to competent authority (if applicable)
Lodging an application	Police Poliisi The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos The lodging of an application overlaps with registration.	Not applicable
Information provision	The Finnish Border Guard Rajavartiolaitos Finnish Immigration Service Maahanmuuttovirasto	Civil society organisations

Access to the territory

Official external border-crossing points

Finland has [24 external air border-crossing points](#), the main one is Helsinki Airport.

Finland has [9 external land border-crossing points](#) situated mostly along the border between Finland and the Russian Federation, the length of which is 1,340 kms: Rajajooseppi, Salla, Kuusamo, Vartius, Niirala, Imatra, Nuijamaa, Vainikkala and Vaalimaa.

Finland has [6 external sea border-crossing points](#) situated mostly along the 1,100 kms of coastline: Haapasaari, Helsinki, Hanko and Åland, Santio and the port of Nuijamaa.

Emergency measures in cases of mass arrivals

Section 133 of the [Aliens Act](#) provides for the registration of immigrants in the event of mass arrivals. In such a case, the government may decide in a plenary session to temporarily send immigrants to a refugee centre for a maximum of 3 months. The police or border control authorities, or other officials appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, are tasked with the registration process, which must occur quickly and may involve entering signs of vulnerabilities into records.

During the registration period, immigrants are required to stay at the refugee centre, unless there are health or other important personal reasons. Additionally, foreign officers from the European Border and Coast Guard or asylum support groups may assist the police in carrying out these tasks under supervision.

Protection from refoulement

The principle of protection from *refoulement* is enshrined in the Constitution of Finland of 11 June 1999, under Section 9(4): *“The right of foreigners to enter Finland and to remain in the country is regulated by an Act. A foreigner shall not be deported, extradited or returned to another country, if in consequence they are in danger of a death sentence, torture or other treatment violating human dignity”*.

The non-refoulement principle is enshrined in Section 147 of the [Aliens Act](#): *“No one may be denied admittance or stay and sent back, deported or, as a result of refusal of entry, returned to an area where they could be subject to the death penalty, torture, persecution or other treatment violating human dignity or from where they could be sent to such an area”*.

The Finnish Immigration Service assesses the application of the *non-refoulement* principle at the same time on the asylum and the return decision.

Protection from *refoulement* at external air borders

See section below about the border procedure.

Protection from *refoulement* at external land borders

See section below about the border procedure.

Protection from *refoulement* at external sea borders

See section below about the border procedure.

Protection from *refoulement* in case of emergency measures related to mass arrivals

Same as above.

Border procedure

[Finland included the border procedure into national legislation in June 2024](#), under Section 104a of the Aliens Act. If the application is made at a border crossing point or through an unauthorised crossing, it may be rejected without examination or processed under the expedited procedure (as outlined in Section 104).

The border procedure applies with specific conditions for minors without a guardian. The application can be rejected without an examination if the applicant comes from a safe third country, produced false documents, has been granted international protection in another Member State or the application is processed under an expedited procedure. Temporary derogations can be allowed if exceptional circumstances prevent processing.

If the applicant has special procedural guarantees and cannot receive the support outlined in Section 96a of the Aliens Act, the border procedure does not apply.

The Finnish Immigration Service must decide on the application within 4 weeks in a border procedure.

According to Section 104b of the Aliens Act, applicants are restricted in movement during the border procedure. They must stay at the border or in a designated area of a reception centre. Exceptions may be granted for serious illness, funerals or to access necessary services, such as schooling for minors.

The applicant's area within the reception centre must ensure privacy and provide access to reception services.

Under Section 104c of the Aliens Act, the border procedure ends if:

- There are no grounds for inadmissibility or expedited processing.
- The Finnish Immigration Service fails to make a decision within 4 weeks.
- The decision is not communicated to the applicant within 7 days.
- An administrative court prohibits the enforcement of a rejection decision.
- 4 weeks have passed since the rejection decision became enforceable, unless prohibited by the court.

Procedural aspects

In Finland, lodging an application for international protection overlaps with registration.

Making an application

Responsible authority and place

Applications for international protection can be made (in the sense of the initial expression of the wish to receive international protection) at a border post, airport or seaport (to border guards) or within the territory to any police department. If a person is in a prison/detention facility, they will be directed to make the application with the police or the border guard. The same will follow if the application is made to the staff of the Finnish Immigration Service, reception centres or Finnish Customs (Section 95(3) Aliens Act).

Possibility to apply from outside the territory

Applications cannot be made to a Finnish embassy abroad. Finland does not have a scheme to issue visas for humanitarian reasons.

Formal requirements for making an application

There is no possibility to apply for international protection by post or e-mail; all applications must be made in person (Section 8 Aliens Act). Vulnerable persons and other exceptional cases may be directed to medical care, and their applications are registered at a later stage. There are no specific time limits within which a claim must be made. However, if a late claim is made, the applicant must explain the delay during the asylum interview and risks having his/her credibility called into question for not having sought protection earlier.

Making an application while being in detention for illegal entry/stay may have consequences on an applicant's detention depending on the circumstances of the application. If the application is likely to be deemed manifestly unfounded, transferred under the Dublin procedure or there is a risk of absconding, the person will likely continue to be detained. If the application is substantiated, they are likely to be released.

In 2020, the Finnish Immigration Service [published a report](#) on the duty of the authorities to clarify and gather information on immigration matters in general, including for asylum applications. The report forms part of the AMIF-funded MISEC project, which aims to strengthen cooperation between immigration and security authorities.

The Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration ('Border Security Act') entered into force on 22 July 2024 and was in force for one year. In January 2025, the Ministry of the Interior announced that it has set up a legislative project to extend the validity of the Border Security Act, with the aim to respond to efforts to put pressure on Finland through the instrumentalisation of migrants. On 16 June 2025, the Ministry of the Interior announced the extension of the Act on Temporary Measures to Combat Instrumentalised Migration ('Border Security Act')

until 31 December 2026. The amendments will enter into force on 1 July, upon approval by the President of Finland on 27 June 2025.

On 16 November 2023 [the Government decides to close part of the eastern border](#) and [adopted a decision on 24 November 2023 to implement processing centers at the Eastern border](#). The Finnish Immigration Service provides updated information on the closure of the border and the access to the asylum procedure. Applications for international protection may be submitted at other border crossing points at Finland's external borders that are still open for air and maritime traffic. The eastern border closure [was extended](#) since and the Ministry of the Interior [announced](#) in April 2025 that it will continue to remain closed.

Registering an application

Responsible authority and place

Registering and lodging an application for international protection overlap. The Border Guard authority or the police are responsible for receiving and registering applications, as well as notifying and enforcing negative asylum decisions. According to Article 95 of the [Aliens Act](#), if the application is made to the authority competent to register it, the application is registered either immediately or on the same/next working day.

If the application is made to an authority other than the authority competent to register it, it is registered within 6 working days after making the application. If the number of applications has increased substantially, the police or border guard may extend the registration time limit to 10 working days.

Practical steps to register the application

According to Article 95 of the [Aliens Act](#), the application must be submitted to the police or border control authority as soon as possible after arrival in the country. If the application is submitted later, it can be accepted under certain conditions (change in the situation of the country of origin of the applicant, the applicant could

not submit documentation earlier or there are justified reasons for delay). Once received, the application is registered by the police or border control authority without delay. If the application is submitted to a different authority (e.g. Finnish Immigration Service, staff of reception centre, detention unit or customs), the applicant must be redirected to the competent authority for registration. The application must be registered within 6 working days of submission; if there is a high number of applications, then the deadline may be extended to 10 working days.

Upon submission, the police, Finnish Immigration Service or border control authority may seize the applicant's travel document for safekeeping until a residence permitted is granted, providing a certificate to the applicant that the documents have been seized.

The opening hours for the place where an asylum application can be lodged and registered are generally between 08.00 am to 16.00 pm (Monday to Friday), as well as in main police stations during weekends. Border crossing points in south-east Finland and Helsinki Airport: 24/7 and others mainly between 08.00 to 21:00 every day. [Contact information - The Finnish Border Guard](#)

Third-country nationals who apply outside of the working hours are handed over to a local reception centre. If it entails a criminal suspect, the person is taken into custody by the Border Guard.

Data collection

Under Section 131 of the Aliens Act, the police or border control authority take fingerprints, photos and any information of the foreign national who has applied for international protection in order to verify their identity and ensure national security. All applications for international protection are registered in an IT system, UMA (fi. *Ulkomaalaisasioiden tietojärjestelmä*), which is managed and used mainly by the Finnish Immigration Service, but also by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, police, border guard, customs, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, Employment and Economic Development Offices, Prison Administration Authority and Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, which gather data on procedures linked to foreigners, including visas,

residence permits, international protection, expulsions and citizenship. Additionally, the register is used to ensure the security of the state and to carry out a basic and an extensive security investigation, as referred to in the Act on Security Investigations.

The database is linked with other national databases, including the Population Information System, Social Insurance Institution, Tax Administration and Legal Register Centre. This is to ease searching of information relevant for the case at hand.

The Eurodac Regulation (604/2013), Article 9 obliges Member States to promptly take fingerprints of all fingers of every applicant for international protection who is at least 14 years of age. The new Eurodac Regulation (2024/1358), Article 15 obliges Member States to take the biometric data of every applicant for international protection who is at least 6 years of age.

Documentation

Applicants receive a certificate attesting the application for international protection and they are hosted in a reception centre in order to access material reception conditions until a decision is taken.

Lodging an application

Responsible authority and place

Registering and lodging an application for international protection overlap. The border guard authority or the police are responsible for receiving and registering applications, as well as issuing and enforcing negative asylum decisions. According to Article 95 of the Aliens Act, if the application is made to the authority competent to register it, the application is registered either immediately or on the same/next working day. If the application is made to an authority other than the authority competent to register it, it is registered within 6 working days after making the application. If the number of applications has increased substantially, the police or

border guard may extend the registration time limit to 10 working days.

Formal requirements to lodge an application for international protection

The application is [lodged](#) orally (no set form is used), and additional information can be submitted by letter or email to the Finnish Immigration Service. The applicant lodges the application by answering questions by a police or border guard officer (aimed at establishing the person's identity, entry into the country and itinerary) who then inserts all the information into the Register of Aliens (which is managed and used through a software known as UMA). If required, an interpreter is summoned.

An application for international protection is lodged in person (it is not possible to do so by proxy). The law, however, allows the applicant to also apply on behalf of dependents who accompany the applicant. An application can therefore include a minor, but not the spouse (all adults lodge an individual application). The presence of the minor included in the application is required when the application is being lodged.

Various practical arrangements assist the person during the process of lodging the application, including separate waiting areas. The applicant is also informed that he/she may contact UNHCR and relevant civil society organisations about their application and legal advice (a contact list is provided).

The application process includes additional activities (establishing the identity of an applicant, taking photographs, fingerprinting, medical examination, personal and luggage checks, and security check, if required).

Once the application is lodged, the application is forwarded to the first instance determining body, the Finnish Immigration Service and the applicant is directed to a reception centre, where he/she is accommodated while the application is being processed.

Documentation

Applicants received a certificate/card attesting the application for international protection and they are hosted in a reception centre in order to access material reception conditions until a decision is taken. Section 96 of the [Aliens Act](#) provides that the police, Border guard or the Finnish Immigration Service can issue this card as proof as applicant for international protection. The card must be returned when the decision on the application becomes final, the person leaves the country, or a travel document was issued.

Information provision

Information is provided when the applicant makes the application for international protection. Aspects may be reiterated at this stage – see Section 95a of the [Aliens Act](#).

Passport and other documents

Obligation to surrender original documents

Requirement to submit original documents

There is no legal requirement for applicants for a form of protection to surrender their national passport to the authorities. Photocopies are not accepted as proof of identity. Applicants are asked to present their identity documents at the earliest possible stage but are also allowed to submit identity documents at any stage during the process.

Consequence of a refusal to surrender documents

According to Chapter 7, Section 130(1) and Chapter 1, Section 7.1 of the [Aliens Act](#), an applicant is generally obliged to cooperate in the investigation and urged to submit all proof of identity (citizenship certificate, birth certificate, etc.). In law, there is no corresponding and explicitly formulated obligation for an asylum applicant to submit his/her original identity or travel document as stated in Article

13(b) of the recast APD.

Return of original documents to the applicant

According to Chapter 6, Section 95 of the [Aliens Act](#), the police, the border control authority and the Finnish Immigration Service have the right to keep original identity/travel documents until the applicant is granted a residence permit or he/she leaves the country. A distinction is made between identity/travel documents and original evidence documents. Both are subject to the same provisions but treated in a different way. Requesting and temporarily receiving back a passport for certain specific purposes is possible.

Other documents

Section 97 of the Aliens Act provides that the Finnish Immigration Service is responsible for determining the identity of an applicant for international protection. The applicant may submit identity documents which can be considered as verified or, if identity documents are not presented, then a more detailed assessment is required, based on for example other documents related to the person's identity, register data, age assessment, language analysis or even statements of the applicant (with overall assessment of credibility and consistency). The Finnish Immigration Service provides detailed information on the verification of documents in the [Instructions on processing an application for international protection - Asylum instructions](#).

Section 7 of the Aliens Act provides that "Parties shall provide evidence of the grounds for their claims, and also, in other respects, cooperate in the examination of their matter". Submitted documents/items are given back immediately if they have been read, copied or scanned and further examination of the original is not necessary. Otherwise they are returned after additional examination or at the end of the procedure. Other than email, there is no possibility for applicants to submit documents electronically/paperless.

Requirement to read digital data

The Aliens Act (301/2004) does not provide specific provisions on the search of electronic devices within the asylum procedure. The Finnish Immigration Service can request the results of a [device search](#) performed by the police or the border on the applicant or another person. The legal basis for a device search is found in Section 22.1 of the [Act on the Processing of Personal Data by the Police](#) and Section 32 [Act on the Processing of Personal Data by the Finnish Border Guard](#). Such a request can be made when there are doubts with regard to the applicant's identity or background.

Guarantees for applicants

Confidentiality principle

Section 131 of the Aliens Act provides that data collected by the police or border control authority are entered in a register which is managed by the police and follows the confidentiality principle outlined in the [Act on the Processing of Personal Data in Police Operations](#).

Personal data referred to in Sub-section 1 may, notwithstanding the confidentiality provisions, be disclosed to identify a foreign national to a foreign authority and to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, taking into account Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).

Information provision

According to Section 95a of the [Aliens Act](#) (amended by [Law No 426/2024](#)): *“the applicant for international protection is informed about the asylum procedure and their rights and obligations in the procedure. The police or border inspection authority gives information to applicants when they apply for international protection. If the border procedure referred to in Section 104a is not applied, the information can also be given by the Immigration Office or the reception centre as soon as possible after the application is submitted. The information is given in the applicant's mother tongue or in a language presumed to be understood”*.

If a decision on the application for international protection cannot be made within 6 months of submitting the application, the applicant must be informed of the delay in processing. At the applicant's request, information about the reason for the delay and when a decision can be expected must also be provided.

The police or the Finnish Border Guard are responsible to hand out information material to applicants during the making, registration and lodging. The Finnish Immigration Office oversees producing and updating the material. No website or mobile application has been developed to provide information during access to procedure.

At the border or in transit zones, information on the right to make an application is provided orally by police and border guards if they assess an arrival as someone who may need international protection (this information is only provided upon a clear indication that the third-country national or stateless person is a potential applicant). The foreigner can also access advice and counselling.

The police or the border guard explain the asylum process and the following steps briefly during the registration of an application. The applicant is given a brochure which explains the asylum process and the applicant's rights and duties. In the brochure, there is a link to the videos which provide additional information.

The information provided by individual sessions, videos, and leaflets/brochures cover:

- The making, registration and lodging of applications;
- The procedure to be followed;
- The applicant's rights and obligations;
- The possible consequences of not complying with obligations and not cooperating with the authorities;
- The timeframe and the means to submit the elements needed to substantiate the application;
- The consequences of an explicit or implicit withdrawal;
- Asylum seekers right to work (provided in a leaflet).

A short brochure which explains the asylum process in a simple language enables the applicant to return to the information whenever s/he needs it. The info videos that are available on YouTube have the same benefit. The information brochures are available on the website of the Finnish Immigration Service: <https://migri.fi/info-fi>, <https://migri.fi/esitteet-ja-julkaisut#turvapaikka> and [Information for asylum seekers](#)

During the registration applicants can be nervous and cannot acquire a lot of information at once. For these reasons, applicants are also given more information about the asylum procedure in an info session at the reception centre. The info session is conducted based on a PowerPoint presentation only in Finnish and represents a tool for the reception centre staff to explain to an applicant the relevant topics in the asylum process. An interpreter is also present in the info session.

In detention, information is provided only upon specific indication that the third-country national or stateless person at hand is a potential applicant.

Information on the asylum procedure and other relevant topics (such as ways to submit the application, asylum procedure, Dublin procedure and reception etc.) is available in 25 languages and accessible through the Finnish Immigration Service's [web portal \(adults\)](#) and multiple [brochures](#) by [topic](#) (a dedicated [material](#) for children, explaining to them the asylum procedure is also available, and information for [unaccompanied minors](#)). A web-portal with the title '[Asylum in Finland](#)' has been

developed by the Finnish Immigration Service in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The portal, which is available in English, Arabic, Dari, and Somali, includes comprehensive, realistic information both on the asylum process and on the Finnish context in general to help interested individuals develop realistic expectations on the process. Moreover, the City of Helsinki manages the [Infopankki](#) website where basic information on possibilities to seek asylum in Finland (available in 12 languages) can be found.

Information is also provided by civil society organisations, e.g. by the [Finnish Refugee Advice Centre](#), [Finnish Refugee Council](#) and via the [National Assistance System for Victims of Trafficking](#)

Specific arrangements for various type of applicants:

Illiterate: Eight short videos in nine languages explain the asylum process for illiterate applicants; the info session at the reception centres is useful too. Moreover, applicants can also address questions to the social workers for more information if needed during individual meetings.

Children/minors: There is a separate brochure about the asylum process for unaccompanied minors. In addition to the general information about the asylum process, there is relevant information only to unaccompanied minors, such as on appointment of guardians, age assessment and tracking of parents. Unaccompanied minors are also given an information session at the reception centre. It is more important for children to have face to face discussions so that things can be explained more thoroughly.

Other vulnerable: No specific materials. Since it is important to identify vulnerable applicants in early stages, the general materials include information on human trafficking, confidentiality and on everyone's right to have their own separate decision even if they apply asylum with family members.

Links to information provided in the national context:

Authority/Agency: Finnish Immigration Service

Title: Information for asylum seekers

Type: Leaflet

Hyperlink:

<https://migri.fi/documents/5202425/6165225/Tietoa+turvapaikanhakijalle+%28fi%29.pdf/760704e-46a2-a592-4e5a13374447/Tietoa+turvapaikanhakijalle+%28fi%29.pdf?version=1.3&t=1594883250864>

Authority/Agency: Finnish Immigration Service

Title: Asylum in Finland

Type: Website

Hyperlink: <http://asyluminfinland.info/>

Authority/Agency: Finnish Refugee Council

Title: Finnish Refugee Council

Type: Website

Hyperlink: <http://pakolaisapu.fi/en/>

Interpretation

There is a right to use an interpreter in the handling of administrative and appeal cases under the [Aliens Act](#), Section 10. The authority must arrange for interpretation in accordance with [Section 203](#). In addition to this, a foreigner can use an interpreter or translator in an administrative or appeal matter at their own expense. A person may not be used as an interpreter or translator obtained by the authority when they have a relationship with the party or matter that their reliability may be jeopardised, or the safety of the party may be endangered. The interpreter's duty of confidentiality is regulated separately.

Interpretation can be provided by the state at the border/in transit and in detention facilities (if considered necessary, including phone interpretation).

Legal assistance and representation

According to Section 9 of the [Aliens Act](#) and as outlined in the Act on Legal Aid [257/2002](#), a foreign national is entitled to legal aid throughout the asylum procedure. Section 9 (3) of the Aliens Act provides that the court may grant state-funded legal aid without an account of the applicant's financial situation.

Under the border procedure, applicants have the right to legal aid. This means that applicants can meet with legal counsel during the processing of their asylum application, where the counsel provides advice on all matters concerning the asylum process. However, it is the applicant's responsibility to apply for and find a legal counsel. Applicants subject to the border procedure can benefit from free legal aid, and a legal counsel can be appointed at short notice. When a counsel has not been appointed before the asylum interview, the Finnish Immigration Service may proceed with the interview without the counsel's presence. However, the counsel may choose to be present if deemed necessary.

The police and border guard are responsible for providing applicants with written and oral information about the legal aid process during the registration and lodging procedures.

For detention, as outlined in Section 123 of the [Aliens Act](#), the detained individual or their legal representative must be notified in writing and in a language that they understand about the reasons for detention. The detainee is also informed about their rights to legal aid and the process for obtaining it.