Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Sweden

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Sweden is bound by the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation (URF).

National legislation

Aliens Act (SFS 2005:716) with later amendments.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	Government through the Ministry of Justice with the approval of Parliament.
Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• UNHCR • Swedish embassies and consulates

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Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Swedish Migration Agency | Migrationsverket (SMA) • Swedish Security Services | Säkerhetspolisen
Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• International Organization for Migration (IOM) • Swedish Migration Agency | Migrationsverket (SMA)
Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Swedish embassies and consulates • International Organization for Migration (IOM) • Swedish Migration Agency | Migrationsverket (SMA)
Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Swedish Migration Agency | Migrationsverket (SMA) • Swedish Public Employment Agency | Arbetsförmedlingen • Swedish municipalities and regions

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Programmes currently in place

The resettlement programme is based on annual quotas within the framework of the European Resettlement Programme.

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	1,700	100	Information is currently not available.
Period 2026-2027	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.
Period 2028-2029	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.	Information is not available at this stage. Pledges are decided at the end of the year preceding the period.

2016 to 2019 quotas

The government instructed the SMA to implement a resettlement programme comprising of 3,400 places, an increase of 79% compared to 2016. This was described as the first step in a gradual upscaling to 5,000 places in 2018. A total

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of 3,401 persons were transferred to Sweden under the national resettlement programme during 2017.

The allocation of places was similar to that of 2016, with a main focus on selections from the MENA region (1,780), the Horn of Africa/East and central Africa and the Great Lakes area (820). Refugees were also resettled out of Asia (200 from Iran). 600 places were reserved for urgent processing of priority cases worldwide.

To prepare for the expected expansion of the resettlement programme in 2018, the SMA requested UNHCR to submit another 1,500 cases during the second half of 2017 (1,100 from MENA countries, 400 from Africa). In December 2017, the government officially announced the increase of the resettlement programme to 5,000 places in 2018.

In the course of 2019, a total of 5,002 persons were transferred to Sweden under the national resettlement programme, including individuals resettled through the 50,000 scheme. More details are available in the Annual Report on the Swedish Resettlement Programme for 2019.

2020 and 2021 quota: COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, resettlement was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial planning included 5,000 individuals to be resettled; however, the pandemic caused major difficulties for all actors and at the end of the year, 3,599 places were filled. Due to local restrictions, UNHCR and the IOM had difficulties to operate, and the SMA decided to pause the transfer of individuals to Sweden for about 5 months (March to August 2020). The Annual Report on the Swedish Resettlement Programme for 2020 includes more details on the implementation of the programme for that year.

The government decided again a quota of 5,000 refugees for 2021, plus an additional assignment to receive the quota refugees who could not travel to Sweden during 2020 due to the pandemic. However, this increase did not have an impact on the number of arrivals that each municipality needed to receive, as previous assignments applied.

Resettled refugees during 2021 were exempt from the requirement of presenting a COVID-19 negative test upon arrival in Sweden, as a comprehensive health examination before their departure was undertaken.

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In 2021, the quota was distributed among Jordan, Türkiye and Lebanon (mainly Syrian citizens): 2,600 places; East Africa and Horn of Africa (primarily nationals of South Sudan, Somalia, Congo and Eritrea): 1,550 places; North Africa/Central Mediterranean route (primarily Syrian citizens and people from Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea): 1,700 places; and acute and priority issues globally: 550 places.

In addition to that number, and due to the crisis in Afghanistan, Sweden received around 1,500 Afghans nationals in addition to the agreed quota refugees for 2021. In order to enable the evacuation of quota refugees from that country, the SMA submitted an early request to the government to temporarily change the rules for quota withdrawal, so that one does not have to be in a third country but can be evacuated directly from Afghanistan. In addition, the limit of 500 emergency places was removed to be able to evacuate more. During 2021, the SMA transferred approximately 6,400 quota refugees to Sweden, including approximately 1,500 people from Afghanistan.

2023 refugee quota

Following a decision by the new government, Sweden pledged 900 refugees to be resettled during 2023.

2024-2025 quota:

In the pledging exercise corresponding to 2024-2025, Sweden submitted a total pledge of 1,700 refugees to be resettled plus 100 refugees to be admitted under humanitarian protection.

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

Identification and referral: UNHCR is in charge of identifying refugees who can benefit from resettlement. They send Resettlement Registration Forms (RRF) and supporting document to the SMA. The RRF contains personal data such as photograph, family details, and possible relative in Sweden. Information on language competences, educational background, work experience and correct personal data facilitates settlement arrangements in a receiving municipality.

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Medical documentation, such as a Medical Assessment Form (MAF), should be submitted for applicants with medical issues/needs. A specific needs assessment should also be conducted by UNHCR.

In exceptional cases, resettlement cases may be submitted by a Swedish diplomatic mission abroad.

Selection: All cases are screened by the Security Service before being examined by the SMA. The selection process is conducted on a dossier basis or during selection missions. In less complex cases, selections can be based exclusively on dossiers submitted by UNHCR. If the security situation in the asylum country is unstable, it may also be appropriate for the SMA to examine a case based on additional information (provided by other SMA units). Sselection missions may be also required when the SMA needs more in-depth information.

Three to four selection missions are carried out by SMA staff each year.

In approximately 40-50% of cases, the SMA bases its evaluation of the reasons for being a refugee or for requiring subsidiary protection on written information submitted by UNHCR (dossier selection). Thus, in such cases, there is no selection mission and the cases are examined in Sweden.

Assessment of cases: The SMA assesses the need for protection in each case that UNHCR submits. The SMA decides whether to grant a person a residence permit in accordance with the Aliens Act either during a selection mission or by dossier examination. The SMA does not request identity documents, this can be done based on an interview or by using UNHCR's assessment.

Timeframe: There is no set timeline for processing cases and it highly depends on the profile of the person. However, the timeframe from the submission of a case to the communication of the decision amounts to around 1 month or 1-2 weeks for urgent and emergency cases.

The time needed to organise a selection mission depends both on the scope of the assignment and the size of the delegation. Excluding the preparation period and any follow-up that may be needed, 2-4 weeks are considered normal.

After a decision to issue a residence permit, it generally takes a few months to prepare the trip to Sweden. Times can vary depending on which country a person is travelling from

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

The majority of the resettled refugees are referred to the SMA (to the National Coordination Department and the Unit for Resettlement Coordination) by UNHCR, which means that UNHCR has classified these individuals as refugees. Even if UNHCR has classified a person as a refugee, however, every person to be resettled in Sweden must receive a residence permit on the basis of the Aliens Act. This means that the UNHCR recognition is reassessed by the SMA before a person is granted a residence permit and transferred to Sweden.

When assessing whether a residence permit is granted within the framework of resettlement, the same considerations are made as when assessing an asylum application that is made inside Sweden. Consideration should also be given to potential exclusion grounds under Article 1F of the 1951 Geneva Convention and to national security.

Only people who are refugees or persons eligible for subsidiary protection according to the Aliens Act receive a residence permit. Permits for quota refugees are permanent. About 95% of those investigated in the context of resettlement receive a residence permit in Sweden.

Pre-departure assistance

Prior to departure, the IOM conducts a fit-to-fly check-up (not a full medical examination) to assess for example if a person is in the late stages of pregnancy or suffers from a serious illness.

The SMA decides which municipality should be assigned to receive the person. Resettled refugees travel directly to their municipality and thus their entry is dependent on accommodation and reception having been arranged. The municipality receives all relevant information to the settlement process, such as any special needs or health problems of the refugee.

When a refugee receives the residence permit and accommodation in a municipality, the SMA arranges a transfer to Sweden. Travel is organised and booked by the IOM upon request of the SMA.

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People who do not have a valid passport receive an emergency foreigner's passport, so-called UT card, which is issued either by the embassy or the SMA. Sometimes an entry visa is also issued. The IOM and UNHCR assist in arranging the necessary permits for departure.

Most selected refugees receive information on the travel arrangements and an overview of life in Sweden before the departure. This can be done through the cultural orientation programme, where they meet with SMA staff and municipalities, and discuss what will happen and what refugees can expect. Two to three cultural orientation programmes are conducted each year. When a cultural orientation programme is not conducted, selected refugees receive shorter information sessions in connection to a selection mission, written material or web-based information.

The SMA is currently developing preparatory programmes and written material (in parallel, the EU-FRANK project is working on a method to gather information for a preparatory programme to support Member States in producing it).

Travel arrangements

Resettled refugees may travel to Sweden on their own, in families or in groups. Sometimes, they are accompanied by staff from the IOM and the SMA.

Arrival and reception

Upon arrival at Arlanda Airport or a local airport, the representatives of the municipality meet the refugees. After arrival, the responsibility for resettled refugees lies with the municipalities, regional governments and all other authorities and agencies that are involved in the functioning of Swedish society (e.g. Swedish Public Employment Service).

The individuals can receive income support, language training and assistance in finding work. Resettled individuals are entitled to the assistance for approximately 2 years, but it may vary on a case-by-case basis.

Full medical examinations are also offered upon arrival by local health institutions and county councils.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

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Information is currently not available.

Resettlement programmes

The resettlement programme is based on an annual quota within the framework of the European Resettlement Programme.

Humanitarian admission programmes

Information is currently not available.

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

Sweden does not have any community sponsorship programmes.

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

Sweden does not have any community sponsorship programmes.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

Sweden does not have any community sponsorship programmes.

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