Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Ireland

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

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

National legislation

24/07/2024: International Protection Act No 66 of 2015, Section 59.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and UNHCR.
Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	For (a) and (c), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in cooperation with partner organisations at the local level. For humanitarian admissions, referrals are made to the IRPP by a partner organisation (The Open Community for 2025), based on established criteria.

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Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Refugee resettlement teams comprise of officials of: - the Irish Refugee Protection Programme unit (IRRP) and - the Ireland's National Police and Security Service | An Garda Síochána
Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	International Organization for Migration (IOM) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Partner organisation and Community Sponsorship Group (CSG) for humanitarian admissions cases
Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	International Organization for Migration (IOM) The IRPP arranges the flight from the first country of asylum for humanitarian admissions.

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Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRRP) Community sponsorship programmes: The national support organisation (Irish Red Cross) and partners Nasc, Doras and the Irish Refugee Council and local voluntary groups, such as neighbours, friends, colleagues or member of local sports clubs.

Programmes currently in place

- **Resettlement programme:** The Irish Refugee Resettlement Programme (IRRP) to resettle refugees is based on annual quotas and within the framework of the European Resettlement Programme.
- **Humanitarian admission programmes:** Humanitarian Admissions Programme 2025
- **Community sponsorship programmes**: Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI)

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	1,200 refugees	100 refugees	n/a

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2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2026-2027	1,200 refugees	100 refugees	n/a
Period 2028-2029	n/a	n/a	n/a

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

Referral

UNHCR, in cooperation with partner organisations at the local level, identify the most vulnerable persons for resettlement, regardless of their race, religion, nationality or ethnicity. To be eligible as a programme refugee, a person must be determined to be a refugee by UNHCR in the country of refuge. In addition, resettlement must be identified by UNHCR to be the most appropriate durable solution for the person or family.

Persons or families are identified as having a resettlement need if they are at risk in the country of refuge or have particular needs that correspond with various UNHCR resettlement categories, including:

- legal or physical protection needs,
- survivors of torture or violence,
- medical needs,
- women and girls at risk,
- family reunification,
- children and adolescents at risk, and
- lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions.

When a person or family is determined by UNHCR to be eligible for resettlement, UNHCR then refers the cases to Ireland for consideration. Referrals for

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resettlement are submitted by UNHCR to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) unit of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Ireland considers whether those referred are acceptable for an interview and then arranges what is referred to as a selection mission.

Selection

Selection missions are carried out by Irish refugee resettlement teams, comprised of officials of the IRPP unit and An Garda Síochána. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is consulted in advance of selection missions on cases with medical needs to assess the types of conditions that can or cannot be treated effectively in Ireland. Security screening is also undertaken by the selection team who individually assesses each case to ensure the refugee does not pose a threat to national security or public order.

No selection on a dossier basis is currently considered.

Assessment

During the selection phase, a profile of the group due to arrive is compiled, including information on individual families and the history of the conflict that led to the particular refugee situation.

Interviews with Ireland's Police Force and with members of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme are conducted and each takes approximately 1.5 hours.

The interview process provides and includes an 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.

All cases are referred for security clearance to the Irish Police force. The final decisions are taken following a full case review upon return to Ireland.

Decisions are normally made within 3 months of the mission but may take longer.

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

Persons admitted under resettlement programmes are considered ‘programme refugees’ (Section 59 International Protection Act 2015). Programme refugees have, in general, the same rights and entitlements as a person granted refugee status under the Geneva Convention.

Pre-departure assistance

Before departure, medical screening is carried out to determine if the person is fit-to-fly. Treatment is provided before departure, if needed (see Travel arrangements).

A 3-day face-to-face orientation programme is provided by the IOM and members of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme. Information is provided on the resettlement process, lifestyle and culture, rights and responsibilities of resettled refugees once in Ireland, management of unrealistic expectations, the Irish education system, access to health services, housing, income and employment in the country. During the session, time is dedicated to questions and answer. Sessions are conducted in a language the person can understand. Some orientation programmes are delivered in groups, sometimes to target groups (e.g. only men; only women; or only children).

Travel arrangements

Pre-departure medical exams are carried out by the IOM, which submits the fit-to-fly certificate indicating the person is physical and mentally fit to travel. The IOM receives instructions and requirements from the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE). If the person has a medical condition, specific instructions are issued.

Travel arrangements: Refugees accepted for resettlement are issued an Irish travel document on behalf of the Irish government. The IOM organises flights, exit permissions and in-transit assistance. In certain countries, the IOM in conjunction with UNHCR organises exit visas.

Arrival and reception

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Following arrival in Ireland, resettled programme refugees receive orientation courses while residing in Reception and Orientation Centres (ROCs). The programme is tailored to the needs of each group and covers a range of areas, such as language skills, rights and entitlements, the Irish education system, employment and life in Ireland.

Childcare facilities are available to ensure adult refugees can participate in the programme. Children are immediately enrolled in mainstream education.

Once private housing is arranged through the local system, resettled programme refugees receive 18 months of support from a local resettlement support worker who facilitates access to mainstream services. Programme refugees can attend English language programmes.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

There is a multi-faceted approach to resettling refugees in Ireland, consisting of three main phases:

1. Overseas selection missions with UNHCR to identify refugees for resettlement;
2. Placement in Reception and Orientation Centres (ROCs) for acclimatisation and orientation;
3. Settlement in local communities, coordinated by inter-agency working groups and supported by accommodation allocation by local authorities and community sponsorship.

The programme involves a high level of coordination among national and local service agencies. Community sponsorship is used as a complementary resettlement measure, where private citizens and community organisations provide accommodation, financial, emotional and settlement support to refugees.

Key elements of the programme include:

- Placement: Local authorities allocate housing and integrate refugees into their areas, with support from inter-agency working groups.
- Reception: Refugees are accommodated in ROCs for initial orientation and assessment, with access to services such as health and social welfare.
- Orientation: IRPP staff and interpreters meet with refugees at monthly clinics. English language lessons are provided, and access to basic services

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facilitated.
- Support services: Refugees have access to mainstream national services, including health, housing, education and employment support.
- Housing: Refugees are initially accommodated in ROCs, then resettled in the community with support from Local Authorities and volunteers.
- Health: Refugees receive medical cards, assigned GPs, and access to medical services, prescription medicines, and hospital care.
- Language: Refugees receive language training and cultural orientation programmes.
- Education: Education is compulsory for children, with access to school places and education provision.
- Employment: The Department of Social Protection supports access to employment opportunities and training.
- Financial assistance: Basic income provision is available, with weekly payments and additional grants for household needs.
- Supporting specific needs: Local resettlement support teams provide support, including resettlement support workers and intercultural support workers.
- Family reunification: Applications are administered by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, with limited family reunification allowed for spouses or minor unmarried children.

Overall, the IRPP aims to provide a comprehensive and supportive approach to resettling refugees in Ireland, with a focus on community integration and access to essential services.

Resettlement programmes

The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established in September 2015. The most recent phase of the programme for 2024-2027 was approved by the government in early 2024.

Humanitarian admission programmes

Between 2021-2024, in response to the crisis in Afghanistan, Ireland, through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP), received approximately 700 humanitarian cases from Afghanistan under the Humanitarian (Visa Waiver)

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Assistance Programme. There was a previous admission scheme operated in the immediate fall of Afghanistan in 2021 through which 10 female members of the judiciary and their families were admitted to Ireland. The IRPP cooperated with a range of organisations to identify individuals and families for the IRPP Humanitarian Assistance Programme. Priority was given to human rights defenders, people supporting women's organisations, LGBTIQ activists, journalists, judges and those most at risk from the Taliban takeover. There were 83 arrivals under the 2024 programme, 77 arrived during 2024 and 6 in early 2025.

The number of admissions is limited to 50 persons for 2025. This limit ensures that Ireland's capacity to host and integrate new arrivals is given due consideration.

Community sponsorship is used to admit proposed beneficiaries to Ireland. A Community Sponsorship Group must be established and have appropriate housing sourced. Only potential beneficiaries who have the appropriate travel documents to exit their country and have accommodation sourced or pledged in Ireland are currently considered. The IRPP liaises with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration to arrange for visa waiver letters to allow for onward travel and admission to Ireland. IRPP officials will arrange the flights to Ireland through travel partners and inform relevant authorities at the Irish airport.

The criteria for admission into the programme align with the categories of persons already selected for admission as programme refugees, as follows:

- **LGBTIQ activists** (this category relates to people who were members of LGBTIQ groups or who were involved in advocating for the LGBTIQ community in Afghanistan);
- **Equality activists** (this category relates to people who were members of equality organisations or involved publicly in the promotion of equality, including gender equality, in Afghanistan);
- **Human rights defenders** (this category relates to people who were members of human rights organisations or involved publicly in the promotion of human rights in Afghanistan);
- **Journalists**;
- **Female judges and prosecutors** (UNHCR has advised that this category should relate to female judges and prosecutors as male judges and prosecutors are not inherently at the same level of risk as their female counterparts);

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- **Hazaras** (UNHCR has advised that Hazaras should be included as members of a religious minority that is particularly at risk from the Taliban).

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

The **community sponsorship programme** is linked to resettlement programmes. In this programme, The Irish Red Cross is the national support organisation and has a coordinating role and develops resources in collaboration with three partners. Government authorities are the administrators of the programme.

Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was established in 2018 as a complementary integration and resettlement stream to the traditional state-centred model. The programme enables a willing population to engage locally by directly supporting a refugee family. The pilot phase concluded in 2019 and the programme has been active since. The programme was externally reviewed in late 2023, with new structures put in place on 1 July 2024.

The sponsor is normally a group of people with different roles. The group has the support of one of the partner organisations, if needed.

The sponsor group must create a plan showing that they can deliver all aspects of the resettlement process. The following key factors must be included in the plan and must be ensured before the selected refugee family arrives:

- a furnished home with adequate facilities and an acceptable standard, available for a minimum of 2 years;
- school place for children;
- appropriate interpretation services, as required;
- arrival day plans and support plan for the sponsorship period;
- access to social welfare payments and eligibility for the housing assistance payment and providing financial support to the family until the social welfare payments are in place;
- opening bank account;
- signing on with a GP, dentist and other medical services;
- English language training, both formal and informal.

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The national support organisation for the community sponsorship programme is the Irish Red Cross. More information can be found here and here.

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

There are no community sponsorship schemes linked to civil society-led humanitarian admission programmes.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

Arrivals under the IRPP's humanitarian admission programme are supported under the community sponsorship programme.

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