Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Germany

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

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

National legislation

10.04.2024: Admission Directive of the Federal Ministry of the Interior on Resettlement Procedures of Particularly Vulnerable Refugees 2024/2025

27.01.2023: Admission Directive of the Federal Ministry of the Interior on Admissions of Particularly Vulnerable Refugees from Türkiye

19.12.2022: Admission Directive of the Federal Ministry of the Interior on the Admission of Particularly Vulnerable Afghan Nationals from Afghanistan

27.06.2020: The Act on the Residence, Employment and Integration of Foreigners in Federal Territory (The Residence Act), Section 23 | Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet (Aufenthaltsgesetz-AufenthG)

Competent authority and stakeholders

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Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	Federal Government • Federal Ministry of the Interior | Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI)
Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Federal Office for Migration and Refugees | Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) • Federal Ministry of the Interior | Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI) • Federal Foreign Office | Auswärtiges Amt (AA)
Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Federal Office for Migration and Refugees | Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) • International Organization for Migration (IOM) • United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	• Ministries of the Interior of the federal states and local authorities (in particular, foreigners' authorities, social welfare authorities and local health authorities, when needed). • Civil Society Contact Point for NesT | Zivilgesellschaftliche Kontaktstelle (ZKS) • NesT Mentoring Groups (community sponsorship) • Civil society organisations, including NGOs and church stakeholders.

Programmes currently in place

The resettlement programme is based on (bi-)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

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2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2024-2025	13,100 refugees	24,000 refugees	100 out of 13,100 refugees
Period 2026-2027			
Period 2028-2029			

Germany has been carrying out resettlement since 2012. In 2016, the German resettlement procedure was embedded in the EU resettlement programme. Currently all resettlement admissions are on hold.

For the period 2024-2025, Germany pledged to receive 13,100 refugees under resettlement and 24,000 refugees under humanitarian admission programmes. Until mid-year 2025, Germany admitted 4,948 persons under the resettlement programmes mainly from Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya and Libya through Rwanda, as well as 1,508 persons under the humanitarian admission programme for Afghans.

In March 2025 after the federal elections, the government decided in its coalition agreement to end Voluntary Federal Admission Programmes as far as possible and not to launch any new programmes. Germany is currently examining how the coalition agreement to end voluntary admissions as far as possible can be implemented for current programmes. Those programmes, along with all activities in the field of resettlement, remain suspended until further notice.

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

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Identification and referral: Refugees have access to the resettlement programme only through UNHCR submissions; individual applications cannot be received. UNHCR sends the resettlement dossiers electronically for BAMF's consideration.

Selection: BAMF pre-registers all persons referred. Pre-selection is carried out on the basis of UNHCR resettlement dossiers in view of admission criteria.

Assessment: After being submitted by UNHCR and pre-selected, resettlement candidates take part in two interviews. During the first interview, the personal data of the candidate and all facts pertaining to the admission criteria are examined. In addition, the interview serves to explain the meaning of resettlement in Germany and to inform about the procedure. In a further step, the possible presence of exclusion grounds will be verified.

Germany carries out information provision activities during this phase. Information is directly provided by German authorities during the face-to-face sessions. All information about the resettlement procedure is provided in a multilingual information sheet which is handed out on the selection interview day. All questions from the refugees are also addressed.

Timeframe: Under the current framework, there is no specific deadline defined by law. The timeframe between submission and departure is usually about 6 months. However, the processing time in resettlement may also vary from country to country, for example due to the different processing times for exit permits. With the implementation of the Union Plan, the URF deadlines in accordance with the regulation will apply.

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

Resettled refugees arriving to Germany receive a residence title, in accordance with Section 23(4) of the Residence Act. The residence permit is issued by local immigration authorities.

The residence permit is based on admission through the respective resettlement or humanitarian admission programme. There is no need to file an asylum application. The residence permit automatically expires in accordance with Section 51(1), Number 8 of the Residence Act when an asylum application is

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filed.

Residence permits are initially valid for a maximum of 3 years and may be extended in accordance with Section 8 of the Residence Act. The residence permit authorises the permit holder to pursue paid employment in Germany. Subsequently, a permanent residence permit may be granted after commonly 5 years of stay, if the necessary prerequisites are met (Section 9a or Section 26(3) and (4) Residence Act). After a certain period of time and once certain requirements have been met, such as language skills, knowledge of the German legal and social system, and the ability to support oneself financially, the persons admitted are eligible to apply for German citizenship.

Pre-departure assistance

Pre-departure measures are organised in cooperation with an implementing partner, including:

- Health assessments to determine specific medical needs in order to ensure safe travel and needs-based accommodation after arrival in Germany, and treatment and immunisation in case of contagious diseases. Necessary pre-departure treatments take place on an individual basis.
- A 3-day pre-departure cultural orientation provides information on travel arrangements, life in Germany and an initial cultural orientation. The courses are designed to inform about Germany and manage expectations, thereby facilitating integration.

Travel arrangements

On behalf of BAMF, the IOM carries out a medical examination 48 hours before departure to ensure the person is fit to travel.

Germany also carries out face-to-face information sessions related to the travel phase through an implementing partner (see pre-departure phase for details).

Refugees are allowed to travel to Germany with a valid, recognised passport and an admission approval. If the passport presented is not recognised by the German authorities, but the refugee has no other documents to verify identity, then an exception can be made to the passport obligation under Section 3(2) of the Residence Act. If the refugee is unable to present a passport but can otherwise verify their identity (including for example a UNHCR refugee certificate

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or registration document), the German diplomatic representation abroad issues a travel document for foreigners pursuant to Sections 5 and 7 of the Ordinance Governing Residence. On an exceptional basis, the representation can issue the visa on a separate page *(Blattvisum)*. The approval for admission and the exception from the passport obligation are valid for 6 months from the date of issuance and expire if the refugee does not enter Germany within this timeframe.

Arrival and reception

Arrival in Germany is commonly organised in groups and by charter flight. Resettled refugees are guided through the procedures at departure/destination airports and then stay for 2 weeks in a reception facility for initial care, orientation and advice. In cases of serious medical need or other vulnerabilities, direct entry by a scheduled flight may also be arranged.

In the reception facility, resettled refugees take part in additional up to 5-day orientation courses. They are taught the basic German vocabulary to be able to communicate in everyday life. In addition, information on life in Germany, such as education, work, mobility and healthcare, are provided. Advice is provided on the first steps at the new place of residence. The state reception authorities and welfare organisations, such as Caritas or the German Red Cross, are involved in orientation courses.

Resettled refugees are then moved to their host municipality in the federal states. The distribution of resettled refugees is based on *Königstein Key*, which considers the state's population and economical capacity. As far as possible, regional ties of the admitted refugees (e.g. family links) are considered. Individuals must take up residence at the place to which they are assigned (Section 24(5), second sentence Residence Act). Relocation to another district is subject to approval by the local immigration offices (e.g. because of work or study). The type of accommodation offered depends on the host municipality; housing in community facilities for refugees or subsidised housing are common practices.

Local authorities take over the responsibility for post-arrival services. Resettled refugees are eligible for social benefits under SGB II or SGB XII. However, the residence permit also grants resettled refugees a work permit, which is intended to support their swift integration into the labour market.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

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Integration measures for refugees aim to provide particularly vulnerable persons who come to Germany with long-term and secure prospects for the future. Resettled refugees receive access to integration courses after arriving in the federal state. Each integration course consists of a language course and an orientation course. The general integration course lasts 700 teaching units but can be extended.

In addition, BAMF finances numerous project partners for vocational language courses. There are also migration advisory services for refugees. Finally, there are a number of nationwide and local integration projects open to resettled refugees.

Resettlement programmes

Germany implemented various resettlement programmes based on Section 23 of the Residence Act (*AufenthG*). The current resettlement programme is based on (bi-)annual quotas within the framework of the European Resettlement Programme.

Humanitarian admission programmes

Various humanitarian programmes were set up under Section 23(2) of the Residence Act (AufenthG). In situations of war and acute crisis, these programmes serve to facilitate the ad hoc admission of refugees.

Three programmes facilitated the arrival of approximately 20,000 Syrian refugees from Syria and neighbouring countries, Egypt and Libya, from 2013-2015.

The humanitarian admission programme for Syrian refugees from Türkiye implemented in 2017 (latest directive from 27.01.2023) aims to implement the EU-Turkey Statement. Up to 3,000 individuals in need of protection per year can be admitted from Türkiye. These admissions are part of the EU Resettlement Programme.

In response to the humanitarian situation on the Greek islands, the federal government decided in close consultation with the Greek government and the European Commission on 15 September 2020, following the fires at the Moria

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refugee camp on the island of Lesbos, to accept a total of up to 1,553 individuals who have already received international protection in Greece through a humanitarian admission programme. The admission of these people was completed in 2021.

On 17 October 2022, Germany launched a federal admission programme for Afghans based on Section 23(2) of the Residence Act. This scheme was intended to ensure that Afghan nationals residing in Afghanistan who were at particular risk could be admitted to Germany. The programme was based on a specific directive that expired in May 2025. Only pre-approved cases will be considered for authorisation to enter Germany. As of 1 September 2025, 1,553 people have arrived in Germany as part of the programme.

The selection criteria and the rights of persons admitted through a humanitarian programme are determined in the specific admission directives of the individual programmes.

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

The programme "New Start in a Team" (Neustart im Team, NesT) is a government and civil society resettlement programme for particularly vulnerable refugees. It was officially launched as a pilot project in May 2019 and made a regular admission programme in July 2022. As NesT is linked to resettlement, all NesT admissions are currently on hold. The programme is foreseen to end by 31 December 2025.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the Federal Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (IntB) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are jointly responsible for the NesT programme. The aim of NesT is to provide additional resettlement places through civil society support and to increase the fundamental willingness of society to accept those seeking protection. Registration and recognition as a refugee by UNHCR is a prerequisite for participation in NesT, in addition to personal and financial support by a mentoring group. The mentoring group is obliged to finance accommodation for the refugees for a period of 1 year. In addition, mentors are obliged to provide refugees with personal integration support during the first year. The selection of

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individuals for the NesT programme and their admission is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the resettlement procedure based on the admission directive, pursuant to Section 23(4) of the Residence Act. BAMF is responsible for the operational implementation.

Since 2019, 186 individuals have been supported through 43 mentoring groups.

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

Germany does not have community sponsorship programmes linked to civil society-led humanitarian admission programmes.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

In addition to the federal government, federal states may also establish humanitarian admission programmes. Section 23(1) of the Residence Act stipulates that, in order to maintain federal uniformity, the relevant state admission directives require the approval of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Currently, no such programmes are implemented.

In the past, some states have granted refugees, mainly from Syria but also from Iraq and Afghanistan, the opportunity to legally enter Germany to join relatives through their own state admission programmes. This required the submission of a declaration of commitment in which the relatives in Germany financed the living expenses of the incoming refugee for a certain period of time.

Beneficiaries: Requirements were different from state to state. The programmes were typically open to Syrian nationals, though some states considered other nationals as well, and usually relatives of first and second degree could be eligible.

Sponsors' eligibility and responsibilities: The family member living in Germany had to have a German passport or residence permit for at least 1 year and sign a declaration of commitment to provide accommodation and living costs for at least 5 years for the relative joining.

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