Forms of protection - Finland

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Finland is bound by the recast Qualification Directive (Standards Qualification Regulation) and has transposed its provisions through the Aliens Act 301/2004 | Ulkomaalaislaki.

National legislation

Chapter 4 of the Aliens Act covers international protection while Chapter 3 regulates the conditions for residence permits.

The relevant provisions of the Aliens Act are as follows:

- Sections 35, 36. 36a-f. (in force since 1st September 2024) – situations in which a residence permit must be refused, including refusal of a residence permit due to asylum proceedings in Section 36f,
- Section 51 of the Aliens Act - temporary residence permit in cases where no return is possible,
- Section 52 – residence permits on a discretionary basis on humanitarian grounds
- Section 53 (1) – general provisions first temporary residence permits and apply for subsidiary protection status, issued for one year,
- Section 53 (7) – first temporary residence permit for refugee status for three years,
- Section 54 (2) – continuation of a residence permit based on international protection if there are no grounds for the termination or withdrawal of refugee status or subsidiary protection status pursuant to sections 107 or 108,
- Section 55 (1)– renewal of residence permit for refugee status for 3 years and for two years for subsidiary protection,

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- Section 87 – eligibility for asylum, exclusion clauses and refusal clauses on grounds of danger to national security or conviction of a particularly serious crime,
- Section 88 – eligibility for subsidiary protection, exclusion and refusal clauses
- Section 89 – temporary residence permit when international protection is not granted or is revoked, but there is a ban on return based on the non-refoulement principle,
- Section 93 - Residence permit granted on special humanitarian grounds or to fulfil international obligations,
- Section 106 – refugee status and subsidiary protection status,
- Sections 107 and 108 – end, withdrawal or revocation of international protection,
- Sections 109-112 – concern temporary protection,
- Section 112 - Issuance of a temporary residence permit,
- Section 113 - Issuance of a permanent residence permit,
- Section 114 and 115 – family reunification,
- Section 116 – jurisdiction of the Finnish Immigration Service.

The Act on the Promotion of Integration 1386/2010 (Act on Integration) governed the integration of beneficiaries of international protection and of national forms of protection under 31 December 2024. The new Act on Promotion of Integration 681/2023 entered into force and applies as of 1st January 2025. A list of applicable national and international instruments related to integration of migrants is available on the dedicated page Integration.fi / Kotoutuminen.fi.

Refugee status	Section 53 (7) and 87 of the Aliens Act as amended as of 2nd January 2025 Section 106 (1) of the Aliens Act
Subsidiary protection	Section 53 (1) and 88 of the Aliens Act as amended as of 2nd January 2025 Section 106 (2) of the Aliens Act
Temporary protection	Sections 109, 110, 112 of the Aliens Act

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National forms of protection	The following national forms of protection are available in Finland. Asylum related procedure: 1. Section 51 of the Aliens Act (Temporary) Residence permit in cases where no return is possible (fi. *Oleskeluluvan myöntäminen maasta poistumisen estymisen vuoksi*): granted to third country national if: i) it is impossible for him/her to return to his/her home country or country of permanent residence because of temporary medical reasons, or ii) it is impossible for him/her to return to his/her home country or country of permanent residence for practical reasons. A residence permit will not be granted if the return is prevented because the person refuses to return or makes it difficult. Firstly, the Finnish Immigration Service will first examine the grounds for granting refugee status or subsidiary protection by the Finnish Immigration Service, then the impediments on return. 2. Section 52 of the Aliens Act (Continuous) Residence permits on a discretionary basis on humanitarian grounds (fi. *Oleskeluluvan myöntäminen yksilöllisestä inhimillisestä syystä*): granted to third country national if it would be manifestly unreasonable not to issue a residence permit having regard to the applicant's medical condition, ties to Finland (e.g. prolonged presence in Finland due to prolonged application process), or other individual, compassionate grounds. In this case, particular attention will be paid to the conditions a person would face in his/her home country, or his/her vulnerable position.
	3. Section 89 of the Aliens Act amended as of 2nd January 2025 (Temporary) Residence permits when the non-refoulement principle applies (fi. *Oleskeluluvan myöntäminen palautuskieltoa sovellettaessa*): granted for one year to a third

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Competent authority and stakeholders

Refugee status	The Finnish Immigration Service (Maahanmuuttovirasto) is competent to issue and revoke residence permits, to decide on end and withdrawal of international protection and other, pursuant to Section 116 of the Aliens Act.
Subsidiary protection	The Finnish Immigration Service (Maahanmuuttovirasto) is competent to issue and revoke residence permits, to decide on end and withdrawal of international protection and other, pursuant to Section 116 of the Aliens Act.
Temporary protection	The Finnish Immigration Service (Maahanmuuttovirasto) is competent to issue and revoke residence permits, to decide on end and withdrawal of international protection and other, pursuant to Section 116 of the Aliens Act.
National forms of protection	Finnish Immigration Service | Maahanmuuttovirasto The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (in case of humanitarian immigration as provided by Section 93 of the Aliens Act) Finland used to have a residence permit category called humanitarian protection (fi. *humanitaarinen suojelu*), but it was removed from the Finnish legislation on 16 May 2016.

Renewal and withdrawal of international protection and national forms of protection

Refugee status

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Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of refugee status: Sections 107 and 108 of the Aliens Act as amended as of 2nd January 2025 cover the situations when international protection can be ended, revoked or withdrawn.

Section 54 (2) of the Aliens Act provides for the continuation of a residence permit based on international protection if there are no grounds for the termination or withdrawal of refugee status or subsidiary protection status pursuant to sections 107 or 108.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: The first residence permit issued for asylum or subsidiary protection before 2nd January 2025 is valid for a period of 4 years.

According to Section 53 (7) of the Aliens Act, the first temporary residence permit for refugee status is granted for a period of three years.

Section 55 provides that the extension of a residence permit based on refugee status is granted for three years.

Review of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The procedure of review includes an individual investigation if the authorities decide to initiate proceedings for end of protection, pursuant to Section 107 (5) of the Aliens Act or to withdraw the status, pursuant to Section 108 (2) of the Aliens Act.

There is no systematic review of all decisions to grant international protection. The assessment is triggered by information from different authorities (e.g. police, border guard and Finnish embassies abroad), as well as based on information received from different units within the Finnish Immigration Service. The applicants have the right to access legal aid and to appeal against a decision to end or withdraw protection.

Renewal of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The applicant must apply for an extension of the residence permit based before its expiry. The Finnish Immigration Services provides details on the procedure here.

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If the applicant does not apply for extension and the process is initiated by the Finnish Immigration Service, there might be an interruption between the residence permits.

The Finnish Immigration Service, once receiving the application, will review whether the applicant is still in need of protection and whether there were changes in the need for protection, by assessing, for example:

- whether the security situation in the country of origin has changed after the status was granted for international protection,
- whether the person has travelled to the country of origin,
- whether the applicant has obtained the passport of his/her country of nationality.

The applicant will submit a paper application, available here, by visiting a service point of the Finnish Immigration Service. They are required to book an appointment in advance through an online appointment system. On the date of the appointment, they submit their application in person, show originals of the documents they attached to the application, and have their fingerprints taken.

The applicant can legally reside in Finland pending the assessing of the application, including during the appeal process. The application can be supplemented or cancelled by the applicant.

The police or the Finnish immigration Service will inform the applicant of the outcome, by post and the applicant must be in Finland in order to receive a decision on the extension of the residence permit application. If the permit is granted, the applicant will receive a residence permit card, whereas in case of rejection, the applicant can be deported from Finland.

The applicant has the possibility to appeal against the decision, before an administrative court, and the instructions on the appeal are attached to the decision.

Free legal aid is provided, subject to a means test, both in renewal and in withdrawal processes by public legal aid offices and private lawyers. The scope of it is general (overall assistance in the process, as well as consultation in withdrawal processes), while in case of an appeal, the aid also included drafting of the appeal.

Withdrawal of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

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The procedure involves an individual investigation on the grounds for withdrawal as provided by paragraph 2 of Section 108 of the Aliens Act.

The Finnish Immigration Service provides detailed information on the procedure here.

The withdrawal of status means that the person will no longer have asylum or subsidiary protection status in Finland. When considering whether to withdraw a protection status, the Finnish Immigration Service examines whether the grounds for the residence permit exist, whether the person can be deported from Finland and whether an entry ban can be imposed.

If the status is withdrawn, the person can apply for a new residence permit on new grounds. In case there are no grounds to be issued a residence permit, a decision to return is made and the person is given the opportunity to voluntarily leave Finland within the time limit set for voluntary return, usually within 30 days. In case an entry ban is issued, the person no longer has the opportunity for voluntary return.

The procedure triggering the withdrawal of international protection is as follows:

1. When the Finnish Immigration Service becomes aware of a reason for considering cancelling refugee status or subsidiary protection status, it sends a letter stating that it is considering cancelling the status,
2. The person is invited for an oral hearing, held at the premises of the Finnish Immigration Service and where the latter examines the case.
3. The decision is made based on the hearing, and either the Finnish Immigration Service or the police will inform of its outcome. The decision can be appealed against within 30 days before an administrative court. Information on the appeal process is included in the decision document.

If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is not cancelled, the person can continue his or her stay in Finland as usual.

If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is withdrawn,

- The current residence permit can remain valid, or the person can apply for a new residence permit on the basis of new grounds, or
- The person will be deported from Finland and an entry ban can be imposed.

There is no systematic review of all decisions to grant international protection. The procedure is triggered by information from different authorities (e.g. police,

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border guard and Finnish embassies abroad), as well as based on information received from different units within the Finnish Immigration Service. The units dealing with passports, family reunification, or nationality applications may contact the specialised unit dealing with withdrawal cases, in case they came across information of relevance. Case officers are responsible for withdrawal/renewal of international protection, while decisions are checked and endorsed by a senior officer. Both officers' names are included in the final decision. More analytically, a team of case officers will go through the case to see what aspects need to be considered, such as the residence permit, whether there have been other residence permit applications, whether there will be forced return and more.

Legal aid: Yes, free legal aid is provided, subject to a means test, both in renewal and in withdrawal processes by public legal aid offices and private lawyers. The scope of it is general (overall assistance in the process, as well as consultation in withdrawal processes), while in case of an appeal, the aid also included drafting of the appeal.

Grounds for withdrawal of the status: The grounds for withdrawal of refugee status or subsidiary protection as listed in Section 108 (1) of the Aliens Act:

1. when applying for international protection, the applicant has knowingly provided false information that has affected the outcome of the decision,
2. when applying for international protection, the applicant has concealed a fact that would have affected the outcome of the decision; or
3. asylum should not have been granted pursuant to section 87, subsections 2–5, or a residence permit should not have been granted pursuant to section 88, subsections 2–4 of the Aliens Act.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is not cancelled, the person can continue his or her stay in Finland as usual. If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is withdrawn, then the current residence permit can remain valid or the person can apply for a new residence permit on the basis of new grounds, or the person will be deported from Finland and an entry ban can be imposed.

The Finnish legislation requires to have a valid travel document while residing in Finland. The following situations can appear. If a refugee travel document was issued, it will be revoked when the refugee status is withdrawn. The person will

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get the passport of his or her country of nationality when the decision on withdrawing the refugee status becomes final. If the person cannot get the passport of his/her country of nationality, he or she can apply for an alien's passport. If an alien's passport has been issued, the Finnish Immigration Service will consider whether to cancel the alien's passport, or to keep it valid so that the person can acquire the passport of his/her country of nationality.

Revocation, end or cessation of the status:

According to Section 107 of the Aliens Act, a person's refugee status is ended or revoked if he or she:

1. voluntarily re-availed him or herself of the protection of his or her country of nationality (e.g. person has moved out of the country permanently, has resided in the country of origin for two years, or has obtained national passport or a visa; the country of origin grants a passport and/or visa as requested by the person and s/he can reside in the country legally and without safety concerns);
2. having lost his or her citizenship, regains it of his or her own free will,
3. acquires citizenship of another State and may avail him or herself of the protection of the new country of nationality (the existence of a passport or other certification proving new nationality, the person's own statements, as well as assessment of relevant country of origin information), are used to assess whether a person effectively enjoys the protection of the new country),
4. voluntarily settles in the country from which he or she fled and outside which he or she stayed for fear of persecution (returned voluntarily to the country and stayed over 2 years); or
5. is no longer in need of protection as the circumstances under which he or she became a refugee ceased to exist,
6. after being granted refugee status, he/she has committed or has reasonable grounds to suspect that he/she has committed an act referred to in section 87 (2), subparagraphs 1 or 3 or (3),
7. there are reasonable grounds to believe that he or she is a danger to national security; or
8. he is dangerous to society because he has been convicted of a particularly serious crime by a final judgment.

The changes in the circumstances as mentioned in point 5 must be significant and permanent. However, the provision does not apply to a person who, on

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compelling grounds arising from persecution or serious harm previously experienced, can refuse to avail himself of the protection of his or her country of nationality or former permanent residence – pursuant to Section 107 (4) of the Aliens Act.

The Finnish Immigration Service provides detailed information on the procedure here as follows. When the Finnish Immigration Service becomes aware of a reason for considering end/revocation refugee status or subsidiary protection status, it sends a letter stating that it is considering withdrawal of the status. The person is invited for an oral hearing, which is held at the premises of the Finnish Immigration Service and where the latter examines the case. Individuals are informed about the reconsideration of their status by the authorities with a notification, which includes the reasons for this review, and are offered the opportunity to submit a written statement (including possible new elements) within 3 weeks. In the written decision, the Finnish Immigration Service will report its decision on cessation/withdrawal of status, the residence permit, the alien's passport, and the possibility of forced return. In clear-cut cases, where residence permit will not be revoked and there will be no deportation order no interview is organised, but the person can submit written statements.

Interview: specialised interviews are used in cases of withdrawal of international protection. Personal interviews are conducted in case where, due to language limitations or high stakes involved (e.g. possibility of forced return, new circumstances), authorities do not consider the submission of written statement as sufficient. Invitation to the interview is sent by mail. It is scheduled between 1-4 months, depending on workload.

Legal aid: Free legal aid is provided, subject to a means test, both in renewal and in withdrawal processes by public legal aid offices and private lawyers. The scope of it is general (overall assistance in the process, as well as consultation in withdrawal processes), while in case of an appeal, the aid also included drafting of the appeal.

The decision is made based on the interview or written statement, and either the Finnish Immigration Service or the police will inform of its outcome. The decision can be appealed against within 30 days before an administrative court. Information on the appeal process is included in the decision document.

If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is not cancelled, the person can continue his or her stay in Finland as usual. If the refugee status or subsidiary protection status is ended or revoked, then the residence permit can remain valid

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or the person can apply for a new residence permit on the basis of new grounds, or the person will be deported from Finland and an entry ban can be imposed.

Deportation on grounds of crimes and endangering Finland national security is permitted when:

- The person was found guilty of an offence carrying a maximum sentence of imprisonment for a year or more or of repeated offences,
- The person has, through his/her behaviour, shown that s/he is a danger to other people's safety,
- The person has taken part, or Finnish authorities have reason to suspect that s/he may take part in activities that endanger Finland's national security.

If the person has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status in Finland, further conditions are required for the deportation: i) the refugee status or subsidiary protection status can be ended and ii) the deportation does not violate the principle of *non-refoulement*.

Subsidiary protection status

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of subsidiary protection

Same as for refugee status

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits:

The first residence permit issued for asylum or subsidiary protection before 2nd January 2025 is valid for a period of 4 years.

The first residence permit for subsidiary protection is granted for one year as modified as of 2nd January 2025 – see Section 53 (1) of the Aliens Act.

Section 55 of the Aliens Act provides that the extension of a residence permit based on subsidiary protection status is granted for two years.

Review of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

Same as for refugee status above

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Renewal of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The applicant must apply for an extension of the residence permit based before its expiry. The Finnish Immigration Services provides details on the procedure here and it is similar as for refugee status.

Withdrawal of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The procedure involves an individual investigation on the grounds as provided under Section 108 (2) of the Aliens Act.

The procedure is the same as for refugee status.

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status: same as for refugee status

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status: same as for refugee status

Revocation, end or cessation of the status:

According to Section 107 (2) and (3) of the Aliens Act, subsidiary protection can be revoked/ended if:

- the circumstances that led to the granting of subsidiary protection status have ceased to exist or have changed to such an extent that protection is no longer needed,
- if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that he or she has committed an act referred to in Section 88, (2 or 3) of the , after receiving subsidiary protection status.

For example, subsidiary protection status can be ended if:

- the person stated in the asylum application that s/he cannot return to his/her home country but have later voluntarily travelled there,
- the security situation of the home country has changed so that the person no longer needs subsidiary protection,
- the person has committed, or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that s/he has committed, a crime against peace, war crime, crime against humanity or an act which violates the purposes and principles of the United Nations,
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person poses a threat to national security

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- the person has committed a serious crime.

The change of circumstances referred to the first scenario above must be significant and permanent. However, the legal provision does not apply to a person who, on compelling grounds arising from persecution or serious harm previously experienced, can refuse to avail himself of the protection of his or her country of nationality or former permanent residence.

The Finnish Immigration Service provides detailed information on the procedure here and it is the same as for the end/revocation of refugee status

National forms of protection

Legal provisions relating to the review, renewal and withdrawal of national forms of protection

The status under Section 52 of the Aliens Act (residence permit for individual humanitarian reasons) is granted only on the territory of Finland, if the applicant is not eligible for asylum or subsidiary protection. There is a single procedure for decision by the Finnish Immigration Service when assessing the application for international protection. The processing time is usually up to 6 months and the negative decisions susceptible to a judicial review. The Finnish Immigration Service issues a separate decision, based on recommendation from the Finish police, in case of return after a rejected appeal or no extension of the residence permit under Section 52.

A new application can be submitted for international protection but not for residence permit on other grounds (employment, studies or family ties) - see here The Ministry of the Interior announces amendments to the Aliens Act on evasion of entry rules and Section 36f of the Aliens Act in force since 1st September 2024.

This status is usually granted to unaccompanied minors or to children if they have not been considered eligible for refugee status or subsidiary protection, but the best interest of the child prevails. Examples: a) Ties to Finland: the applicant has resided in Finland at least three years due to prolonged process. b) A typical case is a family with underage children. Children have usually resided most of their lifetime in Finland and are already attending primary school. Parents are usually working, and refusing a residence permit would be manifestly unreasonable. Leading family life would be impossible in the parent’s country of

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origin and best interest of the child is considered (e.g. both guardians represent different nationalities).

A 1-year residence permit under Section 89 of the Aliens Act when the principle of non-refoulement applies. Upon the expiry of the first permit, the person's situation vis a vis non-refoulement is re-examined and if, the situation remains unchanged, the person is issued another residence permit for one year. If not issued a permit, the person is to be removed.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: 1 year for the first residence permit (pursuant to Section 53 of the Aliens Act) and can be extended for a maximum 4 years for subsequent residence permits (pursuant to Section 55 of the Aliens Act)

Review of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service can review the status if the requirements for its granting are no longer met.

Renewal of the status: According to Section 54 (1) of the Aliens Act, 'a new temporary residence permit is granted if the conditions on the basis of which the foreigner was granted the previous temporary residence permit still exist'.

Withdrawal of the status: The Finnish Immigration Service is the competent authority, as provided by Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The procedure involves an individual investigation on the grounds and the assessment might not necessarily result into a cancellation of permit.

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status: National protection ends when:

- the person no longer qualifies for protection,
- protection was fraudulently acquired,
- the status ceased or can no longer be renewed,
- the person has been granted a residence permit under new grounds (e.g. employment, studies, family ties),
- the person has committed crimes,
- the person has permanently moved outside Finland.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

If there is a decision to withdraw the status and the person resides in Finland, then the authorities can remove the person from the country and an entry ban may be imposed. There is an appeal possible against such decision and access to free legal aid, under the general requirements of a means test.

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Content of protection

Overview

Section 106 of the Aliens Act provides for the granting of refugee status and subsidiary protection status based on the grounds provided under Section 87 (for asylum) and Section 88 (for subsidiary protection).

The Act on the Promotion of Integration (Act on Integration) governs the integration of refugees and also applies to persons granted residence permit on the basis of subsidiary protection or other grounds (humanitarian protection under Section 113, residence permit granted under Section 51, 52 and 93 of the Aliens Act).

Provision of information on the content of protection

The Finnish Immigration Service provides information for beneficiaries of international protection under the page positive decision. There is a brochure with information on rights and obligations once status is granted.

When an applicant receives a positive decision from the Finnish Immigration Service, s/he also receives a separate residence permit card together with the decision and information on Residence permit card. The foreigner has the obligation to inform his legal counsel and the reception center of a positive decision. The reception center will further inform the applicant and guide him or her on next steps and on rights and obligations.

Residence permits

Refugees:

The authority responsible for delivering the residence permit is the Finnish Immigration Service pursuant to Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The first residence permit issued for asylum or subsidiary protection before 2nd January 2025 is valid for a period of 4 years. According to Section 53 (7) of the Aliens Act, the first temporary residence permit for refugee status is granted for a period of three years. Section 55 (1) provides that the extension of a residence

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permit based on refugee status is granted for three years.

The Finnish Immigration Service provides information on applications for residence permit and processing times.

When an applicant receives a positive decision, s/he also receives a separate residence permit card together with the decision and information on Residence permit card.

There is no processing fee for the issuance of the first residence permit, but fees apply for renewal of residence permits and issuance of travel documents such as alien's passport and refugee travel document.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

The authority responsible for delivering the residence permit is the Finnish Immigration Service pursuant to Section 116 of the Aliens Act.

The first residence permit issued for asylum or subsidiary protection before 2nd January 2025 is valid for a period of 4 years. The first residence permit for subsidiary protection is granted for one year as modified as of 2nd January 2025, pursuant to Section 53 (1). Section 55 provides that the extension of a residence permit based on subsidiary protection status is granted for two years.

The Finnish Immigration Service provides information on applications for residence permit and processing times.

When an applicant receives a positive decision, s/he also receives a separate residence permit card together with the decision and information on Residence permit card.

There is no processing fee for the issuance of the first residence permit, but fees apply for renewal of residence permits and issuance of travel documents such as alien's passport and refugee travel document.

Travel documents

Refugees:

The authority responsible for delivering the travel document is the Finnish Immigration Service.

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A person who has been granted refugee status in Finland can request before the Finnish Immigration Service a refugee travel document which can be can be valid for a maximum of 5 years. The Finnish Immigration Service has a dedicated page with instructions for submission of a request for a refugee travel document.

The application is made in person at a Finnish Immigration Service and an appointment can be made by using the booking service.

Return of the passport after the positive outcome: After a person is granted refugee status, the national passport that was originally surrendered to the authorities is returned to the third country national.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

The Finnish Immigration Service is the authority responsible for delivering the travel document which is the Alien passport, valid for 5 years.

A beneficiary of subsidiary protection will always receive an alien’s passport. The Finnish Immigration Service has a dedicated page with instructions for receiving an alien passport.

In addition, an alien's passport can be issued by decision of the Finnish Immigration Service, if: i) a passport from the authority of the home country cannot be obtained, ii) the applicant is a stateless person, iii) there is another special reason to get an alien's passport, such as for example the need to travel to the home country to obtain a national passport or the fact that a person has not been able to obtain a national passport despite attempts, iv) when applying for a residence permit, the person concerned meets the other conditions for granting a residence permit and the national passport has expired during the asylum process and the person cannot, for a justified reason, extend the validity of the passport without traveling to the home country or to the home country's representative office abroad.

According to Section 136 a of the Aliens Act, a refugee travel document and an alien's passport issued on the basis of Section 134(2) or issued to a person who has been granted a residence permit on the basis of Section 89 do not entitle the holder to travel to the foreigner's country of nationality or former country of permanent residence. However, a refugee travel document or alien's passport may be issued without restrictions on the area of validity if there are exceptionally compelling reasons for doing so. Restrictions on the area of validity shall be indicated in the refugee travel document and alien's passport.

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Freedom of movement

According to Section 9(1) of the Finnish Constitution: "*Freedom of movement Finnish citizens and foreigners legally resident in Finland have the right to freely move within the country and to choose their place of residence.*"

Access to employment and employment-related education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Right to access the labour market:

A person who has been granted a residence permit and who registers at an Employment and Economic Development Office as an unemployed jobseeker, is entitled to the same workforce services as any other client of the Employment and Economic Development Office.

A study done by Labore, the Labour Institute for Economic Research and published on 30 March 2022, found that Integration programmes and language training increase employment of immigrants. The Labore report Systematic Review of Active Labor Market Policies' Effects on Immigrants' Employment is a systematic review of literature on the effectiveness of immigrant integration measures and active labour market policies. The review identifies four ways of promoting the employment of immigrants: integration programmes, language training, active labour market policies and financial sanctions. The report is available here.

Administrative steps for employment: The residence card issued following a positive decision specifies the right to work of a refugee. Under Section 10 the Integration Act, municipalities must arrange general guidance and advice to immigrants and integration customers. Advice provision is intended to support the initial stage of integration in particular.

Access to employment-related educational opportunities for adults and vocational training (including training courses for upgrading professional skills):

The new Integration Act provides for the assessment of skills and integration services to be conducted by the municipality, pursuant to Section 14. The assessment will progressively take into account the individual situation of the person, his/her wishes and needs in order to prepare an integration plan,

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pursuant to Section 20 of the new Integration Act.

In view of the major reform on integration, the webpages of Kela has been updated with compiled instructions for municipalities on the reforms of employment and integration services, i.e. the TE24 and KOTO24 reforms. The website also contains information about Kela's benefits and services that are relevant to the reforms.

Access to education

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

- SIMHE services: Higher education institutions responsible for SIMHE services (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland), supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The aim is to enhance the identification and recognition of prior learning (AHOT) of highly educated immigrants of different statuses and to make it easier to direct immigrants to higher education on a national and regional level.
- VALMA: Preparatory education for vocational training (VALMA) gives immigrants an opportunity to improve their basic abilities, learning capabilities and Finnish language skills. The program lasts for a maximum of 1 year. However, students may opt to continue their studies leading to a qualification once they acquire basic knowledge in the field and the necessary learning capabilities.

Amendments to the Act on Liberal Adult Education (in force since 1 January 2018) gives the possibility for the State to fully finance adult education centre, folk high school, summer university or study centre education or training approved as a part of an immigrant’s integration plan.

The Act on Vocational Education (in force since 1 January 2018) provides many kinds of support to the vocational study paths of students with immigrant background. A personal competence development plan is created for all students, in which prior learning is identified and recognised.

In Finland, the Integration Act which will enter into force as of 1st January 2025, provides that the municipality or labour authority must offer multilingual social orientation to the integrating client in his mother tongue or another language he knows well.

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The new Integration Act provides for additional support for adults to access education, which can be provided under the integration plan with the aim to strengthen the person's skills and orientation for employment. Sections 29 and 30 of the new Integration Act provide for the possibility of obtaining support for independent studies.

Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications and validation of skills

Information is currently not available.

Social security and social assistance

Beneficiaries of international protection have same rights as nationals with regards to social security and social assistance as provided by the Social Assistance Act.

Healthcare

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

The health care services are at the same level as for nationals.

Support on mental health issues: The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) published on 7 February 2022 a multilingual video series on mental health which is aimed at people who have moved to Finland as refugees. The video series has been co-developed together with experts by experience and health professionals.

PALOMA project: aim of the project was to create the model for refugees' mental health work in Finland (including the PALOMA handbook and PALOMA-training).

The PALOMA handbook offers an extensive information package about refugees' resource and risk factors relevant to mental health. It offers:

- guidelines and detailed recommendations for decision makers, management, and professionals in different sectors for the prevention, recognition and treatment of mental health problems among refugees and asylum seekers in Finland

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- recommendations and tools not only for the social and health care sectors but also for example, to education, early childhood education, and third sector.

The PALOMA- training is a free, web-based, and comprehensive training package which gives basic information to work with people of refugee background, and to foster both the patients' and the professionals' own wellbeing. The main goal of the following project PALOMA2, is to establish the Centre of Expertise in Refugees' Mental Health Work and to disseminate the knowhow gathered. These centres are established in all five of Finland's university hospitals.

Access to accommodation

Refugees: N/a

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: N/a

Access to integration measures

Refugees:

The integration system has been reformed and a new law is in force since 1st January 2025 – Act on the Promotion of Integration (14.4.2023/681).

A number of measures were adopted in 2024 with the aim of harmonising the integration system.

The new Integration Act provides for the assessment of skills and integration services to be conducted by the municipality, pursuant to Section 14. The assessment will progressively take into account the individual situation of the person, his/her wishes and needs in order to prepare an integration plan, pursuant to Section 20 of the new Integration Act.

The Integration Act is complemented by regulations on multilingual orientation and representative of minors: The government informed that the new Integration Act, which entered into force on 1st January 2025, is supplemented by regulations regarding multilingual social orientation and the remuneration of the representative of a child who became a minor without a guardian.

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Specifically, as of 2025, municipalities have the obligation to organise multilingual social orientation for integration customers as part of integration services. This orientation consists of information about the values and norms of Finnish society, individual rights and obligations, employment and other things related to functioning in Finnish society. It will be organised in the immigrant's own language and consist of at least 70 hours of teaching and independent study.

In view of the major reform on integration, the webpages of Kela has been updated with compiled instructions for municipalities on the reforms of employment and integration services, i.e. the TE24 and KOTO24 reforms. The website also contains information about Kela's benefits and services that are relevant to the reforms.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

The same as for beneficiaries of asylum.

Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection

Refugees:

The right to family reunification for refugees is provided under Sections 114 and 115 of the Aliens Act .

Section 37 of the Aliens Act provides for the definition of eligible family members:

- a family member is considered to be the spouse of a person residing in Finland and an unmarried child under the age of 18 whose guardian is the person residing in Finland or the person's spouse. If the person residing in Finland is a minor child, the family member is the person's guardian. A person of the same sex is also considered to be a family member if the relationship is nationally registered.
- For unmarried partners, they are considered spouses when living in a common household under marital-like conditions, regardless of gender. The prerequisite for such a status is that they have lived together for at least two years. The period of f is not required if the persons have a child in common custody or if there is another weighty reason.
- An unmarried child under the age of 18 who is in the actual care of his or her guardian and in actual need of care on the date of the decision on the

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residence permit application, but whose custody relationship is not officially documented (foster child), is considered to be a child as defined in subsection 1 above. In addition, the child shall be considered to be a foster child if it is proven that the child's previous guardians have died or are missing and that the child has had an actual custody relationship with the sponsor or his or her spouse before the sponsor's arrival in Finland. If the sponsor is a foster child in Finland, the child shall be considered to be a child as defined in subsection 1 above.

The Aliens Act stipulates the practical procedure of DNA sampling in connection with the residence permit process. According to Section 65 of the Aliens Act, the Finnish Immigration Service may provide an applicant or sponsor with an opportunity to prove their biological kinship with DNA analysis paid from State funds if no other adequate evidence of family ties based on biological kinship is available and if it is possible to obtain material evidence of the family ties through DNA analysis. Pursuant to section 66 of the Aliens Act, the procedure is coordinated and monitored by an officer representing the Finnish Immigration Service or a Finnish diplomatic mission.

Conditions for family reunification: Sponsor’s requirements:

- According to the Aliens Act, a person who has a continuous or permanent residence permit for Finland may act as a sponsor. According to the Aliens Act, the following are considered family members:
- spouse of a sponsor residing in Finland including persons of the same sex in a nationally registered partnership, or persons living in a marriage-like relationship regardless of their sex are comparable, under certain conditions, to a married couple.
- unmarried children under 18 years of age over whom the person residing in Finland or his or her spouse has guardianship
- foster child can also, under certain conditions, be issued with a residence permit as a family member.
- If the person residing in Finland is a minor, his or her guardian is considered a family member.
- (on certain grounds) a relative other than a family member of a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary or temporary protection.
- Relatives other than family members can be issued with a residence permit if refusing a residence permit would be unreasonable because the persons concerned intend to resume their close family life in Finland or because the relative is fully dependent on the sponsor living in Finland.

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The Law 472/2024 added new provisions on refusal of a residence permit when applying for a residence permit based on family ties. Section 36c of the Aliens Act provides that a residence permit based on family ties is not granted if:

1. there is a reasonable reason to suspect that the family bond has been formed in order to obtain a residence permit in Finland, and the purpose is not to spend a joint family life,
2. family life must be considered to have ended, and the intention is not to spend a joint family life,
3. the family organiser has obtained his residence permit by providing essentially false, incorrect or misleading information about his identity, citizenship or family relationships, or by failing to provide relevant information; or
4. there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a minor child has been used as a means of entry because the child has been sent to Finland as a family sponsor in order to obtain a residence permit for his family members, unless there is a compelling reason for sending the child to Finland to seek international protection related to the child's life or health.

The assessment made prior the refusal of a residence permit granted on the basis of family ties, must take into account the protection of family life and the best interests of the child.

Brief description of the procedure to follow (documents from country of origin, fees and costs, procedure):

According to Section 69a of the Aliens Act, the decision on a residence permit application based on family ties must be notified to the applicant no later than nine months after the application was submitted. In exceptional circumstances, the decision may be notified later.

The Aliens Act has been amended on residence issued on the basis of family reunification. The changes enter into force on 16 June 2025 and concern these main aspects:

1. minimum age of spouses: - a spouse can only get a residence permit if the applicant and their spouse are at least 21 years old. Also, if the spouses have children in their joint custody, a residence permit application as the child's parent or guardian can be submitted even though the parent is under 21 years of age.

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2. financial resources of a minor's family member - the requirement for sufficient financial resources will not apply to a family member if the sponsor is an unaccompanied minor who is living in Finland as a refugee. However, family members must have sufficient financial resources if a minor sponsor has received temporary or subsidiary protection.

   The requirement for financial resources:

   applies to other relatives of a minor who has been granted international protection, with certain exceptions,

   applies when a minor refugee lives in Finland with one of their parents or guardians,

   does not apply to old family members if the residence permit application based on family ties was submitted within three months of the date on which the sponsor was informed of the decision to grant them refugee status,

   derogating from the requirement is possible in individual cases if there are exceptionally serious grounds or if the derogation is in the best interest of the child.

3. definition of when a child is considered a minor: - aligned with the ruling of the CJEU. When the sponsor is an unaccompanied minor, beneficiary of subsidiary protection, the condition for granting a residence permit for a family member is that the sponsor was a minor on the day when the family member’s residence permit application was submitted. The same requirement applies to situations where the sponsor is a parent or guardian who has been granted this protection, and the applicant is their child. The legislative change provides that only unaccompanied minors, beneficiaries of refugee status and the children of a parent or guardian who has been granted asylum will have special status when defining if they should be considered minors. If a sponsor, beneficiary of refugee status arrived in Finland as an unaccompanied minor, a residence permit may only be granted to their family member if the sponsor was a minor on the day when the sponsor submitted the asylum application on the basis of which the sponsor was granted asylum. Granting a residence permit to the child of a person who has been granted asylum requires that the child was a minor on the day when the sponsor submitted the application on the basis of which

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asylum was granted.

4. the period of residence requirement for family reunification: - a sponsor, beneficiary of international protection must reside in Finland with a residence permit for at least two years before their family member or other family relation may apply for a residence permit based on family ties, but there are some exceptions too.

The period of residence requirement does not apply to established family members of a person who is a beneficiary of international protection or the family members or other relatives of a person receiving temporary protection. The definition of an established (or "old") family member of a sponsor who has been granted asylum is: i) a family member with whom the sponsor had started living with as a family before the sponsor’s arrival in Finland, ii) for a quota refugee - a family member with whom the sponsor had started living with as a family before the sponsor was admitted into Finland's refugee quota and iii) when the sponsor has been granted refugee status in connection with a decision on a permit on the basis of family reunification, then old family members are persons with whom the sponsor had started living with as a family before refugee status was granted.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Same as above for refugees

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