

**COUNTRY  
CHAPTER**

**IRE**

# **IRELAND**

**BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND**

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## **1. Resettlement Policy**

In 1998, Ireland agreed to accept persons for organised resettlement under a Resettlement Quota programme. The criteria for the acceptance of persons under the current programme were set down in a Government Decision in 1998. There is provision in the Refugee Act 1996, as amended, for future agreements with the High Commissioner for Refugees.

## **2. Criteria for Refugee Status Eligibility and Asylum**

Ireland is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. All persons are entitled to apply for refugee status. When they do so, specific procedures are followed for determining whether or not a person meets the necessary criteria for the granting of this status.

All applications are examined in accordance with the definition of a refugee as set out in a section 2 of the Refugee Act, 1996, which defines a refugee as someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. Where it is established that a well-founded fear of persecution exists, the applicant will be granted refugee status.

## **3. Resettlement Quota**

Ireland accepts ten "special case" refugees per year for resettlement, who would not normally come under the scope of Ireland's obligations under the Geneva Convention of 1951 as amended by the New York Protocol of 1957.

Ireland also accepts family members of those special cases on a similar basis as the admission of relatives of persons granted refugee status in the State. If the family members reside with the applicant at the time of transfer to Ireland they may travel with the applicant. Otherwise the applicant may apply for relatives to be admitted following arrival. (See Section 7: Family Reunification).

## 4. Submission and processing via Dossier Selection

Case selection is based on dossier submissions by the UNHCR. Dossiers are submitted to the Department of Foreign Affairs and are examined by both the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Justice Equality and Law Reform. Where medical cases are submitted the dossiers are also forwarded to the Department of Health and Children for examination and approval.

The following documentation should be included with a submission to Ireland:

- i) Completed UNHCR Resettlement Registration Form, ensuring that all sections are completed, particularly information regarding family members. Information provided at this time will be used during processing of all future applications for family reunification etc..., so it is essential that this information is complete and correct (See Section 7).
- ii) Relevant documentation such as medical certificates, birth certificates, copy of passport etc...
- iii) Covering letter explaining why the refugee requires resettlement and whether he or she is at risk or falls into a vulnerable category
- iv) Ensure that name and date of birth and other essential information is accurately completed on dossier submissions otherwise difficulties may arise when processing documentation later.

## 5. Emergency cases

At the present time, Ireland does not have an emergency procedure. There is no separate special allocation for urgent cases.

## 6. Special Categories of Refugees

There are four special categories to which priority is attached in consideration of vulnerable refugee cases.

These are:

- (1) survivors of violence or torture,
- (2) medical needs,
- (3) women at risk,
- (4) Elderly refugees

## **7. Family Reunification**

A refugee may apply for the admission into the state of a member of his/her family. A member of the family is:

(a) a spouse, where the person is married and the marriage is subsisting on the date of the application.

(b) children under the age of 18 years who remain single and

(c) where the refugee is under 18 years of age, he or she may apply for the admission of his or her parents.

There is provision for permission to be granted in exceptional circumstances for other dependent members of the family.

## **8. Medical Requirements**

Acceptance of refugees with medical problems will be conditional on verification that the Irish Health Services can adequately cater for their needs (including resource implications). The acceptance of persons with medical needs will also be subject to consultation with the Department of Health and Children. While elderly refugees are not excluded, back-up support and medical considerations may also apply in these cases.

## **9. Travel**

A refugee may leave and re-enter the State. Persons who do not have a valid passport may apply for a convention travel document which will identify them as a person with permission to reside in the state.

## **10. Status on arrival in Ireland**

All refugees processed overseas are granted permanent residence status upon arrival in Ireland.

## **11. Settlement and community services**

### **Arrival procedures**

Persons admitted under the Resettlement Quota programme are met at the airport by a Resettlement Officer.

During the days immediately after arrival the Resettlement Officer assists the new arrivals to access health and social welfare services. He/she will also offer advice and information on life and culture in Ireland.

### **Status on Arrival**

Persons admitted under the Resettlement Quota programme have the status of Programme refugee.

### **Rights and entitlements**

Under article 24 of the Refugee Act 1996, as amended, programme refugees are entitled to the same rights and privileges as persons with Convention Refugee status in relation to health, social welfare, education and housing, access to the law courts, employment etc.

### **Resettlement location**

New arrivals are placed in cities and towns outside the capital where services and structures are put in place for their reception and resettlement. They may move from these locations but there is no guarantee that resettlement services will be provided in their new location.

### **Accommodation**

The new arrivals may be placed directly into long term private rented accommodation or, if no such accommodation is available, they may be placed in temporary accommodation until longer term accommodation is sourced. Where a person/family is unable to meet their accommodation needs from their own resources, they may apply to the state for assistance.

New arrivals may apply for local authority (state provided) housing in the same manner as an Irish citizen.

### **Employment / Income**

Persons admitted under the Resettlement programme are entitled to seek and enter employment and to carry on any business, trade or profession. They would, in general, be expected to meet their own income needs.

Under Irish Government policy, programme refugees and their relatives who are unemployed have the same entitlements in terms of access to social welfare payments and supplementary welfare payments as are available to Irish citizens and other refugees who have been granted Convention Status. These payments are means based.

## **Education**

Programme refugees, who require it, are provided with English language training to enable them to access further education and employment.

Children are placed in primary or post primary schools appropriate to their age up to the age of 18 years.

Persons over the age of 18 years may access third level education in the same manner as an Irish citizen - subject to the normal terms and conditions e.g. a persons must be resident in Ireland or another EU country for three of the previous five years before they will be eligible to access the free fees initiatives in place in third level academic universities.

## **Health and Medical Services**

Health and Medical Services are provided free of charge to those persons who cannot meet their own medical costs, subject to terms and conditions. In order to avail of free medical services new arrivals must apply for a medical card. Entitlement to a medical card is means based.

Primary Health care is provided through the local General Practitioner (GP) Service and all referrals for hospital treatment or special care is through this GP service. New arrivals must therefore register with a local General Practitioner (GP).

## **Local Support Groups**

Ireland has a very active voluntary community who work to welcome and support new arrivals as they settle into their new lives in Ireland.

## **Access to Religious bodies**

Ireland is predominantly a Christian country and there may not be easy access to other religious institutions country wide.