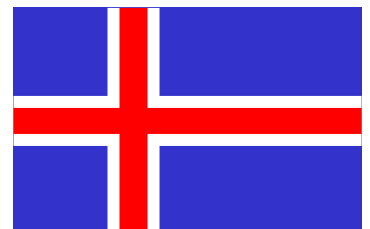


**COUNTRY
CHAPTER**

ICE

ICELAND

BY THE GOVERNMENT OF ICELAND



1. Resettlement Policy

The Government of Iceland agreed, in 1996, to establish an annual resettlement quota as part of the UNHCR Resettlement Programme. The Icelandic Refugee Council is the consultative body on refugees. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through the Icelandic Refugee Council, is responsible for the selection, admission and integration of refugees in Iceland while working in close co-operation with the concerned ministries.

2. Criteria for Refugee Status Eligibility and Asylum

Refugees eligible for resettlement in Iceland are recognised refugees according to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Statute of Refugees and regional instruments, who for security reasons cannot remain in their first country of asylum or return to their country of origin.

3. Criteria for Resettlement

Refugees eligible for resettlement in Iceland are refugees recognised under UNHCR's mandate who fall into one of the following categories:

Legal or physical protection needs, when the refugee meets one of these conditions:

- Immediate or long-term threat of forced repatriation or expulsion.
- Threat of arbitrary arrest, detention or imprisonment.
- Threat to human rights or physical integrity/safety, analogous to that considered under the refugee definition and rendering asylum untenable.

Refugees victims of violence and /or torture

Refugees victims of violence and / or torture who require special medical attention. Their resettlement in Iceland is subject to the availability of appropriate medical services.

Women at Risk

Women facing serious physical and / or psychological threats (rape, sexual harassment, violence, exploitation, torture, etc...) lacking the traditional protection of their families or communities.

Refugees without local integration prospects in the first country of asylum

Under specific circumstances, refugees who do not have an opportunity to establish themselves in their country of refuge in a manner appropriate to their cultural, social, religious or educational background. When refugees remain a certain period in a country of asylum without being able to integrate and there is no prospect for repatriation in near future, they can be considered for resettlement.

4. Resettlement Allocations

The Government of Iceland decides the allocation of the quota in close consultation with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Icelandic Refugee Council, reuniting representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as with the Icelandic Red Cross and the National Association of Local Authorities, makes a proposal on the basis of UNHCR assessment of overall resettlement needs. The Refugee Council meets once per month in average, and decides upon the allocation of sub-quotas by region and category.

5. Admissibility for Resettlement

No special constraints on admissibility are given.

6. Submissions and Processing via Dossier Selection

The processing of refugees in Iceland is mainly carried out through In-Country Selection.

7. Submissions and Processing via In-Country Selection

The selection process is implemented through participation in selection missions to the countries of refuge by an Icelandic delegation.

The delegation is composed of representatives from the Icelandic Red Cross, who heads the delegation, the Ministry of Social Affairs or/and the Local Community as well as an interpreter.

The selection of candidates is made through refugee status determination and resettlement eligibility interviews on the basis of the Resettlement Registration Forms submitted by UNHCR. The Icelandic delegation notifies UNHCR of its decisions immediately after the interviews are completed.

Entry visas are issued by the nearest Danish Embassy to accepted refugees.

8. Emergency Cases

No accelerated procedures for the processing of emergency cases are yet in place.

9. Special Categories

Considering the positive results achieved by the Resettlement Programme thus far, there is potential for a progressive diversification of the Icelandic quota to also include refugees with special needs.

10. Family Reunification of Refugees

The Government of Iceland acknowledges that family unity is an important factor that facilitates the integration of refugees in their country of resettlement. Cases of family reunification are dealt with under the general provisions of the immigration law, on a case-by-case basis.

11. Medical Requirements

No specific medical requirements are provided for under the Icelandic programme.

12. Travel

Travel will be arranged by IOM in close co-operation with UNHCR. Costs of travel are paid by the Icelandic Government, under the responsibility of UNHCR or of any sponsor.

13. Status on Arrival

Refugees accepted for resettlement in Iceland are granted refugee status according to the 1951 Convention. The refugees will be subsequently granted an open residence and work permit. They will be eligible to apply for citizenship after 5 years of continued residence in Iceland.

14. Domestic Settlement and Community Services

14.1 Actors

The reception and integration of refugees is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Icelandic Red Cross. A Steering Group, chaired by the Red Cross, is established in each of the local communities and is responsible, at a local level, for the assistance provided under the Icelandic Programme. Support families are an essential feature of Iceland's integration programme for resettled refugees.

The support families scheme is based on the initiative of individual citizens who volunteer with the Icelandic Red Cross to assist a refugee to integrate in their respective local communities. Support families undergo specific training before being formally assigned to a refugee, including a psychological aid course and a full briefing on the refugee's cultural background.

14.2 Orientation and Language Training

Language training is provided during the first year of residence, four days per week. Icelandic teachers receive interpretation assistance, where required. Cultural orientation on Iceland is provided within the framework of language training.

Information sessions on the background of resettled refugees are provided to the receiving communities in Iceland at the beginning of the programme. This contributes to the development of a good understanding between the refugees and the local community.

14.3 Reception

Newly resettled refugees are met at the airport by representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Icelandic Refugee Council, as well as the local authorities, Red Cross representatives and support families.

14.4 Housing

Upon arrival, refugees are provided with an apartment for one year including heat, electricity and the basic costs for telephone service. In addition, refugees are offered free health services for six months and allowances for their living expenses according to a standard fixed by the Social Services of the local receiving community. Refugees are also provided with new and/or second-hand furniture, a television, radio, vacuum cleaner, refrigerator and washing machine, as well as with clothing.

14.5 Health

Upon arrival in Iceland, all refugees will receive a medical check-up. Medical and dental care is provided as required, free of charge, during the first six months of residence in Iceland. After six months, refugees have the same access to the health system as Icelandic citizens.

14.6 Education

Iceland has a ten-year compulsory education term for children. Refugee children are entitled to education in their mother tongue for the first year at least. All refugees are expected to attend classes of Icelandic language for the initial 9 months, at least.



14.7 Employment and Vocational Training

In each of the communities receiving resettled refugees, a project manager is appointed by the local authorities to mentor and monitor the integration of the refugee(s) concerned. The project manager is responsible for liaising with potential employers and arranging job interviews for the refugee. After an initial period of 4 to 6 weeks, the refugee is generally offered a part-time job. Due to a low unemployment rate in Iceland, most refugees are usually employed before the end of the first year.

14.7 Other assistance

Psychological assistance, language instruction and cultural orientation are provided to refugees throughout their integration process. At the end of the one-year support programme, refugees are expected to become self-sufficient and receive the same level of social assistance as other Icelandic residents.

15. Reference Material

-  Icelandic Nationality Act, No. 100 dated 23/12/1952 and amended in 1982 and 1998.
-  Icelandic Immigration Law, 1965.