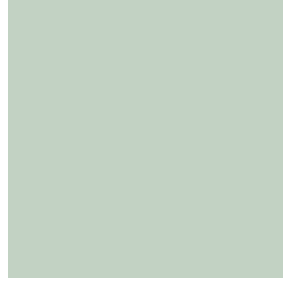


UPDATE ON 2025



REPUBLIC
OF IRELAND



COUNTRY REPORT

MAY 2026

Acknowledgements & Methodology

The 2025 edition of this report was written by Hayley Dowling, Trainee Solicitor at the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre and edited by ECRE.

This report draws on information obtained through a mixture of desk-based research and direct correspondence with relevant agencies, and information obtained through the Irish Refugee Council's own casework and policy work. Of particular relevance throughout were the latest up-to-date statistics from the International Protection Office (IPO) and the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), including their annual and monthly reports; data from the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT); as well as various reports and statements from stakeholders such as the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, UNHCR Ireland and NGOs working on the ground with refugees and asylum applicants. The Irish Refugee Council is grateful to all colleagues for their assistance in obtaining information used to compile this report.

The update on 2025 to the AIDA country report on Ireland was shared with national asylum and reception authorities to provide an opportunity for comments. Any feedback received was reviewed by the author and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final version of the report.

The information in this report is up to date as of 31 December 2025 unless otherwise stated.

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA)

The Asylum Information Database (AIDA) is managed by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). It aims to provide up-to date information which is accessible to researchers, advocates, legal practitioners and the general public through the dedicated website www.asylumineurope.org. It covers 27 countries, including 21 EU Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, HR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI and SK) and 6 non-EU countries (Egypt, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom). The database also seeks to promote the implementation and transposition of EU asylum legislation reflecting the highest possible standards of protection in line with international refugee and human rights law and based on best practice



This report is part of the Asylum Information Database (AIDA), funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and ECRE. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of ECRE and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.



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Glossary & List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| AfHAP | Afghan Humanitarian Admissions Programme |
| CERD | United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination |
| CJEU | Court of Justice of the European Union |
| Co. | County |
| CPT | European Committee for the Prevention of Torture |
| Dáil Éireann | Dáil Éireann refers to the lower house and principal chamber of the national parliament of Ireland. |
| DP | Direct Provision – System for the material reception of asylum applicants |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |
| ECtHR | European Court of Human Rights |
| ELA | Early Legal Advice |
| EMN | European Migration Network |
| EROC | Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre |
| ESRI | Economic and Social Research Institute |
| FLAC | Free Legal Advice Centres |
| Garda Síochána | Irish Police Force |
| GNIB | Garda National Immigration Bureau |
| GRETA | Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings |
| HIQA | Health Information and Quality Authority |
| HSE | Health Services Executive |
| IFPA | Irish Family Planning Association |
| IHAP | IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme |
| IHREC | Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission |
| INIS | Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service |
| IPA | International Protection Act 2015 |
| IPAS | International Protection Accommodation Services |
| IPAT | International Protection Appeals Tribunal |
| IPO | International Protection Office |
| IRC | Irish Refugee Council |
| IRPP | Irish Refugee Protection Programme |
| ISD | Immigration Service Delivery |
| JRS | Jesuit Refugee Service |
| MLR | Medico-Legal Report |
| MASI | Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland |
| OPMI | Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration |
| ORAC | Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner |
| PILA | Public Interest Law Alliance, a project of FLAC |
| RAT | Refugee Appeals Tribunal |
| RCNI | Rape Crisis Network Ireland |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| RIA | Reception and Integration Agency |
| RLS | Refugee Legal Service |
| SHAP | Syrian Humanitarian Admission Programme |
| SI | Statutory Instrument |
| SPIRASI | NGO specialising in assessing and treating trauma and victims of torture |
| TD | Teachta Dála (Irish equivalent term for Member of Parliament) |
| TUSLA | Irish Child and Family Agency |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

Statistics

Overview of statistical practice

Since January 2017, the International Protection Office (IPO) has been responsible for receiving and examining applications. The IPO publishes brief monthly statistical reports on international protection applications.¹ The Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) (formerly Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS)) is part of the Department of Justice and Equality and provides data about asylum and managed migration in Ireland to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. This data is published on the EU open data portal along with data from other European countries.²

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: figures for 2025

| | Applicants in 2025 (1) | Pending at end of 2025 | Total decisions in 2025 (2) | Total rejection (3) | In merit rejection | Refugee status | Subsidiary protection | Humanitarian protection (4) |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total | 13,159 | 15,315 | 19,558 | 15,807 | 15,411 | 3,084 | 397 | 270 |
| Somalia | 2,021 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nigeria | 1,940 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Pakistan | 1,680 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Afghanistan | 1,290 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Georgia | 925 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Vietnam | 679 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Bangladesh | 662 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ukraine | 312 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Zimbabwe | 224 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Sudan | 202 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026.

Note 1: "Applicants in year" refers to the total number of applicants, and not only to first-time applicants.

Note 2: Statistics on decisions cover the decisions taken throughout the year, regardless of whether they concern applications lodged that year or in previous years.

Note 3: 'Total rejection' refers to rejections on merits as well as applications deemed 'inadmissible.'

Note 4: 'Humanitarian protection' refers to humanitarian leave to remain, 'Leave to remain' in the national context takes account of criteria such as humanitarian considerations and/or the person's connections to the State, to determine whether there are compelling reasons to allow the person permission to remain in Ireland. This assessment is conducted in the event that both a claim for refugee and subsidiary protection are ultimately refused. See [National forms of protection](#).

¹ IPO, *Statistics*, available [here](#).

² ISD, *Open Data*, available [here](#).

Applications and granting of protection status at first instance: rates for 2025

| | Overall rejection rate (1) | In merit rejection rate | Overall protection rate (2) | Refugee rate | Subsidiary protection rate | Humanitarian protection rate (3) |
|--------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Total | 80.82% | 78.79% | 17.80% | 15.77% | 2.03% | 1.38% |

Note 1: Refers to applications rejected on merits and applications rejected as inadmissible.

Note 2: Includes both refugee status and subsidiary protection status. Humanitarian protection or 'leave to remain' is not considered a protection status in the national context.

Note 3: 'Humanitarian protection' refers to humanitarian leave to remain, 'Leave to remain' in the national context takes account of criteria such as humanitarian considerations and/or the person's connections to the State, to determine whether there are compelling reasons to allow the person permission to remain in Ireland. This assessment is conducted in the event that both a claim for refugee and subsidiary protection are ultimately refused.

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026

Gender/age breakdown of the total number of applicants: 2025

| | Men | Women | Not specified |
|-------------------|-------|-------|---------------|
| Number | 8,942 | 4,186 | 31 |
| Percentage | 68% | 32% | 1% |

| | Adults | Children | |
|-------------------|--------|-------------|---------------|
| | | Accompanied | Unaccompanied |
| Number | 10,151 | 2,787 | 221 |
| Percentage | 78% | 22% | 2% |

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026.

First instance and appeal decision rates: 2025

It should be noted that, during the same year, the first instance and appeal authorities handle different caseloads. Thus, the decisions below do not concern the same applicants.

| | First instance | | Appeal | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Total number of decisions | 19,558 | - | 5,548 | - |
| Positive decisions | 3,751 | 19.18% | 1,274 | 23% |
| • <i>Refugee status</i> | 3,084 | 15.77% | 1,156 | 21% |
| • <i>Subsidiary protection</i> | 397 | 2.03% | 118 | 3% |
| • <i>Humanitarian leave to remain</i> | 270 | 1.58% | - | - |
| Negative decisions | 15,807 | 80.82% | 4,106 | 74% |

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026.
International Protection Appeals Tribunal, February 2026.

Overview of the legal framework

The most recent version of relevant national legislation is available at: <http://bit.ly/2kneBnp>.

Main legislative acts relevant to asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and content of protection

| Title (EN) | Web Link |
|--|---|
| International Protection Act 2015 | http://bit.ly/2inFha1 |
| Immigration Act 1999 | http://bit.ly/1SFAWqw |
| Immigration Act 2003 | https://tinyurl.com/yvexfm5f |
| Immigration Act 2004 | http://bit.ly/1Kovj0V |
| Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking Act) 2000 | https://tinyurl.com/3smy8ncn |
| European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 | http://bit.ly/1g8Sks4 |

Main implementing decrees and administrative guidelines and regulations relevant to asylum procedures, reception conditions, detention and content of protection

| Title (EN) | Web Link |
|---|---|
| S.I. No. 32 of 2024 International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Countries of Origin) (Amendment) Order 2024. | https://bit.ly/3JgoRMg |
| S.I. No. 541 of 2022 The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 | https://bit.ly/3unpuvU |
| S.I. No. 542 of 2022 The International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 | https://bit.ly/3un6w8Q |
| S.I. No. 86 of 2022 Immigration Act (Visas) (Amendment) Order 2022 | https://bit.ly/3H2VBZn |
| S.I. No. 364 of 2022 Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 2022 | https://bit.ly/3uns98S |
| S.I. No. 725 of 2020 International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Third Country) Order 2020 | https://bit.ly/3cgp1nc |
| S.I. No. 436 of 2020 Disability, Equality, Human Rights, Integration and Reception (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2020 | https://bit.ly/2NAaNDF |
| S.I. No 409 of 2017 European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2017 | http://bit.ly/2E7pPbd |

| | |
|---|---|
| S.I. No 116 of 2017 International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017 | http://bit.ly/2xoWEz8 |
| S.I. No 230 of 2018 European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 | https://bit.ly/2KW1T09 |
| S.I. No 134 of 2016 Immigration Act 1999 (Deportation) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2DFrK9N |
| S.I. No. 62 of 2018 European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018 | https://bit.ly/2H4mj2y |
| S.I. No 121 of 2018 International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Countries of Origin) Order 2018 | https://bit.ly/2I9j2Cm |
| S.I. No 668 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Deportation) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2E8uN7G |
| S.I. No 667 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Travel Document) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2GfErpC |
| S.I. No 666 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Places of Detention) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2rDSkL0 |
| S.I. No 665 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Voluntary Return) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2GeKxGL |
| S.I. No 664 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Permission to Remain) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2rFcFiP |
| S.I. No 662 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Temporary Residence Certificate) (Prescribed Information) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2Gh8WLO |
| S.I. No 661 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Establishment Day) Order 2016 | http://bit.ly/2GhLyhI |
| S.I. No 660 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Application for International Protection Form) Regulations 2016 | http://bit.ly/2FeRwy5 |
| S.I. No 663 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Commencement) (No.3) Order 2016 | http://bit.ly/2GhLBd1 |
| S.I. No 133 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2016 | http://bit.ly/2nbsOht |
| S.I. No 26 of 2016 International Protection Act 2015 (Commencement) Order 2016 | http://bit.ly/2FeTbnj |
| S.I. No 518 of 2006 European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006 | http://bit.ly/1OpPpWj |
| S.I. No. 81 of 2017 Civil Legal Aid (International Protection Appeals Tribunal) Order 2017 | https://bit.ly/2BezlvK |
| S.I. No 55 of 2005 Immigration Act 1999 (Deportation) Regulations 2005 | http://bit.ly/1frfsP |
| S.I. No 708 of 2003- Aliens (Visas) Order 2003 | http://bit.ly/1lme8uH |
| S.I. No 103 of 2002- Immigration Act 1999 (Deportation) Regulations 2002 | http://bit.ly/1MM0BMq |

The International Protection Act 2015 has repealed many of the previous statutory instruments and regulations pertaining to the Irish asylum system.³ Now the Minister has the power to make new regulations under Section 3 for any matter referred to in the International Protection Act 2015.

³ For further information regarding previous regulations, please see: ECRE and Irish Refugee Council, *AIDA Country Report: Ireland*, February 2015, available [here](#).

Overview of main changes since the previous report update

This report was previously updated in **May 2025**.

International protection

- ❖ **Key Asylum Statistics:** Throughout 2025, a total of 13,159 applications for international protection were lodged. The International Protection Office (IPO) issued a total of 19,558 decisions, 3,751 of which were positive. Among these, 3,481 decisions granted international protection to applicants, while 270 applicants were granted humanitarian permission to remain (See [Statistics](#)).⁴

Asylum procedure

- ❖ **Processing of Applications:** The IPO issued a total of 19,558 decisions in 2025. 13,159 applications for international protection were made throughout the year. According to latest available statistics, the number of international protection applications throughout 2025 has decreased somewhat when compared with the previous reporting period (see [Regular Procedure](#)).⁵
- ❖ **Length of procedure:** Throughout 2025, the median processing time for first instance decisions was approximately 17 months for all cases decided pursuant to the ordinary procedure. This marks a slight decrease in the overall processing time compared with the previous reporting period (18 months for all applications under the ordinary procedure).⁶ The median processing time for cases decided pursuant to the accelerated procedure was 4 months throughout 2025.⁷ However, processing times under the ordinary procedure remained lengthy in view of the commitment by the Department of Justice to reduce the overall processing time to 6 months in line with the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group. The median waiting period for appeals before the IPAT was 12.5 months⁸ (see [Regular procedure](#)).
- ❖ **International Protection Appeals:** The vast majority of appeals before the IPAT proceeded on a remote basis via audio-video link throughout 2025. In circumstances whereby an appeal was deemed unsuitable to proceed remotely, the appeal proceeded by way of an on-site oral hearing. This usually occurs in circumstances whereby to proceed with an appeal remotely would be contrary to the interests of justice or whereby the applicant specifically requests an onsite oral hearing. Throughout 2025, the IPAT issued a total of 5,743 appeal decisions.⁹ Of these decisions, 1,156 applicants were granted refugee status, 118 were granted subsidiary protection status and the remaining appeals were rejected.¹⁰ 15,097 appeals were lodged to the Tribunal against negative first instance decisions made by the IPO throughout 2025. A further 237 appeals were submitted to the Tribunal pursuant to the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018¹¹ (see [Appeal](#)).
- ❖ **Changes to the international protection application procedure:** As of 8 October 2025, applications for international protection were processed at two separate locations. Families with one or more children under the age of 18 who were submitting a joint application on the same day, as well as nationals of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Georgia, India, Kosovo, Malawi, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia, and South Africa, were required to submit their applications at the Citywest Convention Centre, located in the south-west suburbs of Dublin. All other applicants, including single applicants and unaccompanied minors, were

⁴ IPO, March 2026.

⁵ IPO, March 2026.

⁶ IPO, March 2026.

⁷ IPO, March 2026.

⁸ IPAT, February 2026.

⁹ IPAT, February 2026.

¹⁰ IPAT, February 2026.

¹¹ IPAT, February 2026.

required to submit their applications at the International Protection Office (IPO) in Dublin city centre.¹²

Changes to the international protection application procedure were initially introduced in summer 2025, when the IPO first implemented the Pact Transition process in respect of applications from nationals of Georgia, India, and Brazil. This process was subsequently expanded to include nationals of the aforementioned countries. Applications from these nationalities were processed in a manner intended to mirror the border procedure that is scheduled to come into effect with the implementation of the Pact in June 2026. The transition is being carried out under the current legislative framework and therefore does not include certain elements envisaged under the Pact, such as restrictions on movement or the establishment of an independent rights monitoring mechanism. These measures will be introduced once the new legislation enters into force¹³ (see [Registration of the asylum application](#)).

- ❖ **Accelerated procedure:** With effect from 23 April 2024, the IPO began accelerating the processing of applications from the country of origin with the highest number of applications within a given period. From April 2024, nationals of Nigeria were subject to the accelerated procedure. Subsequently, in July 2024, Jordanian nationals were also subject to the accelerated procedure. In July 2025, the Department of Justice announced that nationals of Pakistan would also be subject to the accelerated procedure.¹⁴ As of 24 July 2025, 905 people from Pakistan had sought international protection in Ireland throughout 2025. This compares to 1,391 for the whole of 2024, 624 in 2023, 242 in 2022 and 68 in 2021¹⁵ (see [Accelerated procedure](#)).
- ❖ **IPAT case processing capacity:** In October 2025, it was announced that up to 30 staff from the European Union Asylum Agency would be seconded to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal in order to assist with the Tribunal's increasing caseload. At the end of September 2025, there were 15,929 cases pending before the Tribunal. EUAA staff are to assist with preparing appeal files, conducting research on country-of-origin information and international protection jurisprudence, while also providing interpretation in difficult-to-source languages. The agreement between the Irish government and the EUAA will be valid until 31st December 2026.¹⁶ The agreement was announced subsequent to the release of figures in July 2025: 87 individuals were employed with IPAT and there were 25 unfilled vacancies¹⁷ (see [Regular procedure - Appeal](#)).
- ❖ **Deportations:** Throughout 2025, there was an increase in the number of Deportation Orders signed. As of 10 December 2025, 4,454 deportation orders have been signed throughout the year,¹⁸ compared to 2,403 deportation orders signed in 2024.¹⁹ The increase in deportation orders is attributable to the new government's decision to strengthen immigration enforcement. 2025 also saw the renewed use of chartered deportation flights. A contract was signed in November 2024 for the provision of charter aircraft for deportation operation purposes.²⁰ The first flight, bound for Georgia, departed Dublin airport in February 2025. Passengers on board the flight were accompanied by Garda personnel, medical staff, an interpreter and a human rights observer.²¹ As of December 2025, six charter flights operations had removed 205 people from the State. Of these,

¹² International Protection Office, 'What's New', 4th December 2025, available [here](#).

¹³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy Officer, November 2025.

¹⁴ International Protection Office, 'Prioritisation and Acceleration of an Additional Category of Applicants', available [here](#).

¹⁵ Irish Times, 'International protection applicants from Pakistan added to accelerated processing list', 28th of July 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁶ Law Society Gazette, 'EU agency's staff to help with asylum appeals', 20th October 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁷ The Journal, 'Over 22% of jobs at International Protection Appeals Tribunal are currently sitting empty', 4th July 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁸ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 259*, 10 December 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁹ BreakingNews, 'Deportation Orders for failed asylum seekers surged by 180% last year', 17th February 2025, available [here](#).

²⁰ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Charter deportations flights recommence', 1st March 2025, available [here](#).

²¹ *ibid.*

five operations were to non-EU destinations, including Georgia and Nigeria, removing 182 persons subject to deportation orders. The remaining operation removed 23 EU citizens on grounds of criminality²² (see [Return procedure](#)).

- ❖ **Increase in voluntary return allowance:** In September 2025, it was announced that for a limited period, persons in the international protection process prior to 28 September 2025 would be offered increased reintegration assistance if they chose to withdraw their international protection application and avail themselves of voluntary return at an earlier stage in the process. Prior to September 2025, the level of reintegration assistance offered was up to € 1,200 per person and € 2,000 per family unit. Under the changes, whereby an applicant chooses to withdraw their application for international protection before receiving a first instance decision or prior to appealing a negative first instance decision, the reintegration assistance offered would be increased to € 2,500 per person to a maximum of € 10,000 per family unit. Whereby an applicant is in the appeals process and decides to voluntarily return prior to an appeal decision being issued, their assistance will increase, but to the lower amount of € 1,500 per person and maximum € 6,000 per family unit. If they receive a final decision on their application, assistance will only increase for families to a maximum of € 3,000 per family unit.²³ The Irish Refugee Council raised significant concerns regarding the revised policy, noting that it targets specifically persons in the protection process and that it is unethical and inappropriate to pay applicants in need of safety to abandon their claims. 1,496 persons had left Ireland by way of voluntary return as of 5 December 2025, an increase of 78% compared with the same period in 2024²⁴ (see [Return procedure](#)).
- ❖ **Creation of office of Minister of State for Migration:** In January 2025, following the formation of Ireland's new coalition government, a reconfiguration of ministerial responsibilities saw the creation of a junior ministry for migration established within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. The creation of the Ministry was part of a broader expansion in junior ministerial roles. Fine Gael TD, Colm Brophy, was appointed Minister of State for Migration, with specific responsibility for migration, including international protection, working alongside senior Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O'Callaghan TD. The creation of the role marked a significant structural change in governance with respect to Ireland's asylum system and has also drawn scrutiny from stakeholders concerned about the potential dilution of Cabinet-level accountability for asylum matters.

Reception conditions

- ❖ **Reception capacity:** Capacity within the Direct Provision system remained a very significant challenge throughout 2025. Due to the unprecedented increase in numbers of individuals seeking international protection in previous years, accommodation capacity continued to be extremely limited. On 4 December 2023, the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) announced that it would not be in a position to provide accommodation to all international protection applicants upon arrival due to a severe shortage in accommodation capacity.²⁵ As a result, throughout 2025, single male international protection applicants who presented themselves to the International Protection Office were assessed by IPAS and HSE staff for any significant vulnerabilities or health issues and prioritised for accommodation as necessary.²⁶ Whereby no significant vulnerabilities were identified, male applicants were not provided with accommodation. Consequently, many single male applicants were forced to sleep on the street for prolonged periods, often during bouts of inclement weather conditions and amidst a period of increased anti-immigrant

²² Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 608*, 9th December 2025, available [here](#).

²³ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Jim O'Callaghan announces new incentive to encourage Voluntary Returns', 29th of September 2025, available [here](#).

²⁴ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 608*, 9th December 2025, available [here](#).

²⁵ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation', 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

²⁶ *ibid.*

sentiment. At the time of updating (January 2026), there were 405 applicants awaiting an offer of accommodation from IPAS.²⁷ Families with children and single women continued to be offered accommodation throughout 2025.²⁸ IPAs who were not provided with accommodation received a temporary increase of €75 to their Daily Expense Allowance (DEA). This increased the allowance to €113.80 a week for eligible applicants.²⁹

Separately, the State appealed the High Court's decision in *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission v. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth & Ors* [2024] IEHC 493, in which the High Court held that the State had breached Article 1 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights by failing to provide newly arrived international protection applicants with basic necessities, including accommodation, food and hygiene facilities. Allowing the State's appeal and overturning the High Court's decision, the Court of Appeal held that while the State had failed to meet accommodation needs, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) not sufficiently demonstrated that this failure had undermined the applicants' physical or mental health or placed them in a situation of degradation incompatible with human dignity pursuant to Article 1. The Court of Appeal further considered that evidence as to the broader material circumstances were insufficient to establish a violation of Article 1 of the Charter.³⁰ As of November 2025, IHREC had been granted leave to appeal the decision of the Court of Appeal to the Supreme Court.³¹ The appeal was heard by the Supreme Court in March 2026. Judgment was reserved and had not yet been issued at the time of updating in April 2026.

In a separate but related case, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) issued a judgment in *Case C-97/24 S.A. & R.J. v. The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*. This case concerned whether a Member State could avoid liability under EU law for failing to provide material reception conditions on the basis of an unforeseen higher number of arrivals of international protection applicants. The CJEU held that a Member State which fails to provide an applicant lacking sufficient means with material reception conditions, even on a temporary basis, manifestly and gravely exceeds the discretion afforded to it under the Reception Conditions Directive. The Court found that such a failure is capable of constituting a sufficiently serious breach of EU law, thereby giving rise to State liability. It further held that a Member State cannot evade its obligation to ensure the provision of basic needs, as any contrary interpretation would undermine the principle of effective judicial protection for applicants.³² At the time of updating (January 2026), the case had been remitted to the High Court for consideration as to the issue of damages³³ (see [Reception Conditions](#)).

- ❖ **Reception standards:** Throughout 2025, reception standards remained poor. 2025 saw the continued reliance by the State on so-called 'emergency centres.' Applicants continued to be accommodated in congregated and overcrowded settings without access to basic public services.³⁴ Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre also continued to operate throughout the year as both a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, as well as for the accommodation of newly arrived international protection applicants. In June 2025, it was announced that the State had approved plans to proceed with the purchase of the Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre for a sum of €148.2m. The State had been leasing the property from a private contractor since 2020, when it was initially used as a site for administering Covid vaccinations and

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

²⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation', 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

³⁰ *The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission v The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth & Ors* [2025] IECA 156, available [here](#).

³¹ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. 'Supreme Court Grants Commission Leave to Appeal in Unaccommodated International Protection Applicants Case', 7th November 2025, available [here](#).

³² *Case C-97/24 S.A. & R.J. v. The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth*, 1st August 2025, available [here](#).

³³ Information provided by IRC Independent Law Centre, January 2026.

³⁴ Information provided by IRC Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

later converted for use as a transit hub.³⁵ As of December 2025, there were 385 international protection applicants residing at Citywest Convention Centre.³⁶

Throughout 2025, several sites were also developed for the provision of tented accommodation and modular units in order to deal with ongoing accommodation shortages. One such site was located at Lissywollen, Co. Westmeath with projected capacity for approximately 1,000 residents. Construction began on the site in early October 2024, and the first residents arrived in December 2024 with further residents due to arrive on a phased basis thereafter. Establishment of the centre was progressed by way of Ministerial Order so as to fast-track development of the site in response to the significant accommodation capacity constraints.³⁷ Local Councillors, as well as members of the community, strongly opposed the development, citing concerns regarding planning, environmental impacts, health services capacity, lack of consultation and local communities. A High Court challenge was brought by a group of local Councillors, who sought to argue that the State's use of a statutory instrument to expedite the centre's establishment was unlawful.³⁸ In subsequent proceedings, the State conceded that the legislative process used to authorise the centre was indeed flawed. In late 2025, the High Court formally quashed the ministerial order that had allowed the centre to be set up without full planning and environmental approval, declaring the centre's fast-tracked approval legally invalid. However, the judge allowed a four-month stay on the order taking effect and on this basis, the Government has until early March 2026 to pass corrective legislation. Throughout the course of proceedings, the centre continued to operate, albeit at a significantly reduced capacity. However, as of late 2025, the temporary structures on the site were dismantled and the site was cleared³⁹ (see [Types of accommodation](#)).

- ❖ **HIQA Inspections:** During 2025, HIQA continued to exercise its statutory oversight function in relation to permanent IPAS centres, conducting inspections to assess compliance with the National Standards. HIQA's inspections focused on quality, safety, governance and the lived experience of residents in permanent accommodation settings. HIQA published multiple inspection statements over the course of the year, with inspection reports released in January, February, May, June, August, November and December 2025. These covered a broad range of permanent IPAS centres located in counties across the country.⁴⁰ Several were found to have no non-compliances identified against the National Standards. However, a number of non-compliances were also identified across inspections. Common themes included instances where leadership structures, reporting systems or awareness of responsibilities amongst centre staff were insufficient,⁴¹ inadequate implementation of safeguarding procedures,⁴² substandard accommodation arrangements,⁴³ inadequate contingency planning and emergency preparedness, and ineffective systems for identifying and responding to the special needs of residents.⁴⁴ For each instance of non-compliance, HIQA required that service providers submit comprehensive compliance plans outlining how deficits would be addressed in order to achieve full compliance with the national standards (see [Direct Provision centres](#)).

- ❖ **Daily Expense Allowance income assessment:** In November 2025, the Department of Justice proposed significant policy changes aimed at requiring international protection applicants resident in IPAS centres who are engaged in paid employment to make financial contributions toward the cost of their accommodation. The proposed contribution model is means-tested, and applicants will

³⁵ RTE, 'Government agrees €148m purchase of Citywest Hotel and campus', 18 June 2025, available [here](#).

³⁶ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics', 14 December 2025, available [here](#).

³⁷ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Midlands Accommodation Centre, Lissywollen, Athlone', 4 July 2025, available [here](#).

³⁸ Extra.ie, 'Athlone Direct Provision Centre halted by High Court over planning failures', 1 January 2025, available [here](#).

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ HIQA, 'Inspection Reports', available [here](#).

⁴¹ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 15 August 2025', 15th August 2025, available [here](#).

⁴² HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 05 November 2025', 5th November 2025, available [here](#).

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

be required to contribute based on their weekly earnings. Those earning up to approximately €150 per week would pay a relatively modest contribution (e.g., €15 weekly). Contributions increase with higher earnings, with those earning more than €600 per week facing weekly charges of up to €238.⁴⁵ The Irish Refugee Council criticised the changes, noting that many applicants residing in IPAS centres are in part-time or precarious employment, moving in and out of work, and supporting their families on very limited incomes. It was further emphasised that it is unreasonable to expect people to contribute financially when the accommodation they are placed in is often of substandard and poor quality⁴⁶ (see [Daily expenses allowance](#))

Content of international protection

- ❖ **Changes to citizenship and family reunification:** Significant changes to the legal frameworks governing family reunification and citizenship were announced in November 2025. Under these reforms, individuals granted international protection are now subject to more stringent family reunification requirements, including the obligation to demonstrate adequate financial resources and access to suitable accommodation to support family members. In relation to citizenship, the qualifying residence period for refugees will be extended from three to five years. The criteria for naturalisation will also be revised through the introduction of a requirement that applicants demonstrate self-sufficiency. Applicants for citizenship must not have been in receipt of certain social protection payments during the two-year period immediately preceding the submission of an application.⁴⁷ While the majority of the proposed changes will require legislative amendments in order to become operational, the qualifying residence condition with respect to citizenship became operational on 8 December 2025.⁴⁸ The Irish Refugee Council has expressed significant concern with respect to the proposed changes, warning that they will significantly weaken refugee integration by limiting pathways to citizenship and family reunification⁴⁹ (see [Naturalisation](#) and [Family reunification](#)).
- ❖ **Reinstatement of revocation of citizenship procedure:** In April 2025, the Minister for Justice signed an order reinstating the State's powers to revoke naturalised Irish citizenship in serious cases. This followed a 2021 Supreme Court judgment which held that the previous revocation regime lacked adequate procedural safeguards and was therefore unconstitutional. As a result of that decision, no citizenship revocations have taken place since 2021. Under the revised legislative framework, an individual who is the subject of a proposed revocation is afforded 28 days to make submissions to the Minister for Justice setting out why their citizenship should not be revoked. Following the Minister's decision, the individual has a further 14 days to request an independent inquiry. Where such a request is made, an inquiry committee will be established, chaired by a retired judge drawn from the Circuit Court, High Court, Court of Appeal, or Supreme Court. The committee will also include two ordinary members appointed by the Minister for Justice⁵⁰ (see [Naturalisation](#)).

Temporary protection

The information given hereafter constitute a short summary of the Annex on Temporary Protection for this report, for further information, see [Annex on Temporary Protection](#).

⁴⁵ The Journal, 'Asylum-seekers with jobs will be required to pay towards their accommodation under new plans', 3rd November 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁶ Irish Refugee Council, 'Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our Society', 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁷ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister Jim O'Callaghan receives government approval to strengthen migration legislation and introduce new rules on asylum and citizenship & Minister Jim O'Callaghan and Minister Colm Brophy publishes Family Reunification Review', 26th November 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁸ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Changes to Citizenship for People Granted International Protection', 8th December 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁹ Irish Refugee Council, 'Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our society', 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).

⁵⁰ Irish Examiner, 'Justice minister reinstates powers to revoke Irish citizenship in serious cases', 10th of April 2025, available [here](#).

Temporary protection procedure

- ❖ **Key statistics:** As of 03 February 2026, 121,048 individuals had registered for temporary protection in Ireland. 84, 100 had activity administrative data in the State after 30 November 2025.
- ❖ **Extension of temporary protection:** Following the extension of temporary protection up to 4 March 2027, it was confirmed that temporary protection status will continue automatically and no reapplication process is required. Existing temporary protection certificates will remain valid evidence of permission to reside, work, and access public services in Ireland. However, individuals who hold Irish Residence Permit (IRP) cards are still required to renew those cards separately through the Immigration Service Delivery renewal process.
- ❖ **Beneficiaries of temporary protection in another EU Member State:** individuals who previously received temporary protection in another country must provide confirmation that their protection status in that country has been cancelled before applying in Ireland. In practice, this requirement has created significant difficulties. Delays or administrative failures in updating the EU shared database may result in an applicant's status in another country still appearing as active. As a consequence, some applicants have been refused temporary protection in Ireland despite having completed the cancellation process in another Member State.

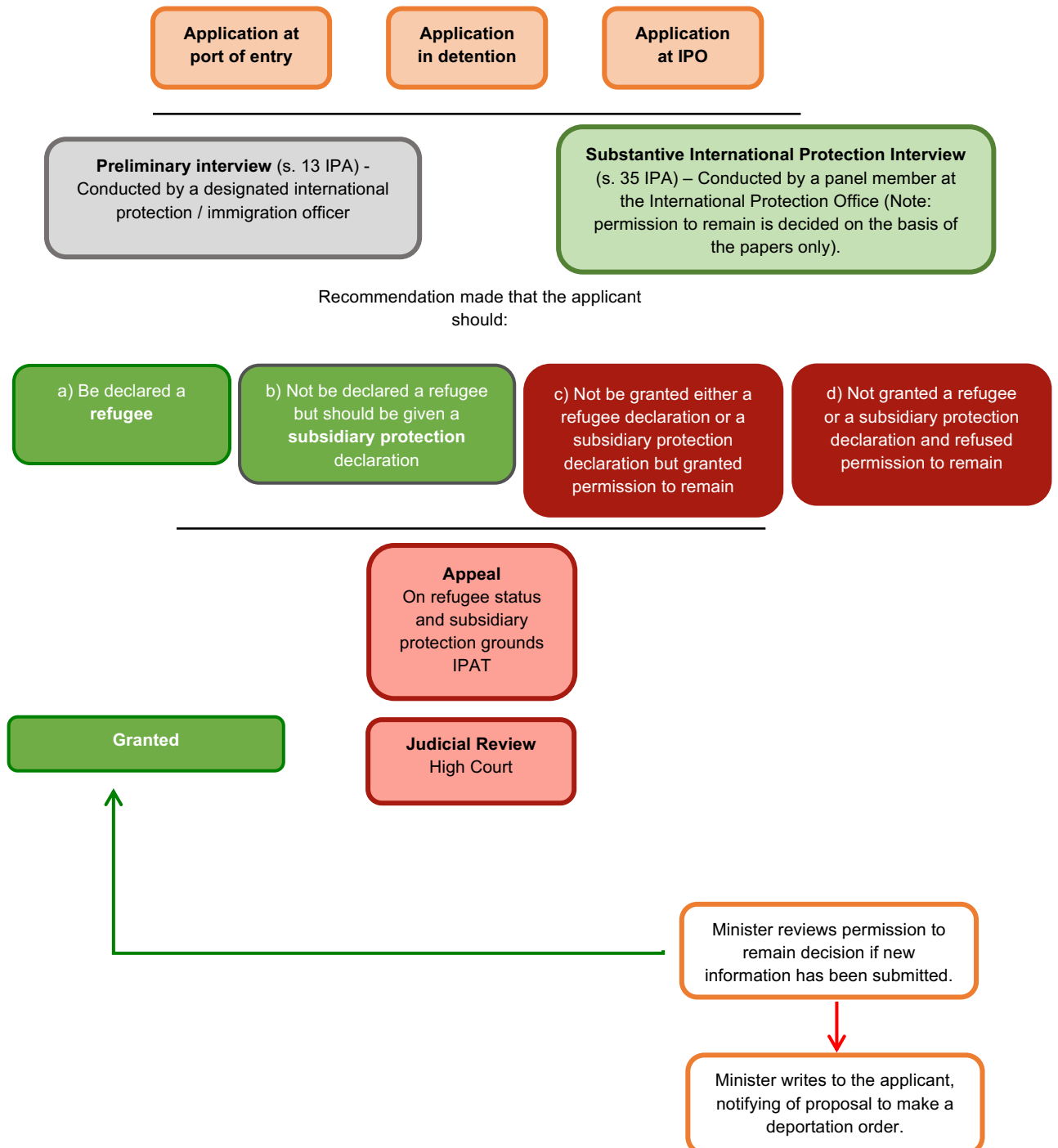
Content of temporary protection

- ❖ **Permitted absence from state accommodation:** In September 2025, in an effort to maximise occupancy of available bed space in state accommodation, a further revised absence protocol was introduced, with a for 21-day absence allowance per calendar year. All absences must be agreed in advance between the BOTP and the accommodation Service Provider at local level. If a BOTP exceeds the allowance, they must be recorded as absent and service providers must report all cases of non-compliance with the protocol to IPAS.
- ❖ **Phasing out of state-supported accommodation:** since 10 November 2025, beneficiaries of temporary protection are accommodated for a maximum period of 30 days, as opposed to 90 days previously, in Designated Accommodation Centres. Some individuals were required to return to Ukraine after the expiry of the 30-day accommodation period because they were unable to secure alternative housing, notably due to the ongoing housing shortage in Ireland. In April 2026, the Government announced a phased withdrawal of State-contracted accommodation housing approximately 16,000 beneficiaries of temporary protection. Under the planned withdrawal, accommodation provided to people who arrived before March 2024 will be withdrawn, except in cases involving highly vulnerable individuals or those facing barriers to independent living. The process will begin in August 2026 and take place over six months, with affected residents to receive at least three months' notice.
- ❖ **Phasing out payments for households hosting beneficiaries:** In July 2022, the Government introduced an Accommodation Recognition Payment of € 400 per month for households hosting beneficiaries of temporary protection. In December 2022, the payment was increased to € 800 per month. However, in June 2025, the payment was reduced to € 600 per month. Subsequently, in April 2026, it was announced that the Government was set to wind down the payment with a view to ending the payment in March 2027. It was also agreed to cut the payment to € 400 per month, commencing in September.

Asylum Procedure

A. General

1. Flow chart



2. Types of procedures

Indicators: Types of Procedures

- Which types of procedures exist in your country?

| | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| ❖ Regular procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ▪ Prioritised examination: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Fast-track processing: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Dublin procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Admissibility procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Border procedure: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Accelerated procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Other: | | |
- Are any of the procedures that are foreseen in the law, not being applied in practice?

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|--|

3. List of authorities that intervene in each stage of the procedure

| Stage of the procedure | Competent authority (EN) |
|--|---|
| Application at the border | Garda National Immigration Bureau |
| National security clearance | Garda National Immigration Bureau |
| Dublin procedure | International Protection Office (IPO) |
| Accelerated procedure | International Protection Office (IPO) |
| Refugee status determination | International Protection Office (IPO) |
| Appeal | International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) |
| Judicial review | High Court |
| Subsequent application (admissibility) | The Minister for Justice and Equality in the Department of Justice and Equality |
| Revocation / Withdrawal | The Minister for Justice and Equality in the Department of Justice and Equality |

4. Number of staff and nature of the determining authority

| Name in English | Number of staff | Ministry responsible | Is there any political interference possible by the responsible Minister with the decision making in individual cases by the determining authority? |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|
| International Protection Office (IPO) | 611 | Department of Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

The International Protection Office (IPO) is the body responsible for registering asylum applications and making the first instance decisions.

The IPO's role involves making recommendations to the Minister for Justice on an applicant's eligibility for refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain under the single procedure. This system replaces the previous multi-layered process overseen by ORAC that was fraught with administrative delays and backlogs.⁵¹

⁵¹ AIDA Country Report: Ireland 2015, available [here](#).

At the end of 2023, the International Protection Office was comprised of 396.14 full-time staff. Out of this number, 170 officials were involved in the decision making process.⁵² As of 2024, there were 590 full-time equivalent staff employed at the International Protection Office, 261 of which were involved in of which were involved in the taking of decisions with respect to international protection applications.⁵³ As of March 2026, there were 611 full-time equivalent staff employed at the International Protection Office, 234 of whom were involved in the taking of decisions with respect to international protection applications.⁵⁴

In July 2023, in response to the significant increase in the number of applications for international protection, and further to the recommendations established in the Catherine Day Report, the Department of Justice published a report on the international protection modernisation programme for 2023 and 2024. This programme was established with a view to enhancing efficiencies and throughput, as well as improving the application, interview and decision-making process for applicants.⁵⁵ As part of the reform strategy, the Department was aiming to increase decision making targets to 1,000 first instance decisions per month by spring 2024. In December 2025, the IPO indicated that throughout 2024, it had delivered over 14,000 first decisions compared to over 8,500 in 2023. In 2025, to the end of November, there had been a 44% increase in the total number of first instance decisions made when compared to the same period in 2024.⁵⁶

Additionally, both the IPO and IPAT’s operational capacity is currently being significantly expanded to meet increased caseloads and decision-making output. Additional resources are also being deployed through increasing staffing at both the IPO and the IPAT. These reforms are being supported by a significantly increased budget allocation of approximately €34m in 2024, to continue scaling up processing.⁵⁷

According to available information €25m was allocated pursuant to Budget 2025 for end-to-end investment in the immigration system, including €9.5m allocated for the Immigration Service Delivery and the International Protection Office, as well as an additional €2.4m allocated for IPAT.⁵⁸

Quality assurance and control

While the authors are not aware of any specific quality assurance or control mechanisms in place within the IPO, the UNHCR, in line with its advisory role, states that it regularly works in conjunction with the IPO with a view to improving the quality of decision making. This work includes the development and delivery of training, and the review of decisions and other support initiatives and draws on the best practice developed by the UNHCR through activities implemented in other EU Member States and internationally.⁵⁹

⁵² International Protection Office, April 2024.
Note: This number is comprised of staff who make both recommendations and decisions within the meaning of the Single Procedure provided for by the International Protection Act 2015.

⁵³ Information provided by the International Protection Office, March 2025. Additionally, it should be noted that the 261 is comprised of staff who make both recommendations and decisions within the meaning of the Single Procedure provided for under the International Protection Act 2015.

⁵⁴ International Protection Office, March 2026.
It should be noted that the 234 figure is comprised of staff who make both recommendations and decisions within the meaning of the Single Procedure provided for under the International Protection Act 2015.

⁵⁵ Department of Justice, ‘Minister McEntee publishes International Protection Modernisation Strategy’, 5 July 2023, available [here](#).

⁵⁶ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 569*, 18 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁵⁷ Department of Justice, ‘Minister McEntee publishes International Protection Modernisation Strategy’, 5 July 2023, available [here](#).

⁵⁸ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 620*, 25 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁵⁹ UNHCR, Ireland Fact Sheet – January – December 2019, available [here](#).

5. Short overview of the asylum procedure

The International Protection Act 2015 (IPA) is Ireland's key legislative instrument enshrining the State's obligations under international refugee law. The final version of the IPA was signed into law by the President of Ireland in December 2016 and officially commenced on 6 January 2017.⁶⁰

The IPA introduced a single procedure where refugee status, subsidiary protection, and permission to remain are all examined together in one procedure compared to the previous bifurcated system under the Refugee Act, 1996. Under the IPA, an application for international protection may be lodged either at the port of entry, or directly at the International Protection Office (IPO). If the applicant made a claim for international protection status at the port of entry, they must proceed to the IPO to complete the initial asylum process and attend a preliminary interview under Section 13 IPA.

The application should be lodged at the earliest possible opportunity as any undue delay may prejudice the application and the applicant may be required to explain the reasons for the delay.⁶¹ Moreover, failure to lodge an application at the earliest opportunity could impact an applicant's credibility, without a formal presumption being made against the applicant.⁶²

Application

Upon lodging an application for international protection, the applicant first fills out an application form and is given a short preliminary interview conducted either by an international protection officer, or by an immigration official – depending on where the application is lodged.

Under Section 21 IPA an application for international protection may be found inadmissible and a recommendation shall be made to the Minister by an international protection officer to this effect. Inadmissibility decisions are made on the grounds that another Member State has granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status to that person, or a country other than a Member State is considered to be a "first country of asylum" for that person.⁶³ A person has the right to an appeal to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) regarding an inadmissibility decision.

Under the [revised international protection procedure](#) since the 8th of November 2022, an applicant presenting at the IPO in order to make an application for international protection is now required to complete their International Protection Questionnaire (IPO2) onsite, in addition to completing their preliminary interview.⁶⁴

The questionnaire has to include, as established in accordance with Section 15(5) IPA, all relevant information pertaining to the grounds for the application, as well as relevant information pertaining to permission to remain, family reunification and right to reside for family members already present in the State, in case such considerations arise at later stages in the process. The information provided in the detailed application form will be duly considered throughout the assessment of the application, including in the applicant's substantive interview. Given the weight afforded to information provided in this questionnaire in determining the outcome of a person's application, the IPO recommends that applicants seek legal advice before completing the questionnaire.⁶⁵ In this respect, applicants are encouraged to avail themselves of the services of the State-funded Legal Aid Board, which can provide legal advice on the international protection process. However, the extent to which the Legal Aid Board is able to assist

⁶⁰ International Protection Act 2015 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order 2016.

⁶¹ Section 28(7) IPA.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ A first country of asylum is defined under Section 21(15) IPA.

⁶⁴ International Protection Office, 'The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 – Information Note', 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, para. 3.7.2.

prior to the submission of the questionnaire is unclear, particularly having regard to the introduction of the revised procedure.

Throughout 2025, the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre provided ongoing legal representation to 358 individuals. 176 new files were opened, and legal representation was provided in many pre-existing matters including representation before the Court of Justice of the European Union in respect of a client who experienced homelessness. Representation was provided to 74 age-disputed minors in both age assessments and international protection proceedings. Many children were taken into the care of the State following intervention and some decisions were challenged by way of judicial review. Support was provided with respect to family reunification, many of which incurred very significant delays. Advocacy was provided in respect of 5 reception conditions cases, including the first ever appeal of withdrawal of reception conditions instigated before the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, resulting in the withdrawal of the decision and the introduction of procedures around withdrawal of reception conditions.⁶⁶

Dublin Regulation

An application for international protection status may be subject to the Dublin Regulation by the IPO if it appears that another Member State may be responsible for the examination of the protection application.⁶⁷ During the initial appointment at the IPO, an applicant's fingerprints are taken and are entered into the Eurodac database. The applicant is also advised that they may obtain legal assistance from the Legal Aid Board. As per the regular procedure, the applicant is issued a Temporary Residence Certificate and referred to the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) for accommodation if they have no other means of accommodating themselves. At this point, the applicant will be taken to an IPAS reception centre in Dublin and later dispersed elsewhere to another Direct Provision centre. If the applicant's details are flagged on the Eurodac database, they may be called for a personal interview to assess the applicability of a transfer to another responsible Member State.⁶⁸

Throughout 2024, there were 1,264 outgoing transfer requests made pursuant to the Dublin Regulation, while a total of 8 people were returned pursuant to a transfer order.⁶⁹ Throughout 2025, there were 1,950 outgoing transfer requests made pursuant to the Dublin Regulation. A total of 2 people were returned pursuant to a transfer order.⁷⁰

Regular procedure

After registering at the IPO and submitting the questionnaire, applicants are notified by post of the date and time of their substantive interview before the IPO. The purpose of the interview is to establish the full details of their claim for international protection. Under the revised procedure, applicants from 'safe countries of origin' undergo their substantive interview within four to six weeks of making their initial international protection application. It should also be noted that, pursuant to the relevant regulation, this accelerated procedure may also be applied to **any** application subject to the need for fairness and efficiency and whereby the International Protection Office considered to be necessary and expedient.⁷¹ The applicant may have a legal representative and an interpreter present at the interview, if necessary. Throughout 2025, the median processing time for cases pursuant to the ordinary procedure was 17 months. The median processing time for cases under the accelerated procedure was 4 months. The median waiting period for appeals before the IPAT was 12.5 months.⁷²

⁶⁶ Information provided by the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, April 2026.

⁶⁷ S.I. No. 62 of 2018 European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.

⁶⁸ Regulation 4 European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.

⁶⁹ International Protection Office, March 2025.

⁷⁰ International Protection Office, March 2026.

⁷¹ IPO, 'The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, available [here](#).

⁷² International Protection Appeals Tribunal, March 2026.

After the substantive asylum interview, a draft “s.39” report is compiled by the authorised officer based on the information raised at the interview and that provided in the application questionnaire, as well as relevant country of origin information and/or submissions by UNHCR and/or legal representatives. The draft report must then be considered and finalised by a civil servant within the IPO and once this has been done a recommendation is issued from the IPO. The finalised recommendation (s.39 report) contains a recommendation as to whether or not status should be granted:

- ❖ If a positive recommendation is made with regard to refugee status, the applicant is notified and the recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Justice, who makes a declaration of refugee status.
- ❖ If a positive recommendation is made with regard to subsidiary protection, the applicant is notified and the recommendation is submitted to the Minister for Justice, who makes a declaration of subsidiary protection. The applicant can also seek an upgrade appeal to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) for refugee status.
- ❖ If the recommendation is negative, the applicant is provided with the reasons for such a decision. The implications of a negative recommendation depend on the nature of the recommendation. The applicant will be advised of their right to appeal any negative decision before IPAT and their right to seek legal advice if they have not done so already. Under the single procedure, where a person is found ineligible for refugee status or subsidiary protection, the decision-maker also considers whether there are humanitarian grounds to recommend a grant of permission to remain. This decision is made on the basis of information provided in the applicant’s questionnaire, as well as in any submissions made by or on behalf of the applicant throughout the procedure. There is no right of appeal on permission to remain decisions.

In general, the Minister for Justice will defer to the IPO or IPAT’s recommendation as to whether status should be granted. However, it should be noted that there are rare cases whereby, following additional examination and investigation, the Minister may refuse to follow the recommendation of the IPO if it is determined that the applicant in question may be deemed to be a security risk.

Appeal

Under the IPA an applicant may make an appeal to the IPAT against: (i) a recommendation that the applicant should not be given a refugee declaration; or (ii) a recommendation that the applicant should be given neither a refugee declaration nor a subsidiary protection declaration. An appeal under those two categories may be lodged before the IPAT in writing, laying out the grounds of appeal within a time limit prescribed by the Minister under Section 41(2)(a) IPA. They may request an oral hearing before the IPAT; if an oral hearing is not requested the appeal will be dealt with on this basis of the papers unless a member of the Tribunal finds it in the interests of justice to hold such an oral hearing. Free legal representation can be obtained through the Legal Aid Board. The deadline for submitting an appeal will be prescribed by the Minister in consultation with the Chairperson of the IPAT.⁷³

If the IPAT decides to set aside the IPO decision, the file will also be transferred to the Department of Justice so the Minister can declare the applicant a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection. If the IPAT decides to affirm the IPO decision, the individual will be sent a notice in writing stating that the application for a declaration as a refugee and/or subsidiary protection beneficiary has been refused. If an application for international protection is ultimately unsuccessful the applicant will be sent a notice in writing stating that the application for international protection has been refused and that the Minister proposes to make a deportation order under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 requiring that the person leave the State within a given timeframe.

An applicant may seek to have a refugee or subsidiary protection recommendation of the IPO or a decision of the IPAT judicially reviewed by the High Court under Irish administrative law, for example where there

⁷³ Section 77 IPA.

has been an error of law in the determination process. It is expected that an applicant will exhaust all available remedies before applying for judicial review and, therefore, most judicial reviews are of appeal recommendations, rather than first instance decisions. Applicants must be granted permission (known as leave) to apply for judicial review before proceeding to a full judicial review hearing.

The High Court can affirm or set aside the decision of the first instance or appellate body. If the applicant is successful, their case is returned to the original decision-making body for a further determination. Because of the volume of judicial review cases that have been brought to challenge decisions over the last number of years, and the procedure of having both pre-leave and full hearings, there is a large backlog of cases awaiting determination.

The number of incoming Judicial Review Asylum cases remained comparatively high in 2024 compared with 2023 (736 in 2024 compared with 779 in 2023), which are in stark contrast with incoming cases in the previous 4 years. Final orders were made in 272 cases, while interim orders were made in 77 cases.⁷⁴ Statistics in relation to asylum cases lodged in 2025 are expected to be published in the Courts Service Annual Report later in 2025.

Permission to Remain

Throughout all stages of the asylum process, prior to receiving a final decision on their claim, the applicant is encouraged to inform the IPO of any circumstances arising that may give rise to the Minister granting the applicant permission to remain if the applicant has been denied both refugee status and subsidiary protection. This status is commonly referred to as ‘leave to remain’ and takes account of criteria such as humanitarian considerations and/or the person’s connections to the State in order to determine whether there are compelling reasons to allow the person permission to remain in Ireland. This assessment is conducted in the event that both a claim for refugee status and subsidiary protection are ultimately refused. It is important to note that if an applicant is refused permission to remain, they do not have a right to appeal this decision.

B. Access to the procedure and registration

1. Access to the territory and push backs

Indicators: Access to the Territory

- 1. Are there any reports (NGO reports, media, testimonies, etc.) of people refused entry at the border and returned without examination of their protection needs? Yes No
- 2. Is there a border monitoring system in place? Yes No
- 3. Who is responsible for border monitoring? National authorities NGOs Other
- 4. How often is border monitoring carried out? Frequently Rarely Never

In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, a person who arrives in Ireland seeking entry may be refused leave to land and, due to the lack of independent oversight and transparency at airports or ports of entry, it cannot be verified whether there are cases in which the person refused leave to land had protection grounds or had intended to apply for asylum. The Border Management Unit, in response, states:

At a port of entry, if a person indicates or is identified as being in need of international protection they are admitted to the international protection process. However, they will still be recorded as a refusal of leave to land.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Courts Service, ‘Annual Report 2024’, 7 July 2025, available [here](#).
⁷⁵ Border Management Unit, Right to Reply, May 2025.

There is currently no access for independent authorities or NGOs at air or land borders in order to monitor the situation, nor do there appear to be any plans to allow such access in the future under revised International Protection legislation following the introduction of the Pact.

In October 2022, it was reported that a unit was to be established at Dublin Airport in order to facilitate stricter immigration checks in respect of arriving passengers. The establishment of the unit was reported to be part of a range of measures introduced by Government with a view to reducing the number of individuals claiming international protection in Ireland.⁷⁶

Starting from autumn 2022, additional immigration control measures had increased at Dublin Airport, targeting in particular individuals seeking to disembark from arriving aircraft with false documentation.⁷⁷

Throughout 2024, it was evident that these practices had expanded considerably, with an increase in reports of arrests and subsequent convictions for failure to produce a valid travel document upon request.⁷⁸ In response to a Parliamentary Question in November 2024, the Department of Justice stated that as of the 30th of September 2024, there had been 132 charges made in respect of s.11 of the Immigration Act 2001 and 141 charges in respect of s.12 of the Immigration Act 2004.⁷⁹ There were also increased immigration checks at the border with Northern Ireland. In May 2024, it was announced that during a garda operation spanning a four-day period, 50 persons attempting to enter Ireland from the UK without the requisite visa or travel documentation were prevented from entering.⁸⁰

In November 2025, in response to a Parliamentary Question in relation to doorstep operations occurring at arriving aircraft in Dublin Airport, the Minister for Justice indicated that the Border Management Unit, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána have an ongoing intelligence-led programme of operations at airplanes to detect passengers who destroy documents in flight and to identify the point of embarkation of undocumented passengers. According to available statistics, 5,125 such operations took place at Dublin Airport up to the 31st of October 2025.⁸¹

As of the 31st of October 2025, 4,038 persons had been refused leave to land at Dublin Airport. The nationalities of those refused leave to land for 2025 were not available as of January 2026.⁸²

The Irish Refugee Council has previously raised concerns in relation to the increasing number of individuals being refused leave to land from active zones of conflict that are demonstrably unsafe and has urged the government to show proactivity in ensuring effective access to the asylum procedure.⁸³

Section 78 IPA amends Section 5 of the Immigration Act 2004 in a way which allows for people to be detained for short periods of time in facilities at ports of entry and/or airports instead of being placed in custody in police stations (see [Detention of Asylum Applicants](#)).

In December 2021, according to a statement made by the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, the dedicated immigration facility at Dublin Airport was opened for use in circumstances where an individual is refused leave to land at the air border. The facility houses the newly opened Dublin Airport Garda Station and the Garda National Immigration Bureau. The Garda Station contains four single person cells and two additional detention rooms. The facility was reported to be fully operational as of March 2022.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Irish Examiner, 'Stricter asylum checks, more deportations, and more basic shelter in bid to control migration', 24 October 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁷ Dublin Inquirer, 'The Government says it's bringing back stricter asylum checks, but what does that mean?', 2 November 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, December 2024.

⁷⁹ Minister for Justice, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 759*, 5 November 2024, available [here](#).

⁸⁰ The Journal, 'Taoiseach 'encouraged' after gardaí prevent 50 people entering Ireland from the UK with incorrect documents', 26 May 2024, available [here](#).

⁸¹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 147*, 5 November 2025, available [here](#).

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ Irish Times, Rise in people from war torn countries refused entry to the State, 2 August 2021, available [here](#).

⁸⁴ Department of Justice, Minister McEntee attends Official Opening of Dublin Airport Garda Station, 6 May 2022, available [here](#).

However, it is not known whether immigration detainees are advised and facilitated in seeking legal advice from detention.

1.1. Border monitoring

There is currently no access for independent authorities or NGOs at air or land borders in order to monitor the situation, nor do there appear to be any plans to allow such access in the future.

1.2. Legal access to the territory

Under Irish law, there is no general procedure under which an applicant can apply for a humanitarian visa with the intention to apply for international protection on arrival in the State. However, in September 2015, the Irish Government established the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). Under the second phase of IRPP (IRPP II), established in 2019, it was planned that 2,900 Syrian refugees located in Jordan and Lebanon would be resettled in the State through a combination of resettlement and community sponsorship initiatives.⁸⁵ However, the State experienced significant challenges in meeting this target, due in part to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the issuing of humanitarian visas to Afghan nationals following the crisis of September 2021.⁸⁶ As a result, a total of just 448 resettled refugees arrived in the State between 2020 and 2022.⁸⁷ This is in addition to a further 564 humanitarian visas issued to Afghan nationals, bringing the total number of resettlements made under IRPP to 1012 in the years 2020 to 2022.⁸⁸ According to available statistics, in 2024, 199 Syrian nationals and 77 Afghan nationals were resettled. As of May 2025, a further 83 Syrian nationals and 6 Afghan nationals had been resettled under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme.⁸⁹

Applicants arriving under resettlement receive programme refugee status.

Ireland's pledge for resettlement and humanitarian admissions, along with forecasted resettlement numbers for 2024-2025 was submitted to the European Commission on the 7th of October 2023. Ireland has pledged to support the arrival of 1,200 refugees under the UNHCR resettlement process from Lebanon and Jordan, with a further 100 humanitarian admissions from Afghanistan.⁹⁰ Under the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan (2026-2027), Ireland pledged to resettle 1,200 people and grant humanitarian admission to a further 100 people.⁹¹

See also sections on: [Family reunification](#); [Afghan Admissions Programme](#); [Irish Humanitarian Admissions Programme and Community Sponsorship](#).

⁸⁵ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Irish Refugee Protection Programme, 29 January 2021, updated 10 February 2023, available [here](#).

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 1324*, 18 April 2023, available [here](#).

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 708*, 20 May 2025, available [here](#).

⁹⁰ European Commission, 'Pledges submitted by the Member States for 2024-2025', December 2023, available [here](#).

⁹¹ Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/2628 of 18 December 2025 on the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Plan (2026-2027), 22 December 2025, available [here](#).

2. Preliminary checks of third country nationals upon arrival

Indicators: Preliminary checks at the arrival point

1. Are there any checks that are applied systematically or regularly at the point of entry when a person enters the territory? Yes No
2. Is the person considered under law to have entered the territory during these checks? Yes No

Section 13 IPA provides that where an individual requests international protection, either at the International Protection Office or at the frontiers of the State, such as at an airport or sea port, preliminary information such as the individual's identity, country of origin, route travelled and general grounds upon which they are seeking protection shall be requested by an immigration officer.⁹² Applicants will also be asked to submit any identity documentation they have in their possession to the International Protection Office and will occasionally undergo verification in order to confirm their legitimacy⁹³ (See [Registration of the asylum application](#)).

Section 19 IPA provides that applicants shall have their fingerprints for the purposes of establishing their identity. Each applicant has their fingerprints checked against the Eurodac system, which allows officials to establish if the applicant has previously applied for international protection in another Member State.⁹⁴

In accordance with s.17 of the IPA, upon successful registration of their application for protection, an applicant shall receive a Temporary Residence Certificate containing their name, person ID number, country of origin, and a photograph of the applicant.⁹⁵ The Temporary Residence Certificate constitutes evidence that an applicant is an international protection applicant and has validly registered their international protection application.

3. Registration of the asylum application

Indicators: Registration

1. Are specific time limits laid down in law for making an application? Yes No
❖ If so, what is the time limit for making an application? N/A
2. Are specific time limits laid down in law for lodging an application? Yes No
❖ If so, what is the time limit for lodging an application? N/A
3. Are making and lodging an application distinct stages in the law or in practice? Yes No
4. Is the authority with which the application is lodged also the authority responsible for its examination? Yes No
5. Can an application for international protection be lodged at embassies, consulates or other external representations? Yes No

The right to apply for asylum is contained in Section 15 IPA. When a person presents themselves either at the IPO or at the frontiers of the State seeking international protection, they shall go through a preliminary interview at a time specified by an immigration officer or an international protection officer. That time limit is not, however, specified in the IPA.

In the case of families applying for international protection, all adult family members must make their own applications. An adult who applies for protection is deemed to be applying on behalf of their dependent children where the child is not an Irish citizen and is under the age of 18 years and present in the State or is born in the State while the person is in the protection procedure or, not having attained the age of 18 years, enters the State while the parent is still in the protection procedure. There is no separate right for

⁹² International Protection Act 2015, s.13(1).

⁹³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, February 2025.

⁹⁴ International Protection Act 2015, s.20 (1).

⁹⁵ International Protection Act 2015, s.17(1).

accompanied children to apply for asylum independently even if they have different protection grounds to their parents.

As of 8 October 2025, applications for international protection were processed at two separate locations. Families with one or more children under the age of 18 who were submitting a joint application on the same day, as well as nationals of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Georgia, India, Kosovo, Malawi, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia, and South Africa, were required to submit their applications at the Citywest Convention Centre, located in the south-west suburbs of Dublin. All other applicants, including single applicants and unaccompanied minors, were required to submit their applications at the International Protection Office (IPO) in Dublin city centre.⁹⁶

Changes to the international protection application procedure were initially introduced in summer 2025, when the IPO first implemented the Pact Transition process in respect of applications from nationals of Georgia, India, and Brazil. This process was subsequently expanded to include nationals of the aforementioned countries. Applications from these nationalities were processed in a manner intended to mirror the border procedure that is scheduled to come into effect with the implementation of the Pact in June 2026. The transition is being carried out under the current legislative framework and therefore does not include certain elements envisaged under the Pact, such as restrictions on movement or the establishment of an independent rights monitoring mechanism. These measures will be introduced once the new legislation enters into force.⁹⁷

Preliminary Interview

Once an applicant presents to the IPO, the applicant makes a formal declaration that they wish to apply for international protection, outlined under Section 13 IPA. The applicant is interviewed by an authorised officer of the IPO to establish basic information. The preliminary interview takes place in a room where other applicants are waiting and being interviewed and is conducted by an official who sits behind a screen. If necessary and possible, an interpreter may be made available. Interpreters are provided by the IPO and typically must be requested in advance. Whereby an applicant presents without having requested an interpreter and an interpreter is not available, it is usually the case that the applicant's basic details are taken by the IPO and they are then called back at a later stage once an interpreter can be arranged.

The information provided by the applicant at this interview is inserted into a standard form entitled 'IPF1' by the IPO officer. The IPF1 contains the applicant's biographical data, including their name, address and nationality, as well as the route travelled to Ireland and a brief summary of their asylum claim. The contents of the form are read back to the applicant, who is then required to sign it, and a copy is provided to them.

The purpose of this initial interview is to establish the applicant's identity; country of origin; nationality; details of the journey taken to Ireland, including countries passed through in which there was an opportunity to claim asylum as well as any assistance obtained over the journey and the details of any person who assisted the applicant in travelling to the State; the method and route of entry into the state (legally or otherwise); brief details of why the applicant wishes to claim asylum; their preferred language; and whether the application could be deemed inadmissible under Section 21 IPA (see [Admissibility](#)).

This interview usually takes place on the day that the person attends the IPO.

As of January 2024, applicants were facilitated in registering their application and undergoing their preliminary interview on the same day.⁹⁸ From July 2024, following the introduction of the online application registration system, applicants were no longer required to undertake a separate preliminary interview. Rather, information previously obtained by the Immigration Officer conducting the preliminary

⁹⁶ International Protection Office, 'What's New', 4th December 2025, available [here](#).

⁹⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy Officer, November 2025.

⁹⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

interview is now captured via the questionnaire⁹⁹ for the purposes of Article 6 of the Directive 2013/32 Common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast).

The applicant is required to be photographed and fingerprinted. If the applicant refuses to be fingerprinted, they may be deemed not to have made a reasonable effort to establish their true identity and to have failed to cooperate. If an applicant is deemed to have failed to cooperate with the international protection process, in accordance with s.38 of the IPA 2015, the Minister for Justice shall send a written notice to the applicant and their legal representative, if known, of their opinion that the applicant has failed to cooperate. The Minister will invite the applicant to furnish, within 10 working days of the notice, their observations on the Minister's opinion. The Minister will also require the applicant to confirm in writing within 10 days of the notice that they wish to continue with their application for international protection, while also reminding the applicant of their duty to cooperate. Where the applicant fails to submit their written observations, or whereby, having considered the applicant's written observations, the Minister believes that the applicant remains in default of co-operation, the application can be considered based only on the information provided by the applicant prior to the written notice being issued by the Minister.¹⁰⁰

The information taken at the screening interview enables the IPO to ascertain if the person applying for asylum has submitted an application for asylum in, or travelled through, another EU country by making enquiries through Eurodac which will assist in determining if the Dublin III Regulation is applicable or not.

Application for International Protection Questionnaire

In accordance with the revised international protection procedure, pursuant to the European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022, an applicant attending at the International Protection Office in order to make an application for international protection is required to complete their international protection questionnaire onsite at the IPO following the conclusion of their preliminary interview.¹⁰¹ The international protection questionnaire has been reduced significantly to just 24 questions in order to enable applicants to complete the questionnaire at the time of making their application. The revised questionnaire is considerably shorter than its predecessors at just 19 pages long and comprised of 11 sections. The questionnaire is available in English only and must be completed by the applicant in English. Whereby the applicant is unable to speak English, they must seek the assistance of a Cultural Mediator to complete the questionnaire.¹⁰²

Section 1 gathers the principal applicant's basic biographical details (full name, identification numbers, address, former addresses).

Section 2 requests information pertaining to the applicant's family, specifically their spouse/civil partner.

Section 3 collects information on the applicant's education and employment history, including formal education/training and employment/self-employment.

Section 4 focuses on the basis of the claim for protection, allowing space for the applicant's personal testimony; questions on any grounds for both refugee status and subsidiary protection, the applicant's fears if returned, as well as reasons why their dependants fear persecution.

Section 5 focuses on state protection and asks whether the applicant reported what happened to them in their country of origin, seeks details on the applicant's criminal record as well as information regarding whether the applicant or their dependants have ever been issued with a passport.

Section 6 deals with permission to remain. In the event that the applicant should be refused both refugee status and subsidiary protection, the minister will consider the person's personal circumstances in order

⁹⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Section 38, IPA 2015.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

to determine whether they may be permitted leave to remain on the basis of humanitarian considerations. The applicant is encouraged to notify the IPO of any new information or circumstances pertaining to permission to remain at any stage they might arise in the process, including following an appeal at the IPAT, which adds an extra degree of responsibility upon the applicant. It is important to note that under S.I. 664/2016 International Protection Act (Permission to remain) Regulations 2016 an applicant only has a five-day period to provide a further submission on permission to remain after the IPAT decision.

Section 7 requires information as to any serious medical conditions the applicant or their dependants or both, have, as well as any documentary evidence of same.

Section 8 of the questionnaire contains information relating to the s.35 interview and asks the applicant about any special requirements they might have for the duration of the interview. It also requests that the applicant provide all available supporting documentation that may be relevant to their claim for both international protection and permission to remain in the State.

Sections 9-11 of the questionnaire ask for information about the completion of the questionnaire, including details of the applicant's legal representative, if applicable.

Previously, the applicant received a more in-depth questionnaire, comprised of 34 questions, in their preferred language, which had to be completed by the applicant and returned within 20 working days.

According to the IPO, the rationale for the current procedure is to ensure that international protection applications, particularly those from safe countries of origin, are dealt with in a timelier manner so as to increase processing capacity and reduce delays.¹⁰³ However, the Irish Refugee Council has written to the Minister for Justice, addressing numerous significant concerns in relation to the appropriateness of the revised procedure. Such concerns relate particularly to applicants who may have had traumatic experiences prior to their arrival in the state. These applicants are required to complete and submit their questionnaire in an open-plan waiting area at the IPO, an environment which is often extremely busy, noisy and tense. This raises significant concern in relation to the applicant's privacy and personal data protection. Moreover, it is an extremely inappropriate physical space for applicants to complete such a significant document and gives rise to a risk of re-traumatisation insofar as particularly vulnerable applicants are concerned. Additionally, the revised process completely removes the applicant's practical access to legal advice prior to the submission of their international protection questionnaire. Unless an applicant is accompanied to the IPO by a lawyer when making their application, they do not have the benefit of legal advice in advance of submitting their international protection questionnaire, a document upon which significant reliance is placed in the applicant's substantive interview.

Translation services are available to assist applicants in the completion of their questionnaire,¹⁰⁴ however, it is not clear what exactly the role of the Cultural Mediator involves or the extent of the assistance they can provide to applicants in the completion of their questionnaire. Having accompanied clients to apply for international protection on several occasions following the establishment of the revised procedure, in the Irish Refugee Council's experience, Cultural Mediators have not been present to assist applicants in the completion of their questionnaires, while the standard of translation services provided has been unsatisfactory given the importance of the questionnaire in the overall application process.¹⁰⁵ In response, the International Protection Office notes:

Both cultural mediators and interpreters support applicants in making their initial application and at their personal interview. Their role is to assist and support the applicant in the international protection process in a language that they are reasonably expected to understand. Any concerns raised about the quality of interpretation services are brought to the attention of the relevant

¹⁰³ International Protection Office, The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 FAQ's, 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, April 2024.

service provider. In addition, there are arrangements in place for interviewers to provide feedback on interpreters, and this is taken into account by the IPO.¹⁰⁶

Following submission of their international protection application, applicants are directed to the international protection unit within the Legal Aid Board for free legal assistance and support completing the questionnaire once they have entered the international protection process. However, the Irish Refugee Council assisted a number of people who had registered with the Legal Aid Board and had been told to complete the questionnaire by themselves due to a general lack of capacity within the Legal Aid Board or a lack of capacity within the solicitors on the Legal Aid Board panel. Anecdotal reports show that the level of funding provided to the panel is insufficient to cover the number of hours required to give comprehensive representation.¹⁰⁷

Throughout 2025, the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre provided ongoing legal representation to 358 individuals. 176 new files were opened, and legal representation was provided in many pre-existing matters including representation before the Court of Justice of the European Union in respect of a client who experienced homelessness. Representation was provided to 74 age-disputed minors in both age assessments and international protection. Many children were taken into the care of the State following intervention and some decisions were challenged by way of judicial review. Support was provided with respect to family reunification, many of which incurred very significant delays. Advocacy was provided in respect of 5 reception conditions cases, including the first ever appeal of withdrawal of reception conditions instigated before the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, resulting in the withdrawal of the decision and the introduction of procedures around withdrawal of reception conditions.¹⁰⁸

Upon registering and lodging their claim, the applicant is issued a Temporary Residence Certificate, which comes in the form of a plastic card and is referred to the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS).

Prior to the establishment of the Citywest Reception Hub in 2022, if the applicant required accommodation, they would usually be taken to **Balseskin** Reception Centre in Dublin (near Dublin airport), where the applicant could then avail themselves of voluntary medical screening and counselling. However, due to a very significant lack of capacity in the Direct Provision system, all applicants are instead brought to Citywest Transit Hub, located on the outskirts of Dublin. Owing to limited bed capacity, many international protection applicants were forced to sleep on the floor of the Convention centre or on chairs for periods of up to 6 weeks while awaiting transfer to more permanent accommodation.¹⁰⁹ Many applicants residing at Citywest have reported sub-standard, overcrowded living conditions, as well as significant child protection concerns, posing a risk to the personal safety, health and wellbeing of adults and children living at the facility.¹¹⁰

Applicants may also make their own arrangements for accommodation if they have the financial resources to do so, however it is crucial that they keep the IPO apprised of their address as any correspondence in relation to their claim will be sent to that location.

¹⁰⁶ International Protection Office, Right to Reply, May 2025.

¹⁰⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

¹⁰⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, April 2026.

¹⁰⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2023.

¹¹⁰ RTÉ, 'Child Safety Concerns at Citywest Transit Hub', 19th December 2022, available [here](#).

C. Procedures

1. Regular procedure

1.1. General (scope, time limits)

Indicators: Regular Procedure: General

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Time limit set in law for the determining authority to make a decision on the asylum application at first instance: | None |
| 2. Are detailed reasons for the rejection at first instance of an asylum application shared with the applicant in writing? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Backlog of pending cases at first instance as of 31 December 2025: | 15,315 ¹¹¹ |
| 4. Median length of the first instance procedure in 2025: | 17 months ¹¹² |

The International Protection Act 2015 governs the law regarding the entry into and presence of persons seeking international protection in Ireland.

There is no time limit in Irish law for the IPO to make a decision on an asylum application at first instance.¹¹³ Under Section 39(5) IPA, if a recommendation cannot be made within six months of the date of the application for a declaration, the IPO may, upon request from the applicant, provide information on the estimated time within which a recommendation may be made. However, there are no express consequences for failing to decide the application within a given time period. Applicants can be called back for a subsequent interview in relation to their claim, occasionally a number of months after their initial s.35 interview was conducted.

The Irish Refugee Council has repeatedly raised concerns regarding increasing delays in the Irish protection process.

In 2025 the median processing time for cases to completion was 17 months under the ordinary procedure and 4 months under the accelerated procedure.¹¹⁴

Prioritised examination and fast-track processing

Prioritisation is dealt with under Section 73 IPA, giving the Minister power to “accord priority to any application”, or “to any appeal” in consultation with the chairperson of the Tribunal. Under Section 72(2) the Minister may have regard to certain matters such as whether the applicant is a person (unaccompanied child) in respect of whom the Child and Family Agency is providing care and protection. The grounds for prioritised applications are not explicitly set out in the IPA, but Section 73(2) states that in according priority the Minister may have regard to the following:

- (a) whether the applicant possesses identity documents, and if not, whether they have provided a reasonable explanation for the absence of such documents;

¹¹¹ International Protection Office, March 2026.

¹¹² International Protection Office, March 2026

¹¹³ There is no time limit in law. Alan Shatter, then Minister for Justice, stated in July 2013 that a reason Ireland was not opting into the recast Asylum Procedures Directive was because the recast proposed that Member States would ensure that the examination procedure was concluded within 6 months after the date the application is lodged, with a possible extension of a further 6 months in certain circumstances. Alan Shatter stated that these time limits could impose additional burdens on the national asylum system if there was a large increase in the number of applications to be examined in the State, especially considering previous increases in the period 2001 to 2003, available [here](#).

¹¹⁴ International Protection Office, March 2026.

- (b) whether the applicant has provided a reasonable explanation to substantiate their claim that the State is the first safe country in which they have arrived since departing from their country of origin;
- (c) whether the applicant has provided a full and true explanation of how they travelled to and arrived in the State;
- (d) where the application was made other than at the frontier of the State, whether the applicant has provided a reasonable explanation to show why they did not make an application for international protection, or as the case may be, an application under section 8 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) immediately on arriving at the frontier of the State unless the application is grounded on events which have taken place since their arrival in the State;
- (e) where the applicant has forged, destroyed or disposed of any identity or other documents relating to their application, whether they have a reasonable explanation for so doing;
- (f) whether the applicant has adduced manifestly false evidence in support of their application, or has otherwise made false representations, either orally or in writing;
- (g) whether the applicant has adduced manifestly false evidence in support of their application, or has otherwise made false representations, either orally or in writing;
- (h) whether the applicant, without reasonable cause, has made an application following the notification of a proposal under Section 3(3)(a) of the Immigration Act 1999;
- (i) whether the applicant has complied with the requirements of Section 27(1) IPA;
- (j) whether the applicant is a person in respect of whom the Child and Family Agency is providing care and protection;
- (k) whether the applicant has, without reasonable cause, failed to comply with the requirements of paragraphs (a), (c) or (d) of Section 16(3) IPA which refers to reporting obligations.

This prioritisation of cases does not generally entail different procedural guarantees.

Applications from certain nationalities can also be accelerated, which leads to a quicker determination of the application and the curtailment of appeal rights. See [Accelerated Procedure](#) for further information.

On 27 January 2017 UNHCR issued a statement in conjunction with the International Protection Office on the prioritisation of applications, which remains in effect as of May 2025.¹¹⁵ Under the IPA, the scheduling of interviews occurs under two processing streams, which run concurrently on the basis of 'oldest case first' and according to specific criteria warranting prioritisation.

According to the UNHCR and the IPO statement setting out the prioritisation procedure:¹¹⁶

1. Stream one will comprise the majority of applications, which will be scheduled mainly on the basis of **oldest cases first**. This includes new applications made after the commencement of the IPA as well as those cases that were under processing prior to the new procedures coming into force. Within this stream, cases will be scheduled according to the following stages and order of priority:
 - (i) pending subsidiary protection recommendations;
 - (ii) pending appeal at the former Refugee Appeals Tribunal;
 - (iii) pending refugee status recommendations.
2. Stream two will also be processed on the basis of **oldest case first**. Stream two pertains to both cases that were open before the commencement of the IPA and those lodged after that meet specific prioritisation criteria:
 - (i) The age of applicants – under this provision the following cases will be prioritised: unaccompanied minors in the care of Tusla; applicants who applied as unaccompanied minors, but who have now aged out; applicants over 70 years of age, who are not part of a family group;
 - (ii) the likelihood that applications are well-founded;

¹¹⁵ IPO and UNHCR, *Prioritisation of applications for international protection under the International Protection Act 2015*, available [here](#).

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

- (iii) the likelihood that applications are well-founded due to the country of origin or habitual residence (specifically, Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya and Somalia);
- (iv) health grounds - applicants who notify the IPO after the commencement date that evidence has been submitted, certified by a medical consultant, of an ongoing severe/life threatening medical condition will be prioritised.

In August 2021, in response to the emerging humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the Department of Justice confirmed that it would begin prioritising international protection applications from Afghan nationals in line with updated advice provided by UNHCR.¹¹⁷ Anecdotal evidence indicates that prioritisation for cases of Afghan nationals took place in practice throughout 2025 for some, but not all, applicants.¹¹⁸ Additionally, throughout 2025, the Irish Refugee Council was aware of numerous cases in which Afghan nationals had been refused a grant of protection status in circumstances whereby there existed strong protection grounds. This constitutes a marked departure from the previous approach of the International Protection Office, in which the vast majority of Afghan nationals were granted some form of protection. The Irish Refugee Council remains extremely concerned regarding this emerging pattern, particularly so in light of the ongoing security situation in Afghanistan.¹¹⁹

1.2. Personal interview

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Personal Interview

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum applicant in most cases conducted in practice in the regular procedure? Yes No
 - ❖ If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews? Yes No
2. In the regular procedure, is the interview conducted by the authority responsible for taking the decision? Yes No
3. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never
4. Can the asylum applicant request the interviewer and the interpreter to be of a specific gender? Yes No
 - ❖ If so, is this applied in practice, for interviews? Yes No

The IPA allows for a preliminary interview of the applicant upon arrival on the territory of the State in order to, among other things, capture basic information about the applicant before they formally register an application for international protection. Section 13 IPA enables an immigration officer or an IPO officer to conduct the preliminary interview. It is not clear from the legislation when it would be an immigration officer or an IPO officer conducting the interview, but the immigration officer must furnish a record of the interview to the Minister. Under Section 13 IPA, the preliminary interview seeks to establish, among other details: whether the person wishes to make an application for international protection, as well as the grounds for that application; the identity; nationality and country of origin of the person; the route travelled by the person and other travel details; and whether any initial inadmissibility grounds arise in the case. If differences occur in the statements furnished by the applicant in the preliminary and substantive personal interviews, a negative credibility finding may be made in respect of the applicant's claim.

The substantive interview is conducted by an International Protection Officer who will have extensively reviewed the applicant's questionnaire and relevant country of origin information in advance. The purpose of this interview is to establish the full details of the claim for international protection and address any issues or inconsistencies arising from the questionnaire and other material supplied to the IPO for the purposes of the case. The interview can last a number of hours, depending on the circumstances of the particular case. A legal representative can attend the interview and is asked to sign a code of conduct to be observed when attending the interview. Private practitioners who are funded by the Legal Aid Board

¹¹⁷ RTÉ, Department of Justice to prioritise international protection applications from Afghan Nationals, 18 August 2021, available [here](#).

¹¹⁸ Information provided by the Irish Refugee Council's Independent Law Centre and Information and Advocacy Service, January 2023.

¹¹⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2025.

to provide legal representation to applicants are not funded to attend the interview. The Irish Refugee Council's Independent Law Centre attends interviews with their clients. Most substantive personal interviews are conducted face to face at the IPO in **Dublin city centre**. In August 2023, as part of the International Protection Office's Modernisation Programme, a new interview hub was established in **Tallaght, Dublin 24**.¹²⁰ As of January 2026, interviews had ceased at the Tallaght hub and instead commenced interviews at Citywest Convention Centre, Dublin 24 in respect of some applicants with a view to reducing capacity pressure on the International Protection Office.¹²¹

Following the implementation of measures to restrict the spread of COVID-19, the IPO began to pilot remote video conferencing interviews. Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, in February 2022, the IPO recommenced in-person interviews. In-person interviews remained the only mode of interview available to applicants throughout 2023. However, in accordance with the International Protection Modernisation Programme, it was announced in July 2023 that consideration would be given to the implementation of video interviews as part of the programme.¹²² Subsequently, in July 2024, a pilot was launched in which 50 international protection applicants were invited to conduct their s.35 interviews via Zoom. The pilot concluded in August 2024, and from January 2025, online interviews were introduced on a phased basis for certain applicants.¹²³ As of January 2026, remote interviews continued to be scheduled for some, but not all applicants.¹²⁴ The criteria for selection of online interviewees remained unclear at the time of updating (January 2026). However, according to the International Protection Office, the rationale for the introduction of online interviews was to increase processing capacity, as well as to reduce the need for applicants to travel to Dublin for the purposes of undertaking their interview.¹²⁵ Additionally, it was announced that from the 31st of July 2024, all single applicants applying for international protection would be registered and complete their international protection application digitally via an online portal. A similar procedure was introduced for families seeking international protection in November 2024.¹²⁶ This remained the case throughout 2025.¹²⁷

Since the commencement of the IPA on 31 December 2016, consideration of eligibility for refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain is given under a single interview, as held in Section 35 IPA.

A personal interview may be dispensed with where the IPO officer is of the opinion that:¹²⁸

- ❖ based on the available evidence, the applicant is a person in respect of whom a refugee declaration should be given;
- ❖ where the applicant has not attained the age of 18 years, they are of such an age and degree of maturity that an interview would not usefully advance the examination; or
- ❖ the applicant is unfit or unable to be interviewed owing to circumstances that are enduring and beyond their control.

In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, interviews were rarely dispensed with in practice, save for in exceptional circumstances. The Irish Refugee Council advocated for greater use of this power during the pandemic. Subsequently, the IPO dispensed with interviews in numerous cases of applicants from prioritised countries in 2021. Many of these applicants were issued with a declaration of refugee status on a papers-only basis in circumstances where they had established their identity and nationality. This was something the Irish Refugee Council recommended in the report "Hanging on a Thread" (published in July 2021), and has been hugely welcomed.

¹²⁰ International Protection Office, 'Modernisation Programme 2023-2024', 5 July 2023, available [here](#).

¹²¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2026.

¹²² Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee publishes International Protection Modernisation Strategy', 5 July 2023, available [here](#).

¹²³ International Protection Office, 'What's New', 26th November 2024, available [here](#).

¹²⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2-26.

¹²⁵ International Protection Office, 'What's New', 26th November 2024, available [here](#); International Protection Office, 'What's New', 26th November 2024, available [here](#).

¹²⁶ *ibid*.

¹²⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2026.

¹²⁸ Section 35(8) IPA.

Where an applicant does not attend their scheduled interview, the application may be deemed to be withdrawn. However, the IPO will first contact the applicant to find out if there is a reasonable cause for their failure to attend the interview.

An applicant may make representations in writing to the IPO in relation to any matter relevant to the investigation following the interview and the International Protection Officer shall take account of any representations that are made before or during an interview under Section 35 IPA. Representations may also be made by UNHCR and by any other person concerned.

International Protection Officers are required to “be sufficiently competent to take account of the personal or general circumstance surrounding the application, including the applicant’s cultural origin or vulnerability” and must provide the services of “interpreters who are able to ensure appropriate communication between the applicant and the person who conducts the interview.”¹²⁹ Whilst this is not laid down in legislation, in practice the applicant may request the IPO officer and/or interpreter be of a particular gender.

A social worker or other responsible adult will usually attend an unaccompanied minor’s interview. Where this is the case, the officer conducting the interview will require the accompanying adult to prove that they are responsible for the care and protection of the applicant. Section 35(5)(a) IPA states that interviews are conducted without the presence of family members save in certain circumstances where the International Protection Officer considers it necessary for an appropriate investigation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such circumstances rarely occur.¹³⁰

The interview is the primary opportunity for the applicant to give their personal account of why they are seeking international protection and cannot return home.

Interviews are always conducted separately and individually, even in respect of couples or persons from the same family. Children are not permitted to be present in the interview room with their parents. Whereby a child’s parents have been interviewed, generally, children will not be interviewed themselves.¹³¹

A total of 9,740 personal interviews were conducted throughout 2023, while 905 applications were decided without the applicant having to undergo a personal interview.¹³²

Throughout 2024, a total of 17,751 personal interviews were scheduled, 171 of which were conducted online. A further 179 applications were decided without the applicant having to undergo a personal interview. Throughout 2025, a total of 24,044 personal interviews were scheduled, 2,912 of which were conducted online. 484 applications were decided without the applicant having to undergo a personal interview.¹³³ These numbers represent a significant increase on the previous reporting period.

Data with respect to the individual nationalities of applicants who were not subject to a personal interview was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).

1.2.1. Interpretation

Section 35(2) IPA states that an applicant who is having a substantive interview shall, whenever necessary for the purpose of ensuring appropriate communication during the interview, be provided by the Minister or International Protection Officer with the services of an interpreter. As mentioned above, the IPA requires that interpreters are fully competent and able to ensure appropriate communication

¹²⁹ Section 35(3) IPA.

¹³⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy, January 2024.

¹³¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, April 2024.

¹³² International Protection Office, April 2024.

¹³³ International Protection Office, March 2026. Note: Statistics on interviews are not recorded in such a manner that the IPO can reliably report on the number of interviews that take place. Interviews can be cancelled or postponed for a number of reasons. The figure for the number of interviews scheduled is used in Ireland.

between the applicant and the interviewer. If an interpreter is deemed necessary for ensuring communication with an applicant, and one cannot be found, the interview is usually postponed until one can be found. There are no known languages of countries from which protection applicants in Ireland typically originate for which interpreters are not available. If issues arise between the applicant and the interpreter during the interview (for example, in circumstances where the interpreter speaks a different dialect of the language requested by the applicant, or where the applicant is uncomfortable with the interpreter provided for any reason), the applicant is encouraged to indicate this to the International Protection Officer and/or their legal representative. This may involve postponing the interview until the issue can be resolved and/or another interpreter can be found. Under ordinary circumstances, where requested, interpreters are obliged to attend international protection interviews in person at the International Protection Office.

As it stands, there is no recognised qualifications framework or established standards, set out in legislation or elsewhere, on the recruitment of interpreters by public bodies, including the IPO. Most interpreters are sourced from a private company that has a contract to provide access to interpreters, with such contracts typically valid for between 2 and 4 years.

Since 2016, the Irish Refugee Council has rolled out an interpreter training programme for French and Arabic interpreters that focuses on promoting best practice interpreting techniques, interpreting practice, terminology used in the asylum process, and ethics and a code of conduct.¹³⁴ The training also provides interpreters with practical exposure through role-playing, involvement in Irish Refugee Council casework and an overview of the asylum process. In 2025, 20 hours of online interpreter training were provided, and 3-in person training days were delivered for 35 interpreters. An additional 5 in-person training sessions were delivered on how to work with interpreters effectively when supporting people in the international protection process.¹³⁵

1.2.2. Recording and report

Typically, the officer conducting the interview makes a record of the information given and that information is read back to the applicant periodically during the interview or at the end of the interview. The applicant is requested to sign each page to confirm that it is accurate or to flag any inaccuracies. In the event that typographical errors are present in the record, the applicant may amend the record and initial the change in the margin; for more substantial changes the page may be re-printed or a supplementary page may be printed. The interview is usually recorded via hand-typed transcription on a desktop. There is no system for independent recording of the interviews (interviews are not audio or video recorded), even where a legal representative is not present. A copy of the interview record is not given to the applicant or their legal representative until and unless the applicant receives a negative decision. If a negative decision is issued, then the applicant and the legal representative automatically receive a copy of the interview record. In some cases, a subsequent interview is required, for example if there are further questions that need to be asked or if the authorised officer has done further research. Interviews may on occasion be adjourned in the event that there is a problem with interpretation or illness.

¹³⁴ Irish Refugee Council, *Interpreter Training Programme*, available [here](#).

¹³⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Re-settlement Officer, April 2026.

1.3. Appeal

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Appeal

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the first instance decision in the regular procedure?
 Yes No
❖ If yes, is it Judicial Administrative
❖ If yes, is it automatically suspensive Yes Some grounds No
2. Average processing time for the appeal body to make a decision: 12.5 months¹³⁶

1.3.1. Appeal before the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT)

Tribunal capacity and EUAA collaboration

In October 2025, it was announced that up to 30 staff from the European Union Asylum Agency would be seconded to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal in order to assist with the Tribunal's increasing caseload. At the end of September 2025, there were 15,929 cases pending before the Tribunal. EUAA staff will assist with preparing appeal files, conducting research on country-of-origin information and international protection jurisprudence, while also providing interpretation in difficult-to-source languages.¹³⁷ The agreement was announced subsequent to the release of figures in July 2025, 87 individuals were employed with IPAT and there were 25 unfilled vacancies.¹³⁸

This was the EUAA's first operational plan with Ireland, aimed at providing support for increased and improved processing of applications for international protection at second instance. The operation is set to run until 31 December 2026.¹³⁹

In 2025, the EUAA deployed 8 experts to Ireland,¹⁴⁰ 6 of which were external experts and 2 were EUAA staff members. They consisted of 6 asylum procedures experts and 2 roving team.¹⁴¹ As of 15 December 2025, there were 8 EUAA experts deployed in Ireland, consisting of 6 asylum procedures experts and 2 roving team.¹⁴²

Appeal process

Decisions of the IPO may be challenged before the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) within 15 working days of receiving a negative decision.¹⁴³ However, pursuant to the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, whereby the IPO recommends that an applicant's application for refugee or subsidiary protection should be refused on the basis of one of the reasons established pursuant to s.39(4) of the International Protection Act 2015, the timeframe in which to submit an appeal is shortened to 10 working days from the date of the decision.¹⁴⁴ Such reasons are whereby a finding is made by the International Protection Office that the issues raised in the application were not relevant to the applicant's eligibility for international protection, whereby the applicant's representations have been inconsistent or contradictory, whereby the applicant failed to make the application as soon as they could without good reason, whereby a finding is made that the applicant did not require international protection due to the possibility of safe internal relocation within their country

¹³⁶ International Protection Appeals Tribunal, February 2024.

¹³⁷ Law Society Gazette, 'EU agency's staff to help with asylum appeals', 20th October 2025, available [here](#).

¹³⁸ The Journal, 'Over 22% of jobs at International Protection Appeals Tribunal are currently sitting empty', 4th July 2025, available [here](#).

¹³⁹ EUAA, *Operational Plan 2024-2025 agreed by the European Union Agency for Asylum and Ireland*, available [here](#).

¹⁴⁰ EUAA personnel numbers do not include deployed interpreters by the EUAA in support of asylum and reception activities.

¹⁴¹ Information provided by the EUAA, 05 March 2026.

¹⁴² Information provided by the EUAA, 05 March 2026.

¹⁴³ Section 41(2)(a) IPA; Section 3(c) International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017.

¹⁴⁴ International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

of origin, or whereby the application is refused and the applicant comes from a safe country of origin.¹⁴⁵ In such cases, an applicant's appeal will be decided without an oral hearing, unless IPAT believes that it is in the interests of justice to hold an oral hearing.¹⁴⁶

The IPAT is the second-instance decision making body for the Irish asylum process. The IPAT is a quasi-judicial body and, according to the IPA, it shall be independent in the performance of its functions. Under Section 41 IPA, the IPAT may hear appeals against recommendations that an applicant not be given a refugee declaration, or recommendations that an applicant should be given neither a refugee declaration nor a subsidiary protection declaration. The IPA also hears appeals regarding Dublin III Regulation transfers and on papers only, inadmissibility appeals. Applications to the IPAT must be made in writing, within a given time frame, including the grounds of appeal and whether or not the applicant wishes to have an oral hearing.

Section 61(4) IPA states that the Minister shall appoint members of the IPAT. They work and are paid on a per case basis. The IPAT consists of a Chairperson, two deputy chairpersons, and such number of ordinary members appointed on a whole time or part-time capacity as the Minister for Justice and Equality, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform, considers necessary for carrying out the extent of the casework before the Tribunal.

In July 2024, the Courts, Civil Law, Criminal Law and Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024 was signed into law, substituting s.62(2) of the International Protection Act 2015, and therefore amending a previous requirement that Members of the Tribunal possess not less than 5 years' experience as a practising barrister or practising solicitor.¹⁴⁷ Section 12 the 2024 Act provides that legal academics, persons practicing law in EU member States, as well as those in non-EEA countries practicing "in a profession that corresponds substantially to the profession of solicitor or barrister" can now be appointed as Tribunal Members.¹⁴⁸ The amendments were made with a view to expanding the capacity of the Tribunal as it seeks to increase its processing speeds.

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, all appeals before the IPAT were suspended. Throughout 2021, all appeals before the IPAT which were deemed suitable proceeded on a remote basis via audio-video link. In circumstances where an appeal was deemed unsuitable to proceed remotely, the appeal was postponed and subsequently rescheduled. As of January 2026, the vast majority of appeals continued by way of remote hearing, save at the request of the applicant or whereby to conduct the appeal remotely would be contrary to the interests of justice.

Throughout 2025, the total number of appeals lodged against negative first instance decisions on international protection applications was 15,097. Additionally, 237 appeals under the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 were lodged.¹⁴⁹

There was a total of 3,908 appeal hearings scheduled in 2025, while 5,504 decisions were issued, with a further 239 decisions issued in accordance with the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 issued in 2025. 1,156 applicants were granted refugee status, 118 applicants were granted subsidiary protection, 168 appeals were dismissed as inadmissible and a further 3,283 appeals were rejected on their merits. The total number of completed appeals was 6,254, including 511 appeals which were withdrawn or deemed withdrawn.¹⁵⁰

1,468 appeal hearings were conducted remotely by videoconferencing software, while a total of 2,838 decisions were taken without an oral hearing, including s.21 (inadmissibility), s.22 (subsequent) and s.43 (accelerated) appeals. The average median duration of the appeal procedure in 2026 was 12.5 months.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁵ International Protection Act 2015, s.39(4).

¹⁴⁶ International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Courts, Civil Law, Criminal Law and Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2024, s. 12(a).

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ International Protection Appeals Tribunal, February 2026.

¹⁵⁰ International Protection Appeals Tribunal, February 2026..

¹⁵¹ International Protection Appeals Tribunal, February 2026..

Where an oral hearing is held, these are conducted in a relatively informal manner and in private. The applicant's legal representative may be present as well as any witnesses directed to attend by the Tribunal. Witnesses may attend to give evidence in support of the appeal, e.g., a country of origin expert or a family member. The Presenting Officer for the IPO also attends. UNHCR may attend as an observer, however, this rarely occurs in practice. Pursuant to section 42(8)(d) of the Act of 2015, and in line with the Chairperson's Guideline 2019/1 on Taking Evidence from Appellants and other Witnesses, the Tribunal may require all persons (over the age of 14) giving evidence before it to give that evidence on oath. Appellants and other witnesses whom the Tribunal requires to give evidence in this manner will be given the opportunity to affirm if they are a non-believer or if the taking of an oath is incompatible with the person's belief.¹⁵²

Section 42(6)(c) IPA provides for the services of an interpreter to be made available whenever necessary for the purpose of ensuring appropriate communication during the interview.

Before reaching a decision, the Tribunal considers, among other things:

- ❖ Notice of Appeal submitted by the applicant or their legal representative;
- ❖ All material furnished to the Tribunal by the Minister that is relevant to the case;
- ❖ Any further supporting documents submitted by the applicant or their legal representative, as well as any observations made to the Tribunal by the Minister or the UNHCR;
- ❖ Where an oral hearing is being held, the representations made at that hearing.

The length of time for the Tribunal to issue a decision is not set out in law. In 2018, the average length of time taken by the IPAT for processing and issuing a decision on an international protection appeal was approximately 154 days.¹⁵³ The median processing time for appeals in 2025 was 12.5 months.¹⁵⁴

Under Section 49(7) IPA, where the Tribunal confirms a recommendation from the IPO that an applicant is not declared a refugee nor in need of subsidiary protection, the Minister may reassess the eligibility of the applicant to be granted permission to remain. For the purposes of such a review, the applicant may submit documentation or information to the IPO about a change of circumstances relevant to a review of permission to remain (such as evidence of an established connection to the State, information indicating humanitarian reasons to grant permission to remain, etc.). Such information must be submitted within a period of time prescribed by the Minister under Section 49(10) IPA, however, no such time period has been prescribed by the Minister since the coming into force of the 2015 Act.

On 11 March 2014, the Chairperson of the RAT issued a Guidance Note (No: 2014/1) which stated that from that date any person may access the archive of Tribunal decisions for any lawful purpose.¹⁵⁵ The Note also stated that all matters that might identify a person as an applicant for refugee status have been removed/omitted so that the identity of applicants is kept confidential; if removal could not sufficiently protect the identity of an applicant, the decision would not be published. This is a significant change in practice; a major criticism of the RAT in the past has been that decisions were not publicly available. Access to the online Tribunal decisions archive requires completion of a simple registration process upon which the user is furnished with a password valid for one year for use with the database.¹⁵⁶

Information on the number of individuals (and relative nationalities) that were issued a return decision but cannot return due to ongoing appeals, moratorium on returns, deportation ban or other was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).

¹⁵² IPAT Administrative Practice note, available [here](#).

¹⁵³ *ibid*, 44.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵⁵ Guidance Note No: 2014/1, Access to Previous Decisions of the Tribunal, 11 March 2014.

¹⁵⁶ International Protection Appeals Tribunal Decision Archive, available [here](#).

1.3.2. Judicial Review

A decision of the IPAT (as with the IPO) may be challenged by way of judicial review in the High Court. This is a review on a point of law only under Irish administrative law and cannot investigate the facts. In addition, the applicant must obtain permission (also called 'leave') to apply for judicial review. This is a lengthy and costly process.

Cases are listed before the High Court "Asylum List." Cases on the "Asylum List" also include judicial review of decisions in relation to other immigration matters such as EU treaty rights, naturalisation and family reunification. The number of incoming Judicial Review Asylum cases remained comparatively high in 2024 (736 in 2024 compared with 779 in 2023). Final orders were made in 272 cases, while interim orders were made in 77 cases.¹⁵⁷ Statistics in relation to asylum cases lodged in 2025 are expected to be published in the Courts Service Annual Report later in 2025.

1.4. Legal assistance

Indicators: Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance

1. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 Representation in interview
 Legal advice
2. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance on appeal against a negative decision in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover
 Representation in courts
 Legal advice

The Legal Aid Board, an independent statutory body funded by the State, provides a dedicated service for international protection applicants. As of January 2026, to qualify for legal services in respect of their asylum application, the applicant's income (less certain allowances) must be less than €18,000 per annum. Applicants in Direct Provision (the state system of reception, accommodation and support for protection applicants) are generally eligible for legal services at the minimum income contribution but may apply to have some of the contribution waived, at the discretion of the Legal Aid Board. Strictly speaking, there is a small fee to be paid of €10 for legal advice and € 40 for representation, but this is invariably waived by the Legal Aid Board whereby an applicant does not have the means to cover the fee.

The total number of applications for Legal Aid from international protection clients throughout 2023 was 9,959.¹⁵⁸ 11,689 people sought legal services in relation to international protection throughout 2024.¹⁵⁹ Data with respect to legal aid applications for 2025 was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).

Asylum applicants can register with the Legal Aid Board as soon as they have made their application to the IPO. All applicants are assigned a solicitor and a caseworker. There are three branches of the Legal Aid Board that have dedicated international protection units, with law centres located in **Cork**, **Galway** and **Dublin** cities, including a specific unit in the Dublin law centre that deals with international protection applications made by children. The Legal Aid Board has normally provided services only at the appeal stage but since 2014, they are also including services in-house for early legal advice (ELA) and via a Private Practitioners' Panel whereby private solicitors provide ELA for the Legal Aid Board for a set fee. The ELA service normally does not cover attendance at the actual personal interview with the applicant and only covers guidance on completing the Questionnaire rather than actual assisting with the

¹⁵⁷ Courts Service, 'Annual Report 2024', 7 July 2025, available [here](#).

¹⁵⁸ Minister for Justice and Equality Helen McEntee, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 529*, 30 April 2024, available [here](#).

¹⁵⁹ Legal Aid Board, 'Annual Report 2024', December 2025, available [here](#).

completion of the Questionnaire form itself. The Legal Aid Board has established some best practice guidelines under the new procedure.¹⁶⁰

Since 2011, the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre has run a free ELA service which involves providing intensive legal assistance to the applicant at the very early stages of the asylum process.¹⁶¹ The ELA package offered by the Irish Refugee Council Law Centre provides an initial advice appointment with a solicitor (preferably prior to the application for asylum being made), accompaniment to lodge an application, assistance with the completion of the in-depth application questionnaire and drafting of a personal statement based on the applicant's instruction, attendance at the substantive interview and submission of representations. In November 2015, following the success of the Irish Refugee Council's ELA programme, the Law Centre published a manual on the provision of ELA to persons seeking protection.¹⁶² The manual is geared towards promoting best practice towards practitioners working in the EU asylum context.

Throughout 2025, the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre provided ongoing legal representation to 358 individuals in a variety of procedures (international protection proceedings, age assessments, reception conditions, family reunification). 176 new files were opened, and legal representation was provided in many pre-existing matters including representation before the Court of Justice of the European Union in respect of a client who experienced homelessness.

Free legal aid for appeals to the IPAT is available through the Legal Aid Board. In the event that an appeal to the IPAT is unsuccessful, the applicant must first of all seek the assistance of a private practitioner to get advice about challenging the decision by way of judicial review in the High Court. If they cannot get such private legal assistance, the Legal Aid Board will consider the merits of the application for judicial review and may apply for legal aid to cover the proceedings but it is important to note that judicial review will only be an appropriate avenue in some circumstances and should not be viewed as an appeal procedure.

Since the enactment of the Reception Conditions Regulations, transposing the Reception Conditions Directive, the Legal Aid Board has responsibility for providing legal assistance to international protection applicants in matters pertaining to reception conditions (such as appeals on decisions made in relation to withdrawal or restriction of reception conditions, or refusal of a work permit, etc.)¹⁶³ The Legal Aid Board guidance states that it is generally open to solicitors to "provide legal advice in relation to a matter covered by the Regulations, and in line with the further guidance provided below in relation to specific matters. Unless an application is received from an applicant who is not an existing client of the Board, it is not to be regarded as a separate matter and should be dealt with as part of the international protection file."¹⁶⁴ No information is available about how this has worked in practice.

There is no requirement for lawyers or legal advisors intervening in International Protection cases to have undergone specific training, although persons intervening in such cases are usually qualified solicitors or persons with comparative professional legal experience. Non-governmental organisations and Independent Law Centres may also provide legal assistance in respect of such cases.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ The best practice guidelines are available [here](#).

¹⁶¹ For further information, see The Researcher, 'Early Recognition of People in Need of International Protection: The Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre's Early Legal Advice and Representation Project', October 2013.

¹⁶² Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, *A Manual on Providing Early Legal Advice for Persons Seeking Protection*, available [here](#).

¹⁶³ Regulation 6(8) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

¹⁶⁴ Legal Aid Board Circular on Legal Services European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, available [here](#).

¹⁶⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2025.

2. Dublin

2.1. General

Dublin statistics: 1 January – 31 December 2025

| Outgoing procedure | | | Incoming procedure | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|-----------|
| | Requests | Accepted | | Requests | Accepted |
| Total ¹⁶⁶ | 1,950 | 527 | Total | 132 | 36 |
| Take back | 1,879 ¹⁶⁷ | 480 | Take back | 101 | 23 |
| Austria | 192 | 60 | Austria | 5 | 2 |
| Belgium | 140 | 83 | Belgium | 7 | 2 |
| Bulgaria | 100 | 7 | France | 15 | 2 |
| Croatia | 55 | 16 | Germany | 33 | 8 |
| Cyprus | 21 | - | Greece | 1 | - |
| Denmark | 18 | 8 | Hungary | 1 | - |
| Finland | 31 | 26 | Italy | 2 | - |
| France | 239 | 21 | Luxembourg | 3 | 1 |
| Germany | 322 | 110 | Portugal | 1 | 1 |
| Greece | 320 | - | Spain | 6 | 1 |
| Hungary | 5 | - | Sweden | 2 | 1 |
| Iceland | 8 | 4 | Switzerland | 15 | 4 |
| Italy | 76 | 13 | The Netherlands | 10 | 1 |
| Latvia | 6 | 4 | | | |
| Luxembourg | 2 | 1 | | | |
| Malta | 9 | 3 | | | |
| Norway | 9 | 3 | | | |
| Poland | 28 | 18 | | | |
| Portugal | 6 | 1 | | | |
| Romania | 26 | 2 | | | |
| Slovak Republic | 1 | - | | | |
| Slovenia | 4 | - | | | |
| Spain | 71 | 10 | | | |
| Sweden | 90 | 50 | | | |
| Switzerland | 39 | 7 | | | |
| The Netherlands | 61 | 33 | | | |
| Take charge | 71 ¹⁶⁸ | 47 | Take charge | 31 | 13 |
| Bulgaria | 1 | 1 | Belgium | 4 | 3 |
| France | 3 | 1 | Bulgaria | 1 | - |
| Germany | 1 | 1 | Cyprus | 4 | 3 |
| Italy | 18 | 10 | France | 1 | 1 |

¹⁶⁶ Contrary to the rest of the data in this table, information in this row (total) was not directly provided by the International Protection Office but calculated by ECRE based on the total number of take charge and take back decisions as communicated by the IPO.

¹⁶⁷ Includes 9 re-examination requests.

¹⁶⁸ Includes 1 re-examination request.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|-----------------|---|---|
| Romania | 2 | - | Germany | 2 | 1 |
| Slovak Republic | 1 | 1 | Greece | 7 | 2 |
| Spain | 45 | 33 | Iceland | 3 | - |
| | | | Italy | 2 | 2 |
| | | | Luxembourg | 1 | - |
| | | | Norway | 1 | - |
| | | | Portugal | 1 | 1 |
| | | | Switzerland | 2 | - |
| | | | The Netherlands | 2 | - |

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026.

Two outgoing transfers were effectively implemented pursuant to a transfer order, while nineteen incoming transfers were effectively implemented pursuant to a transfer order.¹⁶⁹

| Outgoing Dublin requests by criterion: 2025 | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Dublin III Regulation criterion | Requests sent | Requests accepted |
| “Take charge”: Articles 8 to 17: | 71 | 47 |
| Article 8 (minors) | - | - |
| Article 9 (family members granted protection) | - | - |
| Article 10 (family members pending determination) | - | - |
| Article 11 (family procedure) | 1 | - |
| Article 12 (2) (visas and residence permits) | 2 | 4 |
| Article 13 (entry and/or remain) | 68 | 41 |
| Article 14 (visa free entry) | - | 2 |
| “Take charge”: Article 16 | - | - |
| “Take charge” humanitarian clause: Article 17(2) | - | - |
| “Take back”: Article 18 and 20(5) | 1,879 | 480 |
| Art 12(1) (residence permits) | - | - |
| Article 12(2) | | 1 |
| Article 12(3) | | 2 |
| Article 13(1) | | 4 |
| Article 18(1)(a) | - | 3 |
| Article 18 (1) (b) | 1,878 | 114 |
| Article 18 (1) (c) | - | - |
| Article 18 (1) (d) | 1 | 339 |
| Article 20(5) | - | 17 |

| Incoming Dublin requests by criterion: 2025 | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Dublin III Regulation criterion | Requests received | Requests accepted |
| “Take charge”: Articles 8 to 17 | 31 | 13 |
| Article 8 (minors) | 7 | 1 |
| Article 9 (family members granted protection) | 5 | 4 |

¹⁶⁹ International Protection Office, March 2026.

| | | |
|---|------------|-----------|
| Article 10 (family members pending determination) | - | - |
| Article 11 (family procedure) | - | - |
| Article 12 (visas and residence permits) | 14 | 6 |
| Article 13 (entry and/or remain) | 1 | - |
| Article 14 (visa free entry) | - | - |
| “Take charge”: Article 16 | - | - |
| “Take charge” humanitarian clause: Article 17(2) | 4 | 2 |
| “Take back”: Articles 18 and 20(5) | 101 | 23 |
| Article 18 (1) (b) | 96 | 20 |
| Article 18 (1) (c) | - | 2 |
| Article 18 (1) (d) | 5 | 1 |
| Article 20(5) | - | - |

Source: International Protection Office, March 2026.

The Dublin Regulation is implemented by the Dublin Unit of the IPO. The unit is responsible for determining whether applicants should be transferred to another State or have their application assessed in Ireland. The unit also responds to requests from other Member States to transfer applicants to Ireland. The Arrangements Unit of the Immigration Service Delivery is responsible for handling outgoing transfers under the Dublin Regulation.

The European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 62 of 2018) were adopted in 2018 and govern the regulation of the Dublin procedure in Ireland.

2.1.1. Application of the Dublin criteria

Family provisions: Between January 1st and December 31st 2025, a total of 7 incoming take charge requests were issued to Ireland with respect to Article 8 (minors in another Member State). Throughout 2025, the Irish Refugee Council supported a number of international protection applicants whose minor children had applied for protection in another Member State to reunite with their children in Ireland by invoking the Dublin Regulation provisions with respect to family reunification. Typically, following engagement from the Irish Authorities, the sending country would issue the take charge request to the Irish authorities and once accepted, arrangements would be made for the children’s transfer to the State.

Frequently used criteria: The most frequently invoked criterion with regard to outgoing ‘take charge’ requests was Article 13, entry and/or stay in another member state. A total of 68 requests were made pursuant to this criterion. With regard to outgoing ‘take back’ requests, the most frequently invoked criterion was Article 18(1)(b), whereby an applicant has made an application for international protection in another member state. A total of 1, 878 requests were made pursuant to this criterion.¹⁷⁰

The most frequently invoked criterion with regard to incoming ‘take charge’ requests was Article 8, which applies in circumstances whereby the family of an unaccompanied minor is legally present in the territory of another Member State. A total of 7 requests were made with respect to this provision. With regard to incoming ‘take back’ requests, Article 18(1)(b) was the most the most frequently invoked criterion. A total of 96 requests were made pursuant to this criterion.¹⁷¹

Rejection of outgoing requests: Of the 1,950 outgoing requests made, 1,423 such requests were rejected in 2025.¹⁷² The reasons for rejection, however, were unclear at the time of updating in April 2026.

¹⁷⁰ International Protection Office, March 20264.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

¹⁷² Information provided by IPO, March 2026.

2.1.2. The discretionary clauses

The criteria followed by the authorities in applying the Article 17(1) and Article 17(2) of the Dublin III Regulation is unclear in practice (see [Dublin - Appeal](#) for further information).

2.2. Procedure

Indicators: Dublin: Procedure

1. Is the Dublin procedure applied by the authority responsible for examining asylum applications?
 Yes No
2. On average, how long does a transfer take after the responsible Member State has accepted responsibility?
734 days¹⁷³

As part of the general application procedure, all applicants are photographed and fingerprinted (with the exception of applicants believed by the relevant officer to be under the age of 14 years old and not accompanied by a parent or guardian) during their initial interview with the IPO (see section on [Registration](#)). As part of the process applicants and dependent children are required to have photographs taken. They are also required to have their and their dependent children's fingerprints taken. Fingerprints may be disclosed in confidence to the relevant Irish authorities and to asylum authorities of other countries which may have responsibility for considering the application under the Dublin Regulation.

Section 19 IPA sets out the procedure for members of the Garda Síochána or immigration officers to take fingerprints for the purposes of (a) establishing the identity of a person for any purpose concerned with the implementation of the IPA, and (b) checking whether the person has previously lodged an application for international protection in another Member State.¹⁷⁴ Where a person refuses to provide their fingerprints, they shall be deemed not to have made reasonable efforts to establish their identity and shall be deemed to have failed to fulfil their obligation to cooperate with the application process.¹⁷⁵ The IPA does not legislatively provide for the use of force to take fingerprints, however, as not volunteering to provide fingerprints is viewed as a failure to make reasonable efforts to establish one's identity (in line with Section 20(1) IPA setting out grounds for detention), applicants who refuse to be fingerprinted may be detained. Additionally, negative credibility findings may be made against applicants in circumstances where their identity is not accepted, and they may therefore not be recognised as a refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection.¹⁷⁶

In relation to specific guarantees for children in the Dublin procedure, the IPO is required under Regulation 3(b) of the European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018 to consult with Tusla, the Irish Child and Family Agency, on the best interests of the child particularly with respect to the child's well-being and social development and the views of the child. No information is available on the practice under the new single procedure.

2.2.1. Individualised guarantees

It was not clear at the time of updating in April 2026 whether individualised guarantees were sought by the authorities prior to transfers taking place.

2.2.2. Transfers

Of the 1,950 outgoing requests in 2025, 2 requests were effectively implemented. One individual was transferred to France and the other to Spain. The average duration of the Dublin procedure from the time the Member State accepted responsibility until the effective transfer to the Member State responsible was 734 days.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Section 19(1) IPA.

¹⁷⁵ Section 19(4) IPA.

¹⁷⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre.

¹⁷⁷ International Protection Office, April 2026.

2.3. Personal interview

Indicators: Dublin: Personal Interview

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum applicant in most cases conducted in practice in the Dublin procedure? Yes No
2. If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews? Yes No
3. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never

At any time during the initial asylum process, the IPO may determine that a person is subject to the Dublin III Regulation and hold a separate personal interview where necessary to conduct the Dublin procedure.¹⁷⁸

Limited information is available on how Dublin procedure interviews are conducted in practice, but applicants are provided with the common information leaflet stating that they are in the Dublin procedure. However, it is not always clear that the asylum applicant understands that they are having a specific Dublin procedure interview. The onus is placed on the asylum applicant to be able to read the Dublin information leaflet rather than ensuring that it is properly explained by the caseworker and not the interpreter at the Dublin personal interview.¹⁷⁹

2.4. Appeal

Indicators: Dublin: Appeal

Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the decision in the Dublin procedure?

| | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judicial | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Administrative |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
- ❖ If yes, is it
- ❖ If yes, is it suspensive

The appeal against a transfer decision must be lodged within 10 working days and has suspensive effect.¹⁸⁰

The IPAT shall have regard to both the facts and law when considering appeals under the Dublin III Regulation. This is in accordance with Article 27 of the Dublin III Regulation which requires that a person shall have the right to an effective remedy, in the form of an appeal or a review, in fact and in law, against a transfer decision, before a Court or Tribunal.

If the IPAT overturns the decision of the IPO, the applicant and their legal representative and the Commissioner and Minister are notified in writing. The IPAT may either affirm or set aside the transfer decision. When submitting a Dublin appeal to the IPAT, the person concerned can request that an oral hearing is conducted and the Tribunal may additionally hold an oral hearing even if the person concerned has not requested it if the IPAT is of the opinion that it is in the interests of justice to do so. No information is available on the current practice as the Irish system recently changed under the IPA.

There is no onward appeal of an IPAT decision on the Dublin Regulation. However, judicial review of the decision could be sought.

There has been a long running issue over the remit of the IPAT's appeal and whether they can apply the sovereignty clause under Article 17 themselves. In November 2017, the High Court referred a number of questions to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on the application of the Dublin Regulation including on the issue of application of Article 17.

¹⁷⁸ Regulation 4 European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Regulations 6 and 8 European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.

Some of the questions referred included: whether the words “determining Member State” in the Dublin III Regulation includes a state exercising an Article 17 function and whether the functions of a Member State under Article 6 (best interests of the child) include the discretion under Article 17 not to transfer. The CJEU delivered its ruling in January 2019 and stated that Member States are free to entrust to different authorities the task of applying the criteria defined by that Regulation relating to the determination of the Member State responsible and the task of applying the discretionary clause set out in that Regulation.¹⁸¹ The Court of Appeal considered this issue in the case *N.V.U & Ors -v- The Refugee Appeals Tribunal & Ors*.¹⁸² Justice Baker stated - in a judgment delivered in June 2019 - that she was not persuaded by the arguments made by the Irish Government, namely that a departure from the plain meaning of the Irish Regulations of 2014 was justified or that the authority to exercise discretion as to whether to assume jurisdiction pursuant to Art 17(1) may be exercised by the determining body, now the IPO and IPAT.

This decision was subsequently appealed by the State to the Irish Supreme Court. In a judgment delivered on 24 July 2020, Justice Charleton held that the discretionary power established pursuant to Article 17 had not been vested in the International Protection Office and in turn, the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, by virtue of Regulation 3(1) (a) of the EU (Dublin System) Regulations 2014. Consequently, it is now evident that the Minister for Justice retains sole discretion in considering the transfer of applications pursuant to Article 17 of the Dublin III Regulation.¹⁸³

Following the ruling, the precise position regarding the procedure for making an appeal pursuant to Article 17 remains ambiguous. In this regard, the practice of the Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre has been to make ad-hoc submissions on behalf of clients directly to the Minister for Justice.

As of March 2022, a specific division within the Dublin III unit was established in order to examine applications pursuant to Article 17, however, information on the exact process and procedures followed by the division in determining such applications are not clear. This remained the case as of January 2026.

In February 2024, giving judgment in the case of *AC v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors*, a case concerning the proposed return of an applicant to Spain pursuant to the Dublin III, Hyland J. noted that, despite the large amount of litigation which Article 17 had generated, and the judicial observations made regarding the lack of any appeals procedure, it appeared that the position had not been altered. It remained the case, according to the Judge, that no guidelines existed for applicants as to when they ought to make a request pursuant to Article 17, how to make such a request, the criteria to be considered in determining such a request, or the timeframe in which such a request ought to be decided. The judge further noted that ‘given that there is a bifurcated system, it is surprising that the Minister has not identified how the two systems should operate in harmony to avoid undermining the aims of the Dublin III Regulation insofar as transfers are concerned.’¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ C-661/17, *M.A., S.A., and Z.A. v Ireland*, Judgment of 23 January 2019, available [here](#).

¹⁸² *N.V.U & Ors -v- The Refugee Appeals Tribunal & Ors*, Judgment of 26 June 2019, available [here](#).

¹⁸³ *N.V.U & Ors -v- The Refugee Appeals Tribunal & Ors* [2020] IESC 46, available [here](#).

¹⁸⁴ *AC v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors* [2024] IEHC 77, 12 February 2024, available [here](#).

2.5. Legal assistance

Indicators: Dublin: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 Representation in interview
 Legal advice
2. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance on appeal against a Dublin decision in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover
 Representation in courts
 Legal advice

An applicant who is subject to the Dublin Regulation may access legal information through the Legal Aid Board. Technically this is not completely free legal representation as there is a small amount (€10) to be paid. The Legal Aid Board has also issued guidance on the role of Private Practitioners on their panel as regards legal advice, which shows that it also applies in the context of the Dublin procedure.¹⁸⁵ This assistance also applies to the appeal where legal representation is available. There are no reported differences in the quality of service provided between the Dublin procedure and the regular procedure (see section on [Regular Procedure: Legal Assistance](#)).

2.6. Suspension of transfers

Indicators: Dublin: Suspension of Transfers

1. Are Dublin transfers systematically suspended as a matter of policy or jurisprudence to one or more countries?
 Yes No
2. If yes, to which country or countries? N/A

There is no blanket suspension of transfers to any Member State in either law or policy.

Transfers to **Greece** were suspended following the European Court of Human Rights' decision in *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* in 2011.¹⁸⁶ In response to a Parliamentary Question from February 2017 enquiring whether the Department of Justice was intending to implement the 2016 European Commission proposal that States gradually resume transfers to Greece, previous Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald stated that "No transfers of unaccompanied minors are foreseen for the time being. The resumption of transfers is not to be applied retroactively and will only apply to applicants who have entered Greece irregularly from 15 March 2017 onwards or for whom Greece is responsible from this date under the Dublin Regulation criteria."¹⁸⁷

In 2023, the IPO indicated that there were 3 outgoing 'take charge' requests and 62 "take back" requests, however, of the three transfers effectively implemented, none were to Greece.¹⁸⁸ In 2024, the IPO indicated that there were 235 outgoing "take back" requests made to Greece. One such request was accepted but the transfer was not effectively implemented in practice.¹⁸⁹ In 2025, there were 320 outgoing take back requests to Greece. However, none of these requests were subsequently accepted.¹⁹⁰

In August 2021, in response to the emerging humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the Department of Justice announced that Afghan nationals facing transfers to other EU countries pursuant to the Dublin III procedure would have their applications for international protection examined in Ireland on compassionate

¹⁸⁵ See further Legal Aid Board, *Best practice guidelines*, February 2017.

¹⁸⁶ *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*, Application no. 30696/09, 21 January 2011, available [here](#).

¹⁸⁷ *Response to Parliamentary Question 155*, 28 February 2017, available [here](#).

¹⁸⁸ International Protection Office, March 2024: Of the 3 transfers that took place, 1 was to Germany, 1 was to Italy and one was to Switzerland.

¹⁸⁹ International Protection Office, March 2025.

¹⁹⁰ International Protection Office, March 2026.

grounds.¹⁹¹ However, the extent to which this applied, or continues to apply in practice, remains unclear as of January 2026, as data regarding the nationalities of those subject to the Dublin procedure is not readily accessible.

Following Italy's announcement that it will suspend acceptance of incoming Dublin III transfers, the State continued to send such requests. In 2024, 93 such requests were made, 33 requests were accepted by Italy, however, no transfers to Italy were effectively implemented.¹⁹² In 2025, 94 requests were made to Italy. Italy indicated acceptance in respect of 23 such requests. However, these transfers do not appear to have been effectively implemented in practice.¹⁹³

2.7. The situation of Dublin returnees

In response to a request by the Irish Refugee Council, the IPO indicated that they comply with the provisions of Article 31 (Exchange of relevant information before a transfer is carried out) and Article 32 (Exchange of health data before a transfer is carried out) of the Dublin Regulation in relation to incoming transfers.¹⁹⁴

Irish law provides that Dublin returnees are permitted access to the accommodation system on the same basis as other international protection applicants, provided their application for international protection remains open before the IPO. It should be noted however, that due to the current lack of capacity within the IPAS accommodation system, single male applicants under 55 without identified vulnerabilities will not be offered accommodation on arrival in the state.¹⁹⁵ (see [Reception conditions](#)).

Whereby an individual has already received a final decision in respect of their protection application and seeks to make a subsequent protection application, they would be required to make an application to the Minister under Section 22 IPA (see section on [Subsequent Applications](#)). It is possible that the authorities could invoke Section 5 of the Immigration Act 2003 which states that a person whom an immigration officer or a member of the Garda Síochána, with reasonable cause, suspects has been unlawfully in the State for a continuous period of less than three months, be removed from Ireland, however, the extent to which this has occurred in practice is unknown.

3. Admissibility procedure

3.1. General (scope, criteria, time limits)

Section 21 IPA contains provisions outlining the circumstances under which an application may be deemed inadmissible by the presiding International Protection Officer. According to Section 21(2) IPA, an application for international protection may be deemed inadmissible where:

- a. Another Member State has granted refugee status or subsidiary protection to the applicant; or
- b. A country other than a Member State is a [First Country of Asylum](#) for the applicant.

Where the international protection officer is of the opinion that the inadmissibility criteria are met, they shall make a recommendation to the Minister that the application be deemed inadmissible. In such circumstances, the Minister shall notify the applicant and their legal representative of the recommendation, including a statement of the reasons for the recommendations, a copy of the international protection officer's report and a statement informing the person of their entitlements, including the right to an appeal (without an oral hearing) to the IPAT within ten days of receiving the decision.

¹⁹¹ RTÉ, Department of Justice to prioritise international protection applications from Afghan Nationals, 18 August 2021, available [here](#).

¹⁹² International Protection Office, March 2025.

¹⁹³ International Protection Office, March 2026.

¹⁹⁴ Information provided by IPO, August 2017.

¹⁹⁵ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation', 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

Throughout 2025, a total of 396 applications for international protection were deemed inadmissible. All of these decisions were made on the basis that another Member State had granted international protection to the applicant. No applications were deemed inadmissible based on the safe third country concept.¹⁹⁶

The Irish Refugee Council wrote to the IPO, IPAS and HSE in March 2021 stating that a person who has received a recommendation that their application for international protection be inadmissible continue to receive reception conditions as no final determination had been made. Following engagement by IRC with the relevant stakeholders, it was determined that an individual remains an ‘applicant’ within the meaning of the 2015 Act unless and until the Minister declares their application to be inadmissible pursuant to s.21(11), therefore entitling them to material reception conditions. From September 2021, the IPO began applying this interpretation to all individuals subject to the inadmissibility procedure and this remained the case at the time of updating in January 2026.¹⁹⁷

3.2. Personal interview

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Personal Interview
 Same as regular procedure

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum applicant in most cases conducted in practice in the admissibility procedure? Yes No

- ❖ If so, are questions limited to nationality, identity, travel route? Yes No
- ❖ If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews? Yes No

2. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never

Upon lodging an application for international protection at the IPO, all applicants are granted a preliminary interview to obtain basic information about the applicant and their claim. This preliminary interview may also be carried out by an immigration officer and it is unclear from the wording of the legislation if this could occur at the frontiers of the State at ports of entry. Section 13(2) IPA states that a preliminary interview with the applicant shall be conducted to ascertain, among other things, whether any circumstances giving rise to inadmissibility considerations may arise. If any of the inadmissibility criteria arising under Section 21(2) IPA are identified, then a recommendation is made by the IPO to the Minister that the application be deemed inadmissible and an application for international protection may not proceed. The applicant (and their legal representative where applicable) is advised of this recommendation in writing and is informed of their entitlement under s.21(6) of the IPA 2015 to appeal to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal against the recommendation.¹⁹⁸

3.3. Appeal

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Appeal
 Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against an inadmissibility decision? Yes No

- ❖ If yes, is it Judicial Administrative
- ❖ If yes, is it automatically suspensive Yes Some grounds No

Where an inadmissibility recommendation is made, the applicant may make an appeal against that decision within a timeframe designated by the Minister. The time limit for appealing inadmissibility decisions has been set at ten working days according to International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017 (S.I. No. 116/2017), prescribing specific time periods for

¹⁹⁶ International Protection Office, March 2026.
¹⁹⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, December 2023.
¹⁹⁸ Section 21(4) IPA 2015.

different classes of appeal.¹⁹⁹ Data in respect of appeals for 2023, 2024 and 2025 was not available at the time of updating.

Under Section 21(6) IPA, a person who receives notification from the Minister detailing the inadmissibility of their case, at the same time receives a written statement setting out the reasons for the inadmissibility finding and informing the person of their entitlement to appeal to the IPAT against such a recommendation.

The appeal procedure against inadmissibility decisions differs from the [Regular Procedure: Appeal](#) insofar as there is no option for an oral hearing.²⁰⁰

3.4. Legal assistance

Indicators: Admissibility Procedure: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance during admissibility procedures in practice? Yes With difficulty No

❖ Does free legal assistance cover: Representation in interview Legal advice

2. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance on appeal against an inadmissibility decision in practice? Yes With difficulty No

❖ Does free legal assistance cover Representation in courts Legal advice

All asylum applicants can register with the Legal Aid Board as soon as they have made their application to the IPO. Information and guidance on legal advice is contained in Section 3.14 of the Information Booklet provided to applicants with the questionnaire that they are required to fill out as part of their application. Applicants who access the Legal Aid Board are assigned a solicitor and a caseworker.

However, if the inadmissibility procedure happens prior to being provided with a Questionnaire or at the frontiers of the State, it is likely that the applicant will not know how to avail themselves of legal advice so in practice may not receive assistance in an admissibility procedure. Furthermore, the guidance issued by the Legal Aid Board to solicitors on its private practitioner’s panel appears to indicate that legal advice is only available once the applicant has been admitted into the single procedure.²⁰¹

3.5. Suspension of returns for beneficiaries of protection in another Member State

There is no blanket suspension on returns for beneficiaries of protection to any Member State in either law or policy.

Transfers to **Greece** were suspended following the European Court of Human Rights’ decision in *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece* in 2011.²⁰² However, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, as of 2025, applicants who previously held international protection status in Greece are subject to the inadmissibility procedure.²⁰³ The extent to which returns to Greece take place in practice is not known.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Section 21(6) IPA; Section 3(a) International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017.
²⁰⁰ Section 21(7) IPA.
²⁰¹ Legal Aid Board, *Best Practice Guidelines, Information Note for Private Practitioners*, February 2017, available [here](#).
²⁰² *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*, Application no. 30696/09, 21 January 2011, available [here](#).
²⁰³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.
²⁰⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

4. Border procedure (border and transit zones)

The IPA does not provide for a border procedure. A person who is at the frontiers of the State and indicates that they need asylum shall undergo a preliminary interview by an International Protection Officer or immigration officer under Section 13 IPA. They should then be given permission to enter and remain in the State as an applicant of international protection under Section 16 IPA and upon arrival at the IPO premises are granted a temporary residence certificate.

Ireland officially opted into the Pact on 27 June 2024, following a vote in both houses of the Oireachtas. While the Pact is legally in effect, Ireland, along with other EU countries, has until June 12, 2026, to fully implement the new regulations.²⁰⁵ An implementation plan for the Pact was produced in November 2024. Subsequently, in April 2025, Cabinet approved the publication of the General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025.²⁰⁶ Following pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the International Protection Bill 2026 was published.²⁰⁷ Chapter 6 of the Bill envisages the establishment of a border procedure which permits international protection claims to be processed at ports of entry within a 12-week period, whereby certain circumstances arise, including whereby the applicant is considered to have 'intentionally misled the authorities' by presenting false information or documents or by withholding information or documentation relevant to their claim, whereby there are reasonable grounds to consider the applicant a danger to the national security or public order of the State or whereby the applicant is considered unlikely to be granted international protection due to being a national of a country which is statistically unlikely to be granted protection. The border procedure will largely mirror practices in several other EU states. Applicants processed in the border procedure are not authorised to enter Ireland while their claim is being decided. Their freedom of movement shall be restricted, and they will be accommodated in designated facilities instead. However, the Bill in its current form does not contain any definition of what amounts to a 'designated facility' for the purposes of the procedure.²⁰⁸ The Bill also established a new statutory role, the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures. The role was established to provide independent oversight of the new border procedure and related processes. Its purpose is to ensure that the screening process and the application of the border procedure comply with EU law, international law, and fundamental rights protections, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.²⁰⁹

5. Accelerated procedure

5.1. General (scope, grounds for accelerated procedures, time limits)

Certain cases may be prioritised under Section 73 IPA under 10 grounds, as mentioned in the section on [Prioritised Examination](#). This prioritisation of cases does not generally entail different procedural guarantees.

Following the introduction of the revised procedure, other nationalities (as of January 2026: Algeria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Georgia, India, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Malawi, Montenegro, Morocco, Serbia and South Africa) may also find themselves subjected to an accelerated procedure on the grounds that those countries have been designated by the Minister for Justice and Equality as [Safe Countries of Origin](#). Under the revised procedure, applicants from safe countries of origin will now receive a date for their substantive interview within four to six weeks of making their initial international protection application.

²⁰⁵ RTÉ, 'Dáil votes to opt into EU Asylum and Migration Pact', 26 June 2024, available [here](#).

²⁰⁶ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister Jim O'Callaghan secures Cabinet approval for publication of the General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025', 29 April 2025, available [here](#).

²⁰⁷ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister Jim O'Callaghan publishes International Protection Bill 2026', 13 January 2026, available [here](#).

²⁰⁸ International Protection Bill 2026, available [here](#).

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

It should also be noted that, pursuant to the relevant regulation, this accelerated procedure may also be applied to **any** application subject to the need for fairness and efficiency and whereby the international protection office considered same necessary and expedient.

All applications continue to be examined individually and all applicants will retain the right to appeal a negative recommendation by the IPO to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.²¹⁰ However, pursuant to the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, whereby the IPO recommends that an applicant's application for refugee or subsidiary protection should be refused, and the applicant originates from one of the designated safe countries of origin, the timeframe in which to submit an appeal is shortened to 10 working days from the date of the decision. An applicant's appeal will be decided without an oral hearing, unless IPAT believes that it is in the interests of justice to hold an oral hearing.²¹¹ Moreover, if an applicant is from a country designated a safe country of origin, a burden is placed on the applicant to rebut the presumption that they are not in need of international protection (see section on [Accelerated Procedure](#)).

With effect from 23 April 2024, the IPO began prioritising and accelerating the processing of applications from the country of origin with the highest number of applications in a given period.²¹² From April 2024, applications from Nigerian nationals were prioritised.²¹³ In July 2024, the prioritisation process was reviewed and it was decided that the International Protection Office (IPO) would now prioritise cases from the two countries with the highest number of applicants in the last three months. Jordanian nationals were also subjected to the accelerated procedure from 29 July 2024.²¹⁴ At the time of updating (January 2026), Nigerian and Jordanian applicants continued to be subject to the accelerated procedure.

Throughout 2024, 5,171 cases were processed pursuant to the accelerated procedure, with the top 5 nationalities represented being Nigeria, Jordan, Georgia, South Africa and Algeria. 26 such applications were made by minors. The median processing time for such cases was 3 months. A total of 2,863 decisions were issued pursuant to the accelerated procedure. 220 applicants were granted refugee status, 3 applicants were granted subsidiary protection and 37 applicants were granted permission to remain. The remaining 2,603 applications were rejected on the merits.²¹⁵

Throughout 2025, a total of 4,747 cases were processed under the accelerated procedure, with the top 5 nationalities represented being Nigeria, Georgia, Pakistan, Brazil and Albania. 15 of these applications were submitted by unaccompanied minors. The average processing time for applications under the accelerated procedure was 4 months. A total of 5,040 decisions were issued pursuant to the accelerated procedure. 248 applicants were granted refugee status, 77 applicants were granted subsidiary protection status, and 3 applicants were granted permission to remain. The remaining 4,712 applications were rejected on the merits.²¹⁶

Whereas that prioritisation of cases does not generally entail different procedural guarantees, Section 43 IPA foresees different rules for appeals in cases where the applicant:²¹⁷

- ❖ In submitting their application and in presenting the grounds for their application in their preliminary interview or personal interview or any time before the conclusion of the examination, has raised only issues that are not relevant or are of minimal relevance to their eligibility for international protection;
- ❖ Has made inconsistent, contradictory, improbable or insufficient representations which make their claim to be eligible for international protection clearly unconvincing;

²¹⁰ International Protection Office, 'The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 – Information Note', 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

²¹¹ International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022

²¹² International Protection Office, 'Prioritisation and Acceleration of an Additional Category of Applicants', available [here](#).

²¹³ *ibid.*

²¹⁴ *ibid.*

²¹⁵ International Protection Office, March 2025.

²¹⁶ International Protection Office, March 2026.

²¹⁷ Section 43 IPA, citing Section 39(4) IPA.

- ❖ For a reason related to the availability of internal protection,²¹⁸ is not in need of international protection;
- ❖ Failed to make an application as soon as reasonably practicable, without reasonable cause;
- ❖ Comes from a [Safe Country of Origin](#).

The existence of an internal protection alternative as a potential ground for accelerating appeals under Section 43 IPA raises serious concerns as if such a finding is made, it may significantly increase the number of persons who are subject to accelerated appeals.

Data on the number of prioritised international protection applications for 2022-2025 was not available at the time of updating in January 2026.

On 8 November 2022, the International Protection Office introduced a revised international protection application procedure.²¹⁹ In accordance with the European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022, an applicant attending at the International Protection Office in order to make an application for international protection is now required to complete their International Protection Questionnaire onsite at the IPO, in addition to completing their preliminary interview.²²⁰ The international protection questionnaire has been reduced significantly to 24 questions in order to enable applicants to complete the questionnaire at the time of making their application.²²¹

Under the revised procedure applicants from ‘designated safe countries of origin’ will now receive a date for their substantive interview within four to six weeks of making their initial application. Additionally, whereby an applicant receives a first-instance refusal, they may also be subject to an accelerated appeals procedure. It should also be noted that, pursuant to the relevant regulation, this accelerated procedure may also be applied to **any** application subject to the need for fairness and efficiency and whereby the International Protection Office considered same necessary and expedient.

Vulnerable applicants are not exempt from the accelerated procedure. Additionally, the Irish Refugee Council received several concerning reports from applicants subject to the accelerated procedure. Numerous applicants reported that they had not had the opportunity to seek legal advice prior to undergoing their personal interview. This was partly due to the short turn-around time between the applicant’s initial application and interview, and partly due to applicants not being advised at the time of making their application of their right to seek free and impartial legal advice from the Legal Aid Board.²²² Additionally, many applicants subjected to the accelerated procedure were prevented from accessing the labour market in circumstances whereby they received a negative first-instance decision on their application prior to becoming eligible for labour market access. Applicants who receive a negative first-instance decision may then be subject to a protracted appeals process whereby they do not have any entitlement to engage in employment. Newly arrived protection applicants from ‘safe countries’ who were not offered accommodation on arrival and in many cases, consequently street homeless, were also subject to the accelerated procedure. In some cases, applicants were scheduled for their substantive interviews prior to having been offered accommodation by IPAS.²²³ Interaction with such a complex legal process, without the provision of adequate legal advice, is extremely challenging and it is complete inappropriate that an applicant be required to undertake a substantive interview while experiencing street homelessness. In January 2024, the Irish Refugee Council wrote to the International Protection Office requesting that applicants subject to the accelerated procedure and experiencing homelessness be given the option to postpone their protection application until such time as they are offered accommodation. In response, the International Protection Office stated that the 2015 Act does not contain a legislative basis

²¹⁸ Section 32 IPA.

²¹⁹ International Protection Office, ‘The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 – Information Note’, 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

²²⁰ *ibid.*

²²¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service.

²²² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

²²³ *ibid.*

for the pausing of international protection applications and moreover, asserted that if a pause were to be introduced this would be detrimental to the interests of such applicants.²²⁴

In June 2023, the Department of Justice announced that it was to conduct a review of the list of 'designated safe countries of origin.' In January 2024, the Minister for Justice announced that, following the conclusion of the review process, two countries, Algeria and Botswana, would be added to the safe countries list.²²⁵ Subsequently, in July 2024, following a further review, an additional five countries were added to the safe countries list. These countries include Brazil, Egypt, India, Malawi and Morocco, bringing the total number of countries appearing on the safe countries list to 15.²²⁶ The rationale for this, according to the Minister for Justice, was to make the international protection process more efficient and to deter people from using Ireland's asylum system as a route for 'economic migration.'²²⁷

According to the International Protection Office, all applications will continue to be examined individually and applicants whose applications are examined under the new procedure will retain the right to appeal a negative recommendation by the IPO to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal.²²⁸ However, pursuant to the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, whereby the IPO recommends that an application for refugee or subsidiary protection should be refused on the basis of one of the reasons established pursuant to s.39(4) of the International Protection Act 2015, the timeframe in which to submit an appeal is shortened to 10 working days from the date of the decision.²²⁹ This may occur whereby a finding is made by the IPO that the issues raised in the application were not relevant to the applicant's eligibility for international protection; whereby the applicant's representations have been inconsistent or contradictory; whereby the applicant failed to make the application as soon as they could without good reason; whereby a finding is made that the applicant did not require international protection due to the possibility of safe internal relocation within their country of origin; or whereby the application is refused and the applicant comes from a safe country of origin.²³⁰ In these cases, an applicant's appeal will be decided without an oral hearing, unless IPAT believes that it is in the interests of justice to hold an oral hearing.²³¹

According to the IPO, the rationale for the new procedure is to ensure that international protection applications, particularly those from safe countries of origin, are dealt with in a timelier manner so as to increase processing capacity and reduce delays.²³² However, the Irish Refugee Council has written to the Minister for Justice, addressing numerous significant concerns in relation to the appropriateness of the revised procedure. Such concerns relate particularly to applicants who may have had traumatic experiences prior to their arrival in the state. These applicants are required to complete and submit their questionnaire in an open-plan waiting area at the IPO, an environment which is often extremely busy, noisy and tense. This raises significant concern in relation to the applicant's privacy and personal data protection. Moreover, it is an extremely inappropriate physical space for applicants to complete such a significant document and gives rise to a risk of re-traumatisation insofar as particularly vulnerable applicants are concerned. Additionally, the revised process completely removes the applicant's practical access to legal advice prior to the submission of their international protection questionnaire. Unless an applicant is accompanied to the IPO by a lawyer when making their application, they do not have the

²²⁴ Information provided by International Protection Office, April 2024.

²²⁵ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee announces new measures to expedite international protection application processing', 30 January 2024, available [here](#).

²²⁶ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee announces new additions to Safe Countries of Origin list', 2 July 2024, available [here](#).

²²⁷ Breakingnews.ie, 'Safe countries list update aimed at deterring economic migration – McEntee', 30 January 2024, available [here](#).

²²⁸ International Protection Office, 'The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals)(Amendment) Regulations 2022 – Information Note', 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

²²⁹ International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

²³⁰ International Protection Act 2015, s.39(4).

²³¹ International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.

²³² International Protection Office, The European Communities (International Protection Procedures) Regulations 2022 and the International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 FAQ's, 8th November 2022, available [here](#).

benefit of legal advice in advance of submitting their international protection questionnaire, a document upon which significant reliance is placed in the applicant’s substantive interview.

Translation services, as well as Cultural Support Officers are available to applicants in order to assist them in the completion of their questionnaire,²³³ however, it is not clear what exactly the role of the Cultural Support Officer involves or the extent of the assistance they can provide to applicants in the completion of their questionnaire. Having accompanied clients to apply for international protection on several occasions following the establishment of the revised procedure, in the Irish Refugee Council’s experience, Cultural Support Officers have not been present to assist applicants in the completion of their questionnaires, while the standard of translation services provided has been unsatisfactory given the importance of the questionnaire in the overall application process. This remained an issue throughout 2025.²³⁴

5.2. Personal interview

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Personal Interview

Same as regular procedure

1. Is a personal interview of the asylum applicant in most cases conducted in practice in the accelerated procedure? Yes No

- ❖ If so, are questions limited to nationality, identity, travel route? Yes No
- ❖ If so, are interpreters available in practice, for interviews? Yes No

2. Are interviews conducted through video conferencing? Frequently Rarely Never

Personal interviews are conducted for all applicants at first instance. In practice, there is no difference between the scope and format of a personal interview in the accelerated procedure and the **normal procedure**. This remained the case following the onset of COVID-19 and associated restrictions.

5.3. Appeal

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Appeal

Same as regular procedure

1. Does the law provide for an appeal against the decision in the accelerated procedure?

- Yes No
- Judicial Administrative
- ❖ If yes, is it Yes Some grounds No
- ❖ If yes, is it suspensive

Where an applicant is subject to the accelerated procedure it should continue like the regular procedure. However, where the recommendation of the IPO includes one of the findings mentioned in the section on **Accelerated Procedure: General** there may be accelerated appeals under the IPA.

Under Section 43 IPA, applicants then have 10 working days instead of 15 working days to make an appeal,²³⁵ which shall be determined without an oral hearing, unless the Tribunal considers it necessary in the interests of justice to have such a hearing. The appeal is suspensive.

²³³ *ibid.*
²³⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2026.
²³⁵ Section 43(a) IPA; Section 3(d) International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017.

5.4. Legal assistance

Indicators: Accelerated Procedure: Legal Assistance

Same as regular procedure

1. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover:
 Representation in interview
 Legal advice
2. Do asylum applicants have access to free legal assistance on appeal against a negative decision in practice?
 Yes With difficulty No
❖ Does free legal assistance cover
 Representation in courts
 Legal advice

Applicants under the accelerated procedure fall under the same rules for legal assistance as those who are not under the accelerated procedure (see [Regular procedure – Legal assistance](#)). Practical obstacles in giving legal assistance in the accelerated procedure could include that the applicant has difficulty accessing legal representation or the legal representative has difficulty in assisting the applicant in the shorter time period.

6. National protection statuses and return procedure

6.1. National forms of protection

Whereby an applicant has been denied both refugee status and subsidiary protection, s.49 of the International Protection Act 2015 establishes that permission to remain (also referred to as 'leave to remain') will be assessed by the Minister for Justice, who will have regard to such matters as the applicant's family life, personal circumstances and connection to the State.²³⁶ This application does not form part of the single application procedure, but the permission to remain function is also carried out by the International Protection Office. Throughout all stages of the international protection process, therefore, prior to receiving a final decision on their claim, applicants are encouraged to inform the IPO of any circumstances arising that may be relevant to the assessment of their application.

Permission to remain can also be issued at first instance at the IPO examination stage and there is an opportunity to put forward any preliminary grounds for permission to remain in a dedicated section of the application questionnaire. The applicant has the right to submit any information relating to their permission to remain (or consideration for international protection more generally) at any point after the submission of their questionnaire. There is no oral hearing with regard to permission to remain, but it is important that the applicant includes all relevant information in writing concerning their grounds for being granted permission to remain. It is important to note that if an applicant is refused permission to remain, they do not have a right to appeal this decision.

Permission to remain granted in accordance with the 2015 Act is deemed to be granted pursuant to s.4 of the Immigration Act 2004. Beneficiaries receive Stamp 4 permission to remain and hold similar rights to Irish citizens with regard to access to housing, social welfare, employment and education. However, persons granted permission to remain are not permitted to apply for family reunification pursuant to the 2015 Act. Additionally, persons granted permission to remain are generally not entitled to a travel document and are only entitled to apply for naturalisation five years after having received a grant of permission to remain.

Throughout 2025, 270 applicants were granted permission to remain.²³⁷

²³⁶ Section 49(1) IPA 2015.

²³⁷ International Protection Office, March 2026.

6.2. Return procedure

Whereby an individual is deemed not to be in need of international protection; has exhausted all appeal mechanisms; and has been denied permission to remain, they are issued with a final decision to this effect. An individual is eligible for voluntary return and must notify the Minister for Justice and Equality pursuant to s.48(4) of the Act of their decision to return to their country of origin voluntarily within five days of receipt of the final negative decision. Whereby the applicant does not return voluntarily or is not seen to be making reasonable efforts to depart voluntarily pursuant to s.48(5) of the Act, the Minister for Justice may make a deportation order under s.51 of the Act, having considered the prohibition of refoulement pursuant to s.50. In accordance with s. 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999, a deportation order can be amended or revoked by the Minister for Justice and Equality. There is no other form of suspension, withdrawal or administrative appeal for a deportation order. Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 continues to apply to revocation of deportation orders of rejected protection applicants made under the International Protection Act 2015.

An individual who is subject to a deportation order will receive a notice of deportation. The format of the deportation order is set out in the International Protection Act 2015 (Deportation) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 668 of 2016). The deportation order specifies a date by which the person is required to leave the State. A deportation order is accompanied by a letter specifying the date by which the person is required to leave the State. If the person does not leave the State by the date specified, they are obliged to report to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) at a time specified in the letter to allow for arrangements to be made for deportation. The letter also notes that if the individual fails to comply with the terms of the deportation order, or contained in the arrangements letter, the individual may be arrested without warrant and detained under the terms of Section 5 of the Immigration Act 1999. The individual is required to report at regular intervals at the GNIB headquarters, at Burgh Quay in Dublin, or at a local Garda station.

In September 2025, it was announced that for a limited period, persons in the international protection process prior to 28th September 2025 would be offered increased reintegration assistance if they chose to withdraw their international protection application and avail of voluntary return at an earlier stage in the process. Prior to September 2025, the level of reintegration assistance offered was up to €1,200 per person and €2,000 per family unit. Under the changes, whereby an applicant chooses to withdraw their application for international protection before receiving a first instance decision or prior to appealing a negative first instance decision, the reintegration assistance offered would be increased to €2,500 per person to a maximum of €10,000 per family unit. Whereby an applicant is in the appeals process and decides to voluntarily return prior to an appeal decision being issued, their assistance will increase, but to the lower amount of €1,500 per person and to a maximum of €6,000 per family unit. If they receive a final decision on their application assistance will only increase for families to a maximum of €3,000 per family unit.²³⁸ The Irish Refugee Council raised significant concerns regarding the revised policy, noting that it targets specifically persons in the protection process and that it is unethical and inappropriate to pay applicants in need of safety to abandon their claims. 1,496 persons had left Ireland by way of voluntary return as of the 5th December 2025, an increase of 78% compared with the same period in 2024.²³⁹

Throughout 2025, there was an increase in the number of Deportation Orders signed. As of the 10th of December, 4,454 deportation orders have been signed throughout the year,²⁴⁰ compared to 2,403 deportation orders signed in 2024.²⁴¹ The increase in deportation orders is attributable to the new government's decision to strengthen immigration enforcement.

²³⁸ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Jim O'Callaghan announces new incentive to encourage Voluntary Returns', 29th of September 2025, available [here](#).

²³⁹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 608*, 9th December 2025, available [here](#).

²⁴⁰ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 259*, 10 December 2025, available [here](#).

²⁴¹ BreakingNews, 'Deportation Orders for failed asylum seekers surged by 180% last year', 17th February 2025, available [here](#).

2025 also saw the renewed use of chartered deportation flights. A contract was signed in November 2024 for the provision of charter aircraft for deportation operation purposes.²⁴² The first flight, bound for Georgia, departed Dublin airport in February 2025. Passengers on board the flight were accompanied by Garda personnel, medical staff, an interpreter and a human rights observer.²⁴³ As of December 2025, six charter flights operations had removed 205 people from the State. Of these, five operations were to non-EU destinations, including Georgia and Nigeria, removing 182 persons subject to deportation orders. The remaining operation removed 23 EU citizens on grounds of criminality.²⁴⁴

D. Guarantees for vulnerable groups

1. Identification

Indicators: Identification

1. Is there a specific identification mechanism in place to systematically identify vulnerable asylum applicants? Yes For certain categories No

Section 58(1) IPA defines as vulnerable persons individuals ‘such as persons under the age of 18 years (whether or not accompanied), disabled persons, elderly persons, pregnant women, single parents with children under the age of 18 years, victims of human trafficking, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape, or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.’ The provision, however, applies solely to the application of Sections 53 to 57, which refer to content of international protection.

1.1. Screening of vulnerability

Regulation 8 of the European Union (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 provides for the establishment of a vulnerability assessment process. Until January 2021 however, no standardised assessment was carried out in respect of vulnerable international protection applicants, despite this being a clear requirement under EU law. At the end of January 2021, a pilot project to assess the vulnerability of applicants was established at Baleskin reception centre in Dublin.²⁴⁵ The pilot scheme was subsequently extended to all new international protection applicants throughout the state and aims to determine whether the applicant has special reception needs arising from any vulnerabilities identified.

In September 2022, IPAS published a Vulnerability Assessment Pilot Programme Policy, setting out the nature and purpose of the vulnerability assessment.²⁴⁶ Pursuant to the newly established Policy, and, in response to significant pressure on IPAS resources, the vulnerability assessment procedure was also altered substantially. Vulnerability Assessment questionnaires are provided to all individuals making an application for international protection. Questionnaires are made available to applicants in a number of languages, both at their accommodation centres and online via IPAS’ website. A referral form for service providers and third parties working with international protection applicants was also made available and can be completed by the service provider with the applicant’s consent. Both documents contain a series of questions relating to the vulnerability indicators contained within the Reception Conditions Directive (Recast).

The applicant, or service provider, is required to return the questionnaire to the IPAS Resident Welfare Team by email or post. Assessment Officers from the Resident Welfare Team review all returned

²⁴² Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, ‘Charter deportations flights recommence’, 1st March 2025, available [here](#).

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 608*, 9th December 2025, available [here](#).

²⁴⁵ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O’Gorman, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 80*, 31 July 2021, available [here](#).

²⁴⁶ International Protection Accommodation Service, ‘Vulnerability Assessment Pilot Programme Policy’, September 2022, available [here](#).

questionnaires to determine the applicant’s vulnerability status. Whereby an assessment indicates that an applicant has one or more vulnerability the Assessment Officer may contact them to discuss their vulnerability further. In some cases, whereby an assessment indicates a high level of vulnerability, the Assessment Officer may also refer the person for further assessment with an IPAS Social Worker.²⁴⁷

Throughout 2023, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, many applicants who sought vulnerability assessments under the revised procedure have yet to be contacted by IPAS’ Resident Welfare Team, despite numerous applicants presenting with evident and significant vulnerability. The Irish Refugee Council also remains concerned about the lack of information provided to applicants regarding the assessment. It has become apparent in our contact with clients that many individuals undergoing the vulnerability assessment are not aware of the purpose of the assessment, nor do they understand what the information acquired will be used for. In many cases, individuals undergoing vulnerability assessments have recently arrived in the State, often have limited knowledge of the English language. The lack of available information is particularly troubling as applicants are not properly equipped to fully communicate their circumstances.

On 8 March 2024, IPAS announced that the pilot scheme would be suspended until further notice.²⁴⁸ From March-November 2024, it is understood that no vulnerability assessments were conducted, however, vulnerability triage in respect of newly arrived single male applicants continued.²⁴⁹ In the interim, in April 2024, IPAS published a notice of request for tender with a view to outsourcing the vulnerability assessment process. Subsequently, in November 2024 vulnerability assessments resumed and are now conducted by GoodPeople Homecare Ltd. According to IPAS, it aimed to conduct 350 assessments a week, beginning with the existing backlog. Initially, vulnerability assessments were to be conducted at Citywest, with a view to expanding the service to the International Protection Office in the New Year.²⁵⁰

Throughout 2025, 4, 537 vulnerability assessments were conducted. Of those assessed. 4,048 individuals were deemed to be vulnerable in accordance with the Regulations.²⁵¹

With respect to coordination mechanisms on specific issues such as gender-based violence, human trafficking, and torture amongst relevant stakeholders, numerous state agencies and non-governmental organisations have collaborated in order to assist those requiring particular support. One such example was the ‘Reach Project’ run by Ruhama in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Equality the HSE and An Garda Síochána. The project aimed to raise awareness of trafficking as a form of violence against women and girls and improve responses to the issue across the State. The campaign included the provision of support materials to survivors, as well as advertising campaign and free-text number which individuals could contact in order to seek further support.²⁵²

The International Protection Office (IPO) has procedures in place when dealing with potential victims of human trafficking and also has an internal guidance resources available to all IPO staff. The IPO also has a so Officer’ whose role it is to make a referral to An Garda Síochána whereby a potential victim of trafficking is identified.²⁵³

1.2. Age assessment of unaccompanied children

Section 14 IPA states that where it appears to an immigration officer or an officer of the IPO that a child who is seeking international protection is not accompanied by an adult, the officer shall inform, as soon as practicable, the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and thereafter the provisions of the Child Care Act 1991 apply.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*
²⁴⁸ Information provided by IPAS, March 2024.
²⁴⁹ Information provided by the Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.
²⁵⁰ Information provided by IPAS, November 2024.
²⁵¹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No.323*, 5 February 2026, available [here](#).
²⁵² Ruhama, ‘Reach Project for Women’, available [here](#).
²⁵³ Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question 1089*, 21 March 2023, available [here](#).

The IPA contains a number of provisions relating to age assessment and identification of unaccompanied children. Section 24 IPA allows the Minister, or an international protection officer to arrange an examination by an officer of Tusla, to determine the age of an applicant to see if they are under the age of 18 years. An examination is required to be:

- ❖ performed with full respect for the applicant's dignity,
- ❖ consistent with the need to achieve a reliable result, the least invasive examination possible, and
- ❖ where the examination is a medical examination, carried out by a registered medical practitioner or such other suitably qualified medical professional as may be prescribed.

The consent of the applicant and/or the adult responsible for them including an employee or other person appointed by Tusla is required for the age examination. Section 24(6) IPA requires that the best interest of the child is a primary consideration when applying Section 24. Section 25 also provides for an age examination to take place under the direction of a member of the Garda Síochána (national police) or immigration officer if they request the Minister to carry out such an examination when an applicant in detention appears to be under the age of 18 years. Detention for unaccompanied children is prohibited but detention may occur under Section 20(7)(a) IPA if two officials – two members of the Garda Síochána or immigration officers, or one member of the Garda Síochána and one immigration officer – believe the applicant is over 18 years pending an age examination.

The immigrant support organisation, Nasc, has previously highlighted the ‘considerable concerns about Tusla’s age assessment procedures’, more specifically connected to the fact that no sufficient guarantees are in place with respect to age assessment procedures. The organisation was made aware of cases in which age disputed minors were accommodated in Direct Provision centres, with no access to appeal the initial age assessment, which is usually conducted at the frontiers of the State, and therefore unable to access the support and aftercare provided to separated children.²⁵⁴ Neither the IPO nor Tusla collect statistics on age assessments conducted in Ireland.²⁵⁵

Whereby cases are referred to Tusla, an assessment is undertaken in order to determine the eligibility of the young person for the provision of services under The Child Care Act, i.e., whether the individual is in need of the care and protection of Tusla. Determination of age is made giving benefit of the doubt where there may be insufficient supporting documentary evidence. If the individual is deemed not to be a child, they are then referred to the IPO in order to claim international protection.²⁵⁶

It was noted that consideration was given to developing guidance to support staff in the area of age assessments, however, following a deliberative process and legal advice this was not progressed into approved national policy or guidance for the agency.²⁵⁷

Tusla subsequently engaged in a further deliberative process in conjunction with its operational and legal services to determine an eligibility criterion for receipt of Tusla services.²⁵⁸ In April 2023, a finalised policy document - ‘Eligibility for Services for Separated Children Seeking International Protection’ - was circulated amongst relevant stakeholders. It is also evident from the Irish Refugee Council’s attendance at eligibility assessments that the policy has now been implemented. However, as of January 2026, it is noted that the policy document is not publicly available on Tusla’s website or elsewhere.²⁵⁹

The eligibility assessment takes the form of a psycho-social assessment, conducted by two assessing Tusla social workers. The young person is interviewed regarding their personal and family circumstances, their pre-migration experiences, their education, and journey to the State in order to determine whether they are eligible for Tusla services in accordance with the Childcare Act 1991. The young person will also

²⁵⁴ *ibid*, 13.

²⁵⁵ Information provided by Tusla, August 2017.

²⁵⁶ *ibid*.

²⁵⁷ *ibid*.

²⁵⁸ *ibid*.

²⁵⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2024.

be asked to provide any identity documentation or other documentation demonstrating their age. Emphasis is placed on the young person's appearance and physical presentation (i.e. whether they have facial hair, or hair loss for example) and the level of emotional maturity displayed during the course of the assessment. Such factors are often determinative in assessing eligibility, particularly in circumstances where a young person cannot provide any identification documents.²⁶⁰

Independent advocacy is provided to young people by Youth Advocacy Programmes Ireland (YAP). The Independent Advocate supports young people in understanding the eligibility assessment process, linking with appropriate legal and refugee services, as well as practical support such as food and clothing etc. The Independent Advocate is also permitted to accompany the young person to the assessment where needed.²⁶¹

Whereby a young person is deemed eligible for Tusla services, they are taken into the care of the State and placed in appropriate accommodation, usually residential facilities or foster family placements. Whereby an individual is deemed ineligible for Tusla services, they have a right to request a review of the decision. However, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, many young people are unaware of their right to seek a review.²⁶²

Medical assessments, including x-rays, dental checks etc., do not form part the eligibility assessment process in Ireland.²⁶³

In January 2024, it was reported that there had been, according to Tusla, an 'unprecedented increase' in the number of unaccompanied children presenting to its Separated Children Seeking International Protection Service (SCSIP Service).²⁶⁴ Subsequently, in April 2024, it was reported that Ireland has experienced a 500% increase in the number of unaccompanied children seeking international protection. According to figures released by Tusla's Separated Children Seeking International Protection Team in April 2024, in the previous 15 months, 607 unaccompanied children were referred to the service. Of those, 243 minors arrived within the first 3 months of 2024.²⁶⁵ Throughout 2025, this increase continued. While data regarding the number of arrivals for 2025 was not available at the time of updating, it was apparent to the Irish Refugee Council, based on the number of presentations of age disputed minors to its services, that there had been a substantial increase in arrivals throughout the year.²⁶⁶

2. Special procedural guarantees

Indicators: Special Procedural Guarantees

1. Are there special procedural arrangements/guarantees for vulnerable people? Yes For certain categories No

❖ If for certain categories, specify which:²⁶⁷ Unaccompanied children, elderly, severely ill

Section 58 IPA states that the specific situation of vulnerable persons shall be taken into account when applying Sections 53 to 57 of the International Protection Act. Sections 53 to 57 relate to the rights granted to beneficiaries of international protection including a travel document, family reunification, the issuing of permission to reside in the State and other rights. In effect, therefore, the requirements of Section 57 only relate to persons who are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, not persons applying for international protection. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented in practice, including whether these provisions may be applied to persons in the status determination process. Anecdotal information

²⁶⁰ Information provided by Irish refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2025.
²⁶¹ Youth Advocate Programmes Ireland, 'Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP)', 2023, available [here](#).
²⁶² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2025.
²⁶³ *ibid*.
²⁶⁴ Irish Times, 'Unprecedented' increase in unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Ireland', 15 January 2024, available [here](#).
²⁶⁵ The Journal, '500% increase in migrant children arriving alone in Ireland to claim asylum', 30 April 2024, available [here](#).
²⁶⁶ Information provided by IRC Independent Law Centre, January 2026.
²⁶⁷ The IPO has produced a prioritisation note, which sets out prioritisation criteria such as age, health and country of origin, available [here](#).

indicates that Section 58 has been applied successfully in the case of a minor who aged-out while awaiting a decision on his asylum case, thereby rendering him an adult for the purposes of the new **Family Reunification** provisions contained in Section 56 IPA. By reference to Section 58, the applicant could be considered vulnerable for the purposes of benefitting from the more favourable family reunification provisions for minors.

2.1. Adequate support during the interview

Section 28(4)(c) IPA states that the protection decision-maker shall take into account, *inter alia*, the individual position and personal circumstances of the protection applicant, including factors such as background, gender and age, so as to assess whether, on the basis of the applicant's personal circumstances, the acts, to which the applicant has been or could be exposed, would amount to persecution or serious harm. The High Court has indicated that a decision maker's failure to have regard to such individual circumstances may amount to an error of law. In a case in 2013, the High Court quashed a decision of the Department of Justice which refused to grant a national of the Democratic Republic of Congo subsidiary protection on the grounds that, *inter alia*, the decision maker had failed to adequately consider the individual position and circumstances of the applicant.²⁶⁸ Similar findings were made in a case involving a Bangladeshi national.²⁶⁹

Further, Section 35 IPA requires that persons conducting the personal interviews "are sufficiently competent to take account of the personal or general circumstances surrounding the application, including the applicant's cultural origin or vulnerability." There is no publicly available policy reflecting this position and in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, provisions are made for applicants with special needs on an *ad hoc* basis and usually subject to intervention from legal representatives or other support workers.²⁷⁰

The IPO does not have specialised units or officers dealing with claims by vulnerable groups. However, a group of Panel Members have received specialised training, based on a module developed by UNHCR, on cases involving unaccompanied children. Only officials who have conducted this training can interview unaccompanied children. It is not known how many panel members have undergone this specialised training. The IPO has also issued guidelines on best practices for reporting cases of potential or actual child abuse or neglect ('Children First Guidelines') to its staff.²⁷¹

Insofar as minor children are concerned, whereby a Panel Member conducting a personal interview consider it necessary, they can interview accompanied children included in a family application.²⁷² However, in general, only children above the age of 16 are interviewed. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.²⁷³

Whereby it is determined that a child ought to be interviewed, the International Protection Office may implement a number of safeguards, including the use of specialist staff trained to interview children, adapting language to the age and maturity of the child, and ensuring that the interview is conducted in the presence of the child's parents or guardian, while also ensuring confidentiality of the information shared. Additionally, child-friendly information is provided on the international protection procedure and the purpose of the personal interview, and the child is given the opportunity to indicate the preferred gender of both the interviewing Panel Member and interpreter.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ High Court, *E. D-N, L. D. S v Minister for Justice and Equality* [2013] IEHC 447, Judgment of 20 September 2013.

²⁶⁹ High Court, *Barua v Minister for Justice and Equality* [2012] IEHC 456, Judgment of 9 November 2012.

²⁷⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, January 2024.

²⁷¹ Information provided by IPO, August 2017.

²⁷² European Migration Network, 'Accompanied children's right to be heard in international protection procedures' April 2023, available [here](#).

²⁷³ *ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

UNHCR conducts several general training sessions for new staff per year and as requested by the relevant authority. UNHCR also holds information sessions and lectures on topics such as the submission of international protection applications, information sessions for newly arrived asylum applicants and the role of the UNHCR in the international protection process.

Other NGOs, such as Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (Spirasi) also provide training on working with victims of torture. Such training is however conducted on an *ad-hoc* basis upon request. Data in respect of trainings conducted by Spirasi in 2022-2025 was not available at the time of updating.

The International Protection Office (IPO) has procedures in place when dealing with potential victims of human trafficking and also has an internal guidance resources available to all IPO staff. The IPO has a 'Designated Officer' whose role it is to make a referral to An Garda Síochána whereby a potential victim of human trafficking is identified.²⁷⁵

The Irish Refugee Council provides dedicated early legal advice to applicants who are deemed vulnerable or in particular need on a case-by-case basis and subject to organisational capacity at the time.²⁷⁶

It should be noted that Ireland has opted in to the first iteration of the Asylum Procedures Directive, which requires that officials carrying out the personal interview of the applicant be suitably 'competent to take account of the personal or general circumstances surrounding the application, including the applicant's cultural origin or vulnerability.'²⁷⁷ Besides general training received by all IPO staff, there is no specific reference to vulnerability identification in the IPA and, in practice, there does not seem to be a systematic approach to identification or addressing the needs of vulnerable persons in advance of the substantive interview. As mentioned above, despite being Irish law since July 2018, there had been no vulnerability assessments as required by the reception conditions directive as of December 2020.

2.2. Prioritisation and exemption from special procedures

Accelerated procedures do not apply to unaccompanied children but their applications may be prioritised by the IPO. Section 73 IPA grants the Minister power to 'accord priority to any application' or request the International Protection Appeals Tribunal Chairperson to prioritise any appeal, having regard to *inter alia* 'whether the applicant is a person in respect of whom the Child and Family Agency is providing care and protection.'²⁷⁸

In accordance with Section 73 IPA, the IPO (in consultation with UNHCR Ireland), issued a statement setting out prioritisation procedures for scheduling the substantive interviews of certain categories of applicant in February 2017, which remains in effect as of May 2025.²⁷⁹ Under this note, when considering whether to prioritise an application, the IPO may have regard to certain categories of vulnerable applicants with respect to: the age of the applicant (specifically unaccompanied children in the care of Tusla; applicants who applied as unaccompanied children, but who have now aged out; applicants over 70 years of age, who are not part of a family group) and applicants with serious health grounds requiring prioritisation (specifically, applicants who notify the IPO after the commencement date that evidence has been submitted, certified by a medical consultant, of an ongoing severe/life threatening medical condition will be prioritised). Given that there is no formal vulnerability identification mechanism at any stage in the applicant process, the onus will be on the applicant and/or their representative to request prioritisation.

²⁷⁵ Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question 1089*, 21 March 2023, available [here](#).

²⁷⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

²⁷⁷ Article 13(3)(a) recast Asylum Procedures Directive.

²⁷⁸ Section 73(2)(i) IPA.

²⁷⁹ IPO and UNHCR, *Prioritisation of Applications for International Protection under the International Protection Act 2015*, 27 February 2017, available [here](#).

3. Use of medical reports

Indicators: Use of medical reports

1. Does the law provide for the possibility of a medical report in support of the applicant's statements regarding past persecution or serious harm? Yes In some cases No
2. Are medical reports taken into account when assessing the credibility of the applicant's statements? Yes In some cases No

Under Section 23 IPA, a report in relation to the health of the applicant may be furnished if required by the officer of the IPO. This may occur if an officer of the IPO or a member of the IPAT has a question regarding the physical or psychological health of the applicant. The applicant can choose a nominated medical practitioner from a panel established by the Minister for such health reports. The IPA is silent on how the results of the health report will be used and no reference is made to the consent of the applicant being required for such health examinations to be carried out.

It is the duty of the applicant to cooperate in the investigation of their application and to furnish to the IPO any relevant information. Applicants may approach an NGO called Spirasi, which specialises in assessing and treating trauma and survivors of torture, to obtain a medical report. The approach is made through their solicitor. If an asylum applicant is represented by the Legal Aid Board, then the medico-legal report will be paid for through legal aid. If the request is made by a private practitioner, the report must be paid for privately. Spirasi reports receive a fee of €492 per report from the State through the Legal Aid Board's Refugee Legal Service while the cost to produce each report is €1,190. For clients who have private legal representation the cost of a medico-legal report (MLR) can be a barrier to access.²⁸⁰

Spirasi's services include the provision of Medico Legal Reports to the protection process, multidisciplinary assessments of survivors of torture, therapeutic interventions, psychosocial support, outreach and early identification, language and vocational training and training to third parties on survivors of torture. SPIRASI puts the waiting time for appointments for reports at eight-ten months from the date of referral, however it is understood that applicants waiting for a report for an IPAT appeal hearing will be prioritised.²⁸¹

In their 2017 submission to the UN Committee against Torture, Spirasi expressed concern at victims of torture not being able to access reports to support their asylum application in advance of a first-instance decision in the envisaged shorter process under the single application procedure. Additionally, Spirasi indicated at that time that due to the drain on resources in a climate of reduced funding, they were restricted in their capacity to provide the additional rehabilitative supports required by victims of torture.²⁸²

Picking up on these concerns, the UN Committee against Torture in its Concluding Observations on Ireland in August 2017 recommended that the State: 'Provide adequate funding to ensure that all persons undergoing the single procedure under the International Protection Act have timely access to medico-legal documentation of torture, ensure that all refugees who have been tortured have access to specialised rehabilitation services that are accessible country-wide and to support and train personnel working with asylum-applicants with special needs.'²⁸³

²⁸⁰ SPIRASI, *Submission to the UN Committee against Torture in advance of their review of Ireland*, June 2017, available [here](#), 14.

²⁸¹ *ibid.*

²⁸² *ibid.*, 15.

²⁸³ UN Committee against Torture, *Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Ireland*, August 2017, available [here](#), para 12(c).

4. Legal representation of unaccompanied children

Indicators: Unaccompanied Children

1. Does the law provide for an identification mechanism for unaccompanied children?
 Yes No
2. Does the law provide for the appointment of a representative to all unaccompanied children?
 Yes No

Section 14 IPA states that where it appears to an immigration officer or an officer of the IPO that a child who is seeking international protection is not accompanied by an adult, the officer shall inform, as soon as practicable, Tusla and thereafter the provisions of the Child Care Act 1991 apply.

The law provides for the appointment of a legal representative, but the sections of the Child Care Act that would need to be invoked are not in practice. Unaccompanied children are taken into care under Section 4 and 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 as amended. Neither section provides for a legal guardian. There are no provisions stating that a child must be appointed a solicitor, nor is there any legislative provision that a legal representative must be assigned within a certain period. Upon referral to Tusla, each unaccompanied child is appointed a social worker.²⁸⁴ It is not known whether there is a maximum number of unaccompanied children per social worker. Whereby a young person is unhappy with their assigned social worker, they are encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss their concerns with said assigned social worker directly to resolve the issues. Whereby no resolution is reached, the young person can submit a complaint in writing, either online or person, to Tusla, which is registered with the local office concerned. Complaints received by Tusla are recorded to the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the complainant receives a reference number so that they may track the progress of their complaint. At all times, the complainant may also submit a complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman or the Ombudsman for Children.²⁸⁵

Tusla then becomes responsible for making an application for the child, where it appears to Tusla that an application should be made by or on behalf of the child on the basis of information including legal advice in accordance with Section 15(4) IPA. In that case, Tusla arranges for the appointment of an appropriate person to make an application on behalf of the child. There is no legislative or policy guidance setting out how Tusla should make a decision on whether or not an unaccompanied minor should make an international protection application, and such decisions appear to be made on a case-by-case basis. The sole decision on whether or not an unaccompanied child may make an application for international protection is entirely at the discretion Tusla, which raises concerns in relation to the child's individual right to seek asylum under Article 18 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.²⁸⁶

The provisions on the appointment of a legal representative do not differ depending on the procedure (e.g. Dublin). The Dublin III Regulation is engaged once an application is made. However, the assignment of the Member State responsible for the examination of a child's claim differs from that of adults under Article 8 of the Dublin III Regulation. At that point, the child will typically have a solicitor, whose duty it is to provide advice and legal representation to the child. If the child is in care, they will also have a social worker whose duty it is to provide for the immediate and ongoing needs and welfare of the child through appropriate placement and links with health, psychological, social and educational services.

²⁸⁴ International Protection Office, *Information Booklet for Applicants of International Protection*, January 2017, available [here](#), 29.

²⁸⁵ Tusla, 'Feedback and complaints', available [here](#).

²⁸⁶ Irish Refugee Council, *Submission to the UN Committee against Torture on its Review of Ireland's National Report*, June 2017, available [here](#), 11.

E. Subsequent applications

Indicators: Subsequent Applications

1. Does the law provide for a specific procedure for subsequent applications? Yes No
2. Is a removal order suspended during the examination of a first subsequent application?
 - ❖ At first instance Yes No
 - ❖ At the appeal stage Yes No
3. Is a removal order suspended during the examination of a second, third, subsequent application?
 - ❖ At first instance Yes No
 - ❖ At the appeal stage Yes No

Section 22 IPA sets out that a person who wishes to make a subsequent asylum application must apply to the Minister for permission to apply again. The application must set out the grounds of the application and why the person is seeking to re-enter the asylum process including a written statement of the reasons why the person concerned considers that the consent of the Minister should be given. The application is made in writing and there is no oral interview. The Minister shall consent to a subsequent application being made when: new elements or findings have arisen or have been presented by the person concerned, which makes it significantly more likely that the person will qualify for international protection, provided that the person was incapable of presenting those elements or findings for the purposes of their previous application for a declaration; as well as when the person was an applicant whose previous application was withdrawn or deemed withdrawn through no fault of their own and therefore they are incapable of pursuing their previous application. If the Minister refuses to consent to a subsequent application in a written decision, the applicant can submit an appeal to the IPAT within ten working days.²⁸⁷ The Tribunal shall make its decision without an oral hearing.

Section 22 IPA states that the Minister shall, as soon as practicable after receipt of an application, give to the person concerned a statement in writing specifying, in a language that the person may reasonably be supposed to understand (a) the procedures that are to be followed (b) the entitlement of the person to communicate with UNHCR (c) the entitlement of the person to make submissions in writing to the Minister, (d) the duty of the person to co-operate with the Minister and to furnish information relevant to their application, and (e) such other information as the Minister considers necessary to inform the person of and of any other relevant provision of the International Protection Act and regulations made under it.

If the Minister consents to the person making a subsequent asylum application, they are subject to the single procedure in the normal way.

On 13 October 2020, the Supreme Court of Ireland handed down a judgment in the case of *Seredych v. The Minister for Justice* [2020] IESC 62. This case concerned the question of whether the Minister for Justice and Equality is obliged to revoke a deportation order or otherwise facilitate a person to enter the State, in circumstances where that person has been granted consent to make a subsequent application for international protection under section 22 of the International Protection Act 2015. Justice Baker, giving judgment for the Court, adopted the analysis of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales in *R (on Application of AB) v. The Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] EWCA Civ 383,²⁸⁸ which indicated that there is nothing within the Procedures Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU) that obliges a Member State to readmit to its territory an applicant who had previously chosen to leave the State while their application remained pending.²⁸⁹

Throughout 2023, there were a total of 50 subsequent applications pursuant to s.22 of the IPA 2015.²⁹⁰ Throughout 2024, there were a total of 125 subsequent applications for international protection pursuant

²⁸⁷ Section 22(8) IPA; Section 3(b) International Protection Act 2015 (Procedures and Periods for Appeals) Regulations 2017.

²⁸⁸ *R (on Application of AB) v. The Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2018] EWCA Civ 383, 6 March 2018, available [here](#).

²⁸⁹ *Seredych v. The Minister for Justice* [2020] IESC 62, available [here](#).

²⁹⁰ International Protection Office, April 2024.

to s.22 of the IPA 2015.²⁹¹ Throughout 2025, there were a total of 184 subsequent applications for international protection pursuant to s.22 of the IPA 2015.²⁹²

| Breakdown of the total number of subsequent applicants in 2025 by nationality ²⁹³ | |
|--|------------|
| Georgia | 60 |
| Nigeria | 29 |
| Algeria | 16 |
| Pakistan | 15 |
| South Africa | 15 |
| Other | 49 |
| Total | 184 |

F. The safe country concepts

Indicators: Safe Country Concepts

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Does national legislation allow for the use of “safe country of origin” concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is there a national list of safe countries of origin? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is the safe country of origin concept used in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Does national legislation allow for the use of “safe third country” concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Is the safe third country concept used in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Does national legislation allow for the use of “first country of asylum” concept? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

1. Safe country of origin

Under Section 72 IPA the Minister may make an order designating a country as safe and it should be deemed a safe country of origin for the purposes of the single procedure. In deciding to make the order, the Minister must be satisfied that, on the basis of the legal situation, the application of the law within a democratic system and the general political circumstances, it can be shown that there is generally and consistently no persecution, no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and no threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict. In making the assessment, the Minister shall have regard to the extent to which protection is provided against persecution or mistreatment by (a) the relevant laws and regulations of the country and the manner in which they are applied, (b) observance of the rights and freedoms laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and UN Convention against Torture (CAT), in particular the rights from which derogation cannot be made under Article 15(2) ECHR; (c) respect for the *non-refoulement* principle in accordance with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and (d) provision for a system of effective remedies against violations of those rights and freedoms. The Minister’s decision shall be based on a number of sources of information including, in particular, information from other Member States, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA, former European Asylum Support Office), the High Commissioner, the Council of Europe and such other international organisations as the Minister considers appropriate.

The Minister may amend or revoke any such order and shall review on a regular basis the situation of any country designated under Section 72, however, the periodicity of such reviews is not known

²⁹¹ International Protection Office, March 2025.
²⁹² International Protection Office, March 2026.
²⁹³ International Protection Office, March 2026.

In April 2018, the Minister for Justice commenced S.I. No. 121 of 2018, which expanded the safe country of origin list to include **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Georgia and South Africa.**²⁹⁴

In June 2023, the Department of Justice announced that it was to conduct a review of the list of 'designated safe countries of origin'.²⁹⁵ Subsequently, in January 2024, the Minister for Justice announced that, following the conclusion of the review process, two countries, **Algeria and Botswana**, would be added to the safe countries list.²⁹⁶ In July 2024, following a further review, an additional five countries were added to the safe countries list: **Brazil, Egypt, India, Malawi and Morocco**, bringing the total number of countries appearing on the safe countries list to 15.²⁹⁷

The safe country of origin list continues to be applied in practice, reportedly in response to a significant increase in the numbers of applicants to Ireland from those countries since 2017. As of December 2022, Georgia and South Africa were amongst the top 10 countries of origin, with 2,710 and 450 applications respectively.²⁹⁸ In 2023, Nigeria and Georgia were amongst the top 5 countries of origin with 2,084 and 1,065 applications respectively. Algeria also featured amongst the top 5 countries of origin with 1,462 applications, accounting for 11% of the total applications.²⁹⁹ In 2024, Nigeria once again featured in the top 5 countries of origin, with 4,037 applications, accounting for 21.7% of all applications.³⁰⁰ In 2025, Nigeria and Georgia featured in the top 5 countries of origin, accounting for 14.745% (1,940) and 7% (950) of applications respectively.³⁰¹

Where it appears to the IPO that an applicant is a national or has a right of residence in a designated safe country then the country will be deemed to be a safe country of origin for the purposes of an assessment of an applicant's international protection application only where: (a) the country is the country of origin of the applicant; and (b) the applicant has not submitted any serious grounds for considering the country not to be a safe country of origin in their particular circumstances and in terms of their eligibility for international protection.³⁰² There is no appeal against a designation that a person comes from a designated safe country of origin.

Under the revised procedure applicants from 'designated safe countries of origin' will now receive a date for their substantive interview within four to six weeks of making their initial application. For details on how this impacts the asylum procedure, see [Accelerated procedure](#).

In October 2025, the Irish Court of Appeal issued further clarification with respect to the safe country of origin concept and the manner in which it interacts with the concept of state protection. The Court, giving judgment in the case of *Z.M and N.G v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal* [2025] IECA 208, determined that the Tribunal had not erred in law in relying on the safe country designation of Georgia and Albania in concluding that effective State protection was available to the applicants concerned. The Court held that having regard for the designation of a particular State as a safe country was merely an additional factual matter which could support the Tribunal's conclusion regarding the availability of State Protection while not, in itself, determining the outcome. The Tribunal was thus entitled to consider the fact that Georgia and Albania were on the safe country list as part of a broader factual assessment of

²⁹⁴ S.I. No. 121 of 2018, International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Countries of Origin) Order 2018.

²⁹⁵ The Journal, 'Irish officials to review 'safe countries of origin' designation on 8 nations within next year', 3 June 2023, available [here](#).

²⁹⁶ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee announces new measures to expedite international protection application processing', 30 January 2024, available [here](#).

²⁹⁷ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee announces new additions to Safe Countries of Origin list', 2 July 2024, available [here](#).

²⁹⁸ Acting Minister for Justice Simon Harris, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 558*, 31 January 2023, available [here](#).

²⁹⁹ IPO, 'Monthly Statistical Report December 2023, December 2023, available [here](#).

³⁰⁰ IPO, 'Monthly Statistical Report December 2024, December 2024, available [here](#).

³⁰¹ International Protection Office, March 2026.

³⁰² Section 33 IPA.

conditions and protections in those countries, provided it was not the exclusive or dispositive reason for refusal.³⁰³

2. Safe third country

The Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential provisions) Act 2020 inserted into the International Protection Act 2015 section 72A, providing for the Designation of safe third countries. The United Kingdom was designated a 'safe third country' pursuant to s. 72A in 2020.³⁰⁴

Section 21 IPA is amended by the enactment of the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2020. Section 119 of the Act of 2020 amends s. 21(2) IPA by the insertion of subsection (c) which states that an application for international protection may be determined inadmissible whereby the applicant arrives in the State from a safe third country that is regarded as a safe country for that person.³⁰⁵ A "safe country" will be regarded as such whereby:

- a. The individual has a sufficient connection with the country concerned on the basis of which it is reasonable for them to return there;
- b. They will not be subjected to the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment if returned to the country concerned;
- c. The applicant will be readmitted to the country concerned pursuant to the Dublin Regulation.³⁰⁶

According to s.119(d), in determining whether an individual has "sufficient connection with the country concerned, regard will be had for the period the individual has spent in the country, whether lawfully or unlawfully, any relationship between the individual and persons in the country concerned, including nationals and residents of that country and family members seeking to be recognised in that country as refugees, the presence in the country concerned of any family members, relatives or other family relations of the individual concerned and the nature and extent of any cultural connections between the individual and the country concerned."³⁰⁷

Section 122 of the Act makes provision for s.72A IPA, permitting the Minister for Justice to designate a particular state as a safe third country whereby the state concerned meets certain conditions relating to safety and asylum practices.³⁰⁸ In 2020 the United Kingdom was designated a safe third country for the purposes of s.119.³⁰⁹

In February 2022, it was confirmed that no return orders were issued to the United Kingdom in 2021, or to-date in 2022, pursuant to s.51A of the International Protection Act 2015, in circumstances whereby an applicant's application was deemed inadmissible under s.21.³¹⁰ As of March 2023, 29 inadmissibility decisions were made pursuant to s.51A.³¹¹ As of April 2024, 45 inadmissibility decisions were made pursuant to s. 51A. It is not clear whether return orders were affected in respect of 2023 and 2024 decisions.³¹²

In February 2024, the High Court began hearing submissions in two lead cases challenges to legality of the Minister for Justice's designation of the UK as a "safe third country" on the basis that the Minister's designation was unlawful and ultra vires her powers due to the absence of certain safeguards required

³⁰³ *Z.M and N.G v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal* [2025] IECA, 21 October 2025, available [here](#).

³⁰⁴ S.I. No. 725/2020 - International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Third Country) Order 2020, available [here](#).

³⁰⁵ Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2020, s.119, available [here](#).

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*, s. 119(d).

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*, s.122.

³⁰⁹ S.I. No. 725/2020 - International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Third Country) Order 2020, available [here](#).

³¹⁰ Minister for Justice and Equality Helen McEntee, *Response to Parliamentary Questions No 564*, 15 February 2022, available [here](#).

³¹¹ International Protection Office, March 2023.

³¹² International Protection Office, April 2024.

by EU law.³¹³ Both applicants, from Iraq and Nigeria respectively, had been refused asylum in the UK, and challenged by way of judicial review the lawfulness of the Minister's designation, having regard for the UK's Rwanda policy, pursuant to which the UK government has agreed to transfer asylum applicants to Rwanda for processing of their protection claims.

Delivering judgment for the High Court in April 2024, Ms. Justice Siobhán Phelan concluded that the failure to require the Minister for Justice to be satisfied that a person would not be subject to serious harm on transfer to a third country, if designated as safe, meant that Ireland was in breach of the requirements of EU law, specifically Art 3(3) of the Dublin III Regulations. Accordingly, the High Court granted declarations that the designation of the UK as a safe third country pursuant to the 2020 Order was contrary to the State's obligations pursuant to EU law. Moreover, the decisions made by the respondents in respect of the applicants on the basis of this designation were squashed.³¹⁴

Following the judgment, on 30th April 2024, the Minister for Justice obtained Cabinet approval to progress legislative changes to allow the resumption of returns to the UK. In March 2025, International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Third Country) Order 2025 was signed into law.³¹⁵ However, it was not known at the time of updating (January 2026) whether any returns to the United Kingdom have occurred in practice.

3. First country of asylum

Under Section 21(15) IPA a country is a first country of asylum for a person if they: (a) have been recognised in that country as a refugee and can still avail themselves of that protection, or otherwise enjoy sufficient protection in that country including benefiting from the principle of non-*refoulement*; and (b) will be re-admitted to that country.

An application for international protection is inadmissible if a country is deemed to be a first country of asylum for an applicant. There have been anecdotal reports that persons who have been deemed inadmissible by the IPO may have difficulty accessing legal representation from the Legal Aid Board, however the full impact of the inadmissibility provisions in practice in Ireland remains to be seen.

In July 2019, the Irish High Court referred three questions to the CJEU regarding the application of this concept in *M.S. (Afghanistan) v. The Minister for Justice and Equality; M.W. (Afghanistan) v. The Minister for Justice and Equality; G.S. (Georgia) v. The Minister for Justice and Equality*, following the Minister's refusal of the appellants' applications for international protection on the grounds that they had benefitted from subsidiary protection from another state.³¹⁶ Delivering judgment on 10 December 2020, the CJEU determined that Article 25(2) of the Procedures Directive 2005 must be interpreted as not precluding the enactment of legislation in a Member State, which render inadmissible an application for international protection in circumstances whereby the applicant benefits from subsidiary protection in another Member State.³¹⁷

³¹³ Breaking News, 'UK's Rwanda policy does not legally exist, State claims in asylum seeker actions', 21 February 2024, available [here](#).

³¹⁴ *A v. Minister for Justice & Ors, B v. International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors* [2024] IEHC 183, available [here](#).

³¹⁵ SI No. 73/2025 – International Protection Act 2015 (Safe Third Country) Order 2025, available [here](#).

³¹⁶ *M.S. (Afghanistan) v The Minister for Justice and Equality; M.W. (Afghanistan) v The Minister for Justice and Equality; G.S. (Georgia) v The Minister for Justice and Equality*; (Approved) [2019] IEHC 477, 2 July 2019, available [here](#).

³¹⁷ Case C-616/19, *M.S., M.W. and G.S. v. Minister for Justice and Equality*, ECLI:EU:C: 2020:1010, available [here](#).

G. Information for asylum applicants and access to NGOs and UNHCR

1. Provision of information on the procedure

Indicators: Information on the Procedure

1. Is sufficient information provided to asylum applicants on the procedures, their rights and obligations in practice? Yes With difficulty No
- ❖ Is tailored information provided to unaccompanied children? Yes No

A person who states an intention to seek asylum or an unwillingness to leave the state for fear of persecution is interviewed by an immigration or international protection officer as soon as practicable after arriving, depending on the location where such an intention is expressed. The relevant officer informs the person that they may apply to the Minister for Justice and Equality for protection and that they are entitled to consult a solicitor and UNHCR. Where possible this is communicated in a language that the person understands. With respect to persons seeking protection at the border, as noted in [Access to the territory and push backs](#), it appears that people may sometimes be refused leave to land even when there are clear indicators of the fact that they might have protection needs.

Where a person is detained, the immigration officer or member of the Garda Síochána shall inform the person of the power under which they are being detained; that they shall be brought before a court to determine whether they should be detained or released; that they are entitled to consult a solicitor; that they are entitled to notify the UNHCR of the detention; that they are entitled to leave the state at any time; and that they are entitled to the assistance of an interpreter.

The IPO, as soon as possible after receipt of an application shall give the applicant a statement in writing, specifying in a language that the applicant may reasonably be supposed to understand:

- a) the procedures to be observed in the investigation of the application;
- b) the entitlement to consult a solicitor;
- c) the entitlement of the applicant under the International Protection Act to be provided with the services of an interpreter
- d) the entitlement to make written submissions to the Commissioner in relation to his/her application;
- e) the duty of the applicant to cooperate and to furnish relevant information;
- f) the obligation to comply with the rules relating to the right to enter or remain in the state and the possible consequences of non-compliance;
- g) the possible consequences of a failure to attend the personal interview.

The IPO provides written information to every asylum applicant and there is a copy of the information booklet available on the recently established IPO website and is available in 18 languages.³¹⁸

All applicants are given recently issued information leaflets from IPO and the European Commission entitled 'Information about the Dublin Regulation for applicants for international protection pursuant to Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013', a guide to the Dublin process in general. A separate information leaflet is also provided to persons who are subject to the Dublin procedure, entitled 'I'm in the Dublin procedure – what does this mean? Information for applicants for international protection found in a Dublin procedure, pursuant to Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013'. A separate information leaflet aimed specifically at unaccompanied children is also available, entitled 'Children asking for international protection, information for unaccompanied children who are applying for international protection pursuant to Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 604/2013'.³¹⁹ However, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is not always clear that the asylum applicant understands that they are being subject to the Dublin procedure. The onus is at all times placed on the asylum applicant to read and understand the content of the Dublin

³¹⁸ IPO, *Publications*, available [here](#).

³¹⁹ All information leaflets are available online: [here](#).

information leaflet, rather than ensuring that it is properly explained to the applicant by a caseworker or Authorised Officer.

2. Access to NGOs and UNHCR

Indicators: Access to NGOs and UNHCR

1. Do asylum applicants located at the border have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No
2. Do asylum applicants in detention centres have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No
3. Do asylum applicants accommodated in remote locations on the territory (excluding borders) have effective access to NGOs and UNHCR if they wish so in practice? Yes With difficulty No

There are a wide variety of non-governmental organisations providing legal, social and integration assistance to international protection applicants and refugees in Ireland.³²⁰ In general, NGOs and UNHCR do not have access to the airport or the International Protection Office. However, on several occasions since the introduction of the revised international protection procedure, the Irish Refugee Council has been facilitated in accompanying vulnerable applicants when making their application for protection at the International Protection Office.³²¹ Additionally, legal representatives are permitted to accompany applicants when they undergo their substantive interview at the International Protection Office. However, in practice this rarely occurs, save for in the case of particularly vulnerable applicants.³²²

H. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in the procedure

Indicators: Treatment of Specific Nationalities

1. Are applications from specific nationalities considered manifestly well-founded? Yes No
❖ If yes, specify which:
2. Are applications from specific nationalities considered manifestly unfounded?³²³ Yes No
❖ If yes, specify which: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, FYROM, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Georgia, South Africa, Algeria and Botswana.

Legislation in Ireland does not single out any application from a specific nationality as manifestly well-founded in the context of the regular procedure. However, with respect to the scheduling of substantive interviews of applicants, the IPO may prioritise cases of certain nationalities on the basis of ‘the likelihood that applications are well-founded due to the country of origin or habitual residence of applicants.’³²⁴ The Department of Justice has specified that applications from persons from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, Eritrea and Somalia may be prioritised on the basis ‘of country of origin information, protection determination rates in EU member states and UNHCR position papers indicating the likely well-foundedness of applications from such countries.’³²⁵ Prioritisation of protection applicants from these states continued throughout 2025.

In August 2021, in response to the emerging humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the Department of Justice confirmed that it would begin prioritising international protection applications from Afghan nationals in line with updated advice provided by UNHCR. In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, the IPO dispensed with interviews for many Afghan nationals, who were subsequently issued with Declarations of Refugee status on a papers-only basis. This practice continued throughout 2023 in some, but not all cases. It was also announced that Afghan nationals facing transfers to other EU countries pursuant to the

³²⁰ UNHCR, ‘Non-Governmental Organizations in Ireland’, available [here](#).
³²¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.
³²² *ibid.*
³²³ Whether under the “safe country of origin” concept or otherwise.
³²⁴ IPO and UNHCR, ‘Prioritisation of Applications for International Protection under the International Protection Act 2015’, 27 February 2017, available [here](#).
³²⁵ *ibid.*

Dublin III procedure would have their applications for international protection examined in Ireland on compassionate grounds.³²⁶ However, the extent to which this applied, or continues to apply in practice, as of 2025, remains unclear as data regarding the nationalities of those subject to the Dublin procedure is not readily accessible.

The Department also confirmed that applications for family reunification made by Afghan nationals pursuant to the International Protection Act 2015 would now be prioritised and fast-tracked to completion, with full consideration given to the humanitarian context.³²⁷ However, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, this has not been the case in practice. In one case, an application for family reunification was substantially delayed owing to difficulties in acquiring the requisite identification documents for the proposed beneficiaries, as well as a refusal on the part of the Family Reunification Unit to accept copy documentation, despite the obvious issues associated with obtaining original documentation from Afghanistan.

Additionally, as of February 2022, the Irish government had provided visa waivers to approximately 532 persons fleeing Afghanistan, with the first group of evacuated refugees arriving in August 2021.³²⁸ Approximately 425 Afghans had arrived in Ireland as of February 2022.³²⁹ Newly arrived Afghan refugees were accommodated at one of three Emergency and Orientation Reception Centres in Mosney, Co. Meath, Clonea, Co. Waterford and Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon.

Subsequently in September 2023, the Irish Refugee Protection Programme announced that this emergency response had ceased. It stated that it would continue to register requests for access to the programme and would accept 'a limited number of refugees from Afghanistan in a more limited manner dependent on capacity and the application of objective criteria'. It further noted that at present, IRPP resources were at capacity in terms of accommodation and pressures from ongoing commitments from other strands of the resettlement programme. Therefore, applications under the programme would be considered only whereby potential beneficiaries had verifiable accommodation and integration supports already available within their community.³³⁰

In September 2021, the Irish Government also approved the introduction of the Afghan Admissions Programme with a view of admitting up to 500 Afghan nationals to Ireland. The programme opened for applications on 16 December 2021 for an eight-week period. The programme enabled current or former Afghan nationals legally resident in Ireland on or before 1 September 2021 to apply to nominate up to four close family members, who are living in Afghanistan or who have recently fled to neighbouring territories, including Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, to apply for temporary residence in Ireland. The programme opened for applications on the 16th of December 2021 and closed on the 11th of March 2022. There was a total of 528 applications.³³¹ As of 8 November 2023 the Department of Justice had issued 234 positive decisions in respect of 623 beneficiaries. A further 32 negative decisions in respect of 109 individuals had been issued. In addition, 68 applicants had been informed that their applications in respect of 183 individuals were not eligible under the terms of the Programme. As of 8 November 2023, 178 applications in respect of 555 beneficiaries were pending.³³² While initially anticipated that AAP would largely be concluded by the end of 2023, as of May 2025, the Department of Justice continues to process remaining applications.³³³ In the period between January and October 2023, a total of 476 Long Stay Join Family were also issued to Afghan nationals.³³⁴

³²⁶ RTÉ, Department of Justice to prioritise international protection applications from Afghan Nationals, 18 August 2021, available [here](#).

³²⁷ *ibid.*

³²⁸ The Journal, 'First group of evacuated Afghan refugees to arrive in Ireland this evening', 23 August 2021, available [here](#).

³²⁹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question Nos 135, 146 and 173*, 3 February 2022, available [here](#).

³³⁰ Irish Refugee Protection Programme, 'Afghan Response', 23 September 2023, available [here](#).

³³¹ *ibid.*

³³² Minister for Justice, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 333*, 14th November 2023, available [here](#).

³³³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

³³⁴ Minister for Justice, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 370*, 10th October 2023, available [here](#).

In October 2023, following the escalation of conflict in Gaza, the Irish Refugee Council wrote to the Taoiseach, the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. In its correspondence, the Irish Refugee Council supported the call for a ceasefire and the free flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Additionally, IRC recommended that personal interviews in respect of international protection applicants from the Occupied Palestinian Territories be dispensed with where possible, that statutory-based and discretionary family reunification applications be expedited and that the establishment of a humanitarian admissions or resettlement scheme be considered.³³⁵ Throughout 2025, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, applications for protection made by Palestinian nationals were generally afforded priority. Additionally, applications for family reunification made by Palestinian nationals were expedited in some cases following advocacy.³³⁶

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the International Protection Office announced that it was pausing final decisions with respect to international protection applications from Syrian nationals.³³⁷ Following the announcement, the Irish Refugee Council was contacted by approximately 140 Syrian nationals seeking clarification regarding the current situation.³³⁸ In a statement, the Irish Refugee Council queried the legal basis for the pausing of applications and further urged the International Protection Office to communicate to the 450 Syrian nationals currently in the protection process an approximate timeframe in which the issuing of decisions would resume.³³⁹ Additionally, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission wrote to Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, seeking clarification regarding the nature of the proposed pause in the issuing of decisions. The Commission expressed significant concern regarding the decision, stating that the situation in Syria remains ‘far from stable’ and that international protection applicants from Syria remain entitled to a decision on their status with due expedition.³⁴⁰ As of January 2026, issuing of decisions in respect of Syrian nationals had resumed following the issuing by the EUAA of comprehensive Country Guidance on Syria arising from the changed circumstances in the State.³⁴¹

³³⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy Officer, January 2024.

³³⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2026.

³³⁷ RTE, ‘Final decisions on Syrian asylum applications paused’, 10 December 2024, available [here](#).

³³⁸ Irish Refugee Council, ‘Irish Refugee Council statement on pausing of Syrian protection applications’, 10 December 2024, available [here](#).

³³⁹ *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, ‘Commission deeply concerned at State’s temporary pause on Syrian IPAS Applications’, 19 December 2024, available [here](#).

³⁴¹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 120*, 14 January 2026, available [here](#).

Reception Conditions

Short overview of the reception system

International protection applicants are offered accommodation by the Irish State in reception centres under a system known as ‘Direct Provision.’ The State directly provides accommodation and board, along with a weekly allowance for personal requisites (as of January 2026 € 38.80 for adults and € 29.80 for children), a medical card and ancillary supports for individuals awaiting a decision on their application for international protection. The Direct Provision system is overseen by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), a subdivision of the Department of Justice and Equality.

Upon lodging an application for international protection, applicants are referred to IPAS. Previously, applicants were initially accommodated at Baleskin Reception Centre near Dublin Airport for a number of weeks to facilitate a preliminary interview at the IPO, as well as health screening and registration for Community Welfare Service assistance. However, owing to capacity constraints within the international protection accommodation system, from March 2022, Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre was contracted by the International Protection Accommodation Service and repurposed as a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of [Temporary Protection](#), as well as for the accommodation of some newly arrived international protection applicants.

Throughout the course of 2025, reception standards continued to deteriorate. 2025 saw a continued reliance by the State on so-called ‘emergency centres’ and tented accommodation. Applicants continued to be accommodated in congregated and overcrowded settings without access to basic public services.³⁴²

Plans for an additional tented accommodation facility to be located at Thornton Hall, Co. Dublin were temporarily suspended on 5 November 2024, after the State indicated its intention not to contest judicial review proceedings instigated in respect of the proposed development. The proceedings were instigated by local residents who alleged that a Ministerial Order made in respect of the site ought not be allowed to stand due to a lack of adequate environmental screening having been conducted in advance of establishment of the facility.³⁴³ Subsequently, on 18 November 2024, it was reported that a revised Ministerial Order would be issued ‘within weeks’, however, development of the site remained suspended.³⁴⁴ The proceedings followed several months of disruptive protests at the site by locals who objected to the development.³⁴⁵ In late 2025, the High Court formally quashed the ministerial order that had allowed the centre to be set up without full planning and environmental approval, declaring the centre’s fast-tracked approval legally invalid. However, the judge allowed a four-month stay on the order taking effect and on this basis, the Government has until early March 2026 to pass corrective legislation. Throughout the course of proceedings, the centre continued to operate, albeit at a significantly reduced capacity. However, as of late 2025, the temporary structures on the site were dismantled and the site was cleared.³⁴⁶

Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre also continued to operate throughout the year as both a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, as well as for the accommodation of newly arrived international protection applicants. In June 2025, it was announced that the State had approved plans to proceed with the purchase of the Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre for a sum of €148.2m. The State had been leasing the property from a private contractor since 2020, when it was initially used as a site for administering Covid vaccinations and later converted for use as a transit hub.³⁴⁷

³⁴² Information provided by IRC Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

³⁴³ Irish Examiner, ‘Thornton Hall plan to house 1,000 asylum seekers thrown into doubt’, 5 November 2024, available [here](#).

³⁴⁴ Irish Times, ‘New Ministerial Order to be made in weeks’, says Dept’, 18 November 2024, available [here](#).

³⁴⁵ Breakingnews.ie, ‘Thornton Hall protestor recorded making clear threat to security on site, court told’, 12 August 2024, available [here](#).

³⁴⁶ *ibid*.

³⁴⁷ RTE, ‘Government agrees €148m purchase of Citywest Hotel and campus’, 18 June 2025, available [here](#).

As of December 2025, there were 385 international protection applicants residing at Citywest Convention Centre.³⁴⁸

As of January 2026, there were 33,215 persons accommodated within the IPAS system, 25,662 of which were accommodated in emergency accommodation.³⁴⁹

While there is no obligation on an asylum applicant to remain in Direct Provision during the status determination process, if they do opt to leave or stay elsewhere Direct Provision allowance payments are withdrawn. Applicants who opt to reside in Direct Provision centres are accommodated until they are granted some form of status and are subsequently integrated into the community. However, in practice, a significant number of individuals who have been granted status have been unable to move out of Direct Provision owing to a lack of available and affordable housing. The housing crisis in Ireland continues to exacerbate the situation. According to latest available figures, as of January 2026, there were approximately 5,000 individuals with status residing in Direct Provision centres around the country.³⁵⁰

The transposition of the Reception Conditions Directive

Until 2018, Ireland had not been party to the Reception Conditions Directive.³⁵¹ However, the Supreme Court in its judgment in *N.V.H. v. Minister for Justice and Equality*, which dealt with the situation of an asylum applicant who had been living in Direct Provision for eight years with no access to employment, declared that the indefinite prohibition on employment for people in the asylum process was unconstitutional. The Court provided the State with a six-month period within which to review the ban on employment (see [Access to the Labour Market](#)) and to make proposals for providing effective access to the labour market for people in the asylum process. In its response, the Government announced on 22 November 2017 that it would opt into the recast Reception Conditions Directive.³⁵²

While the prohibition on seeking employment was struck down on 9 February 2018, opt into the Directive was only crystallised by the adoption of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 on 6 July 2018. Transposition was done by way of secondary legislation, a statutory instrument, enacted by the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Although this has placed the reception system on a legislative footing for the first time, the practice which preceded the Regulations continues to govern the approach to reception for people seeking international protection. In July 2019, the Irish Refugee Council published a report analysing the transposition of the Directive one year later.³⁵³ Particular concerns were the absence of a vulnerability assessment and the rapid increase in the number of people dispersed to *ad hoc* emergency accommodation premises due to the lack of available bed spaces in Direct Provision accommodation. As of 2026, the extent to which the provisions of the Regulations have been implemented in practice continues to vary significantly.

At the end of January 2021, a pilot programme for the conducting of vulnerability assessments was established at Baleskin reception centre in Dublin. Officials from the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) are carrying out assessments with the assistance of a social worker from the IPO. The pilot scheme initially assessed applicants seeking accommodation from the State and was subsequently extended to all new applicants seeking international protection.³⁵⁴ After a suspension between March and November 2024, it was announced that vulnerability assessments would resume and would be conducted by GoodPeople Homecare Ltd. According to IPAS, it is aimed to conduct 350 assessments a week, beginning with the existing backlog. Initially, vulnerability assessments were to be

³⁴⁸ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics', 14 December 2025, available [here](#).

³⁴⁹ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Stats, 18 January 2026*, available [here](#).

³⁵⁰ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 431*, 2 December 2025, available [here](#).

³⁵¹ Irish Refugee Council, 'The Reception Conditions Directive: One Year On', July 2019, available [here](#).

³⁵² Department of Justice and Equality, 'Government agrees framework for access to work for International Protection Applicants', 21 November 2017, available [here](#).

³⁵³ Irish Refugee Council, 'The Reception Conditions Directive: One Year On', July 2019, available [here](#).

³⁵⁴ *ibid.*

conducted at Citywest, with a view to expanding the service to the International Protection Office in the New Year³⁵⁵ Throughout 2025, 4, 537 vulnerability assessments were conducted. Of those assessed, 4,048 individuals were deemed to be vulnerable in accordance with the Regulations (see [Screening of vulnerability](#)).

The “McMahon Report” and Direct Provision reform

The 2015 McMahon Report marked the first comprehensive review of Ireland’s protection process and Direct Provision system in 15 years, making over 170 recommendations for reform;³⁵⁶ however, former Working Group members later observed that implementation was uneven, delayed, and often partial.³⁵⁷ Building on this report, draft National Standards for Direct Provision accommodation were developed in 2018, consulted on publicly, and finalised in 2019 to standardise conditions across centres.³⁵⁸ While intended as a key reform, the Standards initially lacked independent oversight, raising concerns about accountability and enforcement. Although the Standards became legally binding in January 2021, inspections continued to be conducted by IPAS and its contractors until the government confirmed in October 2021 that HIQA would assume responsibility for independent monitoring.³⁵⁹

As of 9 January 2024, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) assumed the responsibility for monitoring and inspecting International Protection Accommodations Service centres against the legally binding National Standards for Accommodation Offered to People in the Protection Process. This function is conferred upon HIQA by an amendment to the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 by way of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 649 of 2023).³⁶⁰ HIQA commenced inspections in early 2024, and in April 2024, published its first inspection reports.³⁶¹ As of November 2024, reports had been published in respect of nine centres. Three of the centres inspected were found to have no non-compliances identified against the National Standards. The remaining six had varying levels of compliance. The areas of non-compliance identified included assessment and response to special needs of residents, contingency planning and preparedness, accommodation, food, catering and cooking facilities, governance, accountability and leadership, responsiveness of workforce and safeguarding and protection.³⁶² In one of the centres, inspectors found that a safeguarding incident involving the welfare of four children was not managed in line with national policy or guidance. Whereby non-compliance, providers were required to submit compliance plans in order to demonstrate what improvements they will make in order to bring the centre into compliance with the National Standards.³⁶³

During 2025, HIQA continued to exercise its statutory oversight function in relation to permanent IPAS centres, conducting inspections to assess compliance with the National Standards. HIQA’s inspections focused on quality, safety, governance and the lived experience of residents in permanent accommodation settings. HIQA published multiple inspection statements over the course of the year, with inspection reports released in January, February, May, June, August, November and December 2025. These covered a broad range of permanent IPAS centres located in counties across the country.³⁶⁴ Several were found to have no non-compliances identified against the National Standards. However, a number of non-compliances were also identified across inspections. Common themes included instances where leadership structures, reporting systems or awareness of responsibilities amongst centre staff were

³⁵⁵ Information provided by IPAS, November 2024.

³⁵⁶ Department of Justice and Equality, Speech by Minister Fitzgerald: Publication of the Report of the Working Group on the Protection Process, 30 June 2015 available [here](#).

³⁵⁷ Irish Times, ‘Five years since McMahon report and 7,700 still in Direct Provision’, 30 June 2020, available [here](#).

³⁵⁸ For further details on the McMahon report and the 2018 National standards, see previous updates to this country report, available [here](#).

³⁵⁹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O’Gorman, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 107*, 7 October 2021, available [here](#).

³⁶⁰ HIQA, ‘International Protection Accommodation’, January 2024, available [here](#).

³⁶¹ *ibid*.

³⁶² Breakingnews.ie, ‘Non-compliance with food and protection found in some direct provision centres - HIQA, 27 November 2024, available [here](#).

³⁶³ *ibid*.

³⁶⁴ HIQA, ‘Inspection Reports’, available [here](#).

insufficient,³⁶⁵ inadequate implementation of safeguarding procedures,³⁶⁶ substandard accommodation arrangements,³⁶⁷ inadequate contingency planning and emergency preparedness, and ineffective systems for identifying and responding to the special needs of residents.³⁶⁸ For each instance of non-compliance, HIQA required that service providers submit comprehensive compliance plans outlining how deficits would be addressed in order to achieve full compliance with the national standards

Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process

In November 2019, the Government announced a new expert advisory group to look at a 'long term approach to how people seeking asylum are accommodated and supported'. The group, chaired by former European Commission secretary general Dr. Catherine Day, was tasked with making a series of recommendations to end the Direct Provision system and transform the international protection process.

Following an extensive review process, the group's report was published on 21 October 2020. Launching the report, the group's chair Dr. Catherine Day stated that a "whole-of-government approach" is required in order to successfully replace the system. She further added that "continued political oversight" was crucial in implementing the new system.³⁶⁹

The Advisory Group was concerned with two primary issues - the length of time that asylum applicants spend in the system and the type of accommodation and the support they receive while awaiting a final determination on their application for international protection.³⁷⁰

Amongst the most significant of the Advisory Group's recommendations is the abolition of the "congregated and segregated accommodation" of applicants for international protection by mid-2023.³⁷¹ Instead, applicants ought to be initially housed in a designated State-owned reception centre for a three-month period. An onsite multi-service centre should assist applicants in accessing the necessary services and entitlements, including legal aid and post-reception centre housing placement.³⁷² During this period, applicants should also be provided with a weekly cash allowance, a Temporary Residence Card, PPS number and access to ancillary supports such as a medical card, education and training. Applicants should also receive medical and vulnerability assessments within 30 days of making their application for international protection. Following the implementation of the revised vulnerability assessment policy discussed above, newly arrived applicants are required to self-refer, or be referred by a support service, to undergo a vulnerability assessment. The Irish Refugee Council also remains concerned about the lack of information provided to applicants regarding the assessment. It evident in our contact with clients that many individuals undergoing the vulnerability assessment are not aware of the purpose of the assessment, nor do they understand what the information acquired will be used for. It is thus apparent that many newly-arrived applicants have not yet undergone an assessment upon arrival in the State.

Following the initial 3-month reception period, applicants ought to be provided with own-door accommodation in a local community and be permitted to access a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) equivalent. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage would be responsible for securing housing placements. Social welfare allowance would be aligned with mainstream income supports and multi-service support would be provided with work placement, access to education and training, medical card and integration support for a period of up to 18 months following a positive decision.

³⁶⁵ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 15 August 2025', 15th August 2025, available [here](#).

³⁶⁶ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 05 November 2025', 5th November 2025, available [here](#).

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*

³⁶⁹ The Journal, 'Catherine Day: 'Continued political oversight' needed to end Direct Provision', 21 October 2020, available [here](#).

³⁷⁰ Advisory Group on Direct Provision, Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process, 21 October 2020, available [here](#), 5.

³⁷¹ *ibid.*, 8.

³⁷² *ibid.*, 12.

In the event that a negative determination is made and in circumstances whereby all avenues of appeal are exhausted, an applicant ought to be provided with own-door accommodation and housing allowance for a period of 3-6 months pending removal from the State. Social welfare allowance would be aligned with mainstream income supports for up to 6 months, while multi-service support would also continue during this period.³⁷³

The report also makes a number of recommendations that ought to be implemented in the short-term, until the new, permanent system enters into force. These include appointing the HIQA as an independent inspectorate to examine conditions in Direct Provision centres and ensure that the National Standards are being adequately implemented.³⁷⁴ Further immediate recommendations include facilitating access to driving licences and bank accounts, as well as removing restrictions on the right to work.³⁷⁵

Additionally, according to the Report, binding deadlines must apply for each stage of the international protection process. It is recommended that the IPO and IPAT should issue decisions within 6 months.³⁷⁶ In order to clear the backlog of existing cases, the report recommends that a simplified approach ought to be taken whereby an individual has been in the protection process for over 2 years by the end of 2020. In such circumstances, the individual ought to be offered permission to remain for a five-year period without prejudice to their pending application for international protection.³⁷⁷

The recommendations of the Advisory Group were assessed by relevant Government Ministers and their departments and informed the development of the Government's White Paper on replacing the Direct Provision system. The White Paper was published on 26 February 2021.³⁷⁸

Government White Paper on Ending Direct Provision

The Government's long-awaited White Paper on Ending Direct Provision was published on 26 February 2021. The paper establishes a variety of measures aimed at ending the system of Direct Provision and replacing it with a not-for-profit model. The paper broadly reflects the recommendations of the Advisory Group's report and sets out a roadmap towards establishing a new international protection accommodation policy, to be in place by 2024.³⁷⁹

The new model proposes a two-phased approach to accommodating applicants for international protection. In Phase One, it is proposed that the applicant will be accommodated in a designated Reception and Integration Centre for a period of four months. The focus during this phase will be on identifying the applicants' particular needs and linking them with appropriate support services. Accommodation in Reception and Integration Centres will be own-door for families and own-room for single people, with specific accommodation tailored to individuals with identified vulnerabilities. Applicants are to be provided with comprehensive information about the International Protection process, including information regarding Legal Aid Board services, Health services, Education supports, Childcare and Employment activation. An intensive orientation and English language programme will also be provided. Vulnerability Assessments will be carried out in order to determine particular accommodation and support needs and applicants will be linked with appropriate services accordingly. Applicants will continue to receive a bespoke allowance while in the Reception and Integration Centre, similar to that currently provided. In total, six Reception and Integration Centres will be established and operated by the newly established International Protection Support Service.³⁸⁰

³⁷³ *ibid.*
³⁷⁴ *ibid*, 12.
³⁷⁵ *ibid*, 80.
³⁷⁶ *ibid*, 56.
³⁷⁷ *ibid*, 56.
³⁷⁸ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision*, 26 February 2021, available [here](#).
³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*
³⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 42.

Under Phase Two, it is proposed that all accommodation provided will be own-door, self-contained houses or apartments for families, with single people housed in either own-door or own-room accommodation. Accommodation will be located in all counties and the location and number of applicants to be accommodated in each county will be determined according to a national settlement pattern. Different supports will apply to the applicant depending on the accommodation strand provided. For vulnerable persons, supports will be provided by not-for-profit organisations contracted and funded by the Department of Children, Equality and Disability, Integration and Youth to provide the service in a particular location. Whereby the applicant is not deemed vulnerable, resettlement workers, overseen by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, will act at county level to link applicants with supports and services. Applicants and their families will have the right to access mainstream services, including education and health services. Access to further intensive English language supports will also be provided.³⁸¹

The report has been widely welcomed by migrant rights groups in that it goes some way towards developing an all-government approach to ending the system of Direct Provision. However, a major weakness identified in the paper is that it fails to incorporate the Day Advisory Group recommendation in relation to offering permission to remain to people who are two or more years in the system. One of the issues associated with the current process is that the processing of applications takes too long, the result being that asylum applicants spend years waiting for a decision on their application, effectively putting their lives on hold. This ultimately causes considerable capacity issues within the system and, unless the current sizable backlog of cases is resolved, implementation of the Paper's key recommendations will be significantly hampered.

Following the publication of the White Paper, a team was established in the Department of Justice in order to lead the transition to a new accommodation model for international protection applicants. Additionally, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman appointed a programme board. The newly appointed board includes officials from the relevant Departments and agencies and independent members from various non-governmental organisations tasked with overseeing the transition to the new model. The programme board has met four times since it was established, with a fifth meeting scheduled for mid-December 2021. Minister O'Gorman also appointed a three-person external advisory group to act as an independent observer and oversee the implementation of the new model. Additionally, it was announced that the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, working with the Housing Agency, had begun the acquisition of properties for use during phase 2, that is, after people have completed an initial four months in a reception and integration centre and are moved into the community. It was envisaged that applicants would move into this accommodation beginning in 2022 and for this process to accelerate in the following years as more properties are acquired.³⁸² However, in light of the continuing accommodation crisis, it became apparent that the Government's aim of ending Direct Provision by 2024 was no longer feasible.³⁸³ Following a review conducted by the Department of Integration of projected timelines and deliverables contained in the White Paper, and a reassessment of the projections underpinning proposed reforms,³⁸⁴ the Minister for Integration announced that he would bring a revised White Paper to Cabinet in November 2023 setting out a longer-term plan to end the system of Direct Provision.³⁸⁵

On 27 March 2024, it was announced that the Government had agreed a new Comprehensive Accommodation Strategy for International Protection applicants. Following the publication of the White Paper to End Direct Provision in 2021, significant increases in the numbers of those seeking international protection in the State, as well as the requirement to accommodate beneficiaries of temporary protection, have resulted in significant challenges to the State's ability to provide accommodation in respect of those

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, 43.

³⁸² Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman, *Response to Parliamentary Question Nos 12, 14, 74, 77 and 82*, 3 December 2021, available [here](#).

³⁸³ The Irish Times, 'Plan to end direct provision by 2023 set to be watered down amid pressure from Ukraine war', 20th October 2022, available [here](#).

³⁸⁴ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 436*, 13th December 2022, available [here](#).

³⁸⁵ Irish Times, 'New plan to end direct provision to be set out in revised White Paper', 23 October 2023, available [here](#).

seeking international protection. A revised accommodation strategy was therefore published, both with a view to responding to the current homelessness crisis, as well as in order to establish a revised accommodation model, amending the approach outlined in the White Paper in order to take account of the increased number of arrivals.³⁸⁶ The Strategy foresees a move away from full State reliance on private accommodation providers, and towards a core of State-owned accommodation. The State aims to deliver 14,000 state-owned beds by 2028, and this will be supplemented by commercial providers. In order to deal with the demand-led nature of the system, the commissioning of emergency commercial accommodation will continue to be a feature in the short to medium term. According to the State it is the intention of the strategy to put an end to the use of unsuitable accommodation options currently relied upon and gain greater control in respect of the geographic distribution, allocation and dispersal of applicants.³⁸⁷ The Irish Refugee Council stated in a press release that, while the plan has several positive elements such as confirmation of a child benefit style payment and accommodation for vulnerable groups, it is extremely light on detail, dependent on funding that is not yet confirmed, and crucially, does not demonstrate a sufficiently urgent way to end the current homelessness crisis.³⁸⁸

Joint Committee on Justice and Equality

In December 2019, the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality of the Oireachtas published the 'Report on Direct Provision and the International Protection Application Process December 2019'.³⁸⁹ This report called for a fundamental reform of the Direct Provision system and describes it as 'not fit for purpose'.

The members of the Committee found that 'shared, institutionalised living fails to fully respect the rights to privacy and human dignity of those placed in these centres. The issues pointed out in the report of the all-party group include:

- ❖ Inadequate support and services that do not cater to the needs of vulnerable individuals arriving in Ireland;
- ❖ Long delays in the single application process;
- ❖ Issues with accessing the labour market; and
- ❖ Issues relating to children in the Direct Provision system.³⁹⁰

The report made 43 conclusions and recommendations and followed a series of public hearings with stakeholder groups and the receipt of more than 140 written submissions and visits by the Committee to Direct Provision centres in Mosney and Monaghan. Amongst its recommendations there was the change to 'own door' accommodation units for individuals and families; leaving behind the current 'for profit' running of direct provision, and the involvement of approved housing bodies in the provision of accommodation and services.³⁹¹ The work of the Joint Committee ceased with the dissolution of the 32nd Dáil in January 2020. However, many of the findings made by the Committee subsequently informed the work of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process.

³⁸⁶ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 'Government agrees new comprehensive accommodation strategy for International Protection applicants', 27 March 2024, available [here](#).

³⁸⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸⁸ Irish Refugee Council, 'Press release: Irish Refugee Council express concern over pact opt in and international protection accommodation plan and raise serious alarm about risk of homeless women and children', March 2024, available [here](#).

³⁸⁹ Houses of the Oireachtas, Joint Committee on Justice and Equality report finds Direct Provision 'not fit for purpose' and calls for fundamental reform of 'flawed' international protection application process, 12 December 2019, available [here](#).

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

In 2019, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its Concluding observations on the combined fifth to ninth reports of Ireland expressed its concerns about Ireland's Direct Provision system, referring to its continuous failure to provide adequate accommodation for protection applicants and in particular regarding:

- (a) The lengthy stay in inadequate living conditions in Direct Provision centres and its significant impact on mental health and family life of protection applicants;
- (b) The operation of Direct Provision centres by private actors on a for-profit basis without proper regulation or accountability mechanisms;
- (c) The extensive use of emergency accommodation for lengthy periods due to the capacity limit of Direct Provision centres and the housing crisis, the substandard living conditions of emergency accommodation and the lack of necessary services and support provided therein;
- (d) The reported lack of transparency regarding the deaths of persons residing in these centres (art.5).³⁹²

After expressing such concerns, the CERD made the recommendation to Ireland to phase out the Direct Provision system and develop an alternative reception model, with a series of interim measures:

- (a) Improve living conditions in Direct Provision centres and reduce the length of stay in the centres;
- (b) Set up clear standards of reception conditions for Direct Provision centres; regulate and inspect the operation of Direct Provision centres; and hold those responsible accountable in case of breach of standards;
- (c) Halt the emergency accommodation as soon as possible and develop a contingency planning framework with a view to effectively responding to capacity pressures;
- (d) Ensure transparency regarding the deaths in Direct Provision centres and collect and publish data on the deaths in the centres.³⁹³

STAD (Standing Against Direct Provision) Coalition

The STAD coalition was founded by eight NGOs in January 2022 with a view to lobbying the Government to deliver on the commitment to bring an end to direct provision in the next two years. Membership is comprised of Nasc, Amnesty International Ireland, Crosscare, Cultúr, Doras, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council, and the Movement of Asylum Applicants in Ireland. The coalition's primary aim is to replace Direct Provision with an alternative system by 2024, ensure that all emergency reception centres are closed as an immediate priority and reduce processing times for international protection applications and appeals. STAD has also called for HIQA to be provided with a mandate to independently inspect Direct Provision centres while they remain operation and for urgent measures identified in the Catherine Day report to be implemented immediately, such as an increase in the daily expenses allowance, making the right to work available after three months, and the provision a comprehensive vulnerability assessment to all applicants for international protection.³⁹⁴

In October 2023, the STAD coalition called upon the government to publish and implement a new White Paper on Direct Provision without delay. They called for a new roadmap to set out clear timelines for ending the use of the Direct Provision accommodation system, and for a human rights compliant alternative.³⁹⁵ At the time of updating (January 2026), no such revised Paper was forthcoming.³⁹⁶ The coalition also renewed its appeal for access to early legal advice for all those applying for international protection, independent HIQA inspections of all Direct Provision and emergency accommodation centres,

³⁹² UN CERD, *Concluding observations on the combined fifth to ninth reports of Ireland*, 12 December 2019, CERD/C/IRL/CO/5-9, available [here](#).

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ STAD, Coalition to end Direct Provision launched by leading not-for-profit groups, 26 January 2022, available [here](#).

³⁹⁵ STAD, Call for new White Paper on Direct Provision to be published without delay', October 13 2023, available [here](#).

³⁹⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy and Advocacy Officer, February 2024.

and renewed efforts to ensure homelessness is not a recurring issue for international protection applicants and those who have received immigration status in Ireland.³⁹⁷

A. Access and forms of reception conditions

1. Criteria and restrictions to access reception conditions

Indicators: Criteria and Restrictions to Reception Conditions

1. Does the law allow for access to material reception conditions for asylum applicants in the following stages of the asylum procedure?

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----|
| ❖ Regular procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| ❖ Dublin procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| ❖ Accelerated procedure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| ❖ First appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| ❖ Onward appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| ❖ Subsequent application | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reduced material conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |

2. Is there a requirement in the law that only asylum applicants who lack resources are entitled to material reception conditions? Yes No

Under the S.I. No 230/2018 European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 access to reception conditions is provided to a person who has given an indication of intention to seek asylum where they do not have sufficient means to have an adequate standard of living.³⁹⁸ An asylum applicant is defined by the IPA 2015 as a person who has made an application for international protection in accordance with section 15, or on whose behalf such an application has been made or is deemed to have been made. A recipient is a person who has indicated a wish to apply for international protection or someone who has lodged their claim, and who has not ceased to be a recipient. The Regulations do not apply to persons who fall outside of the scope of the (Recast) Reception Conditions Directive (e.g. people living in Direct Provision accommodation with status or people who have been issued deportation orders, who are not considered ‘recipients’ for the purposes of reception).

Provision of reception conditions at a designated place

The entitlement to Reception Conditions is expressly subject to two requirements:³⁹⁹

- ❖ Material reception conditions are made available only at a designated accommodation centre or a reception centre (which is an initial accommodation centre where protection applicants are first accommodated before another accommodation centre is designated). In effect, this guarantees that reception conditions are provided through the existing system of Direct Provision.
- ❖ The recipient complies with the house rules of the accommodation centre. The house rules are defined in the Regulations as rules made by the Minister for Justice under the Regulations. To date, house rules have not been made under the Regulations, although house rules made prior to the Regulations continue to be applied in Direct Provision centres. Since house rules made prior to the introduction of the Regulations are not house rules made under the Regulations, this raises a question about the legal relationship between the current house rules and the Regulations; in particular, enforceability of the current house rules for the purposes of, for example, withdrawing material reception conditions (see [Reduction or withdrawal](#)).

³⁹⁷ STAD, Call for new White Paper on Direct Provision to be published without delay’, October 13 2023, available [here](#).

³⁹⁸ Regulations 2 and 4(1) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

³⁹⁹ Regulation 4(2) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

The Regulations provide that reception conditions are only available within the structure of the existing system known as Direct Provision.⁴⁰⁰ This means that in order to receive material reception conditions, an asylum applicant must live in Direct Provision accommodation and must live in the particular accommodation centre designated by the authorities.⁴⁰¹ In designating an accommodation centre for recipients of reception conditions, the Regulations provide that the Minister will take a number of factors into account (see [Freedom of Movement](#)). While the Regulations provide a new statutory basis for Direct Provision, in many respects, the transposition of the Reception Conditions Directive has not changed the existing structure of reception in Ireland.

Protection applicants are not obliged to use IPAS accommodation and may source their own accommodation or stay with relatives or friends. However, to do so means that the individual is not entitled to material reception conditions (which cover housing but also food, clothing and a daily expenses allowance) or State social welfare supports, e.g. rent allowance, etc. Persons living outside Direct Provision are still legally eligible to access a medical card in line with Regulation 18 of the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 pertaining to the Right to Health. However, in practice, access to medical cards for those living outside of Direct Provision had not been facilitated. Following numerous complaints by IRC to the Department of Health and the Ombudsman, the HSE's Medical Card Unit recently amended their policy to enable international protection applicants who are not living in Direct Provision to obtain medical cards. Consequently, international protection applicants living outside of Direct Provision are now permitted to access medical care and prescription medication on the same basis as those living in the Direct Provision system (see [Health Care](#)).

Provision is made to exceptionally allow for a deviation from the prescribed form of reception under the Regulations in exceptional circumstances where: (a) a vulnerability assessment needs to be carried out to assess special reception needs; or (b) where the accommodation capacity is temporarily exhausted.⁴⁰² The Regulations require that an alternative method of accommodation must be for as short a period as possible and must meet the recipient's basic needs.⁴⁰³

On lodging an application for asylum with the IPO, the applicant is referred to IPAS. Previously, applicants were brought to a reception centre near Dublin Airport named **Balseskin**. However, as noted above, in March 2022, Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre was contracted by the International Protection Accommodation Service and repurposed as a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, as well as for the accommodation of newly arrived international protection applicants. Owing to limited bed capacity, many international protection applicants were forced to sleep on the floor of the Convention centre or on chairs for periods of up to 6 weeks while awaiting transfer to more permanent accommodation.⁴⁰⁴ Many residents reported sub-standard, overcrowded living conditions, as well as significant child protection concerns, posing a risk to the personal safety, health and wellbeing of adults and children living at the facility.⁴⁰⁵ Citywest Convention Centre continued to operate throughout 2024 as both a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, as well as for the accommodation of newly arrived adult international protection applicants. As of January 2025, there were

⁴⁰⁰ The system of Direct Provision has been in place since 2000. The increase in the numbers applying for asylum in the 1990s prompted a decision by the then government to withdraw social welfare from protection applicants and to provide for their basic needs directly through a largely cash-less system. This became known as Direct Provision, which is the system of accommodation for persons in the international protection application process in Ireland today. It continues to be the system pursuant to which material reception conditions are provided under the Regulations. Prior to the introduction of the Regulations, Direct Provision had no statutory basis. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) (now IPAS) was set up as a division within the Department of Justice to manage Direct Provision. While the drafting of the Regulations refers to the "Minister", defined as the Minister for Justice and Equality, powers are exercised by RIA in practice. RIA has no statutory basis and the decision to establish it is not a matter of public record. Originally, it was intended that protection applicants would spend no more than six months living in Direct Provision.

⁴⁰¹ Regulation 7(1) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁰² Regulation 4(5) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁰³ Regulation 4(6) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁰⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, December 2022.

⁴⁰⁵ RTÉ, 'Child Safety Concerns at Citywest Transit Hub', 19th December 2022, available [here](#).

451 international protection applicants resident in the centre.⁴⁰⁶ As of December 2025, there were 385 international protection applicants residing at Citywest Convention Centre.⁴⁰⁷

After a person has applied for asylum, they will be issued with a Temporary Residence Certificate, in the form of a plastic card, which sets out the person's personal details and contains their photograph. When the Temporary Residence Certificate has been received, they will be referred to the IPAS office within the IPO building. Applicants are usually accommodated at Citywest Convention Centre for a period of approximately six weeks prior to being transferred to more permanent accommodation.

Capacity in Direct Provision proved to be a significant issue since 2019. Despite a commitment by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to decommission the use of emergency accommodation prior to the end of 2022,⁴⁰⁸ the number of emergency accommodation centres increased from 79 centres in January 2023 to 216 centres in February 2024. A total of 18,702 international protection applicants, 3,942 of which were children resided in these centres located throughout the country.⁴⁰⁹ As of February 2025, there were a total of 265 emergency centres accommodating 24,974 international protection applicants, 7,031 of whom were children⁴¹⁰ (see [Housing](#)). As of January 2026, there were a total of 259 centres accommodating 25,662 international protection applicants, 7,472 of whom were children.⁴¹¹

The assessment of resources

Irish law provides, pursuant to Regulation 4(1) of the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, that a recipient shall be entitled to receive the material reception conditions whereby they do not have sufficient means to attain an adequate standard of living. In practice, prior to receiving material reception conditions, protection applicants are asked to sign a declaration stating that they do not have sufficient independent means to maintain an adequate standard of living.

With the introduction of [Access to the Labour Market](#) for the first time under the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, provision was made for a reduction in the daily expenses allowance commensurate with income derived from employment, as well as for a contribution towards the material reception conditions received. In November 2025, the Department of Justice proposed significant policy changes aimed at requiring international protection applicants resident in IPAS centres who are engaged in paid employment to make financial contributions toward the cost of their accommodation. The proposed contribution model is means-tested, and applicants will be required to contribute based on their weekly earnings. Those earning up to approximately €150 per week would pay a relatively modest contribution (e.g., €15 weekly). Contributions increase with higher earnings, with those earning more than €600 per week facing weekly charges of up to €238.⁴¹² The Irish Refugee Council criticised the changes, noting that many applicants residing in IPAS centres are in part-time or precarious employment, moving in and out of work, and supporting their families on very limited incomes. It was further emphasised that it is unreasonable to expect people to contribute financially when the accommodation they are placed in is often of substandard and poor quality.⁴¹³

Reception for other categories of persons

IPAS also provides overnight accommodation to citizens of certain EU States who are destitute and who have expressed a wish to return to their own country. Victims of trafficking who are not protection

⁴⁰⁶ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 2 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁰⁷ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics', 14 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 4 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴¹⁰ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 2 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴¹¹ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴¹² The Journal, 'Asylum-seekers with jobs will be required to pay towards their accommodation under new plans', 3rd November 2025, available [here](#).

⁴¹³ Irish Refugee Council, 'Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our Society', 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).

applicants are also accommodated during a 60-day reflection period.⁴¹⁴ During this period, individuals are entitled to access health and psychological services through the Health Service Executive and legal advice through the Legal Aid Board. A range of community and voluntary organisations also provide support, information and advice to victims of human trafficking.

IPAS provides accommodation for applicants up to their return to their country of origin following a negative decision. However, the increasing numbers of people remaining in Direct Provision after being granted status is causing significant strain on IPAS in the context of stretched capacity. In February 2024, it was confirmed by IPAS that persons residing in Direct Provision who had been granted status would be given 12 months in which to access private rented accommodation (24-months for families),⁴¹⁵ prior to being transferred to alternative IPAS accommodation, typically usually to emergency or tented accommodation.⁴¹⁶

In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council beneficiaries of international protection are finding it increasingly difficult to access the private rental market in the context of an ongoing housing and homelessness crisis (see [Content of Protection: Housing](#)).

Issues in accessing reception due to lack of capacity

Throughout 2025, accommodation capacity remained extremely constrained. On the 4th of December 2023, the International Protection Accommodation Service announced that it would not be in a position to provide accommodation to all international protection applicants due to a severe shortage in accommodation capacity.⁴¹⁷ As a result, throughout 2024, all single male international protection applicants who presented to the International Protection Office were assessed by IPAS and HSE staff for any significant vulnerabilities or health issues and prioritised for accommodation as necessary. Whereby no significant vulnerabilities were identified, male applicants were not provided with accommodation.⁴¹⁸ This resulted in many applicants having no option but to sleep on the street for prolonged periods, often during bouts of inclement weather conditions and amidst a period of increased anti-immigrant sentiment.⁴¹⁹ At the time of updating (January 2026), there were 405 applicants awaiting an offer of accommodation from IPAS.⁴²⁰ Families with children and single women continued to be offered accommodation throughout 2025.⁴²¹ IPAs who were not provided with accommodation received a temporary increase of €75 to their Daily Expense Allowance (DEA). This increased the allowance to €113.80 a week for eligible applicants.⁴²² Families with children and single women continued to be offered accommodation throughout 2025.

IPAs who were not provided with accommodation received a temporary increase of €75 to their Daily Expense Allowance (DEA). This increased the allowance to €113.80 a week for eligible applicants.⁴²³ Applicants were also advised that they could make an application for an Additional Needs Payment (ANP), to cover essential needs such as food, transport, or accommodation, however, in the experience of the

⁴¹⁴ The purpose of the reflection period is to allow a victim of trafficking to recover from the alleged trafficking, and to escape the influence of the alleged perpetrators of the alleged trafficking so that they can take an informed decision as to whether to assist Gardaí or other relevant authorities in relation to any investigation or prosecution arising in relation to the alleged trafficking. See ‘Administrative Immigration Arrangements for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking’, available [here](#).

⁴¹⁵ Confirmed in correspondence with IPAS, February 2024.

⁴¹⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁴¹⁷ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, ‘Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation’, 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

⁴¹⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*

⁴²¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁴²² Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, ‘Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation’, 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

⁴²³ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, ‘Statistics on International Protection Applicants not offered accommodation’, 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

Irish Refugee Council, the extent to which this was made available to applicants in practice remained inconsistent throughout 2025⁴²⁴ (See [Housing](#)).

2. Forms and levels of material reception conditions

Indicators: Forms and Levels of Material Reception Conditions

1. Amount of the monthly financial allowance/vouchers granted to asylum applicants as of 31 December 2025 (in original currency and in €):
 - € 155.20 for adults
 - € 119.20 for children

The Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 define “material reception conditions” as: (a) housing, food and associated in-kind benefits; (b) the daily expenses allowance; and (c) financial allowance for clothing.⁴²⁵

2.1. Daily expenses allowance

The Direct Provision allowance, referred to as the daily expenses allowance under the Reception Conditions Regulations, is a payment made to protection applicants for personal and incidental expenses. The rate of the payment remained static until 2019 and was consistently the subject of criticism, including by the McMahon Working Group. The criticism stated that the weekly allowance was wholly inadequate to meet essential needs such as clothing including for school going children and it did not enable participation in social and community activities.⁴²⁶ A group of migrant advocacy organisations called for the daily expenses allowance to be increased during the pandemic. This request was refused. Further calls in 2023⁴²⁷ to increase the DEA in line with inflation also have not received a positive response. Research commissioned by the Irish Refugee Council in October 2023 demonstrated the inadequacy of the Daily Expenses Allowance in covering basic needs of families and children living in Direct Provision. The research determined that basic needs were often unmet. Insufficient nutritional support, transportation limitations, partial healthcare coverage, a lack of organised leisure activities, and difficulties accessing essential amenities were among issues facing participants.⁴²⁸

In November 2025, the Department of Justice proposed significant policy changes aimed at requiring international protection applicants resident in IPAS centres who are engaged in paid employment to make financial contributions toward the cost of their accommodation. The proposed contribution model is means-tested, and applicants will be required to contribute based on their weekly earnings. Those earning up to approximately €150 per week would pay a relatively modest contribution (e.g., €15 weekly). Contributions increase with higher earnings, with those earning more than €600 per week facing weekly charges of up to €238.⁴²⁹ The Irish Refugee Council criticised the changes, noting that many applicants residing in IPAS centres are in part-time or precarious employment, moving in and out of work, and supporting their families on very limited incomes. It was further emphasised that it is unreasonable to expect people to contribute financially when the accommodation they are placed in is often of substandard and poor quality.⁴³⁰

As of January 2026, protection applicants received a weekly allowance of € 38.80 per adult and € 29.80 per child.

⁴²⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁴²⁵ Regulation 2 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴²⁶ Working Group to report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *Final Report June 2015*, para 5.30, 208.

⁴²⁷ Irish Refugee Council, *Budget 2024 submission, 'Addressing poverty in Direct Provision'*, July 2023, available [here](#).

⁴²⁸ Irish Refugee Council, 'Living in International Protection Accommodation: Exploring the Experiences of Families and Children in Direct Provision', 5 October 2023, available [here](#).

⁴²⁹ The Journal, 'Asylum-seekers with jobs will be required to pay towards their accommodation under new plans', 3rd November 2025, available [here](#).

⁴³⁰ Irish Refugee Council, 'Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our Society', 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).

2.2. Other financial support

Section 15 of the Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Act 2009 states that an individual who does not have a “right to reside” in the State shall not be regarded as being habitually resident in the State. As protection applicants do not have a right to reside in Ireland, they are excluded from social welfare. Under the IPA this prohibition remains unless a person has a pre-existing right to work on their previous status in Ireland.

The Working Group report noted that “apart from the weekly allowance, residents are not eligible to apply for other social protection supports with the exception of Exceptional Needs Payments (ENPs) and the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance”.⁴³¹

The Exceptional Needs Payment is a discretionary payment made by a Welfare Officer on receipt of an application for a one-off payment, rather than an ongoing liability. It is relied upon by protection applicants because it is an exception to the general rule regarding habitual residence. For example, it is often the only way to pay for transport costs. However, it is a highly discretionary payment with a limited appeals mechanism. In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, there is anecdotal evidence that there can be wide differences in how the Exceptional Needs Payment is administered, depending on which centre the asylum applicant is living in.

In July 2023, the Irish Refugee Council called upon the Government to permit access to child benefit for children living in Direct Provision.⁴³² The Government subsequently committed to introducing an International Protection Child Payment (IPCP) of approximately €140 per month, securing €4.7 million in Budget 2024 for the purposes of establishing the payment.⁴³³ Despite this commitment, as well as calls from numerous concerned organisations since, as of January 2026, no such payment had been implemented.

Additionally, in May 2023, the Irish Refugee Council called for an increase in the weekly payment of €38.80 to unaccommodated international protection applicants, asserting that the payment was completely insufficient to meet a person’s basic needs while experiencing homelessness.⁴³⁴ Subsequently, in December 2023, following the announcement by the International Protection Service that it was no longer in a position to provide beds for all international protection applicants due to a “severe shortage” of accommodation, the State increased the DEA for unaccommodated protection applicants by €75.00 per week, bringing to €113.80 the total weekly payment made to unaccommodated international protection applicants.

3. Reduction or withdrawal of reception conditions

Indicators: Reduction or Withdrawal of Reception Conditions

1. Does the law provide for the possibility to reduce material reception conditions?
 Yes No
2. Does the law provide for the possibility to withdraw material reception conditions?
 Yes No

The Reception Conditions Regulations provide that reception conditions can be reduced or withdrawn by the Minister of Justice in one of the following four situations, where the applicant:⁴³⁵

⁴³¹ Working Group to report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *Final Report June 2015*, para 5.5, 203.

⁴³² Irish Refugee Council, *Budget 2024 submission, ‘Addressing poverty in Direct Provision’*, July 2023, available [here](#).

⁴³³ Irish Times, ‘Almost 9,000 children in direct provision not eligible for double child benefit payment’, 29 October 2024, available [here](#).

⁴³⁴ Irish Refugee Council, ‘Now I live on the road: The Experience of Homeless International Protection Applicants in Ireland, June 2023, available [here](#).

⁴³⁵ Regulation 6(1) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

1. Has not cooperated with the protection application such that the failure to take a first instance decision can be attributable in whole or in part to the applicant. The Regulations detail that delay can be attributed to the applicant when they: fail to make reasonable efforts to establish identity; act in some way which causes delay to processing of applications without reasonable excuse; or otherwise fail to comply with an obligation relating to the asylum application.⁴³⁶
2. Has not complied with some aspect of the asylum procedure. This ground is particularly vague as it refers to “an obligation under an enactment relating to the application” rather than any specific aspect of the IPA.⁴³⁷ Hypothetically, this means that a failure to comply with any aspect of the application process – no matter how insignificant – could be a ground for reducing or withdrawing reception conditions, so long as the Minister is satisfied that the applicant has failed to provide a “reasonable excuse”.
3. Has seriously breached the house rules of the place of accommodation.
4. Has engaged in seriously violent behaviour. “Seriously violent behaviour” is not defined in the Regulations, which raises a question of when violent behaviour will reach the level of being sufficiently serious to warrant the reduction or withdrawal of reception conditions. It is therefore left to the Minister to determine when behaviour will meet the threshold of being “seriously violent”.

In addition to the Minister for Justice having power to reduce or withdraw reception conditions under the circumstances specified in the Regulations, the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection is also empowered to reduce or withdraw the daily expenses allowance provided to a recipient on the same grounds.⁴³⁸

Both Ministers, when making a decision to withdraw or reduce reception conditions, must have regard to the individual circumstances of the recipient and, in particular, whether they are a vulnerable person.⁴³⁹

The Ministers must also have regard to any explanation provided by the recipient for the conduct which has been deemed to ground the reduction or withdrawal of reception conditions.⁴⁴⁰

The Regulations also provide that a decision to reduce or withdraw material reception conditions shall only be taken in exceptional circumstances where no other action can be taken to address the conduct of the recipient.⁴⁴¹

Where a decision is taken to reduce or withdraw reception conditions, the Minister nonetheless must ensure the person in question has access to health care and a dignified standard of living, where the person does not have means to provide for themselves.⁴⁴² Since it is a requirement of the Regulations that a person will only receive material reception conditions where they do not have sufficient means to otherwise provide an adequate standard of living, it is unclear what safeguarding a dignified standard of living would entail in practice, outside of the Direct Provision system. Arguably, every person receiving material reception conditions would, by definition, require further assistance from the Minister to ensure they are not left destitute. Furthermore, the use of “dignified” rather than “adequate” standard of living in the drafting of this provision raises a question of whether a different standard would be applied to assistance provided to a person for whom reception conditions have been reduced or withdrawn. Neither term is defined which leaves no guidance on what this would entail in practice.

⁴³⁶ Regulation 27 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴³⁷ The corresponding EU law provision, Article 20(1)(b) recast Reception Conditions Directive, refers to non-compliance with reporting duties or information requests, or failure to appear for personal interviews.

⁴³⁸ Regulation 6(2) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴³⁹ Regulation 6(3)(a) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁴⁰ Regulation 6(3)(b) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁴¹ Regulation 6(5) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁴² Regulation 6(6) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

Decisions reducing or withdrawing reception conditions can be challenged by means of review before the Minister for Justice within ten working days,⁴⁴³ or the Minister for Employment Affairs in case of reduction or withdrawal of the Direct Provision allowance.⁴⁴⁴ The decision of the review officer can then be challenged before the IPAT within ten working days.⁴⁴⁵ The IPAT has 15 working days to decide on the appeal.⁴⁴⁶

In 2023, the IPAT received 6 appeals pursuant to the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018.⁴⁴⁷ For 2024, data in respect of the number of appeals pursuant to the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 was not available, however, a total of 17 decisions were issued by the Tribunal in accordance with the 2018 Regulations.⁴⁴⁸

In 2025, 237 appeals were lodged to the Tribunal in accordance with the 2018 Regulations. A total of 239 appeal decisions were issued with respect to the 2018 Regulations.⁴⁴⁹

In 2022,⁴⁵⁰ the Irish Refugee Council assisted approximately 147 international protection applicants experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, many of whom were left without accommodation for weeks or months due to unanswered re-accommodation requests or evictions for alleged breaches of House Rules. In many cases, these withdrawals did not meet the limited grounds permitted under the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, and applicants were not provided with written notification, making appeals impossible. While these breaches continued through 2024 and, as of 2025, still occur to a lesser extent, most applicants now receive written notification outlining the reasons for the withdrawal of reception conditions.⁴⁵¹

4. Freedom of movement

Indicators: Freedom of Movement

1. Is there a mechanism for the dispersal of applicants across the territory of the country? Yes No

2. Does the law provide for restrictions on freedom of movement? Yes No

4.1. Dispersal across Direct Provision centres

The policy of dispersal of protection applicants to Direct Provision centres around the country has persisted with the transposition of the recast Reception Conditions Directive. Following the initial transposition of the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, the previous practice continued, whereby protection applicants were first accommodated in **Balseskin** Reception Centre, where they usually spent several weeks, before being dispersed to one of the other accommodation centres, usually outside of Dublin.

However, an acute shortfall in available accommodation throughout 2022 resulted in the use of Citywest Convention Centre as the central processing and transit hub for both international protection applicants and beneficiaries of **Temporary Protection**. In July 2022, the State also began to use tented accommodation, in which applicants were accommodated in marquee-style structures at various locations around the country. In some cases, applicants were transferred directly to tented accommodation from Citywest, while in other cases, applicants were accommodated in tented accommodation following a period of homelessness. While initially intended as a temporary, many applicants spent months residing

⁴⁴³ Regulation 20(1)(d) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.
⁴⁴⁴ Regulation 20(2)(d) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.
⁴⁴⁵ Regulation 21(1) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.
⁴⁴⁶ Regulation 21(4)(a) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.
⁴⁴⁷ Information provided by IPAT, January 2024.
⁴⁴⁸ Information provided by IPAT, February 2025.
⁴⁴⁹ Information provided by IPAT, February 2026.
⁴⁵⁰ For further details, please see previous updates to this country report, available [here](#).
⁴⁵¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council's Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

in wholly unsuitable accommodation which did not meet their basic needs and exposed them to at times to inclement weather conditions. This practice continued throughout 2025.⁴⁵²

The State also increasingly relied on the use of emergency centres, often comprised of disused offices, large conference rooms, schools, and sports halls in order to accommodate international protection applicants. The Irish Refugee Council has been alerted to numerous grievous risks to vulnerable residents accommodated in these centres, including to women and minor children. These reports included significant child protection issues and serious privacy concerns.

The Minister for Justice and Equality may exceptionally provide the material reception conditions in a manner that is different to that provided for in these Regulations where (a) an assessment of a recipient's specific needs is required to be carried out, or (b) the accommodation capacity normally available is temporarily exhausted. However, it remains to be seen whether the use of such accommodation meets an applicant's 'basic needs' as is required by Regulation 4(6) (b) the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.⁴⁵³

As of February 2024, a total of 18,702 protection applicants, 3,924 of whom were children, were accommodated in 216 emergency accommodation centres throughout the State.⁴⁵⁴ As of February 2025, there were a total of 265 emergency centres accommodating 24,974 international protection applicants, 7,031 of whom were children.⁴⁵⁵ As of January 2026, there were a total of 259 centres accommodating 25,662 international protection applicants, 7,472 of whom were children.⁴⁵⁶

In 2023, the State paid out €651.75 million in respect of the Direct Provision system. In 2024, spending increased by 54% to €1.005 billion, including all accommodation and ancillary costs such as facilities management and other related expenditure.⁴⁵⁷ Figures in respect of spending for 2025 were not yet available as of January 2026, however, the State projected spending of around €1.17 billion on accommodation for international protection applicants as part of International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) costs for 2025.⁴⁵⁸

The exact location of emergency accommodation is not publicly available in order to protect the identity of international protection applicants.⁴⁵⁹ Some emergency accommodation centres have been in place for longer than five years.

Designation of an accommodation centre

In designating an accommodation centre for recipients of reception conditions, the Reception Conditions Regulations provide that a number of factors will be taken into account: (a) maintaining family unity; (b) gender and age-specific concerns; (c) the public interest; (d) public order; (e) the efficient processing and effective monitoring of the recipient's application for international protection.⁴⁶⁰

The special reception needs of an asylum, identified following a vulnerability assessment, shall also be taken into account in designating an accommodation centre. However, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, such vulnerabilities are, in practice, rarely considered in the allocation of accommodation.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵² *ibid.*

⁴⁵³ SI No 230/2018 European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, Regulation 4(6)(b).

⁴⁵⁴ IPAS, 'DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics', 4 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁵⁵ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 2 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁵⁶ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics*, 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴⁵⁷ RTE, 'State spend on accommodating IP applicants tops €1bn last year', 14 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁵⁸ The Sun, 'State spending €5.3m daily accommodating Ukrainians & refugees as shock ten-figure sum bill due for year revealed', 17 September 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁵⁹ Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, Reply to Parliamentary Question No 290, 5 November 2019, available [here](#).

⁴⁶⁰ Regulation 7(2) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁴⁶¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council's Information and Advocacy Service, January 2023.

The Regulations provide that where a recipient is a minor, the need to accommodate the minor together with parents, unmarried siblings, or an adult acting *in loco parentis* will be considered, subject to consideration of the best interests of the minor in question. A further factor to be considered for minor recipients is whether the proposed accommodation centre is suitable to meet their needs.⁴⁶²

No definition of “the public interest” or “public order” is provided in the Regulations, making it difficult to determine how those factors may be adjudged in designating an accommodation centre.

An applicant does not have a choice regarding where they are sent. In practice, due to the ongoing shortage of spaces in the Direct Provision estate, requests for transfers to other accommodation centres were not granted throughout 2024, except in exceptional circumstances; typically, where a significant medical vulnerability is identified. However, an applicant may be moved to a different accommodation centre where the Minister considers it necessary. Subsequently, in January 2024, IPAS introduced a Protocol for Medical Transfer Requests. The Protocol applies whereby an applicant is in hospital and following discharge, is required to attend frequent ongoing appointments at the hospital and needs to live within reasonable travelling distance or whereby placement in alternative accommodation is essential in supporting the international protection applicant in accessing specialist treatment. The Protocol requires that an applicant seeking transfer on medical grounds submit a letter from a consultant doctor at an Irish hospital which outlines the nature of the individual’s condition, as well as a recommendation that indicates that the transfer request is essential for the person’s health status. The letter should also address how their current accommodation is impeding their physical and/or mental health.⁴⁶³ Whereby such a letter is supplied, IPAS will then forward medical documentation to an ‘Independent Medical Referee’, usually a GP contracted by IPAS, who will make a recommendation regarding the transfer. IPAS will then issue a final decision regarding the transfer, and this will depend on the availability of appropriate accommodation.⁴⁶⁴ In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, as of February 2025, requests for transfers continued to be refused, even with the addition of the protocol, except in very exceptional circumstances whereby a significant medical vulnerability is identified.⁴⁶⁵

In 2019, the Ombudsman, in his report on Direct Provision stated: “I have not accepted refusal of transfer requests from people who wish to avail of educational opportunities that are not available from their assigned centre. In my view denying someone the opportunity to better themselves by availing of a place on a further education course is unreasonable.”⁴⁶⁶ However, as of January 2026, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, applicants who sought transfers from IPAS in order to avail themselves of educational opportunities were denied on the basis of lack of capacity within the accommodation system.⁴⁶⁷

IPAS may reallocate a room if it is left unused for any period of time without letting the centre manager know in advance, or if a resident is consistently absent from the centre. An absence occurring over three consecutive nights should lead to a warning letter from centre management that the applicant may lose their accommodation. In the current accommodation crisis and with the continuing lack of capacity in Direct Provision (see [Types of Accommodation](#)), this places applicants at an immediate risk of homelessness. In practice, applicant’s beds are often re-assigned without their knowledge following a period of absences from their designated accommodation. The Irish Refugee Council is aware of numerous cases whereby applicants have returned to their accommodation to find their bed re-assigned following a period of unexplained absence. This occurs in circumstances whereby no warning letter was provided to the applicant in advance of the accommodation being re-assigned. In such cases, applicants often find themselves street homeless until such time as a further offer of accommodation is made by IPAS.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶² Regulation 7(3) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.
⁴⁶³ International Protection Accommodation Service, ‘Protocol for Medical Transfer Requests’, January 2024, available [here](#).
⁴⁶⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.
⁴⁶⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2025.
⁴⁶⁶ Ombudsman, *The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2019*, April 2019, available [here](#).
⁴⁶⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council’s Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.
⁴⁶⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

Paragraph 2.15 of the House Rules and Procedures state that the accommodation centre manager is obliged to notify the Community Welfare Office, now known as a Department of Social Protection representative, the official who grants the asylum applicant their weekly allowance, that they have been away without telling management and that this may affect access to the Direct Provision Allowance.⁴⁶⁹ The extent to which this occurs in practice varies considerably.⁴⁷⁰

In August 2021, the House Rules were revised in light of the introduction of the Reception Conditions Regulations.⁴⁷¹ The Regulations specifically define House Rules as “rules made by the Minister under Regulation 25”. Regulation 25 empowers the Minister to make rules to be complied with by persons who are being accommodated in an accommodation centre or reception centre. Such rules may relate to the operation of the centre and the conduct of residents. Regulation 25(4) further states that the Minister shall make the house rules accessible in a variety of languages on the website of IPAS.

4.2. Restrictions on freedom of movement

Freedom of movement is not expressly restricted in law, but the IPAS house rules require residents to seek permission if they are going to be away from their accommodation overnight.⁴⁷²

In practice, freedom of movement is restricted due to the very low level of financial support given to protection applicants, which means that, unless transport to and from a centre is free and at a suitable time, it is often too costly to travel. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has described the conditions in some Direct Provision as amounting to deprivation of liberty due to the extent of those restrictions.⁴⁷³ The Irish Council for Civil Liberties has also argued that the conditions attached to Direct Provision accommodation amounts to *de facto* detention under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.⁴⁷⁴ The same argument was made by The Global Detention Project in its submission to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) in preparation for its visit to Ireland.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁶⁹ IPAS, *House Rules and Procedures*, available [here](#).

⁴⁷⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

⁴⁷¹ International Protection Accommodation Service, *House Rules and Procedures*, August 2021, available [here](#).

⁴⁷² *ibid.*

⁴⁷³ Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Ireland and the OPCAT*, September 2017, available [here](#), 32.

⁴⁷⁴ Irish Council for Civil Liberties, ‘Ratify OPCAT and allow inspection of direct provision centres: ICCL’, 26 June 2018, available [here](#).

⁴⁷⁵ Global Detention Project, Submission to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT): Ireland’, 25 September 2019, available [here](#).

B. Housing

1. Types of accommodation

| Indicators: Types of Accommodation | |
|--|---|
| 1. Number of reception centres: | 312 ⁴⁷⁶ |
| 2. Total number of places in the reception centres: | Unknown |
| 3. Number of emergency accommodation locations: | 259 ⁴⁷⁷ |
| 4. Total number of places in emergency accommodation: | Unknown |
| 5. Type of accommodation most frequently used in a regular procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reception centre <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel or hostel <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Private housing <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| 6. Type of accommodation most frequently used in an accelerated procedure: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reception centre <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hotel or hostel <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Private housing <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

1.1. Reception capacity and accommodation crisis

Available accommodation within the Direct Provision estate has been decreasing since 2016, due to a number of factors, including the expiry of contracts between IPAS and accommodation providers and the ongoing housing crisis, which is reducing available accommodation sites. Despite some bed spaces being re-introduced in the system in 2019,⁴⁷⁸ the rise in the number of applicants led to 1,559 protection applicants being placed in temporary accommodation by the end of 2019. As of January 2023, the number of individuals resident in emergency accommodation had risen to 11,414.⁴⁷⁹ As of February 2024, the number of individuals resident in emergency accommodation had further increased to 18,702.⁴⁸⁰ As of February 2025, the total number of individuals residing in emergency accommodation was 24,974.⁴⁸¹ As of January 2026, the total number of individuals residing in emergency accommodation was 25,262.⁴⁸²

In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council in 2020 and 2021, requests for re-entry into Direct Provision under the Regulations by people who had not taken up an initial offer of accommodation or have since experienced a change in their circumstance have been refused on the grounds of a lack of accommodation or have been subject to considerable delays.

In 2022,⁴⁸³ the Irish Refugee Council assisted approximately 147 international protection applicants experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, many of whom were left without accommodation for weeks or months due to unanswered re-accommodation requests or evictions for alleged breaches of House Rules. In many cases, these withdrawals did not meet the limited grounds permitted under the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018, and applicants were not provided with written notification, making appeals impossible. While these breaches continued through 2024 and, as of 2025, still occur to a lesser extent, most applicants now receive written notification outlining the reasons for the withdrawal of reception conditions.⁴⁸⁴

The personal circumstances of persons living outside Direct Provision are generally unknown. According to figures supplied by IPAS, as of January 2022, 902 international protection applicants were living outside Direct Provision in private rented accommodation. In terms of people who lived in Direct Provision and then subsequently left it for whatever reasons whilst their asylum application was pending, for example to

⁴⁷⁶ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ Ombudsman, The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2019, April 2019, available [here](#).

⁴⁷⁹ IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Stats*, 29 January 2022, available [here](#).

⁴⁸⁰ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 4 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁸¹ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 2 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁸² IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴⁸³ For further details, please see previous updates to this country report, available [here](#).

⁴⁸⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council's Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

live with family members, a partner or friends, it is very difficult to access the Direct Provision system again, should their situation change.

Throughout 2024, there was a significant increase in the number of alleged arson attacks carried out on sites designated for use as Direct Provision accommodation by anti-migrant protesters. A disused convent in Lanesboro, Co Longford was set on fire in January. The building was going to be used to house 85 Ukrainians, but the owner pulled out of an agreement with the Department of Integration after the fire due to concerns for his family’s safety. Subsequently, in February 2024, the former St. Brigid’s Nursing Home in Crooksling was also the subject of an arson attack, with more than 40 firefighters required to bring the fire under control. The site subsequently became operational as tented accommodation for single males. In April, a building known as Trudder House in Newtonmountkennedy village in Wicklow was **set on fire**. The Department of Integration had been assessing the site after it accepted a HSE offer to use the vacant building and its grounds to accommodate asylum seekers. In July 2024, violence broke out at a site in Coolock that was earmarked to house asylum seekers but which had been the subject of a blockade by protesters for a number of months. The protests began as a company began works on the site. Almost 200 gardaí were involved in dealing with the disorder, in which fireworks and rocks were thrown. 15 people were arrested and charged on the evening of the incident, with several more following.⁴⁸⁵

Further violent incidents targeting people seeking international protection occurred throughout 2025. On 22 October, a violent protest took place outside Citywest Convention Centre. Approximately 2,000 people attended the protest which was organised following an alleged sexual assault of a child in the locality of the hotel the previous day. Numerous arrests were made and a police van was set on fire during the ensuing violence.⁴⁸⁶ Subsequently, on 31 October, a building accommodating asylum applicants in Drogheda, Co. Louth was deliberately set on fire. Four children, including a baby, and an adult were rescued from the top floor. Several people, including two children, were taken to hospital for assessment while an additional 23 people were relocated to alternative accommodation.⁴⁸⁷

1.2. Direct Provision centres

As of February 2024, there were 270 Direct Provision centres located nationwide, including 216 emergency centres and three centres containing tented accommodation.⁴⁸⁸ As of February 2025, there were 320 Direct Provision centres located nationwide, including 265 emergency centres and six centres containing tented accommodation.⁴⁸⁹ As of January 2026, there were 312 Direct Provision Centres located nationwide, including 159 emergency centres and 2 centres containing tented accommodation.⁴⁹⁰

The capacity and occupancy of Direct Provisions centres in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 were as follows:

| Capacity and occupancy of Direct Provision centres | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| | 2022 | | 2023 | | 2024 | | 2025 | |
| Centre | Capacity | Occupancy | Capacity | Occupancy | Capacity | Occupancy | Capacity | Occupancy |
| Carlow | - | - | - | 244 | - | 434 | - | 429 |
| Cavan | 131 | 118 | - | 158 | - | 168 | - | 137 |
| Clare | 474 | 540 | - | 726 | - | 1,008 | - | 1, 008 |
| Cork | 1,455 | 1,313 | - | 1,639 | - | 2,005 | - | 2, 232 |
| Donegal | 769 | 678 | - | 1,707 | - | 2, 036 | - | 2, 234 |

⁴⁸⁵ The Journal, 'How arson attacks on properties linked to asylum seekers have escalated over the last six years', 16 July 2024, available [here](#).
⁴⁸⁶ The Journal, 'Citywest: How a 'peaceful' protest resulted in injured gardaí and a burned out garda van', 22 October 2025, available [here](#).
⁴⁸⁷ The Irish Times, 'Drogheda arson attack: 'The house is on fire. Please answer'', 3 November 2025, available [here](#).
⁴⁸⁸ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 4 February 2024, available [here](#).
⁴⁸⁹ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 2 February 2025, available [here](#).
⁴⁹⁰ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|---------------|----------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| Dublin | - | 7,794 | - | 9,816 | - | 11,205 | - | 10,781 |
| Galway | 829 | 684 | - | 1,288 | - | 2,131 | - | 2,146 |
| Kerry | - | 863 | - | 805 | - | 970 | - | 893 |
| Kildare | 596 | 540 | - | 817 | - | 674 | - | 509 |
| Kilkenny | - | 0 | - | 147 | - | 163 | - | 2,146 |
| Laois | - | 491 | - | 610 | - | 480 | - | 493 |
| Limerick | - | 283 | - | 402 | - | 588 | - | 822 |
| Leitrim | 130 | 105 | - | 87 | - | 245 | - | 206 |
| Longford | 82 | 69 | - | 141 | - | 141 | - | 139 |
| Louth | 464 | 498 | - | 875 | - | 1,221 | - | 1,084 |
| Mayo | 461 | 453 | - | 1,353 | - | 1,645 | - | 1,621 |
| Meath | 778 | 944 | - | 906 | - | 976 | - | 1,092 |
| Monaghan | 427 | 485 | - | 572 | - | 698 | - | 692 |
| Offaly | 232 | 162 | - | 259 | - | 489 | - | 578 |
| Roscommon | 83 | 113 | - | 194 | - | 240 | - | 205 |
| Sligo | 218 | 268 | - | 432 | - | 699 | - | 1,041 |
| Tipperary | 423 | 518 | - | 596 | - | 816 | - | 1,021 |
| Waterford | 487 | 498 | - | 652 | - | 623 | - | 618 |
| Wexford | 102 | 103 | - | 591 | - | 637 | - | 627 |
| Westmeath | 657 | 716 | - | 828 | - | 1,043 | - | 1,205 |
| Wicklow | 890 | 1,004 | - | 1,261 | - | 1,533 | - | 1,110 |
| Total | - | 19,240 | - | 27,106 | - | 32,948 | - | 33,117 |

Source:

- ❖ Figures for 2022 (valid as of January 2023): IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Stats*, 29 January 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Y42e37>.
- ❖ Figures for 2023 (valid as of February 2024): According to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, figures in respect of capacity for 2023 could not be provided due to “variability of data as a result of the emergency nature of the accommodation”, as well as for reasons of privacy and security (Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 1080*, 20 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2mnz8jsr>); occupancy figures from IPAS, ‘IPAS Statistics Weekly Report’, 4 February 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/4aP5UvN>.
- ❖ Figures for 2024 (valid as of 2nd February 2025): IPAS, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Stats*, 2 February 2025, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2js3rwtN>.
- ❖ Figures for 2025 (valid as of 15th of March 2026); IPAS, *IPAS Weekly Stats*, 15 March 2026, available: [here](#).

As of February 2024, 27,106 people resided in Direct Provision, 6,067 of whom were children.⁴⁹¹ As of February 2025, there were 32,948 people resident in Direct Provision, 9,162 of whom were children.⁴⁹² As of January 2026, 33,215 people resided in Direct Provision, 9,759 of whom were children.⁴⁹³

Of those centres in the IPAS portfolio, only three were built (“system built”) for the express purpose of accommodating protection applicants. The majority of the portfolio comprises buildings which had a different initial purpose i.e., former hotels, guesthouses (B&B), hostels, former convents / nursing Homes, a holiday camp and a mobile home site. IPAS is considering the option of moving towards a capital investment-based approach in the provision of accommodation that would involve building customised facilities.⁴⁹⁴

The **Baleskin** reception centre, with a capacity of 537, was previously designated as a reception centre where all newly arrived protection applicants are accommodated. The centre as of 15 September 2020

⁴⁹¹ IPAS, ‘IPAS Statistics Weekly Report’, 4 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁹² IPAS, ‘IPAS Statistics Weekly Report’, 2 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁹³ IPAS, ‘IPAS Statistics Weekly Report’, 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴⁹⁴ Ombudsman, *The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2019, April 2020*, available [here](#).

had an occupancy rate of 264 out of 537 places.⁴⁹⁵ However, In March 2022, Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre was contracted by the International Protection Accommodation Service and repurposed as a transit hub for the processing of beneficiaries of [Temporary Protection](#), as well as for the accommodation of newly arrived international protection applicants. The vast majority of newly arrived protection applicants are now accommodated at Citywest. As of February 2024, 558 applicants were resident at the facility.⁴⁹⁶ As of February 2025, 451 applicants were resident at the facility.⁴⁹⁷ As of January 2026, there were 363 international protection applicants resident at the facility.⁴⁹⁸

Direct provision centres management and evaluation

Seven centres are state-owned: Knockalisheen, **Clare**; Kinsale Road, **Cork**; Atlas House Killarney, Atlas House Tralee, Johnston Marina and Park Lodge, **Kerry**; and Athlone, **Westmeath**. Seven centres are owned by the Irish State with the remainder privately owned. All reception centres are operated by private external service providers who have a contract with IPAS. Executive responsibility for the day-to-day management of reception centres lies with the private agencies, which provide services such as accommodation, catering, housekeeping etc. As of October 2020, there were 26 private companies that have a contract for services with the Department of Justice for the provision of premises that meet required standards and support services for protection applicants. Of these companies, two have a contract to provide management, catering, housekeeping and general maintenance services in state owned accommodation centres.⁴⁹⁹ By 2023, 859 companies were contracted to provide accommodation, 32 of which received over €10 million.⁵⁰⁰ Information in respect of the number of private companies contracted to provide accommodation for 2025 was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).

The Department of Children is responsible for overseeing reception services for asylum seekers under legally binding National Standards introduced in January 2021. Although independent monitoring was expected, inspections initially continued to be carried out by IPAS and its contractors. In 2021–2022, the Department worked with HIQA, stakeholders, and an Expert Advisory Group, and drafted regulations to establish a legal basis for HIQA to independently monitor compliance with the National Standards.

As of 9 January 2024, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) assumed the responsibility for monitoring and inspecting International Protection Accommodations Service centres against the legally binding National Standards for Accommodation Offered to People in the Protection Process. This function was provided to HIQA by an amendment to the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 by way of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 649 of 2023).⁵⁰¹

In April 2024, HIQA published its first inspection reports.⁵⁰² As of November 2024, reports had been published in respect of nine centres. Three of the centres inspected were found to have no non-compliances identified against the National Standards. The remaining six had varying levels of compliance. The areas of non-compliance identified included assessment and response to special needs of residents, contingency planning and preparedness, accommodation, food, catering and cooking facilities, governance, accountability and leadership, responsiveness of workforce and safeguarding and protection.⁵⁰³ In one of the centres, inspectors found that a safeguarding incident involving the welfare of four children was not managed in line with national policy or guidance.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 4 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁴⁹⁷ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 2 February 2025, available [here](#).

⁴⁹⁸ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 18 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁴⁹⁹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O’Gorman, *Response to Parliamentary question nos 469, 470*, 2 February 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁰⁰ The Journal, 'Hotels, State Bodies and Direct Provision: The companies behind Ireland’s refugee housing sector', 14 April 2024, available [here](#).

⁵⁰¹ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation', January 2024, available [here](#).

⁵⁰² *ibid.*

⁵⁰³ Breakingnews.ie, 'Non-compliance with food and protection found in some direct provision centres - HIQA, 27 November 2024, available [here](#).

⁵⁰⁴ *ibid.*

HIQA published multiple inspection statements over the course of 2025, with inspection reports released in January, February, May, June, August, November and December 2025. These covered a broad range of permanent IPAS centres located in counties across the country.⁵⁰⁵ Several were found to have no non-compliances identified against the National Standards. However, a number of non-compliances were also identified across inspections. Common themes included instances where leadership structures, reporting systems or awareness of responsibilities amongst centre staff were insufficient,⁵⁰⁶ inadequate implementation of safeguarding procedures,⁵⁰⁷ substandard accommodation arrangements,⁵⁰⁸ inadequate contingency planning and emergency preparedness, and ineffective systems for identifying and responding to the special needs of residents.⁵⁰⁹ For each instance of non-compliance, HIQA required that service providers submit comprehensive compliance plans outlining how deficits would be addressed in order to achieve full compliance with the national standards.

Whereby centres are subject to inspection, a HIQA inspector will visit the IPAS centre and speak with residents, members of staff and centre managers in order to gain an insight into how the service is run. Inspectors will also examine records held by IPAS centres. Some inspections will be announced, while others will be unannounced. After the inspection, HIQA inspectors will prepare a report in respect of the centre and determine the quality of the services and support provided. Inspection reports will be published on HIQA's website under the [inspection reports section](#). If improvements are required in IPAS centres, the service provider will be required to submit a plan on how and when these improvements will be made. The implementation of these plans will be closely monitored by HIQA.⁵¹⁰

While the commencement of HIQA's inspection and monitoring function is welcomed, the Irish Refugee Council remains deeply concerned regarding the exclusion of emergency centres from HIQA's remit. In the experience of the IRC, the most difficult conditions persist within 'emergency' and 'pre-reception' facilities, and not in permanent centres. Additionally, the number of emergency centres operating in the country has far surpassed that of permanent centres. As of January 2026, IPAS operated 312 properties across the State, of which just 49 were permanent centres.⁵¹¹

1.3. Emergency Accommodation Beds

In September 2018, the Direct Provision estate reached capacity and no accommodation was available for newly arriving protection applicants, as the **Baleskin** centre had no available places. After intensive representations and media attention on the issue, alternative accommodation was provided by IPAS on an emergency basis. This involved the contracting of accommodation in hotels and holiday homes to house protection applicants on a temporary basis pending IPAS contracting for more permanent accommodation centres.⁵¹²

As of January 2026, capacity within the Direct Provision accommodation system remained a significant and ongoing issue. 2025 saw the continued reliance on the use of emergency centres. Such centres often comprised of disused offices, large conference rooms, schools, and sports halls in order to accommodate international protection applicants. The Irish Refugee Council has been alerted to numerous grievous risks to vulnerable residents accommodated in these centres, including to women and minor children. These reports included significant child protection issues and serious privacy concerns. Throughout 2024, the State also continued to use tented accommodation to accommodate international protection applicants at various locations around the country. While initially intended as a temporary measure, many

⁵⁰⁵ HIQA, 'Inspection Reports', available [here](#).
⁵⁰⁶ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 15 August 2025', 15th August 2025, available [here](#).
⁵⁰⁷ HIQA, 'International Protection Accommodation Service centres publication statement 05 November 2025', 5th November 2025, available [here](#).
⁵⁰⁸ *ibid.*
⁵⁰⁹ *ibid.*
⁵¹⁰ *ibid.*
⁵¹¹ IPAS, 'IPAS Statistics Weekly Report', 4 February 2024, available [here](#).
⁵¹² Irish Times, 'Hotels in the east being used as temporary direct provision centres', 19 November 2018, available [here](#).

applicants spent months residing in wholly unsuitable accommodation which did not meet their basic needs and exposed them to at times freezing and wet weather conditions.

In March 2024, it was announced that the site of a former nursing home, located at Crooksling in southwest Dublin, would be repurposed for use as tented accommodation for male international protection applicants.⁵¹³ Following the opening of the site, many residents reported sub-standard living conditions which posed a risk to the health, personal safety, and wellbeing of individuals living at the facility. Initially it was believed that accommodation at the site would be offered as an alternative to street homelessness in respect of applicants who were not offered accommodation on arrival in the State. However, it subsequently became apparent that the site would be classified as ‘a designated accommodation centre’ for the purposes of granting material reception conditions. Many individuals would therefore spend indefinite periods at the site following periods of homelessness on arrival in the State. In July 2024, it emerged that a resident, accommodated at the site following a period of homelessness upon his arrival in the State, had instigated legal proceedings against the State, alleging that the facility does not meet his basic needs, as required by the Reception Conditions Directive 2013. The proceedings were ongoing at the time of updating in May 2025.⁵¹⁴

The Irish Refugee Council visited the site in September 2024, during which residents also reported an apparent lack of governance and oversight within the facility, particularly regarding the needs of the residents, with no central manager present on site. The isolated location of the facility, as well as lack of public transport links also meant that residents had difficulty accessing employment in addition to basic services.⁵¹⁵ The levels of stress, anxiety and frustration amongst residents were also apparent, with many residents reporting a significant deterioration in their mental health since arriving at the facility.⁵¹⁶ There were also reports of harassment of residents at the site by far right agitators, including verbal harassment and the flying of drones over the site in order to obtain aerial footage of same.⁵¹⁷

Similar tented facilities were established at Newtown Mount Kennedy, Co. Wicklow and Athlone, Co. Westmeath throughout 2024, bringing to six the total number of tented accommodation facilities in the State. Approximately 812 international protection applicants were accommodated at these facilities as of 15 December 2024.⁵¹⁸ As of January 2026, there were two tented accommodation facilities in operation, accommodating approximately 231 applicants.⁵¹⁹

Plans for an additional tented accommodation facility to be located at Thornton Hall, Co. Dublin were temporarily suspended on 5 November 2024, after the State indicated its intention not to contest judicial review proceedings instigated in respect of the proposed development. The proceedings were instigated by local residents who alleged that a Ministerial Order made in respect of the site ought not be allowed to stand due to a lack of adequate environmental screening having been conducted in advance of establishment of the facility.⁵²⁰ Subsequently, on 18 November 2024, it was reported that a revised Ministerial Order would be issued ‘within weeks’, however, development of the site remained suspended.⁵²¹ The proceedings followed several months of disruptive protests at the site by locals who objected to the development.⁵²²

⁵¹³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.
⁵¹⁴ Irish Examiner, ‘High Court hears of challenges against using tents to accommodate asylum seekers’, 26 July 2024, available [here](#).
⁵¹⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.
⁵¹⁶ *ibid*.
⁵¹⁷ Dublin Inquirer, ‘At Crooksling’s asylum shelter, harassment on the ground and drones in the sky’, 11 September 2024, available [here](#).
⁵¹⁸ International Protection Accommodation Service, ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics – 15th December 2024’, 15 December 2024, available [here](#).
⁵¹⁹ International Protection Accommodation Service, ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics, 18 January 2026, available [here](#).
⁵²⁰ Irish Examiner, ‘Thornton Hall plan to house 1,000 asylum seekers thrown into doubt’, 5 November 2024, available [here](#).
⁵²¹ Irish Times, ‘New Ministerial Order to be made in weeks’, says Dept’, 18 November 2024, available [here](#).
⁵²² Breakingnews.ie, ‘Thornton Hall protestor recorded making clear threat to security on site, court told’, 12 August 2024, available [here](#).

In late 2025, the High Court formally quashed the ministerial order that had allowed the centre to be set up without full planning and environmental approval, declaring the centre’s fast-tracked approval legally invalid. However, the judge allowed a four-month stay on the order taking effect and on this basis, the Government has until early March 2026 to pass corrective legislation. Throughout the course of proceedings, the centre continued to operate, albeit at a significantly reduced capacity. However, as of late 2025, the temporary structures on the site were dismantled and the site was cleared.⁵²³

By February 2024, 18, 702 individuals were residing across 216 centres.⁵²⁴ As of February 2025, this figure had increased to 24, 975 individuals across 265 centres.⁵²⁵ As of January 2026, there were 33,215 individuals residing across 312 centres.⁵²⁶

The living conditions in these emergency accommodation locations are clearly unsuitable for the needs of protection applicants and fail to fulfil IPAS’s obligations under the EU recast Reception Conditions Directive (see [Conditions in reception facilities](#)).

1.4. Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC)

Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROC) were specifically designed for the accommodation of persons arriving in Ireland through relocation and resettlement.⁵²⁷ There are three EROC located in Waterford, Roscommon, and Meath. As of March 2024, there was a total contracted capacity of 545 places across three EROC centres and 447 individuals resided in the three centres.⁵²⁸ As of April 2025, there was a total contracted capacity of 525 beds across 3 centres and 465 individuals lived in the three centres.⁵²⁹ As of April 2026, there was a total contracted capacity of 545 beds across 3 centres and a total of 470 individuals lived in the three centres.⁵³⁰

| Capacity and occupancy of EROC | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
| | 2023 ⁵³¹ | | 2024 | | 2025 ⁵³² | |
| Centre | Capacity | Occupancy | Capacity | Occupancy | Capacity | Occupancy |
| Waterford (Clonea) | 125 | 110 | 125 | 88 | 125 | 93 |
| Roscommon (Ballaghaderreen) | 220 | 151 | 200 | 181 | 220 | 181 |
| Meath (Mosney) | 200 | 186 | 200 | 196 | 200 | 196 |
| Total | 545 | 447 | 525 | 465 | 545 | 470 |

⁵²³ Extra.ie, ‘Athlone Direct Provision Centre halted by High Court over planning failures’, 1 January 2025, available [here](#).
⁵²⁴ IPAS, ‘IPAS Statistics Weekly Report’, 4 February 2024, available [here](#).
⁵²⁵ IPAS, ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrivals Statistics’, 2 February 2025, available [here](#).
⁵²⁶ International Protection Accommodation Service, ‘IPAS Weekly Accommodation and Arrival Statistics’, 18 January 2026, available [here](#).
⁵²⁷ INIS, ‘Ministers Flanagan and Stanton welcome Syrian refugee families to Ireland’, 27 December 2018, available [here](#).
⁵²⁸ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 1081*, 20 March 2023, available [here](#).
⁵²⁹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 240*, 9 April 2025, available [here](#).
⁵³⁰ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 2039*, 14 April 2026, available [here](#).
⁵³¹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 1081*, 20 March 2023, available [here](#).
⁵³² Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 2039*, 14 April 2026, available [here](#).

2. Conditions in reception facilities

Indicators: Conditions in Reception Facilities

1. Are there instances of asylum applicants not having access to reception accommodation because of a shortage of places? Yes No
2. What is the average length of stay of asylum applicants in the reception centres? Not available
3. Are unaccompanied children ever accommodated with adults in practice? Yes No
4. Are single women and men accommodated separately?⁵³³ Yes No

2.1. Overcrowding and overall conditions

Direct Provision has been under intense scrutiny since its inception in 2000 for the conditions imposed on residents, exacerbated by the fact that systemic delays in the asylum procedure result in people spending far longer in Direct Provision than was originally intended by the State. The system of Direct Provision has been criticised by numerous prominent organisations including the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, the Ombudsman for Children,⁵³⁴ the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, the Special Rapporteur for Children, and the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner,⁵³⁵ as well as UN Treaty Bodies such as the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁵³⁶ and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.⁵³⁷ Most importantly, people in the protection process themselves have also criticised conditions in Direct Provision.⁵³⁸

Since 2017, the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to hear complaints from residents of accommodation centres regarding the conditions of facilities amongst other matters.⁵³⁹

In 2023, the Office of the Ombudsman received 90 complaints from international protection applicants living in state provided accommodation regarding direct provision accommodation. 78 complaints were made regarding the International Protection Accommodation Service, while 8 complaints were made regarding accommodation centres and 3 complaints Ukraine Crisis Temporary Accommodation Team. 44 of the complaints made related to the standard of accommodation, 22 related to transfers from one IPAS accommodation centre to another and 4 complaints were made regarding centre staff. The Ombudsman upheld 10% of complaints and provided some form of assistance in a further 45% of complaints. 45% of complaints were not upheld.⁵⁴⁰ Data in respect of 2024 and 2025 was not available at the time of publication.

In appropriate cases, the Ombudsman's office engages with the relevant Government Department or agency to resolve the situation for the individual complainant concerned and in order to avoid any future similar issues arising.

⁵³³ The extent to which single women and men are accommodated separately varies. There are numerous mixed-sex accommodation centres where both women and men are accommodated together, however, the exact number of such centres was unknown at the time of updating.

⁵³⁴ Ombudsman for Children's Office, 'Special Report: Safety and Welfare of Children in Direct Provision', October 2023, available [here](#).

⁵³⁵ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 'Ireland: Secure dignified accommodation for all refugees and asylum seekers through a government-wide approach', 17 May 2023, available [here](#).

⁵³⁶ United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 'Third periodic reports of States parties due in 2007 – Ireland', 9 June 2015, available [here](#).

⁵³⁷ Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 'Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination', 11 March 2011, available [here](#).

⁵³⁸ Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI), Submission to Justice & Equality Joint Committee, 27 May 2019, available [here](#).

⁵³⁹ Ombudsman, 'The Ombudsman and direct provision', available [here](#).

⁵⁴⁰ Office of the Ombudsman, 'Annual Report 2023', 11 January 2025, available [here](#).

Quality of food and lack of self-catering provisions

In approximately half of Direct Provision Centres, residents receive all meals and are not permitted to cook for themselves.⁵⁴¹ In relation to food, the McMahon Working Group in 2015 recommended that IPAS should: (a) engage a suitably qualified person to conduct a nutrition audit to ensure that the food served meets the required standards including for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and the needs of those with medical conditions affected by food, such as diabetes; and (b) include an obligation in new contracts to consult with residents when planning the 28 day menu cycle.⁵⁴²

The final National Standards presented in August 2019 include a theme on food in order to improve the quality, diversity and cultural appropriateness of food provided in accommodation centres:

- ❖ Food preparation and dining facilities should meet the needs of residents, support family life and be appropriately equipped and maintained;⁵⁴³
- ❖ The service provider commits to meeting the catering needs and autonomy of residents, which includes access to a varied diet that respects their cultural, religious, dietary, nutritional and medical requirements.⁵⁴⁴

By 2019, IPAS had significantly expanded access to self-cooking in direct provision centres, with over half of residents able to cook for themselves and 18 centres operating residents' shops, driven by new contracting rules requiring compliance with the McMahon recommendations.⁵⁴⁵ However, progress was uneven, and by October 2020 only 52.1% of contracted beds had independent living facilities, with Athlone remaining the sole state-owned centre to implement independent living.⁵⁴⁶ No updated data regarding self-catering facilities was available after 2021.

During 2019, the Ombudsman received six complaints concerning food, down from nine in 2018.⁵⁴⁷ This reduction was attributed to the establishment of self-cooking and residents' shops at ten centres in 2019. The lack of communication and engagement of centre's management with residents was identified as the cause of most complaints presented regarding food in Direct Provision centres.⁵⁴⁸ The Ombudsman received two complaints relating to food in 2020.⁵⁴⁹ No complaints on the matter were received in 2021 or 2022.⁵⁵⁰ Data in respect of complaints regarding food throughout 2023, 2024 and 2025 was not available at the time of publication.

All contractors of accommodation centres have the contractual obligation to provide residents with culturally appropriate food options.⁵⁵¹ The menus prepared have to meet the reasonable dietary needs of the different ethnic groups of residents and the reasonable prescribed dietary needs of any person accommodated at the centre.⁵⁵² It is also a contractual obligation to provide a 28-day menu and to consult residents on it.⁵⁵³ In addition to this, a vegetarian option must be included in menus and all food products provided must have a traceability system that complies with food safety requirements.⁵⁵⁴ IPAS's House Rules and Procedures document states that, where possible and practical, an accommodation centre will

⁵⁴¹ Advisory Group on Direct Provision, *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*, 21 October 2020, available [here](#), 118.

⁵⁴² Working Group to report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *Final Report June 2015*, para 4.102, 174.

⁵⁴³ Department of Justice and Equality, *Final National Standards*, 15 August 2019, available [here](#), Standard 5.1. *ibid*, Standard 5.2.

⁵⁴⁴ Department of Justice and Equality, *Spending Review on Direct Provision*, 15 August 2019, available [here](#).

⁵⁴⁵ Advisory Group on Direct Provision, *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*, 21 October 2020, available [here](#),

⁵⁴⁶ Ombudsman, 'The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2019', April 2020, available [here](#).

⁵⁴⁷ *ibid*.

⁵⁴⁸ Ombudsman, 'The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2020', March 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁴⁹ Ombudsman, 'The Ombudsman & Direct Provision: Update for 2021', March 2022, available [here](#).

⁵⁵⁰ Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, Reply to Parliamentary Question No 970, 23 July 2019, available [here](#).

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵² Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, Reply to Parliamentary Question No 970, 23 July 2019.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid*.

cater for ‘ethnic food preferences’ and the centre will provide tea and coffee making facilities, and drinking water, outside normal meal times.⁵⁵⁵ However, complaints about the quality and presentation of food persist across centres, particularly in respect of food served at emergency centres.⁵⁵⁶

2.2. Length of stay

One of the primary issues with Direct Provision is the length of time people spend living in a system that was initially conceived to accommodate people for a maximum of six months while their application was processed. The poor standard of accommodation, combined with an asylum procedure riddled with systemic delays (see [Regular Procedure: General](#)), led to a reception environment that has forced people into circumstances of idleness, and exacerbated trauma and mental health issues.⁵⁵⁷ As a result, the system has been subject to national and international scrutiny.⁵⁵⁸

Research has demonstrated that even where applicants are eventually granted status, they face a number of difficulties transitioning out of Direct Provision and into independent living due to the length of time they have spent out of the workforce, with limited opportunity for personal or professional development. This, combined with limited economic resources and Ireland’s ongoing employment and housing shortages, has led to a significant challenge for people attempting to leave Direct Provision (see [Content of Protection: Housing](#)).⁵⁵⁹

Data regarding the average length of stay in Direct Provision for 2024 and 2025 was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).

C. Employment and education

1. Access to the labour market

Indicators: Access to the Labour Market

| | | | |
|----|--|---|----------|
| 1. | Does the law allow for access to the labour market for asylum applicants? ❖ If yes, when do asylum applicants have access the labour market? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | 6 months |
| 2. | Does the law allow access to employment only following a labour market test? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | |
| 3. | Does the law only allow asylum applicants to work in specific sectors? ❖ If yes, specify which sectors: ❖ Does the law limit asylum applicants’ employment to a maximum working time? ❖ If yes, specify the number of days per year | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No All <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | |
| 4. | Are there restrictions to accessing employment in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | |

In July 2018, Ireland transposed the EU recast Reception Conditions Directive following a decision of the Supreme Court in *N.V.H. v Minister for Justice and Equality* in which the Court held that an absolute ban on employment was a breach of the right to dignity under the Irish Constitution. With the legislative ban on employment struck down as unconstitutional, the main impediment to transposition of the Directive was removed.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁵ RIA, *House Rules and Procedures*, available [here](#).
⁵⁵⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.
⁵⁵⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, February 2024.
⁵⁵⁸ See e.g. Ombudsman, *The Ombudsman & Direct Provision – the story so far*, January 2018, available [here](#); United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland*, CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4, 1 March 2016, available [here](#).
⁵⁵⁹ Dr. Muireann Ní Raghallaigh, Maeve Foreman and Maggie Feeley, *Transition: From Direct Provision to life in the Community*, June 2016, available [here](#).
⁵⁶⁰ *N.V.H. v Minister for Justice and Equality* [2017] IESC 35, available [here](#).

According to the latest available statistics, throughout 2025, there were 22,416 applications for labour market access made by international protection applicants.⁵⁶¹

Waiting times and delays

The Reception Conditions Regulations permits a person who has been waiting more than six months for a first instance decision to apply for labour market access.⁵⁶² In order to be eligible for labour market access, an applicant must also co-operate with the international protection process, with the condition that delays in receiving a first-instance decision must not be attributable to them.⁵⁶³ This condition was examined in the case of *L.K. v. International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors*. In this case, the High Court upheld the applicant's appeal, concluding that the International Protection Appeals Tribunal was wrong to deny the applicant access to the labour market on the basis that there was no evidence that he was responsible for delays in the processing of his international protection application. In September 2019, the applicant applied for international protection in Ireland, however, was unable to complete the process required to lodge his application due to the unavailability of a Georgian interpreter. He was advised that his application would be postponed until such time a Georgian interpreter could be arranged, however, he claimed that he did not hear from the International Protection Office regarding a further appointment date. An appointment was eventually arranged, and the application lodged in December 2020. The applicant was issued with a Georgian questionnaire to complete. He later sought several extensions on the return date for the questionnaire, including for reasons attributable to Covid-19 and also the need to engage a Georgian translator. These requests were granted by the IPO.

In July 2020, the applicant applied for labour market access permission, and this was refused by the Labour Market Access Unit on the grounds that the applicant was responsible for the delays in completing his application for international protection. This decision was appealed to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, who upheld the decision of the Labour Market Access Unit. The applicant then filed judicial proceedings before the High Court. Upholding the applicant's appeal, the High Court concluded that the LMAU's refusal was unjustified and that there was no evidence that the aforementioned delays were attributable to the applicant. Moreover, it was held that the IPAT's upholding of this judgment was unreasonable in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health measures.⁵⁶⁴

Labour market access consists of permission to be self-employed or to be employed in most sectors of the economy, with an absolute ban on employment in public bodies, such as the Civil Service, Local Authorities, or companies/entities majority owned by the Government or established by way of legislation.⁵⁶⁵

In practice, labour market access applications are accepted once a person has been waiting for five months for a first instance decision in order to prevent delays once the six-month period has elapsed. Previously, in order to apply for labour market access, an individual was required to complete and submit an application form by email to the Labour Market Access Unit, along with a copy of their Temporary Residence Certificate and details of any identity documentation provided to the IPO to establish their identity or a description of the efforts made to attain same.⁵⁶⁶ However, applications are now made online via the Immigration Service Delivery portal.⁵⁶⁷

As a consequence of the significant increase in the number of international protection applicants arriving in the state throughout 2023, there were very high volumes of applications received by the Labour Market Access Unit in respect of permission to work. This resulted in significant processing delays of approximately 145 days for first time permission applications.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, while applicants are generally eligible for labour market access permission 6 months after their initial application for protection, many

⁵⁶¹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Questions Np 485 and 486*, 20 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁵⁶² Regulation 11(3) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁶³ Immigration Service Delivery, 'Labour Market Access Permission', available [here](#).

⁵⁶⁴ *L.K. v. International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors* [2022] IEHC 441, available [here](#).

⁵⁶⁵ Regulation 11(9)(a) and Schedule 6 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁶⁶ Immigration Service Delivery, 'Labour Market Access Permission', available [here](#).

⁵⁶⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.

⁵⁶⁸ *ibid*.

applicants are waiting up to 9.5 months in order to access the labour market.⁵⁶⁹ In the view of the Irish Refugee Council this may constitute a breach of the Reception Conditions Directive which requires that an applicant be permitted access to the labour market within nine months of their initial application for protection. The Irish Refugee Council has written to the Minister for Justice in relation to this issue, however, no response had been received at the time of updating (January 2026).⁵⁷⁰

Labour Market Access delays continued throughout 2024. While delays have reduced somewhat, processing times remain at 90 days for first time permission applications.⁵⁷¹ From January 2025, all labour market access permits were issued by email as opposed to by post, with a view to reducing overall processing times.⁵⁷² As of January 2026, the average processing time had reduced to approximately 4 weeks.⁵⁷³ However, anecdotal reports suggested that delays continued sporadically in certain cases.⁵⁷⁴

Once a person has been granted permission prior to receiving a first instance decision, that permission lasts throughout any subsequent appeal process. However, if a person has already received a first instance decision, they will not be able to access the labour market no matter how long they may be waiting for a resolution to an appeal. This means that, despite the right to work constituting a significant positive development for newly arrived protection applicants, those who had been in Ireland the longest and who had already received a first instance decision did not benefit from this change.⁵⁷⁵

On 21 October 2020, the government announced revised arrangements for access to the labour market, including a reduction in the waiting period from nine months to six months from the date of first application for international protection.⁵⁷⁶ Further changes include an increase in the validity period of permission to access the labour market from 6 months to 12 months and expanding access to include applicants who received a first instance recommendation prior to the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 coming into force, provided they meet the criteria established in the Regulations.⁵⁷⁷ These changes came into effect from 26 January 2021 and continue to apply as of January 2026.⁵⁷⁸

In 2019, the Irish High Court referred to the CJEU a preliminary ruling on a number of questions, with the aim of clarifying the right to access the labour market for international protection applicants in the Dublin procedure. On 14 January 2021, in a judgment delivered in the case of *K.S. & Ors v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal & Ors*, the Court of Justice of the European Union determined that Article 15 of Directive 2013/33 (Reception Conditions Directive) must be interpreted as precluding national legislation whereby such legislation excludes an applicant for international protection from accessing the labour market on the basis that the applicant has been subject to a transfer decision under the Dublin III Regulation.⁵⁷⁹ Following the ruling, persons subject to a Dublin transfer have the right to enter the labour market in Ireland whereby no decision on their substantive protection claim has issued within six months and the individual is not responsible for the delay in progressing their transfer. Taking legal action to challenge the transfer will not be regarded as a delay attributable to the applicant in the circumstances.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁶⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

⁵⁷⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy Officer, January 2024.

⁵⁷¹ Immigration Service Delivery, 'Labour Market Permission', 28 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁵⁷² *ibid.*

⁵⁷³ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Labour Market Access Permission', updated the 20th of October 2025, available [here](#).

⁵⁷⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁵⁷⁵ Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI), Submission to Justice & Equality Joint Committee, 27 May 2019, available [here](#).

⁵⁷⁶ Department of Justice, *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process*, 21 October 2020, available [here](#).

⁵⁷⁷ Irish Legal News, 'Restrictions on asylum seekers access to work to be eased', 22 October 2020, available [here](#).

⁵⁷⁸ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee announces reduced 6 month waiting period for international protection applicants to access work' 28 January 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁷⁹ Case C-322/19 and C-385/19, *K.S. and Ors v. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal and Ors*, ECLI:EU:C:2021:11, available [here](#).

⁵⁸⁰ *ibid.*

Conditions and duties of applicants and employers

There are a number of conditions applying to permission to access the labour market with a criminal sanction applying in the event of a breach. An applicant may not employ any person or enter a partnership with another person. An applicant may not be employed or seek to be employed or enter a contract for services with any of the prohibited bodies.⁵⁸¹ An applicant must also inform the Minister of their income and must inform the Minister if they become self-employed or if there is any change to their self-employment.⁵⁸²

In addition, employers must inform the Minister within 21 days of employing an asylum applicant in possession of labour market permission and must inform the Minister within 21 days of that employment ceasing.⁵⁸³ The employer must also maintain records of the particulars of employment including copies of the person's permission to work, the duration of employment, and remuneration paid. Employers must keep these records for three years from the date on which the applicant ceases to be an employee and must provide a copy of these records within ten working days. These additional obligations on employers, which do not apply to other employees, are administratively onerous and may make it less attractive to employ a person seeking asylum. Indeed, the Irish Refugee Council has received reports of employers not recognising the official documents granting permission to work and not employing protection applicants on this basis. It is an offence under the Regulations to fail to comply with these requirements, with an employer potentially subject to a fine of €5,000 and/or a prison term of 12 months.⁵⁸⁴

An applicant who breaches the Regulations on access to the labour market is guilty of a criminal offence, which carries a fine of €1,000 and/or a prison term of one month.⁵⁸⁵ This would also affect their asylum application.

Access in practice

In practice, protection applicants face significant practical difficulties in accessing the labour market.

For instance, many applicants previously experienced barriers in accessing bank accounts due to difficulties in producing satisfactory identity documents for the purposes of anti-money laundering requirements. In April 2021, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission announced that following formal engagement with Bank of Ireland, the Bank had agreed to accept State-issued identity documentation, therefore enabling asylum applicants to open a bank account. The Commission used its statutory powers through a formal process known as an Equality Review.⁵⁸⁶ The five major banks in the State - Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, Permanent TSB, KBC and Ulster Bank -, subsequently confirmed that from 13 May 2021, international protection applicants would be able to provide alternative documentation to prove their identity when seeking to open a bank account.⁵⁸⁷ As of January 2026, the vast majority of applicants were able to access bank accounts without difficulty.⁵⁸⁸ However, throughout 2025, age-disputed minors reported difficulties with respect to opening bank accounts on account of lack of clarity around the applicant's age.⁵⁸⁹

People in the asylum process also previously faced difficulties in obtaining a driving licence due to lack of available identification documentation.⁵⁹⁰ In January 2020, the Workplace Relations Commission found that denying the applicant the means to learn how to drive and therefore earn a living was "indirect

⁵⁸¹ Regulation 11(9)(a) and (10) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁸² Regulation 11(9)(b) and (c) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁸³ Regulation 14 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁸⁴ Regulation 15(2) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁸⁵ Regulation 15(1) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁵⁸⁶ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 'Access to Bank Accounts Confirmed for Asylum Seekers', 11 April 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁸⁷ RTÉ, 'Banks to allow asylum seekers use alternative documents to open accounts', 13 May 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁸⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁵⁸⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, January 2026.

⁵⁹⁰ For further details, please see previous updates to this country report, available [here](#).

discrimination".⁵⁹¹ Subsequently in July 2020, the Dublin Circuit Court overturned a separate Workplace Relations Commission declaration that the refusal to issue driving licences to asylum applicants was discriminatory. On 21 October 2020, the Department of Justice announced that legislation would be brought forward by the Minister for Transport prior to year-end in order to ensure access for asylum applicants to driving licences.⁵⁹² In February 2021, the Minister of State at the Department of Transport confirmed that officials in the Department of Transport and the Road Safety Authority are working in close collaboration with various stakeholders to ensure the provision of drivers' licences to asylum applicants.⁵⁹³ However, prior to legislation being implemented, two international protection applicants successfully challenged by way of judicial review a decision by the Road Safety Authority (the 'RSA') to refuse them permission to exchange their full driver licences, issued by their country of origin, for Irish licences. Following the implementation of the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023, international protection applicants can now apply for a driving license on the same basis as Irish citizens, provided all other requirements are met, and can use their temporary residence certificate as proof of normal residence in Ireland.⁵⁹⁴ In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, as of January 2026, there were no reports of service users experiencing difficulties accessing driving licenses.⁵⁹⁵

Other barriers faced by international protection applicants in sourcing suitable employment include scarcity of employment, lack of access to childcare and discrimination.⁵⁹⁶ In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, such barriers are often exacerbated by the fact that many applicants are accommodated in rural locations with lack of access to public transport links.⁵⁹⁷ Language barriers and cultural differences also play a significant role.⁵⁹⁸

Additionally, a study from the ESRI published in March 2023 regarding labour market integration of international protection applicants in Ireland concluded that the majority of international protection applicants are in low-skilled jobs which do not match the qualifications they hold.⁵⁹⁹ The study found that the largest sector that international protection applicants are employed in is business, sales, and tourism sector with 2,186 persons employed in this industry. Agriculture, animals, and food was the second most common sector with 1,321 people employed.⁶⁰⁰

The study also found that applicants are included within mainstream labour market integration policies and can access employment services, such as those provided by Intreo. However, applicants cannot access some employment supports, due to not meeting eligibility requirements. The ESRI stated that no specific nationwide governance measures to support labour market integration in Ireland were identified in the ESRI's research and Ireland has no specific strategy or policy to support the labour market integration of third-country nationals.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹¹ ADJ-00017832 Correction Order issued pursuant to Section 29 of the Equal Status Act 2000 (as amended), available [here](#).

⁵⁹² Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 'Legislation Promised on Driving Licences Fundamental to Access to Employment for Asylum Seekers', 21 October 2020, available [here](#).

⁵⁹³ Minister of State at the Department of Transport Hildegard Naughton, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 103*, 10 February 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁹⁴ Department of Transport, 'Asylum seekers can now apply for driving licenses', 17 December 2021, available [here](#).

⁵⁹⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, January 2026.

⁵⁹⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Employment Team, February 2024.

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ ESRI, 'Labour Market Integration of International Protection Applicants in Ireland', 24 March 2023, available [here](#).

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ *ibid.*

⁶⁰¹ *ibid.*

2. Access to education

Indicators: Access to Education

1. Does the law provide for access to education for asylum-seeking children? Yes No
2. Are children able to access education in practice? Yes No

Early childhood

Asylum-seeking children and children with international protection status can access the National Childcare Scheme and the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The National Childcare Scheme assists parents to meet childcare costs, including the cost of attending crèche or Montessori. The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age.⁶⁰²

Primary and secondary education

Asylum-seeking children can also attend local national primary and secondary schools on the same basis as Irish children. This has been made an express right under the Reception Conditions Regulations.⁶⁰³

The Irish Refugee Council and other organisations have previously raised concern about access to education for children living in emergency accommodation. In November 2019, the Newstalk radio station reported that up to 30 children living in emergency Direct Provision accommodation were not attending school.⁶⁰⁴ The Irish Refugee Council, in the report 'Reception Conditions Directive: One Year On' report', called on the Minister for Education to ensure children in emergency centres are enrolled in school, and it said the use of Bed and Breakfasts and hotels to accommodate protection applicants should be phased out as soon as possible.⁶⁰⁵

In recent years, Tusla's Education Welfare Service (EWS), has provided support to families living in Direct Provision and emergency accommodation with regard to school attendance, participation, and retention. The Education Welfare Service is staffed with Education Welfare Officers (EWOs). Each regional area is allocated several EWOs. EWOs work with families and children in a child-centred way to overcome barriers with regard to school attendance.⁶⁰⁶ In respect of children residing in Direct Provision, EWOs can assist families with acquiring school places for children of school-going age and engaging with local schools to ensure adequate transportation is provided to children from their centres to and from school.⁶⁰⁷

The City of Dublin Education and Training Board Separated Children's Service has offered educational services and support to separated children since 2001. The most prominent feature of the service is their Refugee Access Programme, which is a transition service for newly arrived separated children and other young people 'from refugee backgrounds'. The programme provides intensive English instruction, integration programmes and assists young people in preparing to navigate the Irish education system. Additionally, the service provides support after transition, including study support, outreach, a drop-in and a youth group.⁶⁰⁸

As of January 2026, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, issues regarding access to primary education are minimal, with the vast majority of issues arising relating to acquiring school places.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁶⁰³ Regulation 17 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁶⁰⁴ Newstalk, Up to 30 asylum-seeking children receiving no education at centre in Carrickmacross, 25 November 2019, available [here](#).

⁶⁰⁵ Irish Refugee Council, 'Reception Conditions Directive: One Year On', July 2019, available [here](#).

⁶⁰⁶ Tusla, 'EWS', available [here](#).

⁶⁰⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁶⁰⁸ Separated Children's Services, *Youth and Education Services*.

⁶⁰⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

Vocational training

Vocational training is now available to protection applicants who have successfully received permission to access the labour market. Such an applicant may access vocational training on the same basis as an Irish citizen.

Further education

There is no automatic access to third level education in Universities and Colleges, or to non-vocational further education courses such as post-leaving certificate courses. Protection applicants can access third level education and non-vocational further education if they can cover the costs of the fees, get the fees waived or access private grants or scholarships.

In order to ameliorate the hardship associated with the high fees, which place third level education beyond the reach of many young people in the Direct Provision system, a pilot support scheme was introduced in September 2015, following the publication of the Working Group Report on the Protection Process. The scheme provided support in line with the Student Grant Scheme to eligible school leavers who were in the international protection system (other than those at the deportation order stage) and who were either: asylum applicants; subsidiary protection applicants; or leave to remain applicants. The eligibility requirements were stringent and meant that the vast majority of students did not satisfy the conditions set by the Department of Education. As a result, uptake was very low, despite clear interest in further and higher education.⁶¹⁰ Concerns were raised that the pilot scheme was so restrictive in nature that it may be very difficult to access.⁶¹¹ Most notably, in this respect, was the requirement that the applicant must have spent five years in the Irish education system. The Irish Refugee Council recommended that the criteria be amended to reduce the five-year requirement.⁶¹² The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) also recommended that the pilot support scheme for free fees be altered to remove the criterion of five years as this presents for many an insurmountable barrier to accessing affordable third-level education.⁶¹³

On 10 August 2020, the Department of Further and Higher Education announced significant changes to the student support scheme for asylum applicants. Prospective applicants are no longer required to have completed the Leaving Certificate examination or have attended an Irish school for three years. Applicants are required to have been accepted on an approved third level course, to have been in the protection process for a combined period of three years and to have been resident in the State for a combined period of three years as of 31 August 2020.⁶¹⁴ In August 2021, it was announced that the Student Support Scheme would be expanded to include allow postgraduate applications for the 2021 to 2022 academic year.⁶¹⁵

In 2022, the Student Support Scheme was re-named 'the International Protection Student Scheme' Funding pursuant to the scheme is now administered by SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland), as opposed to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. Additionally, the three-year residency requirement is no longer considered as commencing on the 31st of August 2019, but rather the day prior to the course start date.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁰ Irish Times, 'Asylum seekers to receive student grants for first time', 28 August 2015, available [here](#).

⁶¹¹ See e.g. Subpri.me, *Access to Education and the McMahon report*, available [here](#).

⁶¹² RTE, 'Third level access scheme for asylum seekers extended', 7 September 2018, available [here](#).

⁶¹³ IHREC, *Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports*, January 2017, available [here](#).

⁶¹⁴ Department of Further and Higher Education, *Student Grant Scheme for Asylum Seekers*, 10 August 2020, available [here](#).

⁶¹⁵ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Skills, *Continuation and expansion of Student Support Scheme for asylum seekers in the international protection system announced by Minister Harris*, 27 August 2021, available [here](#).

⁶¹⁶ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, *International Protection Student Support Scheme 2022-2023*, 26 September 2022, available [here](#).

While data in respect of individual application cycles for 2022, 2023 and 2024 was not available, figures released by the Department of Education in January 2025 indicate that 457 applications have been made to the Student Support Scheme since its inception in 2015. The total amount of funding for maintenance administered under the scheme as of January 2025 is €669, 799.00. The amount administered in fees was not available at the time of updating (January 2026).⁶¹⁷

From January to November 2025, 17 international protection applicants were supported pursuant to the scheme with the total amount of funding provided being €14,154.00. However, these figures are likely to be somewhat higher as SUSI continued to process applications for academic year 2025/26 to year end.⁶¹⁸

Basic instruction on English and computer skills are offered to residents of some Direct Provision centres. Universities have some flexibility on whether to charge refugees third level non-EU fees or EU fees. Both are expensive but non-EU fees are much more expensive. This makes accessing third level education prohibitive for the majority of protection applicants.

A number of Irish Universities have taken steps to improve access for protection applicants. A total of seven out of the eight Irish universities offered full-time scholarships. 9 of the 11 institutes of technology also offer scholarships or access support.⁶¹⁹ The Irish Refugee Council’s Education Fund, using donations from members of the public, makes grants to support access to higher education. In the academic year 2023-2024, the Education Fund supported 78 students to gain access to third level education with an average award of €500 per student.⁶²⁰ In the academic year 2024-2025, the Irish Refugee Council Education Fund received a total of 409 applications, a 36% increase in applications on the previous year. 88 students were supported under the fund.⁶²¹ In the academic year 2026-2026, the Irish Refugee Council Education Fund received a total of 809 applications, and 68 students were supported under the fund,⁶²²

As regards access to education and vocational training for adults protection applicants, English language programmes are available but access often depends on the location of the Direct Provision centre. There are local based initiatives such as the SOLAS Orientation and Learning for Asylum Applicants programme in Galway and Mayo, the CREW project in **Carlow** and the Refugee Access Programme in **Dublin**.⁶²³

D. Health care

Indicators: Health Care

1. Is access to emergency healthcare for asylum applicants guaranteed in national legislation? Yes No
2. Do asylum applicants have adequate access to health care in practice? Yes Limited No
3. Is specialised treatment for victims of torture or traumatised asylum applicants available in practice? Yes Limited No
4. If material conditions are reduced or withdrawn, are asylum applicants still given access to health care? Yes No

Access to health care is free for protection applicants living in Direct Provision and is expressly provided for in the Reception Conditions Regulations.⁶²⁴ The Minister for Health is required to ensure that a

⁶¹⁷ Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 1725*, 22 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁶¹⁸ Minister for Education and Skills, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 626*, 11 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁶¹⁹ Irish Refugee Council, *The Education System in Ireland: A guide for people seeking asylum, those with refugee status, subsidiary protection or permission to remain*, 15 July 2021, available [here](#).

⁶²⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council’s Education Officer, April 2024.

⁶²¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Education Team, February 2025.

⁶²² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Education Team, April 2026.

⁶²³ For further information see European Commission, ICF study, *Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees*, Ireland, April 2016; See also Irish Refugee Council, *Education in Ireland: A guide for protection applicants those with refugee status, subsidiary protection or permission to remain*, 15 July 2021, available [here](#).

⁶²⁴ Regulation 18 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

recipient has access to emergency health care, treatment for serious illnesses and mental disorders, other health care for maintaining their health, and mental health care assessed as necessary for vulnerable persons.

In practice, a recipient of material reception conditions must apply for a medical card, which allows them to attend a local doctor or general practitioner who are located in or attend the Direct Provision accommodation centres. A person with a medical card is entitled to prescribed drugs and medicines and protection applicants living in Direct Provision are exempt from paying the prescription charges levied on medical-card holders.⁶²⁵

Following numerous complaints to the Department of Health and the Ombudsman, the HSE's Medical Card Unit have amended their policy to enable eligible international protection applicants who are not living in Direct Provision to obtain medical cards and access to free medical services from GPs accepting medical card patients, prescription medicines and hospital care. Under previous policy, international protection applicants residing outside of Direct Provision were deemed ineligible for medical cards, with many struggling to access healthcare as a result. In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, issues accessing medical cards for those living outside of Direct Provision have been minimal as of January 2026.⁶²⁶

Data in respect of 2023, 2024 and 2025 was not available at the time of updating.

IPAS's website states that "Health screening is made available in our reception centres to all protection applicants on a voluntary and strictly confidential basis. Screening covers Hepatitis, TB, HIV, immunisation status and any other ailments or conditions that the medical officers feel require further investigation and/or treatment. Screening staff also check the vaccination needs of the resident and their family. Arrangements are in place in various parts of the country to offer this service to those who did not avail of it in Dublin. The outcome of any medical tests undergone by an asylum applicant will not affect their application for a declaration as a refugee in any way."⁶²⁷

Specialised treatment for trauma and victims of torture is available through an NGO called **SPIRASI** which is a humanitarian, intercultural, non-governmental organisation that works with protection applicants, refugees and other disadvantaged migrant groups, with special concern for survivors of torture. Spirasi staff have access to certain accommodation centres e.g. **Balseskin** reception centre in Dublin and can help to identify victims of torture. However, no formal arrangements or agreements exist to deal with torture survivors in a way that is different to someone who has not experienced torture.

Applicants who hold a medical card are entitled to access women's health services, including maternity and infant care and family planning free of charge through the applicant's GP or family planning service.⁶²⁸ A specialist FGM treatment service is provided by the Irish Family Planning Association. The service includes both medical and psychological care.⁶²⁹ The service is provided by the Association's Dublin-based clinics only and patients residing outside of Dublin must travel in order to access the service.

The HSE Women's Health Service (WHS) and Anti-Human Trafficking Team is a statutory service provided by the HSE. The WHS operate a health clinic for women who are victims of human trafficking. Additionally, the AHTT has responsibility for care planning for both male and female victims of trafficking.⁶³⁰

In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, international protection applicants experience numerous practical and logistical difficulties in accessing healthcare. These include obstacles such as the availability of translation services, which are inconsistent across the Irish health service and create communication

⁶²⁵ Citizens Information, 'Prescription Charges for Medical Card Holders', 10 October 2018, available [here](#).

⁶²⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁶²⁷ RIA, *Medical*, available [here](#).

⁶²⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁶²⁹ Irish Family Planning Association, 'Free FGM Treatment Service', available [here](#).

⁶³⁰ HSE, 'Women's Health Service and Anti-Human Trafficking Team', available [here](#).

barriers for patients. Difficulties with transportation to medical facilities from remote accommodation locations also hinder access to healthcare. This is particularly the case whereby international protection applicants are moved from one centre to another without adequate notice and therefore, continuity of healthcare provision may be lost or disrupted. Moreover, there is no specific mental health service established for the purposes of providing support to international protection applicants. While many voluntary organisations such as those listed above provide specific supports in respect of survivors of torture, sexual violence, and human-trafficking. Mainstream mental health services are already under-resourced and therefore operate long waiting lists. Moreover, they may not have the specialist expertise to effectively deal with the unique experiences of international protection applicants and persons with international protection status.⁶³¹

E. Special reception needs of vulnerable groups

Indicators: Special Reception Needs

1. Is there an assessment of special reception needs of vulnerable persons in practice?
 Yes No

Regulation 2(5) of the Reception Conditions Regulations defines a vulnerable person as “a person who is a minor, an unaccompanied minor, a person with a disability, an elderly person, a pregnant woman, a single parent of a minor, a victim of human trafficking, a person with a serious illness, a person with a mental disorder, and a person who has been subjected to torture, rape or other form of serious psychological, physical or sexual violence.”

Under the Reception Conditions Regulations, a vulnerability assessment must take place within 30 working days of a person communicating their intention to seek asylum.⁶³² However, the form of the assessment is not prescribed in the Regulations and a vulnerability assessment had still not been introduced as of the end of 2020, despite a commitment made by the Government in October 2020 that a formal system of vulnerability assessment would be implemented by year-end.

A pilot vulnerability assessment programme for international protection applicants was introduced at Dublin’s Baleskin reception centre in January 2021 and thereafter, extended to all new and existing applicants by January 2023, and later expanded nationwide.⁶³³ In September 2022, IPAS published a policy formalising the programme, but resource pressures led to major procedural changes, including the use of self-completed questionnaires and referral forms aligned with the Reception Conditions Directive. While the Irish Refugee Council welcomed the initiative, it raised concerns about inconsistent assessments and inadequate follow-up supports. On 8 March 2024, IPAS suspended the pilot due to increased arrivals and accommodation constraints,⁶³⁴ and between March and November 2024 no full vulnerability assessments were conducted, although limited triage for newly arrived single men continued.⁶³⁵ Following a tender process launched in April 2024, IPAS announced in November 2024 that assessments would resume, outsourced to GoodPeople Homecare Ltd, with a target of 350 assessments per week, initially at Citywest and later expanding to the International Protection Office⁶³⁶ (see [Identification of Vulnerable Applicants](#)).

While an optional health screening is provided to residents at **Baleskin** and also at **Citywest Transit Hub**, this is only a preliminary health screening and does not constitute a vulnerability assessment. The Regulations also provide for a further assessment to take place at any stage during the asylum process

⁶³¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024. For further analysis, see: RCSI Faculty of Public Health Medicine, ‘Migrant Health – The Health of Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Relocated Individuals’, June 2016, available [here](#).
⁶³² Regulation 8(1)(a) Reception Conditions Regulations.
⁶³³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.
⁶³⁴ Information provided by IPAS, March 2024.
⁶³⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2025.
⁶³⁶ Information provided by IPAS, November 2024.

where the Minister considers it necessary to do so in order to ascertain whether the recipient has special reception needs.⁶³⁷

1. Reception of unaccompanied children

Regulation 9 of the Reception Conditions Regulations provides that in all matters pertaining to the reception of children, “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” For the purposes of assessing a minor’s best interests with respect to reception conditions, the Minister shall have regard to:

- ❖ Family unity;
- ❖ The minor’s well-being and social development, taking into account the minor’s background;
- ❖ Safety and security considerations, in particular where there is a possibility of the minor being a victim of human trafficking;
- ❖ The views of the minor in accordance with their age and maturity.

With respect to unaccompanied children, specifically, Regulation 10 states that the provisions of the Regulations shall apply to unaccompanied children who have made an application for international protection and designates Tusla as the minor’s representative (see [Legal representation of unaccompanied children](#)) in all matters pertaining to their reception entitlements. Unaccompanied minors are not accommodated in Direct Provision and are either reunited with family or taken into care.⁶³⁸

In January 2024, it was reported that there had been, according to Tusla, the child and family agency, an ‘unprecedented increase’ in the number of unaccompanied children presenting to its Separated Children Seeking International Protection Service (SCSIP Service).⁶³⁹ According to statistics, in the period between January and August 2023, 280 unaccompanied minors had arrived in Ireland and sought international protection.⁶⁴⁰

Subsequently, in April 2024, it was reported that Ireland has experienced a 500% increase in the number of unaccompanied children seeking international protection. According to figures released by Tusla’s Separated Children Seeking International Protection Team in April 2024, in the previous 15 months, 607 unaccompanied children were referred to the service. Of those, 243 minors arrived within the first 3 months of 2024.⁶⁴¹

While definitive statistics regarding unaccompanied children for 2025 are not publicly available, according to media reports, Tusla expected to care for approximately 1,200 unaccompanied children by the end of 2025, a 33% increase on the previous year.⁶⁴²

Separately, concerns were raised throughout 2024 regarding the use of unregulated Special Emergency Accommodation for unaccompanied minors in the care of the State. In February 2024, reports emerged that a care home utilised by Tusla had fabricated pre-employment checks of staff, including Garda vetting, therefore posing a significant risk to vulnerable children in its care. An internal report conducted by Tusla determined that Garda vetting files providing clearance for staff to work for the company running the care home had been altered, while pre-employment checks carried out in respect of prospective staff were reportedly falsified.⁶⁴³ Concerns continued to be raised throughout 2025. In January 2025, it was reported

⁶³⁷ Regulation 8(1)(b) Reception Conditions Regulations.

⁶³⁸ Samantha Arnold and Muireann Ní Raghallaigh, ‘Unaccompanied minors in Ireland: Current Law, Policy and Practice’ (2017) 15:1, *Social Work and Society*, available [here](#).

⁶³⁹ Irish Times, ‘Unprecedented’ increase in unaccompanied children seeking asylum in Ireland’, 15 January 2024, available [here](#).

⁶⁴⁰ Irish Examiner, ‘280 unaccompanied children have sought international protection this year’, 14 October 2023, available [here](#).

⁶⁴¹ The Journal, ‘500% increase in migrant children arriving alone in Ireland to claim asylum’, 30 April 2024, available [here](#).

⁶⁴² Irish Examiner, ‘Tusla expects to care for 1,200 unaccompanied child asylum seekers this year, Dail Committee told’, 14 October 2025, available [here](#).

⁶⁴³ RTE, ‘Gardaí probe claim Tusla care provider ‘fabricated’ files’, 29 February 2024, available [here](#).

that Tusla had placed children in the care of a firm that had been blacklisted due to concerns over lack of Garda vetting and child protection training.⁶⁴⁴

Concerns continued to be raised regarding the number of unaccompanied children seeking international protection missing from state care. In July 2024, it was reported that there were 39 children missing from State care. 22 of these children were unaccompanied minors seeking international protection⁶⁴⁵ As of October 2025, 69 unaccompanied children had gone missing from State care. Of these, 48 had been accounted for subsequently, two had aged out and 19 remained missing at the time of reporting⁶⁴⁶ (see [Age Assessment of Unaccompanied Minors](#)).

2. Reception of families with children

In addition to regard for the best interests of the child under Regulation 9, Regulation 10 of the Reception Conditions Regulations sets out the standards pertaining to the designation of accommodation, which includes provisions relevant to children and families with children. The Minister shall take account of *inter alia* family unity (where family members of the recipient are recipients and are present in the territory of the State) and gender and age specific concerns.

In particular, when designating accommodation to children, the Minister shall have regard to (a) the need to lodge a child with their parents, unmarried minor siblings or an adult responsible for him or her (provided it is in their best interests), and (b) the need for the accommodation centre to be suitable to meet all of the child's needs.

There are five centres which accommodate families with children; two which accommodate families and single females. Families are otherwise accommodated with the general population. Children are accommodated together with their families in Direct Provision accommodation centres. In his 2019 report to Parliament, the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Professor Geoffrey Shannon, criticised the Direct Provision, stating “As noted in numerous other Rapporteur reports, the system of Direct Provision for asylum applicants in Ireland should be abolished”.⁶⁴⁷

In April 2021, the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) published the report of its investigation *Safety and Welfare of Children in Direct Provision*. The investigation was launched following a visit to a Direct Provision Centre by the Ombudsman's Office during which a parent raised concerns regarding overcrowding, nutrition, lack of safe play areas for children and poor communication from centre management about facilities at the designated centre and how to go about making a complaint. While the investigation initially focused on one centre, the OCO subsequently decided to expand its investigation to include all accommodation centres where children were residing. This was largely owing to concerns that IPAS did not have a sufficiently robust oversight mechanism in place to ensure quality of services being provided to children.

Residents of direct provision centres raised concerns about overcrowding and safety issues. Other concerns raised during OCO's investigation included inconsistent heating supply to bedrooms, the nutritional content of food, the poor conditions of facilities – including the lack of safe play areas for children – and lack of information on how to submit complaints. The report also underlined a broader ‘culture of fear’ in direct provision centres, with residents being reluctant to bring complaints to the authorities’ attention due to the fear that this may impact on their status or treatment while seeking asylum in Ireland. Interpretation services were also not available in some centres, thus preventing residents from making complaints.

⁶⁴⁴ Irish Times, ‘Company vetting lapses spark alarm within child protection agency Tusla’, 9 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁶⁴⁵ Irish Independent, ‘Nearly half of 39 children missing from state care were unaccompanied minors seeking asylum’, 2 July 2024, available [here](#).

⁶⁴⁶ Irish Examiner, ‘Tusla expects to care for 1,200 unaccompanied child asylum seekers this year, Dail Committee told’, 14 October 2025, available [here](#).

⁶⁴⁷ Professor Geoffrey Shannon, *Eleventh Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection: A Report Submitted to the Oireachtas*, September 2019, available [here](#), 81.

The Report called for IPAS to immediately end the use of commercial emergency hotels and put in place a well-resourced quality assurance mechanism to monitor complaints, child protection and welfare concerns and any other incidents in order to be assured about the quality of services provided to families in all centres. The OCO further called for extensive cultural sensitivity training, as well as training in gender, equality, human and children's rights training for staff working in Direct Provision centres. Finally, it also called on Tusla, the Child and Family agency, to recognise the vulnerability of children within the international protection process and to develop an intercultural strategy.⁶⁴⁸

In its White Paper on Direct Provision, the Government noted that, as part of the revised reception system for international protection applicants, there will be an emphasis on child welfare and child protection. Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs), which comprise all key statutory and voluntary agencies working with children, will ensure that, among their sub-groups, there is a specific focus on the needs of children, young people and their families in International Protection Accommodation settings. The CYPSCs will receive Tusla's input in the key areas such as Prevention, Partnership and Family Support and Educational Support Services. Parenting supports and child development services will also be made available to applicant families to support child development during the application process.⁶⁴⁹

Subsequently, in October 2023, the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) published a Special Report on the Safety and Welfare of Children in Direct Provision. It is the first report of its kind since the OCO was established in 2004. The Special Report sought to highlight concerns regarding the lack of progress on the OCO's previous three recommendations, issued in 2021 following an investigation into the administrative actions of IPAS and Tusla regarding children residing in IPAS accommodation. The report, while acknowledging that the influx of arrivals from Ukraine has created unprecedented challenges for government in respect of the accommodation system, nevertheless expresses concern for the potential adverse effects on the rights and welfare of children residing within state-provided accommodation. The report establishes three key recommendations to be implemented by IPAS, including, to no longer use commercial hotels for the purpose of accommodating children, and plan for accommodation capacity pressures, to put in place robust quality assurance mechanisms, including an independent inspectorate, and further, to take into account the vulnerability of children within the international protection process when planning and providing for their accommodation needs.⁶⁵⁰

3. Reception of victims of torture, violence or trafficking

Victims of torture have access to NGO support services, such as SPIRASI, who provide ongoing therapeutic interventions and psychosocial supports for victims of torture. However, this is curtailed by the practice of accommodating such applicants in isolated accommodation centres and limited funding for organisations providing specialised support.

There does not exist any formal policy to prevent mixed-sex accommodation, however, there are numerous single sex centres for both males and females within the IPAS accommodation stock.⁶⁵¹

In April 2014, IPAS (RIA, as it then was), established a sexual and gender-based violence policy. The policy applies to both centre residents and staff. It notes the duty of care owed to all residents by IPAS staff and further states that an integrated and coordinated response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and harassment be implemented. The policy requires that survivors of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence be provided with adequate information and assistance when reporting an incident to IPAS and An Garda Síochána, that survivors be provided with adequate information regarding

⁶⁴⁸ Ombudsman for Children's Office, Safety & Welfare of Children in Direct Provision, 27 April 2021, available [here](#).

⁶⁴⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, White Paper on Ending Direct Provision, 26 February 2021, available [here](#).

⁶⁵⁰ Ombudsman for Children's Office, Special Report: Safety & Welfare of Children in Direct Provision, October 2023, available [here](#).

⁶⁵¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

support services available and that such incidents are properly reported.⁶⁵² This policy remains in effect as of January 2026, however, the extent to which it is effectively implemented in practice is unclear.

F. Information for asylum applicants and access to reception centres

1. Provision of information on reception

The Reception Conditions Regulations provide that the Minister must, within 15 working days from the date on which a person indicates their intention to seek asylum, in writing (in a language they understand) inform them of the material reception conditions to which they are entitled under the Regulations and the contact details of relevant organisations who may offer support.⁶⁵³

With the current crisis in accommodation for protection applicants, new short-term arrangements have been established as the usual initial reception centre at **Baleskin** has been full (see [Types of Accommodation](#)). One of the many problems which this has created is the absence of information and a clear line of communication regarding the international protection process and entitlements around reception conditions. The Irish Refugee Council and other organisations like Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland and Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland conducted outreach to emergency centres in an effort to provide applicants with key information.

Information is provided by the IPAS on rights and obligations in reception and accommodation through the House Rules and Procedures, which are available in each centre (but which are not “House Rules” as defined in the Regulations). These rules are available in 10 different languages, aside from English, on the RIA’s website (now IPAS which is pending a website update) and are usually distributed to protection applicants for signature on arrival at their designated centre.⁶⁵⁴ The House Rules and Procedures document was updated in January 2019, in accordance with Regulation 25 of the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018.

The IPAS House Rules and Procedures was officially updated on 23 July 2025 and is accessible through the Irish Government’s portal. This is the most recent consolidated set of house rules for residents in IPAS accommodation. This document continues to outline the key expectations and responsibilities for residents in IPAS centres, including how services are delivered, fire safety rules, and how complaints are made.⁶⁵⁵

According to the IPAS annual report 2017, RIA has established information clinics on a bi-annual basis (at least) to provide information on a one-to-one basis and to review the operation of the Direct Provision centre.⁶⁵⁶ It is regrettable that no annual report for 2021-2025 has been published. However, as of January 2023, IPAS has begun publishing weekly reports containing statistics regarding accommodation occupancy, including occupancy by accommodation type, occupancy breakdown by county and nationality.⁶⁵⁷ Weekly reports continued to be published as of January 2026.

⁶⁵² RIA, ‘Policy and Practice Document on Safeguarding RIA Residents against Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Harassment, available [here](#).

⁶⁵³ Regulation 3 Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁶⁵⁴ RIA, *Reception and Accommodation Centres House Rules and Procedures revised January 2019*, available [here](#).

⁶⁵⁵ IPAS, ‘House Rules and Procedures for Reception and Accommodation Centres 2025’, 23 July 2025, available [here](#).

⁶⁵⁶ Department of Justice and Equality, *RIA Annual Report 2016*, available [here](#), 42.

⁶⁵⁷ International Protection Accommodation Service, *DCEDIY IPAS – Weekly Stats*, 29 January 2023, available [here](#).

2. Access to reception centres by third parties

Indicators: Access to Reception Centres

1. Do family members, legal advisers, UNHCR and/or NGOs have access to reception centres?
 Yes With limitations No

With the introduction of the Reception Conditions Regulations, there is now an express right of access to accommodation centres, subject to limitations. The Regulations provide access to a list of people and organisations including family members, legal advisers, UNHCR and other relevant NGOs. This access is specifically granted “in order to assist the recipient”.⁶⁵⁸ This list does not include, for example, friends of applicants or journalists.

The right of access for the people and organisations listed is stated to be limited only to the extent necessary to ensure the security of the accommodation centre and its residents.⁶⁵⁹

The right of access to accommodation centres for guests was the subject of litigation in the case of *C.A. and T.A.*⁶⁶⁰ In that case, the Court held that the complete prohibition on guests in bedrooms was unlawful finding that resident’s rooms could be protected as their ‘home’ under Article 40(5) of the Constitution.⁶⁶¹

It remains the case in practice that access is granted on a discretionary basis with permission being subject to approval from IPAS or the centre management. Residents may invite guests into the centres, but they are confined to the communal areas. According to the House Rules and Procedures for Reception and Accommodation Centres, visiting is generally allowed between 10am and 10pm (8pm for children unless they are with a parent / guardian). The centre manager may restrict the number of visitors at any one time if they believe there might be a health and safety risk. The centre manager may also refuse entry or ask visitors to leave if s/he has reason to believe they may cause a threat to residents or centre property. In this case, the centre manager will notify IPAS the reasons for such a refusal.⁶⁶²

In general, access depends on the relationship between the person seeking access and IPAS or the management of the hostel in question. The Irish Refugee Council for example has previously been refused access to some centres but given access to others. In other anecdotal examples provided by the Irish local elections were also refused entry to accommodation centres as well as a parish in another incident. The Working Group report recommended that IPAS ensure in Direct Provision centres that rooms without CCTV are available for receiving visitors, social workers, legal representatives and other advocates.⁶⁶³

G. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in reception

In the Direct Provision system, no differential treatment of different nationalities has been noted to date. There have been comparisons drawn between Direct Provision and **ERO**C, the latter of which tends to have a wider array of orientation and integration supports to assist relocated and resettled refugees – who are predominantly **Syrian**.

Following the onset of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, approximately 510 Afghan nationals obtained visas and visa waivers to travel to Ireland pursuant to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). According to most recently available statistics, 394 individuals have travelled to Ireland to-date

⁶⁵⁸ Regulation 7(6)(b) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁶⁵⁹ Regulation 7(7) Reception Conditions Regulations 2018.

⁶⁶⁰ *C.A. & Anor v. Minister for Justice and Equality and Ors* [2014] IEHC 532, 14 November 2014, available [here](#).

⁶⁶¹ See e.g. PILA, Guest article by Colin Lenihan – ‘High Court finds some Direct Provision house rules unlawful and in breach of ECHR’, November 2014, available [here](#).

⁶⁶² House Rules and Procedures for Reception and Accommodation Centres, January 2019.

⁶⁶³ Working Group to report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *Final Report*, June 2015, para.4.122, 176.

with this figure expected to increase.⁶⁶⁴ The first group of evacuated refugees arriving in August 2021.⁶⁶⁵ In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, as of January 2023, newly arrived Afghan refugees are being accommodated at one of three Emergency and Orientation Reception Centres in Mosney, Co. Meath, Clonea, Co. Waterford and Balaghaderren, Co. Roscommon.⁶⁶⁶

For 2025, a designated partner organisation, was appointed by the Department to support the admission of 50 Afghan individuals under the Humanitarian Admissions programme, using a community sponsorship framework. The 2025 Humanitarian Admissions Programme was divided into two phases and Phase 1 has been completed. It is planned to complete the balance of the 50 pledged arrivals before the end of 2025. It is envisaged that the 50 pledged arrivals will arrive in Ireland throughout 2026.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁴ RTÉ, 394 Afghan refugees have arrived in Ireland since Taliban took control, 8 December 2021, available [here](#).

⁶⁶⁵ The Journal, First group of evacuated Afghan refugees to arrive in Ireland this evening, 23 August 2021, available [here](#).

⁶⁶⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Resettlement Caseworker, January 2023.

⁶⁶⁷ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 361*, 13 November 2025, available [here](#).

Detention of Asylum Applicants

A. General

Indicators: General Information on Detention

| | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Total number of asylum applicants detained in 2025: | Not available |
| 2. Number of asylum applicants in detention at the end of 2025: | Not available |
| 3. Number of detention centres: | Not available |
| 4. Total capacity of detention centres: | Not available |

It should be noted that, in general, Ireland places very few protection applicants or migrants in immigration detention and data for the numbers of people detained who subsequently apply for international protection are not collated.

Protection applicants and immigrants who may be detained generally fall into six categories:

- ❖ Non-nationals who arrive in Ireland and are refused “leave to land” (see [Access to the Territory](#));
- ❖ Protection applicants who are deemed to engage one of the categories of Section 20(1) IPA (see [Grounds for Detention](#));
- ❖ Protection applicants subject to the Dublin Regulation;
- ❖ Non-nationals who cannot establish their identity;
- ❖ Non-nationals with outstanding deportation orders;
- ❖ Non-nationals awaiting trial for a criminal immigration-related offence(s).

According to data from the Irish Prison Service, throughout 2023, 28 applications for international protection were made from detention, however, the reasons for the applicant’s detention were not known.⁶⁶⁸ Throughout 2024, there were 32 applications made from persons who were in prison at the time that they made an application, however, the reasons for their detention were not known.⁶⁶⁹ Throughout 2025, 34 applications were made from persons who were in prison at the time of making an application. However, their reason for detention was not known.⁶⁷⁰

Furthermore, there are no specially designated detention centres for protection applicants and irregular migrants. Protection applicants are detained within the general prison population, at a Garda Síochána (police) station or another designated place of detention. Places of detention are set out in S.I. 666/2016 – International Protection Act 2015 (Places of Detention) Regulations 2016, which was amended by the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 to designate places of detention as “Every Garda Síochána Station [and] Cloverhill Prison.”

Following the Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture’s 7th periodic visit report on Ireland, it was determined that steps ought to be taken to address the unsuitable practice of detaining in prison non-nationals for immigration-related offences.⁶⁷¹ In December 2021, it was announced that work had been completed on a new Block F in Cloverhill Remand Prison, which is intended to accommodate persons detained for immigration purposes and ensure that they are housed separately from prisoners on remand. Throughout the pandemic, Block F was repurposed as an isolation unit for prisoners who contracted COVID-19, to manage and control infection risk. It is intended that when the pandemic ends, Block F will revert to its original intended use. At the time of updating in January 2026, it remained unclear whether persons detained for immigration purposes were continuing to be accommodated with the general prison population.

Additionally, a purpose-built immigration facility was opened at Dublin Airport for use in circumstances where persons are refused leave to land. The facility houses the newly opened Dublin Airport Garda

⁶⁶⁸ International Protection Office, April 2024.

⁶⁶⁹ International Protection Office, March 2025.

⁶⁷⁰ International Protection Office, March 2026.

⁶⁷¹ Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 485*, 16 December 2021, available [here](#).

Station and the Garda National Immigration Bureau. The Garda station contains four single person cells and two additional detention rooms. Starting from May 2022, the facility was fully operational.⁶⁷²

The International Protection Bill 2026 introduces expanded statutory powers of detention in the context of Ireland’s implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. It is envisaged that detention will arise primarily during the screening phase, the border procedure, and the return process. Section 24 (Part 2) of the Bill provides for arrest and detention during screening in order to establish identity, assess admissibility, or address risks to public order.⁶⁷³ Further powers of detention are established in Part 9, particularly ss.161-163, which permit detention following a return decision for the purposes of enforcing removal.⁶⁷⁴ Additional provisions include ss.168-170, which permit detention or significant restrictions on freedom of movement under the return border procedure.⁶⁷⁵ While the Bill states that detention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and used as a last resort, in line with EU law, these provisions represent a significant expansion of detention within the international protection system in Ireland and have raised extreme concerns regarding safeguards, judicial oversight, and the treatment of vulnerable persons, including children.

B. Legal framework of detention

1. Grounds for detention

Indicators: Grounds for Detention

1. In practice, are most asylum applicants detained

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|--|
| ❖ on the territory: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ at the border: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

2. Are asylum applicants detained in practice during the Dublin procedure?

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequently | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rarely | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

3. Are asylum applicants detained during a regular procedure in practice?

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frequently | <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Never |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|

Detention is not used on a regular basis in Ireland, except in the following circumstances.

1.1. Detention under the International Protection Act 2015

Section 20 IPA provides that protection applicants may be detained by an immigration officer or a member of Garda Síochána and be arrested without warrant if it is suspected that they:

1. Pose a threat to public security or public order in the State;
2. Have committed a serious non-political crime outside the State;
3. Have not made reasonable efforts to establish their identity (including non-compliance with the requirement to provide fingerprints);
4. Intend to leave the State and without lawful authority enter another State;
5. Have acted or intends to act in a manner that would undermine (i) the system for granting persons international protection in the State, or (ii) any arrangement relating to the Common Travel Area;
6. Without reasonable excuse, have destroyed identity or travel documents or is or has been in possession of forged identity documents.

These grounds have remained intact despite the adoption of the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018. Some of the provisions of Section 20 IPA – namely detention based on the commission of a serious non-political crime, the intention to leave the State and unlawfully enter another, acting in a manner

⁶⁷² Department of Justice, ‘Minister McEntee Attends Official Opening of Dublin Airport Garda Station’, 6 May 2022, available [here](#).
⁶⁷³ International Protection Bill 2026, s.24, available [here](#).
⁶⁷⁴ *ibid*, ss.161-163.
⁶⁷⁵ *ibid*, ss.168-170.

undermining the asylum system, or destroying identity or travel documents – are not in conformity with the exhaustive grounds set out in Article 8(3) of the recast Reception Conditions Directive.

Where an asylum applicant is detained, they must be informed, where possible in a language that they understand, that they:

- ❖ Are being detained;
- ❖ Shall be brought before a judge of the District Court as soon as practicable to determine whether or not they should be committed to a place of detention or released pending consideration of the asylum application in accordance with Section 20(2) and (3) IPA;
- ❖ Are entitled to consult a solicitor;
- ❖ Are entitled to seek legal assistance and legal representation;
- ❖ Are entitled to be informed of their entitlement to said legal assistance and representation, and their right to make a complaint under Article 40.4.2 of the Constitution and the procedures for doing so;
- ❖ Are entitled to be given a copy of the warrant under which they are being detained;
- ❖ Are entitled to have notification of their detention, the place of detention and every change of such place sent to the High Commissioner;
- ❖ Are entitled to leave the State at any time during the period of their detention and if they indicate a desire to do so, they shall be brought before a court as soon as practicable. The court may make such orders as may be necessary for their removal;
- ❖ Are entitled to the assistance of an interpreter for the purposes of consulting with a solicitor.

The detaining officer must inform the IPO or IPAT, as relevant, about the detention. The appropriate body then ensures that the application of the detained person is dealt with as soon as possible and, if necessary, before any other application for persons who are not in detention.

It should be noted that the planned establishment of a dedicated detention facility at Dublin Airport could lead to increased detention in practice. While the facility is now operational,⁶⁷⁶ owing to a lack of available statistics regarding immigration detention, it was not clear at the time of updating in January 2026 whether the establishment of the facility has led to an increase in the use of such detention.

1.2. Detention for the purpose of removal

Section 5 Immigration Act 1999 provides that in the case of an unsuccessful applicant for whom a deportation order is in force, a person may be detained by an immigration officer or a member of the Garda Síochána, if it is suspected that they:

- ❖ Have failed to comply with any provision of the deportation order;
- ❖ Intend to leave the State and enter another State without lawful authority;
- ❖ Have destroyed identity documents or is in possession of forged identity documents; or
- ❖ Intend to avoid removal from the State.

Section 5(6) of the 1999 Act prohibits detention for any single period of more than eight weeks and multiple detentions for periods of less than eight weeks where the total period exceeds eight weeks. Section 5 Immigration Act 1999 has been amended under Section 78 IPA so that such persons in the category above (Section 78(3)(b)) may be arrested without warrant. Section 78(3)(b) of the 2015 Act also enables persons to be detained at airport and ports of entry for periods not exceeding 12 hours.

1.3. Detention under the Dublin Regulation

The European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018 provide the possibility to detain an asylum applicant for the purpose of carrying out a Dublin transfer where an immigration officer or member of

⁶⁷⁶ Department of Justice, 'Minister McEntee Attends Official Opening of Dublin Airport Garda Station', 6 May 2022, available [here](#).

Garda Síochána determines that there is a “significant risk of absconding”.⁶⁷⁷ The criteria for determining such a risk have not been spelt out in legislation.

2. Alternatives to detention

Indicators: Alternatives to Detention

1. Which alternatives to detention are laid down in the law? Reporting duties
 Surrendering documents
 Financial guarantee
 Residence restrictions

2. Are alternatives to detention used in practice? Yes No

There are no formal alternatives to detention. Section 20(3)(b) IPA could be considered a possible alternative in that it allows an immigration officer or other authorised person to require an applicant for asylum to reside or remain in particular districts or places in the country, or, to report at specified times to an immigration officer or other designated person. However, as of January 2026, there are no known cases of this being applied in practice.

However, the District Court judge when reviewing the applicability of detention may commit the person concerned to a place of detention for a period not exceeding 21 days from the time of their detention or release the person and make such a release subject to conditions, including conditions requiring them to (i) reside or remain in a specified district or place in the State; (ii) report at specified intervals to a specified Garda Síochána station or surrender any passport or other travel document that they hold. The District Court judge may vary, revoke or add a condition to the release on the application of the person, an immigration officer or a member of the Garda Síochána.⁶⁷⁸

A member of the Garda Síochána may arrest without warrant and detain, in a place of detention, a person who in their opinion has failed to comply with the Court’s reporting conditions under Section 20(9) IPA. In such a case the applicant shall be brought before the District Court again and if the judge feels grounds for detention apply under subsection (9) or (3) above then they may commit the applicant for further periods (each period being a period not exceeding 21 days) pending the determination of the person’s application for international protection under Section 20(12) IPA. In effect, this means that an applicant can be detained for consecutive 21-day periods of detention, which means the detention may be continuous and indefinite. There is no limit to the number of 21-day periods of detention, which can run consecutively.

3. Detention of vulnerable applicants

Indicators: Detention of Vulnerable Applicants

1. Are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children detained in practice? Frequently Rarely Never

❖ If frequently or rarely, are they only detained in border/transit zones? Yes No

2. Are asylum seeking children in families detained in practice? Frequently Rarely Never

The IPA specifically prohibits detention of unaccompanied children. There is no available information on whether other vulnerable applicants have been detained, however detention is rarely used in practice in Ireland. If a dependent child is with their parent and that parent is detained under Section 20 IPA, the immigration officer or member of the Garda Síochána concerned shall, without delay, notify Tusla of the detention and of the circumstances thereof. There is no available information as to whether unaccompanied children awaiting age re-assessments have been detained. However, in general, children awaiting age re-assessments are considered to be adults until such time as they under-go reassessment.

⁶⁷⁷ Regulation 10(4) European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.
⁶⁷⁸ Section 20(5) IPA.

Regulation 19(9) of the Reception Conditions Regulations sets out standards for the detention of vulnerable persons: “Where a detained applicant is a vulnerable person, the Minister shall ensure, taking into account the person’s particular situation, including their health, that:

- (a) the person is monitored regularly, and
- (b) they are provided with adequate support.”

There is no known case of this provision having been applied as of January 2026.

4. Duration of detention

| Indicators: Duration of Detention | | |
|---|--|---------------|
| 1. What is the maximum detention period set in the law: | | |
| ❖ Dublin detention | | 7 days |
| ❖ Other grounds | | None |
| 2. In practice, how long in average are asylum applicants detained? | | Not available |

There is no maximum duration for detention set out in the IPA and the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 fail to include the provision that an applicant “shall be detained for as short a period as possible” in line with Article 9 of the recast Reception Conditions Directive. However, detention under the Dublin Regulation shall not exceed seven days.⁶⁷⁹

Data is not available on how long protection applicants are detained but it is generally considered to be a short period of time pre-removal. The Irish Prison Service data does not break down between detention on other immigration grounds and detention as an asylum applicant.

As noted in [Alternatives to Detention](#), Section 20 IPA shows that District Court judges can apply detention for consecutive 21-day time periods with no upper limit so detention could be indefinite under this provision.

C. Detention conditions

1. Place of detention

| Indicators: Place of Detention | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. Does the law allow for asylum applicants to be detained in prisons for the purpose of the asylum procedure (i.e. not as a result of criminal charges)? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. If so, are asylum applicants ever detained in practice in prisons for the purpose of the asylum procedure? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Places of detention are set out in S.I. 666/2016 – International Protection Act 2015 (Places of Detention) Regulations 2016, which was amended by the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 to designate places of detention as “Every Garda Síochána Station [and] Cloverhill Prison.”

Prior to the Regulations, women were generally detained at the **Dóchas Centre** in Dublin, which has a capacity of 105 places. Men were generally detained at **Cloverhill Prison** in west Dublin that has a capacity of 431. Following the introduction of the Regulations, the Dóchas Centre was not listed as a place of detention, and it is therefore unclear where female detainees are to be held in practice. However, according to reports from various observers, the Dóchas Centre remains the primary detention facility for holding female detainees.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁹ Regulation 10(4) European Union (Dublin System) Regulations 2018.
⁶⁸⁰ Global Detention Project, *Ireland Immigration Detention Profile*, August 2019, available [here](#).

Section 78(4) IPA states that a person detained under that section (Section 78(1) and (2) i.e. with deportation order in force) may be placed on a ship, railway train, road vehicle or aircraft about to leave the State by an immigration officer or a member of the Garda Síochána and shall be deemed to be in lawful custody whilst so detained and until the ship, railway train, road vehicle or aircraft leaves the State.

This practice of detaining asylum applicants in prisons has been criticised by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) and on two occasions by the UN Committee against Torture which found that a prison is by definition not a suitable place in which to detain someone who is neither suspected nor convicted of a criminal offence.⁶⁸¹ In response, the Irish government stated that they planned to establish a specific immigration detention centre at **Dublin Airport** in 2016. In response to an Irish Times report on the detention of a Brazilian woman at Dochas Women’s Prison in July 2017, a Department of Justice Spokesperson stated that work on the dedicated facility was expected to begin on site at Dublin Airport in September 2017 with an estimated timeframe of ten months before becoming operational.⁶⁸² As previously mentioned, the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced in a statement in December 2021 that the purpose-built immigration facility has now opened at Dublin Airport for use in circumstances where persons are refused leave to land.⁶⁸³ The facility houses the newly opened Dublin Airport Garda Station and the Garda National Immigration Bureau. The Garda station contains four single person cells and two additional detention rooms. Starting from May 2022, the facility was fully operational and continued to operate throughout 2024 and 2025.⁶⁸⁴

Moreover, in December 2021, it was announced that work had been completed on a new Block F in Cloverhill Remand Prison intended to accommodate persons detained for immigration purposes; the block was previously used as an isolation unit for prisoners who contracted COVID-19.⁶⁸⁵ At the time of updating in January 2026, it remained unclear whether persons detained for immigration purposes were continuing to be accommodated with the general prison population.

Beyond those facilities, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission in a recent commissioned report on Ireland and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture indicated that Direct Provision could be considered *de facto* detention.⁶⁸⁶ This is due to the fact that, while people are free to leave Direct Provision centres at any time, this may be difficult or impossible in practice due to people’s limited financial allowance and often isolated location.

2. Conditions in detention facilities

| Indicators: Conditions in Detention Facilities | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Do detainees have access to health care in practice? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ If yes, is it limited to emergency health care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |

As mentioned in **Place of Detention**, the Reception Conditions Regulations amend the places an asylum applicant can be detained to include any police station and **Cloverhill Prison**. Whether this means that female detainees will no longer be detained in a female-only prison is unknown.

Regulation 19 of the Reception Conditions Regulations sets out detention conditions in that detained applicants shall: (a) be kept separately from any prisoner detained in the place of detention; (b) be kept

⁶⁸¹ CPT, *Report to the Government of Ireland on the visit to Ireland from 16 to 26 September 2014*, Council of Europe, 17 November 2015; United Nations Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Ireland*, August 2017, para 12(d).
⁶⁸² Irish Times, *Work on Dublin Airport immigration detention centre to begin*, 28 July 2017, available [here](#).
⁶⁸³ Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 485*, 16 December 2021, available [here](#).
⁶⁸⁴ Department of Justice, ‘Minister McEntee Attends Official Opening of Dublin Airport Garda Station’, 6 May 2022, available [here](#).
⁶⁸⁵ *ibid.*
⁶⁸⁶ Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, *Ireland and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture*, September 2017, Available [here](#), 32.

separately from other third country nationals who are not applicants and who are detained in the place of detention; and (c) have access to open air spaces.

The Irish Prison Service manages the day-to-day operation of detention facilities in Ireland. All staff entering the prison service receive basic training from the Irish Prison College, including custodial care, equality, diversity, cultural and social awareness, as well as human rights and ethical dimensions to custodial care.⁶⁸⁷

While there has been some progress in respect of prison conditions in recent years, there remains ongoing issues with regard to overcrowding, with many people sleeping on mattresses and sharing of cells having become a regular feature across the prison estate.⁶⁸⁸

Prisoners are provided with items such as soap, sanitary towels, toothpaste, a toothbrush, and razors. Prisoners are also entitled to a balanced and nutritious diet. Whereby a prisoner is a member of a particular religion and therefore has particular dietary requirements, the Prison Governor will try, insofar as possible to ensure that appropriate food is available.⁶⁸⁹

According to the Irish Prison Service website, the Irish Prison Service's official mission is 'providing safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities.' In line with this mission, they offer numerous services to prisoners, including, basic education classes, as well as specialised classes in creative arts, technology, life skills and health living. Work and vocational training programmes are also available.⁶⁹⁰

With regard to healthcare, prisoners are entitled to receive the same standard of healthcare as members of the public in possession of a medical card. The Irish Prison Service also has a duty to provide appropriate mental health support to prisoners. The Irish Prison Psychology Service provides mental health treatment and support to prisoners. However, reports indicate that some prisoners are required to wait in excess of two-years to access mental health supports as a result of long waiting lists, lack of investment and resource planning.⁶⁹¹

With respect to vulnerable applicants who are detained, Regulation 19(9), provides that the Minister shall ensure that the person is monitored regularly and that they are provided with adequate support, taking into account the person's individual situation, including their health.

Under Regulation 19(6), all applicants are entitled to information on (a) the rules applicable to the place of detention and (b) that person's rights and obligations while detained, in a language they can understand, which should include their entitlement to legal representation.

In late November 2020, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture released its 7th periodic visit report on Ireland. In the report, the Committee reiterated its long-standing call for Irish authorities to suspend the use of prisons for immigration detention, noting that "a prison is by definition not a suitable place in which to detain someone who is neither suspected nor convicted of a criminal offence."⁶⁹² The Committee reported that it had met with several immigration detainees who detailed the harassment and abuse they had received from other prisoners. It noted, for example, a case whereby a "middle-aged diminutive foreign national was placed in a cell with two young remand prisoners who allegedly attempted to rape him as well as physically aggressed and verbally intimidated him."⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁷ Irish Prison Service, 'Irish Prison Service College', available [here](#).

⁶⁸⁸ Irish Penal Reform Trust, 'Progress in the Penal System', 26 May 2023, available [here](#).

⁶⁸⁹ Irish Council of Civil Liberties and Irish Penal Reform Trust, 'Know Your Rights as a Prisoner', 2012, available [here](#).

⁶⁹⁰ Irish Prison Service, 'Irish Prison Education Service', 2018, available [here](#).

⁶⁹¹ The Journal, 'Some Irish Prisoners Facing waits of over two years to access mental health treatments', 7 July 2023, available [here](#).

⁶⁹² European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, *Report to the Government of Ireland on the visit to Ireland carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment from 23 September to 4 October 2019, 24 November 2020*, available [here](#), 17.

⁶⁹³ *ibid*, 17.

3. Access to detention facilities

Indicators: Access to Detention Facilities

1. Is access to detention centres allowed to
- | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ❖ Lawyers: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ NGOs: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ UNHCR: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| ❖ Family members: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Regulation 19(4) of the Reception Conditions Regulations states that a detained applicant “shall be entitled to communicate with and receive visits from, in conditions that respect privacy – (a) representatives of the UNHCR, (b) [...] family members, legal representatives and representative of relevant, non-governmental organisations.”

Limitation on the above is permitted in circumstances where such restriction is deemed “necessary to ensure the good governance of, or safe or secure custody in, the place of detention,” however, the extent to which this is respected in practice is not known.

D. Procedural safeguards

1. Judicial review of the detention order

Indicators: Judicial Review of Detention

1. Is there an automatic review of the lawfulness of detention? Yes No
2. If yes, at what interval is the detention order reviewed? 21 days renewable

Where an asylum applicant is detained, they must be informed, where possible in a language that they understand, that they shall be brought before a District Court judge as soon as practicable to determine whether or not they should be committed to a place of detention or released pending consideration of the asylum application under Section 20 IPA.

If the District Court judge commits the person to a place of detention, that person may be detained for further periods of time (each period not exceeding 21 days) by order of a District Court. However, if during the period of detention the applicant indicates a desire to voluntarily leave, they will be brought before the District Court in order that arrangements may be made.

The lawfulness of detention can be challenged in the High Court by way of an application for *habeas corpus*.

The question of whether grounds for detention continue to exist must be re-examined by the District Court judge every 21 days. In addition to this form of review, a detained asylum-applicant can challenge the legality of the detention in *habeas* proceedings under Article 40(4) of the Constitution in the High Court. The Legal Aid Board provides representation for those detained in the District Court under Section 20 IPA.

2. Legal assistance for review of detention

Indicators: Legal Assistance for Review of Detention

1. Does the law provide for access to free legal assistance for the review of detention?
 Yes No
2. Do asylum applicants have effective access to free legal assistance in practice?
 Yes No

Regulation 19 of the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 provides that a detained applicant has access to representatives of the UNHCR, as well as “family members, legal representatives and representatives of relevant, non-governmental organisations.” A consultation with a representative may take place in the sight but out of the hearing of a member of the Garda Síochána.

Section 20 IPA states that when a person makes an application for asylum, regardless of whether that application is made from detention or elsewhere, they should be informed of their rights to consult a lawyer and UNHCR.

Where an asylum applicant is detained under Section 20 IPA, Section 20(15) states that an immigration officer or a member of the Garda Síochána (police) must give an asylum applicant certain information without delay. Such information includes that the person is being detained, that they shall, as soon as practicable, be brought before a court which shall determine whether or not they should be committed to a place of detention or released pending consideration of that person's application for international protection, that they are entitled to consult a solicitor (and entitled to the assistance of an interpreter for such a consultation), that they are entitled to have notification of their detention sent to UNHCR, that they are entitled to leave the State. The information should be given, where possible, in a language that the person understands.

The Legal Aid Board can provide legal assistance to protection applicants who are detained. No NGO provides routine legal assistance to detained protection applicants, however the Irish Refugee Council Law Centre, as well as private practitioners working in asylum law, may provide such support. Legal representatives may be accompanied by an interpreter when providing legal assistance to persons in detention.⁶⁹⁴

E. Differential treatment of specific nationalities in detention

No distinctions are made between different nationalities in detention. There is no indication that some nationalities are treated less favourably compared to others in the context of detention.

⁶⁹⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Independent Law Centre, April 2024.

A. Status and residence

1. Residence permit

Indicators: Residence Permit

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. What is the duration of residence permits granted to beneficiaries of protection? | |
| ❖ Refugee status | 1 year |
| ❖ Subsidiary protection | Specified period, usually 3 years |

Refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries in Ireland receive a 'Stamp 4' residence permit.⁶⁹⁵ For **refugees** this grants permanent residency and an Irish Residence Permit (formerly the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card) is issued firstly for one year and then renewed for three years renewable. Refugees are able to apply for naturalisation after three years from the date of their asylum application (see [Naturalisation](#)).

Subsidiary protection beneficiaries also receive a 'Stamp 4' residence permit. This allows them to stay in Ireland for a specified period of time, which is normally of three years' renewable duration. They have a right to apply for naturalisation after five years from the date they were granted subsidiary protection.

In June 2020, an online immigration permission renewal system was launched for applicants living in Dublin. This system was subsequently extended to all applicants in December 2020.⁶⁹⁶

In January 2022, a new Immigration Service appointment scheduling system, which will streamline and further improve the registration process, was announced. The interim ISD Registration office Burgh Quay created a free phone number to call, so applicants resident in Dublin could book a first-time registration appointment.⁶⁹⁷ As of January 2023, the revised appointment and scheduling system was fully operational, however, applicants continued to experience significant delays in obtaining appointments in order to register their permission.⁶⁹⁸ As of February 2024, these delays had largely alleviated with most applicants waiting approximately 2-4 weeks for an appointment to register.⁶⁹⁹

From 13th January 2025, the responsibility for registering all applicants in the Republic of Ireland was transferred to the Immigration Service Delivery and will no longer be carried out by the Garda National Immigration Bureau, as was previously the case whereby an applicant resides outside of Dublin. In order to make an appointment for first time registration, an applicant is required to book an appointment online through the Immigration Service Delivery website.⁷⁰⁰ As of February 2025, applicants seeking to register were reporting significant delays of approximately 2-3 months in obtaining appointments.⁷⁰¹ Delays continued throughout 2026 with appointment availability severely limited.⁷⁰²

Regularisation scheme

In December 2021, the Minister for Justice announced a scheme to regularise long-term undocumented migrants, which opened on 31 January 2022. The scheme allowed applicants with at least four years' undocumented residence (or three years for those with minor children), including those with Deportation

⁶⁹⁵ INIS, *Permission, stamps & conditions*, available [here](#).

⁶⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁹⁷ Information provided by ISD, January 2022.

⁶⁹⁸ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2023.

⁶⁹⁹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁷⁰⁰ Immigration Service Delivery, 'Information on registering your immigration permission for the first time', 10 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁰¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2025.

⁷⁰² Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

Orders, to regularise their status. A separate strand opened on 7 February 2022 for international protection applicants who had been in the asylum process for at least two years.⁷⁰³

While widely welcomed by NGOs and undocumented communities, concerns with respect to the programme remained. Time spent in the protection process did not count as undocumented residence, leaving some long-term residents ineligible for either strand despite extended periods in Ireland.

According to data released by the Department of Justice, 6,548 applications in respect of 8,311 people were submitted under the Long-Term Undocumented strand of the scheme, including 1,108 applications in respect of minors, submitted as a part of family applications. As of 12 December 2022, 4,857 decisions had been issued to applicants and of these 4,796 (97%) were positive decisions and 94 (2%) were negative decisions, while 47 (1%) applications had been withdrawn by applicants for various reasons.⁷⁰⁴

2. Civil registration

The Civil Registration Service, operating under the Health Service Executive, maintains all records of births, deaths and marriages in the State.⁷⁰⁵ With respect to registration of births it is legally required in Ireland that all births that take place on the territory of the State are registered with the local Registrar's Office within three months of the birth taking place.⁷⁰⁶ The mother of the child will be provided with a "Birth Notification Form" at the hospital where the birth took place before being discharged and the parents must then proceed to the Registrar's Office to complete the registration. A valid photo ID (such as a passport or temporary residence card, in the case of international protection applicants) must be provided. Information on the birth registration process is available in a number of languages, including Arabic, Chinese and French.⁷⁰⁷

For a marriage to be considered legal in Ireland, the relevant Registrar's Office must be notified, in person, at least three months in advance of a marriage taking place, irrespective of whether or not that marriage is a religious or civil ceremony. The same procedural requirements apply to beneficiaries of international protection as to Irish citizens.

3. Long-term residence

Ireland has not opted into the Long-Term Residents Directive. Under the Irish national system, long-term residency can be granted through a Stamp 4 permission to remain which is valid for five years. This applies to persons who have been legally resident in the State for a minimum of five years on a work permit, work authorisation or working visa conditions. Applications for long-term residency do not apply for persons granted refugee status or granted permission to remain on humanitarian grounds. It also does not apply for people who entered the State under a family reunification scheme.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰³ Department of Justice, *Regularisation of Long Term Undocumented Migrant Scheme*, 13 January 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁰⁴ Acting Minister for Justice Heather Humphreys, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 290*, 15 December 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁰⁵ Civil Registration Service, information available [here](#).

⁷⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁷ Civil Registration Service, *Translated Information*, available [here](#).

⁷⁰⁸ INIS, *Permission, stamps & conditions*, available [here](#).

4. Naturalisation

Indicators: Naturalisation

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. What is the waiting period for obtaining citizenship? | |
| ❖ Refugee status | 5 years |
| ❖ Subsidiary protection | 5 years |
| 2. Number of citizenship grants in 2025: | 26,400 ⁷⁰⁹ |

Section 16(1)(g) of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 gives the Minister the power to dispense with certain conditions of naturalisation in certain cases, including if an applicant has refugee status or is stateless. It should be noted that the issuing of a certification of naturalisation is at the discretion of the Minister for Justice and Equality in Ireland. There are different criteria in place for non-EEA nationals and refugees.

People with **refugee status** can apply for naturalisation after three years' residence in the State from the date they arrived in the country, not from the date when they were granted refugee status. For other non-EEA nationals (including beneficiaries of subsidiary protection), the residence required is five years. To apply for citizenship a form entitled 'Form 8' must be completed by the person concerned and submitted to ISD. This amended form was introduced in September 2016 and now applicants must submit their original national passport with their application for naturalisation.⁷¹⁰ It must include accompanying evidence of the applicant's residence in Ireland and a copy of the declaration of refugee status. Whereby an applicant is not in possession of their national passport, they may instead submit a travel document. In respect of minor children, naturalisation does not automatically extend to the child of an adult who has been granted naturalisation. A child cannot make an application by themselves. The application must be made by the child's parent or legal guardian. A minor child's application may be submitted whereby they have accumulated the reckonable residence and one of their parents have already been naturalised.⁷¹¹

There are no fees for **refugees**, stateless persons or programme refugees to apply for naturalisation except for the €175 application fee. Once the application is granted the certification of naturalisation is free for refugees. For other adults (including beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) the cost for issuing a certificate of naturalisation is €950.

As of February 2023, there were approximately 26,000 applications on hand at the Citizenship Unit at various stages of processing. The median processing time for applications was 19 months.⁷¹² As of October 2023, there had been 12,500 grants of naturalisation. The median processing time for applications remained at 19 months.⁷¹³ Almost 31,000 applications for citizenship were processed in 2024 and the median processing time was reduced to 8 months.⁷¹⁴ An exact breakdown of the number of individuals with refugee and subsidiary protection status who became naturalised was not available at the time of updating in January 2026. Throughout 2025, there were a total of 40,479 applications for citizenship received. There were 26,400 grants of citizenship, while 377 applications were refused.⁷¹⁵

According to research published by the European Migration Network in August 2020, Ireland has more favourable conditions for acquiring citizenship by naturalisation than many other EU Member States.

⁷⁰⁹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 166*, 22 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁰ The application form is available [here](#).

⁷¹¹ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2024.

⁷¹² Minister for Justice and Equality Simon Harris, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 195*, 1 February 2023, available [here](#).

⁷¹³ Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 424*, 28 November 2023, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁴ Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 1062*, 22 January 2025, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁵ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 166*, 22 January 2025, available [here](#)

However, long processing delays and lack of clarity regarding eligibility conditions have been raised as issues of significant concern by NGOs and in parliamentary debate.⁷¹⁶

Significant changes were introduced for applicants regarding the number of proofs required to establish identity and residency for the purposes of making a naturalisation application. From January 2022, the Department employed a scorecard approach in the assessment of identification and residence history. Applicants are now required to reach a score of 150 points in each of the years of proof of residency required according to their particular circumstances. This can be done by submitting proofs with a predetermined point value until the applicant reaches the required score of 150 for each year of residency claimed. Applicants must also accumulate a total of 150 points for establishing identity in order to meet the appropriate standard.⁷¹⁷ The introduction of the scorecard approach was broadly welcomed in providing further clarification for applicants on the required documentation when submitting their applications for citizenship.

Additionally, from January 2022, new applicants for citizenship are not required to submit their original passport with their initial application. Instead, applicants can now provide a full colour copy of each page of their passport and all previous passports containing stamps which contribute towards the period of reckonable residency claimed. The colour copy must be certified by a solicitor, commissioner for oaths or notary public and submitted along with the application form.⁷¹⁸

In August 2023, the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2023 was enacted and established a range of amendments and updates in relation to Irish nationality and citizenship law. Children born in Ireland who do not have an automatic right to citizenship were previously required to reside in Ireland for a minimum of 5 years before applying for citizenship. Under the Act, this requirement has been reduced to 3 years, but the law stipulates that the minor must have a period of one year's continuous residence in Ireland immediately prior to the date of their application and during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence amounting to two years.⁷¹⁹ Additionally, all applicants for citizenship, including minors, are now permitted to be outside Ireland for a minimum of 5 years prior to applying for citizenship. This is an increase from the previous permissible 6 weeks.

Additionally, in October 2023, it was announced that citizenship application process had begun to operate digitally with a view to reducing processing times. The online application service allows applicants to complete the necessary supporting documentation and pay the application fee online.⁷²⁰

Significant changes to the legal frameworks governing citizenship were announced in November 2025. Under these reforms, the qualifying residence period for refugees to be eligible for citizenship will be extended from three to five years. The criteria for naturalisation will also be revised through the introduction of a requirement that applicants demonstrate self-sufficiency. Applicants for citizenship must not have been in receipt of certain social protection payments during the two-year period immediately preceding the submission of an application.⁷²¹ While the majority of the proposed changes will require legislative amendments in order to become operational, the qualifying residence condition with respect to citizenship became operational on the 8th of December 2025 and apply retrospectively to existing applications.⁷²² The Irish Refugee Council has expressed significant concern with respect to the proposed

⁷¹⁶ European Migration Network, *Pathways to citizenship through naturalisation in Ireland*, 7 December 2020, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁷ Department of Justice, *Scorecard approach being introduced for Citizenship Applications from January 2022*, 31 December 2021, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁸ Department of Justice, *Further Guidance on new Passport Process for Citizenship from 1st January 2022*, 31 January 2022, available [here](#).

⁷¹⁹ Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous) Provisions Act 2023.

⁷²⁰ Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 424*, 28 November 2023, available [here](#).

⁷²¹ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister Jim O'Callaghan receives government approval to strengthen migration legislation and introduce new rules on asylum and citizenship & Minister Jim O'Callaghan and Minister Colm Brophy publishes Family Reunification Review', 26th November 2025, available [here](#).

⁷²² Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Changes to Citizenship for People Granted International Protection', 8th December 2025, available [here](#).

changes, warning that they will significantly weaken refugee integration by limiting pathways to citizenship.⁷²³

Additionally, in April 2025, the Minister for Justice signed an order reinstating the State’s powers to revoke naturalised Irish citizenship in serious cases. This followed a 2021 Supreme Court judgment which held that the previous revocation regime lacked adequate procedural safeguards and was therefore unconstitutional. As a result of that decision, no citizenship revocations have taken place since 2021. Under the revised legislative framework, an individual who is the subject of a proposed revocation is afforded 28 days to make submissions to the Minister for Justice setting out why their citizenship should not be revoked. Following the Minister’s decision, the individual has a further 14 days to request an independent inquiry. Where such a request is made, an inquiry committee will be established, chaired by a retired judge drawn from the Circuit Court, High Court, Court of Appeal, or Supreme Court. The committee will also include two ordinary members appointed by the Minister for Justice.⁷²⁴

5. Cessation and review of protection status

Indicators: Cessation

1. Is a personal interview of the beneficiary in most cases conducted in practice in the cessation procedure? Yes No
2. Does the law provide for an appeal against the first instance decision in the cessation procedure? Yes No
3. Do beneficiaries have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice? Yes With difficulty No

Cessation is permitted under Irish law but it is not often applied in practice, so limited information is available on it in Ireland.

The IPA provides for cessation of **refugee status** and subsidiary protection under Section 9 and 11 of the Act respectively. A person ceases to be a refugee if they:

- ❖ have voluntarily re-availed themselves of the protection of the country of nationality;
- ❖ having lost their nationality, have voluntarily re-acquired it;
- ❖ have acquired a new nationality (other than as an Irish citizen), and enjoy the protection of the country of their new nationality;
- ❖ have voluntarily re-established themselves in the country which they left or outside which they remained owing to fear of persecution;
- ❖ can no longer, because the circumstances in connection with which they have been recognised as a refugee have ceased to exist, continue to refuse to avail themselves of the protection of their country of nationality / country of former habitual residence if stateless. There is an exception to (e) in that it shall not apply if the person is able to invoke compelling reasons arising out of past persecution for refusing to avail of protection in their country of nationality.

Cessation of **subsidiary protection** occurs when the circumstances which led to a person’s eligibility for subsidiary protection have ceased to exist or have changed to such a degree that international protection is no longer required. An exception to this is if there are compelling reasons arising out of past persecution for refusing to avail of protection in the applicant’s country of nationality. Statistics provided by the International Protection Office indicate that less than 5 decisions were made in relation to cessation of and exclusion from refugee or subsidiary protection status throughout 2022, however, an exact figure was not provided.⁷²⁵ Throughout 2023, there were less than 5 decisions made in relation to cessation of and

⁷²³ Irish Refugee Council, ‘Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our society’, 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).
⁷²⁴ Irish Examiner, ‘Justice minister reinstates powers to revoke Irish citizenship in serious cases’, 10th of April 2025, available [here](#).
⁷²⁵ International Protection Office, March 2023.

exclusion from refugee or subsidiary protection status, however, an exact figure was not provided.⁷²⁶ Throughout 2024, there were less than 5 decisions made in relation to cessation of and exclusion from refugee or subsidiary protection status, however, an exact figure was not provided.⁷²⁷ Throughout 2025, there were 8 decisions made in relation to cessation of refugee status and subsidiary protection status.⁷²⁸

The IPA indicates the procedure for cessation under the procedure of revocation under Section 52. According to Section 52(4), the Minister shall send a notice in writing of the proposal to revoke and of the reasons for it to the applicant, including information regarding the person’s entitlement to make written representations to the Minister in relation to the notice within 15 working days. Where a declaration that the person’s status be revoked is made, the individual may appeal to the Circuit Court, which may then either affirm the revocation or direct the Minister to withdraw it. There is no legislative provision for an oral hearing as part of this procedure.

6. Withdrawal of protection status

Indicators: Withdrawal

1. Is a personal interview of the beneficiary in most cases conducted in practice in the withdrawal procedure? Yes No
2. Does the law provide for an appeal against the withdrawal decision? Yes No
3. Do beneficiaries have access to free legal assistance at first instance in practice? Yes With difficulty No

Revocation of status is also provided in the IPA under Section 52 on grounds such as where the person has misrepresented or omitted facts, whether or not including the use of false documents, and that was decisive in the decision granting the person a refugee declaration. Revocation has an established procedure in place under Section 52 and the applicant can appeal to the Circuit Court if necessary. Even though no personal interview of the beneficiary is conducted, they can submit information in writing. There is no information on withdrawal or revocation of protection status to date and it would appear to be a rare occurrence in the Irish context. Data provided by the International Protection Office in March 2023 indicated that less than 5 decisions were made in respect of withdrawal of international protection status throughout 2022.⁷²⁹ 6 decisions were made in respect of withdrawal throughout 2023.⁷³⁰ There were less than 5 decisions made in respect of withdrawal throughout 2024.⁷³¹ There were 13 withdrawal decisions made in 2025.⁷³²

⁷²⁶ International Protection Office, April 2024.
⁷²⁷ International Protection Office, March 2025.
⁷²⁸ International Protection Office, March 2026.
⁷²⁹ International Protection Office, March 2023.
⁷³⁰ International Protection Office, April 2024.
⁷³¹ International Protection Office, March 2025.
⁷³² International Protection Office, March 2026.

B. Family reunification

1. Criteria and conditions

Indicators: Family Reunification

1. Is there a waiting period before a beneficiary can apply for family reunification?
 Yes No
 - ❖ If yes, what is the waiting period?
2. Does the law set a maximum time limit for submitting a family reunification application?
 Yes No
 - ❖ If yes, what is the time limit?
12 months
3. Does the law set a minimum income requirement?
 Yes No

1.1. Family reunification under the International Protection Act 2015

Sections 56 and 57 establish the law in relation to family reunification for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. A beneficiary of international protection must apply for family reunification within 12 months of being issued with a refugee declaration or subsidiary protection declaration. Adult applicants may apply for a spouse or minor children under the age of eighteen. Applicants who arrived in the State as an unaccompanied minor may apply for their parents or minor siblings. No reference is made in the legislation to any income or health insurance requirement, nor is there any requirement for the applicants to be residing outside of the State when the application is made. It is the duty of the sponsor (refugee or subsidiary protection beneficiary) and the person who is the subject of the application (family member) to co-operate fully in the investigation including by providing all relevant information in their possession, control or procurement which is relevant to the family reunification application.

The 12-month time limit for family reunification was the subject of a challenge of constitutionality before the Supreme Court in the case of *A v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors, S v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors and I v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors*. [2020] IESC 20. The case concerned an applicant who became estranged from her family in 2011 and travelled to Ireland as an unaccompanied minor. She subsequently applied for, and was granted, international protection in 2014. After resuming phone contact with her family in 2018, she applied for family reunification with her parents and sister but the applicant was refused on the basis that it was not brought within the 12-month time frame specified by s.56(8). In a judgment delivered on 8 December 2020, Justice Dunne determined that the 12-month time limit established pursuant to s.56(8) of the 2015 Act was not unconstitutional nor was it incompatible with the ECHR. The Court noted in its decision that it remained open to the applicant to apply under the 2016 Family Reunification Policy Document, whereby the Minister for Justice can exercise her discretion to grant family reunification on humanitarian grounds.⁷³³

No differences exist between the right to apply for family reunification for refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries.

In order to apply for family reunification, the sponsor must request questionnaires in respect of the beneficiaries from the Family Reunification Unit, a division of the Department of Justice. Once the questionnaires are issued, the sponsor must complete them in submit them, along with the relevant supporting documents to the Family Reunification Unit for processing. Occasionally, the Family Reunification Unit may seek further documentation or clarification from the applicant regarding their family circumstances. Whereby the applicant is applying for family reunification with their minor children, they may be asked if they would consent to DNA testing with their children in order to prove biological relationship. This process is initiated by the Family Reunification Unit, who partner with testing services in the beneficiary's country of origin in order to facilitate the testing. There is no charge for the service. In

⁷³³ *A v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors, S v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors and I v. Minister for Justice & Equality & Ors*. [2020] IESC 20, available [here](#).

practice, DNA testing is only required where there is doubt or difficulty in establishing children's parentage.⁷³⁴

There is no time established in law for the issuing of a decision in respect of an application for family reunification. However, on average, an application will be processed within 12-18 months. Whereby an application is successful, an applicant must apply for visas for their family to enter the state, unless the family originate from a country which is not visa required. Family members are required to enter and reside in the state by the date specified on the decision letter. While there is no application fee associated with the family reunification process, a fee does apply for the subsequent visa application (approximately €60.00 per visa). Where an application for family reunification is refused, it is possible to seek a review. Alternatively, it is open to the applicant to seek judicial review in respect of a refusal.⁷³⁵

Once a family reunification application has been granted that permission will cease to be in force if the family member does not enter and reside in the State by a date specified by the Minister when giving the permission in accordance with Section 56(5) IPA. It remains to be seen how this will be applied in practice.

Under the 2015 Act, there is no possibility for beneficiaries of international protection to apply for dependent family members i.e. adult children, parents of adult applicants, nieces, nephews who are dependent on the refugee or are suffering from a mental or physical disability to such extent that it is not reasonable for them to maintain themselves. Under the previous Refugee Act 1996 as amended it was possible for the Minister to use her discretion to grant family reunification in such circumstances. There is no reference to dependent family members in the IPA.

In July 2017, a group of Senators presented the International Protection Act (Family Reunification Amendment) Bill 2017 to the Government.⁷³⁶ The bill would amend the IPA with a view to enabling a wider range of family members to apply for family reunification, including grandparents, siblings, children (over the age of 18), grandchildren, where dependency can be demonstrated. The bill went before the Seanad in November 2018 where it was passed by 29 votes to 17, however ultimately lapsed with the subsequent dissolution of the Dáil.⁷³⁷

The Irish Refugee Council and other organisations advocated for it to be placed back on the Dáil order paper. On 9 December 2020, it was announced that the Bill would be restored for further debate before the Dáil. As of December 2023, the Bill remained at the third stage before the Dáil, during which time the Bill is examined in detail by section and further amendments are proposed.⁷³⁸ The Bill lapsed with the dissolution of the Dail in November 2024. It remains to be seen whether it will be placed back in the Dail order paper following the establishment of a new government in late-January 2025.

Separately, in July 2024, in the case of *Sibanda v. Minister for Justice and Equality & Ors*, the Court of Appeal determined that adult children are not eligible family members for family reunification, unless there is more than an emotional dependency between the applicant and her adult child. The applicant was a refugee who applied for family reunification with her three minor child in accordance with s.56(1) of the International Protection Act of 2015. The Minister denied the processing of the application for her eldest child, her daughter, since she was not a minor on the date of the application, as required by section 56(9)(d) of the International Protection Act. The applicant claimed that this was fundamentally unjust because her daughter was a minor when she had applied for international protection two years ago and had effectively "aged out" during the time it took the Minister to decide on her case. The applicant further argued that section 56(9)(d) is unconstitutional, and it violates European law and her rights under the ECHR, in particular, Article 8 on the right to respect for private and family life and Article 14 on the prohibition of discrimination. Upholding the decision of the High Court, the Court of Appeal held that adult

⁷³⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2024.

⁷³⁵ *ibid.*

⁷³⁶ Irish Times, 'Senators seek expanded family reunification rights for refugees', 19 July 2017, available [here](#).

⁷³⁷ Oxfam Ireland et al., 'Refugee family reunification bill progresses to the Dáil', 5 December 2018, available at: [here](#) ; See also Oireachtas, *International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill 2017*, available [here](#).

⁷³⁸ *International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill 2017*, available [here](#).

children are not required to be included in the list of family members eligible for family reunification, nor are children's ages assessed to determine whether they are minors on the date of an asylum application or any date prior to the date of the family reunification application. Instead, if an adult child's dependence on their parent surpasses typical emotional bond (due to a disability or medical condition), that adult child may be treated as a member of the parent's immediate family for the purposes of family reunification. On this basis, there was no violation of Article 8 or 14 in conjunction with Article 8 ECHR.⁷³⁹

Throughout 2025, there were extreme and persistent delays in the processing of family reunification applications. These delays occurred primarily with respect to the processing of applications, meaning that in many cases, applicants were required to wait lengthy periods for a decision to be issued in respect of their application, with some applicants waiting in excess of 2 years.⁷⁴⁰ In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, such delays have a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of family life for both applicants and their family members, who continue to face separation for prolonged periods. This is particularly concerning in cases whereby family members were vulnerable or facing persecution in their country of origin.

As of February 2025, 856 family reunification applications were in progress under the Act, accounting for 5,988 family members. In 2024, the Family Reunification Unit received 1,467 family reunification sponsor applications accounting for 4,433 family members. In 2024, 879 family members were approved and 145 refused; 752 were found to be ineligible under the terms of the 2015 Act and a further 99 withdrew their applications.⁷⁴¹ The average processing time for applications throughout 2024 was 18 months as of April 2025⁷⁴², however, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, processing times were often longer than 18 months and, in some cases, up to 28 months.⁷⁴³

Throughout 2025, 669 family members were granted family reunification in accordance with the International Protection Act 2015.⁷⁴⁴ While the average processing time for applications throughout 2025 was not available at the time of updating in April 2026, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, many applications were taking in excess of 2.5 years and in excess of 3 years in some cases.⁷⁴⁵

Significant changes to the legal frameworks governing family reunification were announced in November 2025. Under these reforms, individuals granted international protection are now subject to more stringent family reunification requirements, including the obligation to demonstrate adequate financial resources and access to suitable accommodation to support family members. Applicants will also be required to wait 3 years after being granted international protection in order to apply for family reunification.⁷⁴⁶ The majority of the proposed changes will require legislative amendments in order to become operational and according to the Minister of State, at the time of updating in January 2025, work was underway with the Attorney General to developing provisions for inclusion in the International Protection Bill to give effect to the proposals.⁷⁴⁷ The Irish Refugee Council has expressed significant concern with respect to the proposed changes, warning that they will significantly weaken refugee integration by limiting pathways to family reunification.⁷⁴⁸

⁷³⁹ *Sibanda v. Minister for Justice and Equality & Ors* [2024] IECA 206, 30 July 2024, available [here](#).

⁷⁴⁰ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, January 2026.

⁷⁴¹ Information provided by Department of Justice, February 2025.

⁷⁴² Minister for Justice and Equality, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 182*, 9 April 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁴³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, February 2025.

⁷⁴⁴ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question Nos 445, 446, 447, 448, 467, 472, 479 and 480*, 22 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁷⁴⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council, April 2026.

⁷⁴⁶ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 'Minister Jim O'Callaghan receives government approval to strengthen migration legislation and introduce new rules on asylum and citizenship & Minister Jim O'Callaghan and Minister Colm Brophy publishes Family Reunification Review', 26th November 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁴⁷ Minister of State for Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question Nos 45, 446, 447, 448, 467, 472, 479 and 480*, 22nd January 2026, available [here](#).

⁷⁴⁸ Irish Refugee Council, 'Policy changes will keep families apart and push refugees further into the margins of our society', 3rd December 2025, available [here](#).

1.2. The Irish Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP)

On 14 November 2017, the government announced the introduction of a Family Reunification Humanitarian Admission Programme (FRHAP), which was later renamed the Irish Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP).⁷⁴⁹

UNHCR's Information Note on the IHAP sets out more information on the rationale behind the scheme:

The IHAP is additional and complimentary to existing rights and entitlements to family reunification under Irish law. The programme will provide an opportunity to Irish citizens and persons with Convention refugee status, subsidiary protection status, and programme refugee status, who have immediate eligible family members from the top 10 major source countries of refugees, to propose to the Minister for these family members to join them in Ireland.

Up to 530 persons were given the opportunity to join immediate family members in Ireland under the programme.⁷⁵⁰

Applicants were required to be nationals from one of ten countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, DRC, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea or Burundi.⁷⁵¹

The first open calls for proposals ran from 14 May to 30 June 2018. A larger number of applications than were anticipated were received, however, just 80 applications were granted.⁷⁵² A second call for proposals was opened on 20 December 2018 and ran until 8 February 2019. The Department of Justice was aiming to finalise all IHAP 2 decisions by the end of 2020. It is understood that as of December 2021, all IHAP decisions have been finalised. There is no appeal mechanism against a negative IHAP decision though there is anecdotal evidence that some negative decisions were overturned following an administrative review.

1.3. Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI)

In 2018, Community Sponsorship Ireland (CSI) was established as a complementary refugee resettlement stream to the traditional state-centred model. CSI has been developed in cooperation with the Government of Ireland, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and civil society organisations such as: UNHCR, the Irish Red Cross, NASC, Irish Refugee Council and Amnesty International Ireland. This programme gives private citizens and community-based organisations an opportunity to directly support a refugee family newly arrived to Ireland.

Through CSI, sponsoring communities support integration into Irish society of refugee families by providing a home and offering opportunities to connect with the local services they need, such as English language tuition, employment, and education pathways.

A pilot CSI programme commenced in December 2018 has now concluded. On 15 November 2019, Minister of State, David Stanton, officially launched the Community Sponsorship Ireland Scheme.⁷⁵³

Throughout 2022, the Irish Refugee Council engaged with 14 community sponsorship groups, providing training on best practices for community sponsorship. A further 7 workshops were organised for refugee-

⁷⁴⁹ INIS, 'Minister Flanagan and Minister of State Stanton announce new Family Reunification Scheme in support of refugees and their families under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme', 14 November 2017, available [here](#).

⁷⁵⁰ UNHCR, *FAQ: What is the Humanitarian Admissions Programme 2 (IHAP)*, 2018, available [here](#).

⁷⁵¹ INIS, *Irish Refugee Protection Programme Humanitarian Admission Programme 2 (IHAP)*, available [here](#).

⁷⁵² Irish Times, 'Refugee reunification scheme re-opens with second call for applicants', 21 December 2018, available [here](#).

⁷⁵³ Department of Justice and Equality, 'Minister Stanton Officially Launches Refugee Community Sponsorship Ireland', 15 November 2019, available [here](#).

hosting communities in order to share information and resources. A total of 38 refugees were welcomed by 8 community sponsorship groups across the country.⁷⁵⁴

Throughout 2023, the Irish Refugee Council's Community Sponsorship Team provided training to six community sponsorship groups and welcomed 15 resettled persons, supported by four different community sponsorship groups.⁷⁵⁵ Throughout 2024, the Irish Refugee Council Community Sponsorship Team provided support to 15 Community Sponsorship groups and welcomed 32 re-settled persons.⁷⁵⁶ Throughout 2025, the Community Sponsorship Team provided support to 2 new Community Sponsorship Groups and 12 existing Groups.⁷⁵⁷

2. Status and rights of family members

Family members must enter and reside within the State within a specified period of time issued by the Minister for Justice and Equality. They are entitled to the same rights and privileges as their sponsors as specified under Section 53 IPA. The permission to reside in the State is linked to the sponsor so if the family member is a spouse or civil partner that permission shall cease to be in force where the marriage or civil partnership concerned ceases to exist.

C. Movement and mobility

1. Freedom of movement

Beneficiaries of international protection can reside anywhere in the State and are not restricted to particular areas, although social housing shortages can mean that it can be difficult for them to locate in heavily populated areas such as **Dublin**.

Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to the same medical care and social welfare benefits as Irish citizens so the provision of material conditions is not subject to actual residence in a specific place but there is a shortage of available and suitable accommodation which impacts both Irish citizens and refugees alike at the moment in Ireland.

2. Travel documents

According to Section 55 IPA, the Minister for Justice and Equality, on application by the person concerned, shall issue a travel document to a qualified person and their family member. The Minister for Justice may not, however, issue a travel document if the person has not furnished the required information as requested by the Minister, or the Minister considers that to issue it would not be in the best interests of national security, public health or public order or would be contrary to public policy.

Both refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Ireland are entitled to apply for travel documents, which is done by application form to the ISD Travel Document Section. The application requirements differ slightly between the two categories of applicant, in that the applications of subsidiary protection beneficiaries are subject to the Minister's satisfaction that the applicant is "unable to obtain a travel document from the relevant authority of the country of their nationality or, as the case may be, former habitual residence."⁷⁵⁸ While this does not reflect an overt distinction in theory, in practice, it means that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are required to demonstrate that they have made every effort to prove that they are unable to obtain a travel document from another relevant authority before they are issued with an Irish travel document.

⁷⁵⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Community Sponsorship Officer, December 2022.

⁷⁵⁵ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Community Sponsorship Officer, March 2024.

⁷⁵⁶ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Community Sponsorship team, February 2025.

⁷⁵⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Community Sponsorship team, April 2026.

⁷⁵⁸ Regulation 24(2) European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2013.

Beyond that, the travel document application process for both refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is uniform. Applicants are required to fill out an application form, submit four passport-sized photographs, a copy of documentation from the Department of Justice issuing permission to remain in the state, a copy of the applicant's Garda Naturalisation and Immigration Bureau registration card, and an €80 application fee.⁷⁵⁹

According to the ISD, the validity of travel documents for a holder of a "1951 Convention Travel Document" (person with **refugee status**) is ten years, in line with the validity of Irish passports.⁷⁶⁰

Travel Documents granted pursuant to **subsidiary protection** are issued for the duration of their permission to remain. This is generally for a period of three years from when status is granted under Section 23 of the European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2013.⁷⁶¹ The travel document is renewed in line with the period of permission granted after that by the person's local Registration / Immigration Office.⁷⁶² Furthermore, Schedule 3 of the Subsidiary Protection Regulations states that the "maximum validity of a travel document is 10 years."

The primary limitation on use of travel documents is that the country of origin/persecution of the holder is not permitted for the purposes of travel.⁷⁶³ Other than that, beneficiaries of refugee or subsidiary protection status in Ireland are both equally entitled to travel in or out of the State with their respective travel documents. Holders of Irish refugee and subsidiary protection documents do not require a re-entry permit upon return to Ireland.⁷⁶⁴

In July 2022, the State suspended for a period of 12 months visa-free entry for individuals with refugee status traveling on Convention Travel from 20 'safe' European countries. Previously, pursuant to the European Agreement on the Abolition of Visas for Refugees, those with refugee status could travel to and within Ireland for up to 90 days without requiring a visa or prior clearance. Following the suspension, those seeking to travel to Ireland are now required to apply for a visa in order to enter Ireland, facing processing times of approximately 8-14 weeks.⁷⁶⁵ The measure has been implemented with a view to protecting the 'integrity' of the immigration system, according to the government, who cited an increase in those who had already received refugee status in another European country travelling to Ireland applying for asylum.⁷⁶⁶ According to statistics released by the Department of Justice, 479 such applications were made, representing 7% of the overall applications for international protection during that period.⁷⁶⁷ In July 2023, the suspension was renewed for a further 12 months and will be reviewed once again in July 2024.⁷⁶⁸ As of January 2026, it was unclear whether the suspension remained in effect.

⁷⁵⁹ Department of Justice and Equality, *Travel Document Application Form*, available [here](#); INIS, *Travel Document Photo Requirements*, available [here](#); INIS, *Travel Document Information Note*, available [here](#).

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ Regulation 23 European Union (Subsidiary Protection) Regulations 2013.

⁷⁶² Information provided by INIS, March 2018.

⁷⁶³ Information provided by INIS, March 2018.

⁷⁶⁴ INIS, *Travel Document Information Note*, available [here](#).

⁷⁶⁵ European Commission, *Suspension of Visa-free Movement Programme for Refugees*, 18 July 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁶⁶ Government of Ireland, *Government agrees to temporarily require refugees travelling to Ireland from safe European countries to hold visas*, 18 July 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁶⁷ European Commission, *Suspension of Visa-free Movement Programme for Refugees*, 18 July 2022, available [here](#).

⁷⁶⁸ Department of Justice, *'Visa-free travel for people with refugee status further suspended'*, 11 August 2023, available [here](#).

D. Housing

Indicators: Housing

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. For how long are beneficiaries entitled to stay in reception centres? | Not defined |
| 2. Number of beneficiaries staying in reception centres as of December 2025: | 4, 901 ⁷⁶⁹ |

As mentioned above (see [Criteria and restrictions to access reception conditions](#)), it should be noted that the definition of “recipient” for the purposes of benefiting from entitlements under the Reception Conditions Regulations 2018 does not cover beneficiaries of international protection, or those on deportation orders.

The main source of accommodation is social (public) housing or private rental accommodation. Local authorities are the main providers of social housing but people need to be on housing lists, which can take a considerable amount of time.

According to the Minister of State, David Stanton ‘Once some form of status is granted, residents cease to be ordinarily entitled to the accommodation supports provided through RIA. Notwithstanding this fact, RIA have always continued to provide such persons with continued accommodation until they secure their own private accommodation. IPAS are particularly mindful of the reality of the housing situation in the State and the pressures on the Community Welfare Service in respect of Rent Supplement or the City and County Councils in respect of Housing Assistance Payments and Housing Lists. The Government is committed to ensuring that persons who are availing of State provided accommodation, including those who have come to Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, are supported in sourcing and securing private accommodation.’⁷⁷⁰

Over the past number of years, difficulties have persisted for beneficiaries on accessing housing once status is granted as there is currently a housing crisis in Ireland, which affects Irish citizens and international protection applicants alike. This means that beneficiaries have difficulty leaving Direct Provision and finding suitable housing. This is exacerbated by the accommodation crisis in Ireland, where waiting lists for social housing are long and rental costs exceed the amounts paid in rent supplements.⁷⁷¹ Discrimination and racism is also reported in the rental market.⁷⁷²

The situation for beneficiaries of international protection who are finding difficulty obtaining independent accommodation exacerbates the concurrent lack of capacity in Direct Provision centres.

Throughout 2024, many individuals with international protection status or humanitarian leave to remain who were residing in Direct Provision accommodation after receiving their status were served with notice to source their own accommodation or failing this, be transferred to alternative IPAS accommodation, usually to emergency or tented accommodation. The purpose of the policy was to release accommodation capacity for those in the international protection process who were awaiting determination on their application. However, transfers of this nature gave rise to significant issues for those affected. In the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, many people who received transfer notices left Direct Provision without arranging a sustainable tenancy. Many stayed with friends or family temporarily and given the precariousness of such arrangements, this often led to homelessness. Whereby individuals took up the transfers, progress in education and employment, as well as other integration indicators, were lost when people were transferred. Many people were transferred several hours away from where they worked or had educational opportunities, or indeed where they have made local connections in the community, to an isolated, unknown area. This meant that they lost the social capital which could assist them when

⁷⁶⁹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Questions 438 and 439*, 2 December 2025, available [here](#). available

⁷⁷⁰ *Response to Parliamentary Question by Minister for State David Stanton*, 26 January 2017, available [here](#).

⁷⁷¹ For further information, see Irish Research Council in partnership with the Irish Refugee Council, *Transition from Direct Provision to life in the community*, June 2016, available [here](#).

⁷⁷² The Journal, Ignored at viewings because they're black or Asian: Dozens of asylum seekers facing homelessness, 24 February 2019, available [here](#); See also: Dublin Inquirer, Some ex-asylum seekers say they're stuck In Direct Provision because Dublin landlords won't accept them, 30 September 2020, available [here](#).

searching for somewhere to live.⁷⁷³ The Irish Refugee Council wrote to IPAS and the Department of Housing to outline these concerns, however, the policy continued to operate throughout 2025. Moreover, in March 2025, 600 families who had received their status more than 12 months previously received correspondence from IPAS notifying them that they were required to source their own accommodation or be transferred to alternative emergency IPAS accommodation from 4 July 2025.⁷⁷⁴ As of December 2025, 362 families had left IPAS accommodation, while 109 families had been transferred to alternative IPAS accommodation.⁷⁷⁵

In January 2023, persons living at particular Direct Provision Centres, whereby points or vouchers are issued to residents to cover the cost associated with purchasing groceries, were advised by IPAS that any resident who had obtained international protection status or permission to remain in Ireland and remained living in IPAS accommodation for a period of 8 weeks or more, would have their points or vouchers revoked. Residents were advised that this new policy would be rolled out on a phased basis and persons affected would be provided with 8 weeks' notice prior to their points being removed.⁷⁷⁶ This policy continues to operate as of January 2026.⁷⁷⁷

The Department of Justice has a specific team who work in collaboration with DePaul Ireland, the Jesuit Refugee Service, the Peter McVerry Trust, officials in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and the City and County Managers Association to collectively support residents with status or permission to remain to access housing options. By the end of 2019, a total of 732 people transitioned out of accommodation centres, of which 500 did with the assistance of the services and support mentioned above.⁷⁷⁸ As of December 2025, 3,500 individuals with status had moved out of Direct Provision.⁷⁷⁹

E. Employment and education

1. Access to the labour market

According to Section 53(a) IPA, beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to seek and enter employment, to engage in any business, trade or profession and to have access to education and training in the State in the like manner and to the like extent in all respects as an Irish citizen. There are few schemes specifically devised and tailored for beneficiaries of international protection to access employment within the Department of Social Protection but they can avail of the support provided to Irish citizens. The ESRI have reported that refugees in Ireland can face many challenges in navigating the system of mainstream service provision.⁷⁸⁰ Information barriers can make it difficult for beneficiaries to navigate the system to access employment support and the support available varies from region to region.

An example of the tailored schemes available is Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC), a project run by the Business Community of Ireland and is a labour market programme aimed at assisting migrants including beneficiaries of international protection to enter the labour market. EPIC was launched in 2014 and continues to operate as of January 2026. The programme is part supported by the Department of Justice and Equality and the European Social Fund (ESF) as part of the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL) 2014-2020. As regards recognition of qualifications, the Irish National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC Ireland) facilitates the recognition of foreign qualifications in Ireland by advising clients on how these qualifications compare to the Irish qualifications

⁷⁷³ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Housing Officer, February 2024.

⁷⁷⁴ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Housing Officer, January 2026.

⁷⁷⁵ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 438 and 439*, 2 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁷⁶ Information provided by IPAS, January 2023.

⁷⁷⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

⁷⁷⁸ Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, David Stanton, Reply to Parliamentary Question No 278, 3 December 2019, available [here](#).

⁷⁷⁹ Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 438 and 439*, 2 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁸⁰ ESRI, EMN, *Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection into the Labour Market, Policies and Practices in Ireland*, available [here](#).

on the National Framework of Qualifications.⁷⁸¹ The Irish Refugee Council also has employment programmes for women in the protection process and refugees.

In October 2023, it was announced that holders of “Stamp 4” residence permission holders, including refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and leave to remain, would be permitted to take up employment in the civil service. The expansion of eligibility criteria comes following research undertaken by the Public Appointment Service (PAS) and a government interdepartmental working group seeking to increase diversity across the civil service.⁷⁸²

2. Access to education

People who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status have the right to access education and training in a similar manner to Irish citizens.⁷⁸³ However, reports show that people transitioning from Direct Provision having been granted an international protection status often face practical barriers to further education such as their English competency not being at the required level, previous qualifications not being recognised, not being eligible for grants, not understanding admission procedures and having missed deadlines for college applications.⁷⁸⁴

Some organisations have stepped in to support student access to third-level education. For example, in the Irish Refugee Council a volunteer administers donations made by the public to help with education access. The funds are then spent on course fees, books, transport and other related expenses.⁷⁸⁵ Some Universities have also assisted protection applicants such as the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) which announced in June 2016 that it would provide four scholarships for protection applicants or refugees, subsidiary protection beneficiaries or those persons with permission to remain in Ireland.⁷⁸⁶ In 2019, NUIG became a University of Sanctuary due to its further commitment.⁷⁸⁷ In December 2016, Dublin City University (DCU) was also designated as a University of Sanctuary due to its commitment to welcome protection applicants and refugees into the university community. DCU has offered fifteen academic scholarships available at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. It also has established a number of other welcoming initiatives such as a Langua-Culture Space initiative where DCU students teach beginners level English to protection applicants and refugees. In 2017, the University of Limerick and in 2018, University College Cork, became designated Universities of Sanctuary, respectively – granting scholarship access to a limited number of protection applicants and refugees. DCU, University Limerick, UCC, UCD, NUI Galway and Maynooth University have received the University of Sanctuary Award, and Athlone IT is the first College of Sanctuary in Ireland.⁷⁸⁸

As regards preparatory courses to access school, the Refugee Access Programme is part of the City of Dublin ETB’s Separated Children Service, which prepares newly arrived separated children seeking asylum and other young people from refugee backgrounds for mainstream school and life in Ireland. The programme lasts from 12 to 20 weeks.

⁷⁸¹ Available [here](#).

⁷⁸² EMN, ‘Holders of ‘Stamp 4’ residence permission new eligible for civil service roles’, 24 October 2023, available [here](#).

⁷⁸³ Department of Justice and Equality, Your Guide to Living Independently, An information booklet for people who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status or permission to remain, 2016.

⁷⁸⁴ Irish Research Council in partnership with the Irish Refugee Council, Transition from Direct Provision to life in the Community, the experiences of those who have been granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or leave to remain in Ireland, June 2016.

⁷⁸⁵ Irish Times, ‘No asylum in Ireland’s education system’, 25 October 2016. Doras Lumni and NASC along with the Irish Refugee Council support third-level education access for asylum seekers.

⁷⁸⁶ NUIG, Inclusive Centenaries Scholarship Scheme, Announcement, 17 June 2016.

⁷⁸⁷ University Times, ‘NUI Galway becomes a University of Sanctuary’, 19 September 2019, available [here](#).

⁷⁸⁸ Places of Sanctuary Ireland, Universities and Colleges of Sanctuary, available [here](#).

F. Social welfare

Section 53(b) IPA states that a beneficiary of international protection “shall be entitled... to receive, upon and subject to the same conditions applicable to Irish citizens, the same medical care and the same social welfare benefits as those to which Irish citizens are entitled.”

As such, there are a broad range of social welfare entitlements to which a beneficiary of international protection may avail themselves, including: access to jobseeker’s allowance, for those who are unemployed but actively seeking work; access to disability allowance for those unable to provide for themselves due to disability or illness; access to the one-parent family payment for single parents, and access to child benefit for parents/guardians. Application for various grants is carried out at the individual’s local office of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

International protection applicants living in Direct Provision who are recognised as refugees or granted alternative status are not entitled to full social welfare payments while they remain in Direct Provision in. Taking into consideration the difficulties they encounter accessing the housing market, being entitled to full payment would enable them to better plan for transition to other accommodation.⁷⁸⁹ As of December 2023, there were 5,960 persons with status residing in Direct Provision centres around the country.⁷⁹⁰ As of February 2025, there were approximately 5,400 individuals with status residing in Direct Provision Centres around the country.⁷⁹¹ As of December 2025, there were 4,900 persons with status residing in Direct Provision.⁷⁹²

G. Health care

Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to the same medical care as Irish citizens in accordance with Section 53(b) IPA. Access to health care for protection applicants is also on the same basis as Irish citizens and they are eligible for medical cards subject to a means test and can register with local GPs.

In order to use a medical card, the holder is required to register with a particular GP, usually one which practices in the area in which the applicant lives, who will provide medical care in respect of the applicant. Medical card applicants are required to have their chosen GP complete a form confirming their acceptance of the applicant as a patient during the medical card application process. Throughout 2025, beneficiaries of international protection, along with Irish citizens, faced difficulties in accessing medical care on the basis of a shortage of available places for medical card holders in GP practices. Whereby a medical card applicant approaches three different GPs and are notified that the GP is unable to accept them on their patient list, the applicant can request that the HSE assign them to a GP who does have capacity. However, in the experience of the Irish Refugee Council, applicants may be left waiting for several months until capacity becomes available and a GP is assigned.⁷⁹³

⁷⁸⁹ Citizens Information Board, Submissions to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality for the Review of Direct Provision and the International Protection Application Process, May 2019, available [here](#).

⁷⁹⁰ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 705*, 12th December 2023, available [here](#).

⁷⁹¹ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, *Response to Parliamentary Question No. 287*, 13 February 2024, available [here](#).

⁷⁹² Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, *Response to Parliamentary Question No 438 and 439*, 2 December 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁹³ Information provided by the Irish Refugee Council Information and Advocacy Service, January 2026.

ANNEX I – Transposition of the CEAS in national legislation

Directives and other CEAS measures transposed into national legislation

Ireland has not opted into the recast Qualification Directive or the recast Asylum Procedures Directive.

| Directive | Deadline for transposition | Domestic law provision | Official title of corresponding act | Web Link |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| Directive 2013/33/EU Recast Reception Conditions Directive | 20 July 2015 | 6 July 2018 | European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, S.I. No 230 of 2018 | https://bit.ly/2KW1T09 |

Ireland officially opted into the Pact on 27 June 2024, following a vote in both houses of the Oireachtas. While the Pact is legally in effect, Ireland, along with other EU countries, has until June 12, 2026, to fully implement the new regulations.⁷⁹⁴ An implementation plan for the Pact was produced in November 2024. Subsequently, in April 2025, Cabinet approved the publication of the General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025.⁷⁹⁵ Following pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the International Protection Bill 2026 was published.⁷⁹⁶

International protection application procedure

Changes to the international protection application procedure were initially introduced in summer 2025, when the IPO first implemented the Pact Transition process in respect of applications from nationals of Georgia, India, and Brazil. This process was subsequently expanded to include nationals of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Georgia, India, Kosovo, Malawi, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Serbia, and South Africa. Applications from these nationalities were processed in a manner intended to mirror the border procedure that is scheduled to come into effect with the implementation of the Pact in June 2026. The transition is being carried out under the current legislative framework and therefore does not include certain elements envisaged under the Pact, such as restrictions on movement or the establishment of an independent rights monitoring mechanism. These measures will be introduced once the new legislation enters into force.⁷⁹⁷

Access to the border

There is currently no access for independent authorities or NGOs at air or land borders in order to monitor the situation, nor do there appear to be any plans to allow such access in the future under revised International Protection legislation following the introduction of the Pact.

Border procedure

Chapter 6 of the International Protection Bill 2026 envisages the establishment of a border procedure which permits international protection claims to be processed at ports of entry within a 12-week period, whereby certain circumstances arise, including whereby the applicant is considered to have ‘intentionally misled the authorities’ by presenting false information or documents or by withholding information or documentation relevant to their claim, whereby there are reasonable grounds to consider the applicant a danger to the national security or public order of the State or whereby the applicant is considered unlikely to be granted international protection due to being a national of a country which is statistically unlikely to be granted protection. The border procedure will largely mirror practices in several other EU states. Applicants processed in the border procedure are not authorised to enter Ireland while their claim is being decided. Their freedom of movement shall be restricted, and they will be accommodated in designated facilities instead. However, the Bill in its current form does not contain any definition of what amounts to a ‘designated facility’ for the purposes of the procedure.⁷⁹⁸ The Bill also established a new statutory role, the Chief Inspector of Asylum Border Procedures. The role was established to provide independent oversight of the new border procedure and related processes. Its purpose is to ensure that the screening process and the application of the border procedure comply with EU law, international law, and fundamental rights protections, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁴ RTÉ, ‘Dáil votes to opt into EU Asylum and Migration Pact’, 26 June 2024, available [here](#).

⁷⁹⁵ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, ‘Minister Jim O’Callaghan secures Cabinet approval for publication of the General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2025’, 29 April 2025, available [here](#).

⁷⁹⁶ Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, ‘Minister Jim O’Callaghan publishes International Protection Bill 2026’, 13 January 2026, available [here](#).

⁷⁹⁷ Information provided by Irish Refugee Council Policy Officer, November 2025.

⁷⁹⁸ International Protection Bill 2026, available [here](#).

⁷⁹⁹ *ibid.*

Detention

The International Protection Bill 2026 introduces expanded statutory powers of detention in the context of Ireland's implementation of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact. It is envisaged that detention will arise primarily during the screening phase, the border procedure, and the return process. Section 24 (Part 2) of the Bill provides for arrest and detention during screening in order to establish identity, assess admissibility, or address risks to public order.⁸⁰⁰ Further powers of detention are established in Part 9, particularly ss.161-163, which permit detention following a return decision for the purposes of enforcing removal.⁸⁰¹ Additional provisions include ss.168-170, which permit detention or significant restrictions on freedom of movement under the return border procedure.⁸⁰² While the Bill states that detention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, and used as a last resort, in line with EU law, these provisions represent a significant expansion of detention within the international protection system in Ireland and have raised extreme concerns regarding safeguards, judicial oversight, and the treatment of vulnerable persons, including children.

⁸⁰⁰ International Protection Bill 2026, s.24, available [here](#).

⁸⁰¹ *ibid*, ss.161-163.

⁸⁰² *ibid*, ss.168-170.