



Finland at a glance

- **Population:** 5 401 267
- **GDP (per capita):** 114 PPS (available for 2011 only)
PPS=Purchasing Power Standard, based on the EU 27 average of 100
- **Asylum applications total:** 2 905
- **Total decisions reached in 2012:** 3 090
- **Positive decisions (refugee status, subsidiary protection and humanitarian reasons):** 1 555

2012 data, published by Eurostat in May 2013

The Finnish resettlement programme at a glance

Resettlement quota and actors

Start of ad-hoc programme: 1979

Start of annual quota: 1985

Current quota: 750

Main national actors: Ministry of the Interior, Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI), Security Police, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Centre for Economic Development, Transport and Environment (ELY)¹⁸, municipalities, Finnish Red Cross.

Resettlement numbers

YEAR	ACCEPTED	ARRIVALS	NATIONALITY ⇄ COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS
2013 <i>anticipated</i>			Afghan ⇄ Iran (200); Afghan, Iraqi, Iranian, Somali ⇄ Turkey (150); Congolese ⇄ Southern Africa (Malawi & Zambia) (150); Sudanese ⇄ Egypt (150); Emergency ⇄ various (100)
2012	734	689	Afghan ⇄ Iran & Turkey (192); Congolese ⇄ Rwanda (165); Afghan, Somali, Iranian, Iraqi ⇄ Turkey (143); Burmese, Sri Lankan, Chinese, Pakistani, Somali ⇄ Thailand (132); Emergency ⇄ various (102)

¹⁸ The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres) are responsible for the regional implementation and development tasks of the central government.

YEAR	ACCEPTED	ARRIVALS	NATIONALITY ⇄ COUNTRY OF ASYLUM OF LARGEST GROUPS
2011	626	460	Afghan ⇄ Iran (265); Burmese, Sri Lankan, Chinese, Pakistani, Somali ⇄ Thailand (169); Congolese ⇄ Rwanda (92); Emergency ⇄ various (100)
2010	634	571	Afghan ⇄ Iran (153); Burmese, Sri Lankan, Pakistani ⇄ Thailand (147); Iraqi ⇄ Syria (145); Congolese ⇄ Rwanda (126); Emergency ⇄ various (63)
2009	727	627	Iraqis&Palestinians ⇄ Syria& Jordan (327); Congolese ⇄ Rwanda (151); Burmese, Sri Lankan ⇄ Thailand (149); Emergency ⇄ various (100)

UNHCR Submission categories considered for resettlement

- Legal and physical protection needs
- Survivors of violence and torture
- Medical needs
- Women and girls at risk
- Family reunification
- Children and adolescents at risk
- Lack of foreseeable alternative solutions

UNHCR Priority levels accepted (with sub-quota where applicable)

- Emergency** *ax. 7 days between submission and resettlement*
- Urgent** *within 6 weeks between submission and resettlement*
-100 cases are allocated to emergency and urgent submissions.
- Normal** *within 12 months between submission and resettlement*

Finland's Resettlement Programme

Legal Basis

Section 90 of the 2004 **Finnish Aliens Act** defines the 'refugee quota' and procedures for resettlement. Section 91 of the Act empowers the Ministry of Interior to determine on annual basis which refugees will be resettled to Finland, and resettlement criteria and eligibility are set out in Section 92. The annual quota is confirmed in the annual state budget.

Resettlement Criteria

Basic criteria

- The refugee is in need of international protection with regard to his or her home country.
- The refugee is in need of resettlement from the first country of asylum.
- The requirements for admitting and integrating the alien into Finland have been assessed.
- There are no obstacles to issuing a residence permit in terms of public order, security, health or Finland's international relations.

Criteria related to integration

During the selection process, the Finnish government assesses both refugees' individual and group potential for integration, and the capacity of

participating Finnish municipalities to meet the integration needs of refugees.

Factors that are taken into account in the assessment of individual potential for integration into Finnish society include:

- the educational background of all family members (including literacy and knowledge of the Latin alphabet);
- employment experience;
- health status; and
- the effect that resettlement might have on individual refugees.

A lack of integration potential does not preclude resettlement as such if other factors - such as the need for international protection or for resettlement - favour the selection of particular refugees. Assessments of individual 'integration potential' aim to effect the selection of as 'balanced' a group as possible. Each group should include persons who wish to function as a resource person for their community, and who have expressed an acceptance of this role and demonstrated their potential to fulfill it at the selection interview.

An assessment of the integration capacity of both of the municipalities considers available services and their ability to respond to the needs of refugees, the presence of similar communities and social networks,



the presence of support or ‘resource’ persons, and of family members and/or relatives. The outcomes of this assessment also influence placement decisions of those refugees finally selected for resettlement.

Identification and Selection

The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Employment and Economy, prepares an annual proposal for the refugee quota. The final decision on the quota rests with the Ministry of Interior.

Up to 100 emergency cases are selected on **dossier basis**. The remainder of cases (650) are selected during selection missions. The Finnish Immigration Service (MIGRI) organises **selection missions**, which also may include representatives from the receiving municipality, and potentially include an integration expert from a municipality or an ELY Centre. Security police may accompany selection missions, and MIGRI funds all travel expenses.

Security checks and final selection decisions take place after the delegation’s return to Finland. MIGRI makes final decisions on all resettlement submissions, and decisions cannot be appealed. For normal priority cases, processing time from submission to decision is approximately **2 months**.

Emergency cases are processed within **5 working days**.

Refugee Status, Permanent Residency & Citizenship

Resettled refugees are granted refugee status in Finland and receive a residence permit on arrival. **Residence permits** are granted for 4 years, after which resettled refugees may apply for Finnish **citizenship**. Applicants for citizenship are required to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge (level 3 of the Finnish National Foreign Language Certificate¹⁹) of written and oral Finnish or Swedish. Illiterate applicants may be exempted from the language requirement, although must demonstrate either a basic understanding of Finnish or Swedish²⁰ or regular participation in a language class. Those whose citizenship applications are not accepted after 4 years residency may apply for a 4-year extension of their residence permit, which then becomes a permanent residence permit.

Family reunification

In addition to married partners, children under 18 and parents of children under 18, unmarried partners (including same-sex partners) are also eligible for family reunification if:

¹⁹ Equivalent to level B1.1 and B1.2 of the Common European Framework for Languages

²⁰ The official languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish.

- they have cohabited for at least 2 years; or
- have a child together; and
- are in a 'marriage-like' partnership.
- Relationships must be proven either with identity documents, other documentary evidence or (in the case of parent-child relationships) DNA tests. There is no requirement to demonstrate sufficient income to support joining family members.

Resettlement in Practice

Linking Phases

How is information transferred between selection and reception of refugees in order to prepare for their arrival?

- Forwarding pertinent information from Refugee Referral Form (RRF) to integration actors
A copy of the RRF and any associated documentation (such as medical documents or a Best Interest Determination (BID) for Unaccompanied Minors) is sent to the receiving municipality ahead of refugees' arrival. Where refugees are interviewed during selection missions, RRFs that are sent to municipalities also include interviewer notes.
- Other: Integration experts assess refugees' integration potential

during selection interviews (see 'Resettlement criteria' above) and record their comments and recommendations. MIGRI forwards this information to the receiving municipality.

Pre-departure

- Cultural Orientation (CO):** During 2004-10, refugees selected via selection missions received a 3-day CO programme (FINCO) delivered by IOM, covering practical information about Finland, refugee rights and responsibilities, resettlement travel and reception procedures and basic Finnish phrases. FINCO was not delivered in 2011-12. At the request of MIGRI, IOM is currently developing a new FINCO to be delivered later in 2013.

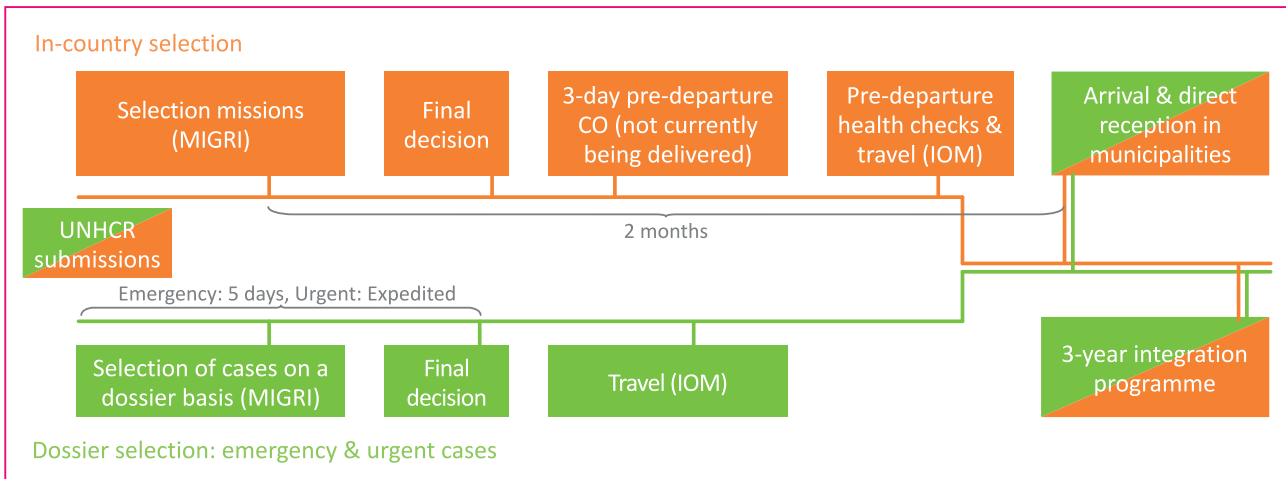
- Medical Exam:** Agreement between the Finnish government and IOM, under which IOM performs fit-for-travel examination as necessary and/or requested.

- Travel arrangements:** IOM

Integration in Practice

Reception

Volunteers trained by the Finnish Red Cross welcome refugees at the airport



and accompany them to the receiving municipality.

Placement policies

Municipalities **voluntarily** agree to receive a specific number of refugees each year, including both resettled refugees and those granted protection through the asylum system. Receiving refugees requires political approval from local councils. To date 140 Finnish municipalities have received resettled refugees. ELY Centres - regional administrative authorities for employment and the economy - negotiate refugee numbers, preferred nationalities and reception and integration programmes with municipalities. Since 2009, the total number of resettlement places offered by Finnish municipalities has not been sufficient to fill the annual quota of 750 persons.

MIGRI considers the presence of relatives, similar ethnic groups and/or nationalities and the availability of

interpreters when making placement decisions, and places refugees with specific medical needs in municipalities near an appropriate hospital or medical services.

MIGRI pays receiving municipalities a 'calculatory lump sum' per refugee (€6,845 for those under 7 years and €2,300 per year for persons older than 7)²¹ to cover costs related to finding accommodation and providing social services, healthcare, specialist psychological counselling, and employment training and support. The maximum reimbursement period for resettled refugees is 4 years, one year longer than for refugees exiting the asylum system. In addition, ELY Centres reimburse municipalities for additional costs relating to receiving refugees with serious medical needs. If refugees move to another municipality, all lump sum and reimbursement payments are reallocated to the new municipality.

²¹ September 2011 amendment to the 1999 Act on Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers.

Finnish municipalities are also compensated for the costs of interpreting services, and municipalities receiving unaccompanied minors are reimbursed all costs until the person concerned is 21 years old. MIGRI reimburses the full amount of the individual integration subsidy issued to refugees by receiving municipalities.

Some municipalities still decline to offer places, arguing that payments do not meet the cost of receiving resettled refugees - particularly vulnerable and high needs cases - and that the system for reclaiming costs is too complex and bureaucratic. The wider context for these discussions is the ongoing tension between the national government and some municipalities over planned reforms to local government in Finland.²²

Additionally, given the lack of places in municipalities, many of those granted refugee status via the asylum system have chosen to arrange their own accommodation rather than waiting in a reception centre until it is allocated to them. This has increased pressure on already scarce housing supply for refugees in larger cities near to reception centres.²³

²² Since 2012, the Finnish government has been implementing a radical reform of municipalities with the aim of increasing public spending efficiency. Some municipalities are strongly opposed to the reform.

²³ In 2012, a monthly average of 400 persons with a residence permit were living in reception centres while awaiting a municipality place, compared to 200 persons in 2011.

Integration services & support

Length: 3 years

The 2011 Act on Integration of migrants, including refugees, emphasises the need to provide integration support as soon as possible after arrival into Finland. The Act also sets targets for proficiency in Finnish and Swedish. Integration services are available to all new arrivals to Finland who have a residence permit.

While all migrants undergo an initial interview assessment to determine if they need an **individual integration plan**, resettled refugees always receive a plan. For those able to seek employment the plans are drafted by local employment offices and focus specifically on finding employment. For those not likely to enter the labour market in the near future - such as the elderly, those with young children or with disabilities - the integration plan is drafted by municipality social services.

Integration plans outline the activities to be completed during the 3-year period. '**Integration training**' as defined in the 2011 legislation forms a central part of each plan, and comprises 60 study units²⁴ of language-learning and orientation into Finnish society. Follow-up activities can include vocational training, skills development and voluntary work, and in some cases may

²⁴ One study unit is equivalent to 35 hours.

also include short work placements or internships. Civil society organisations often work in partnership with municipalities to provide additional services and activities for resettled refugees, such as the volunteer befrienders assigned to resettled refugees by the Finnish Red Cross.

Refugees and migrants following an integration plan receive a monthly integration subsidy from the receiving municipality that averages €674 per month. Additional financial support is provided to families with children, and the maximum duration of integration subsidy payments for all migrants is 3 years. Refugees who move to another municipality retain their entitlement to an integration subsidy.

Integration in Focus: Participative integration project in Finland

Participative Integration in Finland is a three-year project that ran from March 2010 to June 2013, with the purpose of testing models of integration training for new arrivals in Finland. The framework for the project is set out in the 2011 Act on Integration, and the project had a total budget of €10 million.

The project targets three categories of migrants - jobseekers, those requiring specialist support, and children and adolescents. The University of Jyväskylä's Centre for Applied

Language Studies will draw up a project development plan and pilot approaches at the local level (working with municipalities, employment offices and civil society organisations). To date, 10 new approaches have been piloted in 16 municipalities.

Use of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)

Persons resettled using 2012 ERF funding

- Persons resettled from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme
- Unaccompanied minors
- Women and children at risk; particularly from psychological physical or sexual violence or exploitation
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement

Pledges made to resettle under ERF specific categories for 2013

- Persons resettled from a country or region designated for the implementation of a Regional Protection Programme
- Women and children at risk
- Unaccompanied minors
- Survivors of torture and violence
- Persons with serious medical needs that can only be addressed through resettlement

- Persons in need of emergency resettlement or urgent resettlement for legal or physical protection needs

Pledges made to resettle under ERF resettlement common EU priorities for 2013

- Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes Region²⁵
- Refugees from Iraq in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan
- Afghan refugees in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran
- Somali refugees in Ethiopia
- Burmese refugees in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand
- Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan

HIGHLIGHT: The VIPRO project

The ERF co-financed VIPRO Project was established by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy in October 2012, in response to the declining number of places for refugees offered by Finnish municipalities. The project has 4 key objectives:

- to recommend improvements to the system for reimbursing municipalities' costs for receiving refugees;
- to produce a strategy for improving the refugee reception

system at the national and local levels;

- to make recommendations for increasing the availability of psychosocial support for refugees in Finland; and
- to produce a web-based handbook for local refugee reception.



Unaccompanied minor resettled to Finland/Aleksi Malinen

In 2013, the second phase of the project will begin negotiations with relevant stakeholders on how to regulate independent moves from reception centres to municipalities, and explore the status and integration perspectives of unaccompanied minors after the asylum process.

²⁵ The places pledged under this priority are likely to be allocated to Congolese refugees from Southern Africa, namely Zambia and Malawi which are countries included under the common Union priority 'Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes region'.



Evaluations

Although some evaluation studies have been conducted on health, housing or internal migration of immigrants in Finland, including refugees, to date **no comprehensive assessment** of the Finnish resettlement programme has been completed. Each local integration training course is evaluated on its own terms, and civil society organisations may also conduct periodic evaluations and assessments of their activities for refugees.

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- A **strong political commitment** to receiving vulnerable groups of resettled refugees within the annual resettlement quota.
- Relatively large numbers of quota places reserved for **emergency and urgent cases**.
- Political **leadership** on integration - strong legislative basis for the national programme and allocation of resources for research and pilot projects.

Challenges

- **Insufficient places** offered by municipalities for resettlement, resulting in an underutilisation of the resettlement quota and increased waiting times in countries of asylum for refugees accepted for resettlement to Finland. These delays impact significantly on the capacity of the Finnish programme to offer protection to urgent and emergency cases.
- **No pre-departure CO** within the current programme.
- Some resettled refugees have experienced **racism and discrimination** in Finnish municipalities.

New Developments

The VIPRO Project (see 'Highlight', above) has been extended until May 2014.