



Information guide for **persons** being **resettled** to France

Refugees must be **protected**



Registration of families with the UNHCR in Damascus




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You will soon enter the French territory either because you were issued a visa in order to claim asylum in France (« protected entry ») or as a resettled refugee, or in the framework of a transfer from another European Union (EU) Member-State.

The French authorities have taken the decision to welcome you in France. However, this implies that you and the members of your family must be willing to come to France.

No-one can ask you for any kind of payment or reward in return for your entry and stay in France, be it before your departure, or once you are on the French territory.

This document is designed to give you useful information about administrative procedures, reception conditions and life in France.

1

The different entry procedures in France

You will enter France in the Framework of one of the three following procedures:

1° resettlement: In this case, you will automatically be granted refugee status by the French authorities. You will however have to submit an asylum claim to the Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (OFPRA).

2° transfer from another EU Member-State: In this case, France will automatically grant you a protection status equivalent to the one you received in the first EU Member-State. You will however have to submit an asylum claim to the OFPRA.

3° protected entry: in this case, you will have to file an asylum claim as soon as you arrive in France. The OFPRA will determine whether your claim is well-founded or not.

Resettlement

Resettlement allows persons who have fled their countries of origin and who are in a third country to legally settle in France and make a fresh start by becoming integrated into the French society.

This procedure applies to persons:

- under the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- or under the protection of a country other than France.
- or identified by France as being in need of protection.

Even if you have been recognized as a refugee by UNHCR in your first country of asylum, and if you have been resettled to France, you will need to submit an asylum claim to the OFPRA. Social workers in your first reception centre upon arrival in France will assist you in this procedure.

Once your asylum application is filed, the French authorities will automatically grant you refugee status.

Transfer from another EU Member-State

In the framework of a special operation, you may be transferred to France after having been granted some form of protection in another EU Member-State.

Even if you have already claimed and were granted protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection) in another EU Member-State, you will have to submit an asylum claim to the OFPRA. Social workers in your first reception centre upon arrival in France will assist you in this procedure.

Your claim will lead to the automatic transfer of the status you were granted in the other EU Member-State, whether it was refugee status or subsidiary protection.

Protected entry in France

If you have asked for the protection of France while you were in a third country or in your country of origin, you can be allowed to enter the French territory to claim asylum. The diplomatic or consular authorities will issue:

either a short-stay visa with a three-month validity

or a long-stay “asylum” visa with a six-month validity.

You will have to submit an asylum claim to the OFPRA. Social workers in your first reception centre upon arrival in France will assist you in this procedure.

If the OFPRA decides that your claim is well-founded, you will be granted either **refugee status, or subsidiary protection.**

In exceptional cases, your claim could be rejected by France, if you cannot convince the French authorities that you have been persecuted or that you are at risk of persecution in your country of origin.

2 — The trip to France

A Before the departure

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is in charge of organizing your departure: it will take the necessary steps to help you obtain an authorization to leave the territory you currently live in, assist you in all the administrative procedures, make the bookings and purchase the transport tickets.

Medical check-up

You will go through a medical check-up with the health services of the IOM in order to determine if you are fit to travel. If you suffer from a particular disease, a more thorough examination will take place in order to offer you the best medical follow-up in France and to ensure that your treatment will be followed through during the trip to France.

In order for the appropriate medical care to be available to you once you arrive in France, it is crucial that you detail all your medical history during this check-up.

You must collect and keep all your medical documents with you.

The trip

How is my departure organized?

The IOM will take care of purchasing your plane ticket and those of your family members. You will not have to make any payment.

An IOM agent will take you to the boarding area at the airport. He/she will stay with you during the identity check and will make sure your luggage follows you through the journey.

Upon arrival in France, another IOM agent will welcome you as soon as you disembark from the aeroplane and will take you to a meeting point with an agent from the *Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration* (OFII). The OFII is a governmental body in charge of reception and integration of foreigners in France.

If your trip to France includes a stop-over in another airport, the IOM will also assist you during the transit.

What belongings can I take with me?

You are allowed to take all the belongings you wish within the weight limits imposed by the airlines and the restrictions issued by these companies. If you wish to take more luggage than those authorized by the airline, you will have to pay the overcharge fee. You will have to inform the IOM agents if you carry any excess luggage with you. Given the limited storage capacities in reception centres, we ask you to make sure you keep these excess luggages to a minimum.

Please note that it is prohibited to carry certain dangerous objects or materials with you during the flight and that liquids are only allowed in limited quantities.

What documents will I need?

You will need your aeroplane tickets, and all your identity documents (passport, birth certificate, marriage certificate, family record book for registration of births and deaths...) as well as all the documents related to your asylum claim (including the documents delivered by UNHCR).

Keep these documents with you at all times. Do not put them in the luggage that will travel in the hold.

B Arrival in France

Will someone wait for me at the airport?

An agent of the OFII or a member of a humanitarian organization will welcome you when you arrive at the airport.

They will immediately take you to your first temporary reception centre.

3

Administrative procedures upon arrival in France

A What steps must I take after I arrive in France?

Upon arrival in France, you must go to the *Préfecture* (local competent administrative authority) to ask for a temporary residence permit and state that you wish to claim asylum. Depending on the type of visa you were granted, the *Préfecture* will either give you a one-month permit (*autorisation provisoire de séjour (APS)*) or a *récépissé*, with a six-month validity. The *Préfecture* will also give you a form in order to submit your asylum claim. You will have to fill in this form within 21 days after you were issued your temporary residence document.

The OFPRA will send you a letter certifying that they have registered your asylum claim. If you hold an APS, once you present this letter to the *Préfecture*, it will issue a three-month residence permit called *récépissé*. This document will be renewed until the final decision is made regarding your asylum claim.

You will receive legal assistance throughout this procedure.

B What protection will the French authorities grant me?

Refugee status

If you are granted refugee status, you will be issued a residence permit with a 10-year validity. In France, refugees are entitled to the same rights as French citizens, except the right to vote. You will have a travel document that enables you to travel in all countries, except your country of origin. If you go back to your country of origin, you will run

the risk of losing your refugee status. Under exceptional circumstances (for example in case a family member deceases), you can ask the *Préfecture* to issue a temporary travel permit that allows you to travel to your country of origin on an ad hoc basis.

Subsidiary protection

You will receive a one-year residence permit. It will be renewed on a yearly basis if the grounds on which you were granted this protection continue to exist.

After some years in France, if you fulfil the conditions and if you wish to do so, you can apply for French nationality.

4 Reception conditions

A Accommodation upon arrival



The Transit Centre in *Villeurbanne*



The reception centre in *Créteil*



A room at the reception centre in *Créteil*



The restaurant at the reception centre in *Créteil*
(breakfast, lunch and dinner provided for by the Centre)

Where will I live?

You will first go to a reception centre where a team of social workers will assist you in the different legal and administrative procedures you have to initiate when you arrive in France.

The first reception centre is a collective facility. You will live there with other people of different nationalities and religions. You will have your own private space (one or more bedrooms depending on the size and composition of your family), but you will have to share some areas such as the kitchen or bathrooms with the other residents.

The staff of the first reception centre will assist you and your family while you await your transfer in a *Centre d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile* (CADA) - reception centre for asylum seekers.

There are regulations which ensure that all residents can live together in harmony.

B Accommodation during the asylum procedure

You will then go to a CADA or, in some exceptional cases, in a *Centre provisoire d'hébergement* (CPH) intended for persons who were already formally recognized as refugees, where you will stay until the end of the procedure.

There are CADAs in all the regions of *France* but you will not have the possibility to choose the location of your reception centre: it is the State that decides where each person will live, depending on the number of available places.

Depending on the location, you will be accommodated either in a collective centre or in an individual accommodation.

In the CADA, you receive administrative assistance (for the asylum procedure) and social support (health, education for the children...), as well as a financial allowance for food. This scheme is funded by the State and generally run by NGOs.

You will have to leave the CADA at the end of the asylum procedure. If you have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, you will receive assistance to find an autonomous accommodation. In some cases, you might be accommodated in reception centres specifically intended for recognized refugees (CPH).

Asylum seekers and refugees from all nationalities and cultures live together in collective centres. There are regulations which ensure that all residents can live together in harmony.

Extract from the regulations of reception centres: undertakings of persons living in reception centres.

You commit to:

- Indicating if you leave the centre for more than 24 hours and telling where, why and for how long you are going away.
- Asking for an authorization in case you plan on leaving for more than five days.
- Accepting propositions of transfer to another centre.
- With the help of the team of the CADA, ensuring you renew in due time the temporary permits issued by the *Préfecture*.
- Respecting the deadlines for the asylum procedure before the OFPRA.

- Informing the team of the CADA of any changes in your personal or administrative situation.
- Authorizing the reception centre to collect and share information regarding your identity with the competent authorities (*Préfecture*, OFII).
- Respecting the regulations of the CADA.
- Keeping clean and in good condition your private areas in the centre.
- Taking part in animation and information activities organized by the centre.
- Going to your administrative and medical appointments.
- Promptly informing the team of the centre once the OFPRA has made a decision regarding your asylum claim.
- Accepting the exit solution offered to you by the CADA after the OFPRA has made its decision.
- Making a financial contribution for the housing and maintenance fees if you have financial means greater than or equal to the *revenu de solidarité active* (RSA). The *Préfet* fixes the amount of this contribution.

These regulations are on notice boards in the common areas of the centre. If you fail to comply with any of these rules, you will be asked to leave the centre in no time.

Financial assistance

While you are accommodated in a centre, you will receive a monthly living allowance calculated according to the size of your family. It enables you cover your basic needs and those of your family.

Amount of the financial allowance according to family composition (in euros):

| Family | Food provided situation for by the Centre | One daily main meal provided for by the Centre | Individual cooking |
|--|---|--|--------------------|
| Isolated person | 91 | 157 | 202 |
| Couple or isolated person with one child | 130 | 217 | 311 |
| Family of three persons | 158 | 261 | 384 |
| Family of four persons | 192 | 329 | 494 |
| Family of five persons | 229 | 400 | 608 |
| Family of seven persons | 261 | 466 | 718 |
| Additional amount per person | 39 | 74 | 110 |

C The right to work

While the OFPRA examines your asylum claim, you will be authorized to work if you have a renewable six-month *récépissé*.

If you have a renewable three-month *récépissé*, you will in principle not be allowed to work. However, you will benefit from the right to work as soon as you are granted refugee status.

D Access to healthcare

As soon as you arrive in France and have completed a simple administrative procedure, all your medical and hospital fees as well as those of your spouse and children will be taken care of. You will not need to make any payment. This medical insurance is called *Couverture Maladie Universelle* (CMU). You will benefit from the CMU if you present your asylum claim *récépissé* and a certificate of residence.

If you suffer from psychological disorders, you will receive specific care, including in the Medico-psychological Centre of your city.

E Education

In France, children between six and 16 years old must go to school. Children over three years old can be accepted at nursery school.

French school is mixed, public, secular and free.

Plan of the French educational system

Higher education (universities, technical institutes, etc.)

18 years old **Baccalauréat** (school leaving certificate)

| Age | School level | School |
|--------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| 17 years old | Terminale | High School |
| 16 years old | 1 ^{ère} | |
| 15 years old | 2 ^{nde} | |
| 14 years old | 3 ^{ème} | Secondary school |
| 13 years old | 4 ^{ème} | |
| 12 years old | 5 ^{ème} | |
| 11 years old | 6 ^{ème} | |
| 10 years old | CM2 (<i>cours moyen 2</i>) | Primary school |
| 9 years old | CM1 (<i>cours moyen 1</i>) | |
| 8 years old | CE2 (<i>cours élémentaire 2</i>) | |
| 7 years old | CE1 (<i>cours élémentaire 1</i>) | |
| 6 years old | CP (<i>cours préparatoire</i>) | |
| 5 years old | Grande section | Nursery school |
| 4 years old | Moyenne section | |
| 3 years old | Petite section | |

5

Integration in France

The *Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration*

Once you are granted refugee status, the OFII will ask you to sign a *contrat d'accueil et d'intégration* (CAI), an integration contract both you and the French authorities commit to honouring.

This contract entitles you to a civic training on French institutions and the values of the Republic. It also entitles you to classes of French language adapted to your needs and a diploma certifying your level in French once you have taken them.

You will have to take a test in French, which will enable the OFII to determine how many hours of French training you need. You will take these classes in a training centre located close to your accommodation centre.

Moreover, you will be entitled to a skills assessment. Based on the results of this assessment, you will receive assistance in your job search.

The civic training:

It allows you to become familiar with the principles of the French Republic and with the organization of the French State and its institutions. It is free of charge, lasts one day, and is translated into the main country of origin languages. You will receive an individual certificate at the end of the training.

A Finding a job

How to look for a job?

Finding a job will be a key step in the process of integrating into the French society. During this whole process, you will be assisted by professionals in your reception centre or by staff of the *Pôle emploi*, which is a public service assisting people in their job search.

During your job search, you will be entitled to a minimum income : the *Revenu de solidarité active* (RSA).

What will happen if I cannot work?

If you are an elderly person, disabled or incapable of working for any other reason, you will receive a financial compensation.

Can my diplomas and professional experience be recognized in France?

Having your professional experience and diplomas recognized in France is a key step of your integration process. A social worker will guide you through it.

During this process, you will also have the opportunity to take a vocational training.

Please note that it might be difficult to find a similar job to the one you had in your country of origin or a job that suits your qualifications.

Make sure you carry with you all the documents related to your education and previous employment.

B Learning French

Where can I learn French?

Once you have signed your CAI, and if you do not already master the French language, you will be entitled to French classes.

The classes are free and are taught by professionals.

Once you have completed the training, you will receive a diploma recognized by the Ministry of National Education: the *diplôme initial de langue française* (DILF).

This diploma will be useful when you look for a job as it certifies your level of French to your future employers.

6 — La vie en France

A General information

There are 62 million inhabitants in France. 75% of the French population lives in urban areas. Paris is the Capital city, where all the governmental bodies (Ministries, Embassies...) are located.

France covers 551 000 square kilometres.



Source : IGN

France has a temperate climate. In some regions winter can be very cold, and summer very warm.

France, a democratic and secular Republic

France is one of the 27 EU Member-states.

France is a secular, indivisible, democratic and social Republic. It guarantees that all citizens are equal before the law, regardless of their origin, race or religion. It respects all beliefs. The power lies in the hands of the President of the Republic, the Government and the Parliament.

The President of the Republic is elected by all French citizens. The Nation's policy is defined and conducted by the Government, headed by the Prime-Minister, who is himself appointed by the President of the Republic.

The Parliament, divided in two chambers – the National Assembly (577 MPs) and the Senate (331 Senators), votes the Laws.

France is subdivided in 26 regions and 100 Départements. Closer to you, in the city or village where you will live, there are the Mayor and the City Council.

The National Day is 14th July, which is a holiday. It celebrates the French Revolution of 1789.

Equality between men and women

Equality between men and women is a fundamental principal of French society. Women and men have the same rights and obligations. This principle applies to all those who live on the French territory.

Within the family, husband and wife are equal. The wife does not need her husband's authorization to work or open a bank account. Husband and wife jointly exercise parental authority over their children. They make decisions jointly on all matters concerning the children's education.

There can be no marriage without consent (article 146 of the civil code). The consent of both spouses must be conscious, serious and genuine.

Forced marriage and polygamy are prohibited in France.

Equal rights for all

All forms of discrimination, including racial discrimination are prohibited in France. The French legislation is based on article 1 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the 1958 Constitution which states that all citizens are equal regardless of their origin, race or religion. France has laws which can be invoked to punish anyone who acts in a discriminatory manner, for example, if they refuse to hire someone or to rent them a flat or to open a bank account for them, or if they try to prevent them from accessing a public area. Despite campaigns designed to fight xenophobia (hostility towards foreigners), you might experience intolerance or rejection. In case you face manifestly reprehensible attitudes, you will be able to file a complaint at the Police station, the National *Gendarmerie* or at the *Tribunal d'Instance*.

A secular State

In France, religion belongs to the private domain. Everyone is free to hold the belief of his/her choice or not to believe. As long as they do not disturb the peace, the State respects all religious beliefs and freedom of worship.

The State is independent from religions and it ensures that the principles of tolerance and freedom are respected.

You will find there is a wide diversity of places of worship, according to your religious beliefs, on all the French territory.

A State that protects

The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which is embedded in the preamble of the French Constitution, states that « to guarantee the Rights of Man and of the Citizen a public force is necessary; this force is therefore established for the benefit of all, and not for the particular use of those to whom it is entrusted».

In France, the mission of the Police is to ensure that the laws are implemented, to protect persons and possessions and to prevent disturbances and delinquency.

The Police protects citizens.

In rural areas, it is the *Gendarmerie Nationale* that is entrusted with these missions.

B Practical information

Food

The food in France is diverse and adapted to all kinds of diets (vegetarian, halal, kosher...)

It is also possible to find food imported from all over the world in specialized grocery stores.

There are very many places that sell food products all over the French territory.

Money

Once you will hold your first residence permit, you will be able to open a bank or postal account and pay by check or credit card.

You will have to ensure that your bank account is always in credit.

If you write a check while your account is no longer in credit, banking fees will be held on your account. The bank might withdraw your check book and you could be laying yourself open to financial and penal sanctions.

The credit card

The credit card allows you to withdraw cash from cash machines and to pay in shops that have the necessary equipment (look out for the « CB » sign on the entrance door that informs you they do).

The bank where you opened your current account might accept to give you a credit card.

You will then have to pay an annual fee. The card is personal. The bank will give you a secret code that will allow you to use it. Learn this code by heart and do not tell it to anyone.

The bank will send you a statement of account regularly. It lists all the operations that were executed on your account and shows your credit/debit balance.

Transport

Most cities in France are accessible by train.

The price of the ticket depends on the number of persons travelling, the distance, the class (first or second class) and the period of time.

Many categories of persons can get discounts: young or elderly people, large families, couples.

Children under four years old travel for free.

You must stamp your ticket before the train departs and keep it with you during the entire journey.

The railway company personnel can check your ticket during the journey. If you do not hold a valid ticket you will have to pay a fine.

Public transport networks exist in large cities and their suburbs. You will therefore be able to move about by taking the bus, the tramway, the metro or the RER (regional trains in Paris and its region), and the TER (regional express train).

These are a lot cheaper than individual means of transport.

When you move about, you must always carry your identity papers and residence permits with you. You must be able to show them to the Police in case of an identity check.

The driver's license

If you have a driver's license issued by your country of origin and if you are over 18 years old, you will be able to use this document during your first year of residency in France. This license must be valid **and written in French or else you must carry an official French translation with it.** If you fulfil certain conditions, you can ask the *Préfecture* to exchange your driver's license within a period of one year.

Ask the social workers at your reception centre or the *Préfecture* of your *Département*.

Please note that if the one-year period expires, you will have to pass the driving license test again

Public services

In France, public services, including hospitals and schools, are complete, free and accessible to all.

To send mail or money, you will find post-offices all over the French territory.

If you do not have a telephone, public payphones are available in most cities. Telephone numbers in France have ten digits. To make overseas calls, you will have to mark 00 followed by the country code.

Emergency numbers

You can dial the following numbers from any telephone to reach the emergency services. These numbers are free.

■ **15 for medical emergencies**

The SAMU (**emergency medical assistance service**) intervenes. It ensures pre-hospital care if you have had an accident or if you suddenly fall ill.

■ **18 for help**

This number puts you through to the fire-station. They intervene in case of a fire, an accident, gas leak or any other kind of emergency.

■ **17 for the Police**

Dial this number to reach the Police.

■ **115 for social emergency**

Dial this number if you need a temporary shelter.

C Appendix

List of the main actors

■ **UNHCR Paris**

9, rue Kepler // 75116 Paris

T : 01 44 43 48 69

www.unhcr.fr

■ **IOM France**

9, cité de Trévisse // 75009 Paris

T : 01 40 44 06 91

www.iom.int/france

■ **Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA)**

201, rue Carnot // 94136 Fontenay-sous-Bois Cedex
www.ofpra.gouv.fr

■ **Cour nationale du droit d'asile (CNDA)**

35, rue Cuvier // 93100 Montreuil-sous-Bois
www.commission-refugies.fr

■ **To reach the French administration's portal:**

www.services-publics.fr

■ **Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (OFII)**

(Formerly ANAEM : Agence Nationale de l'Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations)
44, rue Bargue // 75732 Paris Cedex 15

T : 01 53 69 53 70

Contact them to get the details of their local agencies

www.ofii.fr

■ **Pôle emploi**

www.pole-emploi.org

T : 39 49

■ **Sécurité sociale**

www.ameli.fr

Tél : 36 46

■ **Caisse d'allocation familiale**

www.caf.fr

Tél : 0820 25 XX 10

(**XX**: indicate the number of your *Département* of residence)



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