

Checklist for transfer arrangements





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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2022

PDF ISBN 978-92-9465-976-7 doi : 10.2847/526686 BZ-07-22-107-EN-N

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Introduction to this tool

Information presented in this tool is by no means exhaustive but represents a compilation of guidance and practical tips on ways to organise the transfer of resettlement cases ⁽¹⁾. The objective is to support Member States of the European Union and Associated Countries (EU+) in their operational work with resettlement.

What is the purpose of this tool?

The main objective of this tool is to identify the most important steps and activities that may take place when preparing and implementing the transfer of refugees within a resettlement programme. The checklist highlights key aspects to be taken into consideration when planning travel arrangements. This ranges from the issuance of travel documents to the welcoming procedures at the destination airport.

Why was it created?

Organising the transfer of large groups of refugees can be a challenging process. This tool has been created in order to guide

countries in defining or improving their operational procedures and to make sure the most important elements are duly addressed. Moreover, this checklist can offer effective support to EU+ countries in organising travel arrangements, whether this part of the resettlement process is outsourced or directly managed by EU+.

Who should use this tool?

This checklist is primarily intended to support national resettlement officers who are planning the transfer of resettled refugees, in collaboration with an external implementing partner or with a national agency. It can be considered useful for officers who are involved with resettlement for the first time and who could benefit from additional guidance, as well as for experienced officers who could use it as a reminder of what they must consider in their work.

⁽¹⁾ This tool was originally developed within the framework of the *Facilitating Resettlement and Refugee Admission through New Knowledge* (EU-FRANK) project. The project was funded by the European Asylum Migration and Integration Fund lead by the Swedish Migration Agency. As part of the handover process from EU-FRANK, the European Union Agency for Asylum has conducted a quality assurance exercise of the resettlement operational tools developed in this project.



Checklist for transfer arrangements

| 1. Travel documents ^(?) | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Travel Permit (TP) issuance , if and where needed for internal movements in the country of first asylum | Liaise with the IOM, UNHCR, or other implementing partners, in departure and/or destination countries to obtain information on procedures requested by the authorities in host countries. Particular attention must be paid to the timing and duration of the TP. | <p>The key stakeholders in host countries are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/national authorities • IOM • UNHCR <p>Other implementing partners Host governments define the procedures, the roles of key stakeholders, and the time frames to obtain TPs, which are often laid down in agreements with UNHCR, IOM or other implementing partners.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Visa issuance | <p>Liaise with national embassies, consulates and diplomatic missions in host countries or neighbouring countries, where relevant.</p> <p>Check with the national embassy regarding their capacity and typical timelines for issuing visas, such as the number of cases or people issued with a visa per day. This information would preferably take into account the refugees' places of residence and those cases in the caseload that are linked.</p> <p>Liaise with the relevant implementing partner if travel arrangements are outsourced.</p> | <p>EEA Resettlement countries generally require entry visas for travel and transit. If refugees do not hold valid passports, Member State authorities can issue a one-time Laissez Passer (LP) or emergency passports, or even ask for ICRC travel documents. UNHCR and/or IOM can assist in obtaining this document depending on how it is arranged in the specific country context.</p> |

^(?) Please consider that additional documents and requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other disruptive events could be necessary.

1. Travel documents ⁽²⁾

| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
|--------|------|---|---|
| | | <p>In order to track any changes that may have occurred in family composition, it is important to verify and adjust the composition of cases. Compare the information to that in the RRFs as well as the refugees' documentary evidence of changes that may have occurred. Such changes can include the birth of a new born, or family members that are now married or deceased. In these cases, it is highly likely the embassy/consulate will need an official update of the list of refugees.</p> <p>Further documentation that may be required by the embassy/consulate include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • birth certificate for newborn babies (and an updated RRF by UNHCR); • divorce certificate; • custodial certificates; • international certificate of vaccination; • DNA test. <p>National security checks may be conducted and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fingerprinting; • screening of names in national and international database (after verifying whether personal data reported on RRFs match with refugees' IDs); • social media checks. | <p>If the refugee does not possess a valid passport, it should be clarified with the national embassy/consulate which documents and information should be used to apply for a visa (e.g. expired passport, national ID, UNHCR refugee attestation). This is important to ensure that all different partners use the same data, for example when booking flight tickets, when requesting exit or in-country travel permits, and for issuing visas.</p> <p>Organisations such as IOM, can facilitate visa processing and related procedures (e.g. temporary permits needed for transit in an Evacuation Transit Centre).</p> |



| 1. Travel documents | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Exit Permit issuance | <p>Liaise in a timely manner with UNHCR, IOM or other implementing partners to allow them to start the exit permit processes according to host country authorities' requests (e.g. the GSO in Lebanon, the DGMM in Turkey, the DRA in Kenya, etc.).</p> <p>Through collaboration with UNHCR/IOM, prepare all documents needed (Advance Booking Notification (ABN) and official travel documents such as national entry visas or LP).</p> | <p>Every context has different protocols for obtaining Exit Permits. This process might take anywhere up to several months. In some cases a fee must be paid, while in other cases the Exit Permit is delivered free of charge. In some contexts, official travel documents are required, in others not. The procedures should preferably be initiated as soon as the resettlement decision is made in order to minimise the waiting time before departure.</p> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Travel arrangements | <p>Select the exact travel dates in agreement with relevant national actors and stakeholders in the field according to airline availability, the validity of exit permits / travel documents, and arrival windows for resettlement countries.</p> <p>Liaise with the relevant implementing partner dealing with logistical/operational support in order to set travel arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comparing costs between charter and commercial flights and determining the best available option and most direct routing taking into account transit requirements where needed; • checking the availability of both international and domestic flights; • booking in advance as early as possible, especially for larger groups, including seats for operational/medical escorts (when needed) and synchronising their travel with the refugees; | <p>Organisations such as the IOM⁽³⁾ hold standing agreements with airlines and charter companies that can facilitate in providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> negotiated fares with flexible conditions; special group fares; reduced or no cancellation fees; enhanced baggage allowances; special assistance to passengers. |

⁽³⁾ Please note that IOM specific policy on operational escorts outlines the following:

- there is a significant number of refugees travelling together;
- travellers do not speak international languages, are not literate, or have physical or mental constraints;
- the journey is particularly long or complex, involves transit stops, or has long transit waits;
- travellers have specific individual needs (for example, unaccompanied minors, single elderly persons, etc.).





| 1. Travel documents | | | |
|---------------------|------|--|--|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informing the airline company about any special needs (oxygen on board, wheelchair, stretchers); travel for refugees with medical conditions takes longer to organise and a medical escort is mandatory; checking airline luggage restrictions policies to avoid problems with check-in on domestic flights (the same check is recommended in case of over land travel in terms of extra bus capacity); arranging accommodation prior to international travel for non-urban refugees living in camp settings or far away from the departure point. <p>Continuously update and amend the list of refugees, their personal details, and itineraries (taking into account withdrawals or no-shows).</p> <p>Share with main stakeholders (e.g. the immigration office, airport police, and reception partners) all significant information including the ABN, a tentative schedule to confirm the best routing and the travel details (hours, flight number, departure and destination airports, medical travel requirement, etc.).</p> | <p>International airlines may have different regulations to domestic airlines. If carry-on bags are too big, this might cause them to be classified as extra bags, which usually carries an extra charge.</p> <p>Check with the relevant implementing partner regarding the reason behind last-minute withdrawals/ no-shows (in any phase of the process).</p> |





| 1. Travel documents | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | National entry visas/LP delivery | Ensure that the IOM, the UNHCR or other relevant implementing partners receive the travel documents and any other necessary documentation from the embassies. Troubleshoot if there are any discrepancies or issues in coordination with the UNHCR or IOM officers and/or the embassy (depending on existing agreements with the host and resettlement countries). | In urgent or emergency cases or otherwise when an embassy is unavailable, some EU+ allow personal delivery of LPs through DHL. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pre-embarkation briefing on travel procedures (generally part of the PDO sessions) | Carry out information sessions as close to the departure date as possible. Provide refugees with practical information about the travel and manage anxiety for first-time travellers. Liaise with the relevant implementing partner regarding airline luggage restrictions and other requirements for domestic transport after arrival (such as number of buses needed, etc.) | The pre-embarkation briefings can cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routings, check-in, in-flight, transit, and arrival procedures • operational and medical escorts' tasks • relevant recommendations including traveling with children, tips on how to behave on board an aircraft, how to prepare and pack luggage, what to pack in the carry-on, how to dress comfortably for the journey, and the use of in-flight facilities. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Assistance at the departure and transit airports ⁽⁴⁾ | Prepare all required departure documentation for the refugees (departure immigration and customs forms) and hand out travel documents and boarding passes for every segment of the trip. Help refugees through airport security, check-in, baggage handling, and boarding procedures (supporting with interpretation if needed). | |

⁽⁴⁾ Please note that IOM dedicated staff have airside access to all major airports globally, and this kind of support is particularly needed for hands-on guidance of groups and for immediate troubleshooting in the event of any incident occurring en route (cancelled flights, missed connecting flight/train/bus, or issues at check-in with travel documents). Rebooking the refugees according to their original routing is fundamental so as not to disrupt arrival procedures already in place at the final destination. IOM staff stay at the airport until the flight takes off and subsequently inform colleagues at the sending, transit, and destination offices that the flight has departed. In some transit airports, the IOM has secured specific designated lounges for IOM passengers or special medical cases. Access to the airport medical facility can also be facilitated. For some itineraries, issuance of boarding passes may be required in transit.





| 2. Health Assessment ⁽⁵⁾ | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Pre-departure health assessments and medical screenings (organised directly by EU+ countries or by an external implementing partner) | <p>Check whether a travel permit is needed to let refugees come and go from their places of stay/camps. Liaise with UNHCR, IOM or other relevant implementing partner when necessary, to obtain the permit.</p> <p>When internal movements are too complicated, an overnight stay until departure can be foreseen for the whole group while health assessments or screenings take place. Keep in mind any security advice from embassies / UNHCR / IOM / other implementing partners). Inform the main stakeholders about the results of health assessments, for instance, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handing over medical clearance of the accepted refugees to the national competent authorities (e.g. Ministry of Health). • liaising with the national reception authorities and/or with professionals working for the municipalities or reception centres to check the arrangements for the accommodation. • identifying the need for medical escorts accompanying refugees during travel to the final destination and consequently facilitate visa issuance for them through the national embassy. | <p>Health assessments can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tuberculosis screening by chest X-ray • Urine test <p>Useful information to be shared with the national reception authorities can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabilities; • Mental health conditions (trauma, vulnerabilities, etc.); • Need of medical escorts during travel; • Need of ambulance for transfer of serious medical cases • Pregnancies to follow-up in order to ensure that refugees can travel safely • any other medical test required by the health authorities of the resettling state <p>When needed, a medical escort can be assigned to provide support during travel ⁽⁶⁾.</p> |

⁽⁵⁾ Please consider that additional health examinations or treatments related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other disruptive events could be necessary.

⁽⁶⁾ Medical and operational escorts can arrange:

- wheelchairs and additional seats in the aircraft;
- an on-board oxygen supply;
- stretchers;
- access to medical facilities in transit
- transportation by ambulance to/from the aircraft;
- getting advance clearance for the medical case on board of the aircraft by the airline's medical department.



**2. Health Assessment (5)**

| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Fit to travel assessment | <p>A pre-embarkation medical check is recommended 24–72 hours before departure.</p> <p>The check aims at assessing whether refugees are fit to travel and do not pose any health threat to other passengers on the aircraft or to persons encountered during transit or immediately upon arrival in the resettlement country.</p> | <p>If during these sessions the health of a refugee has deteriorated or new issues arise, referral to the resettlement country's competent authorities is needed to decide whether to perform more or new tests and/or assign an escort.</p> |



| 3. Upon arrival ^(?) | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Welcoming refugees at the airport in the resettlement country (usually carried out by national resettlement officers and/or representatives of local authorities) | <p>Meet and gather the refugees at the arrival gate and accompany them to the waiting room (when available) or to the arrival hall.</p> <p>Verify the number of refugees that have arrived and communicate the arrival confirmation to relevant partners.</p> <p>Brief the refugees about the procedures that will be carried out until they reach their final destination.</p> <p>Facilitate access to the airport for reception workers who will be accompanying the refugees to their final destination (private apartment or collective reception centre).</p> <p>If medical problems arise, refer patients to medical professionals at the airport or in the municipality (call an ambulance if needed).</p> | <p>Coordinate with IOM, UNHCR, and competent national authorities regarding logistical issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distribution of food and beverages; • babysitting while adults go through administrative procedures; • interpreters for each language spoken by refugees (matching the number, language, and gender balance with the group's specific needs) to ease the official arrival procedures. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Legal status | Grant status to resettled refugees by involving the competent national authorities. | <p>Formalities around the granting of status (such as applications) may be processed during selection missions (together with the decision regarding eligibility for the resettlement programme), upon arrival at the airport, or at a later stage. This process may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fingerprinting • taking identity photos • collecting personal data • signing official forms <p>The issuance of status can be done immediately upon arrival or at a later stage.</p> |

^(?) Please consider that additional health examinations or treatments related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other disruptive events could be necessary.



| 3. Upon arrival (7) | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Status | Step | Task/action required | Additional information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Travel assistance to final destination (managed by representatives of national authorities and reception workers, occasionally supported by the staff of an external implementing partner IOM staff) | Go through airport security and immigration control providing interpretation if required. Provide refugees with assistance to their final destination: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• help with check-in on their onward domestic flight, accompany them to the departure gate, and assist until boarding;• retrieve luggage and reroute it when needed;• meet reception workers and accompany refugees to the bus/ car/train station from where there will be onward transport over land to venues of arrival procedures, collective reception centres, or private housing provided by municipalities. | To ensure continuity of care, as per IOM policies, escorts usually go to the final destination and sign handover forms with the receiving party. |



ISBN 978-92-9465-976-7

