



**Maahanmuuttovirasto  
Migrationsverket  
Finnish Immigration Service**



**ASYLUM, MIGRATION AND  
INTEGRATION FUND**  
Supported by the European Union

# Information for asylum seekers



**Children without parents or guardians**

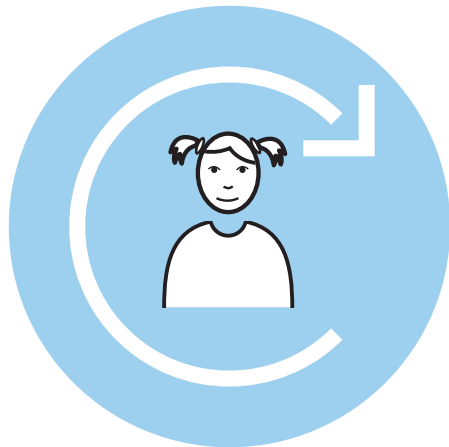


## YOU HAVE FLED YOUR HOME COUNTRY AND SOUGHT PROTECTION FROM FINLAND.

**You have told that you are under 18 years old. Under Finnish law, all persons below the age of 18 are children. They have the right to special protection and care. All children living in Finland have the same rights, such as the right to go to school and to receive treatment if they become ill.**

Even though you have arrived in Finland without your parents or guardians, you are not alone. There are many adults who will help you. The employees at your reception centre will take care of your well-being and upbringing. You will also get a representative who will help you with different matters with authorities.

This brochure describes what happens when you apply for asylum in Finland. You can always ask your reception centre or your representative for more information.



## AUTHORITIES ARE OBLIGED TO MAINTAIN SECRECY

- In Finland you can trust the authorities, including the police and the employees of the Border Guard and the Finnish Immigration Service. They are professionals who act according to law.
- All employees who process your matter are bound by the obligation of secrecy. This means that they are not allowed to talk to outsiders about anything they hear in their work. Employees at reception centres, interpreters, your representative and your legal counsel are also obliged to maintain secrecy.





## Process of applying for asylum

### 1. Tell the border control authorities or the police that you want to apply for asylum.

You need to be in Finland when you apply for asylum in Finland. When you arrive in Finland, tell the border control authorities or the police that you want to apply for asylum. The authorities will register you as an asylum seeker, enter your basic details in the Register of Aliens and take your fingerprints (if you are over 6 years old), signature and photograph. If you have a passport or some other identity document, show it to the authorities.

Please note that it is a crime to give false information about your identity to the authorities in Finland. All persons above the age of 15 will be held responsible for their crimes.

- While your application is being processed, you have the right to reside in Finland.
- Your family members may apply for a residence permit in Finland only after you have received your residence permit.



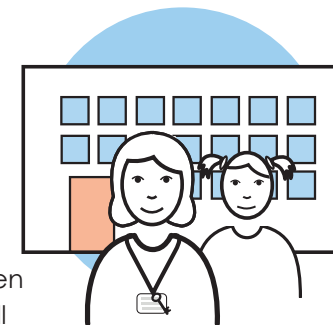
### 2. The authorities will direct you to a reception centre.

You can live at a reception centre while your application is being processed. Also other children whose parents or guardians are not in Finland will live there. You are safe at the reception centre. There are always employees who you can talk to and who can help you.

The employees at the reception centre will take care of your everyday well-being, care and upbringing. You can go to school and have different hobbies.

You must follow the rules of the reception centre and do what you have agreed to do. If you have problems with other children, tell the employees about it. Tell the employees at the reception centre also where you are, and answer the phone if someone from the reception centre calls you.

The reception centre cannot influence the processing of your asylum application.



### 3. A district court assigns you a representative.

By law, persons below the age of 18 are children and cannot handle official matters with authorities on their own in Finland. That is why a district court will assign you a representative. Your representative is an adult who will help you with the asylum process and other official matters. His or her duty is to make sure that your best interest is taken into account in different situations.



#### WHAT DOES A REPRESENTATIVE DO?

- Your representative asks your opinion on different matters and makes sure that the authorities take it into account.
- The representative informs you of your rights and obligations during the asylum process.
- The representative is present when you meet authorities, for example at the Finnish Immigration Service or at the police. He or she will also contact authorities on your behalf.
- The representative will express his or her view on what is in your best interest in different situations.
- If needed, the representative will get you a legal counsel and maintain contact with him or her.
- If you need to sign important papers, the representative will sign them together with you.

#### WHAT THE REPRESENTATIVE DOES NOT DO:

- Your representative does not take care of your everyday care and upbringing. The reception centre is responsible for that. Your representative does not intervene in the rules and practices of the reception centre.

- The representative will not lend you money or buy you things.
- You cannot live together with your representative.

### 4. The Finnish Immigration Service investigates whether your application will be examined in Finland.

Even though you have sought asylum in Finland, your application can in some cases be processed in another country.

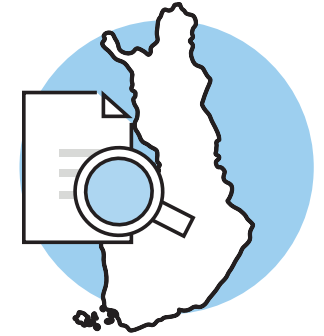
The Member States of the European Union as well as Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein follow the Dublin Regulation. According to the Regulation, an asylum application can only be processed in one of these countries. Tell the authorities if:

- you have family members or relatives in another Dublin country
- another Dublin country has issued you with a residence permit or a visa
- you have previously resided in another Dublin country
- your fingerprints have been taken in another Dublin country
- you have sought asylum in another Dublin country.

If you have family members or relatives in another Dublin country, the authorities will try to bring you together either in Finland or in another country. Your asylum application is then processed in that country. If you do not have family members or relatives in another Dublin country, your application will be processed in Finland.

Your asylum application may be dismissed in Finland also in the following situations:

- You have already been granted protection in a safe country.
- You have arrived in Finland from a safe country where you could have received protection.





## 5. Your reasons to apply for asylum are established at the asylum interview.

An asylum interview is a very important appointment. Your representative will help you get ready for it. The Finnish Immigration Service will invite you to the interview. Please read carefully the invitation and the enclosed documents together with your representative. The reception centre will arrange a ride for you to the interview.

Your representative will be present at the interview. Your legal counsel may also be present at the interview, if necessary.

During the interview, the authorities will establish who you are and how you have arrived in Finland. You need to give precise and correct information about your family members. If you provide false information, it may later be more difficult for you to get your family to Finland.

You will be asked about why you have fled your home country and why you cannot return to your home country. Bring with you all possible proof that supports your story.

Speak bravely about everything you know and what might influence your asylum application. Mention also if you do not know or remember something. Tell the interviewer if you do not understand the interpreter or some of the questions that are asked from you.

It is important that you present all grounds for your application at once. If you later present new grounds, you must have a reason why you have not stated these grounds earlier. The reason must be one that you personally have not been able to affect.

A transcript is drawn up of the asylum interview and you (if you are over 15 years old) and your representative will receive a copy of it.

## PROCESSING TIME

- It will take 6 months at the most to process your asylum application. Please wait for the decision patiently.
- If the application cannot be decided within six months, the Finnish Immigration Service will notify you of this and give you an estimate of when the decision will be made.
- You can also check the expected processing time at the website of the Finnish Immigration Service.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- You can submit additional documents to the Finnish Immigration Service after your asylum interview. You can do so if, for example, your situation has changed considerably due to recent events in your home country, or if you forgot to mention something important during the interview.
- Talk about this with your representative. He or she will send additional information to the Finnish Immigration Service if needed.

## 6. You receive a decision.

The Finnish Immigration Service will continue examining your application after the asylum interview. If necessary, your representative is asked to provide additional information. When your application has been decided, you will receive a written decision.



The decision is made on the basis of the Aliens Act, the information you give during the asylum interview, other data presented in the matter, and the information that the Finnish Immigration Service has about the situation in your home country.

The decision may be positive or negative. The police or the Finnish Immigration Service will serve you and your representative with the decision. Read the decision together with your representative.

### POSITIVE DECISION

You are granted a residence permit, which means that you may stay in Finland. You are automatically registered in the Finnish Population Information System and you will get a personal identity code.



A residence permit may be granted on different grounds. These grounds are:

- 1) asylum,
- 2) subsidiary protection,
- 3) compassionate grounds,
- 4) a case where a person cannot be removed from the country or
- 5) a case where a person is a victim of trafficking in human beings.

Your decision will state the grounds on which you have been granted a residence permit. To learn more about the different grounds for granting a residence permit, see the website and videos produced by the Finnish Immigration Service.

If you are not satisfied with the decision, you can appeal the decision to an administrative court. Your legal counsel will draw up the appeal document together with you and your representative.

### RESIDENCE PERMIT CARD

You will receive a residence permit card together with the decision. The card is proof of your right to reside in Finland. The card is valid as long as your residence permit is valid.

### IDENTITY CARD

In Finland, an identity document is needed for example to open a bank account. A passport issued by your home country or a Finnish identity card are accepted as identity documents. You can apply for an identity card from the police.

### TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

By law, you need to have a valid travel document. If you are granted asylum, you can apply for a refugee travel document. If you are granted subsidiary protection status or a residence permit on other grounds, you can apply for an alien's passport. You can travel abroad and return to Finland with these documents.

### MOVING TO A MUNICIPALITY

When you get a residence permit, you will move from the reception centre to a family group home. You can live there until you turn 18. The employees in the family group home will take care of your everyday care and upbringing. You will still have the same representative who will help you with official matters until you turn 18.



## NEGATIVE DECISION

You are not granted a residence permit, which means that you cannot stay in Finland.

Together with the negative decision, the Finnish Immigration Service issues you with a decision ordering that you must leave the country.

You can also be issued with an entry ban. It means that you are not allowed to return to Finland or the Schengen area. The ban is valid for the time being or for a limited period.

## ACCELERATED PROCEDURE

If your home country is safe and you can return to your home country, your application is considered manifestly unfounded. A negative decision will be made quickly and you will be removed from the country faster than in other cases, usually within 7 days of receiving the decision.

## LEAVING FINLAND

If the final decision in your matter is negative, you must leave Finland. If you return to your home country voluntarily, you can apply for assisted voluntary return. If you do not return voluntarily, the police will return you to your home country. Before you are returned, the police will make sure that you have a safe reception in your home country.

If the police have reason to believe that you will try to prevent your removal from the country, the police may oblige you to report at regular intervals at a police station or at the reception centre. The police may also decide that you are to be held in detention. The detention units are closed areas which you cannot leave. Children are very seldom placed in detention. It is forbidden to place children under 15 years of age in detention.



## APPEAL

- You have the right to appeal against the decision of the Finnish Immigration Service to an administrative court. Appeal instructions are attached to the decision, including the time limit for making the appeal. Your legal counsel will draw up the appeal document together with you and your representative.
- The administrative court may confirm or change the decision or refer your matter to be re-examined by the Finnish Immigration Service.
- You can apply for a leave to appeal against the decision of the administrative court from the Supreme Administrative Court. It does not, however, examine all appeals. After this, the decision is final and you can no longer appeal against it.
- Please note that the Finnish Immigration Service is not able to give you any details of the processing of your matter during the appeal process. Your representative may obtain information only from your legal counsel.

## YOUR RIGHTS

### You may ask for advice from your counsel.



You have the right to get legal aid, meaning that you can meet a legal counsel during the entire asylum process. If needed, your representative will get you a legal counsel and stay in touch with him or her.

Your legal counsel will help you with your application process but not with any other matters.

### An interpreter will be present at appointments with authorities.



The interpreter will speak a language that you understand. He or she will interpret on-site, over the phone or through a video link. The interpreters are impartial and bound by the obligation of secrecy.

### You will get information about your case.



You have the right to access documents that concern you. Your representative can request documents from the Finnish Immigration Service in writing concerning, for example, your decision or interview. Details concerning your application cannot be given over the phone.

### You may work if you are over 15 years old.



In Finland, children go to school instead of work. You can work when you have turned 15.

You have to wait a few months after submitting your asylum application before you can start working. To get more information about working, speak with the employees at the reception centre or visit the website of the Finnish Immigration Service at [migri.fi](http://migri.fi).

### You can return to your home country.



You can cancel your application and return to your home country at any time. You may apply for financial assistance to return to your home country. Discuss the possibility with your representative and a social worker.

### You can make a new application if necessary.



If your circumstances have changed significantly after you have received your final decision, you can submit a new asylum application. Tell about how your situation has changed and present your new grounds immediately when you make a new application. If you do not have any new reasons to apply for asylum, you will get a decision stating that your application will not be examined.



## YOUR OBLIGATIONS

### Contribute to the investigation of your matter.

You must be honest with the authorities and contribute to the investigation of all matters concerning your application. This means that you, for example, must state all the reasons why you are applying for asylum during your asylum interview. If you lie and give false information, your permit may be cancelled later.

### Stay in Finland during the processing of your application.

You cannot leave Finland while your application is being processed. Your application will expire, meaning that it will no longer be processed, if:

- you cannot be contacted for at least two months or
- the authorities find out that you have left Finland.

### Attend all appointments.

You must attend all agreed appointments. If you fail to appear at your asylum interview without a valid reason, your application can be decided without conducting an interview.

If you become ill, notify the employees at the reception centre as soon as possible. Submit a doctor's certificate to the Finnish Immigration Service afterwards.



### Submit all documents that concern your application to the Finnish Immigration Service.

If you have a passport, an identity document or some other documents relating to your application, give them to your representative so that he or she can submit them to the Finnish Immigration Service.

### Make sure your contact details are up-to-date.

Give the reception centre your phone number. Answer the phone if an employee at the reception centre calls you. Let the reception centre know if you change your phone number.

## OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

### Looking for parents or guardians

If you do not know where your parents or guardians are or you are unable to contact them, the Finnish Immigration Service will try to find out where they are and contact them. Tell your representative if you, for some reason, do not want your parents or guardians to be contacted. The Red Cross can also help you look for your parents or guardians. Ask your representative for more information.



### Age examination

It is important that the authorities know your real age. If you do not have a passport or some other official identity document that proves your age, it is often necessary to determine your age more precisely, for example with the help of age examination.



Age examination is carried out only if the Finnish Immigration Service considers it to be necessary. You and your representative will be asked for your consent to the examination. If you refuse the age examination without an acceptable reason, you will be treated as an adult.

The examination does not last long and it does not hurt. During the examination, a doctor will interview you and take an X-ray of your teeth and wrist.

Specialists will then give an assessment of your age. If you are assessed to be a minor, nothing changes. If you are assessed to be older or younger than what you have told, you and your representative are given the chance to express your opinion about the matter. If you are considered to be an adult after this, you will be treated as an adult asylum seeker. You will move to a reception centre intended for adults. Also the assignment of your representative will end.

## WATCH THE VIDEOS ON THE FINNISH IMMIGRATION SERVICE YOUTUBE CHANNEL ABOUT APPLYING FOR ASYLUM

- Applying for asylum in Finland
- On what grounds can you receive a residence permit?
- Who does what during the asylum process?
- Legal aid in the asylum process
- Asylum interview
- Waiting for the decision
- Positive decision
- Negative decision

[migri.fi/videos-for-asylum-seekers](https://migri.fi/videos-for-asylum-seekers)





**Maahanmuuttovirasto  
Migrationsverket  
Finnish Immigration Service**



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#### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Finnish Immigration Service**

postal address: PO Box 10,  
FI-00086 Maahanmuuttovirasto  
telephone: +358 295 419 600  
email: [migri@migri.fi](mailto:migri@migri.fi)  
[migri.fi](http://migri.fi)

**Non-Discrimination Ombudsman**

postal address: PO Box 24,  
FI-00023 Government  
telephone: +358 295 666 817  
email: [yvv@oikeus.fi](mailto:yvv@oikeus.fi)  
[www.syrjinta.fi](http://www.syrjinta.fi)

**The nearest regional office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR**

address: Wenner-Gren Center,  
Sveavägen 166,  
11346 Stockholm, Sweden  
telephone: +46 10 10 12 800  
email: [swest@unhcr.org](mailto:swest@unhcr.org)  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)



**[migri.fi](http://migri.fi)**