

# REFUGEE'S GUIDE

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## USER MANUAL

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Each chapter of this guide (Status, Residence Permit, Civil Status, French Language...) is organised into 4 parts:

- What you need to know
- What you need to do
- The essentials
- Useful links and legal texts and laws

From the contents page, click on the drawing and you will go directly to the chapter that you are interested in.

You can find the full version of the Refugee's Guide comic book on the website.

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## GLOSSARY

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### **A.D.A.**

Allocation de Demande d'Asile

### **A.P.L.**

Aide Personnalisée au Logement

### **A.T.S.A.**

Accueil Temporaire Service Asile

### **A.V.D.L.**

Accompagnement Vers et Dans le Logement

### **C.A.D.A.**

Centre d'Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile

### **C.A.E.S.**

Centre d'Accueil et d'Examen des Situations

### **C.A.F.**

Caisse d'Allocation Familiale

### **C.A.O.**

Centre d'Accueil et d'Orientation

### **C.C.A.S.**

Centre Communal d'Action Sociale

### **C.D.I.**

Contrat à Durée Indéterminée

### **C.D.D.**

Contrat à Durée Déterminée

### **C.D.D.I.**

Contrat à Durée Déterminée d'Insertion

### **C.E.S.E.D.A.**

Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Étrangers et Demandeurs d'Asile

### **C.I.R.**

Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine

### **C.M.U.C.**

Couverture Maladie Universelle Complémentaire

### **C.M.S.**

Centre Médico-Social

### **C.M.P. (I)**

Centre Médico-Psychologique (Infantile)

### **C.N.D.A.**

Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile

### **C.P.H.**

Centre Provisoire d'Hébergement

### **C.P.A.M.**

Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie

### **D.D.C.S.**

Direction Départementale pour la Cohésion Sociale

### **D.G.E.F.**

Direction Générale des Étrangers de France

### **D.I.A.I.R.**

Délégation Interministérielle pour l'Accueil et l'Intégration des Réfugiés

## GLOSSARY

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### **D.I.H.A.L.**

Délégation Interministérielle à l'Hébergement et l'Accès au Logement

### **F.S.L.**

Fonds de Solidarité Logement

### **F.L.E.**

Français Langue Étrangère

### **G.U.D.A.**

Guichet Unique Demande d'Asile

### **H.U.D.A.**

Hébergement d'Urgence pour Demandeurs d'Asile

### **H.L.M.**

Habitation à Loyer Modéré

### **I.A.E.**

Insertion par l'Activité Économique

### **M.S.A.**

Mutualité Sociale Agricole

### **M.D.S.I.**

Maison Départementale de la Solidarité et de l'Insertion

### **O.F.P.R.A.**

Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides

### **O.F.I.I.**

Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration

### **P.R.A.H.D.A.**

Programme Régional d'Accueil et d'Hébergement pour Demandeurs d'Asile

### **P.U.Ma.**

Protection Universelle Maladie

### **P.M.I.**

Protection Maternelle Infantile

### **P.A.S.S.**

Permanence d'Accès aux Soins et à la Santé

### **P.L.I.E.**

Plan Local pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi

### **R.S.A.**

Revenu de Solidarité Active

### **S.I.A.O.**

Service Intégré d'Accueil et d'Orientation

### **S.M.I.C.**

Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance (salaire horaire minimum légal en France)

### **S.P.A.D.A.**

Service Premier Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile

### **V.A.E.**

Validation des Acquis par l'Expérience

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# 00

## STATUS

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(OBTAINING - OFPRA - APPEAL...)

Obtaining the status of refugee, beneficiary of subsidiary protection or stateless person is the start of a new life with rights and obligations. It is a real entry into French society and an administrative and legal break with your country of origin. You need to be prepared for it, as it is a long and difficult process with administrative steps and concrete procedures to follow.

## STATUS

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Once you have refugee status, the 'récépissé' (receipt) of international protection or of the application for a residence permit allows you to work and entitles you to civil and social rights (except for social housing, the residence permit is obligatory).

**As a refugee**, you are entitled to a resident card valid 10 years, automatically renewable.

**As a beneficiary of subsidiary protection**, you are entitled to a 4-year temporary card as soon as protection is recognised, after which you are entitled to request the EU long-stay residence permit. On your card is marked "Bénéficiaire de la protection subsidiaire" (beneficiary of subsidiary protection) and, for the members of your family, "Membres de la famille d'un bénéficiaire de la protection subsidiaire" (family members of a beneficiary of subsidiary protection).

**If you are a stateless person**, it is a temporary card valid for 4 years. On your card is marked "Bénéficiaire du statut d'apatride" (beneficiary of stateless person status). For your family, and for the EU long-stay residence permit, the same conditions as for subsidiary protection apply.

**Subsidiary protection 'type 1' and 'type 2'**: if the Ofpra considers you 'type 1', they will prepare your civil status certificates. If they use the term 'type 2', you must request these documents from the embassy of your country of origin. If the request is refused, write to the Ofpra for a 'requalification' (reclassification) as 'type 1' with the letter from the embassy.

**Your minor children** who arrived with you or afterwards thanks to family unity will not be able to request a residence permit until they are 18.

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If you are a beneficiary of subsidiary protection but **you think you should be recognised as a refugee**, it is possible to appeal to the 'Cour Nationale du Droit d'Asile' (CNDA) (National Court for the Right to Asylum) within 15 days following receipt of your status by post. You can be entitled to a lawyer ('aide juridictionnelle' (legal aid)), which is covered - either in full or in part - by the state. Contact the 'Bureau d'Aide Juridictionnelle (BAJ) (Office for Legal Aid) of the CNDA who, if it is agreed, will appoint one.

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## STATUS

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

If a minor child obtains protection due to the risk of **genital mutilation**, his/her accompanying parents can benefit from the right to stay and be directed towards a 'Centre Provisoire d'Hébergement' (CPH - temporary accommodation centre). OFPRA can request, at any time, a medical examination proving that the minor child has not been subjected to genital mutilation since being in France. The doctor gives the certificate to OFPRA.

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**As soon as you obtain your status (Ofpra or CNDA)**, go to the prefecture in your home town to change your receipt from asylum seeker to refugee with the mention "reconnu réfugié ; autorise son titulaire à travailler" (recognised as a refugee; authorises the holder to work). Or, for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, with the mention "décision favorable de l'Ofpra/de la Cnda en date du ..., autorise son titulaire à travailler" (favourable decision by the Ofpra/CNDA dated ..., authorises the holder to work).

**It is also the time** to fill in your 'Fiche familiale de référence' (family reference form).

This request for a receipt will trigger your notification **by the Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (Ofii)** (French Immigration and Integration Office) to attend a compulsory medical visit and to sign the 'Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine' (CIR) (Republican Integration Contract). If you do not receive notification to attend within a month following your request, go to the Ofii.

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**The Ofpra can put an end to your status** if you decide to give it up, if you have obtained French nationality, if you decide voluntarily to go back to your country of origin, if you make any request to the consulate, embassy or administration of your country of origin, or if the reasons for your asylum no longer exist. It is possible to appeal before the CNDA and then the Conseil d'État (Council of State). *The loss of refugee status* does not lead to the loss of your residence permit but, when you apply for renewal, the request is made as a foreign resident. For beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, it leads to the loss of your residence permit.

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## THE ESSENTIALS

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When you obtain your status, the **'Allocation de Demande d'Asile' (ADA)** (asylum seeker's allowance) stops at the end of the month following the month you received your status (*for example: at the end of June if you received your status letter in May*).

**Your protection receipt will give you access to new social rights:** RSA (income support), Carte Vitale (health insurance card), family allowances...

As a refugee, **the Ofpra becomes your reference 'mairie' (town hall) and administration.** You must inform them of any important changes in your life (marriage, birth, divorce, death...) by registered letter with confirmation of receipt. Always remember to include your dossier number. You can declare any *changes of address* on the Ofpra website.

**You are allowed to have regular contact with your family members** who remained in your country of origin (letters, phone calls, emails, meetings in France or in a country other than your country of origin) - you do not risk losing your status.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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The articles of the CESEDA for the residence permit are L.314-11, 8° (Refugee) and L.313-25 and L.712-25 (Subsidiary protection). For stateless persons: L.313-26. For the withdrawal or end of the status: L.712-3.

## USEFUL LINKS

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You will find all of the information about statuses on the Ofpra website (including the online procedures service):

[www.ofpra.fr](http://www.ofpra.fr)

If you decide to give up your status and go back to your country of origin, the Ofii offers financial assistance - the 'Aide au Retour Volontaire' (ARV) (assisted voluntary return). Follow this link for the renunciation of international protection document:

[www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/notice\\_dinformation\\_et\\_formulaire\\_de\\_renunciation.pdf](http://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/notice_dinformation_et_formulaire_de_renunciation.pdf)

# 01

## RESIDENCE PERMIT

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(PREFECTURE - REPUBLICAN INTEGRATION CONTRACT - OFII...)

Recognised refugees are entitled to a resident card in France, valid for 10 years. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons are entitled to a temporary residence permit valid for 4 years. In order to obtain this residence permit, the signature of the 'Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine' (CIR) (Republican Integration Contract) is **mandatory**. The CIR lasts at least 1 year.

## RESIDENCE PERMIT

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**In some prefectures you can ask for your resident card or residence permit** as soon as you sign the CIR; however, in other prefectures you will have to wait for the Ofpra to put together and send your civil status documents. These delays can vary.

**You must have a personal address** either at a hotel (with a certificate from the hotel and an invoice for the last month), at a private property (certificate from the owner, copy of their ID, copy of their property tax document) or in a tenant's home (certificate from the landlord, ID, copy of a gas or electricity bill or other bill). Domiciliation through an association is recognised but is more difficult.

**Sometimes mistakes are made on the residence documents (receipt, residence permit or travel document).** If you see any mistakes, ask the prefecture to correct them.

After an interview with the Ofii representative, **you will sign the CIR which is valid for 1 year.** If you need them, civic and language training are mandatory. Your level of French is assessed by a test and you are asked for your level (written and spoken) in your mother tongue. At the end of the CIR, you have another interview at the Ofii for an assessment. You are given advice and guidance on looking for employment.

Depending on your level of French and your mother tongue, you will be offered mandatory training lasting 100 to 600 hours maximum in order to reach level A1 and, after an exam, receive the 'Diplôme Initial de Langue Française' (DILF) (Initial Diploma in the French Language). You can then ask the Ofii for additional training in order to reach level A2. If you are unable to attend the courses, send a letter by registered post to the Ofii explaining your reasons why.

#### THE REPUBLICAN INTEGRATION CONTRACT

For refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, the signature of the CIR is now **mandatory**. The CIR will give you access to integration programmes and will enable you to obtain your residence permit without any problems.

## RESIDENCE PERMIT

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**If your family has joined you in France**, they will receive a notification to sign the "Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine pour la Famille" (CIRF) (Republican Integration Family Contract).

Civic training. This is mandatory and, since 1 March 2019, now lasts 4 days. It covers five subjects which are addressed in a group:

- *A portrait of France*: the main characteristics of France, the core points of reference on its history, geography and ways of life. The training emphasises the principles and values of the French Republic as well as the rights and obligations of its people.
- *Healthcare*: procedures for eligibility and identification of healthcare professionals.
- *Employment*: advice on looking for work, how the job market operates, life codes at work, skills and professional training opportunities.
- *Being a parent*: parental authority, children's rights, education and its principles (equal opportunities and gender equality, secularism, school life, etc.).
- *Housing*: advice on finding suitable accommodation, regulations and criteria for acceptable housing.

**If you move home**, you must ask the prefecture for a change of address on your residence permit. If you request travel documents, you must have the same address as on your residence permit. Each change of address on the permit will cost you an administration fee of €19.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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### **'Timbre fiscal' (tax stamp)**

**and tax:** refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection must pay a *'timbre fiscal' (tax stamp) of €19* for their first residence permit however, unlike other foreigners, they will not pay the tax on their first permit.

### **The renewal of the card**

is to be requested at the prefecture *2 months before* the expiry date of your residence permit. Expect to pay a certain amount of money (in 2017: €269, tax stamp and tax). For stateless persons, after your first 4-year resident card you can ask for a 10-year permit.

### **With the residence**

**permit** you will be able to open a bank account, change your driver's licence, have access to social housing and request travel documents.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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For details of the content of the CIR (oral and written exams in the French language and the content of the training days), see the law of 11/09/2018:

[www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/Le-parcours-personnalise-d-integration-republicaine2/Le-contrat-d-integration-republicaine-CIR](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/Le-parcours-personnalise-d-integration-republicaine2/Le-contrat-d-integration-republicaine-CIR)

## USEFUL LINKS

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The PDF booklet **"Venir vivre en France"**, aimed specifically at foreigners, is available to download in several languages:

[www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/Le-livret-d-information-Venir-vivre-en-France](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/Le-livret-d-information-Venir-vivre-en-France)

For more information on residence permits you can also consult, among others, the following websites:

La Cimade

[www.lacimade.org](http://www.lacimade.org)

Forum réfugié

[www.forumrefugies.org](http://www.forumrefugies.org)

Le Gisti

[www.gisti.org](http://www.gisti.org)

France Terre d'asile

[www.france-terre-asile.org](http://www.france-terre-asile.org)

# 02

## CIVIL STATUS

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**(FAMILY FORM - FAMILY  
RECORD BOOK - CIVIL STATUS  
CERTIFICATES...)**

The Ofpra is the 'mairie' (town hall) for refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons. It prepares their civil status documents based on the original administrative documents that the refugees have in their possession and from the declarations made during the asylum application.

These Ofpra documents replace the originals for obtaining residence permits and for use in all administrative procedures.

## CIVIL STATUS

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**The civil status documents issued by the Ofpra are:** birth, marriage and death certificates and the family record book (for marriages that took place abroad and for minors born outside France). For a marriage or the birth of a child in France, the town hall where they were registered will issue the marriage certificate, family record book and birth certificate. The Ofpra also issues the 'certificat de coutume' (certificate of custom in order to get married or enter into a civil partnership).

**The 'fiche familiale de référence'** (family reference form) is sent by the Ofpra after you have been given your status. This document will complete your personal record. You must complete and return it to the Ofpra along with all of your original documents (ID card, passport, birth certificate, marriage certificate (including religious or traditional marriages in the country of origin)) by registered *mail with confirmation of receipt*.

If you are on your own in France and your spouse and children are still in your country of origin, the Ofpra will only note you and your spouse in the family record book. **Your children will only be added to it once they arrive in France.**

You can call the 'Division protection' (protection department) of the Ofpra on: 01 58 68 10 10.

**Be careful** when you complete the family reference form (exact spelling of your names, dates of birth, family members...) as it will be important for family reunification and other procedures. It is very difficult to correct any mistakes.

#### DRIVER'S LICENCE

**Important – do not send the original copy of your driver's licence to the Ofpra** with the family reference form as you will need this document in order to exchange your licence at the prefecture.

## CIVIL STATUS

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**The Ofpra is your reference administration.** The Ofpra must be informed of any changes to your civil status by letter.

**The time required to issue civil status certificates can be very long.** This can have consequences on obtaining the residence permit to maintain your social rights, RSA (income support), Carte vitale (health insurance card), social housing... You must follow up on a regular basis with the protection department of the Ofpra (by fax or by letter) - if needed, ask an association to help you.

**Marriage (in France):** the rules are the same as for French people. You publish your banns at the town hall ('mairie') where you live and you inform the Ofpra after the marriage. It is the same for the 'Pacte Civil de Solidarité' (PACS) (civil partnership). If you divorce, you must request the necessary documents from the Ofpra before divorce proceedings (with a lawyer) at the 'Tribunal de grande instance' (county court) where you live.

**Marriage (abroad, outside your country of origin):** when you get back to France, you must send the 'certificat de capacité de mariage' (marriage licence) to the Ofpra (get this from the embassy or the French consulate of the country where you get married) or proof of the publication of the banns from the town hall where you live, proof of travel (train or plane tickets...), a certified copy of the marriage certificate plus a French version translated by a sworn translator. *In the case of divorce* where divorce proceedings are abroad, the 'Tribunal de grande instance' (county court) of Paris must declare the document valid.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**When the first civil status document is drawn up**, you can request the civil status certificates dated less than 3 months that you need for administrative procedures on the Ofpra website (online procedures).

**If an event** (marriage, birth, death...) **has taken place in another country** than France or your country of origin, you must request these documents at the embassy or the consulate of the country in question.

**Same-sex marriage:** in France, same-sex marriages or civil partnerships (PACS) are legal.

**In the event of a marriage to a foreigner**, he/she must publish the banns at his/her consulate.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**Article 25-3 of the Geneva Convention:** "*Documents or certifications so delivered shall stand in the stead of the official instruments delivered to aliens by or through their national authorities, and shall be given credence in the absence of proof to the contrary*". Also read articles 12, 25 & 2.

## USEFUL LINKS

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Several documents, including the registration form for a marriage abroad can be downloaded on the Ofpra website:

[www.ofpra.gouv.fr](http://www.ofpra.gouv.fr)

***In the event of a mistake on your civil status record***, use the document Cerfa n° 11531\*01 ("Demande de rectification d'une erreur ou d'une omission matérielle") to be sent to 'Monsieur Le Procureur de la République' at the 'Tribunal de grande instance' (county court) of Paris. Attach the full copy of the Ofpra certificate that needs to be corrected, the documents that prove the mistake and a copy of your ID. The Cerfa document can be downloaded online:

[www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/  
gf/showFormulaireSignaletiqueConsulter.  
do?numCerfa=11531](http://www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/gf/showFormulaireSignaletiqueConsulter.do?numCerfa=11531)

(In the future, the Ofpra should be able to take care of corrections itself).

# 03

## FRENCH LANGUAGE

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### (ASSESSMENT - LEARNING...)

Learning French is essential in everyday life in order to better understand administrative procedures, find a job and housing, defend your rights and make your start in society easier. It is also a right that France must respect: as a host country, its role is to facilitate the integration of refugees, in particular by learning French. It is vital for all refugees to speak and use French at every opportunity.

## FRENCH LANGUAGE

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**After the test in French (oral and written) of the CIR,** the Ofii will - if they think it necessary - send you to a language training organisation for 100 to 600 hours maximum of lessons. You do not have to pay anything.

**If the results of your French test are already level A1,** the Ofii can give you an 'attestation de dispense de formation linguistique' (a certificate excusing you from a language course). If needed, you can request an A2 course.

**The DEFLE** 'Département d'études du Français et des langues étrangères' (French and foreign languages department) at French universities allows you to take the 6 recognised language levels (from A1 to C2) with a certificate at the end. To register to the DEFLE, you must have the French 'baccalauréat' (BAC) or equivalent, or provide proof that your profession in your country of origin required its equivalent. *You receive a discount on the registration fees* and some universities also reserve places for refugees. Evening classes are also possible for those who do not have the BAC, but they do not lead to an end-of-study certificate.

**Online training:** some associations and organisations have designed online tools, usually free of charge, in order to progress in French. Listening to French media is also a good way to immerse yourself in the language.

#### LANGUAGE LEVEL ASSESSMENT

The knowledge and practice of the language is assessed according to European criteria, and there are 6 levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2.

The CIR's target is the first level, A1- *this is the minimum required*, and it is preferable to reach levels A2 then B1 and B2 as soon as possible. For example, level B1 is required for naturalisation and level B2 is required to enrol at university. It is a real advantage when you are looking for a job.

## FRENCH LANGUAGE

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**Level A1 (oral and written)** is the level to reach for the CIR in order to get the 'Diplôme Initial de Langue Française' (DILF) (initial diploma in the French language). If you fail the DILF, the Ofii can, upon request, finance a second training course so that you can retake the exam. After the DILF, there is another course to reach level A2 (financed by the Ofii).

The CIR is the main French language learning scheme aimed at refugees, but **there are others available:**

- 'Pôle emploi' (job centre) and 'Mission locale' (community aid projects for young people): language training (key skills, Insup...),
- social services, prefectures, regional authorities and businesses (occupational training),
- 'Conseil départemental' (local council) (literacy, tackling illiteracy and FLE (French as a foreign language),
- 'Centre communal d'action social' (CCAS) (communal social action centre), associations or training organizations.

*Some conditions are necessary:* you need to be a jobseeker, receive the RSA (income support) or the single parent allowance, live in the area in question, have a job, be a young person...

**Ask for information from each administration or organisation - you are entitled to it.**

'**Français langue étrangère**' (FLE) (French as a foreign language) is also taught in different schools and structures but it is expensive if it is not financed by the regional authority, 'Pôle emploi', the town hall or associations, etc.

For your children to learn French, depending on their age **they can benefit from special classes**. For primary school, from 6 to 11 years old, this is organised by your town hall. For secondary-school children, from 11 to 15 years old, by the school and the CASNAV (organisation for the schooling of newly-arrived and travelling children). For 'lycée' students (sixth-form college) from 16 to 18 years old, by a CIO (Centre for Information and Orientation).

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**Your children** will learn French at school, which is mandatory from 6 to 16 years old.

If you sign the CIR, **as a refugee you have priority** to the courses offered by the Ofii but also when you ask for naturalisation as level B1 is required in order to become French.

**Any opportunity to speak French is good:** associations and social and cultural centres often organise discussion classes or language discussion cafés. You will also have the possibility to improve your French and meet French people by volunteering for an association or taking part in local events. **You must speak French, not just during the language classes.**

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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For the French government and Europe, it is both a right and a necessity to learn the language of the country in which you live - it is the only way towards integration. They commit to developing training for refugees across the entire national territory.

To find out about everything available, in several languages (with exercises for all the diplomas, tests, etc.), consult:

[www.ciep.fr](http://www.ciep.fr)

## USEFUL LINKS

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The adult professional training association AFPA offers, for example, a free, online 'MOOC FLE' for level A1 (with business language lessons). See also **Happyfle**, the Refugee Forum and COSI free Smartphone app.:

<https://mooc.afpa.fr>

Other organisations use the Afpa MOOC FLE for level 2, for example the Alliance Française:

<https://mooc-francophone.com/cours/mooc-cours-de-francais-langue-etrangere>

<https://www.fun-mooc.fr/>

As part of the Erasmus programme, the European Union has developed free online tools for those who are learning European languages, including a platform - Online Linguistic Support (OLS):

<http://erasmusplusols.eu/fr>

# 04

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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(CAF – FAMILY ALLOWANCES – RSA)

Refugees over the age of 25 can benefit from the 'Revenu de solidarité active' (RSA – income support) and, just like any person with children living in France, they are entitled to 'allocations familiales' (family allowances) and other financial help. **Careful** – these rights exist but, unfortunately, in practice they are not applied equally everywhere in France. You need to insist, ask for help from an association or a social service and not be discouraged about obtaining what you are entitled to.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/CAF

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The social benefits from the 'Caisse d'Allocations Familiales' (CAF) (family benefits department) are subject to conditions such as income, number and age of the children...

**You must live in France** (an address within a CCAS or an association is sufficient), as must your children (born in France, family reunification).

**Here is the list of the financial assistance from the CAF:**

**'Allocations familiales'** (family allowances) from your 2nd child onwards.

**'Prestation d'accueil du jeune enfant' (PAJE)** (young child benefit) from your first child until s/he is 3 years old: an allowance when the child is born or adopted, basic allowance...

**'Allocation de soutien familial' (ASF)** (family support allowance, also called single parent allowance), if you live alone in France with your children. The CAF does not have the right to ask you for information about your partner if they remained in your country of origin.

*Other benefits exist:* back-to-school allowance, family income supplement (for at least 3 children), for disabled or sick children, when you move home (for families with minor children)...

The local councils and 'mairies' (town halls) also offer help to **people who are in difficulty**.

**In the event of a disability**, there is an allowance for disabled adults (AAH).

#### YOUR CHILDREN'S DOCUMENTS

Whether they arrived in France with you or after you, you must provide the original translated passports and birth certificates (or copies), or the 'livret de famille' (family record book). Some CAFs will ask for the family record book from the OFPRA with the registration of the children. You can provide this document once you have received it.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/CAF

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**Opening a bank account ('compte courant' or 'Livret A' (current or savings account)) is essential. You must also provide an income tax declaration** (i.e. tax return) for the last 2 years or a sworn statement if you do not have a tax assessment. The 'Allocation temporaire d'attente' (ATA) (temporary waiting allowance) is considered to be income, but not the 'Allocation pour demandeur d'asile' (ADA) (asylum seeker's allowance).

#### The documents you will need:

- your 'récépissé' (receipt) of international protection,
- a copy of the decision from the Ofpra or the CNDA,
- proof of income for the last 3 months (salary, ATA, professional training...),
- proof of residence,
- your bank details (RIB),
- the CAF will ask for the family record book put together by the Ofpra. If you do not yet have this document, ask for a certificate with the composition of your family from the CADA, PADA and CPH, the Ofii in your area or the prefecture (memorandum CNAF n°2011-016 of 2 November 2011). **Important:** *do not ask for any documents from your country of origin.*

The '**recognition des droits**' (recognition of rights - specifically for refugees) will allow you to receive your family benefits **from the date your children enter France** (up to 2 years retroactively from the date of receipt by the CAF of your Ofii medical certificate). This is also called 'rétroactivité' (retroactivity). With the form, you must write a letter asking for the '**versement rétroactif des prestations**' (retroactive payment of your benefits) together with the documents that prove the arrival date of your children in France.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/RSA

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Important: your 'Allocation pour demandeur d'asile' (ADA) (asylum seeker's allowance) ends** at the end of the month following receipt of your status. *As soon as you have the 'récépissé' (receipt) of international protection (receipt + copy of the decision of the Ofpra or CNDA), ask for the RSA.* The CAF does not need your residence permit (memorandum n°2010-015 of 15 December 2015 and memorandum CNAF n°2006-017 of 12 September 2006).

**The 'Revenu de solidarité active' (RSA)** is for people who are unemployed, do not receive unemployment benefits or have a low income. The exact amount depends on your situation (living as a couple, a single parent, single, separated, widowed), the number of children and the overall household resources (other benefits, activity...).

The RSA is financed by the local councils and the state. It is paid by the CAF. To find out the amounts:

<http://rsa-revenu-de-solidarite-active.com>

As part of the RSA, when you have found a job (employee, independent worker), you receive the **'Prime d'activité'** (activity bonus) depending on the salary and your resources.

**To receive the RSA**, you must live and have an address in France (even a domiciliation).

#### YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 25

If you are aged between 18 and 25, you are not entitled to the RSA **unless you are a single parent** with one or several children who have either been - or are due to be - born ('RSA jeune'). **Register at the 'Mission locale'** (community aid project for young people), they will be able to help you: *emergency help, 'garantie jeune' (youth guarantee), professional insertion.* If you are working, you can request the 'Prime d'activité' (activity bonus), the 'Parcours d'Intégration par l'Acquisition de la Langue française (PIAL) (integration process through the acquisition of the French language) and the 'Parcours Contractualisé d'Accompagnement vers l'Emploi et l'Autonomie' (PACEA) (formal support process towards employment and independence).

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/RSA

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**The request for RSA** must be taken or posted to the CAF in your department (RSA form + the same documents as for all benefits).

**The CAF will inform you by post** of the agreement by the local council (RSA from the date of submission of the dossier to the CAF) then it will give you your 'numéro d'allocataire' (claimant number) (6 numbers + 1 letter) as well as a provisional code that you must change to an **8 digit** personal code. This code will allow you to log onto the CAF website and monitor your payments, make your quarterly declarations...

**Careful**, you must declare, every 3 months ('déclaration trimestrielle'), all revenues that do not come from the CAF: salary, professional training... There is a reception area with a computer station in each CAF that you can visit without an appointment, and a member of staff can help you to use it.

**The RSA is a contract.** The local council will send you a letter to direct you towards an RSA contact person at 'Pôle emploi' (job centre) for a 'Projet personnalisé d'accès à l'emploi' (PPAE) (personalised project to access employment), or an RSA contact person within an association or a social service (MDSI, CCAS) for a 'contrat d'engagement réciproque' (CER).

#### END OF THE ATA

##### (TEMPORARY WAITING ALLOWANCE)

The ATA, which was specifically for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons looking for employment having revenues below the RSA, no longer exists as of 1 September 2017 (refugees were not entitled to it). Those who were entitled to this benefit before this date will continue to receive it (ATA + RSA supplement = full RSA benefit).

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**If your partner and/or children have stayed** in your country of origin or elsewhere (outside of the European Union), you must declare this to the CAF by specifying 'séparation géographique' (geographical separation).

**For housing benefits, see chapter 06 - Domiciliation, Housing.** When you receive a housing benefit, a fixed amount (€48) is deducted from your RSA. This also applies when you are living free of charge.

**Every 3 months, in your 'déclaration trimestrielle' (quarterly declaration)** for the RSA (on the CAF website or by returning the form by post), you must indicate any changes in your household situation (work, birth of a child, change of address...). However do not wait until the declaration to inform the CAF if you have lost your job, a work contract...

**Charitable associations** offer different types of help - food and financial - if you are in an urgent situation. Enquire in your town.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**If you are refused a benefit by the CAF,** ask for a written decision. There are ways of appealing: a mediator from the CAF/the CAF's 'Commission des recours à l'amiable' (CRA) (out-of-court settlement commission)/the 'Tribunal des affaires de sécurité sociale' (TASS) (court of social security affairs). Ask for advice from an association (timelines and procedures).

**If your RSA is refused or suspended:** 'recours gracieux' (application for reconsideration) at the local council within the following 2 months then, if the request is rejected, at the 'Tribunal administratif' (administrative court) within the next 2 months. Consult the CAF website to find out about the reasons behind benefit cancellation.

**'Recognition des droits' (recognition of rights):** memorandum CNAF n°2008-030 of 29/10/2008, letter-memorandum CNAF n°2013-116 of 23/07/2013, service note PF 5/2008 AC 24/2008 and article R.348-4 of the CASF.

## USEFUL LINKS

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For all the financial help available, go to the CAF or consult their website:

[www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

Social services or associations can help you to use the internet app of the CAF and others, for example the association Emmaüs and their Emmaüs Connect service:

[www.emmaus-connect.org](http://www.emmaus-connect.org)

# 05

## BANK

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### (SAVINGS ACCOUNT – CURRENT ACCOUNT)

It is essential to have a bank account in order to receive your social benefits, to get a job, housing and for everyday life. French law guarantees what we call the 'droit au compte' (the right to a bank account): every person that lives in France, including refugees, has the right to open a 'compte courant' (current account) and not just a 'Livret A' (savings account).

## BANK

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**French law guarantees that every person living in France can open a current account** in a national or regional bank or at the 'Banque postale' (post office), regardless of their income or situation.

Opening an account is a contract between the bank and you: you can choose your bank and the bank can choose its customers. The bank can, as a result, refuse to open an account without giving a reason. **However, the law requires that they send you a written refusal.** You can then refer to the Banque de France (*see 'What you need to do'*).

You can try several banks, but there is no guarantee of success.

**The 'Code monétaire et financier' (French monetary and financial code) provides for 12 free services** that each bank must offer ('services bancaires de base' (SBB) (basic banking services)), including the 'relevé d'identité bancaire' (RIB) (bank details), change of address once a year, domiciliation, cashing of cheques and bank transfers, payments by direct debit, cash deposits and withdrawals, possibility of checking your accounts remotely, a bank card with a bank authorisation for each use...

#### LIVRET A (SAVINGS ACCOUNT) AND CURRENT ACCOUNT

The 'Livret A' is a savings account (there is an agreement for refugees with the 'Banque Postale' (post office)) which is usually not used for current operations even though it can be used to receive your social benefits or to cash in cheques. It can only be used for direct debit payments for rent, taxes, water, electricity or gas bills. With the 'Livret A' you can withdraw cash but you cannot make payments. **The current account can be used for all operations, it is essential: direct debits for phone bills, internet, transport cards, payments by bank card (Visa, Mastercard, Carte bleue)...**

## BANK

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

In accordance with the regulatory texts, **to open a current account** you only need proof of ID with a photo (residence permit, receipt for a residence permit or asylum application) as well as proof of residence (a domiciliation by an organisation or association is valid). *In reality*, the bank can also request other documents: pay slips, RSA certificate, work contract...

**Give the bank an 'attestation d'absence de compte' (confirmation that you do not have an account) that you have written** (by hand or on a computer):

*"Attestation d'absence de compte*

*Je, soussigné (last name, first name), demeurant (your address), atteste sur l'honneur que je ne dispose d'aucun compte bancaire. Attestation établie conformément aux dispositions de l'article L312-1 du code monétaire et financier.*

*Fait à (place), le (date) (followed by your signature)."*

If the bank opens an account for you, it must give you a contract - a 'convention de compte' (account agreement).

**If the bank refuses, send a registered letter with confirmation of receipt or go directly to the Banque de France** closest to where you live with the following documents: a letter where you explain that you do not have an account, the written refusal from the bank, your ID and proof of residence. **The Banque de France will then designate a bank that must open an account for you.**

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**Do not be intimidated** by the attitude or words of some bank employees - **it is a right to open an account.**

The right to a bank account is valid for people but also for businesses, companies, shopkeepers, liberal professions...

Some banks offer the possibility of opening **online accounts**. Some financial establishments have also created '**comptes sans conditions**' (accounts without conditions) (like the Nickel account at some newsagents), with a card for payments and cash withdrawals, possibility of receiving and making bank transfers... *Careful*, you cannot cash cheques with it, and some telephone operators refuse to open a phone subscription with this type of account.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**Law of 29 July 1998, 'droit au compte bancaire' (right to a bank account):** *"Any individual or legal entity domiciled in France who/which does not hold a deposit account shall be entitled to open such an account with the credit institution of his/its choice or with the financial services of La Poste or the Trésor public".*

**Article L312-1 of the 'Code monétaire et financier' (French monetary and financial code):** *"The credit institution which refused to open an account shall, systematically and without delay, provide the applicant with a certificate of refusal to open an account and inform the applicant that he may ask the Banque de France to designate a credit institution which will open an account for him".*

For the information that the bank can request to open an account, see article R.312-2 of the French monetary and financial code.

## USEFUL LINKS

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**Standard letter to ask the Banque de France** to designate a bank after receiving a refusal:

<https://www.conso.net/content/vous-navez-plus-de-compte-bancaire-vous-demandez-lintervention-de-la-banque-de-france>

## 06

## HOUSING - DOMICILIATION

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(CCAS - ASSOCIATIONS - HLM - FSL...)

Refugees are entitled to the same access to housing as the French. Although the 'Dispositif d'Accueil National' (DNA) (national reception scheme) is reserved for refugees, along with the 'Centres d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile' (CADA) (asylum seekers' reception centres) and the 'Centres Provisoires d'Hébergement' (CPH) (temporary accommodation centres), there really are not enough places available. **In reality, finding accommodation is difficult.** There is a long wait to get social housing ('Habitation à Loyer Modéré' (HLM)) and private housing is often inaccessible even with benefits and support.

## HOUSING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**If you do not have any accommodation**, you need to ask for domiciliation with an association or a CCAS, as a postal address is needed for your administrative procedures. You must collect your mail at least once a week.

**In France, in large cities, private housing is expensive and difficult to find.** Owners and estate agencies ask for guarantees: permanent work contracts, high incomes, deposits... You may be also faced with discrimination and suspicion.

**If you are in the CADA**, you will get help to find accommodation and complete other procedures but you can only stay there a maximum of 6 months after you receive your status.

**The Ofii allocates places in the CPHs (temporary accommodation centres).** You have priority if you are considered vulnerable (health, family, social situation, low income...) by your assigned social worker or by the Ofii in your region. Your stay at a CPH is for 9 months, which can be extended for an extra 3 months if you have valid reasons, with the agreement of the Ofii.

**Prefectures, 'mairies' (town halls), local councils and other institutions have reserved apartments** in their social housing stock (HLM): **the 'contingent prioritaire'** (priority quota). In addition to your request for social housing ([see 'What you need to do'](#)), leave dossiers with each local authority because you can be put on a priority list.

**When you get somewhere to live**, you will need to pay a deposit (1 month's rent excluding charges), possibly agency fees, and take out home insurance.

## HOUSING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**In order to request a place at a CPH**, a social worker from the CADA, the SPADA, the CAO or the Ofii in your region sends, by email to the Ofii in Paris, the form with a photocopy of the decision by the Ofpra or the CNDA, the residence permit or the receipt of the application.

**Do not waste any time: as soon as you have your residence permit application 'récépissé' (receipt), register using the social housing form Cerfa 14069\*02** (with a copy of your receipt). Send it by post to an HLM organisation (list provided by your town hall).

This is quicker on the website **Demande de logement social** (<https://www.demande-logement-social.gouv.fr/>) (request for social housing) by creating an online account. You must have an email address and a phone number. In both cases you will receive your '**numéro unique départemental pour le logement social**' (departmental personal number for social housing). The date of the initial request is important for accessing other rights: priority quota, enforceable right to housing (DALO).

**Then, as soon as you receive your residence permit**, put together a full dossier to register your request with the form, a copy of the residence permit, the decision from the Ofpra or the CNDA, proof of your income (RSA, CAF, salary...) as well as other documents. Access to social housing depends on your individual and family income as well as the urgency of your situation.

**A 'commission d'attribution' (awarding committee) will examine your dossier.** You have 10 days to accept or decline an offer of housing. Given the shortage of accommodation in large cities, it is recommended not to refuse HLM housing (social housing) without justified reasons (insalubrity, distance...).

## HELP WITH HOUSING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Emergency solutions and alternatives exist for accommodation**, as they do for all people in a difficult situation. If you have housing, inadequate housing or have no accommodation, if you have an income or not, a job, a family...the organisations and the dossiers differ. Enquire at the CCAS (single people) the MDSI (departmental solidarity and insertion centre) (for families) and associations.

**Emergency hotel accommodation** is arranged by calling the 115.

**If you go through the SIAO** ('Service Intégré d'Accueil et d'Orientation') (integrated service for reception and orientation), you must accept social and administrative support to have access to the 'Centres d'Hébergement et de Réinsertion Sociale' (CHRS) (accommodation and social reintegration centres), to 'Maisons relai' (transition centres), to the 'Allocation Logement Temporaire' (ALT) (temporary housing allowance) and to 'Intermédiation locative' (IML) (rental intermediation). These are all different housing possibilities.

**If you are working**, you have access to the 'Résidence Hôtelière à Vocation Sociale' (RHVS) (social hotel residences), to 'Foyers de Jeunes Travailleurs' (FJT) (young workers' hostels - sign up online) and to the 'Foyers de Travailleurs Migrants' (migrant workers' hostels).

**Other solutions:** ADOMA (social housing) with online registration, the housing association 'Habitat et humanisme' which groups together associations, accommodation and services, the 'résidences sociales' (social residences), 'Agences Immobilières à vocation sociale' (social estate agencies), boarding houses, private sublets... Some associations, such as **Welcome** and **Singa**, offer temporary accommodation in families. Other associations have specific housing programmes: **Forum Réfugiés** (the 'Accelair' programme) and **France Terre d'Asile** ('Cap vers l'intégration' and 'Reloref').

## HELP WITH HOUSING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**There is a limited number of places in the CPHs:** it is the social worker who receives the answer from the Ofii who will be able to direct you towards a CPH anywhere in France.

**If you are working** and your employer pays the '1% logement' (1% accommodation contribution), you have priority access to some housing ('Action Logement' or LOCA-PASS). If you are a temporary worker with over 600 hours of work, you benefit from the FASTT program (ask your temp agency). **VISALE insurance**, which is available online (<https://www.visale.fr>), allows you to receive, within 48 hours, a guarantee for a private landlord or estate agency.

**Depending on your situation, the CAF offers housing benefits (APL, ASL...).** For an HLM, the local authority landlord will send the documents to the CAF - the benefit is only paid from the second month onwards.

**In each department, the 'Fonds de solidarité pour le logement' (FSL) (solidarity fund for housing)** offers help (guarantee for the owner or HLM organisation, financial assistance, first month's rent, housing insurance...). You need to fill out a specific dossier.

#### ..... 'LE DROIT AU LOGEMENT OPPOSABLE' (DALO) (ENFORCEABLE RIGHT TO HOUSING)

In accordance with law n°2007-290 of 5 March 2007, the state guarantees to everyone a "*right to decent and independent accommodation*". A departmental mediation commission, which you must refer to, draws up a list of people with priority access sent to the prefect for the '**Plan Départemental d'Action pour le Logement des Personnes Défavorisées**' (PDALPD) (departmental action plan for housing disadvantaged persons). With the DALO, you can also submit a '**requête en référé-liberté**' (request for an emergency appeal), with a lawyer, so that the administrative court can demand emergency housing from the prefecture.

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## THE ESSENTIALS

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**Housing insurance** is mandatory and must be provided when you sign the lease (rental contract).

**Do not hesitate to contact** the HLM local authority landlords and remember to update your dossier, with your new pay slips and any other important information.

There are very long waits in large cities to access social housing. **It can be quicker to search in smaller towns or villages.**

**Do not forget to renew your application for HLM housing every year**, 1 month before the anniversary date, otherwise you may have to start all over again.

**Your departmental personal social housing number is only valid for your department.** If you move to a different department, you will have to request another personal number.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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In accordance with the decree of 14 June 2010 concerning the application for social and rental accommodation, those entitled to international protection and who do not have a French tax assessment only have to give proof of their income after their entry date into France or during the last 12 months - either through documents (pay slips, certificates from the CAF, RSA or the Ofi...) or by sworn statement. **The social housing landlord cannot request tax assessments from the last 2 years.**

## USEFUL LINKS

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Form to request social housing:

<https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/R149>

'Programme de logement pour tous les réfugiés en famille' (DIHAL) (housing programme for refugee families):

<http://www.gouvernement.fr/delegation-interministerielle-a-l-hebergement-et-a-l-acces-au-logement-dihal>

Contact the housing assistance associations, as well as the CPHs in France.

# 07

## EMPLOYMENT

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### (DIPLOMAS – TRAINING – EMPLOYMENT)

After receiving their status (as soon as they have the 'récépissé' (receipt)), refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have the same rights to work and access professional training as French people. However, they often experience problems because of the language barrier, lack of contacts, non-recognition of diplomas or experience and the technical complexity of looking for employment. They are also victims of discrimination. **The process is often long, and people can feel discouraged and guilty: it is important to have some support so as not to face these difficulties alone.**

## DIPLOMAS AND TRAINING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**In order to find employment you must speak French.** Take language training courses - some specialise in professional vocabulary.

As there is no equivalence between foreign and European diplomas, **you can request 'attestations de comparabilité' (comparability certificates) of your diplomas, which are free of charge for those who are entitled to international protection.** This request can only be made online, to the Centre ENIC-NARIC France (<http://www.ciep.fr/enic-naric-france>). Attach a copy of the decision by the Ofpra or CNDA. You do not need to have your diplomas translated.

**In France there are some 'emplois réglementés' (regulated occupations)** with conditions concerning French nationality (public service) or diplomas (doctor, dentist, lawyer, chemist...). **For health professionals,** you must contact the ARS ('Agence Régionale de Santé') (regional health agency) and consult the authorisation procedures (<http://www.cng.sante.fr/-Procedure-d-Autorisation-d-.html>).

The Ofii, the CADA and the CPHs can direct you to professional and language training programmes.

**To enrol for secondary education,** you must request an 'attestation de niveau' (level certificate) from the 'Rectorat' (local education authority) and enrol in a school. **If you want to continue your higher education,** you must have the BAC ('baccalauréat') or equivalent, level B2 in French and ask the university where you wish to enrol for a level certificate, which is determined by an educational committee. The ENIC-NARIC certificate can help you with your application.

Enquire at the university or school offering the training course you are interested in: the conditions and ways to get in are often different.

## DIPLOMAS AND TRAINING

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**Profession training programmes (usually paid)** are offered by the government, 'Pôle emploi' (job centre) and the regional and local authorities. The 'mairies' (town halls) offer 'Plans Locaux pluriannuels pour l'Insertion et l'Emploi' (PLIE) (local multi-year plans for insertion and employment) which you can sign up for. These training programmes are available - under certain conditions - to people looking for employment and those receiving the RSA (income support).

**The French government has tasked two organisations** with offering training courses, skills assessments, 'Évaluations de compétence et de capacité professionnelle' (ECCP) (assessments of professional skills and capacities), support for the 'Validation des Acquis par l'Expérience' (VAE) (validation of knowledge through experience): these are the group of public schools **GRETA** and the **APFA** (association for adult professional training). You can contact them directly.

**The 'Validation des Acquis par l'Expérience' (VAE)** (validation of knowledge through experience): **if you have at least 3 years' experience in a specific profession**, with, perhaps, studies relating to this profession, you can obtain a certificate in recognition of this. A VEA comes with a fee (funding is possible through 'Pôle emploi', the state, regional authorities...). You need a good level of French and it can be a long and complicated process. **If you have no documents proving your experience, we do not recommend that you request a VAE.** Consult the website [www.vae.gouv.fr](http://www.vae.gouv.fr) for more information, you will find a 'Point relais conseil' (information relay centre) close to where you live.

### TRAINING DURING EMPLOYMENT

**If you work**, you are entitled to training as part of the company: training programmes, 'Congé Individuel de Formation' (CIF) (individual training leave), leave for a skills assessment, 'Droit Individuel de Formation' (DIF) (individual right to training programme)...

## EMPLOYMENT

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**Refugees often have access to jobs** in the hotel and restaurant industry, construction, cleaning, personal care, large retailers, security... These jobs are often very different to your original profession but it can be a first step to getting some income, finding a home...

**As soon as you receive the 'récépissé' (receipt) for your residence permit** (on which is written "autorise son titulaire à travailler" (authorizes its holder to work)), **you can work and register at 'Pôle emploi'** (job centre). The family members who came as part of your family reunification programme are also entitled to work.

Generally speaking, you will not have been able to work during the asylum application period, **so you are not entitled to the 'Allocation chômage' (unemployment benefit) or the 'Allocation de Retour à l'Emploi' (ARE) (return-to-work allowance)**. **You are entitled to the ARE** once you have worked at least 610 hours over the last 28 months.

**It is important to have a driver's licence** when you are looking for work: remember to exchange your permit during the first year of your residence permit.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 25

You are not entitled to the RSA but **you can access paid reinsertion programmes with the 'Missions locales'** (community aid projects for young people) for a fixed period, with the 'Parcours Contractualisé d'Accompagnement vers l'Emploi et l'Autonomie' (PACEA) (formal support process towards employment and independence) and the 'Garantie Jeunes' (youth guarantee). You can sign a volunteer contract, as an intern, with the 'Établissement Pour l'Insertion Dans l'Emploi' (EPIDE) (work integration organisation) or request to join the 'École de la deuxième chance' (E2C) (second-chance school). Finally, a 'Service civique' (civic service) - within an organisation, association or local authority - is also possible. Make sure you learn French as quickly as possible.

## EMPLOYMENT

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**Register on the 'Pôle emploi' (job centre) website.** This can be difficult, so ask for help from a Pôle emploi advisor, an association or a service such as Emmaüs Connect. You will have a personal area on the website, with a user name and password.

**You will then be called in to validate your registration** with a Pôle emploi advisor. Take your CMU/CMUC certificate or your Carte vitale (health insurance card), your receipt or residence permit and your proof of address. Try to go to this first appointment with someone who speaks French.

The Pôle emploi advisor will put together, with you, a **'Plan Personnalisé d'Accès à l'Emploi' (PPAE) (personalised return-to-work plan)** - in other words your professional project and the steps you need to take before the next appointment. Remember to update your situation at the end of each month. When you receive a copy of your ENIC-NARIC certificate, give it to your advisor.

**You are entitled to training and assisted employment contracts**, like any other jobseeker: 'Contrat d'Insertion dans la Vie Sociale' (CIVIS) (social insertion contract), 'Insertion par l'Activité Économique' (IAE) (insertion through economic activity), help to create a business, work-study contracts, aids for employment in small or small-medium sized companies (TPE/PME)... Do not hesitate to ask for training (French language and professional training). Temporary work is another possibility, as are insertion placements and personal care. Volunteer work can open doors to employment through the people you meet and the things that you will learn.

You can also benefit from an **'immersion professionnelle'** (professional immersion) within a company through Pôle emploi, Mission locale, an association... You will receive support and you can discover a new profession and make new contacts.

If you need transport to get to a job interview, training course or competitive exam, **Pôle emploi can give you financial help with the 'Aide à la mobilité' (mobility allowance)** for transport, accommodation, meals.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**You must update your situation each month on the Pôle emploi website** ("Je m'actualise"), with your user name and password in order to confirm that you are still looking for employment or to declare that you have found a job... If you don't, you will be excluded/crossed off by Pôle emploi.

**You can contact your Pôle emploi advisor** using the email address specified in your online personal area.

For all job search procedures, **always give copies of your documents and never the originals.**

**Pôle Emploi does not have a service specifically for refugees.** The CPHs have agreements in place with Pôle emploi in order to provide you with assistance. Associations will be able to advise you as will, little by little, the people that you will meet.

**Do not hesitate to ask for work directly in businesses, shops or from people you have met...** A network of contacts is essential when you are looking for employment.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**The right to professional training** for everybody, including refugees, is written in article L6111-1 of the French labour code. Article L751-1 of the CESEDA, amended by article 29 of the law relating to the right to asylum of 29/07/2015, specifies that the beneficiaries of international protection who have signed a CIR (Republican Integration Contract) benefit from "*personalised support to access employment and housing*".

## USEFUL LINKS

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**A regional portal for training and employment**, the CARIF OREF, offers training by profession and by region that you can consult:

<http://www.intercariforef.org/formations/recherche-formations.html#>

To find an **Afpa** training centre close to you:

<https://www.afpa.fr/>

Pôle emploi (tabs " Découvrir le marché du travail" and "Les métiers porteurs"):

<http://www.pole-emploi.fr>

A large number of associations work towards the economic insertion of refugees. The association Action Emploi Réfugiés gives you support and puts you in touch with employers depending on your profession. Registration and job offers on:

[www.actionemploirefugies.com](http://www.actionemploirefugies.com)

# 08

## HEALTHCARE

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### (SOCIAL SECURITY - TREATMENTS...)

Refugees have the same rights as French people regarding access to healthcare and social security: the 'Protection universelle maladie' (PUMA) (universal healthcare protection) covers everyone who lives and works in France. The 'Couverture maladie universelle' (CMU) (universal medical cover) no longer exists, but the 'CMU complémentaire' (CMU-C) (supplementary CMU) still remains for people with low incomes. **In practice, refugees encounter real problems:** disparities across France, a lack of interpreters and a lack of consideration for their specific health problems.

## HEALTHCARE

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**The French healthcare system** includes a mandatory general system (PUMA), that is financed through income-based contributions, and supplementary health insurance (private, 'mutuelle' (top-up health insurance) or CMU-C). This 'sécurité sociale' (social security) covers medical bills, maternity, work accidents... Most consultations, medicines, medical examinations and hospital fees are paid for by the state and the supplementary healthcare system, which includes the CMU-C. You do not need to pay in advance for healthcare, unless it is for treatment that is not covered by social security.

**You must choose a general practitioner** who will become your family doctor ('médecin traitant'). This is mandatory for reimbursement of your medical fees; you need to declare the name of the doctor to the 'Caisse primaire d'assurance maladie' (CPAM) (public health insurance body) by filling in a form on your first medical visit. If you need to see a specialist or have medical examinations, you must be referred by your doctor.

**If you have been receiving PUMA and CMU-C since your asylum application**, your rights remain the same. If you have a temporary social security number (this starts with an 8 for women and a 7 for men), you will need to give your Ofpra civil status certificate to the CPAM in order to receive your permanent number and your 'Carte vitale' (health insurance card). **Careful – this can take a long time**, do not hesitate to ask for it again by letter or directly at the desk.

#### CHILDREN AND FAMILY

**Your children aged under 18** benefit from your medical cover if they are still your dependents ('Carte vitale' from the age of 12 onwards). For spouses, in 2019 the status of 'ayant droit' (beneficiary) will no longer exist. Ask to be 'affilié' (registered) with the 'Sécurité sociale' in your name with the residence criterion.

## HEALTHCARE

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**When you have your permanent social security number** (this starts with a 1 for men and a 2 for women), you can request your 'Carte vitale' (health insurance card) by letter or online to the CPAM nearest to where you live. They will send you a form to sign and return in the envelope provided, together with an ID photo and a copy of your residence permit or the 'récépissé' (receipt). Until you receive your Carte vitale, the 'attestation' (certificate) that you need to collect from the CPAM will allow you to receive healthcare coverage. **The Carte vitale needs to be updated every year (at a pharmacy).**

Depending on your income the previous year, you can request **the CMU-C from the CPAM** by completing the form with proof of residence, your residence permit or receipt, your RSA certificate or your pay slips and other supporting documents from the last 12 months. **Remember to renew the CMU-C each year if your income remains low.**

**If you have a job with a salary**, your employer affiliates you to the 'Sécurité sociale'. You will need to get a 'mutuelle' (top-up insurance) - either the one offered by your employer or one of your choice. The CPAM can help you to pay for this.

**If you had the 'Aide médicale d'État' (state medical assistance) or no cover at all**, ask for the PUMA and the CMU-C as soon as you receive your status.

**Depending on where you live - Paris or elsewhere**, in a town or a village, it can sometimes be difficult to find specialist doctors. The reception and processing of dossiers by the CPAM can differ depending on the region and there are no interpreters. For mental health issues, there are support facilities to help you especially in large cities. Do not be discouraged and remember that there are associations that can help you.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**If you change your general practitioner,** remember to declare the change to the CPAM.

**If you are without medical protection due to administrative issues, the 'Permanence d'accès aux soins' (PASS)** (continuous access to healthcare) offers free consultations and medicines at the public hospital. Ask the social assistant at the hospital emergency department. You can also contact an association such as 'Médecins du Monde'.

**If you have a disability,** the 'Allocation d'Adulte Handicapé' (AAH) (adult disability allowance) guarantees a minimum income. It is paid by the CAF. Ask your doctor as well as a social assistant to submit a dossier at the 'Maison Départementale pour les Personnes Handicapées' (MDPH) (departmental centre for disabled persons).

**Inform the CPAM** of any changes to your address, bank details or professional situation if you receive the CMU-C.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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The Geneva Convention asks that all States "*accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their nationals*" (articles 23 and 24).

## USEFUL LINKS

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The medical insurance website (you can create your online account):

[www.ameli.fr](http://www.ameli.fr)

For people with psychological problems, specialised structures do exist. Contact them directly or ask a local association:

Comede (Comité pour la santé des exilés)

[www.comede.org](http://www.comede.org)

Centre Primo Levi

[www.primolevi.org](http://www.primolevi.org)

Parcours d'exil

[www.parcours-exil.org](http://www.parcours-exil.org)

France Terre d'asile, CIAPA (pour les adolescents),  
contact avec le Centre de ressource des mineurs  
étrangers isolés, InfoMIE :

<http://infomie.net>

# 09

## MOBILITY

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**(PASSPORT - DRIVER'S LICENCE -  
BUS - TRAIN - SCHENGEN)**

Mobility - the possibility of travelling in France and abroad - is essential for refugee integration, be it for work, housing or in order to do what you would like to do. A majority of refugees live in the Paris area, when better living conditions may exist elsewhere in France. You need courage and curiosity to move around once you have received your refugee status but this experience can be beneficial.

## MOBILITY

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

If you are a **refugee or 'type 1' beneficiary of subsidiary protection**, the Ofpra keeps your passport, but if you want to travel **you can obtain a 'titre de voyage'** (travel document) from the prefecture, which you must have in the Schengen zone (the residence permit is not sufficient). You do not need a visa. Outside the Schengen zone, request a visa from the consulate of the country you wish to travel to. **If you are a 'type 2' beneficiary of subsidiary protection**, you use your passport to travel.

**If you intend to stay over 90 days** in a country in the Schengen zone, then you must ask for a visa.

**Driver's licence:** you can exchange your driver's as long as there is an agreement between France and your country of origin.

List of countries having an agreement with France:

<https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F1460>

#### TRAVELLING FOR MINOR CHILDREN.

In order to travel, your minor children must be able to present a **'document de circulation pour étranger mineur'** (DCEM) (document for the movement of foreign minors) which parents must request from the prefecture (valid for 5 years within the Schengen zone). As of 1 March 2019, the 'titre d'identité républicain' (TIR), (republican identity document) no longer exists. Outside the Schengen zone, you can ask for a travel permit for your children, together with a visa depending on the country. You must collect the travel documents from the prefecture accompanied by the child. These documents are also useful for everyday life in France (police ID checks, registering at the CPAM...).

## MOBILITY

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

**The travel permit needs to be requested at the prefecture** – you will need to bring your residence permit, proof of residence, 2 ID photos and the form. It is valid for 5 years for a refugee and 1 year for a beneficiary of subsidiary protection (you will need a 'timbre fiscal' (tax stamp) of €45 and €19). The country/countries you are not allowed to go to (at the risk of losing your international protection) are written in your travel permit.

**For the driver's licence, the documents that you need to provide at the prefecture** are your original licence translated by a sworn translator (the national licence and not the international licence, which is temporary), the 3 completed forms (you can get these from the prefecture), the residence permit, proof of ID and a photo. For special licences (C and D), a medical visit to a doctor certified by the prefecture is mandatory (you will need to pay for this).

**If you do not have your original licence**, or if you only have a copy, you will need to prove that you had one (insurance certificate, taxi driver permit, declaration of loss, etc.). If the prefecture refuses to issue the new licence, make an appeal with the help of a lawyer.

**In order to go and live in another country**, you must send a letter to the Ofpra to request a '**transfert de protection**' (transfer of protection). The Ofpra submits your dossier to the country concerned, which will accept - or not - depending on your situation (employment, family, proficiency in the language...). *This system does not exist for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection*, who must request a transfer of protection from the country of settlement themselves.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**Taking the driving test:**

it is possible to receive financial help if you have a professional project and there are 'social' driving schools that offer lower rates.

**Public transport:**

depending on the town, department or region, free transport cards are available if you are registered with 'Pôle emploi' (job centre) or if you receive the RSA (income support): bus, metro, tramway, regional trains (TER). There are also 'cartes familles' (family cards) available at the SNCF (train company). Young persons' cards as well as other discount cards for public transport start from the age of 5.

**Useful tips:** it can be less expensive to travel by car using Blablacar (car sharing), if you have a debit card (<https://www.blablacar.fr/>). The SNCF always has special offers if you book in advance (<https://www.voyages-sncf.com/>). 'Pôle emploi' can cover travel expenses for work. **Careful:** having your own car can be expensive: registration documents, insurance, parking, repairs...

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**Article R.322-1 of the CESEDA:** "*foreign nationals legally staying in France have freedom of movement*", including in the 'Départements d'Outre Mer' (DOM) (overseas departments) and the 'Collectivités d'Outre Mer' (COM) (overseas collectivities) where restrictions exist for some professions.

### Driver's licence:

decree of 09/04/2019 :

[www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025175223](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025175223)

[www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000038386907&categorieLien=id](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000038386907&categorieLien=id)

[www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=C-2D860ED3EBC71E571495CD738B55905.tplg-fr33s\\_1?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025175223&dateTexte=20190725](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do;jsessionid=C-2D860ED3EBC71E571495CD738B55905.tplg-fr33s_1?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025175223&dateTexte=20190725)

## USEFUL LINKS

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**Wimoov** is a platform that can help you (taking your driving test, choosing a type of transport, etc.). 'Pôle emploi', the 'Mission locale' (community aid project for young people) or a social service can direct you towards Wimoov. At the 'Missions locales' young people under 25 can also receive help with a driving licence via the 'Pôle Inclusif d'Accompagnement localisé' (PIAL) (inclusive local support centre):

[www.wimoov.org](http://www.wimoov.org)

The association 'France terre d'asile' (FTDA) has a programme called 'Clef de France' to help refugees in the Paris region (Île-de-France) to look for a home and a job in other regions. Other associations (such as APREVA) offer financial help for travel or inexpensive car rentals.

[www.france-terre-asile.org](http://www.france-terre-asile.org)

# 10

## FAMILY UNITY

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### (REUNIFICATION - REGROUPING...)

The principle of 'unité familiale' (family unity) applies to refugees, they have the right to 'réunification familiale' (family reunification) due to their fears for their spouses and children without having to meet the conditions (housing, income, time spent in France...) requested of other foreigners for the 'regroupement familial' (family regrouping). Family reunification applies to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons who have entered France legally. Families who enter the country illegally after the beneficiary of subsidiary protection must apply for asylum.

## FAMILY UNITY

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In order to join you in the context of 'réunification familiale' (family reunification), the members of your family must have been **declared to the Ofpra** on the family reference form at the time of the protection application. The family is entitled to a resident card valid 10 years (4 years renewable for stateless persons and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection):

- **Your spouse (adult)** if the marriage took place before you obtained refugee status. If you are not married, you need to prove that you lived together in a stable relationship before the status request.
- **Your unmarried children**, maximum age 19.
- **Your children and those of your spouse** from a previous marriage if one of you has parental authority (a copy of the legal decision and the authorisation of the other parent is required).
- Your parents if you are a minor.

**For all other cases**, the request is made within the framework of the 'regroupement familial' (family regrouping) - the same as for other foreigners - to the local Ofii office nearest to where you live.

**If you are the parents of minor children protected in France** and you live in France (both mother and father) it is a question of 'regroupement familial' (family regrouping) if you wish to bring over your other minor children who have remained alone in your country of origin (CESEDA article L. 752-1).

**If one of the parents has remained in the country of origin with your other children**, this is a matter of 'réunification familiale' (family reunification), and it is the child who is protected in France who brings over his/her other parent along with his/her brothers and sisters.

**Plane tickets:** make sure you have money to pay for your family to come over, as there is no official financial assistance for this.

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**The 'Bureau des familles de réfugiés' (BFR) (refugee families office)** will write to you when your family has applied for a visa at the consulate. You must provide a copy of your residence permit, your birth certificate from the Ofpra if you have it, proof of address, CPAM and CMU certificates, the CAF certificate and **proof of continued links** with your family. The Ofpra will pass on the details of the composition of your family to the BFR.

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## FAMILY UNITY

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

First of all, your family must contact the French consulate or embassy where they live and request a **'visa de long séjour'** (long stay visa). They must make an **appointment over the phone or online**. This step can be complicated (language barrier and sometimes request for documents that are not required by law).

**Your family must provide:** a visa application form per person, a passport (or a pass), compliant ID photos, a certified full copy of birth and/or marriage certificates, any proof of the family link, proof of refugee status and €99 in local currency.

**All documents need to be filled out in French** with a translator accredited by the consulate. If you have it, send your family a copy of your Ofpra civil status record – this could be of great help. For your part, you must reply to the 'Bureau des familles de réfugiés' (refugee families office) (*see previous page*).

The consulate will give your family a **'quittance'** (dated receipt) (*keep a copy*). Response time is 2 months, renewable once, + 4 months if they need to check your civil status (maximum 8 months in total). **Your family must enquire regularly with the consulate.** *It can be a long process.*

Once the visa is issued, your family has **maximum 3 months** to come to France and to request the residence permit they are entitled to from the prefecture.

**Write to the Ofpra** to inform them of your family's arrival, sending the family record book and passports in order to register your children.

Even if they have entered France illegally, it is possible **for refugees' spouses and partners, as well as for the parents of refugee minors**, to request a resident permit.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**'Bureau des familles de réfugiés'** (refugee families office): keep a copy of **any proof of the continued link** with your family (emails, photos, money transfers, phone calls...) to give to the office.

**The reasons for visa refusal** can, among other things, be linked to missing documents, missing proof that you are related, to a fraudulent application, threats to the disturbance of public order, non-respect of the principles of family life in France (ban on polygamy)...

**If the visa application is refused** by the consulate or you do not receive an answer **within 8 months**: the consulate must always explain why the request was denied. You have a maximum of two months to **appeal** to the 'Commission contre les décisions de refus de visa d'entrée en France', BP 83609, 44036 Nantes cedex 1. In the case of a refusal, it is possible to appeal to the 'Tribunal administratif' (administrative court). You are advised to consult a lawyer in both cases.

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**The right to family unity is recognised, among others, by** the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1951, the European Convention on Human Rights (art. 8), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Directive 2003/86/CE.

In France, the specific law regarding family unity can be found in the CESEDA.

**CESEDA : L. 752-1, L. 812-5, R. 752-1 à 3 et R. 812-4.**

## USEFUL LINKS

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The 'visa long séjour' (long term visa) bearing the mention 'carte de séjour à valider dans les deux mois suivant l'arrivée', (residence permit to be validated within 2 months after arrival), can be consulted and downloaded for completion (you can also complete and scan it then send it to your family):

**[www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/gf/cerfa\\_14571.do](http://www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/gf/cerfa_14571.do)**

For details about visas, see the section "Vivre en France" (living in France):

**[www.diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr)**

# 11

## NATURALISATION

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**Refugees can apply for French nationality 'par la naturalisation'** (by naturalisation) as soon as they have received their status. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons must however have lived in France for 5 years before they can do this, except in certain cases. Even if this is just one step, it is important for refugees: it gives access to rights and obligations and represents a big step towards integration into French society.

## NATURALISATION

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Becoming French by naturalisation is not a right: it is the French state that decides, by decree, who gets French nationality.

**Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons** must wait until they have lived in France for 5 years, except for certain cases (2 years of higher education, exceptional examples of integration...). **Refugees can request naturalisation as soon as they receive their status**, however it is preferable to wait until they fulfil certain conditions: proficiency in the French language, arrival of the family, having a stable situation...

To make this request you must:

- be over 18 and have a residence permit,
- have your residence and main income in France,
- live with your family in France,
- have sufficient knowledge of the French language (**level B1, oral French**, diploma or certificate from an organisation with the mention 'Français langue d'intégration' (French as language of integration),
- have a basic knowledge of French history, culture and society, of the rights and obligations of the nationality and Republican values (**what is expected of you can be found in the 'livret du citoyen' (citizen's booklet)**),
- have a 'good and moral conduct', have a 'loyal conduct' towards French institutions,
- not have any convictions.

#### NATURALISATION OF YOUR CHILDREN

**Make sure that your children are written down** on your request for naturalisation. If your child is born after your application, notify this using the 'changement de situation' (change of situation) form. Children who are minors become rightfully French if they live with the naturalised parent, even after a divorce (the 'effet collectif' (collective effect) of naturalisation). If you are not French, your child born in France can obtain French nationality at the age of 18.

## NATURALISATION

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Give the prefecture two copies of the '**demande de naturalisation**' (request for naturalisation) form with the documents and a €55 'timbre fiscal' (tax stamp). If you want to 'franciser' (make more French) your first and/or last name, this is done at the same time. **You will be given a 'récépissé' (receipt).**

**Check with the prefecture or via the internet tool of the French Ministry of the Interior for the list of all the documents you need to provide.**

For photocopies of documents in your mother tongue, provide **translations by a sworn translator**. The dossier is compiled using photocopies but you will need to show the originals.

You will have an interview at the prefecture (you can find what is expected of you in the citizen's handbook), and investigations, for example with your neighbours, may be requested by the prefecture ('good and moral conduct' and 'loyal conduct').

**This interview is essential** - also try and keep up to date with current affairs (name of the French President, recent French history, politics...).

**The prefect has 6 months** to reject your dossier, postpone it, declare it inadmissible or admissible and, in this case, send it to the minister in charge of naturalisations. **The administration has a total period of 18 months** from the date of the 'récépissé' (receipt) to make a decision. If your request is accepted, you will become French once the naturalisation decree is published in the 'Journal officiel' (official journal). The prefecture will let you know.

**In the event of a negative decision by the prefect**, you have 2 months to make an application for reconsideration to the minister in charge of naturalisations. If you receive a negative response or no response, make a court appeal to the 'Tribunal administratif' (administrative court) of Nantes. It is preferable to get a lawyer.

## THE ESSENTIALS

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**Employment and regular income:** several decrees provide for the fact that your entire career and all of your efforts to find employment since obtaining your status are taken into account, not just your situation when you apply. Also provide proof of your volunteer work and community, political, artistic or cultural commitments.

As a refugee, beneficiary of subsidiary protection or stateless person, **you do not need to provide a copy of your criminal record from your country of origin.**

You do not have to give up your **nationality of origin**, as France recognises dual nationality, including for refugees.

**A group welcome ceremony** into French citizenship is organised in each department, approximately 6 months after you obtain French nationality. It is an important and symbolic step where you will sign the **charter of rights and duties of French citizens.**

## LEGAL TEXTS AND LAWS

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**Article 34 of the Geneva Convention:** *"The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalisation proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings".*

## USEFUL LINKS

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The French Ministry of the Interior provides an online tool to help you prepare your dossier:

<http://accueil-etrangers.gouv.fr/modeles/articles-lies/article/outil-d-aide-a-la-constitution-des-dossiers-de-naturalisation>

To download the request for naturalisation form:

[www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/gf/cerfa\\_12753\\_02.do](http://www.formulaires.modernisation.gouv.fr/gf/cerfa_12753_02.do)

The form to make your last and/or first names more French, if you so wish:

<http://accueil-etrangers.gouv.fr/modeles/articles-lies/article/formulaire-cerfa-no-65-0054>

To prepare for the assimilation interview, the knowledge that is expected of you can be found in the 'livret du citoyen' (citizen's handbook):

[www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/La-nationalite-francaise/Le-livret-du-citoyen](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/La-nationalite-francaise/Le-livret-du-citoyen)

# 12

## **INTEGRATION AS SEEN BY REFUGEES**

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### **Interviews**

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## INTEGRATION

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### AS SEEN BY REFUGEES

All immigrants, including refugees, must make an effort to integrate and adapt to life in France, but integration also requires an effort from French society and its institutions to welcome them. The dynamic of integration is based on this reciprocity: those who come to France must respect the rules and values of the country and become full members of society; French institutions and society must respect and recognise differences – legal, economic, social and cultural. For around 30 years, “integration” has been the official doctrine of France. It has replaced that of “assimilation” where the immigrants’ socio-cultural differences had to remain private, forgotten even.

A new word is emerging today, the word “inclusion”: social, economic, cultural and interpersonal. Instead of thinking of policies for refugees, it is about devising them with them. It is now a question of exchange rather than reciprocity.

This being a relatively new word, after working on the Guide with the refugees in the committee, we asked them for their understanding of the word “integration” and about their lives since their arrival.

These interviews took place in French.

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## Joseph 35 years old, arrived in 2013.

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### From Congo

*"Integration is having the same rights as the others. You accept the culture and the way of life, even if it is different to what you know, in order to become a citizen - a good republican as you say here. You change your culture a little, with the good things from here and the good things from your own culture, and you are free. Then you are fully integrated. But you must never forget your own culture! You have your own history, you can't forget it. It is like if you go and live in Africa: you can adapt to the culture but, deep inside, you will always remain French.*

*French society has helped me a lot to start a new life by accepting me, giving me a job and helping me. After five years I feel well- integrated. It is great to live here. With French people, it is not easy to approach someone you do not know, for them it is not easy with immigrants either. Everyone stays in their own corner a bit. That is what is sad here, in Africa you can make friends quickly.*

*With work, you need to adapt to the job and work hard to get somewhere, and not always look to do something that you used to do. I have changed my career. I can move forward because I have the will to do so. If you are courageous and work hard, there is no question of colour here."*

**Hosam 37 years old, arrived in 2014.**

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**Stateless Palestinian originally from Syria**

*"Everything is different. You need to first understand this society to know how to live here and how to interact with other people. It was my destiny to be here.*

*The first difficulty is the language and I did not know anyone here. I did not want to just stay in my community, I wanted to be with French people. People always tell me that you need to learn the language in order to integrate but how can you learn the language without integrating?*

*We must learn a lot of things at once and some people are traumatised by what they have been through. I received help - from people, the state and the associations, which are very important here. I was also very lucky to be able to continue my profession.*

*I have met a lot of French people and I like them a lot. I feel at home here. I have plenty of friends, I have my job, my apartment. It has not been easy but I have my life here. I have even integrated well: I had to pay my first fine because I had not put on my seatbelt in the back of a car... I did not know you had to!*

*In order to integrate, you must not just stay within your community or your religion, amongst yourselves. This is very important, you need to be open-minded. As Islam says, we must be in contact with others."*

## **Abeer 41 years old, arrived in 2015.**

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### **From Irak**

*"For me, there are many ways to become part of French society, understand the French people and behave correctly as there are a lot of differences with the Arabic society I come from. You need to participate, be an active member and the first step is the language. If you do not speak French you may live in France but only physically, as though you are on a different planet.*

*I am accepted and it is a commitment that I need to keep to. The financial help for refugees comes from other people's salaries. If you work, you are also participating. France has given me asylum and the feeling of living in peace. I do not worry about being safe anymore. It gives me a lot of hope. That gives me something extra and I add something to society. It is a way of living together.*

*If I obtain French nationality I will become French with Iraqi and Arabic origins. I cannot forget my origins and I do not want to, I am proud of them. In just 2 years I have learned many things and I continue to do so. I do everything I can to be integrated quickly. Work is essential, I miss it today in order to move forward in what I know and to not 'lose my touch', as they say."*

## **Clementine 50 years old, arrived** --- **in 2011. From Ivory Coast**

*"I understand it as integration in someone else's country, in a society. I feel safe compared to what happened in my country, I can have a life here that I never would have had and I can make a new life for myself. I changed a lot when I came here and I have learned many things. It is important to integrate because you learn a lot. If you do not travel, there are so many things that you cannot know. And you become a different person in your way of seeing and understanding things, you are more knowledgeable.*

*I cannot forget where I come from, my upbringing. I know that is where I come from. For example, I prefer the upbringing in my country but I prefer how things evolve here. I tell myself that, maybe later, I will take French people over there to discover my country.*

*It is important to respect the people here, the laws and traditions. Today I have a job and I pay contributions for others. I also help other people such as the elderly. I feel that I am well-integrated, in my relationships and my work. Even if I do not like the cold weather! I intend to stay here, I no longer have a home in my country. I am waiting for my children to join me, that is what I miss."*

**Anna 48 years old, arrived in 2006.**

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**From Russia**

*"It's about being with others, working, studying and doing all the everyday things with them. It is an exchange. You must not shut yourself away at home and be invisible. On the road to integration, you need to tick boxes. We do what we can to live here and progress in every way. But, without help from society, we would not be able to. When we arrived here schooling, medical services and French lessons were free of charge. Today, by working, we do what we can for the country and for ourselves. That is why we want to be naturalised, in order to be citizens of this country.*

*You never forget where you come from, otherwise you end up without a past or a history. Children must know where they come from. That does not mean that we cannot do something for France. For example, we do not celebrate Christmas at home but we do at school so that the children do not feel different to the others. By combining the two cultures I believe we become richer.*

*I feel good now. My sons are protected and I tell them how much some people dream of living here, that they need to make the most of it. I miss my friends and family, we stay in touch from a distance. I also miss the taste of fruit but I have got used to it!"*

## Ahmed 38 years old, arrived in 2014.

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### From Yemen

*"I often hear this word 'integration' on the TV. But integration has been part of me for a long time. Part of my family lives in France, my father lived in Paris, I have been speaking French since I was at school, I knew the culture and then I worked in tourism with French people when I was in Yemen.*

*France opened its door and welcomed me when other neighbouring Arab countries would not have done so. Now I have a job, I am part of the French system, I no longer have time to help refugees with the French volunteers and associations as I used to. These French people are the reflection of France's human rights and they play a very important role in our lives. We must not forget this.*

*It was not easy to start with, I was nostalgic and I thought that I would go home when the war was over. Since I started working I feel even more responsible for my family. I have a sister in Norway, another in Belgium and I help my parents, who are in Yemen. I have realised that it is possible to live far away from them, as if the world had become smaller. I feel good, I have stability. For 20 years I welcomed French people to Yemen as a tour guide, to show them my country. The French have returned the favour, and more."*

## THANKS

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