

The rights of refugees

For refugees, finding a place of safety is more than being away from persecution or serious harm, it also means beginning to rebuild your life and your family. For many, access to employment is the best way to achieve a sense of self-worth and dignity and is a clear pathway to integration. In addition, the worry for family members left behind or forced to move to other countries can undermine and affect a person or families' ability to truly integrate.



Right to access employment

Question to GE16 candidates: Do you think that work is one of the best ways for people to integrate into communities in Ireland?

- From the [limited studies](#) done, over 90% of refugees find themselves dependent upon social welfare after getting their papers. The same is shown for [people who get status](#) after being in the Direct Provision system.
- For refugees, there is no tailored support to assist them in obtaining work in Ireland despite the fact that they may have special needs arising from their displacement and/or years spent in the Direct Provision system. The National Learning Network (NLN) provides a range of training courses and support services for people who need specialist support (job seekers, unemployed, people with an illness or disability) in 50 centres around the country so a framework does exist which could be expanded upon for refugees.

Commitment needed from GE16 candidates: Support the right to work for asylum seekers to reduce dependency and start integration as soon as possible. Establish support systems to assist refugees to access employment or become self-employed as soon as possible.

Family

Question to GE16 candidates: What would it mean to you if you were forced to be apart from your family?

- Refugees are often separated from family members with which they were living when they were forced to leave their country.
- The experience of being a refugee often means caring for family members beyond your partner and children under 18 due to loss of extended family members (e.g. nieces and nephews on the death of a sibling).
- Refugees often come from countries where the extended family is part of an integrated network of support.
- The International Protection Act 2015 has a limited idea of what 'family' is, one that only allows for spouses/civil partners and children under the age of 18. These restrictive rules ignore the importance of and the different dimensions of families and the fact that important relationships cannot always be entered into in a person's own country (e.g. for members of the LGBT community).
- The time limit of just 12 months for someone to make an application for family reunification ignores the difficulties that there are in being able to prove relationship, locate displaced relatives and the time that people need to establish themselves in Ireland.

Commitment needed from GE16 candidates: Seek an amendment to the definition of 'family' in the International Protection Act 2015 and to withdraw the time limit for the establishment of a relationship and for making an application for family members to join refugees in Ireland.