



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt,
Gnóthaí Baile agus Imirce
Department of Justice,
Home Affairs and Migration

Policy Document on Non-EEA Family Reunification

Immigration Service Delivery (irishimmigration.ie),
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Glossary of Definitions

- “Appeals officer” means a different Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration official to the original decision-maker in any given case including, where deemed appropriate, an official of a higher grade.
- “Child” means a biological child or step-child of the sponsor, or “adopted child” of the sponsor within the definition of Section 18 of the Interpretation Act 2005;
- “Critical Skills Employment Permit” means such a permit issued in accordance with the Employment Permits Act 2024 to allow a non-EEA national to work in Ireland in occupations which are included on the Critical Skills Occupations List¹;
- “De Facto Partnership” means a relationship akin to marriage, duly attested, including a period of at least two (2) years cohabitation prior to application;
- “Dependency” means that a family member is, has been and will continue to be dependent upon, and supported financially by, the sponsor on a continuous basis, with clear evidence of ongoing social support;
- “Family Reunification” means the entry into and subsequent residence in the State by family members of a sponsor residing lawfully in the State under a permission issued in accordance with this policy;
- “General Employment Permit” means such a permit issued in accordance with the Employment Permits Act 2024 to allow a non-EEA national to work in Ireland in any occupation unless excluded under the Ineligible List of Occupations;²
- “Hosting Agreement” means an arrangement between a research organisation and a researcher whereby the researcher undertakes to complete an approved research project, and the organisation undertakes to host the researcher for that purpose;³
- “Intra-company Transferee” means a non-EEA national transferred from an overseas branch of a multinational corporation to its Irish branch;⁴
- “ISD” means the Immigration Service Delivery function, within the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, responsible for the delivery of Ireland’s frontline immigration services. It was formerly known as the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS);

¹ Available at enterprise.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/Employment-Permit-Eligibility/Highly-Skilled-Eligible-Occupations-List/

² Available at enterprise.gov.ie/en/what-we-do/workplace-and-skills/employment-permits/employment-permit-eligibility/ineligible-categories-of-employment/

³ In accordance with the conditions of Council Directive 2005/71/EC, available at eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2005:289:0015:0022:EN:PDF

⁴ For more details, see enterprise.gov.ie/en/what-we-do/workplace-and-skills/employment-permits/permit-types/intra-company-transfer-employment-permit/

- “KASP” means the King Abdullah Scholarship Programme, which provides funding for young citizens of Saudi Arabia to undertake third level studies abroad;
- “Non-EEA National” means a person who is not a citizen of a European Union Member State, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland or the United Kingdom⁵;
- “Proxy Marriage” means any marriage where an appointed substitute (proxy) stands in for at least one party to the marriage at the ceremony;⁶
- “Reactivation Employment Permit” means such a permit issued in accordance with the Employment Permits Act 2024 to provide a non-EEA national on an employment permit a pathway to re-employment where they have fallen out of employment through no fault of their own, or have been exploited or poorly treated by their employer;
- “Sponsor” means the person with permission to be in the State who is **applying** to be joined by a family member;
- “Stamp 4” means an immigration permission which entitles a non-EEA national to reside in Ireland for a specified period of time, subject to conditions, to work without the need for an employment permit and to operate a business;⁷
- “Stamp 5” means an immigration permission which entitles a non-EEA national to reside in Ireland without condition as to time, to work without the need for an employment permit and to operate a business;⁸
- “Start-up Entrepreneur Programme” means the Irish Government programme which allows for innovative entrepreneurs to apply for permission to establish their business and reside in Ireland on a full-time basis;⁹
- “Temporary Protection” has the same meaning as it has in Section 60 of the International Protection Act 2015.¹⁰

⁵ Switzerland and the United Kingdom, while not members of the EEA, are included here for brevity’s sake.

⁶ The marriage is considered to have been contracted in the country that the ceremony took place, provided said country permits proxy marriages.

⁷ For more details, see www.irishimmigration.ie/registering-your-immigration-permission/information-on-registering/immigration-permission-stamps/

⁸ Same as above.

⁹ For more details, see www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-work-in-ireland/what-are-my-options-for-working-in-ireland/coming-to-work-for-more-than-90-days/start-up-entrepreneur-programme-step/

¹⁰ Available at revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2015/act/66/revised/en/html#SEC60.

PART I – General Orientation

1. Overview of the Non-EEA Family Reunification Policy

- 1.1 The immigration scheme set out in this Policy document provides, under the discretionary executive power of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, for an application process for family reunification¹¹ for certain categories of people legally resident in the State.
- 1.2 It is intended that family reunification will be facilitated where people meet the requirements of the criteria set out in this document. **However, it is important to note that there is no automatic entitlement to family reunification, which is dependent on a number of key criteria, as set out in [Part II](#), including the key criterion that a sponsor must have the means to be able to provide for their family without recourse to state supports.**
- 1.3 The procedure for determining whether to grant or refuse an application for family reunification is based on but not limited to a number of established criteria, set out in [Part II](#). The granting or refusal of an application will be greatly determined by these criteria, and the key requirements include:
- **Eligibility of the sponsor** (see [Section 4](#) and [Section 5](#));
 - **Eligibility of family member(s)** (see [Section 7](#));
 - **Financial thresholds and financial records** (See [Section 9](#) and [Section 10](#));
 - **Waiting period** (based on category of sponsor and family member, see [Section 6](#));
 - **Dependency** (see [Section 8](#)).
- 1.4 **The onus is on the sponsor and/or family member(s)** to satisfy the Minister that they meet all relevant criteria of this Policy and to provide any required documentation.
- 1.5 For the purposes of this Policy, the different categories of family members in respect of whom applications can be made are:
- 1.5.1 **Nuclear family** – Spouse / civil partner¹² / de facto partner¹³, and unmarried minor children under the age of 18.
- 1.5.2 **Dependent parents**
- 1.5.3 **Dependent adult children**¹⁴

¹¹ See glossary for definition.

¹² As defined in [Section 7.10](#).

¹³ See glossary for definition.

¹⁴ Only where they are dependent on the care of the parent sponsor for their subsistence due to a serious medical or psychological condition that makes independent life unsustainable (see [Section 7.23](#)).

- 1.5.4 In addition to the above categories, an application may be made in respect of other family members, but **only** where exceptional circumstances as detailed in [Section 13](#) arise.
- 1.6 This Policy does **not** deal with family reunification applications where there are existing alternative statutory or policy/administrative provisions in place (see [Section 5](#)).
- 1.7 The immigration permission given to family members varies depending on (a) the status of the sponsor and (b) the family relationship. This is set out in Appendix C – see [Section 6](#) for details.
- 1.8 Applications will **not** be accepted on behalf of family members already present in the State on a different permission (e.g. a student permission), or no permission, or as a visitor.
- 1.9 Each application will be considered as a joint application between the sponsor and any family members included in the application. Applicants are deemed to be on notice of all published criteria and the onus rests with the Applicant to produce all relevant and necessary documentation. Where applicants do not comply with the published requirements, there is no onus on the Minister to notify the applicants of such deficiencies prior to the issuing of their decision.
- 1.10 Where concerns arise as to the veracity of certain information, statements and/or documentation submitted by an applicant in support of their application, they will be given an opportunity to respond to any such concerns and invited to provide further information and clarification. This should be supported with clear and cogent documentary evidence that addresses any issues identified. If an application is subsequently found to contain false, misleading or inaccurate information or documents, the application will be refused, and the applicant may not be permitted to appeal this decision – see [Section 14 on fraud and abuse of rights](#).
- 1.11 Where an application is refused, reasons for that refusal will be provided. Refusals can be appealed to an appeals officer unless the application has been found to contain false, misleading or inaccurate information/documents following the outcome of the procedure outlined at [Section 14.1](#). The decision of the appeals officer shall be final and cannot be appealed, but it remains open to the applicant to apply again in future should their circumstances change. Details on refusals and appeals can be found in [Section 15](#).
- 1.12 The current expected timeframe for the processing of family reunification applications is approximately 12 months (assuming all required information has been submitted). This is subject to change and the ISD website can be consulted for updates on time frames. Complex

applications are likely to take significantly longer. This is a business goal and in no way constitutes a legal obligation on ISD, nor does it mean that any case not completed within that expected time frame will be given a positive determination by default.

2. Issues to be Considered when Assessing an Application

- 2.1 Family reunification is important to the welfare of migrants and their families and contributes to their successful integration.
- 2.2 In providing for family reunification, it is necessary to balance the needs of the sponsor/family members for reunification with wider considerations of public policy, in particular the resources of the State, the integrity of the immigration system and the welfare of all those concerned.
- 2.3 When deciding on applications for family reunification therefore the Minister is required to:
 - 2.3.1 Ensure that the application is compliant with this Policy;
 - 2.3.2 Ensure that the application is only made on behalf of a family member who is outside the State where they are a visa required national.
 - 2.3.3 Ensure, where the application is made on behalf of a family member who is a non-visa required national, that they have informed immigration officers at the port of entry of their intention to apply for family reunification.
 - 2.3.4 Establish that there is a genuine family relationship between the sponsor and the family member(s);
 - 2.3.5 Ensure that sufficient information and supporting documentation is provided to support a decision;
 - 2.3.6 Ensure, as far as possible, that there is no risk to public policy, public security or public health and that family reunification will not result in an undue burden on the public purse;
 - 2.3.7 Ensure family reunification arrangements are not abused as a means of gaining entry into the State for other purposes (for example by way of marriages of convenience);
 - 2.3.8 Have regard to concerns about the previous immigration history of the family members or sponsor, for example if any one of those people has previously been refused entry to, or removed from, the State;
 - 2.3.9 Ensure that the sponsor has sufficient resources, including suitable accommodation, to provide for their family members without recourse to State supports;
- 2.4 In addition, the State has a responsibility to protect vulnerable people and therefore these matters are required to be considered:

- 2.4.1 Vigilance in relation to potential cases of human trafficking and smuggling;
- 2.4.2 Ensuring that the consent of all people involved is freely given;
- 2.4.3 In the case of children or vulnerable adults, ensuring that no child protection or other concerns arise.

2.5 Where an application is refused, reasons will be given. These may include, in addition to failure to meet any or all of the criteria outlined in this document, reasons relating but not limited to the above-mentioned matters at Section 2.3 and 2.4. Details on refusals and appeals can be found in [Section 15](#).

3. Requirements for Sponsor/Family Member

- 3.1 All applicants for family reunification must co-operate fully with the requirements of the application process. The degree of co-operation and the quality of material supplied in support of an application will have a bearing on the length of time it takes for a decision to be made and on the outcome of the application.
- 3.2 In that context, the sponsor/family member must provide sufficient documentary evidence/proof to satisfy the Minister:
 - 3.2.1 As to the identity of the family member applied for;
 - 3.2.2 As to the nature and genuineness of the family connection;
 - 3.2.3 As to the nature and extent of the dependency between the family member and the sponsor;
 - 3.2.4 That the sponsor will assume full responsibility to financially support the family member concerned, and that they have sufficient resources to do this;
 - 3.2.5 Where appropriate, that the family member poses no risk to public health, public security or public policy and that the family member is of good character and conduct;
 - 3.2.6 Where adopted children¹⁵ are concerned, of the legality of the adoption in the country in which it is effected and that it is capable of lawful recognition in Ireland.
- 3.3 Where deemed appropriate, a statutory declaration or written commitment in relation to any of the matters listed above may be requested.

¹⁵ See glossary for definition. Please be aware that, for all Irish citizens and non-Irish nationals who wish to complete a new foreign adoption while resident in Ireland, you **cannot** do that under this policy. You **must** apply instead for an immigration clearance letter, which is an entirely separate process to family reunification. For details, please see www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/foreign-adoption-immigration-clearance-letter/

- 3.4 Applicants may be asked to provide any other information, documentation or evidence deemed necessary to enable a decision to be made.
- 3.5 **Please note:** applications for family reunification on behalf of visa required family members **must** be submitted prior to the family member travelling to Ireland, and non-visa required family members **must** inform immigration officers at the port of entry of their intention to apply for family reunification. Applications will not be accepted on behalf of family members already present in the State on a different permission (e.g. a student permission), or no permission, or as a visitor.

PART II – Application Criteria

The procedure for determining whether to grant or refuse an application for family reunification is based on a number of established criteria. These criteria are explained in more detail in the following sections.

4. **Who is covered by this Policy?**

4.1 The following categories of persons can be sponsors for an application under this published Policy on Family Reunification:

- 4.1.1 Irish nationals who wish to be joined by family members who are non-EEA nationals;
- 4.1.2 Certain non-EEA nationals, legally resident in Ireland, seeking to be joined by non-EEA family members (see [Section 6](#)), and
- 4.1.3 Those granted refugee/subsidiary protection status where the application does **not** fall within the scope of Section 56 and 57 of the International Protection Act 2015.¹⁶

5. **Who is NOT covered by this Policy**

5.1 This policy is not intended to provide for alternative mechanisms for sponsors to bring non-EEA family members to enter and reside in the State where existing statutory provisions or alternative policies are in place, for example:

- 5.1.1 EU nationals exercising rights of free movement (“EU Treaty Rights”);¹⁷
- 5.1.2 UK nationals;¹⁸
- 5.1.3 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection¹⁹ under the provisions of Section 60 of the International Protection Act 2015.

5.2 Those whose circumstances may qualify them for an application for international protection or for established humanitarian programmes, for instance where an individual has a well-founded fear of being persecuted or faces a real risk of suffering serious harm in their country of origin.

5.3 Where a person has received a declaration as a convention refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection in the last 12 months and wishes to be joined by a spouse, civil partner or unmarried child under 18 (or where the person is under 18 at the time of application and wishes to be joined by their parents and any children of their parents under 18) they are eligible to apply for family reunification but **must** apply through a **separate procedure** under Sections 56 and 57 of the International Protection Act 2015:

¹⁶ Available at revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2015/act/66/revised/en/html#SEC56.

¹⁷ See www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-an-eea-or-swiss-national/

¹⁸ See www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-your-uk-national-family-member/

¹⁹ See glossary for definition.

- 5.3.1 They should apply in writing to Family Reunification Unit, Immigration Service Delivery, Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 D02 XK70, Ireland (or by email to FRU_IPA@justice.ie);
- 5.3.2 The application should include their own name, person ID number and address, and for each family member it should include their full name, relationship to the sponsor (e.g. husband, wife, daughter, son, etc.), date of birth, nationality and current address;
- 5.3.3 Further details are available on ISD's website.²⁰
- 5.4 Those resident in Ireland as students (except for PhD students and those on certain recognised scholarship programmes) or on a Third Level Graduate Scheme permission are **not** eligible to sponsor an application under this Policy.
- 5.5 Non-EEA nationals already resident in Ireland who wish to apply for an immigration permission based on their relationship with another Irish citizen/resident sponsor may **not** apply under this Policy. They are covered by separate schemes, the details of which are listed on the ISD website.²¹
- 5.6 Family members who are seeking to enter and reside in the State for the primary purpose of employment or higher education should not apply under this Policy.
- 5.7 Domestic staff and unrelated members of the general household are **not eligible** under any circumstances to join a sponsor in Ireland under this Policy (domestic staff, regardless of whether they live with the family or how long they have been part of the household, are subject to the Employment Permit regime and must apply, independently and in their own right, as workers rather than as a family member or member of the household);

²⁰ See www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/family-reunification-of-international-protection-holders/

²¹ See www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/ and www.irishimmigration.ie/registering-your-immigration-permission/changing-your-immigration-permission/

6. Immigration status of sponsor

6.1 There are several different categories of sponsor²² with different requirements and entitlements as regards family reunification pursuant to this document for each:

6.2 Category A Sponsor

- a) Irish national residing or intending to reside in Ireland,
- b) Those granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status who are resident in Ireland where the application is not within the scope of Section 56 and 57 of the International Protection Act 2015.

(Waiting Period: no waiting period, so can apply for family reunification at any time)

6.3 Category B Sponsor

- a) Investors with a permission under the Immigrant Investor Programme²³,
- b) Entrepreneurs with a permission under the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme²⁴ (STEP),
- c) Critical Skills Employment Permit holders²⁵,
- d) Researchers on Hosting Agreements²⁶,
- e) ISD-approved scholarship programme students (e.g. KASP²⁷),
- f) Intra-company transferees²⁸,
- g) PhD student permission holders (subject to conditions including having no recourse to State funds),
- h) Full-time non-locum doctors in employment,
- i) Ministers of Religion under the relevant Scheme²⁹ (subject to conditions including having no recourse to State funds).

(Waiting Period: no waiting period for family reunification with nuclear family members, who may accompany them on arrival in the State provided all requirements of the Policy are met and they have obtained entry-visas where necessary. For any other family members, they can apply after 2 years in the State on an eligible permission immediately prior to making an application).

²² See glossary for definition.

²³ This programme is now closed for new applicants. For more details, please see www.irishimmigration.ie/processing-of-iip-applications-on-hand-following-the-closure-of-the-programme/

²⁴ See glossary for definition.

²⁵ See glossary for definition.

²⁶ See glossary for definition.

²⁷ See glossary for definition.

²⁸ See glossary for definition.

²⁹ Under the Immigration Policy for Ministers of Religion, see www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-work-in-ireland/what-are-my-options-for-working-in-ireland/coming-to-work-for-more-than-90-days/minister-of-religion/

6.4 **Category C Sponsor**

- a) General Employment Permit holders³⁰,
- b) Reactivation Employment Permit holders³¹,
- c) Stamp 4 holders³² not covered by categories set out as above, who are eligible to sponsor a family reunification application.

(Waiting Period: May apply for family reunification with nuclear family members after 12 months in the State on an eligible permission, and with any other family members after 5 years in the State on an eligible permission).

6.5 The immigration permission given to family members varies depending on (a) the status of the sponsor and (b) the family relationship. The different types of immigration permission given to family members are outlined in [Appendix C](#).

6.6 Where a person changes from another eligible permission to a Stamp 4 or Stamp 5³³ permission, their eligibility to sponsor a family reunification application and the type of immigration permission given to their family members will remain as per their original permission.

6.7 Family reunification for those on recognised scholarship programmes lasts only as long as the programme, and family members **must** leave the State at the same time as the scholarship holder. PhD Students will be expected to demonstrate academic progress at renewal of permission stage.

7. **Nature of the Family Relationship**

7.1 For the purposes of this document, the different categories of family members applied are set out in [Section 1.5](#).

7.2 The nature of the relationship between the sponsor and the family member is crucial to the outcome of family reunification decisions. Members of the sponsor's nuclear family are the primary focus of this Policy. Dependent parents and dependent adult children may also apply but they are subject to more rigorous requirements and checks (see [Section 8](#) and [Section 10](#)). All other family members may only apply under exceptional circumstances (see [Section 13](#)).

³⁰ See glossary for definition.

³¹ See glossary for definition.

³² See glossary for definition.

³³ See glossary for definition.

7.3 The sponsor and family member(s) are responsible for proving the familial relationship to the Minister. The Minister is entitled and authorised to request supervised DNA testing, paid for by the applicant, as evidence of the familial relationship where the Minister considers that the evidence provided is not sufficient (see [Appendix A](#)).

7.4 In the case of an application for family reunification with an adult, the sponsor and the family member should both make a joint application. In the case of a child under the age of 18 and unmarried, the sponsor should make the application on behalf of the minor applicant.

Spouse/Civil Partner

7.5 The spouse or civil partner must be at least 18 years of age at the time of their application for family reunification.

7.6 Marriages/civil partnerships must be between two people only, freely entered into by both parties, lawfully conducted and capable of recognition under Irish law.

7.7 In all cases, a clear commitment is needed from both parties that they will live together as spouses/civil partners following the outcome of the application.

7.8 Evidence should be provided to show that the parties have met each other in person prior to and since entering into a marriage or civil partnership.

7.9 Subject to section 7.11, no minimum duration of marriage/civil partnership is required prior to making an application for family reunification.

7.10 A civil partnership between two consenting adults contracted in Ireland prior to 16 May 2016, or an overseas civil partnership contracted in accordance with the law in a jurisdiction where civil partnerships are recognised, is treated as being equivalent to marriage.

7.11 A sponsor who is joined by a spouse/civil partner in Ireland will, in the event of the termination of the marriage or civil partnership (by divorce or dissolution), be ineligible to be joined by a different spouse or partner until a minimum of five years has elapsed from the date of the granting of the first spousal permission. In addition:

7.11.1 The non-EEA spouse/civil partner is subject to the same waiting period as the sponsor where they wish to sponsor any future applications for a spouse or civil partner;

7.11.2 The sponsor and/or family member will be required to provide documentary evidence of the divorce/dissolution capable of recognition under Irish law, where relevant;

7.11.3 Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the earlier marriage or civil partnership was one of convenience, permission for family reunification may be refused.

De Facto Partners

7.12 The de facto partner must not be related to the sponsor by family, must be at least 18 years of age at the time of their application for family reunification and the relationship must be exclusive for the full duration of the qualifying period.

7.13 For de facto partnerships it will be necessary to provide evidence that the relationship is genuine and durable. Evidence of cohabitation in a relationship akin to marriage of at least two (2) years and the nature of partnership will be important factors in deciding on an application for family re-unification. For an indicative list of supporting documentation accepted as proof of cohabitation, please visit the De Facto Scheme Application weblink.³⁴

7.14 In all cases, a clear commitment is needed from both parties that they will live together as de facto partners following the outcome of the application.

7.15 Cases will arise where a prospective sponsor or applicant remains legally married to one person while in a de facto relationship with another. In general, the expectation would be that the parties would have obtained a divorce, but this is not always possible for various reasons. The circumstances of each case need to be examined on their merits on a discretionary basis. As a general rule a qualification period would apply in these cases also, commencing from the date of the legal separation. The sponsor/partner would be required to provide documentary evidence of the legal separation capable of recognition under Irish law.

7.16 In the case of de facto partners, individuals are ineligible to sponsor a different partner until a minimum of five years has elapsed from the date of the first de facto partner permission. The sponsor will be required to provide documentary evidence of the ending of the relationship.

Polygamy

7.17 Irish law does not recognise polygamous marriage. The first marriage entered into is the one recognised under Irish law, and thus the only one eligible for spousal family reunification. No subsequent marriage contracted while the first union subsists will have any recognition for

³⁴ See www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-an-irish-national/de-facto-partner-of-an-irish-national/#joint-docs

immigration purposes, even in the event of the sponsor obtaining a divorce from the earlier spouse following the subsequent marriage. An application for spousal family reunification involving a sponsor who is in a polygamous marriage will be refused where an application is made for a second or subsequent spouse.

Proxy Marriage

- 7.18 Proxy marriages³⁵ may be recognised under Irish law. Where this is the case, the marriage will meet the requirements of this policy. However, a proxy marriage gives rise to additional concerns not only in immigration terms but also for the protection of the parties.
- 7.19 The immigration authorities will enquire into the circumstances of the marriage and must be satisfied that the marriage is genuine and freely entered into by both parties and that it is not a device aimed predominantly at securing an immigration advantage.
- 7.20 The parties must also provide evidence to show that they have met each other in person prior to and since entering into the marriage.

Children

- 7.21 A child is understood to be the biological child or step-child of the sponsor, or “adopted child” of the sponsor within the definition of section 18 of the Interpretation Act 2005.
- 7.22 Only unmarried minor children under the age of 18 will be considered as part of the sponsor’s nuclear family.
- 7.23 An application may be made for an adult child over the age of 18 where that child is dependent on the care of the parent sponsor for their subsistence due to a serious medical or psychological condition that makes independent life unsustainable. Official verifiable medical documentation must be submitted in support of the stated medical or psychological condition. The higher level of dependency and the higher financial thresholds for dependent adult relatives shall apply (See [Section 8](#) and [Section 10](#) below).
- 7.24 In the case of adopted children, key considerations are that:
- 7.24.1 The adoption has been carried out in Ireland or is recognised under Irish law;

³⁵ See glossary for definition.

7.24.2 There has been a genuine and complete transfer of parental responsibility, with emotional and financial support now provided by the adoptive parent(s);

7.24.3 The adopted child has the same rights as any other child of the adoptive parent(s);

7.25 All Irish citizens and non-Irish nationals who wish to complete a new foreign adoption while resident in Ireland **must** apply for an immigration clearance letter, the requirements for which are set out on the ISD website.³⁶ This is an entirely separate process to family reunification and so you **cannot** apply under this Policy.

7.26 Stepchildren will be treated as part of the immediate family when it is established that they are full-time members of the household. The stepchild's presence in the State gives no automatic entitlement to visit or reside in Ireland to their other parent, who is not travelling to the State.

7.27 A sworn affidavit from the non-sponsor parent is required in shared/joint custody arrangements. The child's presence in the State gives no automatic right to visit or reside in Ireland to the other parent, who is not travelling to the State.

8. Dependency

8.1 "Dependency" is defined in the glossary.

8.2 A minor child of the sponsor (unless by a subsequent polygamous marriage) under the age of 18 and unmarried will automatically be assumed to be a dependant.

Higher Level of Dependency for Dependent Adult Relatives

8.3 Adults, other than a spouse/partner, who claim dependency must satisfy the Minister that they are not a person of independent means and they have been and will continue to be dependent on the sponsor for their subsistence. They must also prove additional elements of dependency.

8.4 This will apply to dependent parents and dependent adult children of the sponsor, as well as to all other dependent adult relatives (applications for whom will only be considered under exceptional circumstances – see [Section 13](#)).

8.5 Dependency for present purposes, in respect of an adult, must be long term and sustained prior to the making of the application for family reunification. The dependency must currently be in existence, having continued while the dependent family member is living outside of the State.

³⁶ See www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/foreign-adoption-immigration-clearance-letter/

- 8.6 The degree of dependency must be such as to render independent living at a subsistence level by the family member in his/her home country impossible if that financial and social support were not maintained. This may be due to a serious medical or psychological condition, for which official verifiable medical documentation must be submitted.
- 8.7 Applications will be assessed in light of all relevant factors. These will include the existence of other family members, particularly in the country of origin, who may provide support to the family member instead.
- 8.8 The Minister must be satisfied that family dependency is genuine and was not created just to facilitate the migration of the family member to the State.
- 8.9 While a sponsor may have maintained a dependant family member in a country with low living costs, this is not evidence of the sponsor's ability to maintain them in Ireland as set out in Section 9 below.

9. Ability of Sponsor to Support their Family Members

- 9.1 Economic considerations are an important factor when assessing family reunification cases. The economic benefits that migration brings, including through the significant contribution to the State of work and taxation, must be balanced with the substantial costs to the State of education, childcare, housing, healthcare and welfare that may arise from family migration. The sponsor must assume full financial responsibility for the family member they are seeking to bring to reside in Ireland with them.
- 9.2 The State does not have an obligation to subsidise the family concerned and the sponsor must show evidence they can provide for the family member(s) if they are permitted to enter and reside in Ireland. The financial thresholds set out in Section 10 below will be applied.
- 9.3 When a person is granted an immigration permission on the condition of not being an undue burden on the State, failure to abide by the conditions of their permission will have implications for their permission, including revocation or non-renewal of the permission.
- 9.4 Where a permission is revoked or renewal is refused, this may result in the person facing initiation of proceedings to remove them from the State, which may lead to deportation and a re-entry ban.

10. Financial Thresholds for Sponsors

- 10.1 Requirements for Irish nationals, beneficiaries of international protection and non-EEA nationals seeking family reunification differ depending on the category of the sponsor and the family members concerned. The financial requirements for each category are set out below.
- 10.2 The income of **only one individual sponsor** will be considered in assessing whether an application meets the financial requirements as set out in this section.
- 10.3 Declared and verifiable savings by the family member or sponsor may be taken into account in assessing cases that fall short of the income thresholds set out below.
- 10.4 These figures are for guideline purposes only and represent a minimum financial requirement.
- 10.5 The sponsor must continue to maintain the required income levels in order to maintain their own and/or their family's entitlement to reside in the State, and the sponsor must provide evidence of this at the time of the renewal of permission.
- 10.6 The sponsor must not have been mainly reliant on State supports from the Irish State for a continuous period of two years or longer immediately prior to application.³⁷

Spouses, Civil Partners and De Facto Partners

Category A:

- 10.7 Category A sponsors must have earned a gross income over and above any State benefits of not less than €40,000, cumulative, over the three-year period prior to application.

Category B:

- 10.8 For Category B sponsors, family reunification may take place prior to any earnings being accrued and the sponsor may be accompanied by their nuclear family upon entry to the State.
- 10.9 The sponsor must provide supporting documentation confirming the length of the sponsor's employment and their gross income for the current tax year. Family members may also need to apply for an entry-visa, the requirements for which are set out on the ISD website.³⁸

³⁷ Not including payments disregarded when calculating Weekly Family Income for the purposes of the Working Family Payment. See www.gov.ie/en/publication/372c31-operational-guidelines-working-family-payment-formerly-known-as-fis/

³⁸ See www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-a-non-eea-non-swiss-national/join-non-eea-family-member/

10.10 The immigration status granted to the sponsor is such as to assume certain levels of income (e.g. Critical Skills Employment Permit holder or researcher) either immediately or in the future or on the basis that the sponsor falls into a category whose migration to Ireland is promoted as part of Government policy. The sponsor must continue to meet the terms of their permission in order to maintain their own and their family's entitlement to reside here and evidence of this must be provided by the sponsor at the time of the renewal of permission.

Category C:

10.11 Category C sponsors must have a **gross** income in excess of €30,000 in the previous year for a couple with no children, with the expectation that this level of income will be maintained.

10.12 The sponsor must provide supporting documentation, such as an employment detail summary from Revenue, confirming the length of the sponsor's employment and their gross salary for the previous tax year.

Minor Children

10.13 In the case of family reunification with minor children, Category C sponsors must have a **net** income in the previous year in excess of that applied by the Department of Social Protection in assessing eligibility for the Working Family Payment (WFP) and the expectation must be that this level of income will be maintained (See [Appendix D](#) for indicative gross salary figures).

10.14 Category C sponsors must provide supporting documentation, such as an employment detail summary from revenue, confirming the length of the sponsor's employment and their **net** salary, at the required level, for the previous tax year.

Dependent Adult Relatives (for all Categories of Sponsors)

10.15 The financial thresholds for seeking family reunification with an adult dependant relative are higher due to the potential burden on State services.

10.16 This will apply to dependent parents and dependent adult children of the sponsor, as well as to all other dependent adult relatives (applications for whom will only be considered under exceptional circumstances - see [Section 13](#)).

- 10.17 All dependent parents and dependent adult children must first apply to ISD for Stamp 0 **before** they can apply for family reunification, and this must be done from **outside the State**.³⁹
- 10.18 As outlined in [Section 8](#) above, adults who claim dependency are not people of independent means. People claiming a dependant relationship must satisfy the Minister examining their application that they are dependent on the sponsor for their subsistence.
- 10.19 The sponsor of a dependent adult relative will be required to have earned in Ireland, in each of the previous three (3) years, **gross income** in excess of 185% of the average yearly earnings in Ireland for one relative and 250% thereof for two relatives, increasing by a similar amount for any subsequent dependent adult relatives applied for – see [Appendix D](#). This is based on average weekly earnings in Ireland, as published quarterly by the CSO, for Q2 of the year prior to application. These thresholds will also apply when renewing the residence permission.
- 10.20 Where the dependent adult relative has a guaranteed income into the future (e.g. a pension), this can be used to offset some of the financial thresholds (bearing in mind that a person with a sufficient personal income for their needs may not be considered to be a dependant).
- 10.21 The following conditions will be applied to migration of this nature, if approved:
- 10.21.1 The relative **must** be covered by private medical insurance at, or above, the level of private healthcare in a private hospital (regardless of whether the relative is eligible for State-funded health services);
 - 10.21.2 The sponsor will be required to sign a legal undertaking to the effect that they will bear complete personal financial responsibility for the relative, and that any State funds availed of by the relative will be reimbursed by the sponsor. Where deemed appropriate, a signed statutory declaration or written commitment to this effect may be requested, and the family may also be required to establish a financial bond for this purpose;
 - 10.21.3 The sponsor will be required to provide detailed evidence of suitable accommodation for the relative, appropriate to their needs.

11. Reasons for Family Separation and the Length of Time of such Separation

- 11.1 In some cases, for economic or other reasons, a family may be separated for a long time. For example, one family member may go abroad to work and support the family in their home

³⁹ See website for details: www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-a-non-eea-non-swiss-national/dependent-parent/ or www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-join-family-in-ireland/joining-a-non-eea-non-swiss-national/dependent-adult-child/

country via remittances. The reason and length of any family separation, as well as the actual relationship between the two parties, will be taken into account.

- 11.2 Where a family member has been separated from the sponsor for a long time, apart from any period of time linked to the qualifying period for family reunification, their case will be subject to a higher degree of scrutiny than cases where the parties have been living as a family unit until more recently.
- 11.3 Where a family has voluntarily separated as a speculative means of securing Irish residence for one family member, the full facts of their case and their immigration history will be subject to additional scrutiny as part of any application for family reunification.

12. Public security, public policy and public health

- 12.1 A critical element in all immigration decisions is the protection of the State, its citizens and other people living within it.
- 12.2 Applications for family reunification will be refused where a party to an application (sponsor and/or family member) is deemed a potential risk to public security, public policy or public health.
- 12.3 A person may be considered a potential risk to the public security of the State, or another State, for a variety of reasons including but not limited to the following:
 - 12.3.1 Terrorism or support for terrorist activities,
 - 12.3.2 Incitement to hatred,
 - 12.3.3 Criminal behaviour, or
 - 12.3.4 Violence against one or more persons.
- 12.4 A criminal record will be highly influential in the consideration of an application for family reunification. However, minor convictions will not automatically exclude a person from consideration.
- 12.5 A family member seeking to reside in the State must be of good character and conduct, prior to travelling to the State and while resident here.
- 12.6 Public policy is a broader term and encompasses issues such as the democratic, economic and social wellbeing of the State, including matters touched on in this Policy document such as polygamous and proxy marriage.

12.7 Public health considerations primarily arise in the context of contagious diseases, for instance in the case of a pandemic, or where diseases are subject to the World Health Organisation's International Health Regulations⁴⁰ or a condition set out in the first schedule of the Immigration Act 2004⁴¹.

13. Exceptional Circumstances

13.1 The Minister may, in rare and exceptional cases, waive certain qualifying criteria when determining an application. Such rare and exceptional cases must arise by reference to the specific exceptional circumstances of the sponsor/family member, as opposed to the generalised circumstances of the country in which the family member resides.

13.2 In addition, the sponsor/family member must clearly set out in their application why their situation is rare and exceptional. Supporting evidence must be submitted to prove/substantiate this claim, i.e. evidence provided in support of the factual background relied upon by an applicant in their supporting statement(s). For the avoidance of any doubt, there is no guarantee of a positive outcome of an application premised on exceptional circumstances.

13.3 The consideration of rare and exceptional circumstances will always be subject to the Minister first being satisfied that the family relationship is:

Valid and genuine;

and

One where there is dependency.

For the avoidance of doubt, these two requirements **shall not be waived**, regardless of the exceptional circumstances proffered by the sponsor/family member.

⁴⁰ See www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations

⁴¹ See revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2004/act/1/revised/en/html#SCHED1

PART III – Refusals, Appeals and Fraud

14. Fraud/Abuse of Rights

- 14.1 Where concerns arise as to the veracity of information, statements, or documentation submitted by an applicant in support of their application (e.g. fraud is suspected), they will be given an opportunity to respond to any such concerns and invited to provide further information and clarification. This should be supported with clear and cogent documentary evidence that addresses any issues identified. If an application is subsequently found to contain false, misleading or inaccurate information, statements, or documents, the application will be refused, and the applicant may not be permitted to appeal this decision.
- 14.2 Each application will be considered as a joint application between the sponsor and any family members included in the application. Where fraudulent documents are submitted by the sponsor, knowledge of this on the part of family members may be inferred, and they may be considered party to the fraudulent application.
- 14.3 Any residence permission or entry-visa obtained through family reunification as a result of fraud, false, misleading or inaccurate information, misrepresentation, or abuse of rights (including through marriage of convenience) will be revoked or not renewed.
- 14.4 The Minister may refuse to accept future entry-visa or preclearance applications from those found to have made or been party to false, misleading, inaccurate, or fraudulent applications for a period of up to 5 years, and findings of fraud may be held against them in assessment of their character and conduct for any future immigration applications.
- 14.5 Where a sponsor provides misleading or inaccurate information to the Minister or to the other authorities of the State in support of a family reunification application, they will be disqualified from sponsoring any future applications for a period of up to 5 years. This may also breach the conditions of the sponsor's own immigration permission which could result in the revocation or non-renewal of that permission.
- 14.6 Where permissions are revoked or renewal is refused, this will result in the person facing initiation of proceedings to remove them from the State. This could result in deportation and a re-entry ban.

14.7 Where the use of false, misleading, inaccurate, or fraudulent information or abuse of rights is suspected subsequent to the granting of a permission, ISD may make further inquiries. Any refusal to cooperate may lead to a negative inference being drawn.

15. Refusal of Application and Appeals

15.1 Each case is considered individually and on its own merits, taking into account all relevant matters including all criteria set out in this document and issues of public policy.

15.2 The degree of cooperation and the quality of material supplied in support of an application will have a bearing on the length of time taken for a decision to issue and will have a bearing on the outcome of the application.

15.3 Where an application is refused, reasons will be given and the decision can be appealed to an appeals officer unless the application has been found to contain false, misleading or inaccurate information/documents following the outcome of the procedure outlined in [Section 14.1](#).

15.4 The appeal must be made in writing and must be received by ISD within 30 working days of the date of the issue of the decision. The appeal must be submitted to the appropriate decision-making centre by the sponsor/family member or by their legal representative or both.

15.5 The reasons for the appeal should be set out and must be supported by cogent documentary evidence, statements, etc. additional to the documents submitted with the earlier application. An appeal should address the reasons stated in the decision refusing the original application.

15.6 It is the responsibility of the sponsor and/or family member(s) and/or their legal representative to identify and submit whatever documents they deem appropriate in support of the appeal.

15.7 An appeal will be considered by an appeals officer. The decision of the appeals officer cannot be appealed but it remains open to the applicant to apply again in future should their circumstances change. The officer determining the appeal may:

15.7.1 Confirm the original decision,

15.7.2 Set aside the original decision and impose conditions or amended conditions,

15.7.3 Set aside the decision and grant the application for family reunification.

15.8 Appeals officers may make further enquiries into any aspect of the application, and any decision to deny the appeal may be based on the original ground(s) for refusal, or on any new grounds he/she may consider to be justified.

Part IV – Related Matters

16. Independent permissions for family members

- 16.1 The residence of family members granted family reunification will be dependent on the continued residence and status of the sponsor. If the sponsor does not reside continuously in the State or leaves the State permanently, their dependent family member(s) must also depart.
- 16.2 A spouse, civil partner, de facto partner or dependent minor child may apply for an independent permission having resided lawfully in the State for at least **five (5) years**, or where their sponsor naturalises as an Irish citizen. This should be done at the next online renewal of their permission.
- 16.3 In the event of divorce, dissolution of a civil partnership or separation (legal or otherwise), a spouse/partner may apply to ISD for a change of status⁴² to an independent permission if they have been in a subsisting relationship with the sponsor for at least three (3) years prior to the end of the relationship; with the two (2) most recent years spent residing in Ireland. In the event of a significant change of circumstances, such as divorce, annulment or dissolution of a relationship, or the death of the sponsor, the family member must notify ISD in writing within 21 working days and any undue delay in notifying ISD may have a negative impact on any change of status application. In circumstances where the sponsor dies, a sympathetic view will be taken.
- 16.4 It is possible for those refused an independent permission to appeal the decision. Where an application for an independent permission and any subsequent appeal are unsuccessful, this may have implications for the person's future residence in the State.

17. Victims of abuse

- 17.1 In cases where a person who derives their immigration status from that of their spouse/partner or other person is the victim of domestic abuse at the hands of that person, there is a process in place in ISD to allow the victim to apply for immigration status in their own right, outlining their circumstances. This process will continue to be applied, and guidelines are available on the ISD website.⁴³
- 17.2 You will **not** be deported for reporting domestic abuse.

⁴² Change of status is a separate process to family reunification - for details, see www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/. Applications will be considered by ISD on a case by case basis and the “changed status” will depend on that family member's new situation as well as the circumstances of the change (e.g. are they working, studying, dependent on another resident, etc.)

⁴³ See www.irishimmigration.ie/my-situation-has-changed-since-i-arrived-in-ireland/immigration-guidelines-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse/

Appendix A – Guidelines on DNA Sampling for the Purposes of Family Reunification

1. The provision of DNA evidence in support of an application for family reunification may be proposed either by ISD or the applicant, where parentage is asserted on the basis of a genetic link to the child.
2. The provision of DNA evidence is not a mandatory requirement of an application.
3. If DNA evidence is not supplied, a decision will be based on other evidence of parentage supplied.
4. Negative inference may be drawn from the fact that the applicant does not wish to undergo DNA testing.
5. DNA test results will be considered when assessing parentage. Parentage will be assessed in light of relevant Irish law on parentage including legislation on guardianship, assisted human reproduction and other relevant legislation.
6. Applicants will, in most cases, be responsible for the cost of the DNA testing.
7. Testing companies and authorities, and persons supervising testing and donation of samples, must be approved in advance by ISD but will be strictly independent in the conduct of the testing.

Appendix B – Guidelines on Parental Consent in Cases of Family Reunification

In order to ensure that family reunification arrangements cannot be used as a means of facilitating child abduction (including in scenarios where one parent seeks to remove the child from the lawful custody of the other) it must be clearly established that both parents consent to the movement of their child.

Where the parents are divorced, separated or estranged and where one parent is seeking to bring the child to Ireland as part of a family unit, the consent of the other parent must be obtained and furnished in support of the application for family reunification.

Where consent is required, a signed original letter of consent must be provided, supported by the passport or identity card of the person concerned for the purposes of signature verification.

There may be cases however where there are some suspicions as to the veracity of the documentation. In such cases it may be a requirement that the other parent should present themselves at the Irish visa office or embassy/consulate to confirm their consent in person. Where the child is coming from a country where there is no Irish representation it may be a requirement that the parents present themselves to the foreign ministry of their own country to have the consent verified.

Where the consent of the other parent is not required for any of the following reasons:

- Death of one parent;
- Mental incapacity;
- Sole custody granted to one parent without visitation rights to the other.

Verified official documentation must be provided to support the dispensing of the requirement for such consent.

Appendix C – Immigration Permissions for Beneficiaries of Family Reunification

Sponsor	Permission Received by Family Members		
	Spouse, Civil Partner and De Facto Partner*	Minor Children (16-18)*	Dependent Adult Relatives
Category A	Stamp 4	Stamp 4	Stamp 0
Category B <i>Investors and Entrepreneurs</i>	Stamp 4	Stamp 4	Stamp 0
Category B <i>CSEP Holders, Intra-Corporate Transferees, Researchers on Hosting Agreements, Full-Time Non-Locum Doctors</i>	Stamp 1G	Stamp 1G	Stamp 0
Category B <i>PhD Students, KASP Holders</i>	Stamp 2A	Stamp 2A	Stamp 0
Category B <i>Ministers of Religion</i>	Stamp 3	Stamp 3	Stamp 0
Category C <i>GEP Holders</i>	Stamp 1G	Stamp 1G	Stamp 0
Category C <i>Stamp 4 and Stamp 5 holders not covered above</i>	Stamp 3	Stamp 3	Stamp 0

*Spouses, civil partners, de facto partners and dependent minor children with **at least 5 years of residence** in the State as a dependant of a Category A, B or C sponsor, **or whose sponsor naturalises** while they are resident as a dependant of a Category A, B or C sponsor, may apply for an independent **Stamp 4** permission at the next online renewal of their permission.

Appendix D – Financial Thresholds for Family Reunification⁴⁴

Minor Children

Number of Children	Minimum Annual Net Salary Required (2025) ⁴⁵	Indicative Annual Gross Salary Equivalent (2025)
<i>1 Child</i>	€36,660	€44,300
<i>2 Children</i>	€41,912	€54,200
<i>3 Children</i>	€47,164	€64,200
<i>4 Children</i>	€51,896	€73,400
<i>5 Children</i>	€58,448	€87,100
<i>6 Children</i>	€64,480	€99,700
<i>7 Children</i>	€71,552	€114,500
<i>8+ Children</i>	€76,544	€124,900

Dependent Adult Relatives

Number of Dependent Adult Relatives	Minimum Annual Gross Salary Required (2025) ⁴⁶
<i>1 Adult</i>	€92,789
<i>2 Adults</i>	€125,390
<i>3 Adults</i>	€157,992
...	...

⁴⁴ This Appendix will be updated annually to account for changes in the reference amounts.

⁴⁵ Based on the income limits used by the Department of Social Protection in assessing eligibility for the Working Family Payment in 2025.

⁴⁶ Based on CSO data for unadjusted average earnings in the State (final) for Q2 2024.