



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Voluntary Assisted Return

1) Who can apply for IOM Dublin's Voluntary Assisted Return Programmes?

IOM offers assistance to asylum seekers and other irregular migrants from non-EEA* countries who want to return permanently to their country of origin but do not have the means and/ or travel documentation to do so.

2) What are the benefits of voluntary return?

The objective of IOM's voluntary assisted return assistance is to help individuals to return to their home country in an orderly and dignified way. When you are assisted by IOM, you travel in the same way as any other passenger. The reasons for your stay in Ireland and your return will remain confidential and will not be shared with anybody outside of the voluntary return process.

3) Does voluntary return affect a future possibility to re-enter the country legally?

If you return voluntarily before a deportation order is made and you have no outstanding criminal court proceedings in Ireland, you may still apply to the Irish Government to re-enter Ireland legally for the purpose of work, study, etc.

4) Will my passport or travel documents be stamped by an Irish Immigration Officer?

If you return through IOM's programme, your passport will not be stamped when leaving Ireland.

5) What is the procedure?

- First, you fill in the application form and sign a declaration of voluntary return.
- After discussing the programme with you, we send the details to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and tell them that you have applied to return home voluntarily.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will need to approve every applicant who applies for return under IOM's programmes.
- If your application is approved, and you do not have a valid Travel Document issued by your country of origin, IOM shall assist, where possible, in obtaining the necessary documentation to facilitate your return journey.
- We will then discuss with you suitable dates on which you would wish to travel and make the necessary travel arrangements. IOM will strive to meet the timeframe you propose, however this may not always be possible. Please note that IOM does not provide a service at weekends, therefore travel dates must be weekdays.

* EEA (European Economic Area) is comprised of the Member States of the European Union plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

- We will then provisionally book a ticket for your travel and arrange any transit visas for the countries you travel through, if necessary.
- We will meet you at Dublin airport and assist you in departing.
- We can also arrange assistance in transit and on arrival in your home country if requested.

6) If I apply for return under the VARP, how does it affect my asylum application?

IOM's voluntary assisted return programmes are co-funded by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, which decides whether an applicant is eligible for return under the programmes.

If you decide that you want to return you will have to withdraw your asylum claim prior to applying for voluntary return in order for the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to consider your application. You will also be requested to sign a declaration of voluntary return, which verifies the voluntary nature of your decision to return.

If you change your mind about leaving Ireland at any stage before your departure, and you would like to re-enter the asylum system, you should seek legal advice about options available to you.

7) What happens when I arrive in my country of origin?

If you need assistance from IOM at the airport in your country of origin, we can arrange this. In some countries IOM has no representation; therefore airport arrival assistance may not be possible.

If it is a long distance from the airport to your final destination, the local IOM office can provide you with tickets for your onward journey.

8) How much luggage can I bring?

That depends on the airline you travel with. The average baggage allowance is 20kg. Airlines will not accept any item of baggage that weighs more than 32kg per adult. IOM will inform you in advance of your travel of what your exact baggage allowance will be. For some destinations it is possible to have a slightly higher baggage allowance.

If you bring more, you will have to pay. Excess baggage is very expensive. IOM is not responsible for, and will not be able to pay for any excess baggage. If you miss your flight because of excess baggage issues, IOM will NOT be in a position to purchase a second flight ticket for you.

If you do want to bring your excess baggage and are in a position to cover the cost of it, we suggest that you organise a cargo shipment of it well in advance as it is much cheaper.

9) How long will it take to organise my return travel?

IOM always aims to meet the needs of returnees and to find the most appropriate routes of return. On average the timeframe for the return is **three to six weeks**. It is dependent on various factors such as Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform approval, availability of commercial flights, obtaining travel documentation, and any special needs to be taken into consideration for the return travel. **However, in case of emergency, it may be possible to arrange travel within a shorter timeframe.**