

Overview

All rules governing international volunteers fall under the jurisdiction of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), part of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. At the moment, the Department is reviewing the policy in relation to volunteer workers, and volunteers are dealt with on a case-by-case basis (for more information, see source 1).

For organisations who wish to involve volunteers from abroad, there are a number of basic guidelines to follow so that volunteers are able to successfully enter and remain in the country, even while the government continues its review of rules governing volunteers.

Please note that this document treats only full-time volunteers who plan on entering the state with the primary intention of volunteering full-time and have secured their volunteer opportunity in advance. Individuals who have successfully entered the state for other reasons (work, travel, studies, etc) have the right to engage in unpaid voluntary activity whilst they partake in their primary activity.

Volunteers from Outside the EEA

Volunteers from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) can volunteer in Ireland (2). Although these individuals are not permitted to undertake paid work in the country without a work permit, they may enter and remain in Ireland for the purpose of engaging in full-time, unpaid voluntary activity. While volunteers must not receive payment for their activity, it is acceptable for host organisations to cover basic expenses of long-term volunteers, such as accommodation and living and travel expenses, by a basic stipend or other arrangement (see below for more information).

Some non-EEA nationals require a visa to enter Ireland while others do not. Information on which individuals require visas to enter can be found on the INIS site (3).

Non-EEA nationals who require a visa to enter Ireland

Non-EEA nationals who do require visas must enter the state on either a Short Stay (C) or Long Stay (D) visa. A

Short Stay (C) Visa is issued for a stay of 90 days or less for the purpose of Tourism, Visit family/friend, Business, Conference, Transit, and some visas which will come under the category of 'Other'. Individuals arriving in Ireland on a C visa may not apply for permission to remain past their maximum permissible stay of 3 months. A Long Stay (D) Visa will not be issued for any of the above reasons, but may be given for the purpose of Employment, Study, or Joining Spouse/Partner/Parent, and certain other categories (4).

Visa-required nationals who wish to enter Ireland with the primary intention of volunteering should contact their local embassy to determine which visa is appropriate for their situation.

Non-EEA volunteers who do not require a visa

Non-EEA nationals who do not require a visa to enter Ireland may arrive at their port of entry as they normally would and do not need to obtain any official government paperwork before entering the country to volunteer.

Non-EEA individuals entering the country to volunteer for any amount of time need to declare their intentions honestly when arriving at Irish immigration. Immigration officials have the right to grant these individuals permission to remain for up to three months; if volunteers wish to remain for more than three months, they must register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

Volunteers from outside the EEA who do not require a visa will need to present a number of documents to be granted permission to enter Ireland to volunteer. Officials at immigration will expect to see:

1. Proof of unpaid volunteer opportunity
2. Proof of sufficient finances
3. Proof of private medical insurance

1. Proof of unpaid volunteer opportunity: Non-EEA individuals arriving from abroad who will be volunteering in Ireland must present proof of their volunteer opportunity. This normally consists of a letter from the host organisation, and should include basic

information such as the time period and commitment and should state that they will be undertaking unpaid volunteer activity.

2. Proof of sufficient finances: Non-EEA individuals without a work visa do not have the right to work in Ireland. They may undertake unpaid activity only and must also have proof of sufficient finances to support themselves during their stay in the country. This support can come from the host organisation (basic living stipend, free accommodation, etc) or from the individual himself (most recent bank statement, etc).

3. Proof of private medical insurance: All non-EEA individuals who wish to volunteer in Ireland must have valid private medical insurance covering their stay. This can be provided by the host organisation or by the individual himself/ herself. Officials will expect to see proof of valid private medical insurance (insurance card, paperwork, etc).

Remaining in the Country as a Volunteer

Non-EEA individuals who plan to remain in the country for more than three months must register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau and obtain a Certificate of Registration from their local immigration registration officer (5). An immigration certificate of registration (GNIB Registration Card) is issued by the Garda National Immigration Bureau to the non-EEA who registers. The fee associated with this mandatory registration is €150 (6).

Registration must normally be completed within the first month that the non-EEA volunteer is in Ireland. When registering, the individual will need to present the same set of documentation that he/ she presented to officials at immigration. The volunteer will be given permission to remain up to the end of their volunteer period, as specified in the host organisation's letter.

Sources

(1) Official government stance on re-evaluation of policy governing religious and volunteer workers: http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Religious_and_Volunteer_Workers.

(2) European Economic Area (EEA) is composed of the EFTA member countries (except Switzerland) and the

European Union member-states. Current countries include: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom. As of legislation introduced in 2002, Swiss nationals now have the same rights to enter and remain in the country as EEA nationals.

(3) For a list of classes of non-nationals who do not require a visa to enter Ireland, please see Schedule I of this document: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/s.i.239%20final.pdf/Files/s.i.239%20final.pdf>. All others require a visa to enter.

(4) Information on types of visas: http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/Type_of_Visa.

(5) There are a number of locations where individuals may register for a Certificate of Registration. In the Dublin Metropolitan Region, individuals should register at the GNIB, Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. Outside of the Dublin Metropolitan Region, individuals should register at either their closest Garda District Headquarters Station, Blessington Garda Station, Co. Wicklow, or Maynooth Garda Station, Co. Kildare. For more information about immigration on the Garda website: <http://www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=31&Lang=1>

(6) For more information about Certificates of Registration: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/WP07000031>.

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