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**Convention determining the State responsible for examining  
applications for asylum lodged in one of the Member States  
of the European Communities**

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1997

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Presented to Dáil Éireann by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

**CONVENTION DETERMINING THE STATE RESPONSIBLE  
FOR EXAMINING APPLICATIONS FOR ASYLUM LODGED IN  
ONE OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN  
COMMUNITIES**

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS,

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF DENMARK,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC,

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SPAIN,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC,

THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC,

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE GRAND DUKE OF LUXEMBOURG,

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS,

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC,

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT  
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND,

*Having regard* to the objective, fixed by the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December 1989, of the harmonization of their asylum policies;

*Determined*, in keeping with their common humanitarian tradition, to guarantee adequate protection to refugees in accordance with the terms of the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967 relating to the Status of Refugees, hereinafter referred to as the 'Geneva Convention' and the 'New York Protocol' respectively;

*Considering* the joint objective of an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of persons shall, in particular, be ensured, in accordance with the

provisions of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, as amended by the Single European Act:

*Aware* of the need, in pursuit of this objective, to take measures to avoid any situations arising, with the result that applicants for asylum are left in doubt for too long as regards the likely outcome of their applications and concerned to provide all applicants for asylum with a guarantee that their applications will be examined by one of the Member States and to ensure that applicants for asylum are not referred successively from one Member State to another without any of these States acknowledging itself to be competent to examine the application for asylum;

*Desiring* to continue the dialogue with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in order to achieve the above objectives;

*Determined* to co-operate closely in the application of this Convention through various means, including exchanges of information,

**HAVE DECIDED TO CONCLUDE THIS CONVENTION AND TO THIS END HAVE DESIGNATED AS THEIR PLENIPOTENTIARIES:**

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS,

Melchior WATHELET

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Justice, Small and Medium-sized Businesses and the Self-Employed

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF DENMARK,

Hans ENGELL

Minister for Justice

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,

Dr. Helmut RÜCKRIEGEL

Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany at Dublin

Wolfgang SCHÄUBLE

Federal Minister for the Interior

THE PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC,

Ioannis VASSILIADES

Minister for Public Order

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF SPAIN,

José Luis CORCUERA  
Minister for the Interior

THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC,  
Pierre JOXE  
Minister for the Interior

THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND,  
Ray BURKE  
Minister for Justice and Minister for Communications

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC,  
Antonio GAVA  
Minister for the Interior

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE GRAND DUKE OF LUXEMBOURG,  
Marc FISCHBACH  
Minister for Education, Minister for Justice, Minister for the Civil Service

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS,  
Ernst Maurits Henricus HIRSCH BALLIN  
Minister for Justice

THE PRESIDENT OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC,  
Manuel PEREIRA  
Minister for the Interior

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT  
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND,  
David WADDINGTON  
Secretary of State for the Home Department (Home Secretary)

Sir Nicholas Maxted FENN, KCMG  
Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at  
Dublin

*Who*, having exchanged their Full Powers, found in good and due form,

**Have agreed** as follows:

## Article 1

1. For the purposes of this Convention:

- (a) 'Alien' means: any person other than a national of a Member State;
  
- (b) 'Application for asylum' means: a request whereby an alien seeks from a Member State protection under the Geneva Convention by claiming refugee status within the meaning of Article 1 of the Geneva Convention, as amended by the New York Protocol;
  
- (c) 'Applicant for asylum' means: an alien who has made an application for asylum in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken;
  
- (d) 'Examination of an application for asylum' means: all the measures for examination, decisions or rulings given by the competent authorities on an application for asylum, except for procedures to determine the State responsible for examining the application for asylum pursuant to this Convention;
  
- (e) 'Residence permit' means: any authorization issued by the authorities of a Member State authorizing an alien to stay in its territory, with the exception of visas and 'stay permits' issued during examination of an application for a residence permit or for asylum;
  
- (f) 'Entry visa' means: authorization or decision by a Member State to enable an alien to enter its territory, subject to the other entry conditions being fulfilled;
  
- (g) 'Transit visa' means: authorization or decision by a Member State to enable an alien to transit through its territory or pass through the transit zone of a port or airport, subject to the other transit conditions being fulfilled.

2. The nature of the visa shall be assessed in the light of the definitions set out in paragraph 1 (f) and (g).

## Article 2

The Member States reaffirm their obligations under the Geneva Convention, as amended by the New York Protocol, with no geographic restriction of the scope of these instruments, and their commitment to co-operating with the services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in applying these instruments.

## Article 3

1. Member States undertake to examine the application of any alien who applies at the border or in their territory to any one of them for asylum.

2. That application shall be examined by a single Member State, which shall be determined in accordance with the criteria defined in this Convention. The criteria set out in Articles 4 to 8 shall apply in the order in which they appear.

3. That application shall be examined by that State in accordance with its national laws and its international obligations.

4. Each Member State shall have the right to examine an application for asylum submitted to it by an alien, even if such examination is not its responsibility under the criteria defined in this Convention, provided that the applicant for asylum agrees thereto.

The Member State responsible under the above criteria is then relieved of its obligations, which are transferred to the Member State which expressed the wish to examine the application. The latter State shall inform the Member State responsible under the said criteria if the application has been referred to it.

5. Any Member State shall retain the right, pursuant to its national laws, to send an applicant for asylum to a third State, in compliance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention, as amended by the New York Protocol.

6. The process of determining the Member State responsible for examining the application for asylum under this Convention shall start as soon as an application for asylum is first lodged with a Member State.

7. An applicant for asylum who is present in another Member State and there lodges an application for asylum after withdrawing his or her application during the process of determining the State responsible shall be taken back, under the conditions laid down in Article 13, by the Member State with which that application for asylum was lodged, with a view to completing the process of determining the State responsible for examining the application for asylum.

This obligation shall cease to apply if the applicant for asylum has since left the territory of the Member States for a period of at least three months or has obtained from a Member State a residence permit valid for more than three months.

#### Article 4

Where the applicant for asylum has a member of his family who has been recognized as having refugee status within the meaning of the Geneva Convention, as amended by the New York Protocol, in a Member State and is legally resident there, that State shall be responsible for examining the application, provided that the persons concerned so desire.

The family member in question may not be other than the spouse of the applicant for asylum or his or her unmarried child who is a minor of under eighteen years, or his or her father or mother where the applicant for asylum is himself or herself an unmarried child who is a minor of under eighteen years.

#### Article 5

1. Where the applicant for asylum is in possession of a valid residence permit, the Member State which issued the permit shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

2. Where the applicant for asylum is in possession of a valid visa, the Member State which issued the visa shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum, except in the following situations:

(a) if the visa was issued on the written authorization of another Member State, that State shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum. Where a Member State first consults the central authority of another Member State, *inter alia* for security reasons, the agreement of the latter shall not constitute written authorization within the meaning of this provision.

(b) where the applicant for asylum is in possession of a transit visa and lodges his application in another Member State in which he is not subject to a visa requirement, that State shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

(c) where the applicant for asylum is in possession of a transit visa and lodges his application in the State which issued him or her with the visa and which has received written confirmation from the diplomatic or consular authorities of the Member State of destination that the alien for whom the visa requirement was waived fulfilled the conditions for entry into that State, the latter shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

3. Where the applicant for asylum is in possession of more than one valid residence permit or visa issued by different Member States, the responsibility for examining the application for asylum shall be assumed by the Member States in the following order:

(a) the State which issued the residence permit conferring the right to the longest period of residency or, where the periods of validity of all the permits are identical, the State which issued the residence permit having the latest expiry date;

(b) the State which issued the visa having the latest expiry date where the various visas are of the same type;

(c) where visas are of different kinds, the State which issued the visa having the longest period of validity, or, where the periods of validity are identical, the State

which issued the visa having the latest expiry date. This provision shall not apply where the applicant is in possession of one or more transit visas, issued on presentation of an entry visa for another Member State. In that case, that Member State shall be responsible.

4. Where the applicant for asylum is in possession only of one or more residence permits which have expired less than two years previously or one or more visas which have expired less than six months previously and enabled him or her actually to enter the territory of a Member State, the provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of this Article shall apply for such time as the alien has not left the territory of the Member States.

Where the applicant for asylum is in possession of one or more residence permits which have expired more than two years previously or one or more visas which have expired more than six months previously and enabled him or her to enter the territory of a Member State and where an alien has not left Community territory, the Member State in which the application is lodged shall be responsible.

#### Article 6

When it can be proved that an applicant for asylum has irregularly crossed the border into a Member State by land, sea or air, having come from a non-member State of the European Communities, the Member State thus entered shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

That State shall cease to be responsible, however, if it is proved that the applicant has been living in the Member State where the application for asylum was made at least six months before making his application for asylum. In that case it is the latter Member State which is responsible for examining the application for asylum.

#### Article 7

1. The responsibility for examining an application for asylum shall be incumbent upon the Member State responsible for controlling the entry of the alien into the territory of the Member States, except where, after legally entering a Member State in which the need for him or her to have a visa is waived, the alien lodges his or her application for asylum in another Member State in which the need for him or her to have a visa for entry into the territory is also waived. In this case, the latter State shall be responsible for examining the application for asylum.

2. Pending the entry into force of an agreement between Member States on arrangements for crossing external borders, the Member State which authorizes transit without a visa through the transit zone of its airports shall not be regarded as responsible for control on entry, in respect of travellers who do not leave the transit zone.



3. Where the application for asylum is made in transit in an airport of a Member State, that State shall be responsible for examination.

#### Article 8

Where no Member State responsible for examining the application for asylum can be designated on the basis of the other criteria listed in this Convention, the first Member State with which the application for asylum is lodged shall be responsible for examining it.

#### Article 9

Any Member State, even when it is not responsible under the criteria laid out in this Convention, may, for humanitarian reasons, based in particular on family or cultural grounds, examine an application for asylum at the request of another Member State, provided that the applicant so desires.

If the Member State thus approached accedes to the request, responsibility for examining the application shall be transferred to it.

#### Article 10

1. The Member State responsible for examining an application for asylum according to the criteria set out in this Convention shall be obliged to:

(a) Take charge under the conditions laid down in Article 11 of an applicant who has lodged an application for asylum in a different Member State,

(b) Complete the examination of the application for asylum,

(c) Readmit or take back under the conditions laid down in Article 13 an applicant whose application is under examination and who is irregularly in another Member State,

(d) Take back, under the conditions laid down in Article 13, an applicant who has withdrawn the application under examination and lodged an application in another Member State,

(e) Take back, under the conditions laid down in Article 13, an alien whose application is has rejected and who is illegally in another Member State.

2. If a Member State issues to the applicant a residence permit valid for more than three months, the obligations specified in paragraph 1 (a) to (e) shall be transferred to that Member State.

3. The obligations specified in paragraph 1 (a) to (d) shall cease to apply if the alien concerned has left the territory of the Member States for a period of at least three months.

4. The obligations specified in paragraph 1 (d) and (e) shall cease to apply if the State responsible for examining the application for asylum, following the withdrawal or rejection of the application, takes and enforces the necessary measures for the alien to return to his country of origin or to another country which he may lawfully enter.

#### Article 11

1. If a Member State with which an application for asylum has been lodged considers that another Member State is responsible for examining the application, it may, as quickly as possible and in any case within the six months following the date on which the application was lodged, call upon the other Member State to take charge of the applicant.

If the request that charge be taken is not made within the six-month time limit, responsibility for examining the application for asylum shall rest with the State in which the application was lodged.

2. The request that charge be taken shall contain indications enabling the authorities of that other State to ascertain whether it is responsible on the basis of the criteria laid down in this Convention.

3. The State responsible in accordance with those criteria shall be determined on the basis of the situation obtaining when the applicant for asylum first lodged his application with a Member State.

4. The Member State shall pronounce judgment on the request within three months of receipt of the claim. Failure to act within that period shall be tantamount to accepting the claim.

5. Transfer of the applicant for asylum from the Member State where the application was lodged to the Member State responsible must take place not later than one month after acceptance of the request to take charge or one month after the conclusion of any proceedings initiated by the alien challenging the transfer decision if the proceedings are suspensory.

6. Measures taken under Article 18 may subsequently determine the details of the process by which applicants shall be taken in charge.

#### Article 12

Where an application for asylum is lodged with the competent authorities of a Member State by an applicant who is on the territory of another Member State, the determination of the Member State responsible for examining the application for asylum shall be made by the Member State on whose territory the applicant is. The latter Member State shall be informed without delay by the Member State

which received the application and shall then, for the purpose of applying this Convention, be regarded as the Member State with which the application for asylum was lodged.

#### Article 13

1. An applicant for asylum shall be taken back in the cases provided for in Article 3 (7) and in Article 10 as follows:

(a) the request for the applicant to be taken back must provide indications enabling the State with which the request is lodged to ascertain that it is responsible in accordance with Article 3 (7) and with Article 10;

(b) the State called upon to take back the applicant shall give an answer to the request within eight days of the matter being referred to it. Should it acknowledge responsibility, it shall then take back the applicant for asylum as quickly as possible and at the latest one month after it agrees to do so.

2. Measures taken under Article 18 may at a later date set out the details of the procedure for taking the applicant back.

#### Article 14

1. Member States shall conduct mutual exchanges with regard to:

- national legislative or regulatory measures or practices applicable in the field of asylum,
- statistical data on monthly arrivals of applicants for asylum, and their breakdown by nationality. Such information shall be forwarded quarterly through the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Communities, which shall see that it is circulated to the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities and to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

2. The Member States may conduct mutual exchanges with regard to:

- general information on new trends in applications for asylum,
- general information on the situation in the countries of origin or of provenance of applicants for asylum.

3. If the Member State providing the information referred to in paragraph 2 wants it to be kept confidential, the other Member States shall comply with this wish.

#### Article 15

1. Each Member State shall communicate to any Member State that so requests such information on individual cases as is necessary for:

- determining the Member State which is responsible for examining the application for asylum,
- examining the application for asylum,

- implementing any obligation arising under this Convention.

2. This information may only cover:

- personal details of the applicant, and, where appropriate, the members of his family (full name and where appropriate, former name; nicknames or pseudonyms; nationality, present and former; date and place of birth),
- identity and travel papers (references, validity, date of issue, issuing authority, place of issue, etc.),
- other information necessary for establishing the identity of the applicant,
- places of residence and routes travelled,
- residence permits or visas issued by a Member State,
- the place where the application was lodged,
- the date any previous application for asylum was lodged, the date the present application was lodged, the stage reached in the proceedings and the decision taken, if any.

3. Furthermore, one Member State may request another Member State to let it know on what grounds the applicant for asylum bases his or her application and, where applicable, the grounds for any decisions taken concerning the applicant. It is for the Member State from which the information is requested to decide whether or not to impart it. In any event, communication of the information requested shall be subject to the approval of the applicant for asylum.

4. This exchange of information shall be effected at the request of a Member State and may only take place between authorities the designation of which by each Member State has been communicated to the Committee provided for under Article 18.

5. The information exchanged may only be used for the purposes set out in paragraph 1. In each Member State such information may only be communicated to the authorities and courts and tribunals entrusted with:

- determining the Member State which is responsible for examining the application for asylum,
- examining the application for asylum,
- implementing any obligation arising under this Convention.

6. The Member State that forwards the information shall ensure that it is accurate and up-to-date.

If it appears that this Member State has supplied information which is inaccurate or which should not have been forwarded, the recipient Member State shall be immediately informed thereof. They shall be obliged to correct such information or to have it erased.

7. An applicant for asylum shall have the right to receive, on request, the information exchanged concerning him or her, for such time as it remains available.

If he or she establishes that such information is inaccurate or should not have been forwarded, he or she shall have the right to have it corrected or erased. This right shall be exercised in accordance with the conditions laid down in paragraph 6.

8. In each Member State concerned, the forwarding and receipt of exchanged information shall be recorded.

9. Such information shall be kept for a period not exceeding that necessary for the ends for which it was exchanged. The need to keep it shall be examined at the appropriate moment by the Member State concerned.

10. In any event, the information thus communicated shall enjoy at least the same protection as is given to similar information in the Member State which receives it.

11. If data are not processed automatically but are handled in some other form, every Member State shall take the appropriate measures to ensure compliance with this Article by means of effective controls. If a Member State has a monitoring body of the type mentioned in paragraph 12, it may assign the control task to it.

12. If one or more Member States wish to computerize all or part of the information mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 3, such computerization is only possible if the countries concerned have adopted laws applicable to such processing which implement the principles of the Strasbourg Convention of 28 January 1981 for the Protection of Individuals, with regard to automatic processing of personal data and if they have entrusted an appropriate national body with the independent monitoring of the processing and use of data forwarded pursuant to this Convention.

#### Article 16

1. Any Member State may submit to the Committee referred to in Article 18 proposals for revision of this Convention in order to eliminate difficulties in the application thereof.

2. If it proves necessary to revise or amend this Convention pursuant to the achievement of the objectives set out in Article 8a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, such achievement being linked in particular to the establishment of a harmonized asylum and a common visa policy, the

Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Communities shall organize a meeting of the Committee referred to in Article 18.

3. Any revision of this Convention or amendment hereto shall be adopted by the Committee referred to in Article 18. It shall enter into force in accordance with the provisions of Article 22.

#### Article 17

1. If a Member State experiences major difficulties as a result of a substantial change in the circumstances obtaining on conclusion of this Convention, the State in question may bring the matter before the Committee referred to in Article 18 so that the latter may put to the Member States measures to deal with the situation or adopt such revisions or amendments to this Convention as appear necessary, which shall enter into force as provided for in Article 16 (3).

2. If, after six months, the situation mentioned in paragraph 1 still obtains, the Committee, acting in accordance with Article 18 (2), may authorize the Member State affected by that change to suspend temporarily the application of the provisions of this Convention, without such suspension being allowed to impede the achievement of the objectives mentioned in Article 8a of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community or contravene other international obligations of the Member States.

3. During the period of suspension, the Committee shall continue its discussions with a view to revising the provisions of this Convention, unless it has already reached an agreement.

#### Article 18

1. A Committee shall be set up comprising one representative of the Government of each Member State.

The Committee shall be chaired by the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Communities.

The Commission of the European Communities may participate in the discussions of the Committee and the working parties referred to in paragraph 4.

2. The Committee shall examine, at the request of one or more Member States, any question of a general nature concerning the application or interpretation of this Convention.

The Committee shall determine the measures referred to in Article 11 (6) and Article 13 (2) and shall give the authorization referred to in Article 17 (2).

The Committee shall adopt decisions revising or amending the Convention pursuant to Articles 16 and 17.

3. The Committee shall take its decisions unanimously, except where it is acting pursuant to Article 17 (2), in which case it shall take its decisions by a majority of two-thirds of the votes of its members.

4. The Committee shall determine its rules of procedure and may set up working parties.

The Secretariat of the Committee and of the working parties shall be provided by the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Communities.

#### Article 19

As regards the Kingdom of Denmark, the provisions of this Convention shall not apply to the Faroe Islands nor to Greenland unless a declaration to the contrary is made by the Kingdom of Denmark. Such a declaration may be made at any time by a communication to the Government of Ireland which shall inform the Governments of the other Member States thereof.

As regards the French Republic, the provisions of this Convention shall apply only to the European territory of the French Republic.

As regards the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the provisions of this Convention shall apply only to the territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Europe.

As regards the United Kingdom the provisions of this Convention shall apply only to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They shall not apply to the European territories for whose external relations the United Kingdom is responsible unless a declaration to the contrary is made by the United Kingdom. Such a declaration may be made at any time by a communication to the Government of Ireland, which shall inform the Governments of the other Member States thereof.

#### Article 20

This Convention shall not be the subject of any reservations.

#### Article 21

1. This Convention shall be open for the accession of any State which becomes a member of the European Communities. The instruments of accession will be deposited with the Government of Ireland.

2. It shall enter into force in respect of any State which accedes thereto on the first day of the third month following the deposit of its instrument of accession.

## Article 22

1. This Convention shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval. The instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval shall be deposited with the Government of Ireland.

2. The Government of Ireland shall notify the Governments of the other Member States of the deposit of the instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval.

3. This Convention shall enter into force on the first day of the third month following the deposit of the instrument of ratification, acceptance or approval by the last signatory State to take this step.

The State with which the instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval are deposited shall notify the Member States of the date of entry into force of this Convention.

**In witness whereof**, the undersigned plenipotentiaries have hereunto set their hands.

**Done** at Dublin this fifteenth day of June in the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety, in a single original, in the Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish languages, the texts drawn up in each of these languages being equally authentic and being deposited in the archives of the Government of Ireland which shall transmit a certified copy to each of the other Member States.