

## NATURALISATION and INTEGRATION

### Improving stateless people's access to naturalisation and integration

[What's the issue?](#)

[What can I do as a frontline practitioner?](#)

[What needs to change at the policy level?](#)

[More background information on the issue and additional resources](#)

#### What's the issue?

The only solution to statelessness is the acquisition of a nationality. Barriers to naturalisation can leave stateless people **unable to exercise their rights** and societally **disadvantaged**.

- Stateless people's rights are limited in some contexts – such as in relation to education, healthcare, welfare benefits, and employment – contributing to prolonged poverty and other harm.
- Stateless people usually do not have the right to vote, hold political office, or participate fully in democratic processes.
- Children of stateless people may be born stateless if laws do not contain full safeguards to prevent childhood statelessness, violating [children's right to a nationality](#).
- People who remain stateless for long periods may feel isolated and unwelcome, causing mental health problems and inhibiting their potential to contribute to society.

#### What can I do as a frontline practitioner?

**The 4 Rs: Recognise, Record, Refer, and Read up!**

##### 1. **Recognise statelessness and its impact**

Do not assume either that everyone has a nationality, that everyone who is stateless knows they are stateless, or that statelessness will have been identified in the refugee [screening](#) or [status determination](#) process. Consider whether stateless people face heightened barriers to naturalisation, and if needed, explore further.

- Do stateless people face barriers to naturalise, for example if they lack certain documents, such as birth certificates and passports?
- Are stateless people unable to afford the cost of naturalisation, and is this linked to past restrictions on their rights and opportunities?
- Can any requirements be relaxed / waived?

##### 2. **Record lack of proof of nationality and indications of statelessness**

If you identify that a person may be stateless, record this important information on any paperwork relating to this person. If a form does not have fields allowing you to accurately record this information, make a note somewhere on the form about it, so that there is a record, and inform the person of this and that it may be important in future. Also keep copies of any relevant documents in your file so that they can be accessed later if needed.

Most European countries have international obligations that require them to facilitate the naturalisation of stateless people, although in practice stateless people often face significant barriers in acquiring a nationality.

3. **Refer to expert advice, support, and information**

If you identify possible statelessness of a person who wants to naturalise, refer the person to organisations that specialise in statelessness and nationality in your country of work to see if they can help. Some of [our members](#) may be able to assist. Download and use our [guide/poster](#) for refugee response actors and our [short guide](#) for refugees and asylum seekers.

4. **Read up** about statelessness, naturalisation and integration. There's some more information below, and more on our websites (links below).

- [Facilitated Naturalisation of Stateless Persons](#)
- [Voting Rights of Refugees](#)
- [Access to citizenship and its impact on immigrant integration](#)
- Many studies indicate that **naturalization has positive links to integration and socio-economic and other outcomes**; for example [here](#) and [here](#).

### What needs to change at the policy level?

- **States should comply with the 1954 Convention** relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and provide for facilitated naturalisation in law and policy.
- **States should facilitate stateless people's access to naturalisation in practice**, including by ensuring accurate recording and determination of statelessness and exempting stateless persons from documentation requirements, fees, and language/testing requirements if needed.
- **States should provide citizenship officials with training** about the circumstances of stateless people and barriers they may face in relation to requirements for naturalisation.
- **States and other agencies should tailor access to integration services for stateless people** to ensure equitable access to rights and opportunities.

### More background information on the issue and additional resources

**International law** recognises that the main solution to statelessness is access to a nationality, but stateless people face many barriers to naturalisation. [The 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons](#) requires states to facilitate naturalisation and integration of stateless people. But very few countries adhere to this obligation; even where legal provisions exist, [often they are not implemented fully](#).

**Many stateless people have been systematically excluded from formal education or employment** in their countries of origin. This can mean that language classes and vocational training in Europe are the first time a stateless person has ever accessed formal education. Further, stateless people may not have documents usually required to prove eligibility for many educational or employment opportunities – for example, birth certificates, certificates of previous educational attainment, evidence of formal work experience, or letters of recommendation.

In many contexts, significant **hurdles remain** for stateless people to naturalise or integrate. For example, in some countries a birth certificate is required to apply for naturalisation. In other countries, a passport or proof of renunciation of a former nationality is required. In some countries naturalisation procedures are very expensive, and fees are not waived for stateless applicants (for example, in [the UK](#)). There may also be a citizenship test, language or [minimum income requirements](#). All of these can pose barriers for stateless people seeking to naturalise.

**Get more information**

[European Network on Statelessness](#)

[Stateless Journeys](#)

[Statelessness Index](#)

[UNHCR's Ending Statelessness site](#)

[UNHCR's Self-Study Module on Statelessness](#)

[Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion](#)

[Statefree](#)

Attend a course at the [Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion](#) or the [University of Melbourne](#).

Organisations in Europe can [contact ENS](#) about training opportunities. You can also [sign up to our mailing list/newsletter](#), follow us on social media (Twitter: @ENStateless) and support the [Stateless Journeys campaign](#).

*'We will always be Palestinian and must never give up on the Palestinian struggle for our right to return to our ancient homeland. However, becoming a Dutch citizen has better enabled me to fulfil my potential....'*

~ [\(Formerly stateless\) Palestinian woman, naturalised as Dutch citizen](#)