



Family Reunification for Beneficiaries of International and Subsidiary Protection

The information presented in this fact sheet complements the developments reported in the [Asylum Report 2025](#). It covers the period 2024-October 2025.

Family reunification can play a significant role in the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the host society. The right to and protection of family life is enshrined in several international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The [EU Family Reunification Directive](#) establishes the legal framework under which non-EU nationals can bring their family members to the EU country in which they legally reside. Ireland and Denmark have opted out of the Directive.



The [Asylum and Migration Management Regulation](#), which will apply in July 2026 and replace the current Dublin III Regulation, includes specific provisions on family unity for asylum seekers.

The implementation of the directive can vary across Member States. Depending on the countries, family reunification in the context of international protection may be granted to refugees but not necessarily to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and does not apply to individuals seeking asylum.

Some Member States are currently introducing or considering more restrictive measures to limit family reunification, introducing longer waiting times or even halting decision-making for applicants for family reunification of Syrian nationality since the change of regime in Syria.¹

1. Key developments at the European level from 2024-2025

- The European Migration Network (EMN) published a [study](#) in October 2025 providing a comprehensive overview of the implementation of laws and policies in family reunification of third-country nationals.² One of the challenges reported from refugees was that the deadlines to apply for family reunification were difficult in several countries
- The European Parliamentary Research Service published in April 2025 a [briefing](#) on family reunification rights for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. It observes that family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection remains a challenging and time-consuming process due to various legal, practical and administrative obstacles. It also notes limited [Eurostat data](#) on first permits issued for family reunification with a beneficiary of protection status.³
- Several EU+ countries participated in 2024 in an EUAA exchange programme on effective family reunification. Bilateral study visits allowed certain countries to further strengthen their collaboration, such as the visit from the Romanian General Inspectorate for Immigration (GII) to the Swedish SMA. The GII delegation gained insights on the organisation of the Dublin unit and the procedure followed in Sweden, which can be used to reinforce processes in Romania.
- UNHCR published in December 2024 its [guidelines](#) on international legal standards for family reunification, noting that this is often the only safe pathway to international protection.⁴



2. Key developments at the national level from 2024-2025

EU+ countries made legislative and policy changes related to family reunification during 2024 and 2025, with several countries introducing new measures and requirements.

- The Italian Council of Ministers approved a Decree Law which introduces urgent provisions concerning the legal entry of foreign workers and citizens, including the processing time for family reunification permits which was increased from 90 to 150 days, aligning with the 9 months in EU legislation.⁵
- The Belgian Chamber of Representatives adopted new legislation in July 2025, amending the conditions for family reunification under the law of December 1980. It introduces stricter rules, including extended waiting periods for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to apply for family reunification, increased income requirements and an increased age limit.⁶ Refugees have 6 months to submit an application without having the income conditions apply. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have a waiting time of 2 years before they can apply for family reunification. The text adopted still needs to be submitted for royal assent and promulgated as law. The rules for family reunification were previously amended during 2024, allowing parents to reunite with their accompanied minor child with international protection under certain conditions, expanding family reunification for people with a residence permit on the grounds of statelessness and adjusting the determination of minority to recent CJEU case law.⁷
- The Finnish Parliament approved in June 2025 a set of amendments to the Aliens Act which tighten the requirements that must be met in family reunification cases and concern the minimum age of spouses, financial resources of a minor's family member, alignment of the definition of a child considered to be a minor, and the period of residence requirement for family reunification. Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection will now require a 2-year residence in Finland. The minimum age for both spouses is now set to 21 years old before the residence permit becomes valid. Family members or other relatives of a minor who have been granted subsidiary protection or temporary protection must have sufficient financial resources.⁸
- Legislative amendments in Denmark in June 2025 included stricter rules on the extension or revocation of residence permits and on family reunification. Residence permits for family reunification will be conditional on people living together in a shared household. Non-compliance can lead to revocation unless certain family ties remain.⁹ The Danish Immigration Service drew the attention of the municipalities in June 2024 to a change based on a court judgment from 2020, as it emerged that several municipalities were still not aware that a child's maintenance obligation for parents over 60 years old ceases when the parent is granted a permanent residence permit.¹⁰
- In Bulgaria, legislative [amendments](#) to the Law on Asylum and Refugees regarding family reunification from June 2025 foresee changes in the application requirements and processing times.



- The Austrian National Council decided in April 2025 to temporarily suspend reunification of family members with international or subsidiary protection. In July 2025, the Main Committee of the National Council approved the regulation, which stipulates that the deadline for processing applications for family reunification or the obligation to decide on them will be suspended for the next 6 months. According to the Asylum Act, the scheme can be extended for a further 6 months for a maximum of three times.¹¹ The number of family reunification cases have already drastically decreased following changes in the procedure in May 2024, which involves re-verifying files, more systematic use of DNA tests and additional document checks.¹²
- The Norwegian Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) announced a new practice description in April 2025 which explains how to apply the regulatory provision allowing exemptions from the income requirement in family immigration cases due to particularly strong humanitarian considerations.¹³ Furthermore, tighter family reunification rules were proposed to protect the best interests of the child, in an effort to prevent child abduction and bigamy.¹⁴
- The Dutch Council of Ministers approved in March 2025 an Asylum Emergency Measures Act and a law introducing two status systems which differentiate between refugees and people receiving protection on other grounds. For the latter group, stricter criteria are applied for family reunification, such as a 2-year waiting period and thresholds related to housing and income.¹⁵
- In Germany, the Influx Limitation Act, which aims to end family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, was presented in January 2025 and rejected by a narrow majority.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the parliamentary debate on suspending family reunification continued after the federal elections.¹⁷ According to the coalition draft, family reunification is to be suspended for 2 years for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in order to ease the burden on Germany's reception and integration systems but should, at the same time, be possible in cases of hardship. The German Bundesrat approved the law in July 2025 for a period of 2 years. A request to refer the matter to the Conciliation Committee did not reach a majority.¹⁸
- To simplify procedures for beneficiaries of international protection, the family reference form (FFR) was phased out in January 2025.¹⁹ The form enabled the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) to establish the civil status of a beneficiary and confirm their family situation in the event of a request for family reunification.
- Italy adopted a new decree law ([DL 145/2024](#)) in December 2024 which includes measures to limit family reunification. An applicant must now have at least 2 years of continuous, legal stay in Italy. Municipalities will assess the suitability of housing based on occupancy and other criteria.²⁰
- In line with the measures set out in the Migration Action Plan ([Plano de ação para as migrações](#)) of June 2024, the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum (AIMA) started in October 2024 the new process of family reunification for foreign citizens with children and young people up to the age of 18. Minors must already be on the territory on the date of the application. Applications can be submitted on the platform for Family

Reunification of Minors on the [AIMA Services Portal](#). Appointments are made automatically by AIMA's services for the collection of biometric data.

- In Iceland, amendments to the Act on Foreigners, adopted in June 2024, introduced various changes to the procedure and legal effects for applicants for international protection, including changes to family reunification. The condition introduced for the right to family reunification of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is only for beneficiaries whose status has been renewed at least once, with possible exceptions granting for compelling reasons. For holders of a humanitarian permit, the right to family reunification is now only permitted after their status has been renewed twice, with exceptions being granted for urgent cases.²¹
- The Swiss Federal Council launched the process to reduce the waiting period for family reunification for people with temporary admission in May 2024, following a ECtHR judgment in 2021.²²

3. Case law related to family reunification

European and national courts continued to interpret decisions taken by national administrations on the right to be unified with one's family. They delivered guidance and clarified rules on the scope of and criteria for family reunification.



CJEU and ECtHR

- The ECtHR [found](#) no violation of the right to respect for private and family life (Article 8) concerning a rejected application for family reunification submitted by an applicant from Ethiopia in Sweden in July 2024. The application was refused on the ground that, at the time of the application, the applicant failed to fulfil the minimum-income and accommodation requirement.²³
- The CJEU [ruled](#) in January 2024 that an unaccompanied minor had the right to family reunification with the parents, and exceptionally with the vulnerable sibling in need of permanent assistance from the parents on account of a serious illness, even if the unaccompanied minor reached the age of majority during the family reunification procedure.²⁴

National courts

- The Portuguese Constitutional Court ruled in August 2025 on five provisions of the [Law](#) on the Legal Status of Entry, Residence, Departure and Removal of Foreigners, which included restrictions to access family reunification. The court considered some of the provisions to be unconstitutional, which the President of the Republic subsequently vetoed.²⁵
- In the Netherlands, the Court of the Hague [granted](#) in July 2025 an interim measure to allow family reunification for a young beneficiary of international protection with his parents and minor siblings residing in the Gaza Strip. At first, the young adult's request for family reunification was rejected by the Minister of Asylum and Migration in

June 2024, but the court considered that the Minister gave an insufficient reasoning overall. Taking into consideration the best interests of the child, the interim relief judge highlighted that the minor siblings were without adequate housing, food, medical facility or safety and in mortal danger. As the compelling urgency and strong doubts about the legality of the contested decision were established, the interim relief judge ordered the grating of the requested visa for the family to reunite.²⁶

- The Finnish Supreme Administrative Court [ruled](#) in April 2025 that an Afghan woman and her two children may be considered as other relatives for the purpose of family reunification of the grandfather of the children, who is a beneficiary of refugee status in Finland. The court considered that the rejection of their family reunification request was unreasonable in view of their stable family life in Afghanistan, which they intended to continue in Finland. Therefore, the court overturned the contested decision and ordered the Finnish Immigration Service (FIS) to reassess the case.²⁷
- The German Federal Administrative Court [held](#) in September 2024 that family members (second wife and children) of a person entitled to subsidiary protection already living with his first wife and six children cannot, in principle, be granted a residence permit for humanitarian reasons if the legal impossibility of leaving the country for family reasons is based solely on family ties to the beneficiary of subsidiary protection that existed prior to entry.²⁸
- The Dutch Council of State [upheld](#) in July 2024 a decision of the State Secretary for Justice and Security, which declared an Eritrean applicant's asylum application inadmissible, despite his wish to reunite with his wife and child of Dutch nationality, because the applicant already received international protection in Germany.²⁹
- In Norway, the Oslo District Court [ruled](#) in July 2024 that the family members of a recognised refugee from Eritrea did not meet the requirement to produce documents for family reunification. The applicants had stated that there were no grounds to impose an absolute passport requirement, especially since Eritrean passports are uncommon and obtaining an exit visa is difficult. The Oslo District Court dismissed the appeal, ruling that the applicants had not met the requirement for document production in compliance with the law's requirements, since passports could be obtained at Eritrean embassies abroad, and it found that the Immigration Appeals Board decision and subsequent decisions were valid and did not violate Article 8 of the ECHR.³⁰
- The Irish Court of Appeal [determined](#) in July 2024 that adult children are not eligible family members for family reunification, unless there is more than an emotional dependency between the applicant and an adult child. A recognised refugee from Zimbabwe had applied for family reunification but the processing of the application was denied for her eldest child since she was not a minor on the date of the application. As an alternative remedy, the Court of Appeal discussed the possibility for the applicant to submit a request to the Minister for a visa for her daughter to join her in Ireland.³¹

For more cases related to family reunification, please see the [filtered search](#) in the EUAA Case Law Database.



To search for more developments by topic, country or year, consult the [National Asylum Developments Database](#).

To read more case law related to asylum, consult the [EUAA Case Law Database](#).

Sources

Please see [Sources on Asylum 2025](#) for the full list of over 1,500 references which were consulted for the Asylum Report 2025.

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