

## Position paper



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# Upholding the right to family reunification

for beneficiaries of international  
protection<sup>1</sup> in Europe

Based on their operational experience, National Red Cross Societies in the European Union (EU) encourage EU Member States which are subject to the EU Family Reunification Directive and other European countries that have adopted similar laws to ensure that beneficiaries of international protection can effectively access and exercise their right to family reunification. To this end, they have identified the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that all beneficiaries of international protection benefit from the right to family reunification.
2. Expand the scope of family members eligible for family reunification.
3. Lift any administrative and practical barriers to ensure that beneficiaries of international protection and their family members can effectively exercise their right to family reunification.
4. Ensure that applications for family reunification are dealt with promptly and that the assessment of family links does not further impede the family reunification process.
5. Ensure that reunited families in Europe are adequately supported in their new life.

“  
**Family reunification  
helps realizing the  
right to family life and  
is key to integration.**”

# Position paper

For people who flee persecution, armed conflict or other situations of human rights violations and are forced to leave their family behind, family reunification is often the only way to enjoy family life once they reach safety. As such, the right to family reunification under European Union (EU) law is not only intertwined with the legal obligation to respect family life and family unity – as enshrined in several international and regional instruments,<sup>2</sup> it is a critical aspect of people successfully integrating in their countries of destination. Often, family reunification is also a pathway to safety for those family members who remain at risk in violent or unsafe environments in the country of origin or in a third country.

Across the EU, modalities for family reunification of third country nationals<sup>3</sup> are governed by the Directive on the right to family reunification<sup>4</sup> (the EU Family Reunification Directive). This legislation establishes more favourable conditions for refugees to exercise their right to family reunification compared to other third country nationals regularly residing in the EU. Refugees are exempted from having to provide evidence of accommodation, health insurance and resources if they apply for family reunification within three months of the granting of status. The 2014 European Commission guidelines for the application of the Directive encourage Member States to interpret the existing rules in a generous manner,<sup>5</sup> with the aim of preserving family unity.

The purpose of this position paper is to encourage states which are subject to the EU Family Reunification Directive as well as other European countries that have adopted similar laws to ensure that beneficiaries of international protection can effectively access and exercise their right to family reunification.

Getting to know your new home. Reunited families and volunteers on an excursion through the city of Vienna, accompanied by the integration counsellor of the Austrian Red Cross. © OERK/FamilienTreffen/Hechenberger





Tedros and his wife Merhawit were separated when they fled from Eritrea. Tedros later arrived in Sweden and was granted permanent residence. The family applied for family reunification and after a lengthy process they were able to reunite in Sweden in 2019, Östersund 2019. © Donald Boström/Swedish Red Cross

## Background

Globally, family reunification remains the most frequently used legal pathway, even though the number of permits delivered has been decreasing.<sup>6</sup> The Global Compact on Refugees identifies family reunification as a 'durable solution'.<sup>7</sup> As a result, in 2020, the Global Family Reunification Network was created, bringing together representatives from intergovernmental organisations, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations legal advocates and academia, as well as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).<sup>8</sup> It is the first global platform dedicated to the reunification of refugee families and holders of other complementary forms of international protection, with the aim to improve meaningful access to family reunification globally.

Despite the EU legal and policy framework and more than 20 years of implementing the EU Family Reunification Directive, reuniting family members of beneficiaries of international protection in Europe remains difficult and lengthy in practice due to

various legal, practical and administrative obstacles. Recent developments across Europe have further restricted the right to family reunification, either through temporary exemptions to the legislation, or significant delays in the processing of family reunification claims.<sup>9</sup>

However, by making it de facto more difficult for separated families to be reunited, it is harder for individuals to settle down and envisage long-term prospects in their new place of residence.<sup>10</sup> The constant worry about family left behind has a real impact on people's mental and physical health. Long waiting times for family reunification can only add to the anxiety, as people feel helpless for not being able to support their families left behind and not knowing when they will be able to reunite.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Europe provide various services<sup>11</sup> to separated families of beneficiaries of international protection. Beyond restoring and maintaining contact between family members,<sup>12</sup> they may offer legal and administrative assistance throughout the family reunification procedure, including travel arrangements and support to reunited families to integrate smoothly in their new



A family hugs one another as they reunite in France, having been supported by the French Red Cross. © Guillaume Binet/French Red Cross

communities. In their activities, they are assisted by a broad Family Links Network<sup>13</sup> that consists of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and ICRC delegations in the countries where the sponsor's<sup>14</sup> family members are residing. Hence, National Societies witness first-hand the reality of family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection in Europe and the negative impacts of family separation, both on them and their family members left behind.

In 2018, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Europe, including the ones working on family reunification cases of beneficiaries of international protection, established the Red Cross Family Reunification Working Group<sup>15</sup> which brings together National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from origin, transit and destination countries, the ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the Red Cross EU Office. Thanks to exchanges on this platform, National Societies have developed

a concrete understanding of the challenges faced by families and have been able to raise awareness at national and EU levels around key concerns which affect the right to family life and the principle of family unity.

### **Our Recommendations**

This position paper draws on the longstanding expertise<sup>16</sup> of European National Red Cross Societies<sup>17</sup> and the IFRC in supporting beneficiaries of international protection and their families.

#### **1. Ensure that all beneficiaries of international protection benefit from the right to family reunification.**

In Europe, people fleeing armed conflict, other situations of generalised violence, human rights violations and persecution may be given different forms of international protection. Some are granted refugee status in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention, while others

are given subsidiary protection or other forms of complementary protection. Compared to refugees, under the national law and practice of some EU Member States and associated countries, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection may face additional impediments in reuniting with their family members. These can be for example mandatory waiting periods before a beneficiary of subsidiary protection can lodge an application for family reunification, or the imposition of strict requirements that the sponsor must fulfil. Such practices fail to recognise that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have the same family reunification needs<sup>18</sup> as they are unable to return to their country of origin where there are substantial grounds to believe that they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm.

We call on:

- » EU Member States and associated countries to ensure the right to family reunification without any discrimination based on different protection statuses (1951 Convention refugees, subsidiary and other forms of complementary protection) and provide equal access to family reunification to refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary and other forms of complementary protection.
- » The European Commission to expand the scope of the EU Family Reunification Directive to include beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, including unaccompanied and separated children, and explicitly provide that they benefit from family reunification under the same favourable conditions as 1951 Convention refugees. This would be an important step towards bringing the EU Family Reunification Directive in line with the EU asylum acquis which ensures equal treatment for all beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>19</sup>

## **2. Expand the scope of family members eligible for family reunification.**

EU Member States have an obligation under the EU Family Reunification Directive to authorise the reunification of refugees with their ‘nuclear’ family members, i.e. spouses, minor children and parents of unaccompanied children, if those family relationships existed before the entry into the territory.<sup>20</sup> There is no obligation for Member States to reunite other family members, such as adult children, parents of adult children, grandparents or other relatives unless there is proof that those family members depend on the sponsor. Practice shows that some Member States interpret the notion of family unit narrowly or fail to allow entry of family members which fall beyond their understanding of core family<sup>21</sup> due to a stringent assessment of dependency links.

Besides, asylum processes and the subsequent procedures to determine an application for family reunification can be lengthy and complex. Although such delays are beyond the control of beneficiaries of international protection and their family members, they can affect their family reunification prospects. This is often observed in cases involving children whose family reunification application may be rejected because they turn 18 during the asylum or family reunification process.

A strict interpretation of family and dependency can have detrimental consequences for the well-being of beneficiaries of international protection, as the absence of relatives who could support them increases their vulnerability.<sup>22</sup>

We call on EU Member States and associated countries to:

- » Use a broad interpretation of family ties and consider the reunification of family members beyond the nuclear family whenever the specific situation requires so, based on a fair assessment of dependency which considers financial and physical aspects but also legal, emotional, cultural and social factors.
- » Allow unaccompanied and separated children irrespective of their age to reunite not only with their parents, but also with their siblings, legal guardians and other family members, especially in cases where their parents are deceased. Other family members may include caregivers or other

**“EU Member States should use a broad interpretation of family members eligible for family reunification.”**



“ **Red Cross offers legal help and administrative assistance throughout the family reunification procedure.** ”

Practical and legal assistance during the lengthy family reunification journey. © RKNÖE/Hechenberger

relatives with whom children share social, cultural or other family ties beyond the strict biological definition of family.

- » In line with the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU,<sup>23</sup> uniformly ensure that an unaccompanied child, irrespective of protection status, is regarded as a child as long as they were below the age of 18 at the time of entry into the territory of a Member State and at the time of submission of their asylum application, and not when the decision on the application for family reunification is made.

### **3. Lift any administrative and practical barriers to ensure that beneficiaries of international protection and their family members can effectively exercise their right to family reunification.<sup>24</sup>**

Practical hurdles can make family reunification in Europe a lengthy and unsafe process. Family members often need to cross borders to reach the embassy of the European State where their application can be lodged and processed. Some may even encounter violence or exploitation along their journeys.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the fees and expenses associated with the reunification process can sometimes constitute an insurmountable financial barrier and lead to long waiting periods. Expenses can include the translation and verification of documents, visa and embassy fees, the costs of staying in the country where the embassy is (if there is no embassy in the country of residence/origin) and of subsequent travel to the EU Member State where the sponsor

is located. Additional costs can be raised by external service providers which are often appointed by national authorities to manage visa application appointments. DNA tests are at times also required which often implies significant additional expenses which are not systematically covered by the authorities. Even when a family reunification request is accepted, family members face obstacles with exiting the countries they are located in and reuniting with sponsors in Europe. These obstacles often relate to difficulties with obtaining legal residence in the countries where family members need to remain during the family reunification procedure.

We call on EU Member States and associated countries to:

- » Increase cooperation between their embassies and make greater use of the provisions which enable family members outside Europe to apply for and collect visas at embassies of other states, as foreseen under the EU Regulation No 812/2009 (Common Visa Code).<sup>26</sup> This cooperation should particularly take place in cases of emergency situations and humanitarian crises. It should also allow for the collection of biometric data in accordance with internationally accepted data protection standards, as well as the submission of documentation, the facilitation of interviews, and the collection of travel documents.
- » When required, jointly engage in a diplomatic dialogue with non-EU countries of residence and transit to facilitate the

departure of family members whose reunification request was accepted, particularly in situations where countries of residence and transit place excessively stringent exit requirements.

- » Scale up authorities' capacities, including those of consular services, and constantly improve the knowledge of operational staff handling family reunification requests. This is also critical to facilitate the swift processing of applications.
- » Exempt applicants from the requirement to appear in person and offer alternative means, considering financial and administrative limitations and limitations in access to embassies in origin and transit countries. Such alternative means may include direct applications at the immigration office by the family member residing in the host country, but also the use of digital tools. Such flexible approaches should be particularly applied in cases of emergency situations and humanitarian crises, as well as with vulnerable individuals such as unaccompanied children, dependent and older people.
- » Ensure that external visa service providers operate in full respect of the family's right to reunification by providing timely appointments, reliable access to visa

services, and relevant support in situations with a humanitarian component.

- » Provide, where necessary, travel assistance – both financial and logistical – to reunite family members, either directly or through other actors, such as the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. In light of their precarious situation, all family members of beneficiaries of international protection should be excluded from any application or other procedural fees, especially if such costs are likely to hamper family reunification.

**4. Ensure that applications for family reunification are dealt with promptly and that the assessment of family links does not further impede the family reunification process.<sup>27</sup>**

It is often difficult for beneficiaries of international protection and their family members to obtain the necessary official documents from their national authorities. Although the EU Family Reunification Directive states that authorities should consider other types of evidence to prove the existence of a family relationship, some EU Member States reject applications based solely on the absence of official documentation. Collecting

Ehaa, Anas and their daughter Maria left their home in Homs, Syria, together due to the war in 2016. First, they arrived in Lebanon and from there they continued their flight to Sweden, where they were granted permanent residence. © Swedish Red Cross



the necessary documents can become even more challenging in those EU Member States which require that the application for family reunification is submitted within three months of the sponsor being granted protection status.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, a lack of 'valid' travel documents such as a national passport or equivalent can often become an obstacle to reach Europe even if an application for family reunification is approved.

Despite the precarious situation of family members who are left behind, the duration of the procedure from application to arrival can vary significantly between Member States, reaching up to years. Certain delays are often observed before getting an appointment to lodge the application in the first place. The overall delay before the family reunification can take place is often longer, due to potential further delays in the asylum process until a sponsor is granted international protection status and is allowed to apply for family reunification.

We call on EU Member States and associated countries to:

- » Refrain from referring beneficiaries of international protection or their family

members to the authorities of the country of origin or habitual residence to obtain documentation and evidence.

- » Adopt a flexible approach, providing sufficient time to collect the evidence necessary to prove the family relationship between the beneficiaries of international protection and their family members. If applicants lack formal documents to prove the family link, European countries should consider all available evidence, including photos, proof of contact and witness statements. Considering that 'family' should not be defined in strictly biological terms and their disruptive effect on individuals' well-being, DNA tests and age assessments should only be used as a last resort.<sup>29</sup>
- » In line with European Commission guidance,<sup>30</sup> refrain from requiring beneficiaries of international protection to meet accommodation, health and resources requirements if the application for family reunification is not submitted within a period of three months after the granting of international protection status.<sup>31</sup> These requirements are often disproportionate and may constitute a practical obstacle to family reunification.

Providing individual support and assistance to a newly reunified family. Assessing individual needs after years of separation. © RKNÖE/Hechenberger





- » Ensure swift access to family reunification and decide on the family reunification application no later than nine months from the date when the application is lodged, in line with the EU Family Reunification Directive.<sup>32</sup>
- » Consider issuing one-way laissez-passer documents to family members who cannot obtain national travel documents, and accept the Convention Travel Document<sup>33</sup> or the ICRC Emergency Travel Document as last resort.<sup>34</sup>
- » Increase the availability of free legal counselling and information to make sure that beneficiaries of international protection and their families can effectively access family reunification procedures and, where necessary, lodge an appeal against a rejected application. implementation of migration funds, including through implementing the Partnership principle.

### **5. Ensure that reunited families in Europe are adequately supported in their new life.**

Family reunification does not end with the arrival of family members in their destination country. Family members may face additional barriers to accessing essential rights, such as education and employment. In the EU, such access often depends on the status of the sponsor. The residence titles granted to family members are accessory to the sponsor's resident title, which makes family members susceptible to any changes occurring in the status of this person, its duration or even the continuation of their relationship.<sup>35</sup> The right to apply for an autonomous right of residence is reserved only for certain family members, usually the nuclear family, and only if certain additional conditions are fulfilled. However, autonomous status is important to allow individuals to reach their full potential and integrate in their communities.

Furthermore, measures to support the family unit to find proper accommodation, access the health system, apply for a job, and navigate complex administrative procedures on arrival still need to be further developed across Member States. Often, family allowances are either restricted or scarcely available following family reunification.<sup>36</sup> Research conducted by the British Red Cross<sup>37</sup> demonstrates that a failure of authorities to make the necessary

arrangements for the family members ahead of their arrival, and to flexibly respond to the particular circumstances reunited families face, hinders their successful integration and puts them at risk of destitution.

We call on the EU, its Member States and associated countries to:

- » Direct more resources towards better understanding the needs of families post-reunification and invest in policies that address any gaps in this regard.
- » Assess the needs of reunited families in a multidisciplinary manner<sup>38</sup> and support them to integrate as soon as possible when they arrive, with processes starting before their journey to destination countries. This includes providing information on the next steps the family should take and supporting them to find suitable housing, secure an income and access the welfare system, schooling, other tailored support for children<sup>39</sup> as well as psychosocial support. In addition, access to a full set of rights, such as unrestricted access to the labour market, is a key factor to enable the integration of family members in their new communities.
- » Enable access to social services in a similar manner as for local populations to avoid family breakdown, poverty or discrimination.
- » Ensure that admitted family members have the right to an autonomous residence permit and a secure status, independently from their sponsor, in a swift manner and with clear, non-bureaucratic conditions.

### **6. Ensure that the right to family reunification is respected and is not limited due to migration management objectives.**

Impediments to family reunification are increasingly used as a tool to reduce the number of new arrivals and control migration flows. Across Europe, there have been attempts to restrict or postpone access to family reunification.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, impediments to family reunification may lead family members who wish to reunite with their loved ones to resort to irregular pathways thus exposing themselves to serious threats and hardship.

An enhanced understanding of the needs of international protection beneficiaries affected by administrative practices, including in the context of COVID-19,<sup>41</sup> will be instrumental to address existing gaps and apply a protection-oriented approach which includes procedural flexibilities to give effect to the right of family unity. Regrettably, Europe-wide data<sup>42</sup> on permits issued for family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection are limited, or not available at all.

We call on EU Member States and associated countries to:

- » Systematise the collection of data on family reunification applications, decisions and issuance of visas. The European Commission, legally tasked to regularly report on

the implementation of the EU Family Reunification Directive, should closely monitor and assist EU Member States in overcoming any challenges in family reunification procedures and exchanging good practices.

- » Regularly review the impact of their policies, laws and practices, and address the legal, practical and administrative obstacles limiting or preventing family reunification, while considering the voices of affected people. Reunification must not be subject to residence/entry quotas and discretionary powers of authorities should be minimal when making decisions in this field.

 30.05.2023

## Endnotes

- 1 Under EU law, international protection encompasses refugee and subsidiary protection status (Article 2(a) of Directive 2011/95/EU of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted).
- 2 The most relevant provisions can be found in: Articles 17 and 23(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and Articles 9-10 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 7 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, provide that "everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life". See also Article 82(3) of the **Fourth Geneva Convention** and rule 105 of the ICRC International Humanitarian Law Database on respect for family life in international and non-international armed conflict.
- 3 Any person who is not a citizen of the EU within the meaning of Article 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and who is not a person enjoying the EU right to free movement, as defined in Article 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code).
- 4 Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification. All EU Member States are subject to the EU Family Reunification Directive except for Ireland and Denmark. Although Ireland and Denmark as well as Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and the UK are not subject to the provisions of the EU Family Reunification Directive, they have adopted similar laws on refugee family reunification. In this paper, the term 'Europe' refers to all countries applying the EU Family Reunification Directive or similar laws.
- 5 **Communication** from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on guidance for application of Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, 2014. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), **Not there yet: Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection**, 2023.
- 6 OECD and UNHCR, **Safe Pathways for Refugees II** (OECD-UNHCR Study on Third-country Solutions for Refugees: Admissions for family reunification, education, and employment purposes between 2010 and 2019), 2021.
- 7 UN, **Global Compact on Refugees**, 2018, para 14, page 50.
- 8 The Global Family Reunification Network was established under the auspices of the Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways and subsequently the Roadmap for 2030.
- 9 For a recent overview of the obstacles faced by beneficiaries of international protection in different countries, please refer to ECRE, **Not there yet: Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection**, 2023.
- 10 Red Cross EU Office, Swedish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, British Red Cross and ICRC, **Humanitarian consequences of family separation and people going missing**, 2019; Swiss Red Cross, **Family Reunification: An important factor for health and integration**, 2023 (in German).
- 11 See the three-year project **Reunification Pathways for Integration** (REPAIR) co-funded by the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which will run until 2024 and seeks to enable family reunification in the EU by assisting beneficiaries of international protection and their family members before, during and after arrival. More examples of the type of family reunification support that National Red Cross Societies in the EU provide can be found in the **Handbook on safe avenues to access protection in Europe**, 2023.
- 12 See the Red Cross and Red Crescent **Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025** and the **Restoring Family Links** website.
- 13 The **Family Links Network** of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement helps people look for their family members when they have lost contact due to armed conflict or other situations of violence, disasters, migration or other situations of humanitarian need. In addition to restoring contact between family members, the Movement may support people to reunite with their relatives, where possible and in line with applicable national laws.
- 14 'Sponsor' means a third country national residing lawfully in a Member State and applying or whose family members apply for family reunification to be joined with them, Article 2 of the Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification.
- 15 UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees, **Family Reunification: RCRC Working Group on Family Reunification** (Good practices).
- 16 Red Cross EU Office and ECRE, **Disrupted flight: The reality of separated refugee families in the EU**, 2014; **Handbook on safe avenues to access protection in Europe**, 2023; Red Cross EU Office, **Public webinar on family reunification**, 2021; Red Cross EU Office and UNHCR, **Public webinar Family Reunification Directive: 20 years of implementation**, 2022.
- 17 National Red Cross Societies in the EU, as well as the Icelandic Red Cross, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross and the British Red Cross.
- 18 UNHCR, **Persons in need of international protection**, 2017; **Submission** by UNHCR in the case of M.A. versus Denmark (Application no 6697/18), **Submission** by UNHCR in the case of J. K. versus Switzerland (Application no 15500/18).
- 19 See for example Directive 2011/95/EU on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast).
- 20 Articles 4, 9 and 10 of the EU Family Reunification Directive.
- 21 EMN, **Family Reunification of third country nationals in the EU**, 2017.
- 22 Red Cross EU, Swedish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross, British Red Cross and ICRC, **The humanitarian consequences of family separation**, 2019.
- 23 ECJ, Judgment of 12 April 2018 (**C-550/16** – Netherlands); ECJ, Judgment of 16 July 2020 (Joined Cases **C-133/19**, **C-136/19** and **C-137/19** – Belgium), UNHCR **statement** in the case of CR, GF, TY versus Landeshauptmann von Wien (C-560/20).
- 24 See also UNHCR, **UNHCR recommendations on flexible approaches to family reunification procedures in Europe**, 2023.
- 25 British Red Cross, **The Long Road to Reunion: making refugee family reunion safer**, 2020.
- 26 For example, **Article 5 and 8 Common Visa Code**.
- 27 See also UNHCR, **Conclusions on International Protection Adopted by the Executive Committee of the UNHCR Programme 1975–2017**, Conclusion 24, 2017.
- 28 Article 12(1) EU Family Reunification Directive.
- 29 See UNHCR, **UNHCR Note on DNA Testing to Establish Family Relationships in the Refugee Context**, 2008 and ICRC Guidance on ICRC Involvement in the use of DNA Analysis (available on request).
- 30 **Communication** from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on guidance for application of Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, 2014.
- 31 Article 7(1) and Article 12(1), EU Family Reunification Directive.
- 32 Article 5(4), EU Family Reunification Directive.
- 33 A travel document issued to a stateless person by a signatory to the UN Convention relating to the Statute of Stateless Persons, adopted on 28 September 1954.
- 34 The ICRC **Emergency Travel Document**, June 2022.
- 35 European Commission, **Family Reunification of Third-Country Nationals in the EU plus Norway: National Practices**, European Migration Network Inform, 2017.
- 36 European Commission, **Family Reunification of Third-Country Nationals in the EU plus Norway: National Practices**, European Migration Network Synthesis Report, 2017.
- 37 British Red Cross, **Together at last: supporting refugee families who reunite in the UK**, 2022.
- 38 Such assessment should be undertaken by a team of experts such as social work professionals, housing officers and employment officers.
- 39 See also **guidelines** in the European Child Guarantee.
- 40 This is for example the case in Austria, Denmark and most recently in the Netherlands. For an overview see ECRE **Not there yet: Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection**, 2023, but also Council of Europe, **Realising the right to family reunification of refugees in Europe**, 2017.
- 41 Red Cross EU Office, **Family unity cannot be compromised**, 2021.
- 42 Eurostat, **First permits issued for family reunification with a beneficiary of protection**

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“ For people who flee persecution, armed conflict or other situations of human rights violations and are forced to leave their family behind, family reunification is often the only way to enjoy family life once they reach safety. ”



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