

REPAIR PROJECT

Funded by the European Union's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), led by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in partnership with the Austrian Red Cross (ARC), British Red Cross (BRC), French Red Cross (FRC), and Slovenian Red

Cross (SRC), the **REunification PathWAY for IntegRation (REPAIR)** project will run for three years, from 2022 to 2024, supporting family reunification by assisting people granted international protection and their family members before, during, and after arrival in the EU.

“*Whether from Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, or Somalia, people who flee violence and persecution often get separated from their family members, which can have devastating consequences on their wellbeing. Without their loved ones present, they are not able to resume normal lives.*”

IFRC Europe Regional Director, Birgitte Ebbesen

Family Reunification: needs and context

Family unity and family life are fundamental rights enshrined in international and EU law. For beneficiaries of international protection (BiP) and their family members, family reunification (FR) is often the only way to enjoy the fundamental right to family life. Family separation can have devastating consequences on the well-being of individuals and their integration. Family Reunification also prevents desperate families from taking dangerous journeys to join their loved ones, often resulting in tragic deaths en route and several incidents of people going missing.

The Council Directive 2003/86/EC recognizes the need for more favorable conditions for refugees to exercise their right to family reunification. These are the measures mentioned in the text. While setting down minimum standards, the Directive does not prevent the Member States from applying more generous rules, such as granting beneficiaries of subsidiary protection the same favorable treatment or applying a broad definition of family beyond the nuclear one.

The 2014 Commission guidelines for the application of the Directive encourage the Member States to interpret the existing rules in a flexible manner. The European Commission's recommendation on resettlement and complementary pathways (this is the policy doc on the basis of which the EC has launched the present project opportunity) also highlights the need to improve access to family reunification.

However, obstacles persist, making family reunification a lengthy and unsafe process: A lack of information from the beneficiaries, the high costs of transport, the difficult access to embassies, difficulties to reach the family members, a family definition limited to the nuclear family, length of procedure, costly administrative processes, lack of support overseas, lack of training of social workers in host countries to support with this specific procedure.

The REPAIR project aims to assess and reduce those obstacles, in order to increase the number of people who can benefit from family reunification and create a more welcoming environment for the beneficiaries and effective integration possibilities for the beneficiaries and their families in Europe.

To tackle the barriers to FR, available support and assistance mechanisms will be improved, standardized, and expanded from the prearrival to post-arrival stages as part of four work packages of the project. Common standards, tools, and guidance materials will be co-produced with affected communities to raise awareness of the needs and adequate support for BiP and their family members and to foster cross-regional collaboration.



People's needs throughout the FR process will be addressed by high-quality individual casework, ensuring that BiP and their family members are well informed and legally supported throughout the FR journey. The internal structures of the ARC, BRC, FRC, and SRC will be reinforced to offer their expertise and coordinate with key stakeholders for following up on individual needs, ensuring the proximity and accessibility of services.

Although it is widely emphasized that FR supports the integration of BiP, service providers or receiving communities may not be aware of the needs. Activities will contribute to receiving societies actively supporting FR needs of beneficiaries and for service providers to play their critical role in the process, and ultimately in the longer term to enable more welcoming and safe receiving communities.

Identification of gaps and needs

One of the first goals of the project is to underline the gaps in the FR process. It is crucial to understand the concrete needs of beneficiaries and host communities and gaps in available services. To do so, the first part of the project assesses the barriers (before, during and after FR) faced by those who have already accessed FR and/or are currently in the process. Based on a Community Engagement and Accountability approach, diasporas and beneficiaries will be at the center of the evaluation process.

A survey will be designed in cooperation with identified diaspora organisations and/or beneficiaries of FR by the ARC. The partner national societies will use the ARC co-designed survey and adapt it accordingly to their national contexts.

The results of those needs assessments will allow the production and dissemination of digital learning materials to raise awareness among Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) National Societies, community partners, and relevant organisations.

Increased support to Beneficiaries of international protection

Another part of the project is to increase and expand the NS capacities to follow up FR cases. With the support of legal advisers, the NS will answer FR issues by providing direct help to Beneficiaries of international protection during all the phases of the process.

This will include support such as translation and legal advice during the FR pre-departure procedure. But also, material, and logistical support to facilitate the FR process during the departure. And finally, a post-departure follow-up to facilitate the integration (post arrival support, PSS, secure information, language classes, assistance to local authorities, etc).

Strengthening of capacities

Based on its expertise gained in the previous steps NS will work on improving national responses to a better FR process.

To do so, NS will train and animate a national network of volunteers dedicated to the follow-up of individual family reunion cases. They will also assist partners going from authorities to other national service providers. This strengthening of capacities also includes public information campaigns to raise awareness of the FR right.

The goal is to create a better understanding of the consequences of family separation and the right to family unit for beneficiaries of international protection, to build stronger links with host communities to include them in the support of the FR process (community sponsorship, better integration, etc).

Sharing knowledge and humanitarian diplomacy

The last objective of the project is to share all the knowledge gathered to improve access to family reunification on a global scale.

A transnational Project Steering Group will be established to provide guidance and input from key stakeholders including ICRC, RCEU Office, UNHCR, IRAP, and other academic and refugee organisations.

Learning from the action will be consolidated into case studies, tools, and documents which can be shared further. Multi-stakeholder and regional events will be organised to disseminate learning within the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and externally welcome stakeholders from the government, service providers, NGOs, and international organisations.

The sharing of learning and methods across Europe both within and beyond the Movement will support the development of improved and standardised approach to service provision in family reunification.



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