



## ‘What is Family Reunification?’

**Family Reunification** is a recognised reason for immigration in many countries. If one or more family members already resides in a certain country, the rest of the family may be able to immigrate to that country as well.

Family Reunification laws try to balance the right of a family to live together with the country's right to control immigration.

If you have family members who are already living legally in another European country, it is very important that you tell the Greek Asylum Service about them and that you would like to join them there.

## ‘Does it apply to me?’

If you fulfil one of the following conditions, you may be able to live with your family members in another European country:

- If you are a child under 18 years old and you are travelling without your parents or a legal guardian, you can ask to be taken to your mother/father, sister/brother, aunt/uncle, or grandmother/grandfather. Additional information for unaccompanied and separated children is provided below.
- If you are an adult over 18 years old, you can ask to live with your spouse or your child who is not yet an adult, if they are living legally in another European country.

You will have to show documents that can help to prove what you are claiming.

***YOU DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS TO HAVE ASYLUM IN THE RECEIVING COUNTRY.***

(Article 10 – Dublin III “ Family members who are **applicants** for international protection”)

## Possible Exceptions

### Especially vulnerable People

In some cases, a European country can approve Family Reunification **even if you do not fulfil the conditions above**. This may be the case for people who have very serious health problems or who have other specific needs. If you have such needs, be sure to ask about Family Reunification at your registration appointment. This is decided on a case-by-case basis. More information about what to do if you or a relative is an *especially* vulnerable case is provided below.

**If your request for Family Reunification is denied, the Greek state will decide if you can get asylum in Greece.**

## “How Do I Apply for Family Reunification?”

You can only apply for family reunification at full registration at the Greek Asylum Service.

- If you are on the [Islands](#) you will be registered when you arrive.
- If you are on the mainland you must organise to be [fully registered](#).

## What Happens at the Full Registration Appointment?

At the full registration appointment, it will be decided whether you have a valid reunification claim. Be prepared to provide documents proving that you have core family members in another country. It is much easier and quicker for the Greece Asylum Service to determine whether you have a valid family reunification claim if you come with all the right documents ready. You will also need to get your family member to complete a consent form to say that they consent to the reunification. The form can be found [here](#). The form can be completed in English or Greek.

Failure to provide the correct documents could slow the process down considerably. Information about what other documents could be required is below.

If it is decided that you have a valid claim, then Greece will send your file to the receiving country where your family is. Greece has **three months** to do this.

You will need to hand in your passports and identification documents at this registration appointment but they will be returned to you when your application for Family Reunification is complete.

At the registration appointment you will be issued with a card, it looks like this:



Όνομα/ Name

Επώνυμο/ Surname

Όνομα πατέρα/ Father's name

Όνομα μητέρας/ Mother's name

Ημερομηνία γέννησης/Date of birth

Τόπος γέννησης/Place of birth

Υπηκοότητα/Nationality

Διεύθυνση διαμονής/Residence address

ΑΘΗΝΑ, ΑΘΗΝΩΝ /

Ημερομηνία έκδοσης/Date of issue

10/06/2013

Ημερομηνία Υποβολής αιτήματος/Date of application

10/06/2013

Αριθ. Υπ./Case No:

Αριθ. Δελτίου/Card No:

Ημερ. συνέντευξης ή εξέτασης προσφυγής/

Date of interview or examination of appeal

17/06/2013

Ημερομηνία λήξης/Date of expiry

10/09/2013

Υπογραφή αιτούντος

signatures

Υπογραφή υπαλλήλου

signatures



On the top right hand corner of your card there is another date: “Date of interview or examination of appeal.”

If you are still in Greece on this date and your reunification case has not progressed, you should present yourself at the Greek Asylum Service with your identification paper containing your case number.

## What happens *after* the full registration appointment?

The ‘receiving’ country will take charge of your Family Reunification application and transfer you to be with your relative at least until your claims have been fully examined.

The receiving country have 2 months to process your application.

Once the receiving country have made a decision they inform the Greek Asylum Service who then inform you of their decision, or they may ask for supporting documents. If you are approved for Family Reunification, then Greece has **6 months** to send you to the receiving country and will provide you with your travel documents.

You will receive your passports or identification documents when you leave Greece.

## More Details on Family Reunification

### Documents to Prove Your Family Reunification Case

If you have any document which you think might be relevant and you are not sure, bring a copy to your interview with the Greek Asylum Service.

**You do not necessarily have to have documents** in all of these categories to prove your claim for Family Reunification, but if you have any documents in any of these categories, get copies printed (if applicable) and bring them to your interview.

**(Article 34(2) of the Dublin III Regulation: list of possible documents which can be relevant to Dublin family reunification applications)**

(a) personal details of the applicant, and, where appropriate, his or her family members, relatives or any other family relations (full name and where appropriate, former name; nicknames or pseudonyms; nationality, present and former; date and place of birth);

**Any kind of official documents which show your family relationship to the relative with whom you wish to be reunited with in another EU country.**

(b) identity and travel papers (references, validity, date of issue, issuing authority, place of issue, etc.);

**Any kind of official documents which show your identity and your relative's identity.**

(c) other information necessary for establishing the identity of the applicant, including fingerprints processed in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 603/2013; 29.6.2013 Official Journal of the European Union L 180/49 EN

This is information the Greek authorities and the other country where your relative is will have access to but you do not have direct access to it, so you are not expected to produce this evidence.

(d) places of residence and routes travelled;

Any kind of document which shows where you and your relative are resident and the routes you both travelled to get there.

(e) residence documents or visas issued by a Member State;

Any kind of official document which shows that your relative in another EU country has permission to remain in that country, either a residence permit, a passport issued by that country, or another kind of legal residence which is granted while their application for asylum is being examined, after they have fully registered their application – this may not be at the same time as they first registered their intention to apply for international protection, it is a kind of residence document which is normally issued when they have fully registered their claim and been interviewed to record the basic facts of their claim but not yet had their claim fully examined and decided on. If you are not sure whether your relative's residence document is at the right stage of their asylum procedure for you to apply for family reunification with them now, get a copy printed and bring it to the Greek Asylum Service, they will decide.

If you cannot access the Asylum Service for information or assistance quickly and you want to make sure you get all the right documents ready to make your family reunification as quick as possible, seek information and assistance from the legal aid implementing partner of UNHCR in your region of Greece- this may be The Greek Forum of Refugees, Metadrasi or DRC or another organisation, depending on where you are. There is a list of support organisations on our website [here](#).

(f) the place where the application was lodged;

**This is on your applicant for international protection registration paper or card.**

## Unaccompanied and Separated Children

The best interests of children should prevail over all other considerations, according to the law.

- Unaccompanied children are persons under 18 who are not accompanied by a parent or any adult family member caring for them.
- Separated children are persons under 18 who are accompanied by one parent OR another adult family member. Unaccompanied and separated children are entitled to prioritisation in family reunification procedures.

#### **Children under the age of 14.**

If the family reunification claim concerns an unaccompanied or separated minor who is under 14, then the Greek Public Prosecutor of the region they are registered in is responsible for carrying out either a:

- **Best Interests Determination**, if they are **unaccompanied** or a ...
- **Best Interests Assessment**, if they are **separated** from their parent.

If the **Best Interests determination** or **Best Interests assessment** of the child agrees that it is in the child's best interests to be reunited with the relative they are applying for family reunification with...

... and if they are separated from one parent

...and if the separated parent also gives consent or their consent has been sought

...or if it was impossible to contact them

... or they did not respond in a reasonable time....

...then the Public Prosecutor should decide to give permission for the child to be reunited with their relative.

Processing times with the Public Prosecutors in different regions of Greece vary widely and in some regions it is very difficult to get a timely response or decision from the Public Prosecutor who is the appointed legal guardian of unaccompanied minors. This is not within the control of the Asylum Service.

#### **Children between the ages of 14 and 18.**

If your family reunification claim concerns an unaccompanied minor who is over 14 and under 18, you may also have to show evidence that the minor is **willing** to be reunified with the parent or another adult family member. If the relative they are applying to be reunited with is not their parent, you may need to show that the relative is willing and able to take responsibility for caring for them. A simple, written, signed declaration that makes the intention clear

If the family reunification claim concerns a separated minor who is over 14 and under 18, and is with one parent or an adult family member **who is not their parent**, then it may also be required to show evidence that consent has been gained from the separated parent/s to allow reunification with the relative they want to be reunited with.

## **Especially Vulnerable Cases**

When a person or their relative is especially vulnerable and both of them are applicants for international protection in different EU countries, they may be able to obtain a residence permit. You may be reunited more quickly this way.

There is a Humanitarian Clause in the Dublin III regulation, which states that EU member states may apply to grant a residence permit to reunify you and your relative, even if they are not directly obliged to by the provisions of that Regulation.

If you think this might apply to you, ask for more information and assistance [from support groups](#).

In some EU countries, including Germany, there is another procedure for granting a residence permit in exceptional circumstances for humanitarian reasons, which may also be quicker. Because Germany is currently overwhelmed with processing asylum and family reunification applications, it is likely that the level of 'exceptional circumstances' for this to apply to you would have to be very exceptional.

If you are in extremely urgent need of family reunification due to a severe vulnerability of you or your relative in another EU country, ask for more information and assistance,

***Seek competent legal information and assistance if you are at all unsure***

Family reunification procedures are complicated. If you need legal information or assistance, make sure that the lawyer you contact is really knowledgeable and experienced in these procedures. The legal aid implementing partners of UNHCR in each region are accountable for the services they provide and so you can expect their information and advice to be more reliable.

If you are not sure who the legal aid implementing partner organisation of UNHCR in the region of Greece where your asylum application is registered is, ask the UNHCR [Protection officer](#) in your area. If you ask other UNHCR staff, they may not know the answers you need, but they should refer you to the UNHCR Protection officers in your area.

You could also ask for the UNHCR Protection referral pathway document to be translated and made available to you so that you know who and which organisation to ask for help with different kinds of enquiries or problems.

You could also contact us at [www.refucomm.org](http://www.refucomm.org) using the contact form.

***Peace be with you***

[www.refucomm.org](http://www.refucomm.org)