Red Cross publishes a report highlighting challenges in family reunification for persons granted asylum

This advocacy document presents a thorough examination of the relevant legal regulations and publicly available information pertaining to the implementation of the right to family reunification for asylum seekers. It incorporates statistical data and insights gathered from lawyers and advocates who provide legal assistance to foreigners, as well as other publicly available sources.

The document offers a systematic analysis of the situation, yielding interpretive and inductive conclusions that inform its recommendations. These recommendations align with the Lithuanian Red Cross's longstanding commitment to protecting the rights and interests of refugees and asylum seekers. The experience of separation from family, particularly when it is forced, can be profoundly distressing and have a lasting impact on an individual. For those fleeing war and persecution, reuniting with family members who remain in another country is often the top priority upon arrival in the host country. In such cases, family reunification is frequently regarded as a crucial prerequisite for successful rehabilitation and integration.

Despite the recognition of the individual's right to family reunification and the state's positive obligation to facilitate its implementation through mediation and assistance, foreigners who have been granted asylum in Lithuania often encounter significant difficulties in reuniting with family members who remain in another country. The stories of asylum seekers highlight the systemic problems that foreigners who have been granted asylum in Lithuania face in exercising their right to family reunification. While ad hoc solutions may be found in certain individual cases, many people remain trapped in uncertainty.

The current legal framework formally allows family members of an asylum seeker to benefit from family reunification, but the implementation of this right lacks a systematic approach, interconnected structures and processes, and tailored procedures and solutions adapted to the specific situation of refugees. In Lithuania, "family reunification" is often a difficult-to-achieve outcome rather than a well-defined and consistent process that begins with the granting of asylum to an individual (and, consequently, the acquisition of the right to family reunification) and continues until their family members arrive and settle in

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A comprehensive process that covers all aspects of family reunification and is accessible and understandable to the individual who has been granted asylum is essential. In light of the identified problems, we propose the establishment of a flexible, operational, effective, and refugee-centered family reunification procedure that defines a clear algorithm, sequence of procedural actions, conditions, and rules for using this procedure.

This procedure would be initiated by a foreigner who has been granted asylum in Lithuania (thus exercising their right to family reunification) or their family members abroad (thus exercising their right to family reunification), and its outcome would be a formal confirmation of the right to family reunification, enabling the relevant individuals to enter and reside in Lithuania without additional administrative requirements.

The model proposed by the Lithuanian Red Cross builds upon existing elements from other procedures, ensuring compatibility with the general principles of the Lithuanian migration system. The proposed model also eliminates certain restrictions that lack rational justification and obvious benefits for the state, and instead encourages the state to take proactive measures to promote and facilitate family reunification, such as incorporating a family reunification component into the integration package. By doing so, the state can ensure that family reunification is a clearly defined and consistent process that supports the successful integration of refugees in Lithuania.

Source(s)

- Lithuanian Red Cross | Lietuvos Raudonasis Kryžius (17 June, 2025), Lietuvoje prieglobsčio gavusių asmenų teisės į šeimos susijungimą įgyvendinimo iššūkiai [The challenges of implementing the right to family reunification for individuals who have received asylum in Lithuania (revised and updated edition)], https://redcross.lt/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/LIETUVOJE-PRIEGLOBSTI-GAVUSIU-ASMENU-TEISES-I-SEIMOS-SUSIJUNGIMA-IGYVENDINIMO-ISSUKIAI-LT-2025.pdf

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