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For freedom of movement: Independent information for refugees and migrants coming to Europe

من اجل حرية التنقل : معلومات مستقلة للاجئين و المهاجرين القادمين الى اوروبا

Pour la libre circulation: Informations indépendantes pour réfugiés et migrants arrivant en Europe

برای آزادی و حرکت : اطلاعات مستقل برای پناهندگان و مهاجران آینده در اروپا

Internet:
www.w2eu.info

Updates:
http://live.w2eu.info

Contact:
contact@w2eu.info
w2eu_info@yahoo.com

Family reunification based on Dublin III regulation

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Families might find themselves in a situation where one person went first to a specific country, and his/her family-member has remained behind in another European country. In that case, you have the possibility to ask for family reunification. You apply in the country where you are, in order to go where your relative is.

Attention! Currently no one can estimate how long the procedure will take until you are out of Greece and reunified with your family as more than 50,000 refugees got trapped only since a short period in Greece and family reunification applications as well as normal asylum applications and relocation applications that all are handled by the same state office have peaked within the last few weeks. Anyway, you should still try to apply as soon as possible in order not to lose time as this is for many the only legal way out of Greece.

Attention! Family reunification does not hinder you of leaving Greece before completing the procedure in case the borders open again.

How do I apply for family reunification if my relative is still in the asylum procedure/ has received political asylum or subsidiary protection status?

- The family member in the country where you want to be reunited to has to get registered for asylum. **Attention!** The date of arrival is not necessarily the same like the date of registration.
Due to a work overload authorities in many countries register asylum seeking refugees after days, weeks or even months. Tell your relative to send you the newest identity document he/she received from the authorities in the country he/she applied for asylum in order to cross check with an NGO in which state of registration he/she is. Your relative can also check for help in the procedure in the country he/she is:
<http://w2eu.info/contacts.en.html>
- Before applying for family reunification check what your relative has stated to the authorities concerning his/her family. Attention! It is crucial that he/she has mentioned to have relatives, in the best case he /she mentioned specifically you with your correct name, family name and date of birth (age). It is not possible to apply for family reunification if your relative has declared not to have any relatives alive. It is though possible to apply if he/she stated to have lost contact to his/her relatives. Attention! Get the exact information on your age he/she stated (if necessary get a copy from their asylum interview) and take care to write your and his/her name exactly as written already by him/her.
- Get an appointment at the Asylum Service in Athens, Thessaloniki or elsewhere in order to ask for family reunification. Attention! You will go typically through asylum procedure but

apply for family reunification. In this frame you can also apply for accommodation in a refugee camp, but currently there is a huge lack of places, so only unaccompanied minors can access a camp after a certain waiting period of around 2-4 weeks depending on urgency and vulnerability. Attention! The hugest problem is to get access to the Asylum Service in order to make an appointment. Some NGOs offer help for the necessary Skype procedure. Unaccompanied minors do not need to go through the Skype procedure to get an appointment but can seek the help of an NGO such as ARSIS, PRAKSIS, GCR and others.

- Print a copy of the identification document of your relative. Take also any contact of your relative and his/her lawyer or other supporters with you. Visit an NGO that can assist you in the procedure to make sure everything is going well.
- If you are an unaccompanied minor it is highly crucial to state that your relative has been your legal guardian already back in your home country.

If you are 1-17 years old at the time you apply for family reunification and you are without any close family member in Greece you can apply for family reunification with:

- Most efficient:
Parents – one parent – brother / sister or persons who were the responsible adults in place of the parents already before leaving the home country
- Working well:
Uncle – aunt – grandparent(s) who can take care of you
- Possible:
Other relatives

If you are an adult you can apply for family reunification with:

Spouse or your child...

- Most efficient:
...if they have refugee status/ subsidiary protection
- Working well:
...if they are in the asylum procedure (marriage must have been already in the country of origin)
- Possible:
...if they have another right to stay

If you are an adult and your relative is also an adult but not your spouse, you can apply based on humanitarian grounds to...

- Effectively but difficult:
...to your adult children, siblings, parent if you are pregnant or suffer a heavy disease or psychological problems, if you have a newborn child, if you are severely disabled, and in need of the support of your child which you should be able to proof by medical certificates
- Very difficult:
...to other relatives

How can I proof my family relationship?

- Pages of your family-book, a marriage certificate, birth certificates, papers from your country of origin with the same family names, places of birth etc.
- Family photos.
- Experience showed that in some cases it could also be helpful to have a witness statement of a social worker or lawyer of your family to whom you wish to be reunited to or yourself. If they witnessed a phone or Skype call and can therefore state to have witnessed that the interaction between you and your family seems genuine, loving and familiar and that this would be proof for them that the relationship you have stated to have to each other is true.

Attention! Authorities can ask for a DNA-test if you lack other proofs. On the other side sometimes the procedure gets faster if you give the results of a DNA test. **Attention!** Names, dates and places of birth have to be like in the official papers.

How long will the procedure take?

1. Greece has three months to ask the other EU country for the family reunification.

Attention! After three months from the moment you apply for asylum you cannot apply for family reunification any more!

2. The other country has another two months to send its answer back to the Dublin office in Greece.

3. After a positive answer Greece has six months to “send” you to the country you applied to go.

In total the maximum time according to law is 11 months.

Attention! There are right now a lot of people asking for asylum registration. So nobody knows how long it will actually take until one can apply for family reunification. Delays are certain.

Under which circumstances will the procedure be fast tracked?

- Unaccompanied minors applying for family reunification from within detention can ask for a fast track procedure, where the answer has to be submitted within one month.
- If you or your relatives are seriously sick (physically or mentally) get a doctors certificate and hand it to the authorities.

What rights do I have in Greece after I apply for family reunification?

You get the same rights as an asylum applicant.

- You can apply for housing in an open reception centre. **Attention!** Currently only unaccompanied minors can get a place and even they have to wait for an unknown period of time. The open reception centres are no prisons. You can freely move in and out during opening hours. You will have the support of social workers and lawyers, you can learn languages and you have a bed in a shared room and food. It will take some weeks until a place is found currently.
- You have access to the public health system and get free medical aid in hospitals.
- You are also allowed to rent a room, flat, house.
- You are allowed to marry.
- Children can go to school.

If it takes long, will I not have too much expenses?

Renting a flat and getting food supplies if needed will cause expenses. But consider the expenses in money and the risks of leaving Greece clandestinely in comparison.

If I apply for family reunification and the border opens suddenly can I still go?

Yes. Applying for family reunification does not hinder you from moving on by yourself.

I have registered myself to the authorities originally with a wrong age can I still correct it?

You can correct your age during family reunification application.

Attention! If you register as an unaccompanied minor be aware that the Greek authorities have an obligation to protect you and put you in an open camp for minors. If no such place is available they can put you alternatively in detention until a place is found in an open camp (protective custody). Currently this has been reported to happen only in Idomeni and in some occasions in Thessaloniki region. Unaccompanied minors in the area of greater Athens do not have this problem in the moment.

In which direction will the family reunification be completed generally?

Since 2011 when Dublin returns to Greece got halted temporarily family reunification always goes out of Greece! BUT, normally the European country in which the first asylum registration has been done is responsible for the asylum procedure for the whole family.

Attention! Family reunification normally goes in the direction of the country where the majority of the family resides. This general rule does currently NOT apply for Greece but for example if you are in Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Croatia, Austria etc and apply there for family reunification with your relative in the “North”.

Attention! Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Bosnia are not included in the Dublin Regulation, so you cannot apply for Family reunification under Dublin from there.

Will a family reunification harm my relatives?

- Asylum case?
No, as long as you inform him/ her before applying and check exactly what he/ she said in his/ her asylum case in order not to say something contradictory and in order to write all your personal data correctly.
- Living conditions?
No, as you can still apply to stay in a separate place in case things don't work out with staying together after reuniting.

Attention! If your relative feels nervous about the idea to apply for family reunification, give him/her a contact to someone who can explain him/ her the whole procedure so he/ she knows exactly what would happen. If you don't know whom to ask you can send us an email:

w2eu_info@yahoo.com

Family reunification under other laws and procedures?

The ones having relatives in another EU country who 1. applied for asylum and received another status than political asylum or subsidiary protection and 2. who already have a national passport from the country of residence have to apply for family reunification under other procedures.

Attention! In the latter case you have to ask the embassy of the country where your relative lives for family reunification.

Attention! Unaccompanied minors in Greece who have their mother or father in another EU country holding a political asylum status or a EU countries' passport and who want to reunite with them can apply for this before the respective embassy in Greece. Unaccompanied minors whose brother, sister, uncle or aunt are holding a protection status (including travelling documents) in Greece can try to apply for the legal guardianship before a Greek court and in the following apply for family reunification before the respective embassy.

For information on legal ways to travel to the US, Australia and Canada another infosheet will be prepared.

Useful contacts

Governmental offices for family reunification application:

ASYLUM SERVICES / ATHENS

P. Kanellopoulou 2
10177 Athen
+30 210 698 6500
asylo@asylo.gov.gr

Skype access to receive a date for registration in the area of Greater Athens:

Farsi/Dari: Monday from 13 to 14 o'clock,
Tuesday and Wednesday from 12 to 13 o'clock.
Skype ID: asylum.service.farsi.dari

Arabic: Monday 10-12, Tuesday 10-11
Skype ID: asylum.service.arabic

English/ French: Monday 12-13, Wednesday 11-12
Skype ID: asylum.service

REGIONAL ASYLUM OFFICE

THESSALONIKI
Building of former «B KTEO», Pontou Street –
Lahanagora District,
540 01 Kalochori Thessalonikis
(The Office is served by bus line No.9, Stop
«Anapsyktirio»)
Tel: +30 2310-751775
Fax: +30 2310-267722
E-mail: pga.thessalonikis@asylo.gov.gr

Skype access to receive a date for registration –
rest of Greece

Farsi/ Dari: Thursday 13-14
Arabic: Thursday 9-10
English / French: Thursday 12-13

NGOs providing legal aid and advise for family reunification:

ECOMENICAL REFUGEE PROGRAMME
Provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers.

Iridanou 20, Athens
first floor
(close to train station: Megaro Mousikis or
Evangelismos)
Tel.: +30 210 72 95 926

GREEK COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES (GCR)
A Greek non governmental Organization that supports asylum seekers and refugees in Greece. Offers legal counselling and social assistance free of charge. To make an appointment go there from Monday to Friday before 9 o'clock.
Solomou 25, Athens
Exarheia (near Omonia)
Tel.: +30 210 38 00 990

NGOs providing support for family reunification of unaccompanied minors and vulnerable cases (in Athens):

ARSIS

Tenedou 21B

Near Amerikis square / Patission Street

from 10 to 17 o'clock

NGOs offering computer and internet infrastructure to call the Asylum Office per skype (in Athens):

Metadrasi

Thesprotias 8 (near Larissis railway station)

Sudanese Refugee Association

Astipalaia 2 / Patission 224 (between Amerikis Square and Koliatsou Square)

FAROS

For unaccompanied minors

Ioulianou 18 (Exarhia)

Babel

I. Drosopoulou 72 (Amerikis Square)

Greek Refugee Council

Solomou 25 (Exarhia)

ARSIS

Mavromaitaion 43 (near Paidiontou Areos Park)

Afghan Community

Khalkokondili 35 (Omonia)

For contacts in countries where your relatives reside you can check here:

<http://w2eu.info/contacts.en.html> or you can write us an email on w2eu_info@yahoo.com so we can give you an advice where to ask.

What is w2eu.info?

w2eu.info provides contacts and counselling to refugees and migrants on their way. At the outer borders of Europe, people are refused entry, they are imprisoned and deported.

Nevertheless people are coming. w2eu.info is supporting you who come to Europe in your struggle for a better life.

We welcome all travellers on their difficult trip and wish you all a good journey - because freedom of movement is everybody's right!

Permalink to this infosheet: <http://w2eu.info/greece.en/articles/greece-family.en.html>

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www.w2eu.info

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<http://live.w2eu.info>

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contact@w2eu.info
w2eu_info@yahoo.com
