

REPAIR PROJECT

SLOVENIA

HIGHLIGHTS



REPAIR

Family Reunification offers a safe route for families separated by conflict and instability to join their loved ones. Although straight-forward in concept, families often struggle with legal, administrative and logistical obstacles.

Since 2022, the three-year Reunification Pathways for Integration (REPAIR) project has bolstered practical support to families for Family Reunification, at the same time including, listening to, and learning from them to understand how the system can better meet families' needs.

REPAIR IN SLOVENIA

As a REPAIR partner, the Slovenian Red Cross (SRC) has engaged with people with lived experience and other relevant organizations to co-produce guidance and tools on Family Reunification, while also offering direct support before, during and after reunification.

ACHIEVEMENTS

SRC highlights during the REPAIR project, include:

- Supporting more than 30 families through the family reunification process, comprising approximately 130 family members from more than nine different countries.
- Training more than 50 staff and volunteers on family reunification, including on the provision of psychosocial support.
- Reaching more than 450 people with information about family reunification.
- Organizing information sessions with partners (UNHCR, IOM, PiC) from government and non-government stakeholders, building awareness on families' needs and the support available to them.
- Convening a Slovenian family reunification stakeholders' network for better coordination and knowledge and resource sharing.

- Through the family reunification stakeholders' network, creating a Slovenian family reunification manual, and a *Roadmap to Family Reunification in Slovenia* leaflet, both in seven languages, helping organisations and families understand the reunification process, including the documentation required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Simplify family reunification procedures

Complicated administrative procedures and legal frameworks – and a lack of accessible, reliable information – mean those applying for family reunification need professional legal support to stand any chance of success.

Reform is necessary to protect family unity and ensure family reunification is genuinely and fairly accessible to all beneficiaries of international protection and their families.

2. All stakeholders have a responsibility to speed up the process

Family Reunification requests take too long, putting further strain on families, often already separated for years even before the process begins. Processing of applications, decision making, communication of decisions, and the facilitation of travel, all need to be faster, with adequate resources allocated.

3. Establish financial support

The cost of application, and families' lack of access to financial support, are two of the main obstacles to family reunification. DNA testing, travel costs, IOM escorts, exit visas, notary fees, and translation costs can amount to thousands of euros, putting reunification out of reach or forcing people into debt. This is especially the case for children seeking reunification.



This project is funded by the European Union



To find out more about the achievements and findings of the REPAIR project – read our online report, and access our online toolkit using the QR Codes.



Online Toolkit



Online Report

The financial burden should be reduced - for example by accepting documents in original languages, and the provision of financial support.

4. A stakeholders' body

A coordination body, facilitating cooperation, trust and discussion should be set up for stakeholders involved in family reunification, including government ministries, social services, Civil Society Organisations, international organisations, and people under international protection.

5. The same rights and state support for refugees and people under subsidiary protection.

Families of people under subsidiary protection are granted temporary residence for a period matching that of their sponsor, and are not eligible for accommodation assistance. In the case of unaccompanied children applying for family reunification, the child-sponsor must cover all accommodation costs. This is unrealistic and, in some cases, forces children to leave education to earn money.

6. Prioritise families' protection needs, including after arrival.

Families seeking reunification may be in immediate danger. This should be recognised throughout the process. Policies around citizenship should prioritise the safety of children born in Slovenia to people under international protection after family reunification has taken place who could face the threat of deportation to a country they do not know.

7. Longer-term integration support is essential for families to thrive.

Too often families lack support to establish themselves in their new communities. Slovenian language-learning support is often inadequate, as is the provision of accommodation. High rents, xenophobia, misinformation, and administrative obstacles make access to housing particularly hard for refugees, especially those with larger families. Families of people under subsidiary protection face additional hardship as they have even less access to support.

8. Emphasise psycho-social support and different family members' specific needs.

Moving to a new country, adapting to a new culture, and re-connecting with family members is a challenge. Long-term support, including the involvement of social workers and access to psycho-social support, is essential.

Women in particular may be at risk of becoming isolated. In cases of family breakdown they may not dare separate from their sponsor due to fears over their right to remain in the country and lack of other support. In such cases, family members should have the right to a secure status, independent of their sponsor.

9. Greater investment by government and local authorities.

Integration support should be holistic and continuous but both civil society and the state lack capacity; the Government Office for Support and Integration of Migrants, for example, has responsibility only for sponsors, not their families. Legislative changes are needed to assign responsibility and resources and build capacity to support reunited families.

Integration occurs at the local level, requiring local authorities to be more involved. A clear integration strategy - engaging local authorities and administrations, government services, educational communities, NGOs, employers, and religious communities - coordinating responsibilities through a clear division of roles, is needed to better direct efforts at national and local levels.

10. Greater formal inclusion of people under international protection and their families

People with lived experience of family reunification - including people under international protection and their families - should be included in working groups and other consultative and decision-making bodies to review and inform policies and legislation.

Led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in partnership with the Austrian, British, French, and Slovenian National Red Cross Societies, the REPAIR project is co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).



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