

“Family reunification for refugee and migrant children: standards and promising practices”

Webinar

Thursday, 2 July 2020, 9.30 – 12.00

Background information

The protection of refugee and migrant children has been in the focus of the Council of Europe, especially in the last five years. From 2017 to 2019 a comprehensive Action Plan on the protection of refugee and migrant children in Europe was implemented by the Organisation, with the support and coordination of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees. Under the umbrella of the Action Plan, the Office of the SRSR has developed a handbook on legal standards and good practices on family reunification.

This publication is addressed to those who design and apply laws and is conceived as a point of reference for capacity-building material, technical assistance, co-operation projects and new practices for and with relevant authorities and institutions. It focuses on the reunification of families with children in the context of international migration, and in particular on reunification possibilities for unaccompanied and separated refugee and migrant children. Its aim is to share good examples but also lessons learned on which further practice can build and evolve. It was developed based on over 40 contributions from state and non-governmental stakeholders, including from international organisations like UNHCR, IOM and ICRC.

Although the publication was developed in a context unrelated to COVID-19, it is now pertinent to note that family reunification is a procedure which could enhance the protection of unaccompanied children in lockdown in various facilities across the continent by facilitating relocation from congested regions and therefore help both children have a less traumatic experience of the public health measures imposed and states to fulfil their international obligations.

To launch this publication, the Special Representative would like to hold an online event on the topic of family reunification. The purpose of the event is to increase awareness on how children’s rights can be ensured through adequate family tracing and family reunification procedures. The emphasis is on enhancing co-operation between different professionals involved in family reunification procedures, as well as NGOs.