

# FAMILY REUNIFICATION & HUMANITARIAN VISA TO SWITZERLAND

**T**he importance of the family unit and family reunification for migrants is recognized and protected by a variety of instruments under both international human rights and international humanitarian law.

Families belong together. Yet refugees' migration journey often tears families apart, causing stress and negatively impacts their participation in economic, social and cultural life.

The right to respect for family life is also part of the Swiss Federal Constitution, which recognises the importance of this right for all people in Switzerland, including refugees, and guarantees its protection.

Since July 2021 IOM Switzerland has been managing the Swiss Family Reunification project (previously managed by HQ) and has been supporting beneficiaries who have been granted family reunification or humanitarian visa on a case-by-case basis. This includes the comprehensive logistical support to the family members at every stage of the process as they travel from the country of origin/country of residence to Switzerland.

## Family Reunification

Recognized refugees (holding a B or C permit), may bring nuclear family members to Switzerland, under the Swiss family reunification scheme. This includes spouses, registered partners and underage children, as well as adopted or step children. Other family members, particularly parents and siblings of unaccompanied children — even if they are underage — are not entitled to family reunification.

Persons who hold an F permit (temporarily admitted persons) must wait at least three years, after the decision granting them temporary admission status, before applying for family reunification for their children under 18 years of age and their spouse or partners. In addition, there are some financial requirements which need to be fulfilled

**Geographical Coverage:** Switzerland and various countries of origin

**Beneficiaries:**

- Recognized refugees holding a B or C permit in Switzerland, who have been granted family reunification;
- Beneficiaries travelling to Switzerland with a humanitarian visa

**Nuclear family members:** spouses, registered partners and underage children, as well as adopted or step children

**Managed by:** IOM Switzerland

**Partners:** Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), cantonal partners, NGOs and other actors.

## Humanitarian Visa

If a person's life or physical integrity is directly, seriously, and concretely threatened in his or her country of origin, he or she may apply for a visa to come to Switzerland on humanitarian grounds. According to current practice, this type of visa is granted only in very exceptional cases and the decision to grant a humanitarian visa lies exclusively with the Swiss authorities.

## Project Objectives

The objective of this project is to support migrants and refugees' cases to exercise their right to family unity through safe and regular family reunification as well as to support those who have been granted humanitarian visa for Switzerland. More broadly speaking, the project aims at contributing to the Swiss Government's migration governance in general and its assistance to migrants in particular.

IOM Switzerland aims to achieve the project's objectives by working towards the following outcomes:

### 1. Increased capacity to engage in Family Reunification and Humanitarian Visa

Beneficiaries are able to travel in a safe, regular and informed manner from their country of departure to their final destination in Switzerland. Medical needs and other vulnerabilities are taken into account for the organization of the journey.

### 2. Safe travel from country of departure to Switzerland

Beneficiaries are able to travel in a safe, regular and informed manner from their country of departure to their final destination in Switzerland. Medical needs and other vulnerabilities are taken into account for the organization of the journey.

**For more information:**

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement EJPD  
**Staatssekretariat für Migration SEM**

IOM Switzerland works in partnership with the SEM, cantonal partners, NGOs and other actors on family reunification and humanitarian visa to Switzerland. This project is managed by IOM Switzerland, in coordination with IOM offices in countries of origin.