

Good advice on family reunification for refugees

Are you a refugee in Denmark, and would you like to bring a family member here?
Or are you in contact with a refugee who needs help applying?

This pamphlet explains who has the right to family reunification, and which rules apply.

Also available in Danish at refugeeswelcome.dk/advice



There are different sets of rules for family reunification in Denmark:

1. The normal Danish rules;
2. EU rules;
3. Rules for refugees.

This pamphlet deals **only with the requirements for refugees**, which are more lenient, but still difficult for some people to fulfil.

At Refugees Welcome we can answer questions, help with filling out applications, submit special remarks or appeal rejected cases. You can contact us in the following ways:

- Call 50558011 (leave a message, if a volunteer adviser doesn't answer immediately)
- Write an e-mail to kontakt@refugeeswelcome.dk
- Meet us in person in Copenhagen, see more on the website refugeeswelcome.dk/advice
- Write to us on Facebook (Refugees Welcome, Denmark)

What is “family”?

Denmark interprets the right to family life strictly, and normally only grants residence to nuclear families, ie. **father, mother and children under 18 years of age.**

Partner: Can either be a spouse or someone who has been in a relationship for an extended time.

Children: Must be your own biological children or children who are adopted after rules that comport with the Danish rules for adoption, or children of a partner who applies at the same time. If the child is over 15 years of age special rules apply.

Parents: Unaccompanied minors who are refugees have the right to bring their parents here, but adults will normally not be allowed to bring their parents.

Siblings: Unaccompanied minors who are refugees have the right to bring their siblings under 18 here, if their parents also come. You can also bring a younger sibling here, if you have had a father/mother role over the child, because his or her parents are dead. Adults, however, normally can't bring their adult siblings here.

What are your rights?

Refugees have the right to be reunited with their nuclear family that is already established. They don't necessarily have a right to make a new family and bring them to Denmark. The general rule is that Denmark has the obligation to reunite existing families, but only if they cannot live together safely in another country.

That means that you will need to document the following:

PARTNER:

- a valid, real wedding certificate OR proof of cohabitation for at least 18 months,
- that the pair has established a genuine relationship, not only with the purpose of bringing one of them here,
- that the marriage was entered freely and after both individual's wishes (if spouses are related to each other, it is regarded as a rule as involuntary),
- that the marriage lives up to the Danish requirement that both parties should be over 18 and physically present at the wedding,
- that the identity of the partners can be documented in the form of a passport, birth certificate or ID card (if you don't have a passport and can't get one, you must explain why).

CHILDREN:

- that the child's identity can be confirmed, and that he or she is a biological child (birth certificate and/or DNA-test) of the resident or of a partner applying at the same time, or official adoptee of the resident in Denmark, comporting with Danish adoption rules,
- that the resident or the partner has custody over the child (alone or shared). If it is shared, it must be documented that there is permission to move the child to Denmark,
- if the child is over 15 years old: that there aren't other family members who can take care of the child, or that the child has special health problems.

On documentation:

- Marriage certificates from Eritrea are generally not recognized, and for Syria and Eritrea Denmark requires both a religious and a civil marriage certificate.
- Birth certificates for children are normally required. Alternatively, or as an addition, DNA testing can be requested, which can be arranged via the nearest Danish embassy while your application is being processed.
- Certificates should first be submitted as a scanned picture, but you might be asked to deliver the original copy later.

If you get married after you arrive in Denmark:

- If you were a couple before one of you came to Denmark, but get married after that date (it may also be a re-marriage in another country), because your application was refused due to e.g. insufficient length of cohabitation or an invalid marriage certificate, you will generally be granted family reunification with a new, valid marriage certificate, especially if you have maintained contact throughout the whole period.
- If you were not together before one of you came to Denmark, there is a high risk of the authorities assuming that the relationship has been established with the intention of gaining residency and you will be turned down, in spite of a valid certificate. It is certainly not a good idea to get married during the first visit. Internet correspondence is not sufficient to document a relationship but can support physical visiting periods. It is practically impossible to establish a cohabitation period of 18 months, as the person in Denmark must not leave the country for such a long period.
- If the other party already has a residence permit in a safe country, e.g. in the EU, you will not be exempted from living up to the normal, Danish criteria, even if you knew one another earlier, unless you can show that the person in Denmark does not have permission to live in the other country. (You need to apply for family reunification in the other country first and be able to supply evidence that the application was rejected).

Separation of children and their parents:

In some cases, a parent will get permission to bring a child to Denmark, but not the other parent. This can happen if the family life as such is not recognized, but only the child's right to be reunited with their parent in Denmark. It can create a hopeless situation where the child must grow up with e.g. their dad in Denmark or their mum in Ethiopia. Due to visa rules, distance and cost, the child is in reality separated from one parent. These cases unfortunately require a long and hard battle and some people give up.

If the child is over 15 years old and lives in their home country with someone who can care for them, like a parent, aunt or grandparent, their application for family reunification will generally be refused.

How do you apply?

On the website newtodenmark.dk you are guided by questions to the forms relevant to refugees – depending on whether it concerns a spouse/cohabitant (maybe with a child), a child not applying at the same time as a parent, or another family member (e.g. parents of an unaccompanied minor).

One part is filled in by the person in Denmark/the reference (the party who already has residency here).

Another part is filled in by the applicant (the person that wishes to come to Denmark) or by the resident on behalf of the applicant with a power of attorney, see below. Make sure you don't get the two parts mixed up!

Digital applications: You need a Danish digital signature (MitID) to fill in the forms online. This is the easiest and most secure way of doing it. If it's a partner you wish to bring to Denmark, your partner can fill out his/her section of the online form, but often it will be smoother if the resident fills out both (attach a power of attorney which can be [found here](#)). If you choose this, the resident will receive all communication from Immigration Service on Digital Post.

Paper form: The application can also be printed and submitted to the Immigration Services Citizens Service personally (you need to book a time). Always keep a copy of the completed application form and the attachments!

Applications for children are always filled out by the person living in Denmark on behalf of the child. On the other hand, if it is the child who is in Denmark and applying for family reunification with a parent who is elsewhere, then a guardian or the other parent fills in the form on their behalf.

Remember that you need to submit an authorized translation of all documents into Danish or English.

Fee: Fees are not required for any application to Immigration Service or appeals to The Immigration Appeals Board in cases concerning refugees.

The persons who are applying to come to Denmark need at an early stage of the case to attend their nearest Danish Embassy (in some cases, Swedish/Norwegian embassies can be used) to have their biometrics taken (photograph and fingerprints), and possibly to get a DNA test, which costs a fee to the embassy of around 1,700 DKK per person.

When and if a permit is granted, a fee of around 1,100 DKK per person must be paid for a laissez-passer (travel document), if the applicant does not hold a valid passport.

If you apply for family reunification while your spouse is visiting Denmark with a valid visa, s/he will be allowed to stay in Denmark until the decision. But if it's another family member (such as a parent), a refusal will lead to a ban on entry in Denmark for several years and difficulties in getting a visa again even after that period.

When can you apply?

Adult refugees who have asylum status under paragraph 7.3 cannot apply for family reunification until they have had residency for 1 year and 10 months, but unaccompanied minors with 7.3 can apply immediately. Adult refugees with a permit under any other paragraph than 7.3 can apply immediately. If you have residency under the special law for Ukrainians, particular rules apply – you are welcome to contact us.

Generally, you should apply as quickly as possible after you have received asylum, to show an eagerness to reunite the family. If you do not have all the documents ready, it is in any event better to apply immediately and indicate that you will send in any missing documents as soon as possible. The same applies if your family is not yet able to get to a Danish embassy.

For children, you must apply within 3 months of getting your own residence permit or after the birth of the child. If you apply later than 3 months, you must explain why it was not possible to apply earlier. Additionally, the older the child is, the more difficult it is to get permission – especially if the child is over 15.

Special questions on the application form

Read all the questions and information on the form carefully! Get help from an interpreter, if you are in doubt.

As a general rule, you should answer all questions on the forms. If you don't know the answer or cannot attach the correct documents, you should explain why. You can mark if a question is not relevant with, e.g. with a minus.

FA1/FA10 Question 3: To obtain family reunification in Denmark, both parties must voluntarily agree to the marriage and it cannot be arranged by others. It is automatically assumed that the marriage was arranged if the parties are related to one another (even second cousins). If that is the case, you should prepare additional documentation to show the marriage was entered into voluntarily, e.g. to be included in a potential appeal.

FA1/FA10 Question 9 + 10-12: For refugees who are still in need of protection and cannot be referred to live together in other countries, there are no demands on work, accommodation or Danish language skills. But fill out the questions if in doubt. It may also be relevant e.g. in the assessment whether it is best for your child to live with you or in their homeland. If the authorities have to ask you these questions later, it means a longer processing time.

The statement about being willing to support your partner economically is only required if the marriage is not accepted under Danish law. If the marriage is accepted, Danish law obliges you to support your spouse.

If your application is not successful:

If you are from Eritrea, Somalia or other countries where documentation can be a problem, there is a big risk that you will not be granted family reunification. As a rule, the appeal process is conducted on paper without a hearing, and you do not automatically get allotted a lawyer like in asylum cases.

You can appeal to the **Immigration Appeals Board (Udlændingenævnet)** within 8 weeks from when you receive the letter informing you that your application was rejected. If your appeal is not ready within 8 weeks, send a short appeal anyway, and inform them that you will send further information later. The deadline must be kept.

If you are a refugee, you do not need to pay the fee, but the processing time is extremely long, and has recently been up to 2 years. It might be faster sending in a new application to the Immigration Service if there are new circumstances to report. If you also receive a negative decision from the Immigration Appeals Board, you can try to appeal to the court, but you need a lawyer to do this, and it can be costly.