



Annual General Conference 2026

Thursday 4 June 2026, Brussels

Le Bouche à Oreille, Rue Félix Hap / Félix Hapstraat 11, 1040 Brussels

Workshop Number: 3

Room: TBC

Time: 11.00 – 13.00

Title	Protecting the right to family unity
Organiser	Caritas Europa
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the latest legislative changes and restrictions that have been implemented across Europe 2. Understand the human impact of restrictions to family reunification and how they both keep families apart and hinder social inclusion 3. Discuss (i) ways to overcome the barriers to family reunification; (ii) the possible role(s) that civil society organisations can play; (iii) the European Commission's role in monitoring the situation; and (iv) the available legal tools for redressing the situation 4. Propose policy recommendations for protecting the right to family unity
Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leïla Bodeux – Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer (Asylum and Migration), Caritas Europa
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Ahmad Wali Ahmad-Yar – Postdoctoral Researcher, University for Continuing Education Krems and President, Umbrella Refugee Committee • Evita Armouti – Head of Unit (Social Inclusion and Migration), Red Cross EU Office • Pieter Van Roeyen – Jurist, Caritas international (Belgium) • Peter Varga – Legal Director, International Refugee Assistance Project Europe

Format	Panel discussion followed by an interactive Q&A with the audience
Description	<p>The right to family unity is increasingly under threat in Europe with the spread of restrictive migration and asylum policies. However, family life is not a privilege but a right, enshrined in several legal instruments, including as Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The 2003 EU Family Reunification Directive and 2014 guidance set out the EU's rules on family reunification and call for the facilitation of access to it.</p> <p>Despite this, in recent years, several EU member states, including Austria, Belgium and Germany, have restricted access to family reunification and increased the conditions and administrative rules to access this right.</p> <p>People with subsidiary protection have been particularly affected by these changes, which also undermine integration and social cohesion.</p> <p>The aim of this workshop is to enable participants to increase their understanding of and discuss the recent legislative changes and the human impact that restrictive rules, high costs and complex procedures have on families that are separated, often for years. It will conclude with reflections and policy recommendations on the facilitation of access to family reunification.</p>
Contact	For more information about this workshop, please contact Leïla Bodeux .