

REVIEW 2015

Reception of asylum seekers and Voluntary return



FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL



I am delighted to send you the 2015 review of the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers.

2015 was an eventful year, marked by a sudden influx of asylum seekers in Belgium and elsewhere in Europe. We saw the largest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War. In order to ensure our missions, we made an emergency increase in our reception capacity. In less than six months, our network progressed from 16,000 places to 33,000 places. Never before have we opened so many new reception structures in so little time. A challenge made possible thanks to the investment by all the teams in the field and the excellent cooperation with our partners and political authorities. This achievement deserves to be highlighted.

By the time you read this annual report, our working context will have changed. The increase in the number of arrivals has been followed by a fall in demand since the start of the year. From one crisis to another, we are now seeing a decrease in occupancy in centres and individual housing. This new context will require a reorganisation of our network. At the start of June, the federal government decided to reduce the reception capacity by 10,000 places, in particular by closing 30 temporary centres.

Therefore, the challenge over the coming months will be to reorganise the network and capitalise on the know-how acquired during the crisis period and, above all, to guarantee a sufficient number of reserve places that will allow us to manage another increase in demand which is always unpredictable. Therefore, closed reception places will be transformed into buffer places.

Our wish, in close collaboration with our partners, is also to continue our high-quality projects, which take account of the specific vulnerabilities and needs of the different types of asylum seekers. In this regard, Fedasil will apply the new reception model: with collective centres being the standard, reception in individual houses is reserved for vulnerable people (pregnant women, women alone with children, people with a disability, etc.) and for asylum seekers with a strong chance of being recognised as refugees. We are also planning to continue to inform migrants about the support programme helping them to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. Another challenge will be the integration of refugees in Belgium. In view of the high rate of recognition, we are planning to pursue our collaboration with federated entities in charge of housing, social integration, employment and teaching.

On a European level, Belgium will respect agreements that ensure greater solidarity. Our Agency

will assume its responsibilities, whether for the resettlement of refugees who do not have any future prospects in their initial reception country or for the relocation in Belgium of migrants who have arrived at the gates of Europe.

Many people joined our organisation over the past few months, generally employed under a fixed-term contract. In the current context, the majority of these contracts will not be renewed. This 2015 review bears witness to the work achieved by our teams and offers me another opportunity to thank them all.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Jean-Pierre Luxen,
20 June 2016

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KEY EVENTS OF 2015

17.200
reception places
80%
occupancy



Start of 2015

May The flow of migrants to Europe is starting to be felt in Belgium: the number of asylum applications increases greatly within several weeks. The number of arrivals in the reception network is now higher than the number of departures.

February Fedasil opens two regional offices (North and South) in charge of monitoring all the reception structures within a same geographic area (federal centres and partners, Public Social Welfare Centre and NGO housing). This internal reorganisation aims to improve collaboration between all the reception operators and standardise the reception of asylum seekers.

April The budgetary context affects Fedasil, the same as most federal institutions. Fedasil submits practical proposals for savings.

June Increase in voluntary returns. More and more migrants decide to return voluntarily to their country of origin, including many Iraqis.

July In view of the increase in the number of arrivals, Fedasil activates 2,000 buffer places in federal centres and with partners. These places are available within a period of two weeks (three months for Public Social Welfare Centre housing).



Kapellen

August _New reception centres: on 6 August, the Council of Ministers decides on a first rapid and temporary increase in the reception capacity (2,500 places in total), in particular in barracks owned by the Department of Defence. On 28 August, the government gives its approval for 6,600 additional places. The places are opened gradually, sometimes within the space of a few days.



Elsenborn

September _Asylum seekers are more than ever at the heart of the news. Hundreds of volunteers offer their help. In the new centres, their assistance helps to facilitate the opening of centres. Fedasil has never been so popular with journalists and the general public. Evidence of this can be seen in the number of visitors to our website: in September, 158,600 visits are recorded on www.fedasil.be, compared to the usual average of 15,000 visits/month.

August _150 mobile housing units loaned by the Department of Defence are installed in 13 federal centres. Each unit is able to cater for up to 6 people, namely a total of 900 places. The first housing units are available on Monday 17 August.



Pondrôme

September _The Council of Ministers allocates new reception sites (3,000 places in collective centres), and encourages the creation of places via the country's Public Social Welfare Centres (individual reception).



Koksijde

September _Record number of arrivals in the reception network (6,233 people in the month - namely 235 people/day). Together, Iraqis, Syrians and Afghans represent 80% of the new arrivals.

October First centre managed by a private operator: in order to compensate for the lack of reception places, the federal government decides to entrust some reception to private operators via urgent public tenders. The first centre opens on 8 October in Turnhout and is managed by the Corsendonk-G4S consortium. Several private operators, mandated by Fedasil, open a total of about ten reception centres.



Turnhout

October New additional reception places approved by the Council of Ministers (16 and 30 October, 4,000 places in total). These new urgent and temporary measures should enable the reception of the high number of asylum seekers in Belgium. The Department of Defence provides considerable support. The government also provides beds at different campsites, as well as in other types of housing in order to compensate for the closure of sites which are not equipped for winter.

October Belgium continues its programme to resettle refugees who do not have any prospects in their reception country: 225 Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 75 Congolese refugees in Burundi arrive in our country, mainly between October 2015 and January 2016.



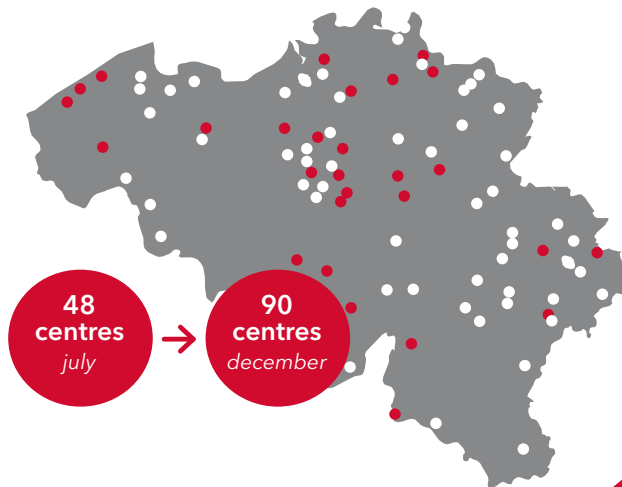
Pondrôme

November Asylum seekers can now work for four months after submitting their asylum application. Therefore, the waiting time between the asylum application and access to regular paid work is reduced from 6 to 4 months.

November 635 unaccompanied minors enter the network in November, which corresponds to the annual flow registered in previous years!



Sint-Pieters-Woluwe



Fedasil launches a website for voluntary returns: above all, it is aimed at illegal immigrants in Belgium, as well as Fedasil's partner organisations.

www.voluntaryreturn.be

33,400
reception places
97%
occupancy



End of 2015

December Fedasil and its partners now have more than 2,000 specific places for unaccompanied minors (compared to 1,000 places at the start of the year).

December The federal government again adopts measures to temporarily increase the network's capacity. In less than six months, the network doubled its reception capacity. The government also decides to increase the number of reception places for unaccompanied minors by converting adult places into specific places for minors.

December Following the terrorist attacks in Paris at the end of 2015, the federal government releases an additional budget for security and the fight against terrorism. In this frame, different measures are taken within Fedasil, such as greater consultation between reception structures and the local police, the recording and reporting of incidents, and the prevention and detection of signs of radicalism in centres.

Recruitment:

At the end of 2015, Fedasil employs more than **1,500 people** (compared to 1,100 at the start of July)



RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

In 2015, Belgium registered twice as many asylum seekers as in 2014. This increase in the number of arrivals was observed in the second half of 2015. Consequently, Fedasil registered a major increase in the number of people applying for a reception place.

Twice as many reception places

In order to be able to offer a reception for all people who are entitled to it, Fedasil rapidly and greatly increased the capacity of its reception network (collective centres and individual housing). The number of places doubled in less than six months: at the end of 2015, Belgium had 33,400 reception places compared to 16,000 structural places at the start of July. The new places were often created within a tight timescale and for a limited period.

Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan

At the end of 2015, more than 32,000 people were

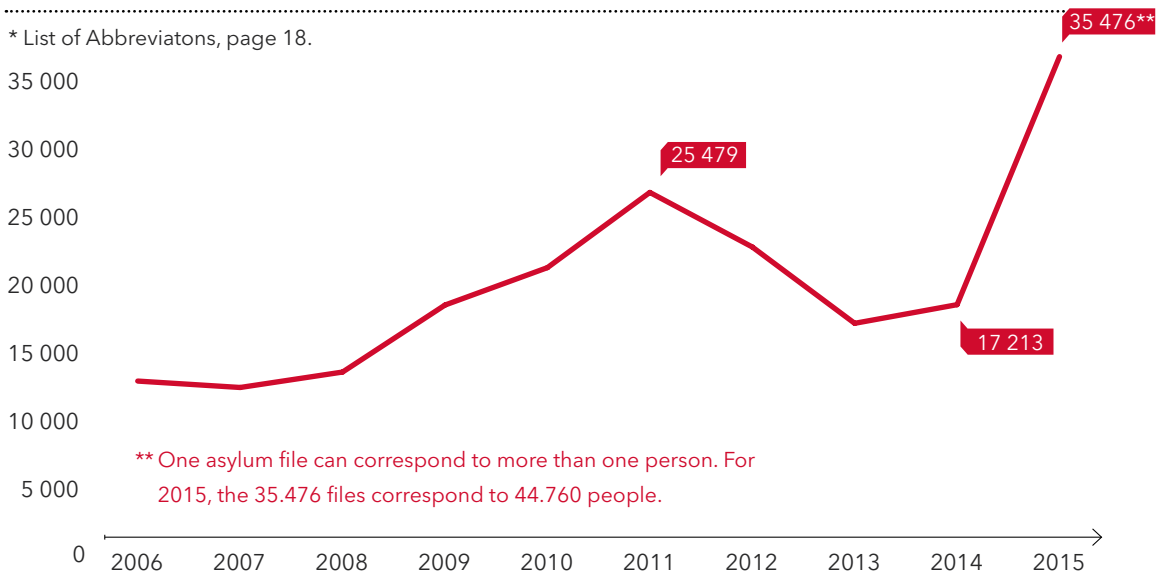
welcomed. The main countries of origin were Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan: together, these three countries represent 2/3 of the people welcomed in Fedasil's network. The percentage of single men is on the increase: they represent 44% of residents (compared to 32% at the end of 2014). The large majority of people welcomed are awaiting a decision from asylum bodies (87% compared to 68% at the end of 2014).

Unaccompanied minors

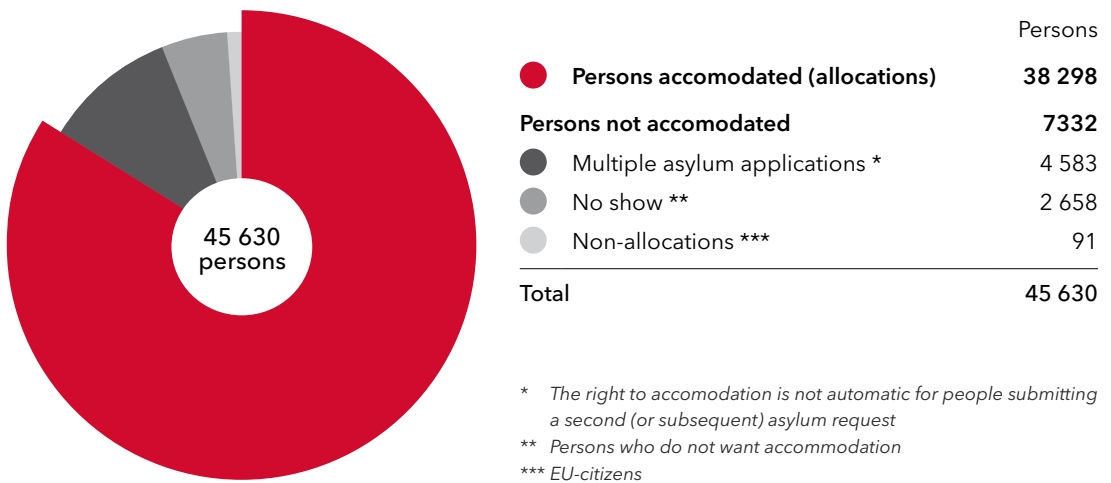
2015 was also marked by a major increase in the number of unaccompanied minors (Mena) welcomed by Fedasil and its partners. Here again, the reception capacity, offering specific support for these vulnerable young people, was increased very quickly. At the end of 2015, there were about 2,100 places for unaccompanied minors (compared to 1,300 places at the end of 2014).

Evolution of asylum applications (files) in Belgium / 2006-2015 (Source: CGRS*)

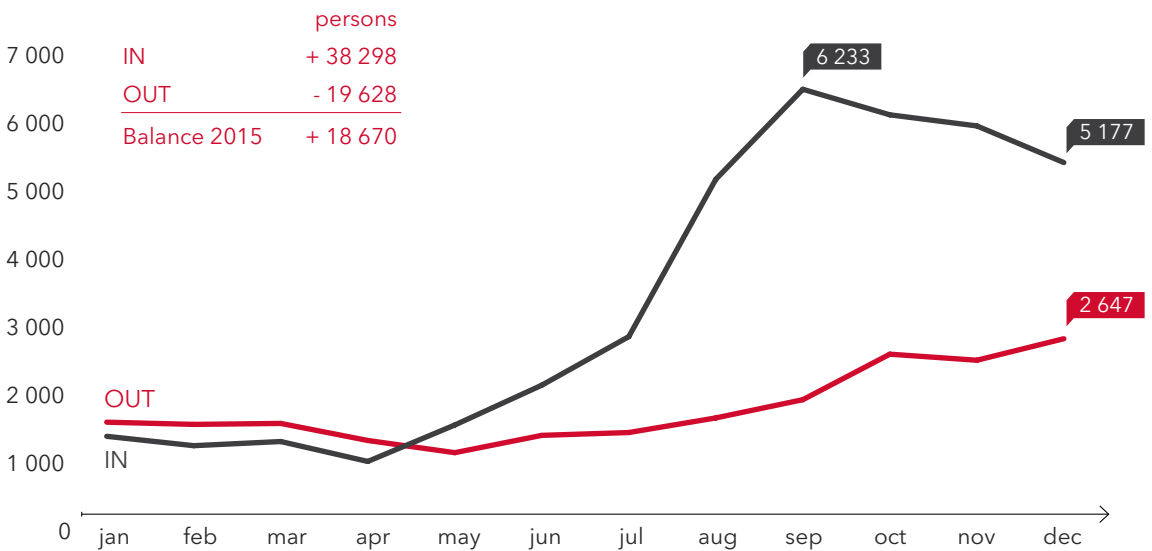
* List of Abbreviations, page 18.



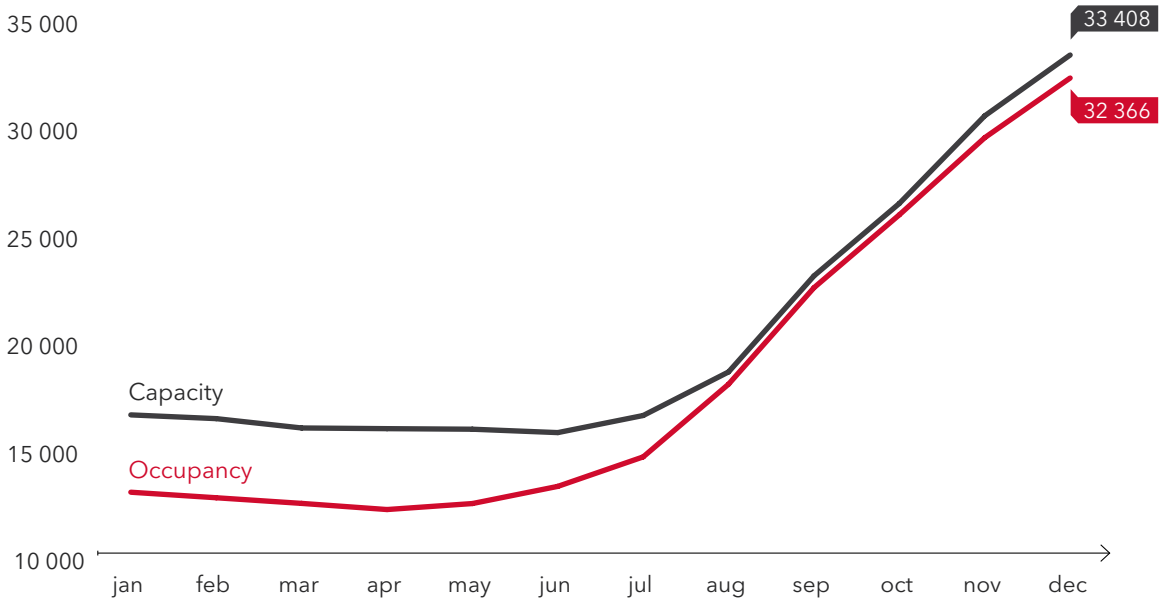
Reception applications at the Fedasil Dispatching / in 2015



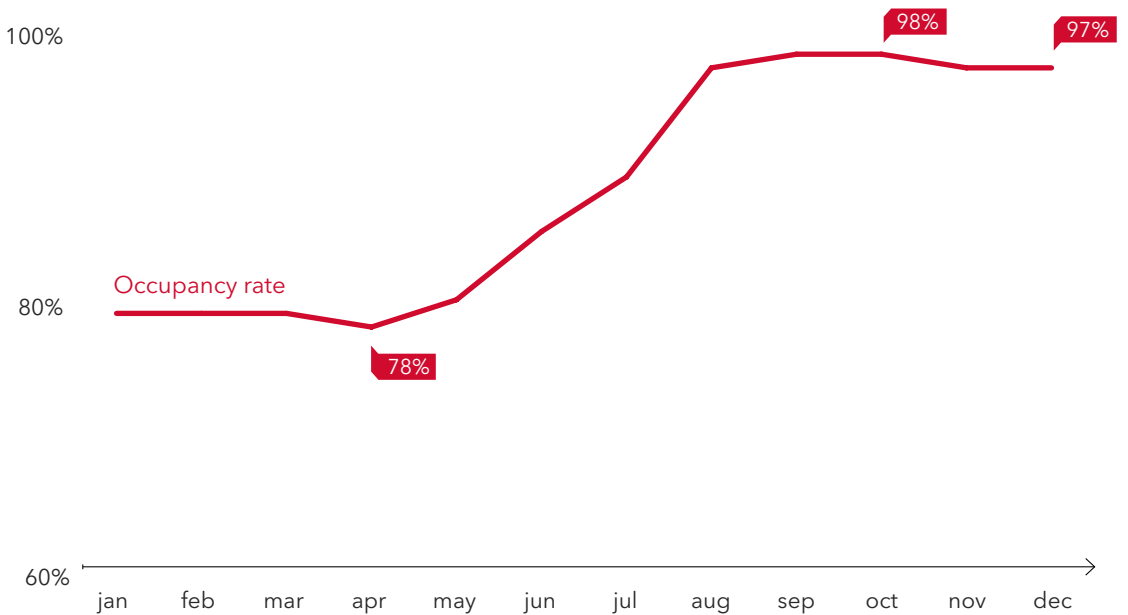
Reception network arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) / in 2015



Evolution of the reception capacity and the occupancy / in 2015

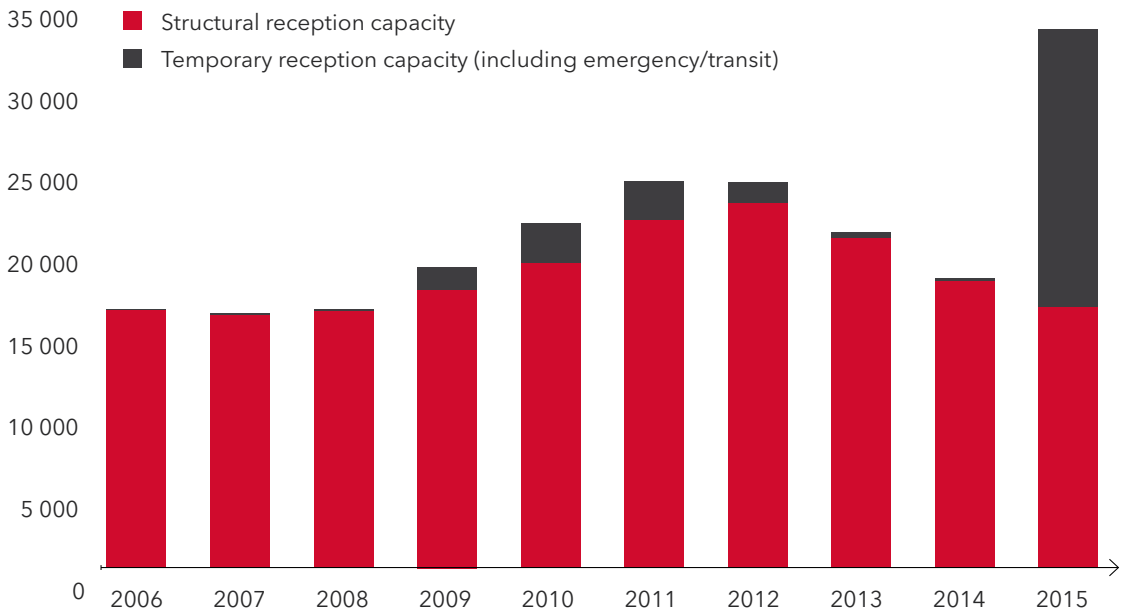


Evolution of the occupancy rate / in 2015



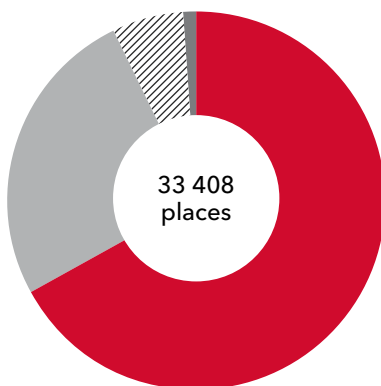
Evolution of the reception capacity / 2006-2015

Situation end of December of each year



Reception network: distribution and occupancy by type of reception structure / end 2015

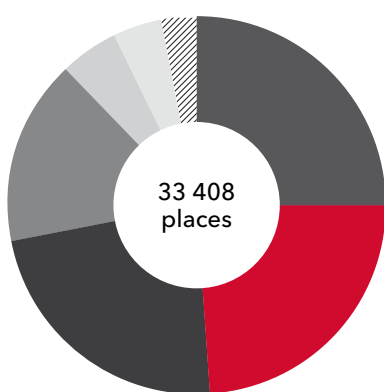
* List of Abbreviations, page 18.



	CAPACITY	OCCUPANCY	OCCUPANCY RATE %
Collective housing:			
● Federal centres, Croix-Rouge, Rode Kruis and other partners	22 349	21 855	98
Individual housing:			
● CPAS* (local reception initiatives), Vluchtelingenwerk, Ciré	8 795	8 468	96
Special accommodation for unaccompanied minors:			
⊗ Federal centres and partners	2 094	1 895	90
Open return places:			
● Federal centres	170	148	87
Total	33 408	32 366	97

Reception network: contribution of the partners / end 2015

* List of Abbreviations, page 18.



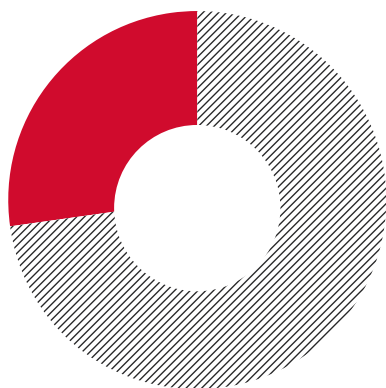
PARTNER		PLACES
● CPAS*	local reception initiatives	8 359
● Fedasil	centres, federal reception initiatives, open return places	7 949
● French-speaking Red Cross	centres	7 656
● Dutch-speaking Red Cross	centres	5 493
○ Ciré & Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen	individual housing	1 672
○ Private partners	centres	1 288
⊘ Other partners	Samu social, Caritas international, Mutualités socialistes, City of Ghent	991
Total		33 408

Administrative status of accommodated persons / end 2015

* List of Abbreviations, page 18.

	%
Asylum seekers whose file is in treatment (IO*, CGRS* or CCE*)	87
Persons with a residence permit (recognised refugees, subsidiary protection, regularised)	6
Persons with appeal	1
Persons whose asylum application has been rejected or who obtained an extension of their residence permit	2
Persons whose asylum application has been rejected who are within the delay of the order to leave the territory or who wait for this order	3
Other situations	1

Gender of accomodated persons / end 2015



	%
◉ Men	73
● Women	27

Family composition of accomodated persons / end 2015



	%
● Families	44
● Single men	44
● Single women	5
◉ Unaccompanied foreign minors	7

Age of accomodated persons / end 2015



	%
Adults	72
● Adults with family	23
● Single adults	49
Minors	28
● Minors with family	21
● Unaccompanied foreign minors	7

Main countries of origin of accomodated persons / end 2015

COUNTRY	%
Iraq	23
Afghanistan	22
Syria	20
Somalia	6
Unspecified	2
Russia	2
Guinea	2
Congo (RDC)	2
Albania	2
Eritrea	1
Rate of top 10 within the network	82

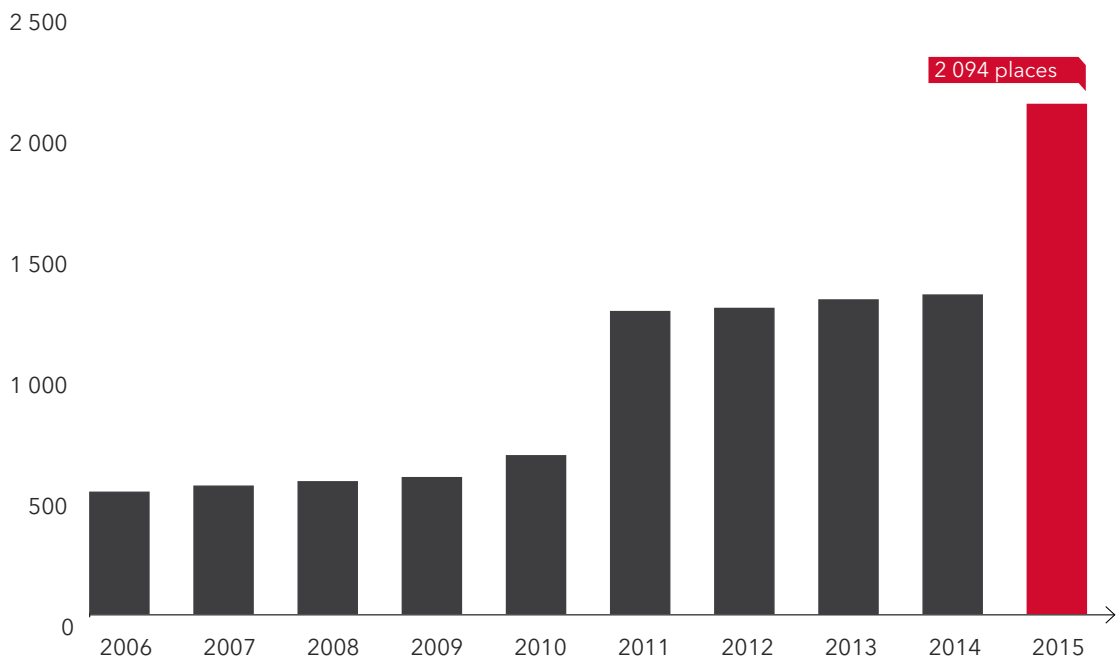
Unaccompanied foreign minors : capacity and occupancy by reception phase / end 2015

* List of Abbreviations, page 18.

		PLACES	OCCUPATION %
1st phase			
Observation	Fedasil, Rode Kruis, Samu social	689	92
2nd phase			
Stabilization	Fedasil, Rode Kruis, Croix-Rouge, Rode Kruis, CPAS*, private partners	1 227	82
3rd phase			
Accompanied autonomy	CPAS*, Ciré, Vluchtelingenwerk, City of Ghent	178	94
Total		2 094	90

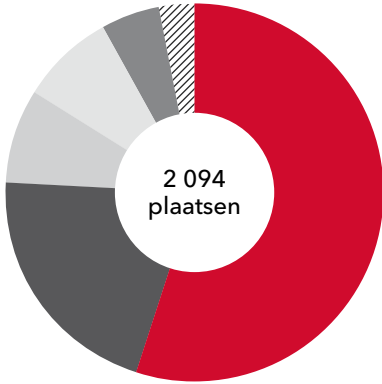
Evolution of the reception capacity for unaccompanied foreign minors / 2006-2015

Situation end of December of each year



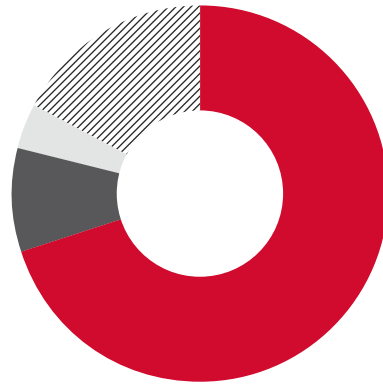
**Unaccompanied foreign minors:
contribution of the partners / end 2015**

* List of Abbreviations, page 18.



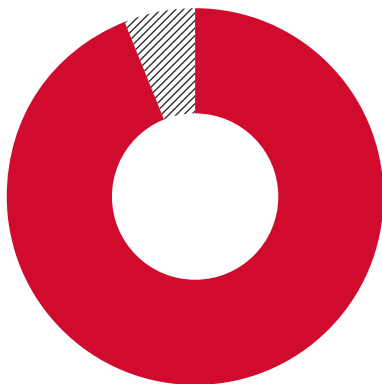
PARTNER	PLACES
● Fedasil	1 146
● Dutch-speaking Red Cross	442
● CPAS* (local reception initiatives)	171
● French-speaking Red Cross	160
● Samu social	100
⊗ Others	75
Total	2 094

**Main countries of origin of the accommodated
unaccompanied foreign minors / end 2015**



COUNTRY	%
● Afghanistan	70
● Syria	9
● Iraq	4
⊗ Others	17

**Gender of the accommodated
unaccompanied foreign minors / end 2015**



	%
● Boys	94
⊗ Girls	6

VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2015, 4,053 people decided to return voluntarily to their country of origin with the help of the Belgian voluntary return programme - this is 13% more than in 2014. Among them, 1,631 people also received support for their reintegration, namely two returned people out of five.

Iraq, the number one destination

One out of four voluntary returns was to Iraq. Just over 1,000 Iraqis left voluntarily, most of them asylum seekers. Fedasil noted an increase in returns to Ukraine (second most common destination in 2015) and to Kosovo, and a significant reduction in returns to Russia and Serbia.

More asylum seekers

Both asylum seekers and migrants who are illegally in the country can request a voluntary return. Returns by illegal immigrants remain high, and relatively stable, from year to year. In 2015, they represented 50% of returns (2,021 people).

We notice that more asylum seekers, whether in the middle of the procedure or at the start of their application, chose to return to their country (2,032 people in 2015, compared with 1,506 in 2014). This trend can be explained in part by the increase in asylum applications in Belgium since May 2015.

New Return Desks

In order to reach migrants who are not in the reception network, Fedasil has four return desks, which organise services to answer their questions and plan a possible return. These return desks are located in Brussels, Ghent and, since 2015, also Liège and Antwerp.

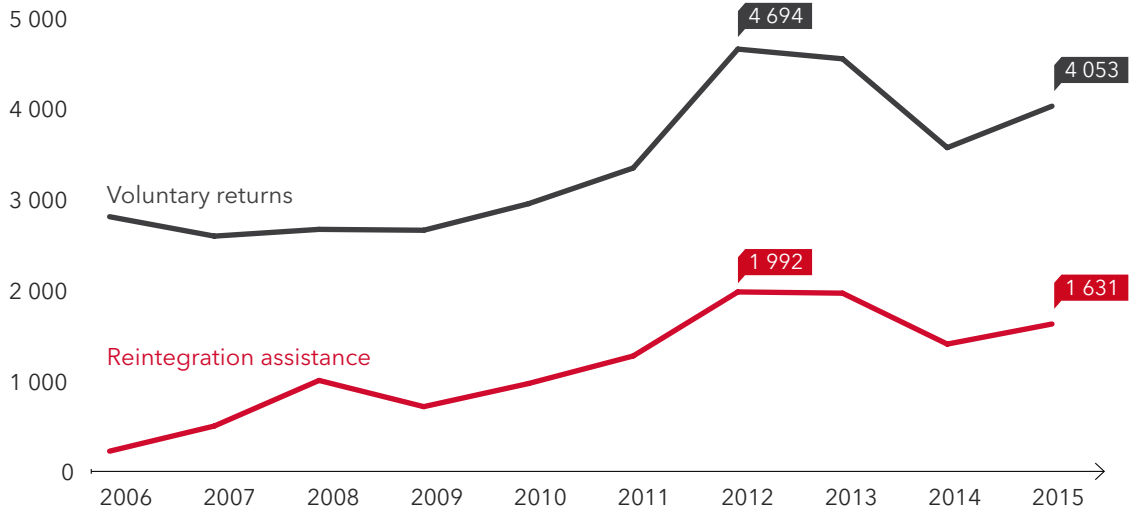
In 2015, 40% of returns were organised by a Fedasil return desk (compared with 32% of returns in 2014). The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) usually handles the practical organisation of the journeys.

Tailor-made support for reintegration

In the case of a voluntary return, support may be offered for reintegration in the country of origin. This is tailor-made: the return advisor examines the individual situation of each return candidate and offers support according to his or her situation. This may be material aid for the development of a professional activity or for renovating and fitting out a house. It may also involve support to pay medical expenses resulting from health problems.

In 2015, 40% of voluntarily returned people were able to benefit from one or more forms of support for reintegration, which may be complementary.

Evolution in voluntary returns from Belgium (number of people) / 2006-2015



Comment:

Since 2013, the figures also include the voluntary returns organised by the Immigration Office (205 in 2013, 141 in 2014 and 67 in 2015). These figures do not include voluntary returns carried out within the framework of the Dublin Convention to the European countries where migrants have already applied for asylum, and which are organised by the Immigration Office.

Main countries of destination / in 2015

PERSONS WHO RETURNED (WITH OR WITHOUT REINTEGRATION)		PERSONS WHO RETURNED WITH REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE	
Iraq	1 023	Iraq	568
Ukraine	542	Russia	251
Romania	536	Georgia	114
Russia	257	Armenia	66
Brazil	187	Ukraine	51
Kosovo	160	Kosovo	50
Georgia	120	Afghanistan	35
Mongolia	117	Macedonia	32
Slovakia	82	Morocco	31
Armenia	80	Pakistan	21

Voluntary returns per continent / in 2015



CONTINENTS	PERSONS
● Africa	292
● Asia	1810
○ Europe	1710
⊘ America	241
Total	4 053

Vrijwillige terugkeer: profiel van de migranten / in 2015



	PERSONS
● Asylum seekers	562
● Persons whose application was rejected	1470
⊘ Undocumented migrants	2021
Total	4 053

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCE	Le Conseil du Contentieux des Etrangers (Council for Alien Disputes)
CGRS	Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons
IO	The Immigration Office
CPAS	Centre Public d'Action Sociale (Public Social Welfare Centre)

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Ce bilan est également disponible en français.

This review is also available in English.

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Brussels, June 2016.

Fedasil is in charge of guaranteeing material aid to asylum seekers and other categories of foreigners in Belgium. Fedasil assures quality and conformity throughout the entire reception network. Fedasil also coordinates the voluntary return programs for Belgium.

In this review we highlight the key events and the reception and voluntary return statistics for 2015. For the latest information and news about our organisation, visit our website **www.fedasil.be**.

All about reception