

# REVIEW 2016

Reception of asylum seekers and voluntary return





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**Cover picture:** *In 2016, like other Fedasil's co-workers, Sabine Van Dael (reception centre of Arendonk) went to work in a hotspot as an EASO expert. The picture was taken on the Greek island of Chios.*

# FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL



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I am delighted to present the 2016 review of the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers.

2016 was marked by a decrease in asylum applications in Europe, and particularly in Belgium. This reduction was just as striking as the peak in arrivals observed in 2015. In such a context, the Federal Government justifiably asked us to reduce reception capacity.

As such, 10,000 places were closed in 2016 and other closures are planned for 2017.

This reorganisation of our reception network is a challenge in itself. To manage the situation effectively, we need to adapt to the fluctuating context of asylum, whilst stabilising our structural capacity and preparing ourselves for potential new crises. This balance also needs to take account of the budget reality which has entailed cuts for all of the Federal public institutions.

This scaling-down phase somehow leaves a bitter aftertaste, since it means that we cannot retain everything that we acquired during the crisis. I am, of course, referring to the reception centres which function very well, in

the positive dynamic which developed with civil society, but also the material, financial and above all human investments which were made. The employment contracts of various staff who were recruited during the crisis will not be extended. Nevertheless, it gave me great pleasure to see their professionalism rewarded by a jury, who awarded us the title Federal Public Organisation of the Year 2016. This award is a source of pride and recognition for the work accomplished by the staff of Fedasil and all its partners.

Another challenge is the sustainable integration of the people who have obtained protection status. It is the responsibility of Fedasil to prepare these people for their new lives in Belgium. In recent months, we have strengthened cooperation with the institutions in charge of integration, employment, housing and education. These are all essential areas which we continue to develop.

We are also planning to continue to inform migrants about the support programme helping them to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. This programme has been successful, in particular the 'reintegration' strand which enables people who have returned to their country of origin to start up a new project. Over the last ten years, Fedasil and its partners, IOM and Caritas, have supported over 13,000 migrants with their reintegration. I must also highlight the considerable resourc-

es made available to us by the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

Our country also has the duty to respect its international obligations in terms of solidarity. The decrease in arrivals in Belgium does not in any way signal the end of the migration crisis. Fedasil intends to take its responsibility in relocating asylum seekers who have arrived in Italy or Greece, or to resettle Syrian refugees who have been accommodated without any prospects for the future in Syria's neighbouring countries.

Therefore, you will also find in this 2016 Review the most recent developments regarding the resettlement and relocation of migrants in Belgium.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Jean-Pierre Luxen,  
30 May 2017



# RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

After a record year for asylum applications in 2015, Belgium registered half as many applications in 2016, which was one of the most significant decreases in the European Union. In 2016, 16,699 persons received a place within the Fedasil reception network, a reduction of 56% compared with 2015.

## **Closure of 10,000 places**

From February 2016 onwards, there were fewer arrivals of asylum seekers than departures in the reception centres. In order to bring the number of places in line with the current situation, the Federal government decided to reduce capacity by 10,000 places in 2016, in particular by closing around 30 temporary centres which had been opened with urgency to absorb the large amount of newly arrived asylum seekers in 2015.

Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq remained the 3 main countries of origin of asylum seekers in 2016.

## **Increased occupancy**

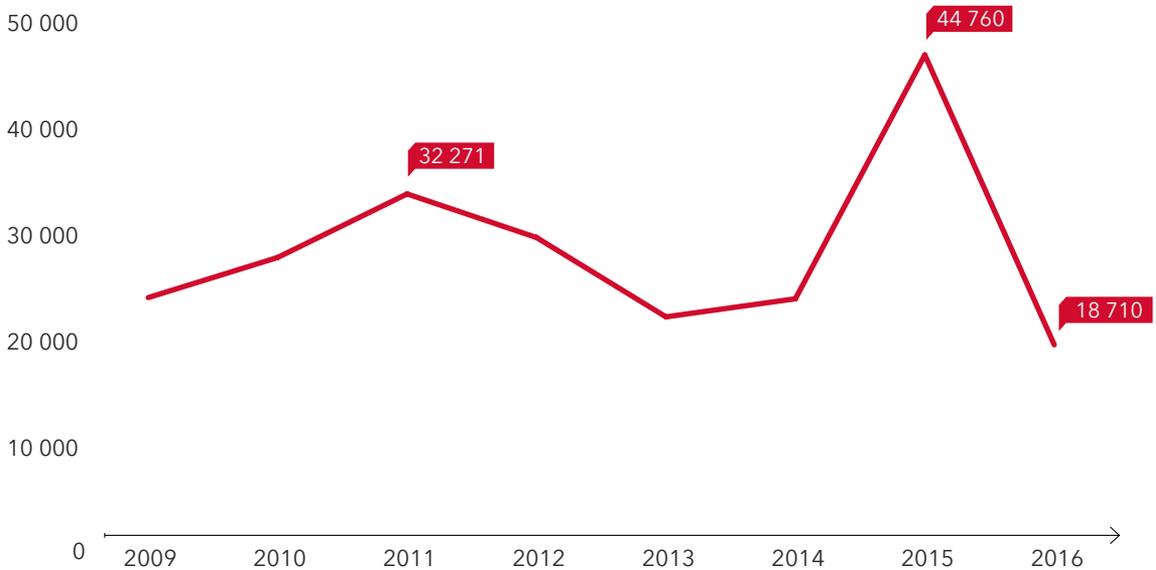
During the first half of 2016, occupancy continually decreased within the reception centres (up to 79% of the places were occupied). Subsequently, due to the closure of places, the occupancy rate rebounded to reach 87% at the end of 2016. Asylum seekers accommodated in the centres affected by closure were gradually transferred to other reception centres.

At the end of 2016, Fedasil and its partners accommodated 22,903 people, of whom 1/3 were Afghans. The number of people in families increased (54% of residents), at the expense of single men (34%). The large majority of people welcomed are awaiting a decision from asylum bodies (77% of residents).

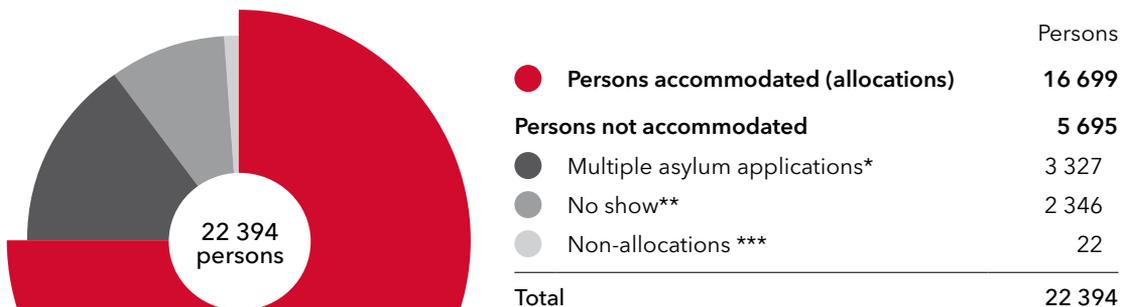
## **Unaccompanied foreign minors**

The decrease in arrivals observed in 2016 also concerned foreign unaccompanied minors (UM). However, the specific reception capacity for UM increased (+27%), in particular by increasing supply for the youngest people. At the end of 2016, Fedasil and its partners had 2,651 places for unaccompanied minors. The young people accommodated are primarily boys (15-17 years old) from Afghanistan.

## Evolution of asylum applications (number of persons) in Belgium / 2009-2016 (source: CGRS)



## Reception applications at the Fedasil Dispatching in 2016

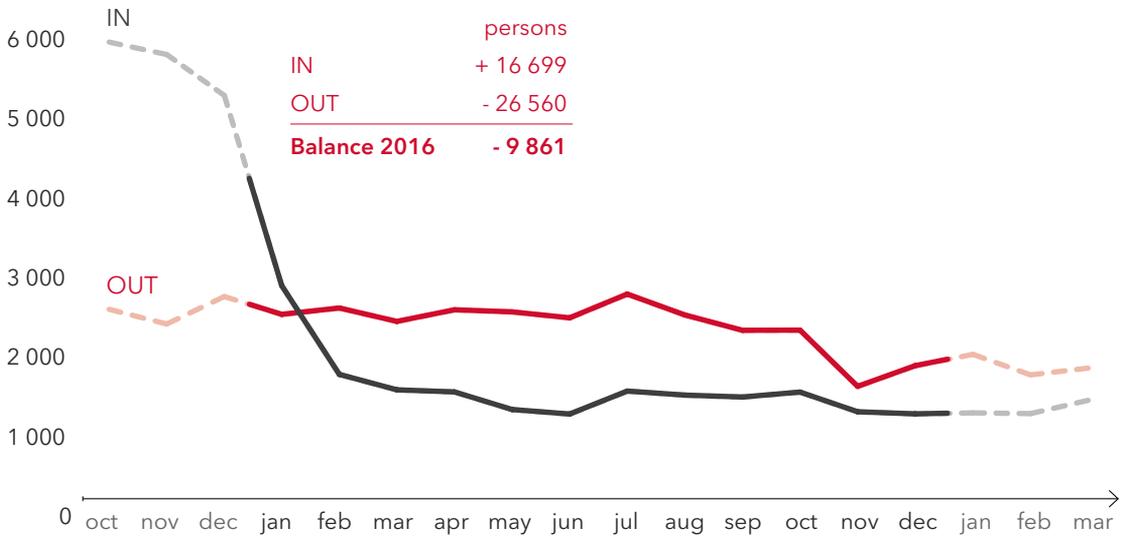


\* The right to accommodation is not automatic for people submitting a second (or subsequent) asylum request

\*\* Persons who do not want accommodation

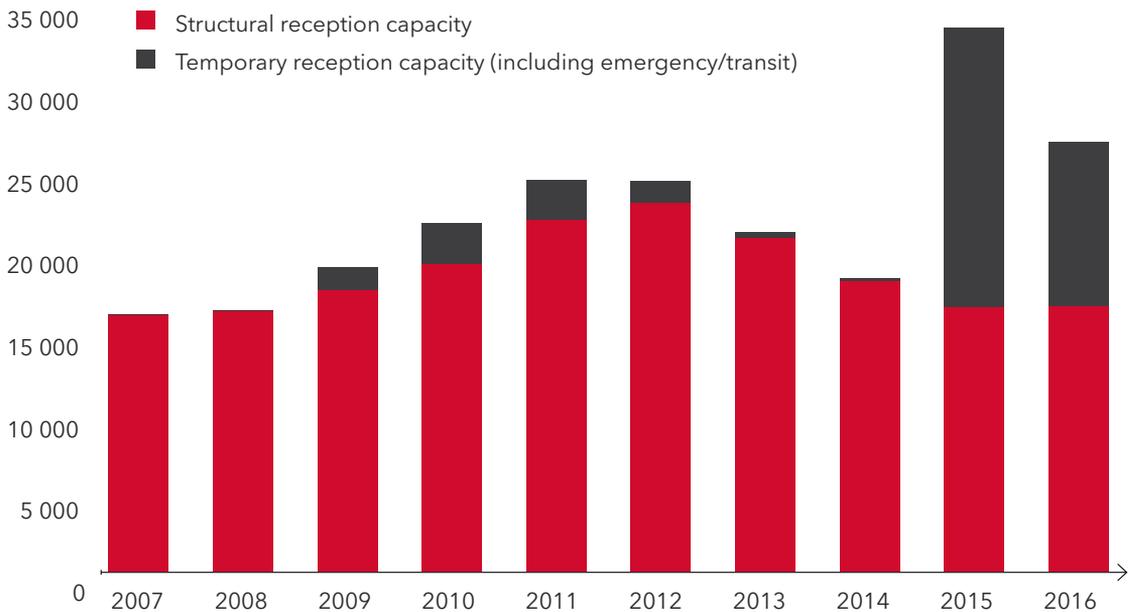
\*\*\* EU-citizens

## Reception network arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2016



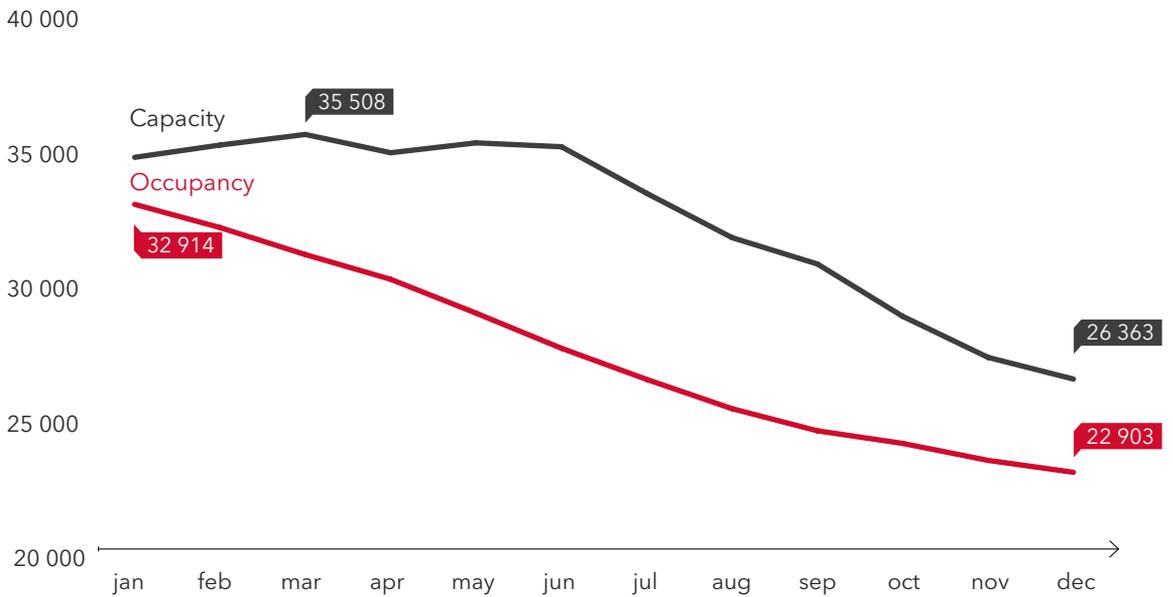
## Evolution of the reception capacity / 2007-2016

Situation end of December of each year



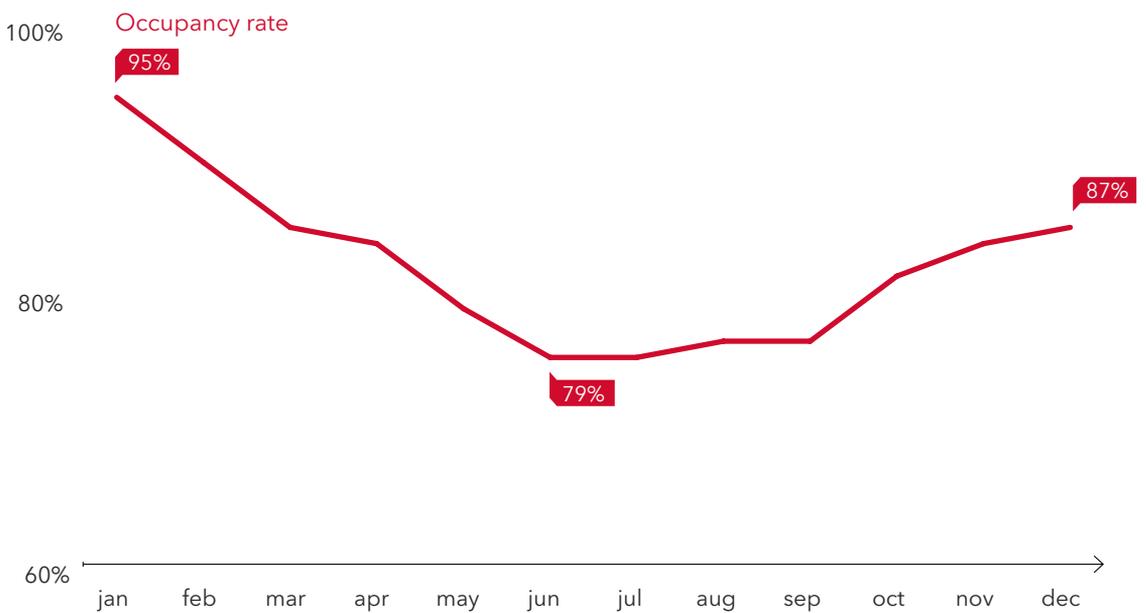
## Evolution of the reception capacity and the occupancy in 2016

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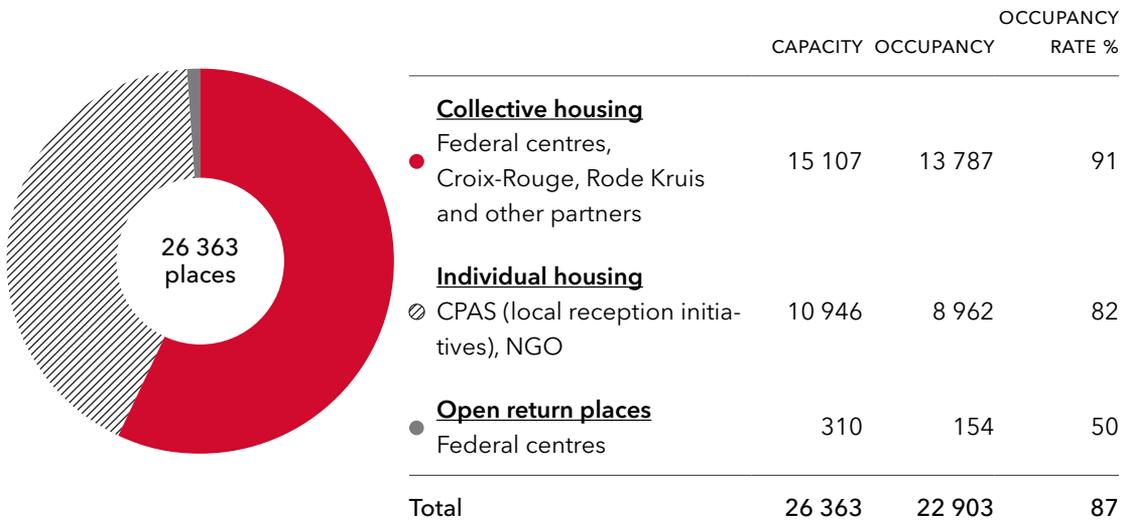


## Evolution of the occupancy rate in 2016

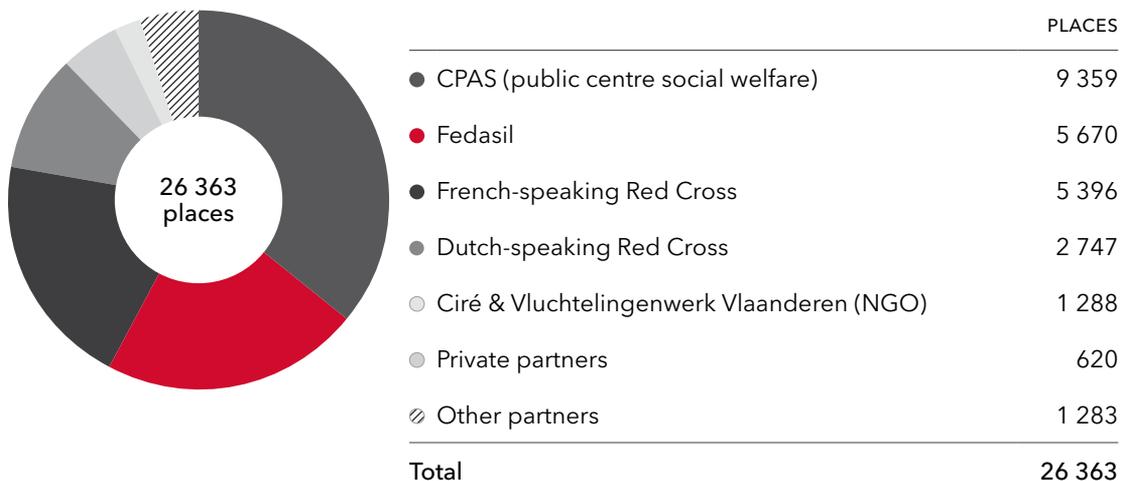
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## Capacity and occupancy by type of reception structure / end 2016



## Reception network: capacity per partner / end 2016



## Arrivals in 2016



	%
● Families	40
● Single men	34
● Single women	9
⊘ Mena (Unaccompanied foreign minors)	18



	%
● Afghanistan	25
● Syria	15
● Iraq	7
● Guinea	5
○ Somalia	5
○ Albania	5
⊘ Others	38

## Administrative status of accommodated persons / end 2016

	%
Asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their asylum application	77
Persons with a residence permit (recognised refugees, subsidiary protection, regularised)	12
Persons who filed an appeal	2
Persons whose asylum application has been rejected or who obtained an extension of their residence permit	2
Persons whose asylum application has been rejected but who have not yet received a departure order or whose period to leave the country has not yet passed.	5
Resettled refugees	1
Other profiles	1

## Persons accommodated / end 2016



	%
● Families	54
● Single men	34
● Single women	5
⊗ Mena (Unaccompanied foreign minors)	7



	%
● Afghanistan	31
● Iraq	17
● Syria	9
● Somalia	5
○ Guinea	3
○ Unspecified	3
● Russia	3
● Albania	3
⊗ Others	26



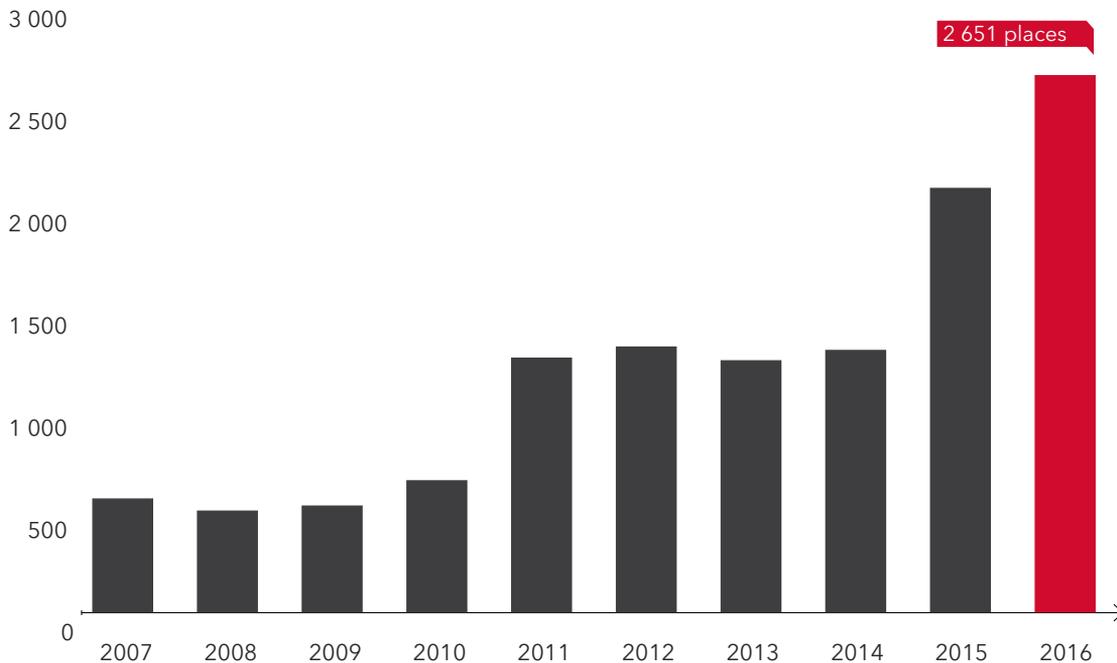
	%
● Men	69
● Women	31



	%
● Adults	67
● Minors	33

## Evolution of the reception capacity for foreign unaccompanied minors (UM) / 2007-2016

Situation end of December of each year



## Unaccompanied minors: capacity and occupancy by reception phase / end 2016

		PLACES	OCCUPATION	OCCUPANCY RATE %
<b>1st phase</b>	Fedasil	190	124	65
Observation				
<b>2nd phase</b>	Fedasil, Croix-Rouge, other partners	2 052	1 581	77
Collective housing				
<b>3rd phase</b>	CPAS, Caritas International, other partners	318	285	90
Individual housing				
<b>Specific places</b>	Fedasil and other partners	91	42	46
<b>Total</b>		<b>2 651</b>	<b>2 032</b>	<b>77</b>

## UM: capacity per partner

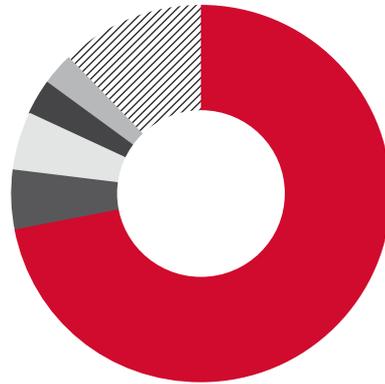
/ end 2016



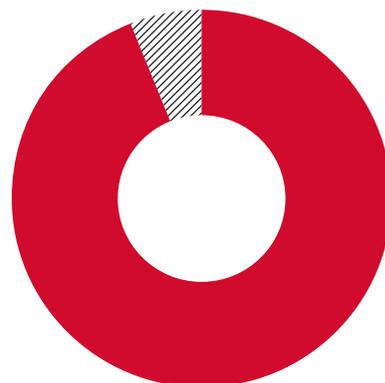
	PLACES
● Fedasil	933
● French-speaking Red Cross	793
● CPAS	221
● Dutch-speaking Red Cross	216
● Flemisch community	145
● French community	130
⊘ Others	213
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 651</b>

## Profile of the UM in the reception network

/ end 2016



	%
● Afghanistan	72
● Syria	5
● Somalia	5
● Guinea	3
● Iraq	3
⊘ Other countries	12



	%
● Boys	94
⊘ Girls	6

# RESETTLEMENT AND RELOCATION

Belgium organised the arrival of 652 vulnerable migrants in 2016: firstly, refugees with little or no prospects for integration in their initial reception country (resettlement) and secondly, people who applied for asylum in Greece and Italy, where there is high migratory pressure (relocation within the EU). Both of these programmes benefit from European funding (AMIF fund).

## **Resettlements on the rise**

Since 2013, Belgium has had a structural resettlement programme and is committed to taking in a contingent of vulnerable refugees every year. Between 2013 and 2016, 862 refugees were resettled in Belgium, including 664 Syrians.

In 2016, 452 refugees were resettled in Belgium, primarily Syrian families from Lebanon and Turkey.

In Belgium, these refugees receive the protection and integration prospects they did not have in their first reception country. One of the priorities for 2016 was also the resettlement of refugees as part of the agreement between the European Union and Turkey. This agreement stipulates in particular that for each Syrian sent from the Greek islands to Turkey, another Syrian is resettled from Turkey to the EU.

## **Relocation from Greece and Italy**

The relocation mechanism for asylum seekers which was implemented by the European Union at the end of 2015 is designed to relieve the burden on the Member States who are under high migratory pressure (Italy and Greece in this case). As such, 200 asylum seekers, primarily Syrians, arrived in Belgium from Greece and Italy in 2016.

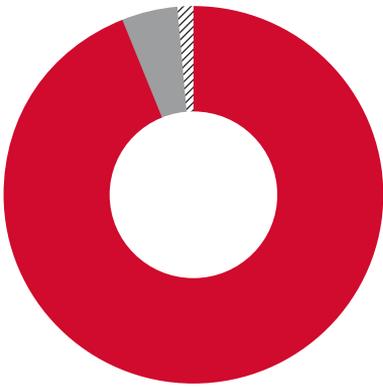
## **Reception: what is the difference between relocated and resettled people?**

The people relocated to Belgium are asylum seekers and follow the process for asylum seekers: Fedasil offers them accommodation within a reception centre whilst their application is being assessed.

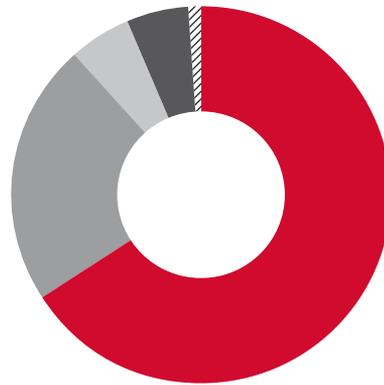
For resettled refugees, the initial reception (4 to 6 weeks) is managed by Fedasil, which provides a place in one of its centres. These refugees are then accommodated in a local reception initiative managed by a Public Centre for Social Welfare. They are entitled to stay there for six months. The Public Centre for Social Welfare can also be a candidate to accompany refugees for up to 1 year, thereby ensuring their integration and social guidance.

[More information on www.resettlement.be](http://www.resettlement.be)

## Resettled asylum seekers in Belgium in 2016

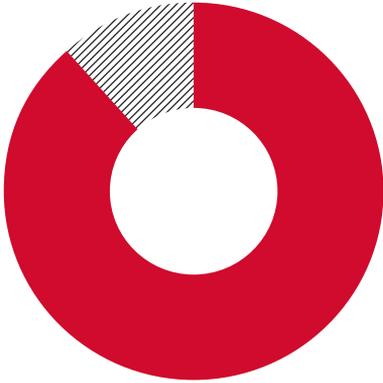


	PERSONS
● Families	425
● Single men	21
⊘ Single women	6
Total	452

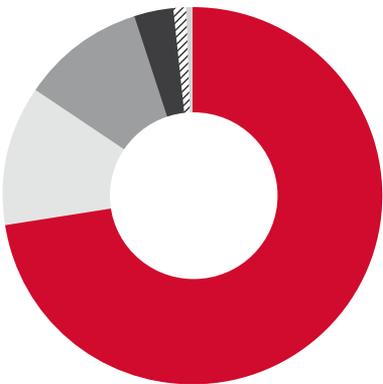


COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	INITIAL COUNTRY OF RECEPTION	PERSONS
● Syria	Lebanon	298
● Syria	Turkey	102
● Syria	Jordan	24
● Syria	Egypt	24
⊘ Congo (DRC)	Burundi	4
Total		452

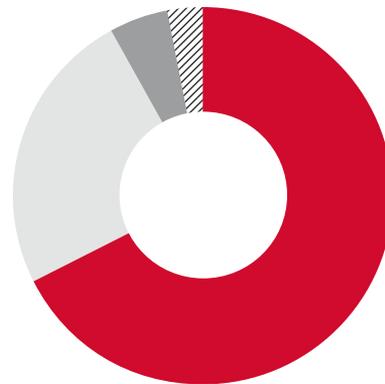
## Relocated asylum seekers in Belgium in 2016



RECEPTION COUNTRY (IN EU)	PERSONS
● Greece	177
▨ Italy	23
Total	200



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	PERSONS
● Syria	145
○ Iraq	24
● Eritrea	21
● Unspecified	7
▨ Palestine	2
○ Central African Republic	1
Total	200



PROFILE	PERSONS
● Families	135
● Single men	49
● Single women	10
▨ Unaccompanied minors	6
Total	200

# VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2016, 4,267 people decided to return to their country of origin via the Belgian voluntary return programme (+5% compared to 2015). Of these, 1,974 people also received support for their reintegration, equating to almost half of the people who returned.

## **Many returns to Iraq and Afghanistan**

The voluntary return programme is intended both for asylum seekers (with procedure pending or rejected) and migrants staying illegally who have never applied for asylum in Belgium.

Just over 1,000 Iraqis, mostly asylum seekers, returned voluntarily in 2016, representing 1 return in 4. Moreover, in February 2016, Fedasil and the IOM organised a charter flight (outside the regular airlines) for the first time, for the voluntary return of 106 Iraqis. Between May and September, the Iraqis who returned voluntarily received among other things a larger bonus at the time of their departure.

Voluntary returns to Afghanistan also increased: 162 returns in 2016, versus an average of 20 to 50 returns in previous years. The Afghans also benefited from a doubling of the departure bonus during the second half of 2016.

## **Fedasil return desks**

In order to reach migrants who are not in the reception network, Fedasil has five return desks, which organise services to answer their questions and plan a possible return. These return desks are located in Brussels, Ghent, Liège and Antwerp, and since the end of 2016, also in Charleroi.

The Fedasil counselors (return desks and reception centres) provided support for 50% of the people who returned in 2016. The other candidates for return were supported by our partners.

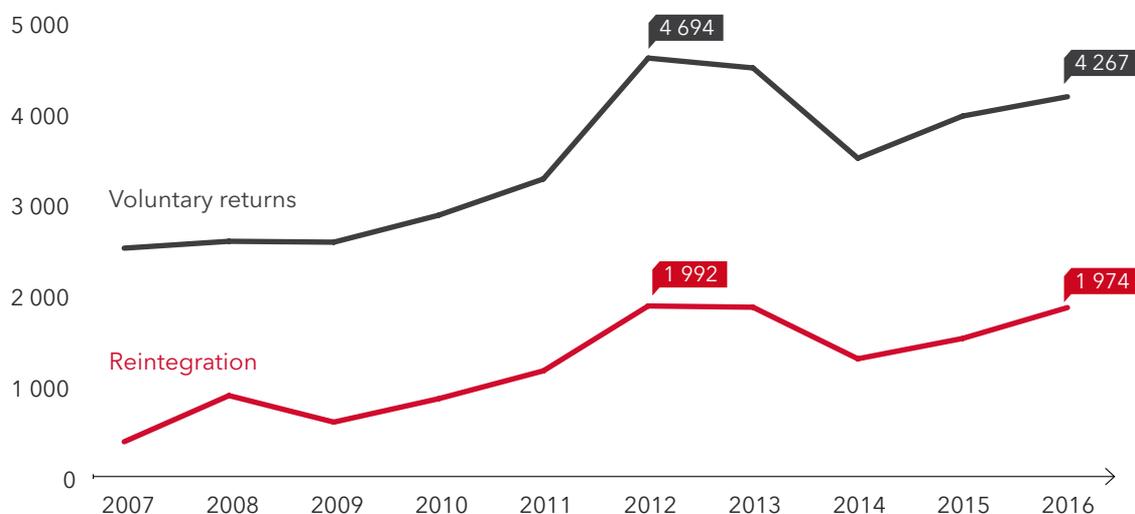
## **Tailor-made support for reintegration**

In the case of a voluntary return, support may be offered for reintegration in the country of origin. In 2016, 46% of the people who returned voluntarily benefited from reintegration support. This support is tailored: based on the person's individual situation, the candidate for return can receive material aid to develop a professional activity, or to improve a house. It may also involve support to pay medical expenses resulting from health problems.

The Belgian voluntary return programme benefits from European funding (AMIF fund).

[More information on www.retourvolontaire.be](http://www.retourvolontaire.be)

## Overview of voluntary returns from Belgium (number of returnees) / 2007-2016



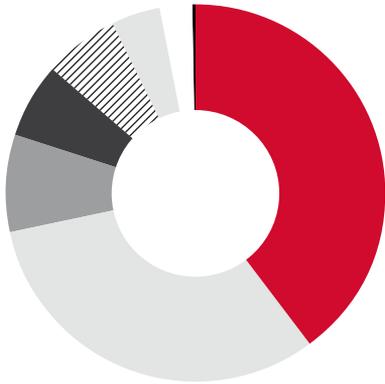
### Comment:

Since 2013, the figures also include the voluntary returns organised by the Immigration Office : 205 in 2013, 141 in 2014, 67 in 2015 and 47 in 2016. Furthermore, 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 origin in 2016

PERSONS WHO RETURNED (WITH OR WITHOUT REINTEGRATION)		PERSONS WHO RETURNED WITH REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE	
Iraq	1 062	Iraq	844
Ukraine	647	Russia	155
Romania	618	Afghanistan	123
Brazil	228	Georgia	109
Russia	167	Ukraine	71
Afghanistan	162	Kosovo	41
Mongolia	157	Armenia	40
Georgia	122	Macedonia	39
Albania	107	Albania	36
Kosovo	90	Pakistan	34

**Voluntary returns in 2016:  
countries/regions of origin**



	PERSONS
● Eastern Europe	1 698
○ Middle East	1 367
● Russia and Caucasus	353
● Far East	274
⊘ South America	267
○ Sub-Saharan Africa	189
○ North Africa	113
● Others	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 267</b>

**Profile of the returnees in 2016**



	PERSONS
● Asylum seekers	1 224
○ Rejected asylum seekers	1 090
⊘ Migrants without a residence permit	1 953
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 267</b>



	PERSONS
● Single men and women	2 663
○ Families	1 570
● Unaccompanied minors	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 267</b>

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**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.

Deze balans bestaat ook in het Nederlands.

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In Belgium, Fedasil is in charge of receiving asylum seekers and other beneficiaries. Fedasil guarantees quality and conformity throughout the entire reception network. Fedasil also coordinates the voluntary return programmes from Belgium.

This review contains the statistics for 2016 for reception, voluntary return, resettlement and relocation. You can discover more information and news about our organisation on our website, **[www.fedasil.be](http://www.fedasil.be)**.

# All about reception