

REVIEW 2020

Reception - Resettlement - Voluntary return



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Cover photo: Medical team at the reception centre in Jodoigne © Caroline de Patoul

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FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL



I am delighted to share with you the 2020 review of the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers in Belgium.

This review is obviously marked by the global coronavirus pandemic.

Fedasil has observed a 40% drop in arrivals at reception facilities in 2020, as a result of border closures. The Agency also put in place strict precautionary measures throughout the year to minimise contamination and ensure the safety of the asylum seekers and the staff.

I am proud to be able to write that the medical situation in our centres has remained under control. All the credit for this goes to our teams in the field, who have shown commitment, solidarity and courage in a challenging working environment.

At the same time, Fedasil continues to develop its reception network. With the support of our new political authority, we are designing a reception model that will be able to react quickly to potential crises - with sufficient buffer places.

2021 is also the first year of my mandate as Director General of Fedasil.

We have embarked on broad-ranging deliberations on the major directions that the Agency may take in the coming years. Our ambition is to continue to invest in the quality of reception, while integrating new challenges such as legal migration channels, the integration of refugees and climate issues, and also to strengthen collaborations with our partners - whether in terms of reception, voluntary return, our institutional partners or the communes and cities of the country.

I hope you enjoy reading this review.

Michael Kegels
1 April 2021

RECEPTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The year 2020 was characterised by the coronavirus crisis which, from March onwards, added an extra dimension to the saturation of the reception network observed in Belgium since the end of 2018. In this context, Fedasil has taken various preventive measures to keep the health situation under control, and to increase the reception capacity so we could better distribute residents and anticipate the resumption of asylum applications.

Fall in arrivals

In 2020, 13,645 people joined the Fedasil reception network (40% fewer than in 2019). Due to the global coronavirus pandemic, Belgium definitely saw a significant drop in asylum applications, especially between March and July 2020. Afghanistan was the main country of origin (19% of arrivals in the network).

In 2020, 15,468 residents left the reception network. This is a slight decrease compared with 2019.

The health crisis also had a negative impact on the length of time it took to process asylum applications and therefore on the length of stay in our network. Moreover, people with protection status had difficulty in visiting accommodation and therefore in leaving the reception facilities quickly.

Creation of places

Fedasil continued to look for additional places in order to anticipate the resumption of asylum applications and better manage the occupation of centres within the health context. At the end of 2020, the network counted 28,180 places, which is 1,200 more than at the beginning of the year.

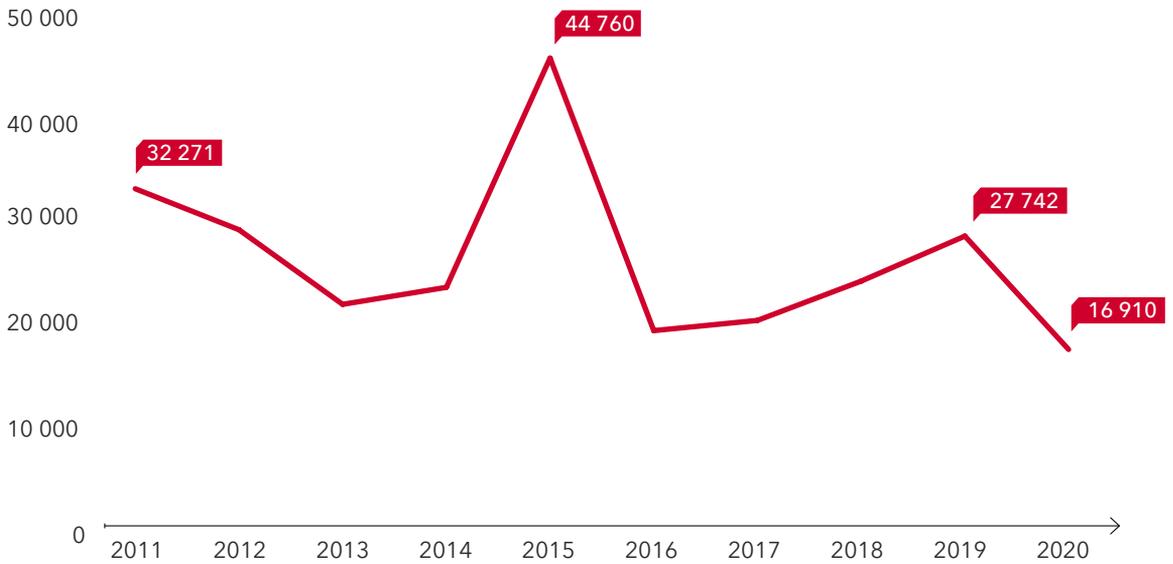
In view of the increase in the arrival of unaccompanied minors ('UM'), Fedasil also increased its specific reception capacity: at the end of 2020, there were 2,077 UM places, an increase of 385 places compared to the end of 2019.

Fifteen temporary centres opened last year, including several run by private companies.

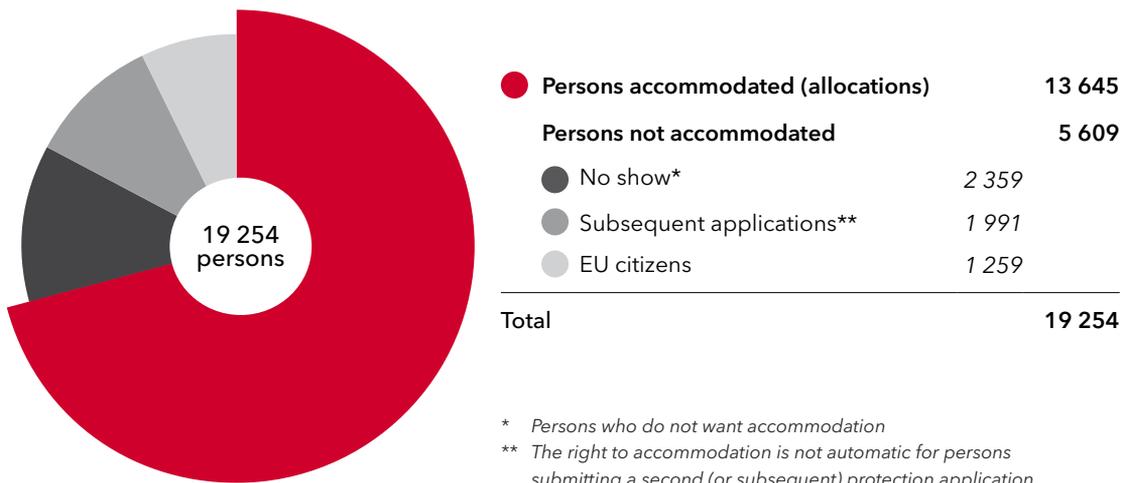
The occupancy rate has stabilised at around 85% since summer 2020. Nearly 50% of the people received were families with children. One in three residents was under 18 years of age. A total of 122 nationalities are represented in the reception network, the main countries of origin being Afghanistan, Palestine and Syria.

More information is available at www.fedasil.be

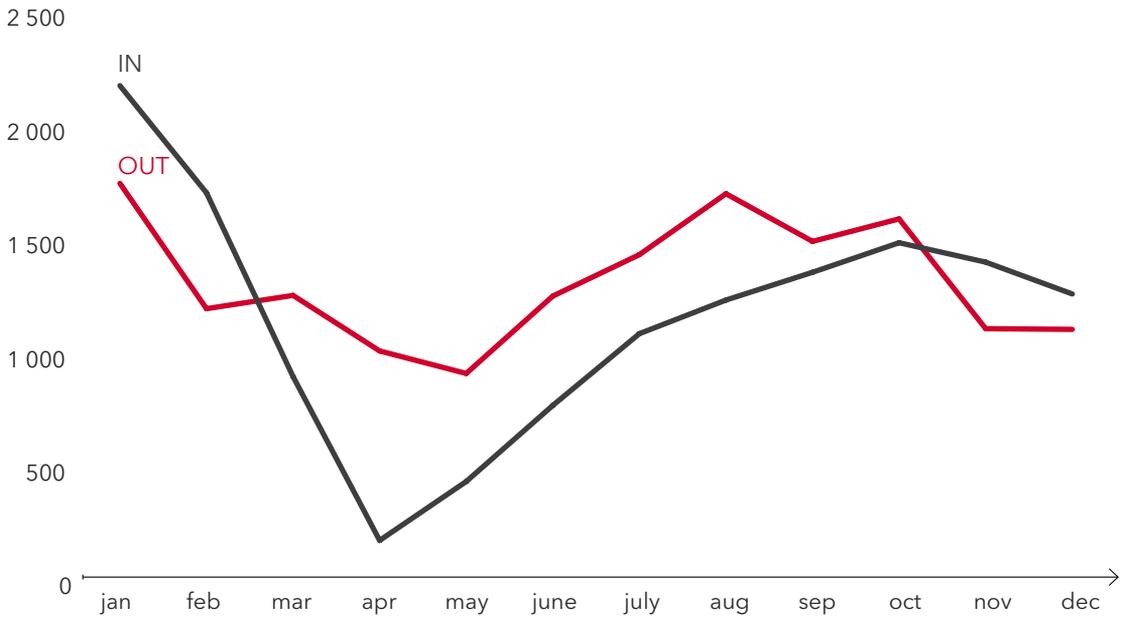
Number of persons who applied for international protection (asylum) in Belgium (Source CGRS)



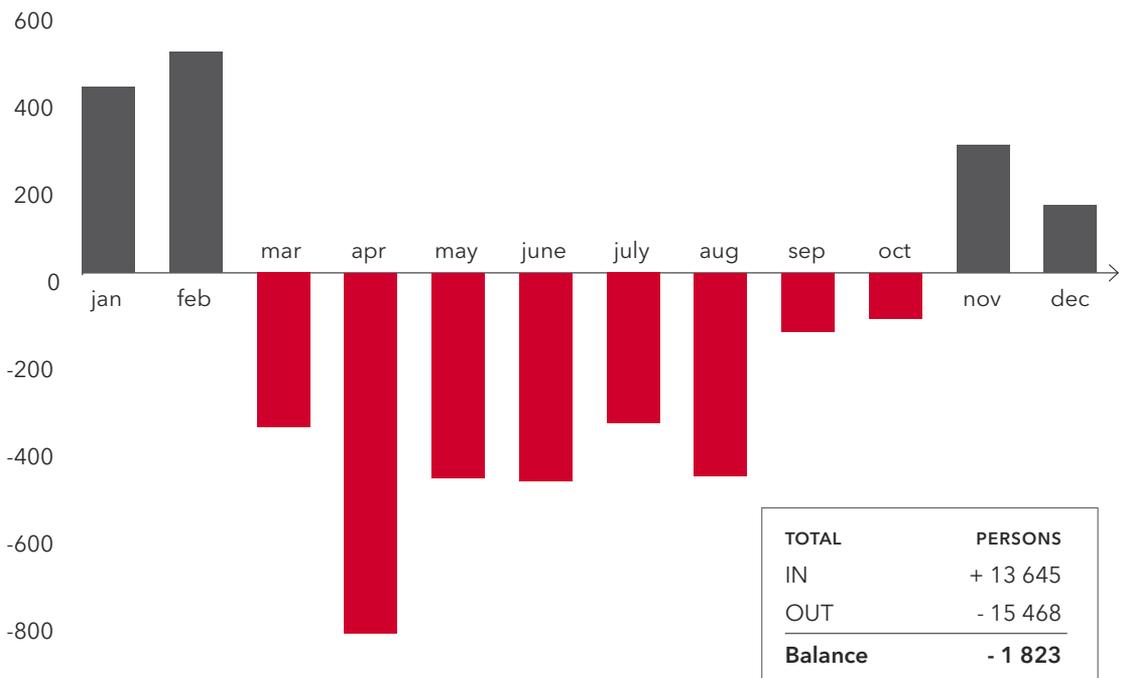
Reception applications at the (Fedasil) arrival centre in 2020



Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2020



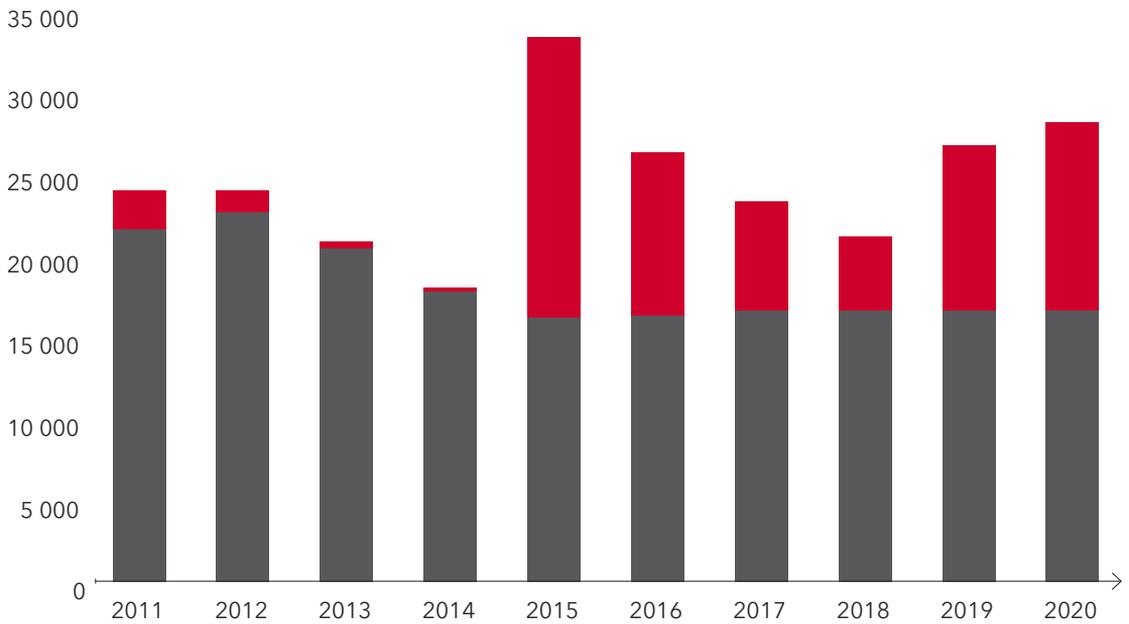
Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2020: balance IN/OUT



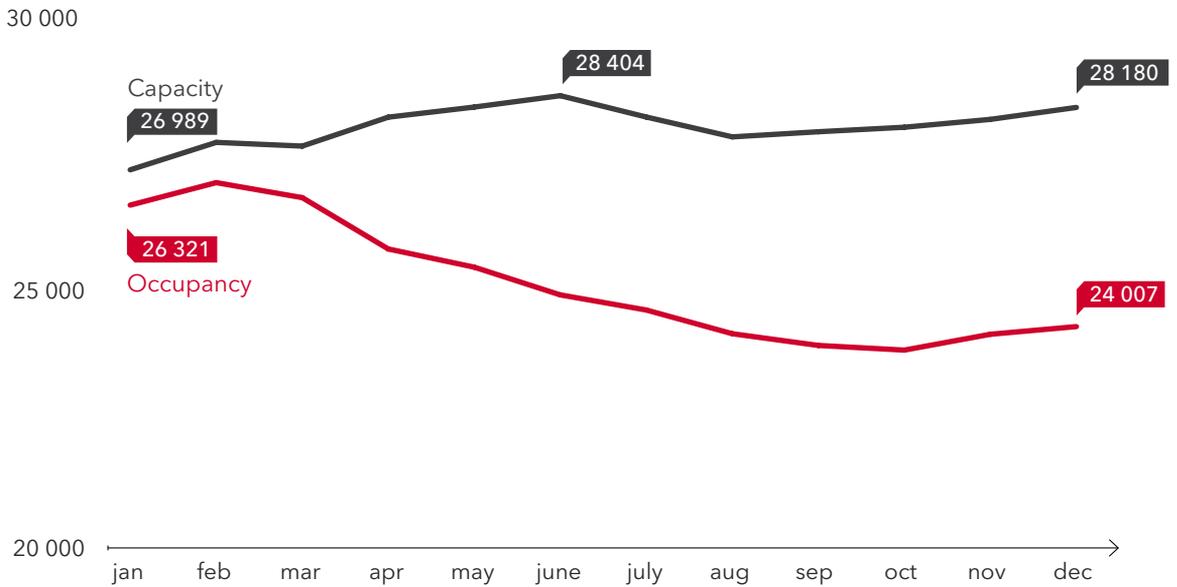
Evolution of the reception capacity

Situation end of December of each year

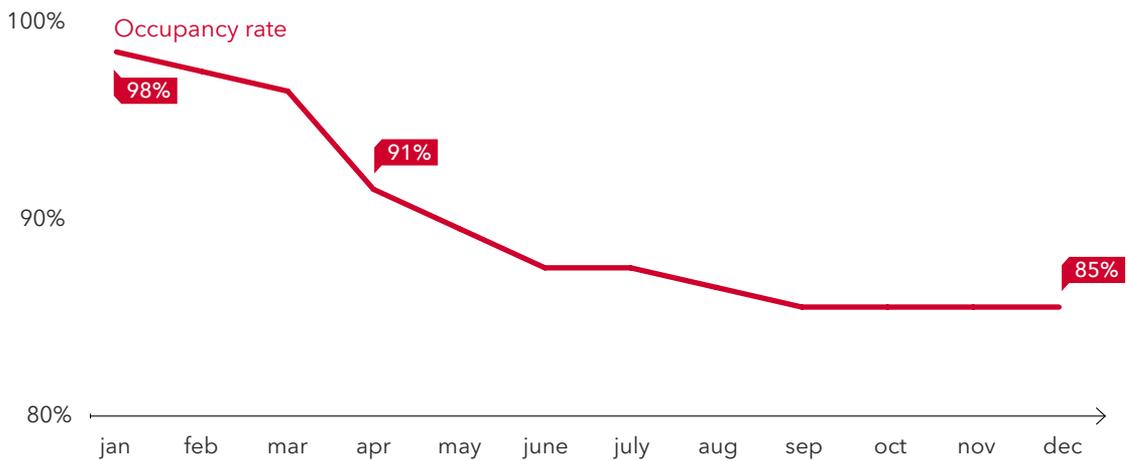
- Structural reception capacity
- Temporary capacity (emergency, activated buffer places)



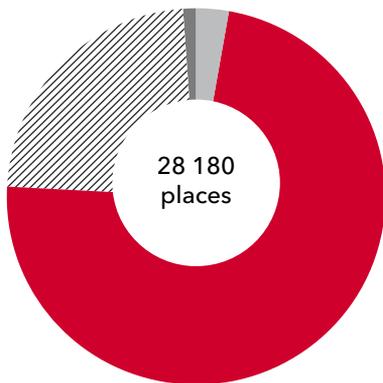
Evolution of the reception capacity and the occupancy in 2020



Evolution of the occupancy rate in 2020

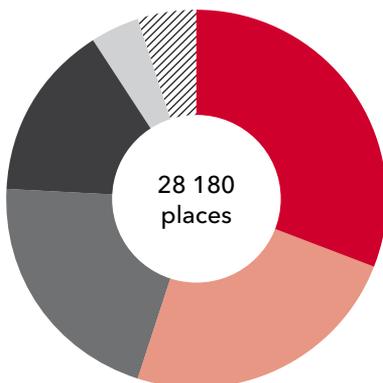


Types of reception places / end 2020



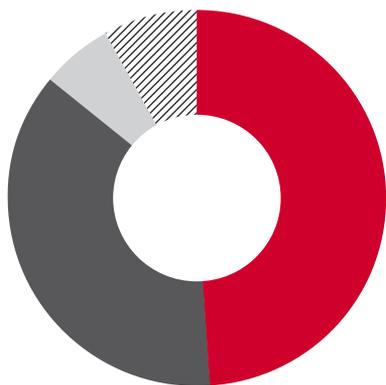
	CAPACITY	OCCUPANCY RATE %
● 1st phase reception Arrival centre, observation and orientation centres for UM	878	47
● Collective housing Federal centres, Croix-Rouge, Rode Kruis, private partners, Samusocial, Caritas and other partners	20 513	86
⊗ Individual housing CPAS/OCMW (public social welfare centre), Caritas, Ciré and other partners	6 389	93
● Open return places Federal centres	400	36
Total	28 180	85

Contribution of the partners / end 2020



	PLACES
● Fedasil	8 767
● French-speaking Red Cross	6 695
● CPAS	5 955
● Dutch-speaking Red Cross	4 066
● Private partners	1 022
⊗ Other partners	1 675
Total	28 180

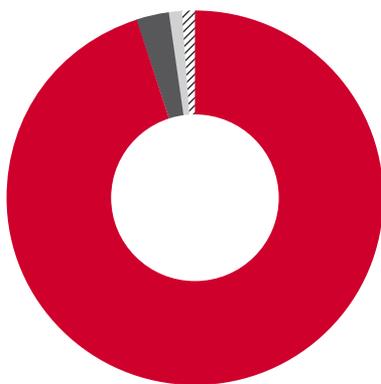
Profile of the persons accommodated / end 2020



	%
● Families	49
● Single men	37
● Single women	6
⊗ UM (Unaccompanied foreign minors)	8



	%
● Men	67
● Women	33



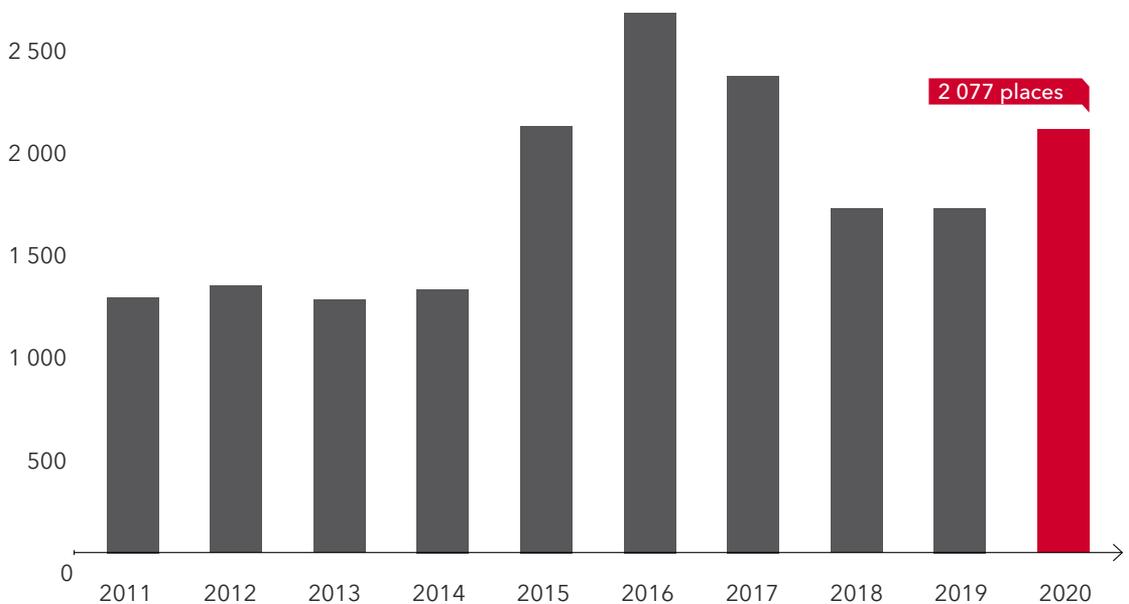
	%
● Applicants for protection (including UM) whose application is being processed	95
● Persons with a residence permit	3
● Resettled refugees	1
⊗ Other administrative situations	1

	%
● Adults	67
● Minors	33

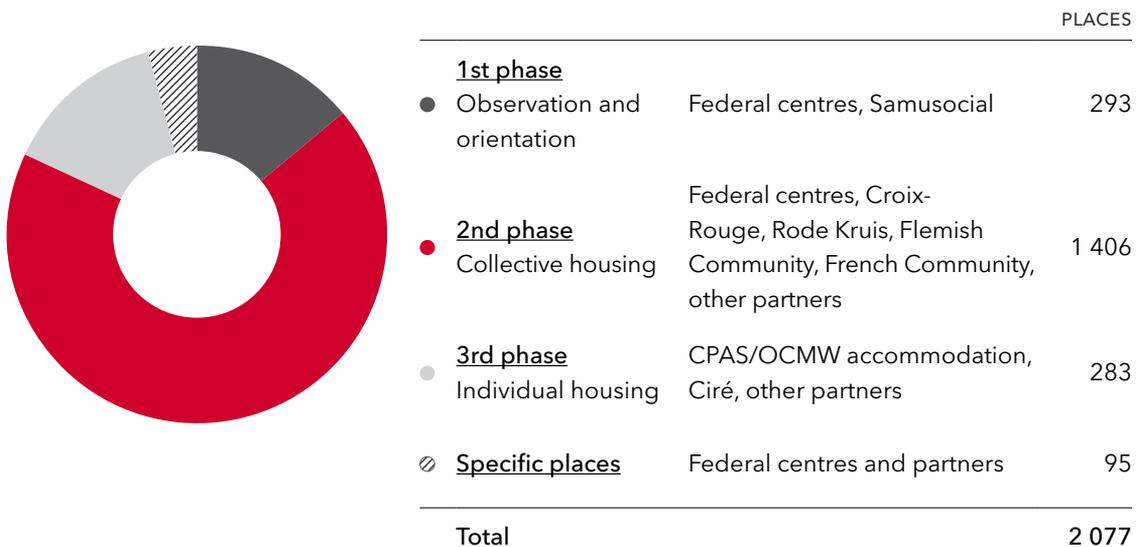
	%
Afghanistan	16
Palestine	12
Syria	9
El Salvador	6
Guinea	6
Eritrea	5
Somalia	4
Iraq	3
Iran	3
Congo (DRC)	3
Others (112 countries)	33

Unaccompanied foreign minors (UM): evolution of the reception capacity

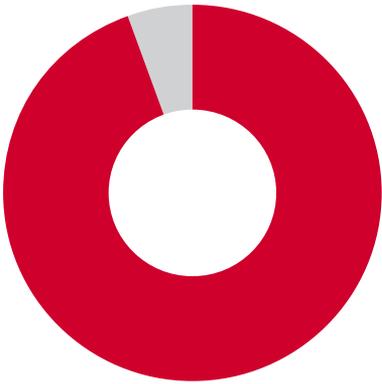
Situation end of December of each year



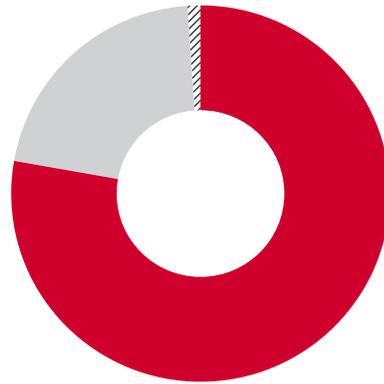
UM: capacity by reception phase / end 2020



Profile of the accommodated UM / end 2020



	%
● Boys	94,5
● Girls	5,5



	%
● 16-18 years	78
● 12-15 years	22
▨ 11 years and less	<1



	%
● Afghanistan	74
● Somalia	6
● Eritrea	4
● Guinea	4
● Syria	3
▨ Other countries	9

RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

Belgium has had a structural resettlement programme since 2013. Our country has committed to accepting a quota of vulnerable refugees each year, based on European priorities.

In 2020, only 176 people were resettled in Belgium. Arrivals were actually suspended from July 2019 to October 2020, first due to the lack of places in the reception network in Belgium, and then due to the international health situation.

In 2021, Fedasil intends to organise the arrival of a record number of refugees, i.e. around 1,500 people, in order to meet the commitments of previous years.

Community sponsorship

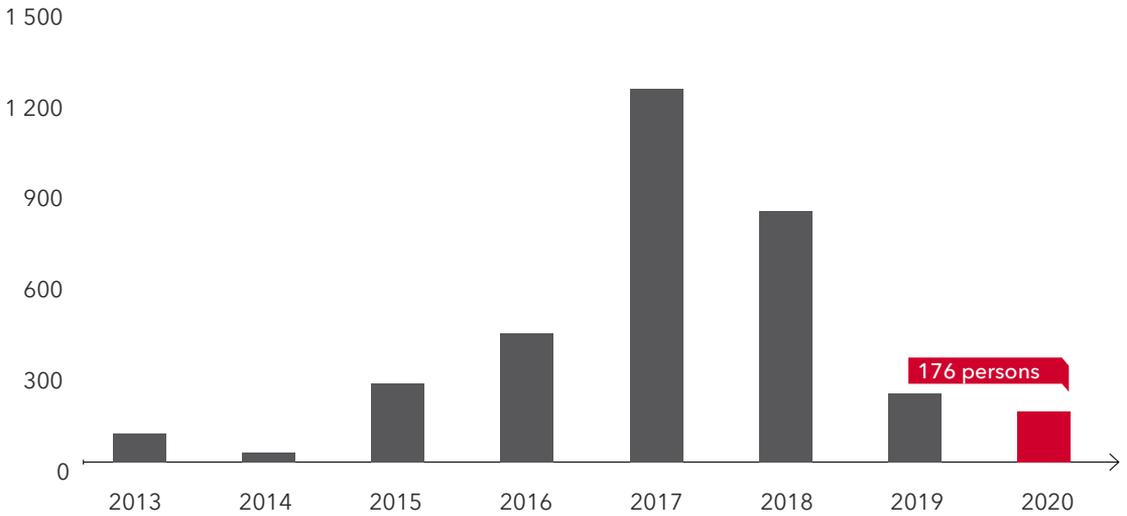
All the refugees resettled in 2020 were Syrians. Before arriving in Belgium, they were in Lebanon and Turkey.

Of these refugees, three families (14 people in total) were welcomed through a new project called “community sponsorship”. This is a pilot project whereby refugees are welcomed and accompanied in Belgium by an association or a group of people, without going through a reception period in a Fedasil centre. Caritas International is responsible for the supervision of the associations/citizens that welcome the refugees.

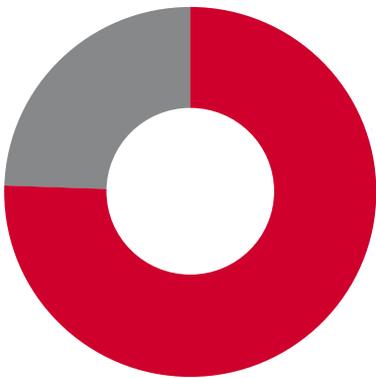
The resettlement programme is funded by AMIF, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union.

More information is available at www.fedasil.be/en/resettlement

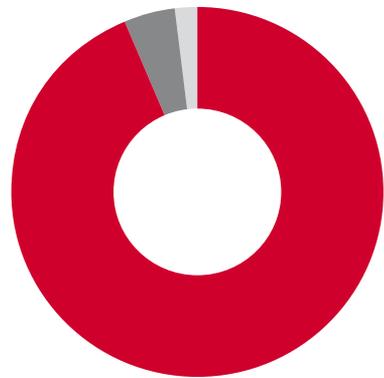
Number of refugees arrived in Belgium in the framework of resettlement



Profile of the refugees resettled in 2020



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	INITIAL COUNTRY OF RECEPTION	PERSONS
● Syria	Lebanon	133
● Syria	Turkey	43
Total		176



	PERSONS
● Families	165
● Single men	8
● Single women	3
Total	176

VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2020, 1,847 people returned voluntarily to their country of origin. This was a drop of 24% compared to the previous year. This decrease is mainly related to the measures taken at the national and international levels to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reduced flights

From March 2020, several destinations were difficult or impossible to reach, and the situation in Belgium as well as in the countries of origin did not always allow for a return.

However, many returns were organised thanks to the efficiency of the International Organization for Migration (IOM, partner in the travel arrangements) and sustained contact with embassies. One of the solutions was to organise special flights; in November, 77 Salvadorans left on a flight specially chartered for the voluntary return.

Informing undocumented migrants

In 2020, Fedasil continued its information and awareness-raising work, especially in collaboration with its partner cities and communes. The mobile team of Fedasil outreachers has informed many undocumented migrants and transit migrants about their rights and options in Belgium, including the possibilities for voluntary return.

Assistance in the country of destination

In 2020, 1,110 of the returnees received reintegration assistance, i.e. almost two people in three.

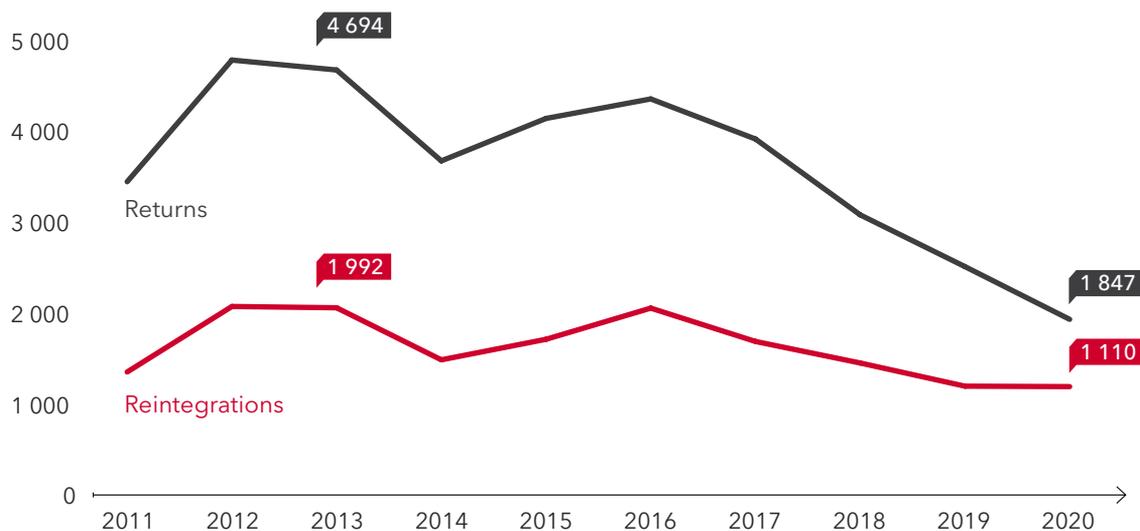
The reintegration programme helps to address the problems faced by people on their return, such as the renovation or rental of a home, job searches and medical expenses. The IOM and Caritas International are in charge of preparations from Belgium. Reintegration is monitored on the ground by their local offices or partners.

Several stories were collected in 2020 and published on the Fedasil website dedicated to voluntary return.

The Belgian voluntary return programme receives support from the European AMIF fund.

More information is available at www.voluntaryreturn.be

Evolution of voluntary returns from Belgium (number of returnees)



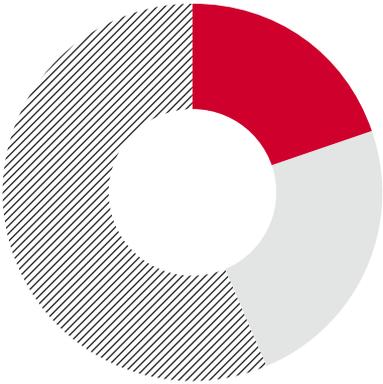
Comment

The figures also include the voluntary returns to the country of origin organised by the Immigration Office (20 persons in 2020). However, these figures do not include voluntary returns carried out within the framework of the Dublin Convention (organised by the Immigration Office to the European countries where migrants have already applied for asylum).

Countries of destination in 2020

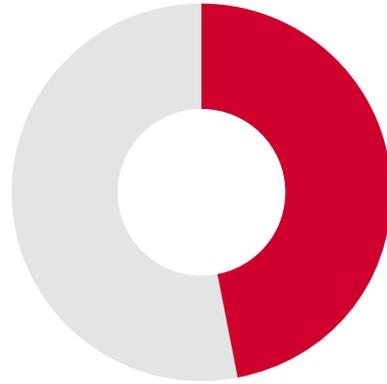
RETURNEES (GLOBAL FIGURE, WITH OR WITHOUT REINTEGRATION)		RETURNEES WITH REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE	
Brazil	480	El Salvador	133
El Salvador	134	Brazil	132
Georgia	104	Mongolia	86
Mongolia	96	Georgia	74
Romania	87	Belarus	58
Ukraine	83	Russia	51
Colombia	68	Colombia	51
Albania	60	Albania	39
Belarus	59	Afghanistan	34
Russia	58	Iraq	26
Others	618	Others	426
Total	1 847	Total	1 110

Profile of the returnees in 2020



RETURNEES

● Applicants for international protection (asylum)	367
○ Rejected applicants for international protection	441
⊘ Irregular migrants	1039
Total	1847



PERSONS

● Families	871
○ Single men and women	976



%

● Men	60
● Women	40



%

● 0-17 years	19
● 18-25 years	16
● 26-35 years	26
⊘ 36-50 years	26
● + 51 years	13

Fedasil is the federal Belgian government body responsible for the reception of applicants for international protection (asylum) and other target groups. Fedasil guarantees the quality and conformity of the different reception structures. Fedasil also coordinates the organisation of voluntary returns to countries of origin.

This review presents the events and statistics for 2020 for reception, resettlement and voluntary returns.

The latest information and news about our organisation can be found on our website, www.fedasil.be