

# REVIEW 2023

Reception - Resettlement - Voluntary return



# FOREWORD

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I am pleased to share with you the 2023 review of Fedasil, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in Belgium.

The year was again marked by the saturation of our reception network. A situation we have been seeing since the summer of 2021: Fedasil is unable to offer a reception solution to all those seeking protection, despite the creation of many additional places (3,000 in 2023!) and the numerous measures taken by the Agency and the government to reduce the length of stay in centres.

As you can see, the challenges remain many: starting with adapting our network and our internal organisation to current needs. Even if the creation of reception places will not by itself resolve the crisis situation, Fedasil continues to assume its responsibilities. We are looking for new sites, some of them temporary, while continuing to invest in getting our residents into work, preventing incidents, supporting people outside the reception system, helping them return to their home countries and ensuring the well-being of our staff.

I am confident in our ability to overcome these challenges. Fedasil can always count on its staff and many partners to find innovative solutions

and adapt to a changing environment. Our dearest wish is for Fedasil to be able to soon get back to the original purpose of its mission: providing high quality accommodation for all those seeking and entitled to protection. It is time for the Agency to once again serve as the role model it used to be in the past.

In this election period, we recommend that the next Belgian federal government give Fedasil the resources it needs to resume a flexible and effective reception model for those seeking protection. A government that will, undoubtedly, continue to strengthen cooperation between all the players in the asylum chain, a project begun during the current legislature.

On a personal note, my interim appointment as Director General of Fedasil comes to an end on 1 July. I'm particularly proud to have been able to lead an organisation that can rely on committed courageous teams, despite the difficulties and the pressure. I wish all the best to the Agency's future Director General, Pieter Spinnewijn, who undoubtedly has the necessary experience and talent to lead Fedasil over the coming years.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual review.

Best regards,

Fanny François,  
Acting Director General  
May 2024

# RECEPTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICANTS

**2023 was once again marked by the saturation of the reception network. Since 2021, a number of persons seeking protection have found themselves outside the Fedasil network. The most vulnerable (families, minors, women) are prioritised for reception.**

In 2023, applications for protection (asylum) remained high: almost 35,500 applications were registered in Belgium (-3% compared with 2022). At the same time, Fedasil has noted that the number of people leaving reception centres remains lower than the number arriving, due to the longer duration of asylum procedures. As a result, the number of people accommodated by Fedasil increased throughout 2023.

## Lack of places

In 2023, 8,816 people were unable to enter the regular reception system on the day they registered. These people (single men) were invited to join a waiting list and be accommodated at a later date depending on the number of places available. Several of them are being temporarily housed in

the Brussels homeless system (2,000 places available under an agreement between the regional and federal authorities). At the end of 2023, almost 3,000 people were still on the waiting list.

Some protection applicants have undertaken legal action. In 2023, Fedasil was convicted more than 3,000 times by the labour courts for a failure to provide accommodation. These people are then prioritised for accommodation, depending on the number of places available.

## Creation of places

In this context, Fedasil has sought to increase its reception capacity in order to offer shelter to as many people as possible. Despite a number of obstacles (lack of infrastructure, administrative authorisations, recruitment, etc.), Fedasil was able to create more than 3,000 new reception places last year, some of them temporary.

By the end of 2023, the system had 35,651 places, a net increase of 2,152 places compared with the end of 2022.

## Unaccompanied minors

However, unlike in previous years, there was a drop in arrivals of unaccompanied minors. In 2023, 2,744 young people entered the system, down 28% on 2022.

At the end of 2023, Fedasil and its partners were accommodating 2,743 unaccompanied minors, mainly boys (91% of the young people) between 16 and 18 years of age. Afghanistan remains the leading country of origin, even though the proportion of young Afghans is declining.

Further information available at [www.fedasil.be](http://www.fedasil.be)

## Ukrainian refugee

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine in 2022, the Belgian authorities at various levels have been working together to accommodate those fleeing the country as best as possible. At the refugee registration centre in Brussels (run by the Immigration Office), Fedasil is responsible for directing people who so wish to temporary accommodation organised in the country's municipalities.

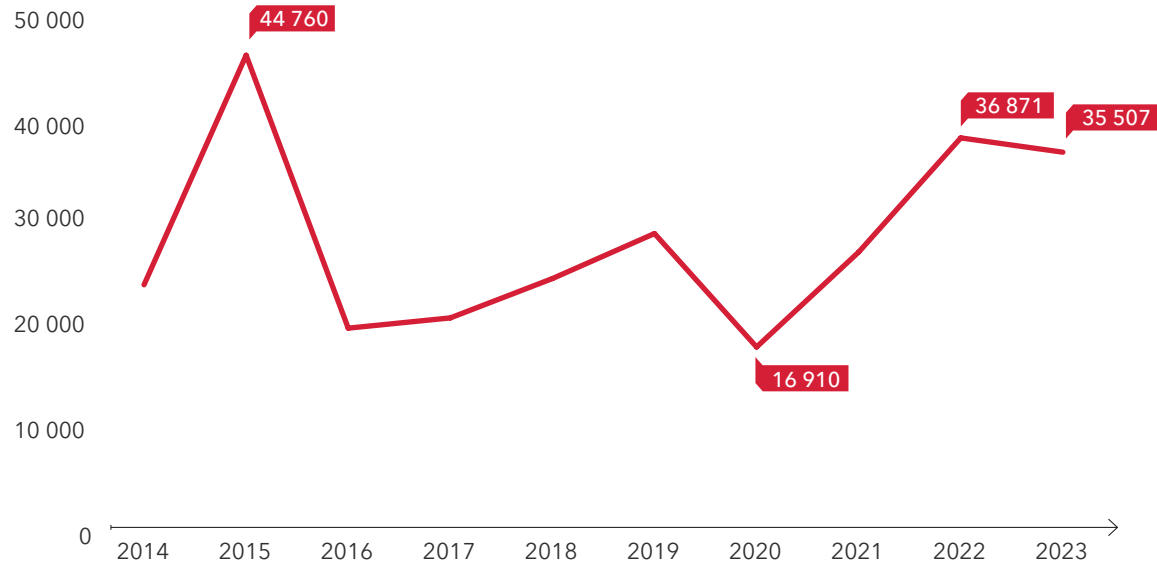
In 2023, the Immigration Office issued 15,343 temporary protection certificates. Fedasil referred 1 in 4 refugees to temporary accommodation - either directly to a local authority or via the Red Cross 'Ariane' emergency centre in Woluwe-St-Lambert (Brussels).

*Under a European directive, displaced persons from Ukraine can register in Belgium to receive temporary protection and, if necessary, accommodation and social assistance. They do not have to apply for asylum and are not accommodated within the Fedasil reception system.*

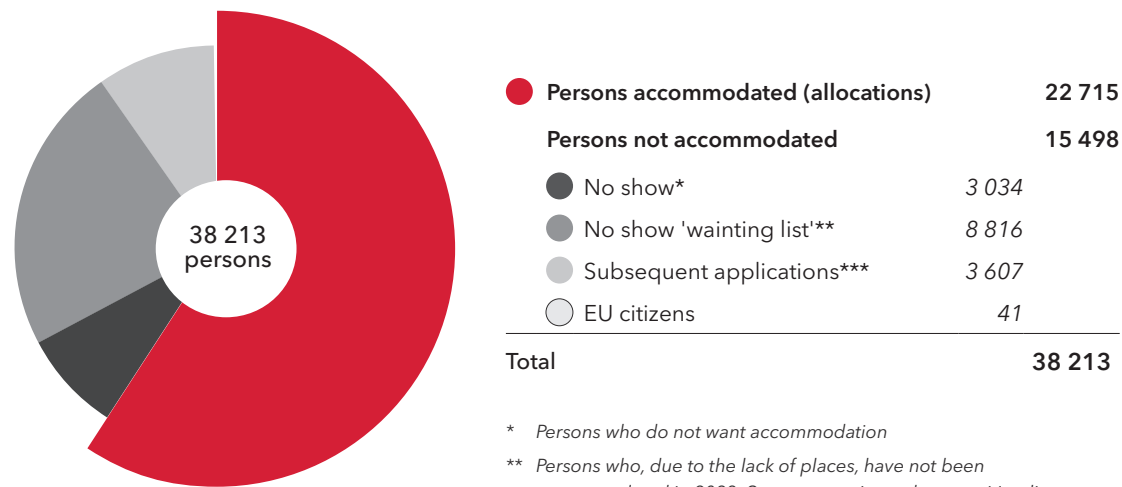
[www.info-ukraine.be](http://www.info-ukraine.be)

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

(Source: CGRS)



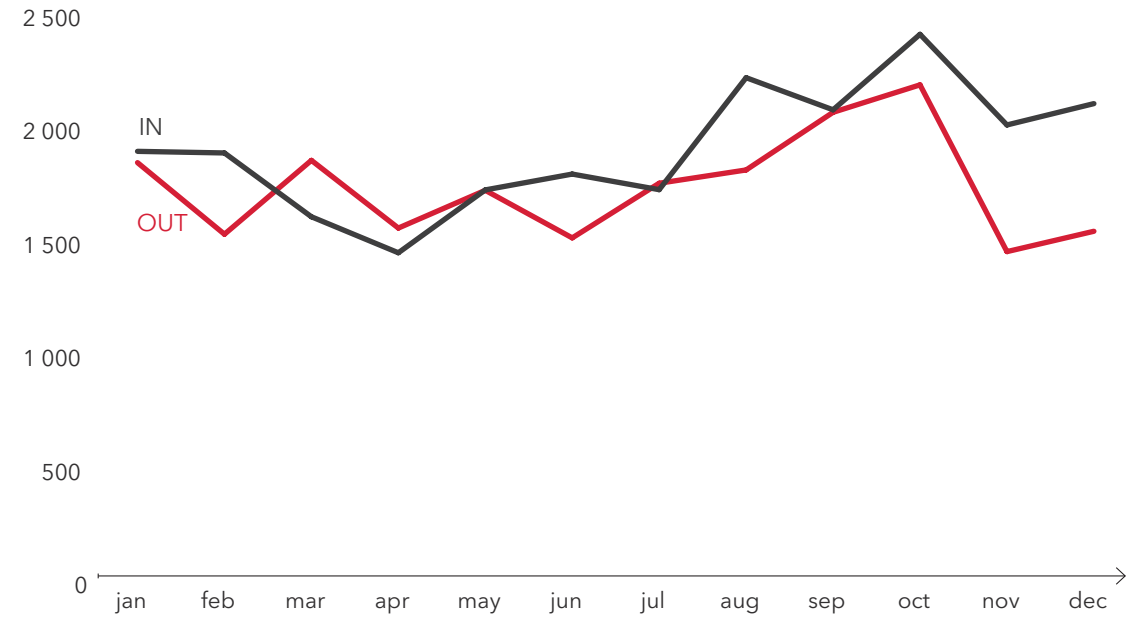
### Reception applications in 2023



\* Persons who do not want accommodation  
 \*\* Persons who, due to the lack of places, have not been accommodated in 2023. Some are registered on a waiting list and will be accommodated subsequently  
 \*\*\* The right to accommodation is not automatic for persons submitting a second (or subsequent) protection application

### Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2023

Situation end of December of each year



### Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2023: balance IN/OUT

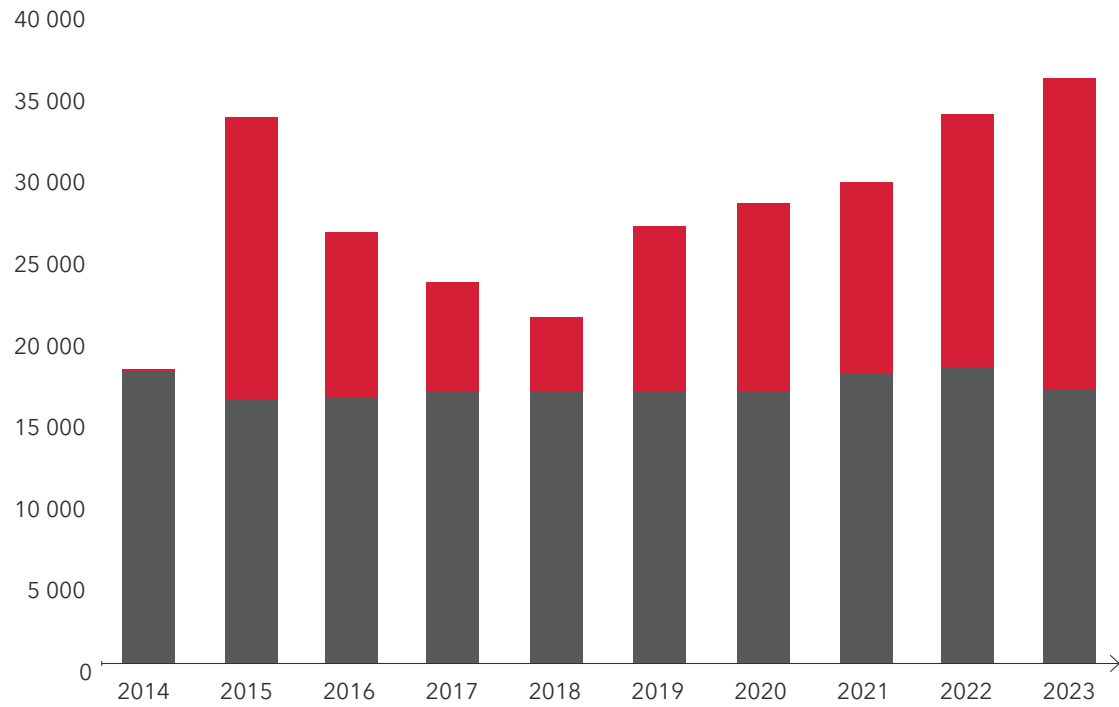


TOTAL	PERSONS
IN	22 715
OUT	20 682
<b>Balance</b>	<b>+ 2 033</b>

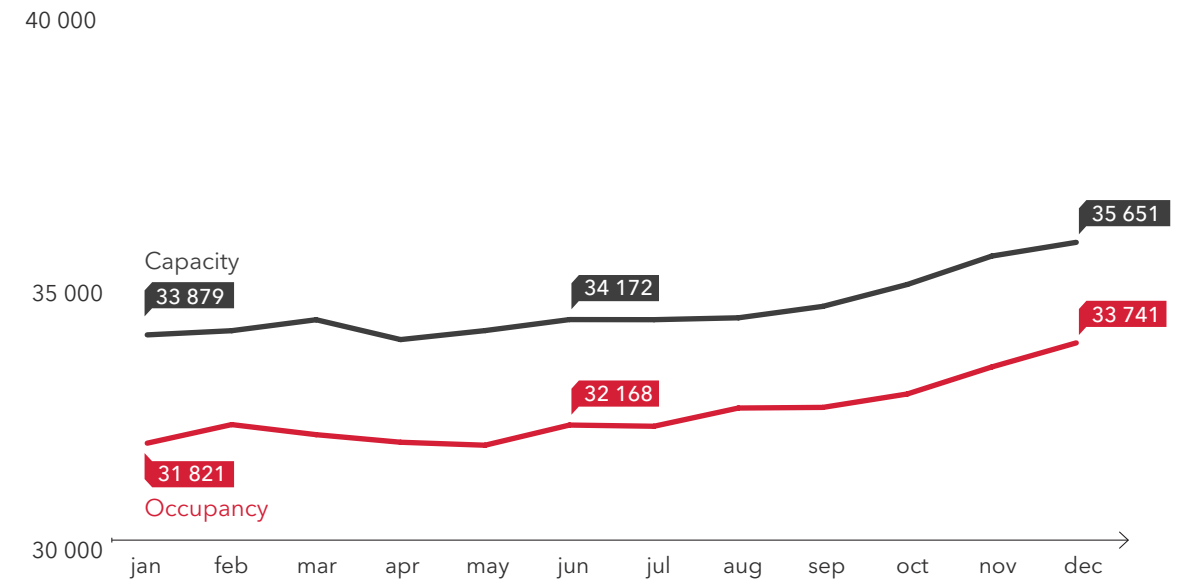
### Evolution of the reception capacity

Situation end of December of each year

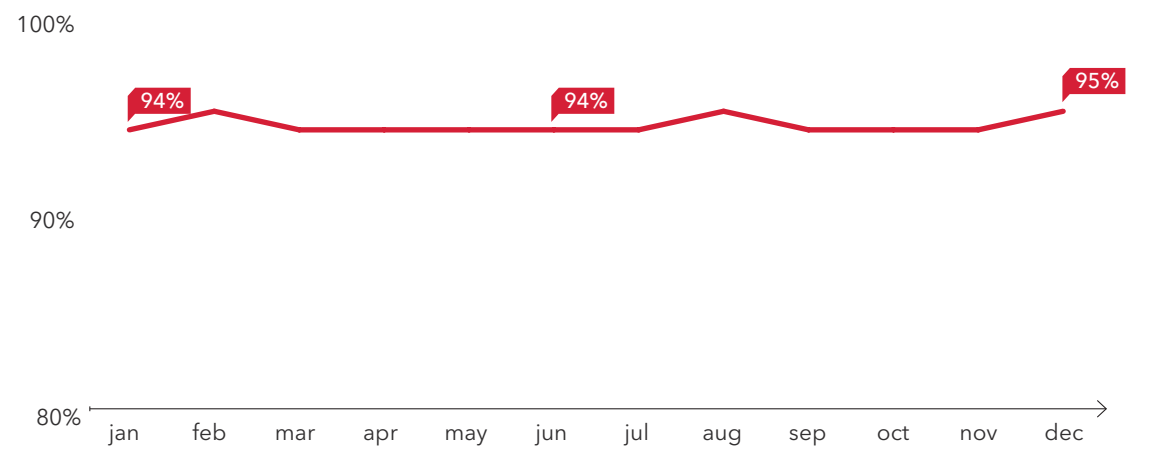
- Structural reception capacity
- Temporary capacity (emergency, activated buffer places)



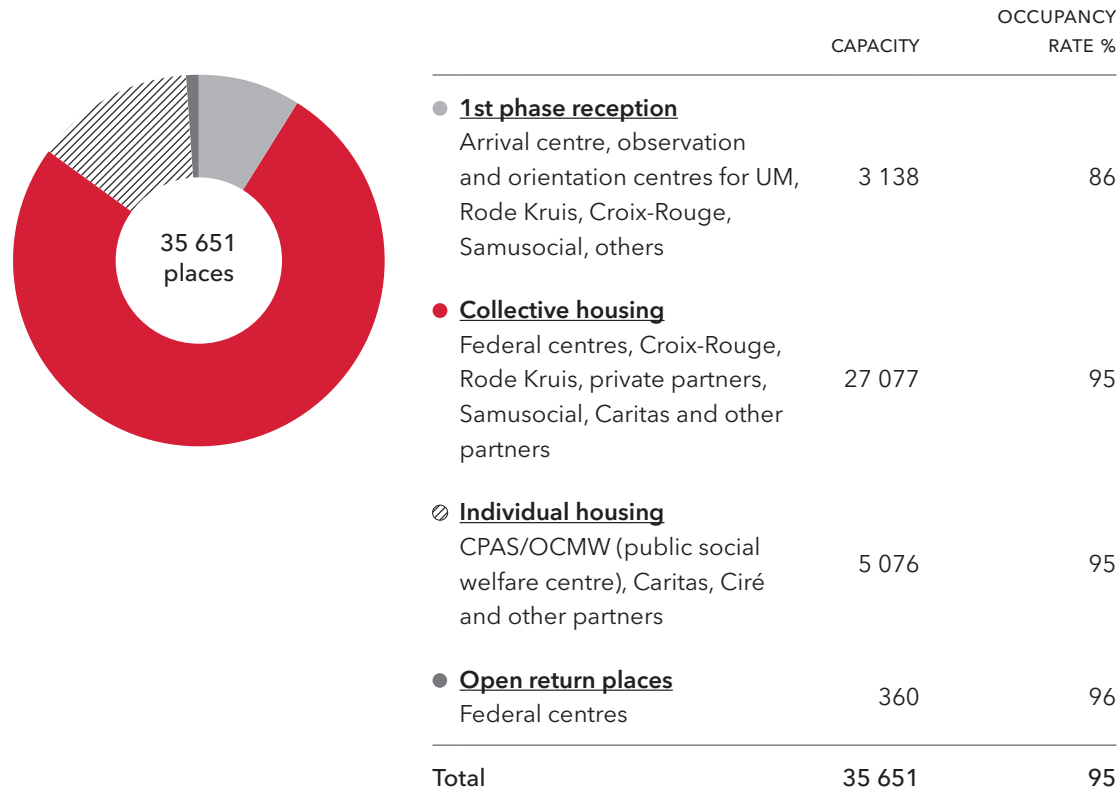
### Evolution of the reception capacity and the occupancy in 2023



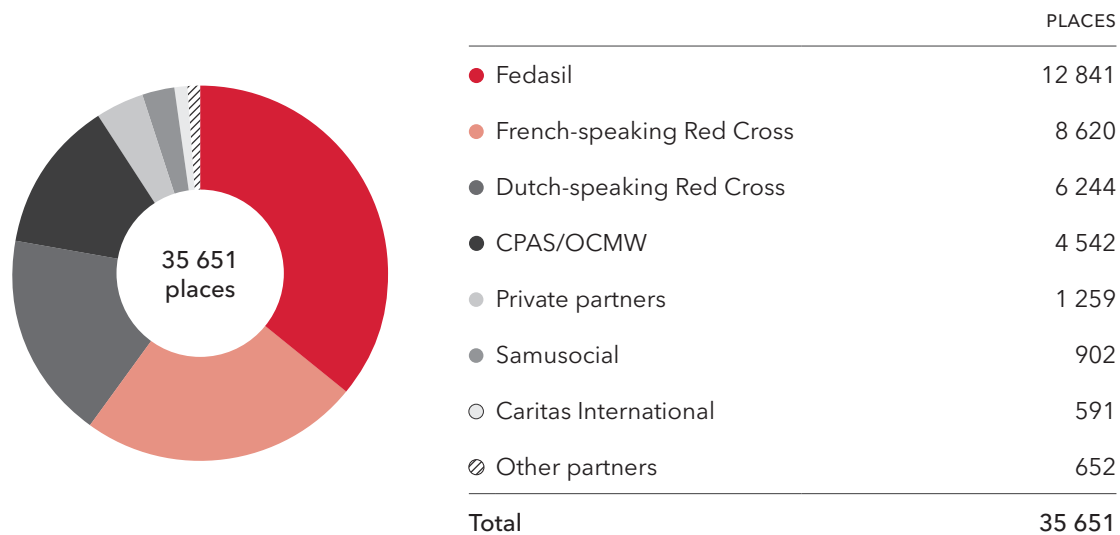
### Evolution of the occupancy rate in 2023



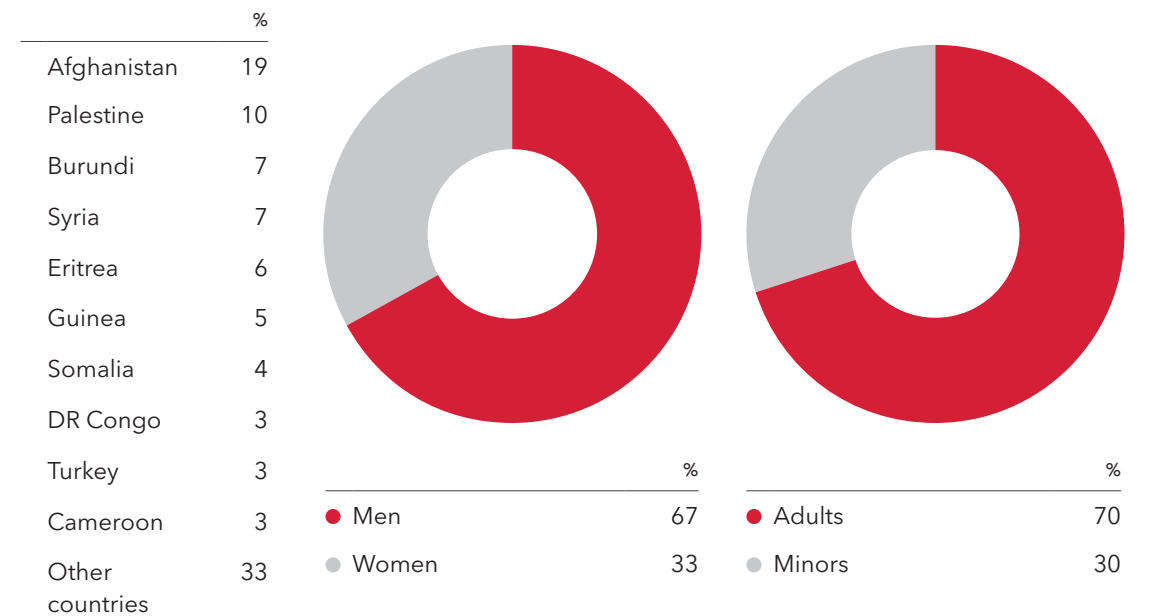
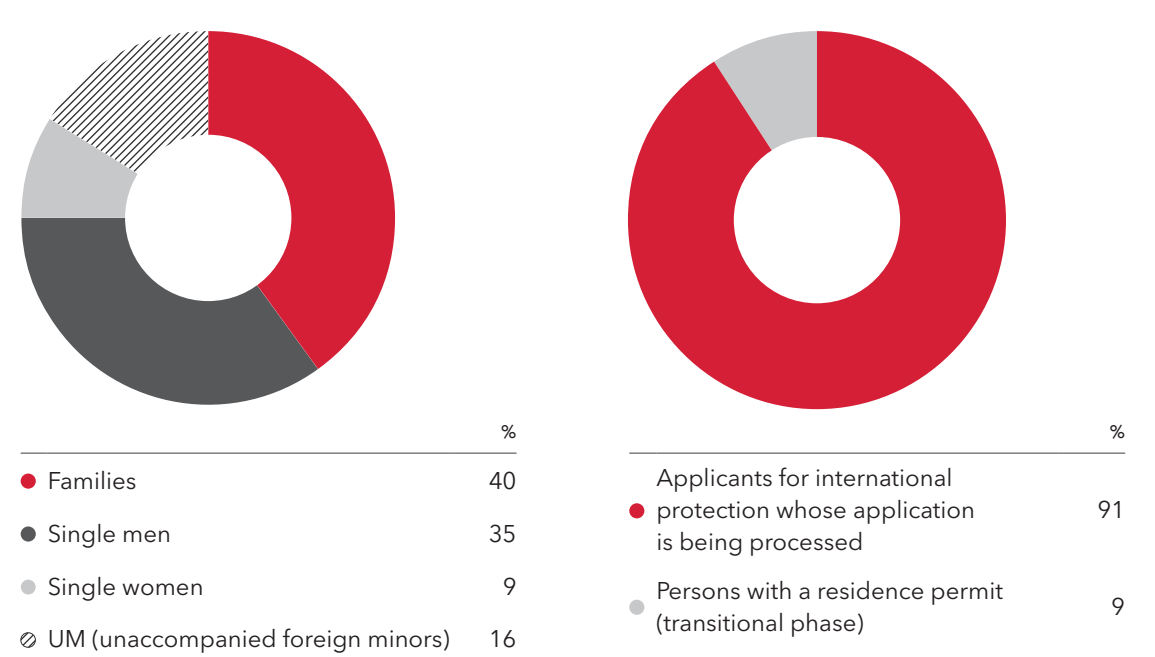
Types of reception places / end 2023



Contribution of the partners / end 2023

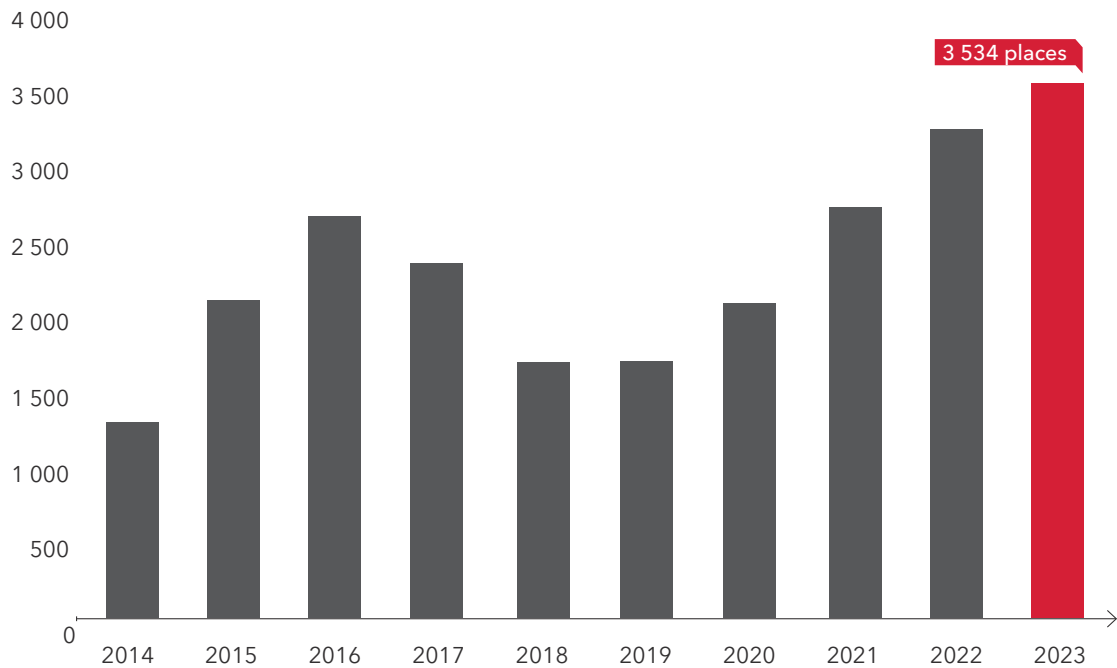


Profile of the persons accommodated / end 2023

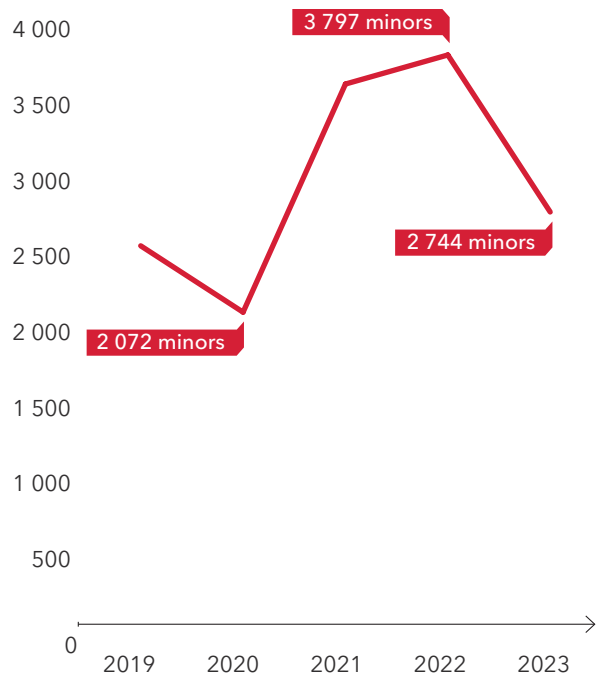


### Unaccompanied foreign minors (UM): evolution of the reception capacity

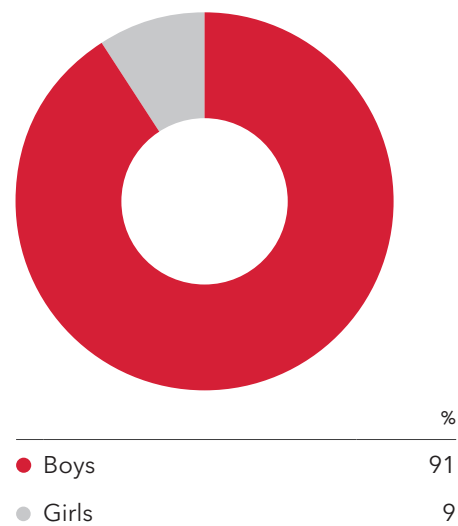
Situation end of December of each year



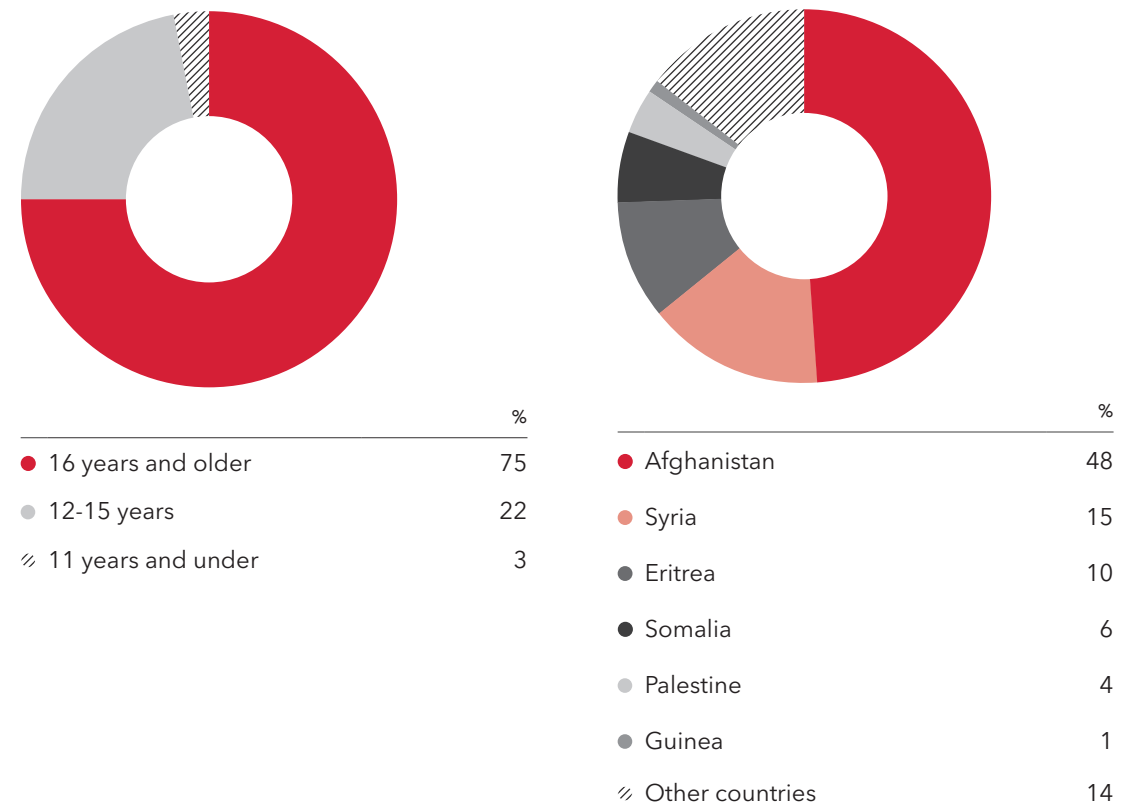
### UM: arrivals in the reception network



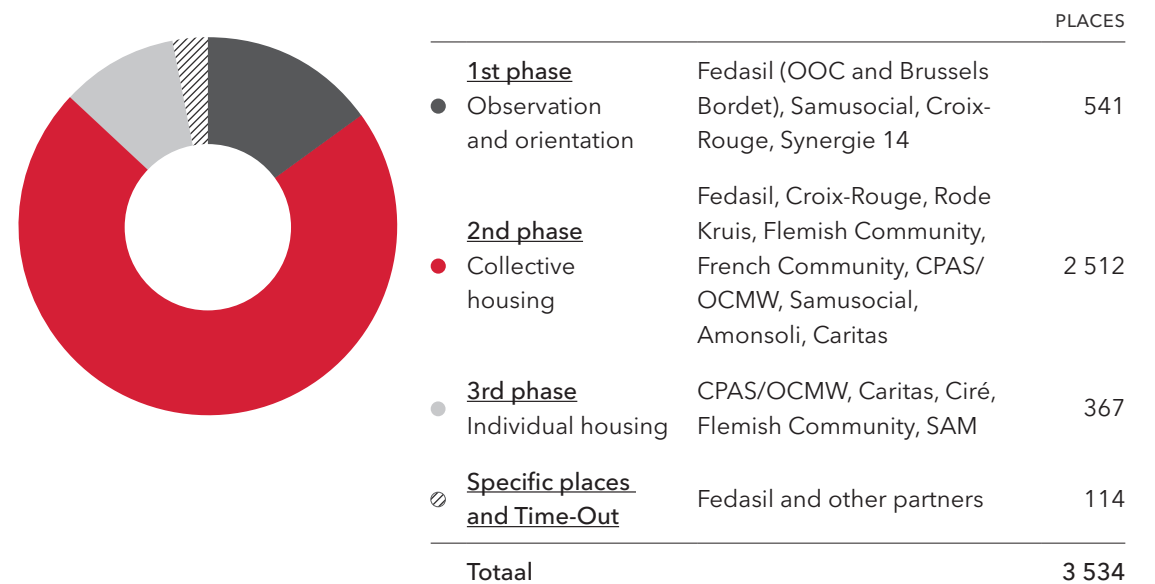
### Profile of the accommodated UM / end 2023



### Profile of the accommodated UM / end 2023



### UM: capacity by reception phase / end 2023



# RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

**Belgium has had a structural resettlement programme since 2013. Our country is therefore committed to receiving a contingent of vulnerable refugees each year, based on European and national priorities.**

287 refugees were resettled in Belgium in 2023, mainly families of Congolese refugees from Rwanda and Syrian refugees from Jordan and Egypt.

Despite numerous efforts, Belgium's undertaking to resettle 500 refugees could not be honoured. As in the previous year, the saturation of the regular reception system was a major obstacle to resettlement.

## Alveringem Reception Centre

The creation of a dedicated resettlement reception centre in September 2023 marked a turning point. In Alveringem (West Flanders), Fedasil now has around 100 structural places for resettled refugees.

Of the 287 refugees resettled in 2023, 190 passed through our centre in Alveringem. This centre therefore offers further prospects for growth in the Belgian resettlement programme.

Fedasil also continues to invest in alternative reception models (outside the regular system), such as 'community sponsorship', a sponsorship programme in which volunteers take in resettled refugees for a year, guiding them and helping them find their way in Belgian society. Partner associations can assist and provide volunteers with any support they need.

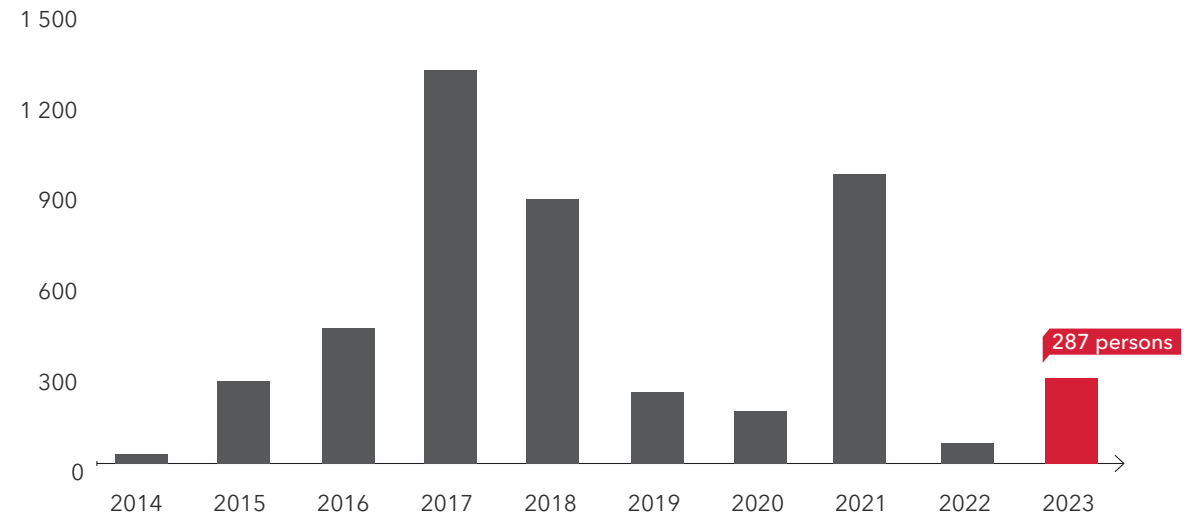
The resettlement programme is financed by the European AMIF fund. Further information available at [www.reinstallation.be](http://www.reinstallation.be)

## Relocation

In 2023, 32 people were relocated to Belgium from Cyprus. These people came from Syria, the DRC and Djibouti.

Relocation is a solidarity mechanism within the European Union designed to support those Member States most affected by migration flows. In recent years, Belgium has organised relocations from Greece, Italy, Malta and Cyprus.

Number of refugees arrived in Belgium in the framework of resettlement



Profile of the refugees resettled in 2023



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	INITIAL COUNTRY OF RECEPTION	PERSONS
● DR Congo	Rwanda	154
● Syria	Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey	81
● Sudan	Egypt	26
● Ethiopia	Egypt	18
⊘ Eritrea	Egypt	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>287</b>

	PERSONS
● Families	260
● Single men	21
⊘ Single women	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>



# VOLUNTARY RETURN

**Since the end of the Covid health crisis, the number of voluntary returns from Belgium has started to rise again.**

In 2023, Fedasil assisted 2,952 people who decided to return to their country of origin. Fedasil has taken on the task of providing migrants with tailor-made support, in collaboration with its partners IOM and Caritas International.

Three specific profiles can be identified among those who were returned in 2023: people who had an application for protection still under consideration (20% of returns), people whose application for protection was rejected (22%) and migrants without a residence permit (58%). Over the years, the latter group has accounted for a growing proportion of voluntary returns. Fedasil intends to pursue its partnerships with players on the ground in order to reach out as effectively as possible to people who are not staying within its reception system.

The main destination countries have remained virtually unchanged for several years: Brazil, Moldova, Mongolia, El Salvador and Georgia.

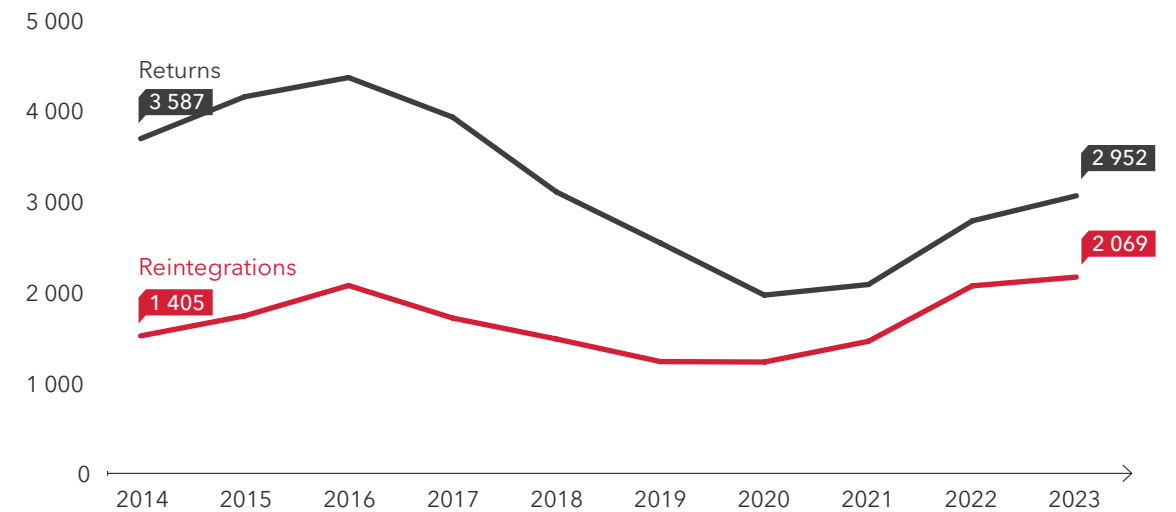
## Assistance in the destination country

Among the returnees, 2,069 migrants (70%) received additional support with reintegration to help them build a new future in their country. Reintegration is monitored locally in the destination country by IOM and Caritas International, or via their local partners.

Reintegration assistance has therefore become the norm. This assistance can be used for a variety of projects: renovating a house, setting up a micro-business, finding a job, etc.

Several return programmes from Belgium benefit from European support (AMIF funds). Further information available at [www.voluntaryreturn.be](http://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 (45 persons in 2023). 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 2023

RETURNEES (WITH OR WITHOUT REINTEGRATION)		RETURNEES WITH REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE	
Brazil	996	Brazil	574
Moldova	171	Moldova	147
Mongolia	170	Mongolia	145
Georgia	145	Georgia	120
El Salvador	107	El Salvador	102
Romania	92	Belarus	76
Belarus	87	Pakistan	76
Colombia	82	Turkey	65
Pakistan	80	Iraq	65
Turkey	73	Colombia	60
Others	949	Others	639
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 952</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2 069</b>

## Profile of the returnees in 2023



	%
● Applicants for international protection (asylum)	20
○ Rejected applicants for international protection	22
⊗ Undocumented migrants	58



	%
● Families	46
○ Single men and women	54
⊗ UM (unaccompanied foreign minors)	>1



	%
● Men	60
● Women	40



	%
● 0-17 years	21
● 18-35 years	40
● 36-50 years	27
⊗ + 51 years	12

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Ce bilan est également disponible en français.

Deze balans bestaat ook in het Nederlands.

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Brussels, June 2024.

**Fedasil** is responsible for the reception of applicants for international protection (asylum) and other target groups, and guarantees quality and compliance within the various reception modalities. We prepare our residents for life after reception, we coordinate the various voluntary return programmes and implement the commitments made in international programmes such as resettlement and relocation.

This review presents the events and statistics for 2023 regarding reception, resettlement and voluntary returns.

The latest information and news about our organisation can be found on our website, [www.fedasil.be](http://www.fedasil.be)

Information for applicants for protection can be found (in 14 languages) on our website [www.fedasilinfo.be](http://www.fedasilinfo.be)