

# REVIEW 2022

Reception - Resettlement - Voluntary return



Cover photo: © Sefat Momand. Picture taken by a young asylum seeker in the reception centre of Lommel.

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# FOREWORD



I am pleased to share with you the 2022 review of the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers in Belgium.

It was a year marked once again by the saturation of our reception network. Despite the thousands of places created, Fedasil was forced to refuse reception to many applicants for protection. As a result, our Agency has been convicted several times for failing to provide reception.

This situation tarnishes the image of Fedasil and Belgium. However, we are doing our best to increase the reception capacity, even if creating new places alone will not solve the current crisis. For months now, there have been more arrivals in our centres than departures: a reversal of this trend is absolutely essential.

With the support of our Secretary of State and the other asylum authorities, a large number of measures have been taken to provide structural solutions, whether to speed up departures from reception structures or to limit arrivals. We have a collective responsibility to find a solution quickly!

I would like to stress the importance of working closely with all the players in the asylum chain, such as the Immigration Office (OE) and the

Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), as well as with the Ministry of Defence and the National Crisis Centre. And Fedasil does not stop there since, in 2022, we continued and intensified our cooperation with the Regions and Communities in areas such as education, employment, housing, etc.

Today, Fedasil and its partners manage 35,000 reception places – almost a record. Every day, we strive to offer the best possible reception and support to our residents, despite the difficult conditions. Hats off to our staff!

2022 also marks Fedasil's twentieth anniversary. Our Agency was set up in 2002 with the mission of coordinating the reception of asylum seekers in Belgium. We can take great pride in what has been achieved over the last 20 years, despite several turbulent periods. My greatest ambition is to regain pride in our work, to get back on track with our mission as quickly as possible and to work together to address the challenges of providing a high-quality reception for all applicants for international protection.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual review.  
Sincerely,

Fanny François,  
Director General a.i.,  
June 2023

# A 20-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE



**2002** Launch of Fedasil!

**2004** Setting up of a specific reception path for UFM (unaccompanied foreign minors)



**2006** Twenty years of reception at Petit-Château (and in Belgium)

**2006** Fedasil takes charge of the “voluntary return programme”



**2016** Fedasil receives the Federal Public Organisation of the Year award

**2016** Significant drop in asylum applications. The government decides to reduce reception capacity by 10,000 places, in particular by closing 30 temporary centres



**2015** Asylum crisis: Belgium records an unprecedented number of asylum seekers as a result of the conflict in Syria. Fedasil doubles the capacity of its reception network in six months

**2015** Fedasil sets up two regional offices (North and South) responsible for monitoring all the reception structures in a specific geographical area

**2017** Further reduction in network capacity (closure of 3,000 places)

**2018** Centre occupancy rises again and Fedasil goes back into “crisis mode” at the end of the year

**2018** Creation of the “arrival centre” at Petit-Château, in a chaotic context given the increase in arrivals

**2019** The length of the asylum procedure increases, the network gradually reaches saturation point, and Fedasil creates 5,000 additional reception places



**2020** Health crisis: reception centres have to adapt and take measures

**2007** Reform of the asylum procedure and entry into force of the “reception act”

**2008** Increasing occupancy, start of network saturation and creation of temporary emergency accommodation



**2009** A crisis year: asylum seekers are accommodated in hotels or given a “non-referral”

**2010-2011** New crisis years: thousands of new emergency places are created. Non-referral and staff actions continue

**2014** Creation of a code of ethics at Fedasil, with four core values: respect, customer focus, impartiality and discretion. Reception quality standards are laid down

**2013-2014** Closure of emergency accommodation and reduction in capacity in a context of budget savings



**2013** Implementation of the structural resettlement programme for refugees in Belgium

**2010** Asylum seekers can access the labour market

**2012** Reversal of the trend: occupancy starts to decrease again, as does the length of stay in the centres



against Covid-19. Arrivals in the network are down, but the length of stay increases. Fedasil increases its reception capacity (+1,200 places)



**2020-2022** After the Covid “interval”, arrivals and occupancy rates in the centres

increase: Fedasil faces a new reception crisis, the biggest since 2010. Despite the number of places created, asylum seekers find themselves on the streets



**2022** Fedasil helps manage the reception and orientation of Ukrainian refugees

# RECEPTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

In 2022, nearly 37,000 applications for protection (asylum) were recorded in Belgium, an increase of 40% compared with 2021. This increase in arrivals put further pressure on Fedasil's reception network. At the same time, Fedasil notes that the number of departures from the reception centres remains inferior to the arrivals, due to the longer duration of asylum and residence procedures.

As a result, the number of people accommodated by Fedasil increased throughout 2022 and Fedasil ran out of places.

## **4,000 places created**

In this context, Fedasil has sought to rapidly increase its reception capacity in order to accommodate as many people as possible. By the end of 2022, the network totalled 33,499 places – an increase of more than 4,000 places compared with the beginning of the year!

Last year, 14 reception centres were opened.

In addition, the Agency has experienced considerable difficulty in recruitment. Staff shortages have an impact on the timing of centre openings and on the full operation of the centres. Several measures were taken in 2022 to attract new staff and increase Fedasil's attractiveness (job days, social network campaigns, secondment of staff from other public services, etc.).

## **Convictions**

However, despite the substantial efforts of Fedasil's teams and partners, the increase in recep-

tion capacity still did not allow to accommodate everyone. A number of persons, mainly single men, had to go back to the arrival centre (Petit-Château in Brussels) in the following days to ask for accommodation, resulting in queues and a difficult humanitarian situation for several weeks. Fedasil subsequently set up a waiting list system for people without reception solution.

Several applicants for protection took legal action. In 2022, Fedasil was convicted more than 5,000 times by the labour courts for failing to provide reception.

In agreement with the Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration, a number of measures with an impact on arrivals at and departures from reception centres were taken in 2022. Throughout the year, Fedasil naturally continued to search for new reception sites to reduce the pressure on the network.

## **UFMs**

The increase in arrivals also involves UFMs – unaccompanied foreign minors, mainly boys aged 15-17 from Afghanistan.

In 2022, Fedasil significantly increased its reception capacity for UFMs: 3,231 specific places were available at the end of 2022, representing the creation of more than 500 places in one year. This is a record number, amounting to twice the capacity of January 2020!



Despite the number of places created, there was also a shortage of suitable places for UFM's. Among the causes of the saturation are the length of the identification process of young people (age tests), the waiting time for the appointment of a guardian, and the length of the asylum procedure (particularly for Afghans).

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

### **Ukrainian refugees**

Belgian authorities at different levels of government worked together to provide the best possible reception for Ukrainians who fled their country. From March 2022, a large number of Fedasil staff members were deployed to the refugee registration centre in Brussels (run by the Immigration Office). Fedasil's mission is to direct people who so wish to a temporary housing solution organised in the municipalities of the country.

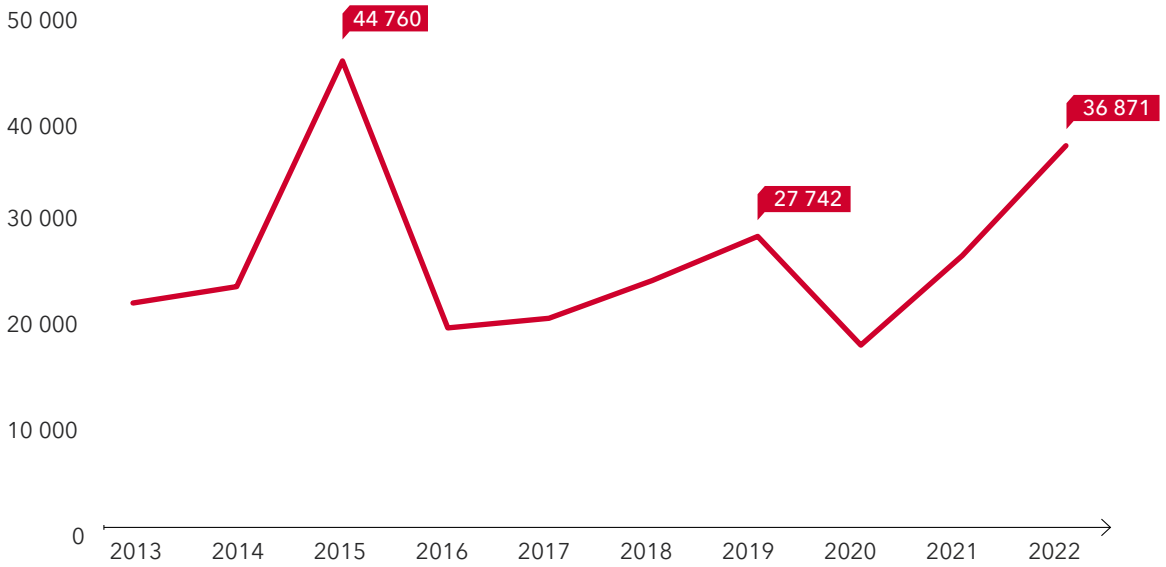
In 2022, more than 60,000 temporary protection certificates were issued by the Immigration Office. Fedasil referred 16,000 persons to a temporary accommodation (i.e. around 1 refugee in 4).

Displaced persons from Ukraine can register in Belgium to receive temporary protection and, if necessary, help with accommodation and social assistance. They do not have to apply for asylum and are not accommodated in the Fedasil reception network.

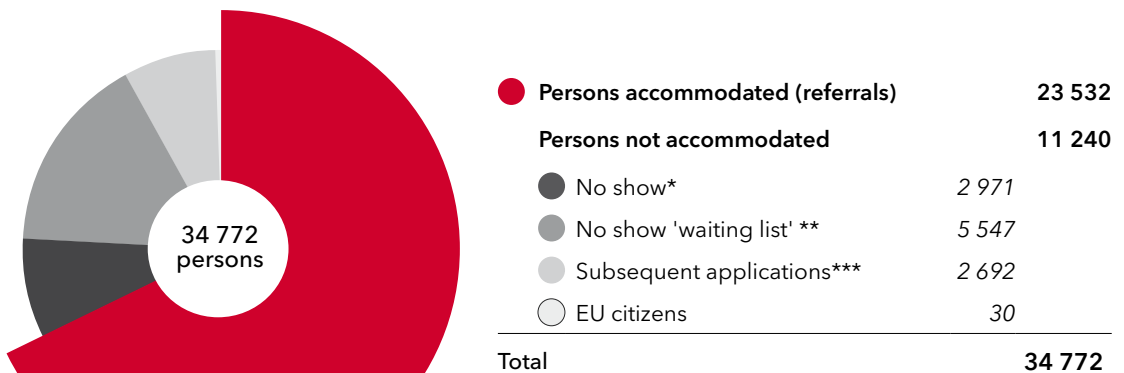
[www.info-ukraine.be](http://www.info-ukraine.be)

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

(Source: CGRS)



## Reception applications in 2022

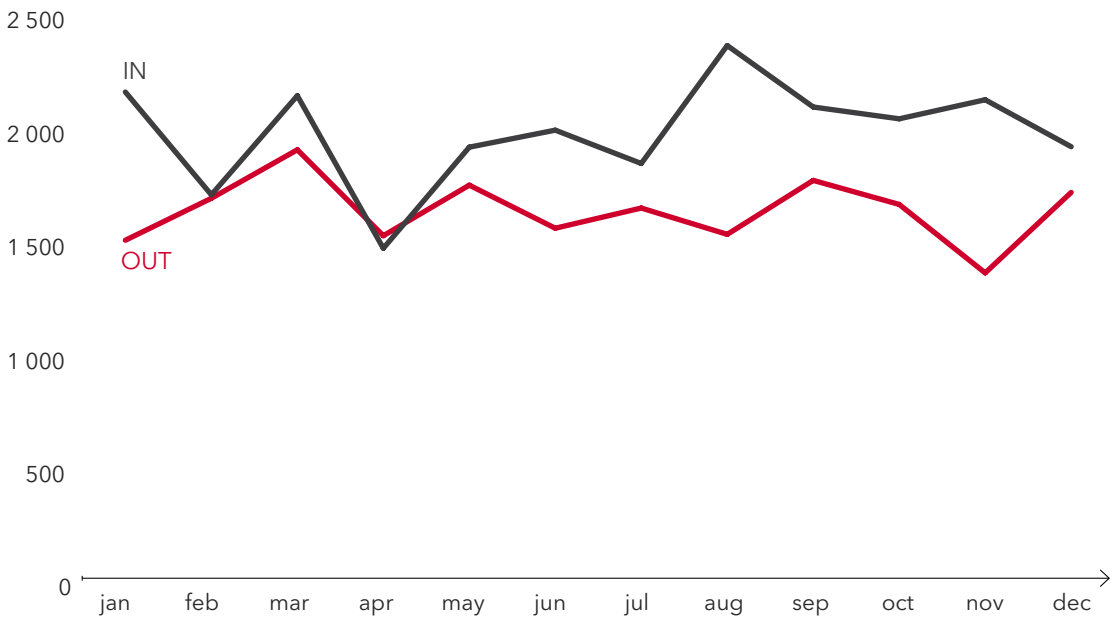


\* Persons who do not want accommodation.

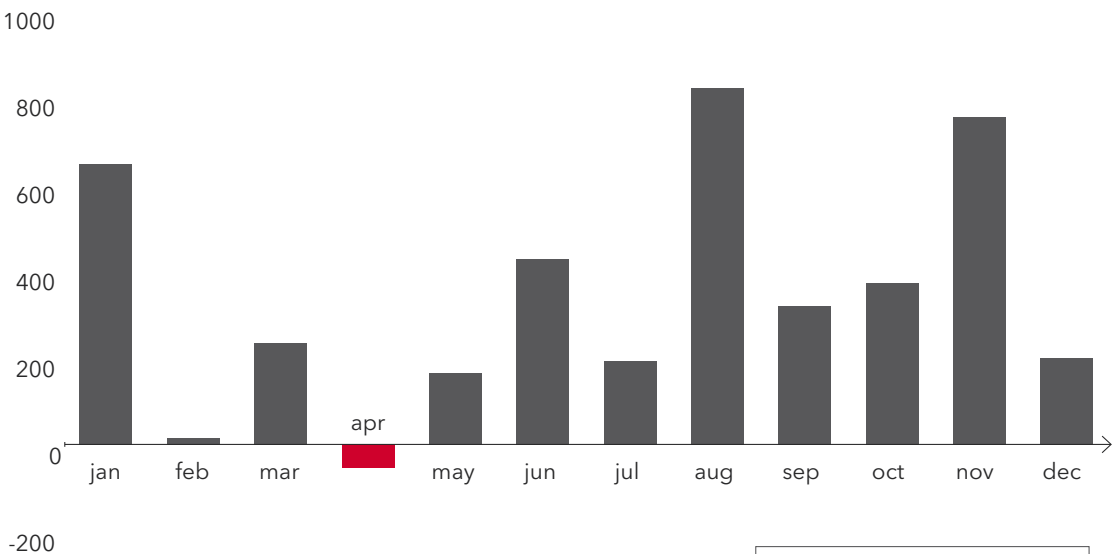
\*\* Persons who, due to the lack of places, have not been accommodated. Some are registered on a waiting list and will be accommodated subsequently.

\*\*\* The right to accommodation is not automatic for persons submitting a second (or subsequent) protection application.

## Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2022



## Reception network: arrivals (IN) and departures (OUT) in 2022: balance IN/OUT



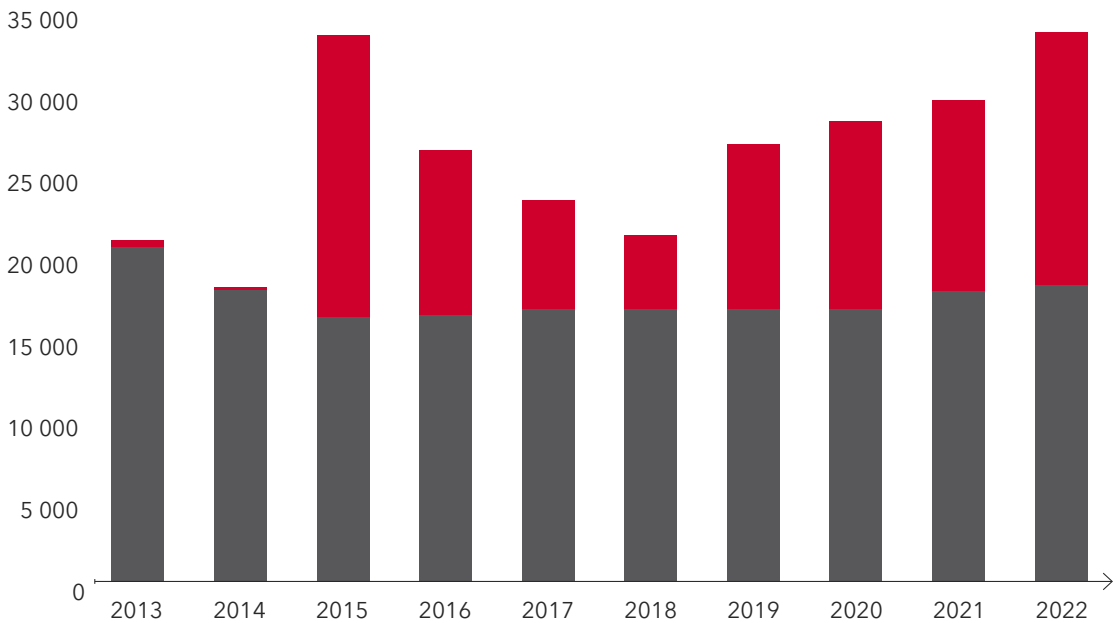
TOTAL	PERSONS
IN	23 530
OUT	19 389
<b>Balance</b>	<b>+ 4 141</b>

## Evolution of the reception capacity

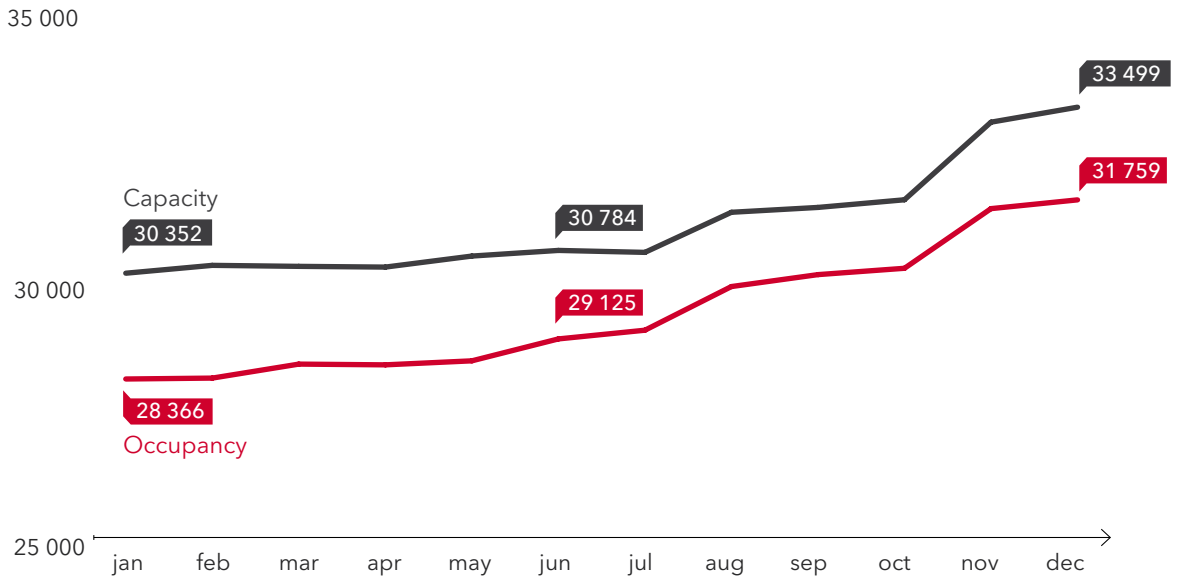
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Situation end of December of each year

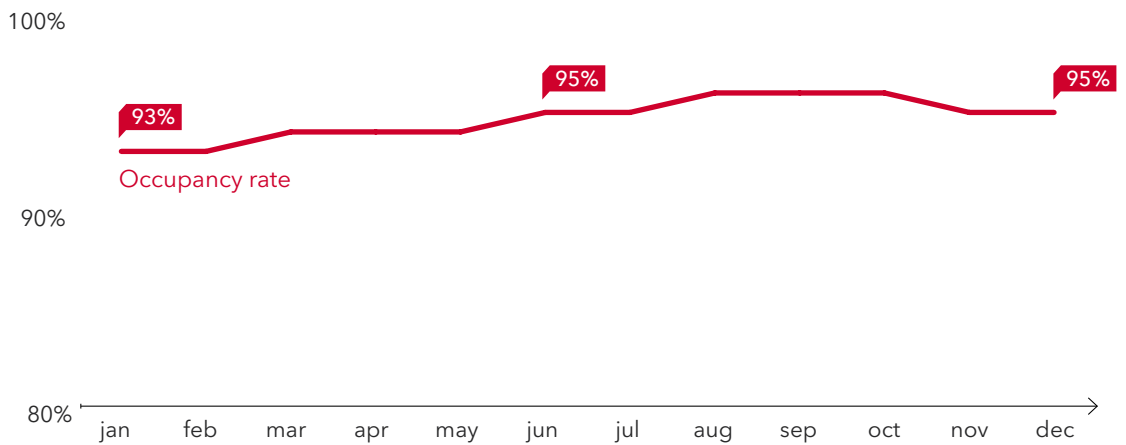
- Structural reception capacity
- Temporary capacity (emergency, activated buffer places)



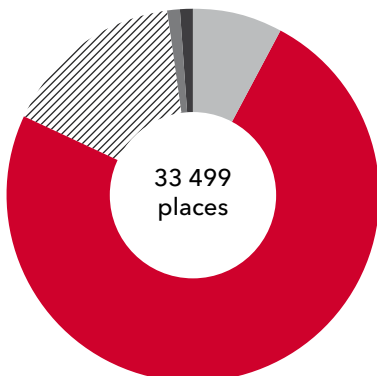
## Evolution of the reception capacity and the occupancy in 2022



## Evolution of the occupancy rate in 2022

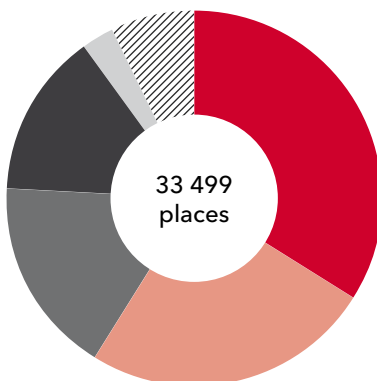


## Types of reception places / end 2022



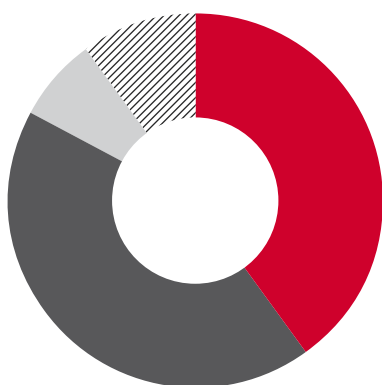
	CAPACITY	OCCUPANCY RATE
● <b>1st phase reception</b> Arrival centre, observation and orientation centres for UFM's, Red Cross, Samusocial, others	2 769	90
● <b>Collective housing</b> Federal centres, Red Cross, private partners, Samusocial, Caritas and other partners	24 950	96
⊗ <b>Individual housing</b> CPAS/OCMW (public social welfare centre), Caritas, Ciré and other partners	5 220	96
● <b>Open return places</b> Federal centres	360	44
● <b>Emergency accommodation</b> Federal centres in Glons and Jabbeke	200	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>33 499</b>	<b>95</b>

## Contribution of the partners / end 2022



	PLACES
● Fedasil	11 493
● French-speaking Red Cross	8 395
● Dutch-speaking Red Cross	5 847
● CPAS/OCMW	4 713
● Private partners	1 147
⊗ Other partners	1 904
<b>Total</b>	<b>33 499</b>

## Profile of the persons accommodated / end 2022

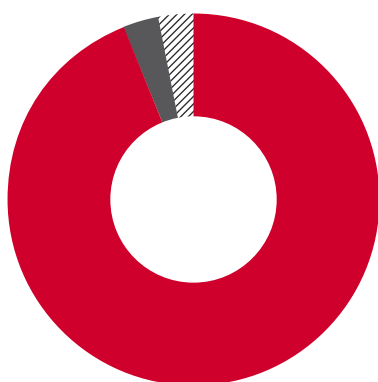


	%
● Families	40
● Single men	43
● Single women	7
⊗ UFM's (Unaccompanied foreign minors)	10



	%
● Men	71
● Women	29

	%
● Adults	70
● Minors	30

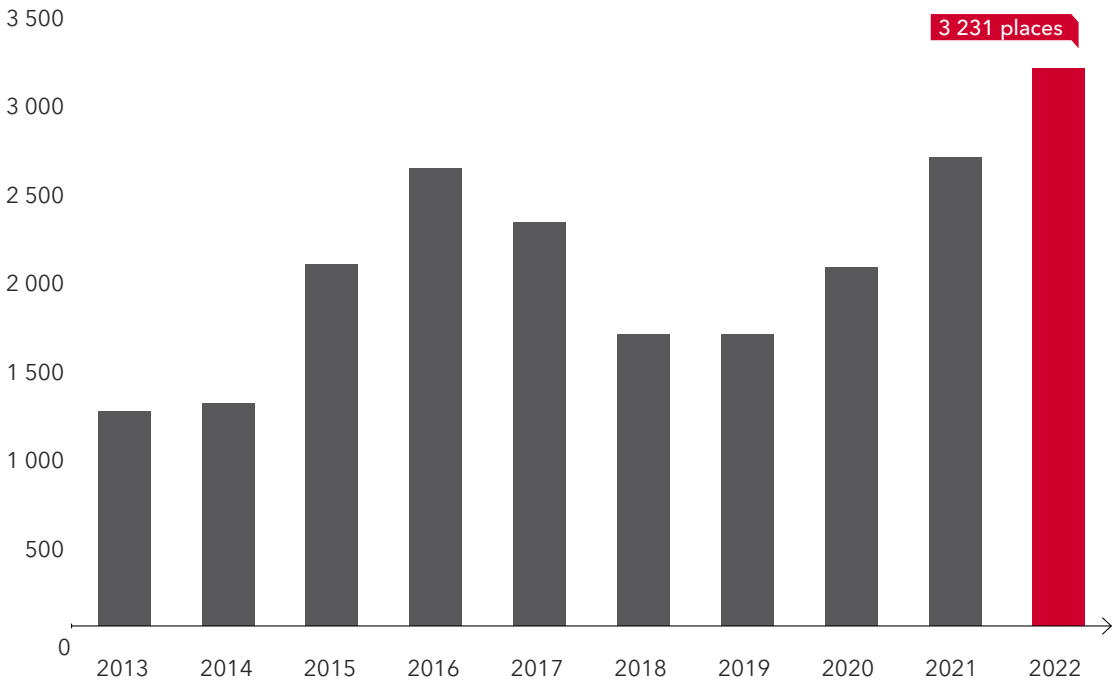


	%
● Applicants for international protection whose application is being processed	94
● Persons with a residence permit	3
⊗ Other administrative situations	3

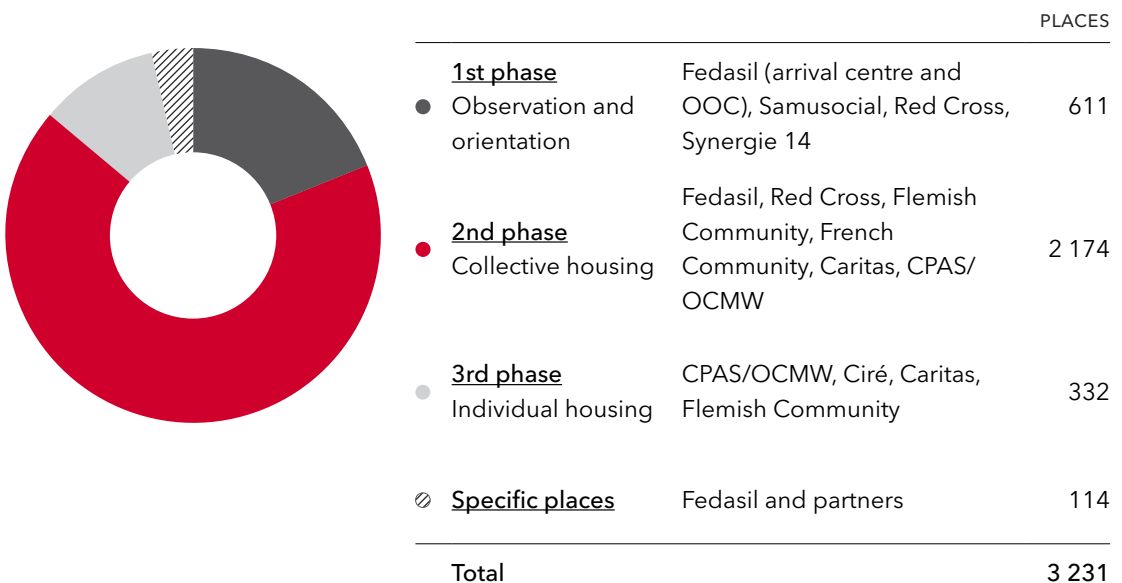
	%
Afghanistan	26
Palestine	10
Burundi	9
Syria	7
Eritrea	5
Guinea	5
Somalia	3
Congo (DRC)	3
Cameroon	2
Iraq	2
Other countries	28

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

Situation end of December of each year



## UFMs: capacity by reception phase / end 2022

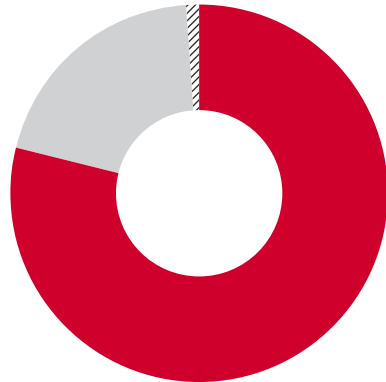




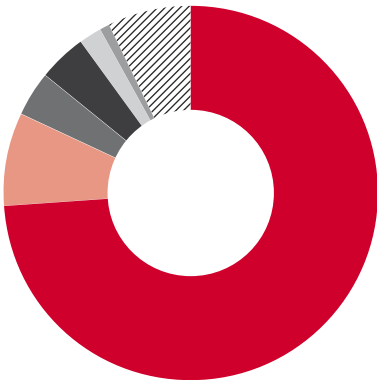
## Profile of the accommodated UFM's / end 2022



	%
● Boys	96
● Girls	4



	%
● 16 years and older	79
● 12-15 years	20
▨ 11 years and under	1



	%
● Afghanistan	74
● Syria	8
● Somalia	4
● Eritrea	4
● Burundi	2
● Guinea	1
▨ Other countries	7

# RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

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

In 2022, only 71 refugees came to Belgium via the resettlement programme, mainly Syrians from Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. This figure is not in line with the targets set at the beginning of the year. Fedasil's reception network has been dealing with a shortage of places since last year, which has led to the postponement of transfers of refugees selected for resettlement.

## Sponsorship

Once in Belgium, most refugees are received in a Fedasil centre specialised in resettlement. After a six-week stay in the centre, they move on to an accommodation provided by a public centre for social welfare (CPAS/OCMW) or to an accommodation managed by Caritas International, from where they will seek long-term settlement in Belgium.

Given the lack of places in its regular network, Fedasil has sought alternative reception models to ensure the continuity of the resettlement programme. In this way, community sponsorship was introduced in Belgium. This project consists of supporting a group of citizen volunteers who will support refugees for a year in their arrival and settlement process. As an intermediary organisation, Caritas is responsible for supervising the citizens who support the refugees.

The resettlement programme is financed by the European AMIF Fund.

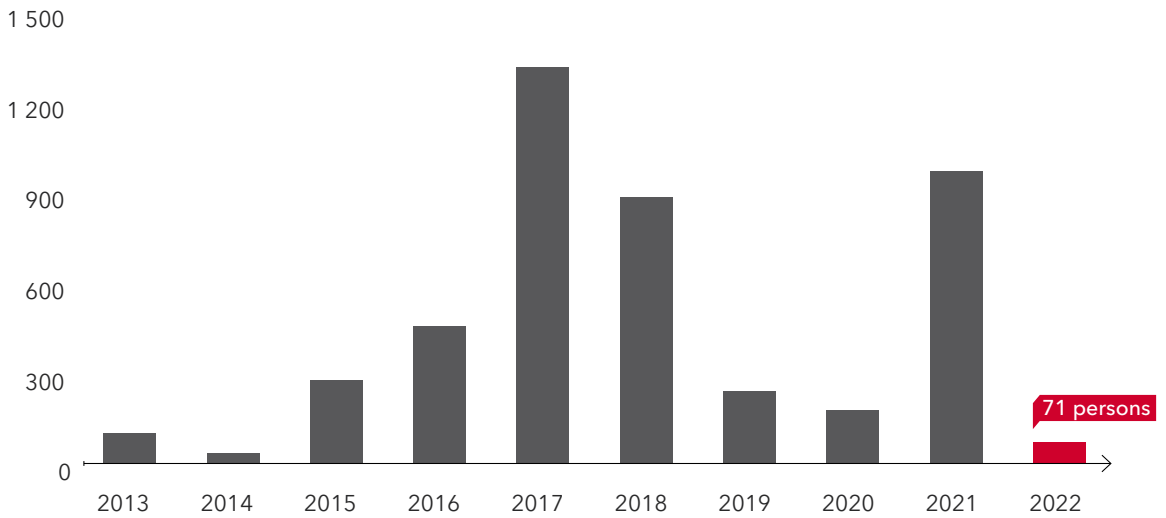
More information at [www.resettlement.be](http://www.resettlement.be)

## Relocation

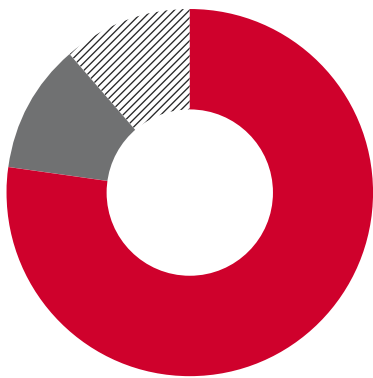
In 2022, a family of six from Afghanistan was relocated to Belgium from Greece.

Relocation is a solidarity mechanism within the European Union, which aims to support the Member States most affected by migratory flows. As with resettlement, relocations to our country have been postponed due to the saturation of Fedasil's network.

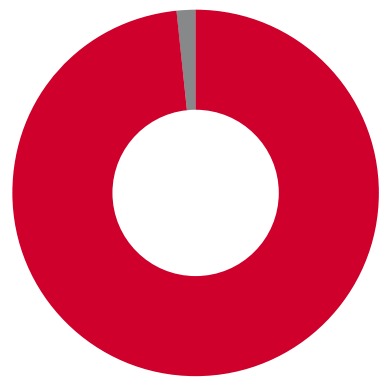
## Number of refugees arrived in Belgium in the framework of resettlement



## Profile of the refugees resettled in 2022



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	INITIAL COUNTRY OF RECEPTION	PERSONS
● Syria	Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon	55
● Sudan	Egypt	8
▨ Others		8
<b>Total</b>		<b>71</b>



	PERSONS
● Families	70
● Single women	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>

# VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2022, Fedasil assisted 2,673 people who had decided to return to their country of origin. The number of returns started to rise again after several difficult years due to the constraints related to the coronavirus. Compared with 2021, this represents a 36% increase, returning to the figures seen before the health crisis (2018-2019).

Among the 2,673 people returning in 2022, three specific profiles can be identified: people whose application for protection (asylum application) was being examined, people whose application for protection had been rejected and migrants without a residence permit. In 2022, 52% of voluntary returns involved persons without a residence permit in Belgium.

The main nationalities were Brazil (641 returnees), Mongolia (363), Ukraine (198), Moldova (192), El Salvador (125) and Georgia (100). In total, there were no fewer than 94 destination countries in 2022.

## **Support in the destination country**

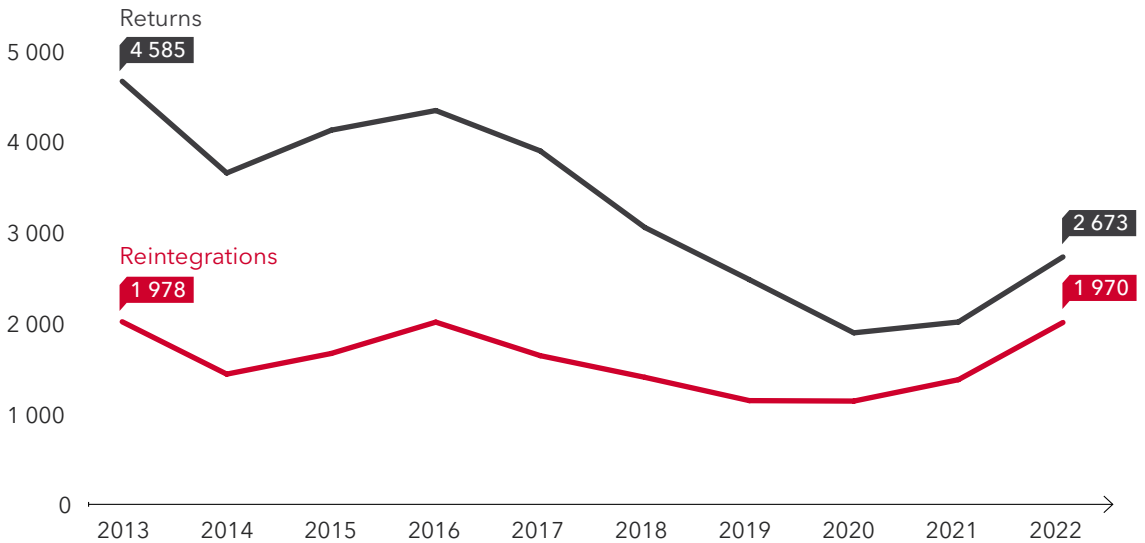
Among the returnees, 1,970 migrants received additional reintegration support (i.e. 74% of people) to help them build a new future in their country. Reintegration is monitored locally by the IOM and Caritas International offices, or via their local partners.

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.

Return projects from Belgium receive European support (AMIF Fund).

More information 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 (20 persons in 2022). 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 international protection).

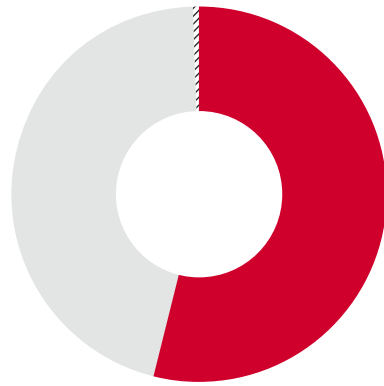
## Countries of destination in 2022

RETURNEES (WITH OR WITHOUT REINTEGRATION)		RETURNEES WITH REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE	
Brazil	641	Brazil	395
Mongolia	363	Mongolia	322
Ukraine	198	Moldova	168
Moldova	192	El Salvador	122
El Salvador	125	Ukraine	119
Georgia	100	Georgia	81
Belarus	72	Belarus	70
Romania	69	Colombia	45
Albania	59	Morocco	41
Slovakia	52	Albania	40
Others	802	Others	567
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 673</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 970</b>

## Profile of the returnees in 2022



	%
● Applicants for international protection	29
○ Rejected applicants for international protection	19
⊗ Irregular migrants	52



	%
● Families	51
○ Single men and women	48
⊗ UFM (Unaccompanied foreign minors)	1



	%
● Men	56
● Women	44



	%
● 0-17 years	25
● 18-35 years	37
● 36-50 years	26
⊗ + 51 years	12

## CONTACT

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Ce bilan est également disponible en français.

Deze balans bestaat ook in het Nederlands.

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Brussels, June 2023.

**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 2022 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)