



 **VOLUNTARY  
RETURN HOME**

**Voluntary return  
from Belgium**

**fedasil**  
FEDERAL AGENCY FOR THE  
RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS



Towards a more integrated migration  
policy, made possible by the AMIF

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## 1. Voluntary return, what is it?

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The voluntary return programme offers tailored support to people who wish to return to their country of origin. A return is organised from Belgium and includes transport costs and travel assistance.

The voluntary return also includes a return grant and possible reintegration support in the country of origin, depending on the situation of the person.

## 2. Voluntary return ≠ forced return

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The voluntary return programme, coordinated by Fedasil, is based on the willingness and free and informed choice of the people. In contrast, forced returns are not based on choice and are organised by the Immigration Office.





### 3. Who can request a voluntary return?

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Migrants without a residence permit or in the process of obtaining a permit may apply for the voluntary return programme, regardless of the residence procedure undertaken: asylum application\*, family reunification, expired visa, etc.

Migrants who have never undertaken a residence procedure can also apply for the programme.

\* *In European and Belgian law, the term 'asylum application' is replaced by 'application for international protection'.*



## **Voluntary return means...**

### **Social support**

Social workers inform and advise people, whether it is at a reception centre, a Fedasil desk or partner organisation. They assess their needs, listen to their expectations and support them in their decision.

### **An informed choice**

In order to make their decision, people receive all the necessary information on the journey, as well as on the situation and opportunities in their country of origin. If they decide to return, they may reverse their decision at any time.

### **Tailor-made support**

If their individual situation allows, returnees may receive additional support for reintegration in the country of origin. This support aims to help them develop a realistic return project.

### **Confidential**

The return is organised quietly and discreetly. The authorities of the country of origin are not notified and the journey takes place in the same way as for ordinary passengers.

## 4. Reach and inform migrants

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### **Within the Fedasil reception network**

Asylum seekers are kept informed of the possibility of a voluntary return throughout the entire process. If they receive a negative response to their asylum application, they can only be accommodated in a Fedasil reception centre with available return places. There, they are supported specifically with a view to their voluntary return.

### **Outside of the Fedasil reception network**

Voluntary returns are also possible for people outside of the network. These people may contact a Fedasil return desk or one of the partner organisations established in the major cities of Belgium.

### **Broadly inform with CONEX**

Fedasil works with local organisations and administrations (Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège, etc.). Their task is to provide information on voluntary return to the various actors in their region. This collaboration, called CONEX, enables us to reach migrants when they turn to different organisations, and to refer them to the right agency (Fedasil or its partners).





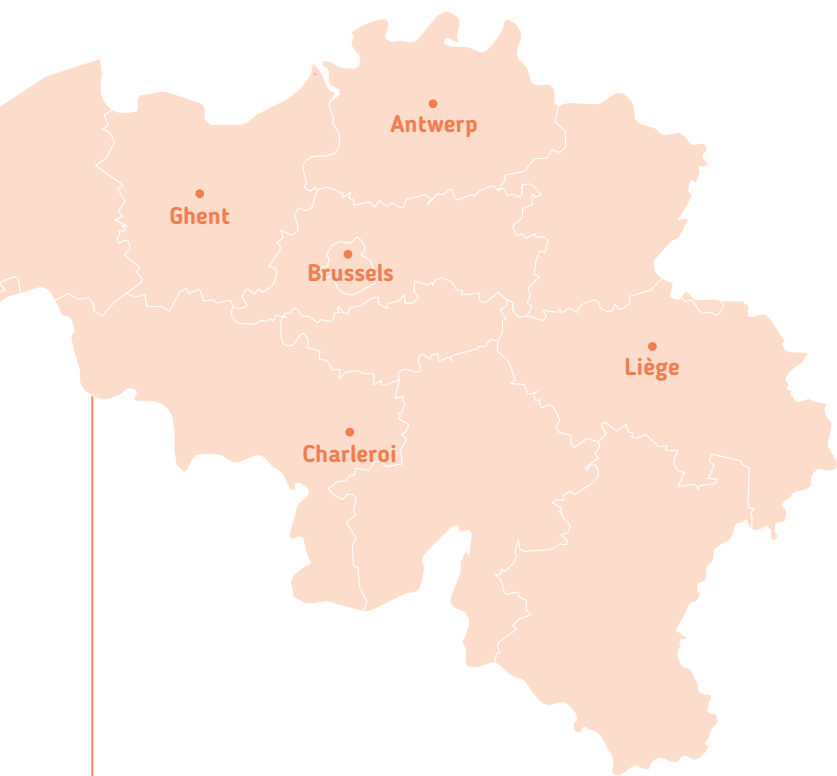
# Before the return

## 5. Where to seek a possible return?

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Migrants who want more information on voluntary return can visit a Fedasil return desk or consult a social worker from a partner organisation. There, they will be given information tailored to their situation and needs.

Addresses of our return desks and of our partners can be found on: [www.voluntaryreturn.be/en/contact](http://www.voluntaryreturn.be/en/contact).



**Fedasil return desks**

**T +32 800 32 745**

## 6. What does reintegration support involve?

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Returnees receive reintegration support depending on their situation. It is material assistance. This support can be used to start a small revenue-generating business, help get employment, rent or renovate a home, cover medical expenses, etc.

To implement reintegration projects, Fedasil works with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Caritas International, which have offices and partners in different regions of the world.

## 7. Who has access to reintegration support?

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Access to reintegration depends on the situation of the migrant: country of origin, administrative status and vulnerability.

Asylum seekers whose application is being processed and applicants who have recently received a negative response, receive reintegration support.

People without residence permits are also eligible on the basis of their vulnerability. For example, pregnant women, unaccompanied minors, people with health problems, victims of human trafficking and families with children qualify for a reintegration support.

## 8. Is accommodation provided before the return?

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People who request a voluntary return may be accommodated in Belgium until the day of departure, on condition that the return is realistic and that it can take place within a reasonable period of time.

They can be accommodated in the institution where they are already received or in a Fedasil open return place.

## 9. What are open return places?

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Open return places are found in Fedasil reception centres. These are open places in open centres, and people can therefore come and go freely.

They are primarily intended for asylum seekers who received a final negative decision. Accommodation for these people can only be extended in return places, and for a limited period of time.

Social workers are present in the return places to provide all relevant information regarding the voluntary return and to help the rejected applicants take a decision. The Immigration Office is also present to follow up on the rejected applicants.

# The journey

## 10. Who organises the journey?

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Fedasil works with the IOM to organise the practical travel arrangements, to reserve seats and to accompany the migrants at the airport or at the bus stop, as well as in transit if possible.

The IOM makes every effort to ensure that the journey goes smoothly and provides, if necessary, a medical or operational escort.



## 11. What about travel documents?

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Returnees are required to obtain the necessary travel documents themselves (passport or laissez-passer).

Through its contacts with foreign embassies in Belgium, Fedasil is able to facilitate the administrative preparation of returns. The costs required for the documents are reimbursed at the moment of departure.

## 12. How is the departure facilitated?

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The journey generally takes place by plane. However, for some countries in Europe, the journey takes place by bus. The IOM is present at the moment of departure at the airport or at the bus stop to provide support to the returnees. Assistance can also be provided in transit.

Before departure, the IOM reimburses any administrative and transport costs. The IOM also gives the people who qualify\* a cash grant to meet their initial needs after the return.

Baggage limitations by the airline or bus company apply to the returnees, just as they do for the other passengers.

\* For nationals of countries with visa requirements for Belgium.

# Upon arrival

Once in the country of origin and if possible, the IOM provides for the transfer to the final destination by covering the necessary taxi or public transport costs. On request, an IOM staff member may meet people upon their arrival at the airport.

## 13. Who follows up on the reintegration projects?

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The local IOM office or partner of Caritas in the country of origin assists returnees with their reintegration project.

The reintegration partners give advice, settle payments or pay refunds. The reintegration budget must be used within the 12 months following the return.

The IOM and Caritas regularly report on the outcome of the projects: how the budget was used, how the person is keeping a few months after the return, etc.

In addition, Fedasil travels regularly with the IOM and Caritas to the countries of origin to meet the returnees and talk about their projects.





## 14. Testimonies from returnees

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The IOM and Caritas routinely collect testimonies from people who have returned voluntarily to their countries of origin. Fedasil shares these testimonies online:

[www.voluntaryreturn.be/en/stories](http://www.voluntaryreturn.be/en/stories).



**Abdulmueen** returned to Iraq after 2 years in Belgium. He took the decision after his second asylum application was rejected.

Abdulmueen was accommodated by his family in Baghdad and received support from the IOM for his reintegration project. Through purchasing equipment and developing a business plan, he was able to restart the family bakery.

A few months later, the bakery is up and running and generating a regular income. To deal with competition, he offers quality products at reasonable prices.

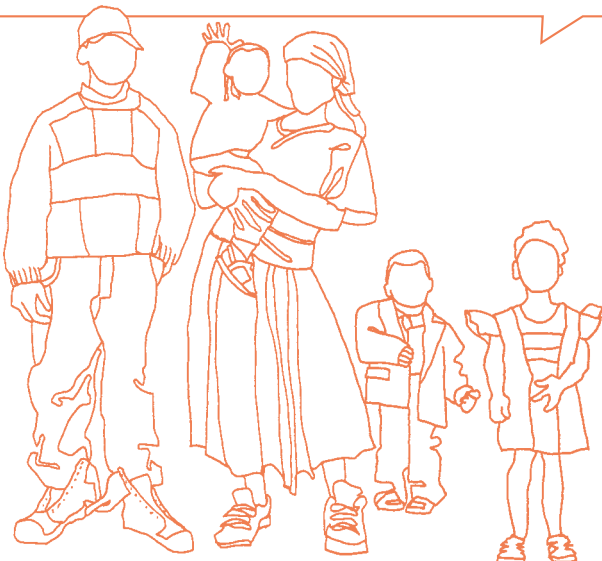
Abdulmueen hopes that his bakery will grow:

*“By working hard and planning well, it’s possible to develop one’s own business.”*

**The Miftari family** returned to Kosovo with reintegration support for vulnerable persons.

The parents and their three children were living in difficult conditions in Kosovo as their home had been destroyed during the war. It was then that they began to consider a future in Belgium. But after a while, they realised that life here was not what they had hoped for.

When they returned to Kosovo, they had to find and furnish a new home. They also had to register with the municipality, obtain identity documents, enrol their children in school, treat their health problems... The IOM offered them support in all of these areas.



**Agnès** came alone to Belgium. Since her asylum application process had failed, she returned to the family home in Burkina Faso.

However, Agnès wished to become independent, have a fixed income and her own place to stay. With the reintegration support provided by Caritas, Agnès decided to open a small shop, where she started selling dry goods and hygiene products. The next step was to acquire a cool storage space and a refrigerator.

Since Agnès also has health problems, she spent some of the reintegration budget on her treatment.



# For further information

## Contact us

A question on voluntary return? Call the toll-free number **0800 32 745** (from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays) or send an email to [voluntaryreturn@fedasil.be](mailto:voluntaryreturn@fedasil.be).

## Websites

Fedasil has a website on voluntary return for migrants and organisations where you will find the addresses of our desks and partners: [www.voluntaryreturn.be](http://www.voluntaryreturn.be).

The mission and activities of Fedasil as well as the figures on voluntary return can be found on: [www.fedasil.be](http://www.fedasil.be).

## Receive our newsletter

Our quarterly newsletter offers you news and testimonies on voluntary return (in French or Dutch). Register on: [www.retourvolontaire.be/fr/partners](http://www.retourvolontaire.be/fr/partners).

## **Order our brochures**

You can order free copies of this booklet as well as of our other brochures and posters: [www.retourvolontaire.be/fr/partners](http://www.retourvolontaire.be/fr/partners).

## **Interested in a training session?**

Fedasil regularly holds training sessions aimed at making the subject of voluntary return easier to understand by migrants. These training sessions are intended for staff and organisations working with migrants.

# Organisations

## **Fedasil**

Fedasil is the Federal Agency for the reception of asylum seekers in Belgium, and strives to provide each one with a harmonised and high-quality reception. It also coordinates the voluntary return programme for migrants from Belgium to their country of origin.

## **European funding**

The voluntary return programme receives national and European funds, among which the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).



## **IOM**

The International Organization for Migration promotes a humane management of migration throughout the world. The IOM assists the Belgian government in organising voluntary returns by making practical travel arrangements and by setting up reintegration projects in the countries of origin.

## **Caritas International**

The NGO Caritas International implements development projects for the most vulnerable people and seeks to offer a humane response to each individual migration experience, particularly by establishing reintegration projects in the countries of origin.



RETOUR VOLONTAIRE



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Deze brochure is ook beschikbaar in het Nederlands.*

# voluntaryreturn.be



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