



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

fedasil

FEDERAL AGENCY FOR THE
RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Resettlement in Belgium



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What is resettlement?

Resettlement is a programme run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (hereafter UNHCR). Over the past 60 years, resettlement has provided millions of people with protection and the chance to start a new life in a third country.



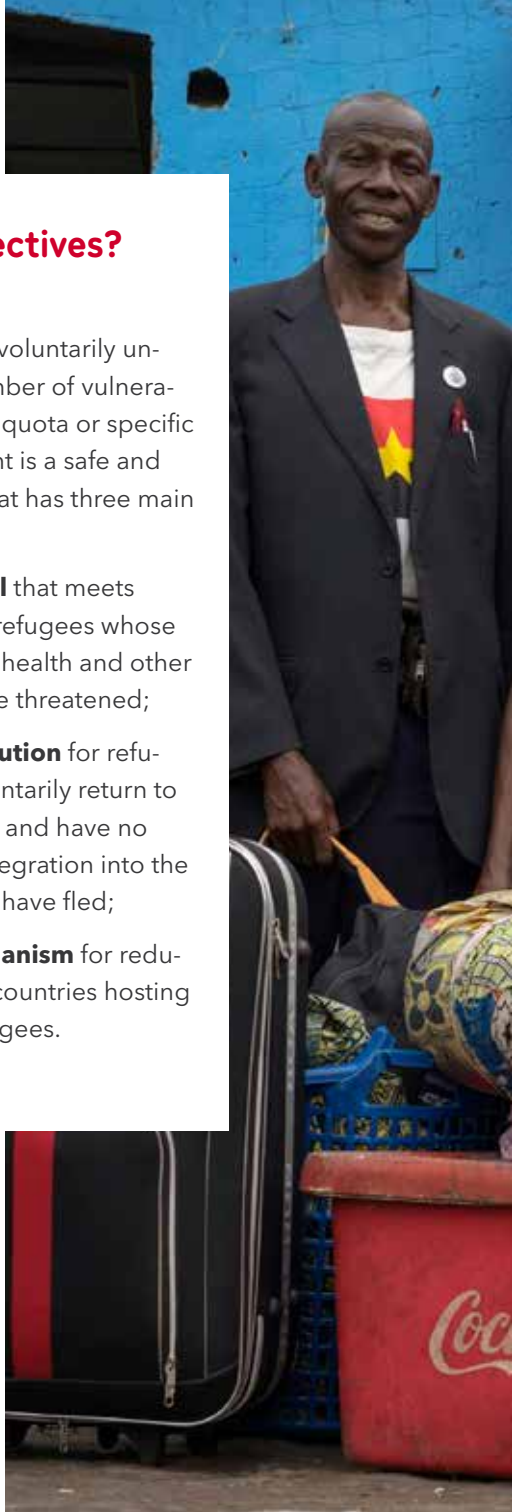


Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection ("first country of asylum") to another State that accepts them as refugees ("resettlement country").

What are its objectives?

Resettlement countries voluntarily undertake to accept a number of vulnerable refugees, through a quota or specific operations. Resettlement is a safe and legal migration route that has three main objectives:

- it is an **protection tool** that meets the specific needs of refugees whose lives, freedom, safety, health and other fundamental rights are threatened;
- it offers a **durable solution** for refugees who cannot voluntarily return to their country of origin and have no prospects for local integration into the country to which they have fled;
- it is a **solidarity mechanism** for reducing the pressure on countries hosting large numbers of refugees.





What is the institutional framework?

Overall strategy

In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Global Compact on Refugees, which sets out a series of objectives, including the implementation of a three-year strategy (2019-2021) on resettlement and complementary channels of admission. This strategy aims to:

- increase the number of resettlement places and countries;
- make admission channels more accessible and develop new opportunities;
- promote more welcoming and inclusive societies.

UNHCR

The UNHCR is responsible for the global implementation of resettlement. It organises an annual tripartite conference that brings together governments, international organisations and NGOs involved in the process, to review the global context of forced exile, good practices and challenges. It is on this basis that States identify needs.

European Union

Resettlement is also a cornerstone of the European Union's overall strategy on asylum and migration. The European Commission defines common priorities in line with the UNHCR's recommendations. These priorities are focused on geographical regions, nationalities or specific categories of refugees. The Commission also provides financial support to European resettlement states.

Who can be resettled?

To be resettled, a person must meet a series of prerequisites.

Recognised refugee

The person must have been granted refugee status (Geneva Convention) and be registered with UNHCR.

Durable solution

UNHCR examines the personal situation of each recognised refugee. If a return to the country of origin or local integration are not possible, resettlement is defined as the best durable solution.

Vulnerability criteria

There are particularly vulnerable people among the refugees in a given country. UNHCR identifies them and submits their case to a resettlement country. Refugees being resettled must meet one or more of the following seven criteria:

- need for legal and/or physical protection
- survivors of violence and torture
- medical needs
- women and girls at risk
- family reunification, where resettlement is the only way to reunite family members
- children and adolescents at risk
- lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions

What are the global needs?

According to UNHCR figures, **70.8 million** people were forced into exile around the world in 2019. This is the largest forced displacement since the Second World War.

It included more than **25 million** refugees, 85% of whom fled to the countries bordering their countries of origin. Many of them live in very precarious conditions and do not have access to de facto protection. The host countries, for their part, are facing significant challenges and increasing pressure.



In recent years, the number of resettlement places available has decreased worldwide, while needs have continued to increase. In 2018, only **7%** of refugees in need of resettlement were able to receive it.

The UNHCR estimates that in 2020,

1.44 million

refugees will need resettlement.



NEEDS BY POPULATION



	%
● Syria	40
● South Sudan	14
● DRC	11
● Afghanistan	7
● Others	28



Did you know?

The United States, Canada and Australia have a long tradition of resettlement, including through a system that favours the extraterritorial processing of submitted cases. Since 1980, the United States has resettled more than 3 million refugees, Canada 658,000 and Australia 486,000 (Pew Research Centre).

In recent years, the United States has significantly reduced its resettlement quota from 85,000 in 2016 to 18,000 in 2019. This decision has had a significant impact on the number of resettlement places available world-wide. (Migration Policy Institute)

Since when has Belgium offered resettlement?

Since the Second World War, Belgium has resettled around 10,000 people through different initiatives, in particular:

- 6,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956-1957;
- 1,100 Chileans fleeing the Pinochet regime in 1973;
- 2,500 boat people from Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975;
- 1,200 Kosovars in 1999, due to the war in Kosovo.

In 2009 and 2011, Belgium set up two first resettlement pilot projects in response to calls from the international community. This phase assessed the feasibility of implementing a long-term resettlement programme.

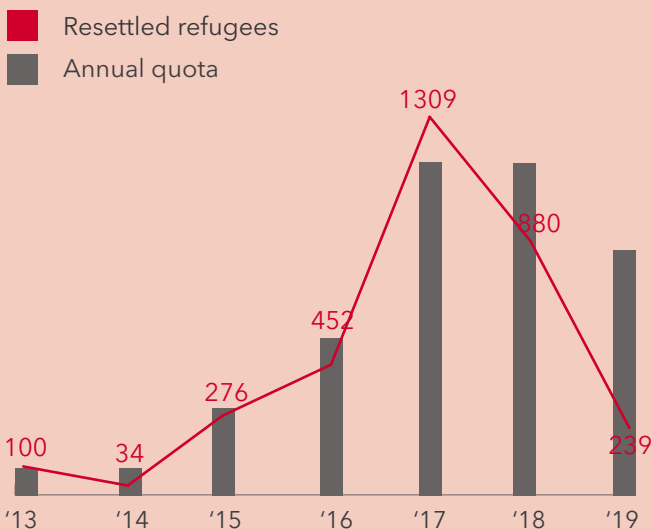
What is a structural programme?

In 2013, Belgium adopted a structural programme, through which it undertakes to receive a defined number of resettled refugees every year.

Annual quota

Every year, the government establishes a quota of refugees to be resettled and defines priorities (nationalities, first country of asylum, specific groups, etc.) on the basis of European priorities, in line with UNHCR recommendations. There is no specific legal basis for resettlement in Belgian law. The Belgian programme is funded by AMIF, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

RESETTLEMENT IN BELGIUM



Actual transfers

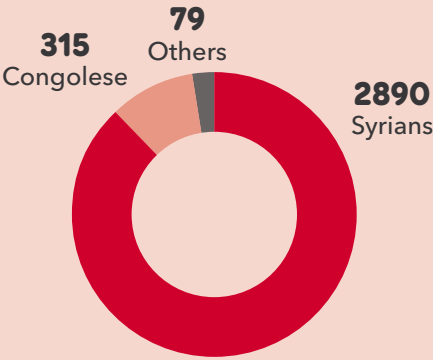
There may be a discrepancy between the annual quota and actual transfers, due to the large number of factors involved in planning operations (security situation in the first country of asylum, places available in the Fedasil reception network, organisation of transfers taking into account medical or administrative constraints, voluntary withdrawals of candidates, etc.).



What operations were carried out?

In recent years, resettlement operations have been carried out in different countries and for different refugee populations.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF RESETTLED PERSONS





A world map with a light gray background. The countries of first asylum for resettled refugees are highlighted in a dark red color. These countries are Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Niger, Uganda, Burundi, and Tanzania. The map shows the outlines of all countries, with the highlighted ones standing out.

COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM OF RESETTLED REFUGEES

Turkey

Lebanon

Iraq

Jordan

Egypt

Niger

Uganda

Burundi

Tanzania

Since the start
of the structural
programme in 2013,
3,290 refugees
have been resettled.

What are Fedasil and the CGRS doing?

The CGRS and Fedasil are the two main Belgian administrations involved in resettlement. They submit an annual joint resettlement proposal to their political authority and create the operational plan based on the defined policy.

CGRS

In view of its protection mandate and its expertise in the various countries, the CGRS hears refugees and gives a selection opinion to the competent Minister, who takes the final decision on admission. The CGRS takes a formal decision to recognise refugee status for resettled persons after arrival.

Fedasil

Fedasil, in collaboration with its partners, manages preparation, travel and reception, as well as the transition to integration of resettled refugees. These refugees follow a specific reception route in the months following their arrival.



Mohammed, a Syrian resettled from Jordan in 2017.

"I remember my first day in Belgium. A Fedasil employee welcomed me at the airport. I will always remember her smile. For me, resettlement was like a second birth, a new beginning. I have rights here, I can be myself and make my own choices without being afraid."



Who are the resettled refugees?

In 2018...

Vulnerability criteria: 90% of resettled refugees fell into one of these three vulnerability categories: need for legal and physical protection, victims of violence and torture, children/adolescents at risk.

Gender and age: 55% of those who arrived were male and 45% female. Those who were resettled were relatively young. Almost half of those resettled were children; just over 35% of adults were between 18 and 40 years of age.

Family composition: 93% of refugees arrived as a family. They were generally families with children, consisting of at least four members (62.5%). For the first time, six unaccompanied minors were resettled as part of a pilot project carried out during an operation in Niger through the Libyan Emergency Transit Mechanism set up by UNHCR.



Mohammed, a Syrian resettled from Lebanon in 2015.

"In Lebanon, I was threatened by religious groups. My procedure took about a year. UNHCR called me to tell me that my file had been accepted by Belgium. It has been a challenge to adapt to a whole new environment – people, work, culture. But Belgians are understanding and I am happy here. I feel safe and I can move forward."



What situations are they fleeing?



Syria : "The war in Syria has been going on for more than eight years and has cost hundreds of thousands of lives. Millions of Syrians have had to flee, leaving everything behind. There are now 6.3 million Syrian refugees, the vast majority of whom are in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan." (UNHCR, April 2019)

Congo : "In recent years, several waves of unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo have caused massive population displacements. More than 886,910 refugees from the DRC are currently being hosted in African countries." (UNHCR, July 2019)



Central Mediterranean :

"Persecutions, conflicts and human rights violations continue to force large numbers of people to flee to Europe in search of safety. 63,311 people have already risked their lives reaching Europe by sea so far in 2019." (UNHCR, September 2019)





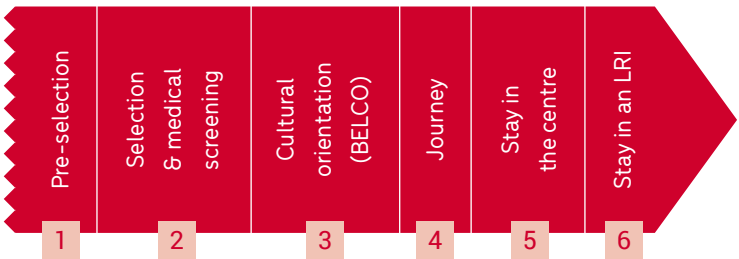
Salem, a Congolese resettled from Uganda in 2017.

"Belgians sometimes have difficulty imagining the immense problems faced by refugees. I lived in Uganda for two years after fleeing South Kivu. Today, thanks to resettlement, Belgium has given me a second chance. I want to take it, rebuild my life and not miss any opportunities. In the future, I would like to become a photographer."



What are the stages of resettlement?

Resettlement is a multi-step procedure involving a range of national and international actors. The final choice to be resettled rests with the refugee, who may decide at any time to continue or discontinue the procedure.



1. Pre-selection

As part of its mandate, UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement and submits their case to a resettlement country. Refugees cannot choose the country in which they will be resettled. They are pre-selected based on the UNHCR's vulnerability criteria.

2. Selection and medical screening

The General Commissioner for Refugees and Stateless Persons (GCRS) organises a selection mission to the first country of asylum and conducts interviews with the refugees. On the basis of the interview and the file, the GCRS issues an opinion to the Minister in charge of asylum and migration.

The files are also examined by the State Security Department. The Minister takes the final decision and instructs the Immigration Office to grant access to the territory.

Fedasil carries out a medical screening in parallel. This screening has no influence on the selection decision. Medical information is transmitted to the medical teams of the future reception facilities to guarantee that reception is adapted to the needs of the resettled persons.

3. Cultural orientation (BELCO)

Fedasil, with the logistical support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is responsible for organising the BELCO cultural orientation. BELCO is mandatory for anyone over 14 years of age. Its objective is to provide information to refugees before they leave and help them better manage their expectations. A series of fixed themes (culture shock, timeline, Belgium, housing, education, employment, family, health, cost of living, travel) and transversal themes (norms & values, rights & duties...) are discussed over several days. Fedasil also conducts individual interviews with the refugees to prepare them for reception in Belgium.

4. The journey

The refugees leave the country in which they are located after obtaining the necessary documents through local embassies. The IOM takes care of flight reservations and final medical examinations and accompanies the refugees from their departure to their arrival in Belgium, including a presence during immigration and customs formalities.

5. Reception in the centre

Refugees are welcomed on arrival, in the vast majority of cases in one of the four Fedasil centres specialised in the reception of resettled persons: Sint-Truiden, Ponderôme, Florennes and Kapellen. They stay in the centre for about six weeks and have access to material assistance and a practical reception programme (shopping, using transport, sorting waste, dealing with the culture shock, etc.) adapted to their needs. During this stay, refugees officially submit an application for international protection to the Immigration Office (IO). Since their case has already been approved in advance, they are granted refugee status within weeks of arrival.

Reception in a LRI

After their stay in the centre, resettled refugees are moved to one of the local reception initiatives (LRI) present in more than 500 Belgian municipalities. LRIs are housing units managed by the Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) and made available to recognised asylum seekers and refugees. Resettled persons have the right to stay there for six months and receive social support. During this transitional phase, they focus on their administrative set-up and the search for private housing, and they begin their integration process.





And then what?

Refugees leave the LRI and move into the private accommodation they have found. They can thus start their lives more independently, with the support of the actors competent to help with integration. In order to facilitate and strengthen the integration process of resettled refugees, Fedasil also monitors the implementation of specific agreements with the PCSWs and the NGO Caritas.



Anwar, a Syrian resettled from Lebanon in 2016

"The people who supported me helped me a lot. Today, I am a driver at Les Petits Riens and I used a social loan to buy an apartment in Anderlecht. There is no possible comparison between my life in Lebanon and my life now. Here, I have found safety and a good education for my children. For me, Belgium is about freedom."

PCSW

Any PCSW that manages a LRI hosting resettled refugees can become a partner in the resettlement programme by offering these refugees accommodation in the same municipality, but outside the Fedasil reception network. In this event, the PCSW undertakes to offer intensive tailor-made support for a minimum of 12 months in order to promote integration (orientation towards language courses, integration programmes for newcomers, professional integration services, etc.).

The PCSW then becomes a resettlement operator in its own right, providing support for the sustainable integration of refugees resettled in a Belgian municipality. This approach is part of the local anchoring vision advocated by Fedasil.

Caritas

The NGO Caritas is developing a project for Syrian refugees who have recently arrived in Belgium via resettlement. In this context Caritas, under the aegis of Fedasil, manages:

- the organisation of **personal development** workshops in the form of interactive group sessions on certain psycho-social and citizenship themes;
- the management of an **online platform** where refugees can exchange views and receive reliable information in their own language on topics related to daily life in Belgium (housing, public transport, insurance, recycling, etc.);
- the development of a network of **ambassadors** made up of former resettled refugees. Their role is to share their experience during BELCO and with newcomers at workshops.

Community sponsorship

Community sponsorship is a specific way of receiving and accompanying resettled refugees, in which civil society is directly involved and plays a significant role.

Following a matching procedure, some refugees selected for resettlement in Belgium are sponsored by a community. Therefore, they do not follow the standard reception path designed for resettled refugees.

The sponsor community commits to receiving them in a suitable accommodation and to providing them with tailored assistance for a period of at least one year. The sponsor community helps them to better understand the Belgian society and supports them throughout the different stages of their new life: administrative procedure, education, vocational training and employment, sports and leisure, health and well-being, language, social network, access to specialised services.

Thanks to this system, Belgium could diversify the safe and legal pathways for people in need of protection and promote a positive image of refugees.

Community sponsorship facilitates the empowerment of resettled refugees as well as their integration within the Belgian society.





"The sponsor community can, with goodwill, an open mind and good cooperation, make a big difference in the life of these vulnerable newcomers."

Refugee voices

Since 2018, resettled refugees have been asked several times by Fedasil to give their opinion or share their story. This allows them to participate directly in a programme of which they are the primary beneficiaries. Read the testimonies that are regularly published on our social media and our website: **www.fedasil.be/en/resettlement**



Short glossary



UNCHR

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - the UNHCR guarantees the rights and well-being of refugees around the world.



OIM

International Organization for Migration - the IOM ensures the humane and orderly management of migration and promotes international cooperation on migration issues.



Fedasil

Fedasil is the Belgian federal agency for the reception of asylum seekers - Fedasil is responsible for the reception of applicants for international protection and other target groups, including resettled refugees.



CGRS

Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons - the CGRS is an independent Belgian federal administration that examines every application for international protection individually and impartially, including as part of resettlement.



Immigration Office

The Immigration Office is the Belgian federal administration in charge of migratory matters. It works to ensure access to the territory and is responsible for the registration of applications for international protection.



CONTACTS

Do you have any questions about the selection of resettled refugees and international protection? Contact the CGRS at **resettlement@ibz.fgov.be**.

Do you have any questions about the transfer to Belgium, reception and the transition to integration of resettled refugees? Have you accompanied or do you know any resettled people who want to contribute to Refugee Voices? Contact us at **resettlement@fedasil.be**.

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