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FEDERAL AGENCY FOR THE
RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Resettlement in Belgium



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What is resettlement?

Resettlement comprises the selection and transfer of refugees from a country where they sought refuge to a third country, which takes them on as refugees.

Since the first resettlement operations in the 1950s, the programme has already safeguarded millions of people and given them the opportunity to start a new life in a third country.

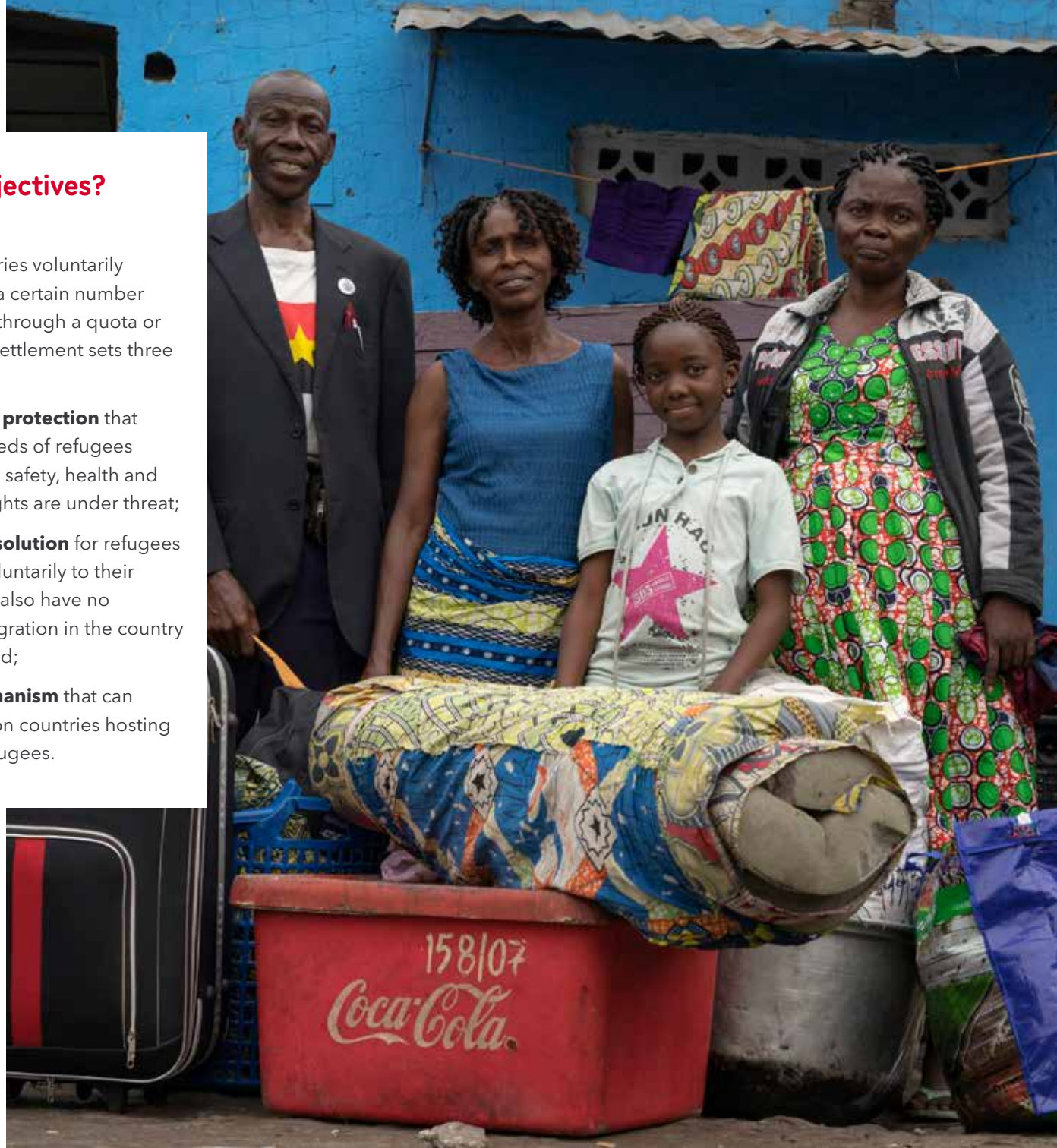


Resettlement is a **safe** and **legal** migration route for vulnerable refugees.

What are the objectives?

The resettlement countries voluntarily undertake to welcome a certain number of vulnerable refugees through a quota or specific operations. Resettlement sets three main objectives:

- It is an **instrument of protection** that meets the specific needs of refugees whose lives, freedom, safety, health and other fundamental rights are under threat;
- It offers a **long-term solution** for refugees who cannot return voluntarily to their country of origin and also have no prospect of local integration in the country to which they have fled;
- It is a **solidarity mechanism** that can reduce the pressure on countries hosting a large number of refugees.



What is the institutional framework?

UNHCR

UNHCR plays a crucial role in resettlement: they identify vulnerable refugees to be considered for resettlement and annually identify global needs and priorities.

UNHCR also organises an annual international conference that brings together the stakeholders involved: governments, NGOs, resettled refugees as experience experts, etc.

European Union

Resettlement is also a cornerstone of the European Union's global strategy on asylum and migration. The European Commission sets common priorities in line with UNHCR recommendations.

These priorities focus on specific geographical areas, nationalities or categories of refugees. In addition, the Commission shall provide financial support to European countries resettling vulnerable refugees.

Who can be resettled?

In order to be resettled, a series of prior conditions must be met.

Recognised refugee

The status of recognised refugee (Geneva Convention) must be obtained and registered with the UNHCR.

Sustainable solution

UNHCR investigates the personal context of each recognised refugee. If no other sustainable solution - such as return to the country of origin or integration into the first country of asylum - is available, the refugee may be eligible for resettlement.

Refugees eligible for resettlement meet one or more of the following vulnerability criteria:

- Need for legal and/or physical protection;
- Have survived violence and torture;
- Medical needs;
- Women and girls at risk;
- Family reunification when resettlement is the only way to reunite the members of a family;
- Children and young people at risk;
- The lack of other sustainable solutions in the short term.

What are the global needs?

According to UNHCR figures, **108.4 million** people worldwide were forced to flee in 2022, both within and outside their country of origin. This is the largest forced displacement since World War II.

That number includes more than **35.3 million** refugees, 70% of whom have fled to a neighbouring country of their country of origin. Many of them live in great uncertainty and have de facto no access to protection.

Host countries in neighbouring regions face major challenges and are under increasing pressure.

UNHCR estimates that more than
2.4 million
people will need resettlement by 2024.

Population with the greatest needs:

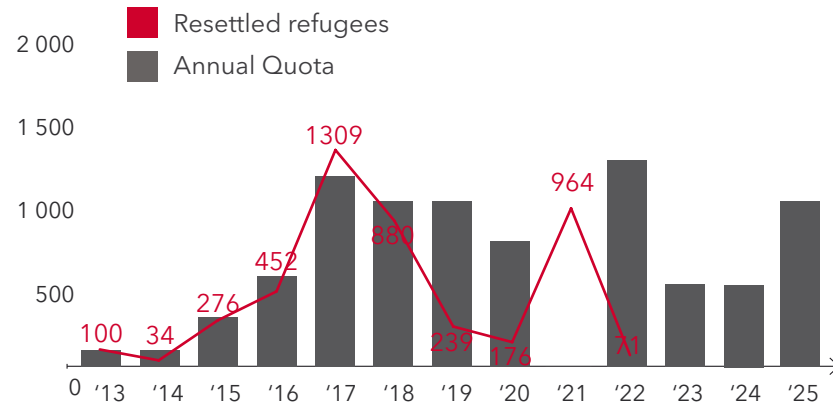
1. Syria
2. Afghanistan
3. Democratic Republic of the Congo
4. South Sudan
5. Myanmar



Resettlement in Belgium

Since 2013, Belgium has a structural programme in which the government undertakes to resettle a certain number of people to Belgium each year.

In determining the number and priorities of nationalities and asylum countries, the government takes into account the recommendations of the European Commission and UNHCR. The programme is co-financed by AMIF, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

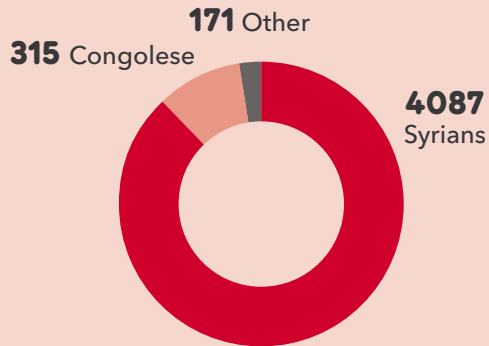


What operations have already been performed?

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

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN OF RESETTLED REFUGEES

** Up to and including 15/09/2023*



FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES FROM WHICH RESETTLED REFUGEES ARRIVE

** Up to and including 15/09/2023*



Since the start of the structural programme in 2013, **4,573 refugees have been resettled.**

What do the CGRS and Fedasil do?

CGRS and Fedasil are the two main Belgian administrations involved in resettlement. Each year, they submit a joint resettlement proposal to their political authorities and lay down the operational planning based on the established policy.

CGRS

The CGRS (the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons) exercises a protection mandate and has expertise in the various countries, which is why it hears the refugees and gives selection advice to the competent State Secretary, who ultimately decides on admission. For resettled refugees, the CGRS formally decides to grant them the status of recognised refugee after their arrival.

Fedasil

In cooperation with partners, Fedasil manages the preparation, travel, reception and support of the resettled refugees. They follow a specific integration process during the months after their arrival.



Mohammed, a Syrian, resettled from Jordan in 2017.

"I remember my first day in Belgium. At the airport I was welcomed by a member of staff from Fedasil. I will never forget her smile. For me, the resettlement was a rebirth, a new beginning. Here I have rights, I can be myself and make my own choices without fear."



Who are the resettled refugees?

In 2022...

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

Gender and age: 53% of the refugees arriving were men, 47% were women. The group of resettled refugees was relatively young: 71% of them were between 0 and 40 years old.

Family composition: 99% of refugees resettled in 2022 arrived as families. They were typically families with children, consisting of at least four family members (80%).

Fayez, 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 case had been accepted by Belgium. Adapting me to a completely new environment - people, work, culture - was quite a challenge. But the Belgians are understanding and I am happy here. I feel safe and I can move on with my life."



What situations are they fleeing from?



Syria: The war in Syria has been going on for more than a decade and has killed hundreds of thousands of people. Millions of Syrians had to flee and leave everything behind.

There are now 6.5 million Syrian refugees, the vast majority of whom are in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. (UNHCR, June 2023)

Congo: “In recent years, numerous waves of unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo have led to mass migrations. Currently, more than 1 million refugees from the DRC are being accommodated in African countries. (UNHCR, August 2023)



Central Mediterranean : “Prosecutions, conflicts and human rights violations continue to force a large number of people to flee to Europe in search of safety. In 2022, 159,500 people have already risked their lives to reach Europe by sea.” (August 2023)



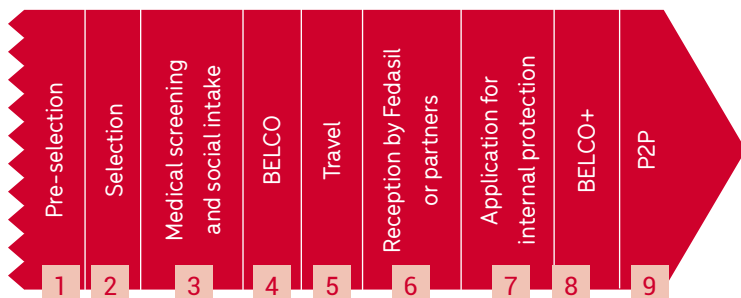
Salem, Congolese, from Uganda resettled in 2017.

“It is sometimes difficult for Belgians to imagine the immense problems faced by refugees. I fled from South Kivu and then lived in Uganda for two years. Belgium has now given me a second chance thanks to the resettlement. I want to grab it, I want to rebuild my life and not miss any opportunity. I would like to become a photographer later on.”



What does the resettlement process look like?

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



1. Pre-selection

Within the framework of its mandate, UNHCR determines which refugees are eligible for resettlement and submits their case to a resettlement country. Refugees cannot choose which country they will be resettled to. Pre-selection is based on UNHCR's vulnerability criteria.

2. The selection

The CGRS conducts interviews with refugees during a mission to the first country of asylum or online, with a view to selection. Based on the interview and the case, the CGRS advises the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. The files are also investigated by State Security. The State Secre-

tary makes the final decision and instructs the Immigration Office to grant entry into the territory.

3. Medical screening & social intake

Fedasil performs a medical screening and organises a social intake, which has no influence on the selection decision. Medical and social data will be transferred to the medical teams of the future reception facilities to guarantee that reception is adapted to the needs of the resettled persons.

4. Cultural orientation (BELCO)

Fedasil is responsible for organising BELCO, the Belgian cultural orientation. BELCO is mandatory for anyone older than 14 years. The aim is to inform refugees before they leave and to help them better manage their expectations. Over several days, a series of set topics (cultural adaptation, timeline, Belgium, housing, education, work, family, health, cost of living, travel) and transversal subjects (norms & values, rights & obligations, etc.) are discussed. Fedasil also conducts interviews with refugees to prepare for reception in Belgium.

5. The journey

After obtaining the necessary documents through the local embassies, the refugees leave the country they are in. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) books the flights, carries out the latest medical examinations and accompanies the refugees from their departure to their arrival in Belgium.

6. Reception with Fedasil or partners

Upon arrival, the vast majority of refugees are welcomed in Fedasil's network: in a reception centre specialised in resettlement and/or in a local reception initiative (LRI). There, they get access to material help and a practical reception programme that is tailored to their needs (shopping, using public transport, sorting waste, dealing with cultural differences, etc.).

In addition, it is possible, immediately after arrival or after a stay in the Fedasil network, to be accommodated outside the network, via the Community Sponsorship programme or partnership model.

7. Application for international protection

After arrival, the refugees officially submit an application for international protection to the Immigration Office (DVZ). Since their case has already been approved in advance, they are granted refugee status within weeks of arrival.

8. BELCO+

Upon arrival, Fedasil offers the resettled refugees a follow-up to the BELCO training they attended before departure: BELCO+. The two training courses are coordinated and provide the target group with the necessary knowledge and skills to integrate smoothly into Belgian society.

The training consists of several modules that the resettled refugees attend in groups over a period of several days to several weeks.

9. Peer2Peer

Caritas International manages peer2peer: a programme intended for refugees who were recently resettled in Belgium. This programme includes the following points:

- **Workshops focused on personal development**, in the form of interactive group sessions on certain psychosocial themes and civic spirit;
- An **online platform** where refugees receive and exchange reliable information in their language about everyday life in Belgium (housing, public transport, insurance, etc.);
- A network of **ambassadors** of former resettled persons who share their experiences through BELCO and with newcomers during workshops.

Community Sponsorship

Community Sponsorship is a programme in which a hosting group of - ideally five - enthusiastic volunteers welcome, accompany and guide resettled refugees for at least a year in Belgian society.

During the entire process, volunteers can rely on support from an experienced partner organisation, such as Caritas International, which in turn is supported by Fedasil.

As soon as the refugee(s) agree(s) to join the programme, Fedasil and the partner organisation seek out a good match

with a hosting group in Belgium. Preparations, such as the search for a suitable home, can then begin.

The volunteers help the resettled refugee(s) with the many steps they have to take as newcomers: getting to know the neighbours, enrolling the children in the local school, looking for a job, etc.



Want to know more?

Take a look at the brochure!



"I'm sure we've made friendships with this family that will last. The more autonomous they become, the less we are needed. That is the ultimate goal." *Tine, hosting group*

Partnership model

Resettled refugees can also stay outside the reception network, as part of the partnership model launched by Fedasil in early 2023.

This model offers various possibilities and can result in a unique collaboration: an innovative city working together with an experienced PCSW, a young non-profit organisation joining forces with a committed municipality, a passionate NGO - with a multidisciplinary team - getting involved in the project on its own, etc.

The partners all share the same goal: sustainable integration of resettled persons in the neighbourhood they can now call their new home. They provide at least one year of accommodation and guidance for a resettled person or family.



Want to know more?

Take a look at the brochure!



Quick Glossary



UNCHR

UN High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR is responsible for the rights and welfare of refugees all over the world.



IOM

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



Fedasil

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



CGRS

Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons - The CGRS is an independent Belgian federal institution that examines every request for international protection individually and without prejudice, also in the context of resettlement.



Immigration office

The Immigration Office is the federal Belgian authority responsible for migration. The immigration office plays a role in granting access to the territory and is responsible for registering applications for international protection.

CONTACT

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

Do you have any questions about the journey to Belgium, the reception and accompaniment of resettled refugees? Would you like to know how you, as a partner organisation, can play a role in the reception and accompaniment of resettled refugees? Contact us at **resettlement@fedasil.be**.

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