

## Belgium

September 2024

In June 2024, Belgium held European, national, and regional elections. In this context, UNHCR issued a [Memorandum](#) with key recommendations for strengthening integration and protection of forcibly displaced and stateless people.

Between January - June 2024, **17,853 people applied** for international protection, an increase of 16,39 per cent compared to 2023. The total recognition rate at first instance stands at 46.7 per cent.

The [reception system](#) remains overstrained in Belgium. UNHCR continues to call for adequate reception conditions for all applicants, without discrimination.

### POPULATION STATISTICS (as of mid-2024)\*

Refugees	<b>172,442</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>49,519</b>
Stateless people	<b>836</b>
Others of concern	<b>628</b>

### Top three countries of origin\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	<b>81,295</b>	State of Palestine	<b>5,945</b>
Syrian Arab Republic	<b>22,339</b>	Afghanistan	<b>5,865</b>
Afghanistan	<b>18,669</b>	Syrian Arab Rep.	<b>4,210</b>

\*UNHCR Mid-Year Statistical Report 2024 and UNHCR [data finder](#)

### [Protecting forcibly displaced and stateless people in Belgium](#)

#### UNHCR visits reception facilities and conducts focus group discussions

Since January 2024, UNHCR visited seven facilities, including an 'emergency village' for refugees from Ukraine to monitor the living conditions of forcibly displaced persons in reception centres at a time of increased reception pressure. To gain a deeper understanding of the situation of this group and to promote meaningful participation, 67 asylum seekers in total participated in focus group discussions organized by UNHCR during the visits.

#### Shelters operated by refugee committees

Since 2019, UNHCR Belgium, as part of its CBP activities, has been working closely with refugee communities, primarily in Brussels, to develop community-based empowerment, representation and inclusion of refugees. The refugee committees are currently managing four shelters, located in structures (former hotels/office buildings) which can host refugees from Ukraine and asylum seekers.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### World Refugee Day

To celebrate World Refugee Day, UNHCR co-organized Brussels Refugee Week with the refugee committees. Several events were organized, including a football tournament, concerts with refugee artists, a bazaar with arts from refugee artisans, and five movie nights highlighting stories of forced displacement.

#### EU-Passworld

In August 2024, UNHCR welcomed three Syrian and 4four Congolese students who arrived in Belgium through the EU-Passworld educational pathways, to start university in Belgium (see below story).

#### Statelessness

In July 2024, UNHCR organized a training on statelessness for the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons (CGRS) and Immigration Office staff, in the context of the forthcoming entry into force of the new law on a residence permit for stateless persons.



Stephen and his buddy Tuur in front of the university library in Leuven ©Caritas/Céline Jalil

#### EU-Passworld offers hope and perspective for refugee students

Stephen, a refugee from South Sudan, is pursuing a master's degree in anthropology at the KU Leuven university in Belgium.

[Read](#) about how he obtained his scholarship and discover why he calls Leuven his new home.

## Key Priorities

- **EU Pact on migration and asylum:** The Pact was adopted by the European Parliament and Council during the Belgian EU Presidency. UNHCR analyses its impact at national level and is holding consultations with key stakeholders.
- **Asylum procedures:** 17,853 people applied for international protection, an increase of 16,39 per cent compared to 2023. Asylum instances are facing a backlog in first instance and appeal.
- **Reception:** The reception system remains saturated. UNHCR continues to call for adequate reception conditions for all applicants as insufficient reception opportunities impact the health of asylum-seekers, as well as fair and efficient asylum procedures.
- **Advocacy:** In the context of the federal, regional, local and EU elections, UNHCR met with key stakeholders including political parties, authorities and civil society and advocated for its key asks in line with its [Memorandum](#).
- **Temporary protection:** Belgium remains welcoming towards refugees from Ukraine. Some 86,050 persons have been granted temporary protection since February 2022.
- **Family reunification:** Family reunification is ruled by strict criteria. Challenges include submission of requests abroad, long waiting times and costs associated. UNHCR continues to advocate for flexibility and supports applicants, including with implementing partner Myria.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways:** The resettlement programme has been once again temporarily suspended, mainly due to challenging reception situation in the country.
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** Refugee representation in Brussels has expanded to ten refugee-led organizations (RLOs). These entities serve as consultative bodies, supporting relevant stakeholders in optimizing refugee inclusion.
- **Detention monitoring:** Detention of asylum-seekers upon arrival at the border remains quasi systematic.

UNHCR's partner Nansen provides legal assistance to asylum-seekers in detention. UNHCR takes part in an observer capacity in meetings of MOVE, an immigration detention focused NGO consortium.

## Working with Partners

- UNHCR maintains regular contact with authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, lawyers, and academia. UNHCR signed partnerships with Nansen, which provides legal support to lawyers and asylum-seekers, and Myria, the Federal Migration Centre, that provides legal support to beneficiaries of international protection, lawyers, and case workers to facilitate family reunification.
- **External engagement:** Ahead of the Belgian (and European) elections in June, UNHCR Belgium launched an [online factchecking campaign \(NL\)](#), providing accurate information to the general public on migration and asylum-related figures and themes.

## Statelessness

- Belgium is party to the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions on Statelessness, and the nationality law contains relevant safeguards. Statelessness is determined by the judiciary. Residence permits are not automatically granted to recognized stateless people, leaving many without rights. A new law on this matter will enter into force in September 2024.

## UNHCR Presence in Belgium

### Staff:

29 National Staff  
 17 International Staff  
 1 Affiliated workforce

### Offices:

1 Multi-country Office in Brussels

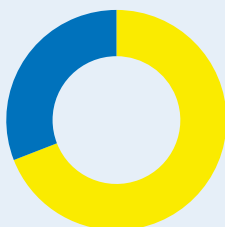
## Financial information (as of 30 September 2024)\*

\*Information relates to Belgium Multi-Country Office

### Financial requirements for 2024

**\$ 12.2 M**

Funding gap 24%  
**\$ 2.8 M**



Funded 76%  
**\$ 9.4 M**

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