

# Belgium

February 2023

Belgium has a **solid asylum** system, and UNHCR enjoys **good collaboration** with the asylum institutions. In 2021, Belgium increased its unearmarked funding to UNHCR for the next three years.

UNHCR welcomed the fact that between January and December 2022, Belgium received more than **100,000 people seeking protection**, including approx. 64,000 refugees from Ukraine.

The **reception network** is saturated. In 2022, thousands of asylum seekers have not been accommodated. UNHCR calls for adequate reception conditions for all applicants.

## UNHCR POPULATION STATISTICS AS OF MID-2022\*

Refugees	<b>127, 831</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>20, 368</b>
Stateless persons	<b>1,190</b>

### Top three countries of origin\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	<b>48,238</b>	Afghanistan	<b>5,302</b>
Syrian Arab Republic	<b>20,086</b>	State of Palestine	<b>1,313</b>
Afghanistan	<b>7,049</b>		<b>1,089</b>

\*UNHCR 2022 Mid-Year Trends and UNHCR [data finder](#)

## UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

As of mid-February, **67,021 refugees from Ukraine** were registered for temporary protection in Belgium.

**Community-Based Protection:** Belgium - in particular Brussels and later Wallonia - pioneered the use of community-based approaches to address access to services and local solutions for refugees from Ukraine, thereby enabling refugees to become the primary actors, particularly with the use of specific persons of contact and refugee-led organizations in the response design and implementation.

**Housing:** Due to the current reception crisis, the overheated housing market and the waiting lists for social housing, many refugees from Ukraine lack access to long-term housing. The absence of residence impacts their access to rights in the registration process in municipalities.

**Child protection:** 1,182 unaccompanied or separated refugee children from Ukraine have been granted temporary protection in 2022. The guardianship system is, however, strained. Last December, 800 refugee children from Ukraine were on the waiting list to be assigned a guardian. UNHCR is follow up on an AMIF monitoring project implemented by the authorities and on a UNHCR/Caritas project focused on access to information for UASCs from Ukraine.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Reception Conference

At a December conference on the reception crisis, UNHCR set out its position and suggestions on ways forward in its [keynote speech](#). The conference was organised by civil society and attended by academia, civil society, government and law makers.

### Community-Based Protection

The refugee-led organizations, empowered by UNHCR, were awarded the official status of collective shelters' operators to take an operational role in housing management for refugees from Ukraine.

### Resettlement and complementary pathways

UNHCR encourages Belgium to resume and expand resettlement processing from all operations as soon as possible, as the resettlement programme is suspended due to the reception crisis.

## BASSEL AND STELLAS JOURNEY TO SAFETY



Having fled Syria, Bassel found safety and a new home in Belgium. The now musician and co-owner of a café experienced first-hand the power of solidarity through the host family that took him in soon after arrival. Years later, Stella, the dog he grew up with, reunited with Bassel in Belgium.

[Video](#) and full [story](#) here.

## Key Priorities

- **Advocacy:** Messages contained in the 2020 UNHCR Memorandum continue to be relayed.
- **Asylum procedures:** Belgium has a solid asylum system. Asylum applications in 2022 have increased significantly (+42%) compared to 2021. The total recognition rate at first instance was 42%.
- **Reception:** The reception network is saturated. In 2022, thousands of asylum seekers have not been accommodated. UNHCR calls for adequate reception conditions for all applicants.
- **Family reunification:** Strict criteria rule relatively long and costly family reunification procedures. Few humanitarian visas are issued compared to the needs. UNHCR focuses on advocacy and individual support through partner Myria.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways:** Belgium pledged to resettle 1,250, 1,400 and 1,500 refugees in 2022, 2023 and 2024 respectively; and to uphold and expand other legal pathways, including family reunification. UNHCR advocates for resumption of resettlement currently suspended because of the ongoing reception capacity shortage, supports in finding solutions to housing challenges and in the development of complementary pathways.
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** Refugee representation in Brussels has expanded to ten refugee-led organizations (RLOs), consultative entities supporting stakeholders in optimizing refugee integration. RLOs are also building partnerships with local authorities, financial institutions, social services and labour market stakeholders. UNHCR has handed over day-to-day management of the refugee empowerment project to refugees.
- **Detention monitoring:** Detention of asylum-seekers upon arrival at the border is *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 regularly interacts 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 formulates policy advice and provides legal support to international protection holders, lawyers, and family reunification case workers .
- **External engagement:** UNHCR raises awareness about the situation of refugees in Belgium and worldwide. By engaging in [media interviews](#) and sharing [advocacy messages](#) via social media on the reception crisis in Belgium, UNHCR has expressed concern about the situation and called for immediate and long-term solutions.

## Statelessness

- Belgium is party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, and nationality law contains relevant safeguards. Statelessness is determined by the judiciary. **No residence permit** is automatically granted to recognized stateless persons, leaving many often without rights. Belgium has **pledged** to create a legal status for stateless persons by providing stateless persons who cannot return to their home country a right of residence in Belgium.

## UNHCR Presence in MCO Belgium

### Staff:

22 National Staff  
 16 International Staff  
 3 Affiliated workforce

### Offices:

1 Multi-country Office in Brussels

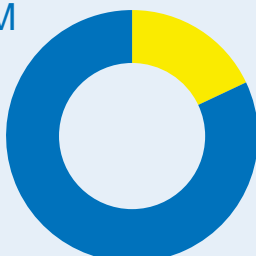
## Financial information (February 2023)

Information relates to Representation for EU Affairs, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the Liaison Offices to EUAA and Frontex

### Financial requirements

USD 12.0 M

Funding gap  
 82%  
 9.9 M



Funded  
 18%  
 2.1 M

UNHCR is grateful for the support from our top government donors of unearmarked, softly earmarked and earmarked funding:

**Belgium | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America**

As well as for the generous contributions from private individuals and the private sector.