



Resettlement Country: Belgium

Last updated: [10-02-2022]

1. Resettlement Policy and Program Description

1.1 Program Year/Cycle:

- Start date: 01-Jan-22 End Date: 31-Dec-22

1.2 Resettlement Policy and Program

Belgium has a structural resettlement programme with an annual quota since 2013. Prior to this, Belgium had some pilot experiences through different ad hoc resettlement operations (Iraq, Libya) and the development of the Joint European Resettlement Scheme. The size of the quota is decided by the Government (Minister or State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). The quota for the first years of the programme were set at 100, but this quota gradually increased to 1.250 for 2022, mainly for the resettlement of Syrian and DRC refugees. For the 2018-2020 AMIF pledging exercise (extended until the end of 2021), Belgium pledged to resettle 2.758 refugees, of which 2.259 arrived.

The selection process is managed by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), the determining authority. As a standard practice, the CGRS conducts interview missions in the countries of asylum, but exceptionally other methods are used (remote interviewing, dossier selection). Social screening, pre-departure cultural orientation, travel and medical arrangements, initial reception and transition to mainstream and specific integration services are managed by the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL). Transportation in the country of asylum, medical arrangements, and organization of the transfer to Belgium are delegated to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Upon arrival in Belgium, resettled newcomers stay for a period of six weeks in a reception centre. Afterwards, they move to an individual reception place for six months (extension of maximum 2 months possible). During this time they need to find a private housing solution, so that afterwards they can move to private housing outside of the reception network.

1.3 Ministries and Departments

The two main operational authorities, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) and FEDASIL, fall under the State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration. The Immigration Office, competent for the registration of the asylum application and the issuing of the refugee statute, also falls under the State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration. The Belgian Embassy in the country of asylum, competent for issuing the travel documents, and visas, falls under the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

1.4 Process for Determining the Resettlement Admission Targets

The size of the quota is decided by the Government (State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). CGRS, the asylum authority in Belgium, and FEDASIL, the reception agency in Belgium, make a



proposal for the allocation of the quota based on the UNHCR's Projected Global Resettlement Needs, the EU priorities and national considerations. The final decision is taken by the Government (State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). To optimize the national strategic implementation of the resettlement programme, coherence with the Belgian Foreign Affairs Office policy as well as the Belgian Development Cooperation's policy is sought. The timing of the decision process follows publication of UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs document, European thematic and geographic priorities, AMIF pledging exercises and Belgian budget cycles.

2. Eligibility for Refugee Status and other forms of International Protection

2.1 National Legislation defining eligibility

Refugee status is granted on the basis of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention). The asylum procedure and the competencies of asylum institutions are governed by the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980 (Law on the entry, residence, settlement and removal of aliens). The Aliens Act also includes provisions for subsidiary protection (i.e. complementary protection), in line with the EU qualification directive. The status of subsidiary protection is granted if an asylum applicant does not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention but when there is a real risk of serious harm if returned to his country of origin.

There are no specific provisions on resettlement in Belgian legislation (aliens act, reception, social integration, etc.). Resettlement is handled within the existing legislation.

2.2 Additional Information

Resettled newcomers are granted refugee status immediately after arrival in Belgium. There is no difference between refugee status criteria for asylum-seekers, and those for resettled refugees.

3. Resettlement Decision-Making

3.1 Resettlement Admissibility and Public Interest Criteria

In order to be eligible for resettlement to Belgium, a person must meet the refugee criteria as defined in Belgian Aliens Law. In general, the same criteria apply for resettlement as for regular applicants for international protection who apply in Belgium. Additional criteria related to reception capacity (e.g. limitation on family size or serious medical cases) may apply depending on the situation. The applicant must be able to articulate an individual need for protection in relation to his/her country of origin.

Specific rules apply for child marriages: UNHCR is asked not to submit cases including girls/women who got married before they turned 16, unless at the time of submission the marriage was concluded more than 15 years after the woman turned 18.

All cases submitted for resettlement are screened and cleared by the State Security Services (State Security Service, General Intelligence and Security Service (Military Intelligence) and the Federal Police). If there are indications that a person submitted should be excluded from international protection or would pose a threat to public order or national security, the case will be rejected.



3.2 Requests for Reconsideration

No specific procedure is foreseen to request reconsideration. If a person is rejected for resettlement based on reasons linked to eligibility for international protection or exclusion and/or security issues, there is no possibility to reconsider the case. If a case was rejected based on other reasons (e.g. withdrawal for personal reasons, changed family composition like divorce/marriage, ...) UNHCR can ask the CGRS to reconsider a case. A fully updated RRF will then be needed.

3.3 Dependency

In accordance with the principle of family unity, resettlement is as a rule, offered to all core family members (spouse and children under 18 in a case at the moment of resettlement application, even if they would not meet the eligibility criteria on an individual basis)

4. Legal Status on Arrival and Citizenship

4.1 Legal Status on Arrival

There is no specific legal framework for resettlement in Belgium and there are no specific provisions on resettlement in Belgian legislation on immigration, reception, social integration, etc. As a consequence resettlement has to be handled within the existing legislation. Since the international protection status cannot be granted outside of the Belgian territory, resettled refugees are granted refugee status immediately after arrival in Belgium.

There is no difference between refugee status criteria for asylum seekers, and that for resettled refugees. Either the refugee status is granted on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention, either the status of subsidiary protection is granted if an applicant for resettlement does not meet the criteria of the latter convention but when there is a real risk of serious harm if returned to his/her country of origin.

After refugee/subsidiary protection status has been granted, a resettled refugee will receive a residence permit for a period of five years. After this period of five years, the resettled refugee will be granted permanent residence.

4.2 Eligibility for Citizenship

Belgian citizenship can be obtained by a person above 18 years of age who has resided legally in Belgium for five years and who knows one of the three national languages and:

- who can prove his/her social integration AND economic participation or
- who is married to a Belgian citizen or is the parent of a Belgian child aged under 18 AND who can prove his/her social integration or
- who cannot work due to a disability or is retired.

The citizenship declaration can also be made by a person above 18 who has resided legally in Belgium for ten years and who knows one of the three national languages and who can prove his/her social participation in the Belgian community.

The cost of this procedure is 150€.



The conditions described above are the basic criteria necessary to acquire the Belgian citizenship. The exhaustive conditions can be found in the updated version of the Belgian Nationality Code.

5. Processing Priorities

5.1 Processing Priorities

The allocation of places is based on UNHCR's Projected Global Resettlement Needs, and aligned where possible with resettlement efforts or priorities within the European Union. The focus is on vulnerable families in protracted refugee situations, although other political considerations are also taken into account, (e.g. the start of the one-to-one scheme of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016). Absorption capacities - including integration facilities, housing for large families, specific services (e.g. for UAM's, High Care places, etc.) - are taken into account when setting the allocation of the quota.

Belgium only accepts submissions by UNHCR. No places are foreseen for non-UNHCR submissions.

6. Special Considerations

6.1 Unaccompanied and Separated Children

An unaccompanied child is a child under 18 years old, who is without his/her parent(s) or (legal) representative and without legal residence documents. Unaccompanied children in Belgium have a legal status with additional rights, which is regulated by the Guardianship Act (Programme Law (I) (Art. 479) - Title XIII - Chapter VI: Guardianship of unaccompanied foreign minors, 24 December 2002).

The procedure for granting international protection in Belgium contains some specific provisions for both unaccompanied and accompanied children. The CGRS takes additional measures to process such applications, which are based on the principle of the higher interest of the child.

Belgium accepts only limited numbers of unaccompanied minors within the resettlement programme (since 2018 Belgium hasn't resettled UAM's), mainly because of the almost constant high number of applications for international protection by unaccompanied minors in Belgium which puts a lot of pressure on processing capacity and the reception capacity for this group. When a child is submitted for resettlement by UNHCR without its parents, a Best Interest Determination (BID) should be conducted.

In order to allow for a child accompanied by only one parent to resettle to Belgium, any custody or guardianship issues should be cleared and a signed consent form - when possible - should be collected from the absent parent, as is the case for such applications for international protection lodged in Belgium. If there are good reasons for the fact that a consent form cannot be presented (e.g. parent is missing), despite the fact that all reasonable efforts were made, the decision will be made on a case by case basis.



6.2 Minor Marriage

Sexual acts with minors under the age of 16 are punishable by law. Depending on the case, this is considered "indecent assault" (articles 372 and 373 of the Criminal Code) or "rape" (article 375 of the Criminal Code). Even if the minor consents and no coercion is used.

This implies that a marriage of a minor under the age of sixteen may not be recognised by the Belgian authorities as it is contrary to public order.

In the event that the safety or morality of the child is endangered, specific measures can be taken with regard to the person(s) exercising parental authority or guardianship over the minor (Articles 30 and 32 Youth Protection Act).

In the context of applications for international protection in Belgium, the assessment of the exclusion depends on the age the child was when the first sexual intercourse took place: If younger than 14 years, this is always considered a rape according to national law, therefore an exclusion for the spouse/partner is a possibility. Between 14 and 16 years, there is an individual assessment of the claim. If the parents of the partners were aware and agreed, an exclusion may also be applied in their case.

In the context of resettlement, UNHCR is asked not to submit cases including girls/women who got married before they turned 16, unless at the time of submission the marriage was concluded more than 15 years after the woman turned 18.

Spouses between 16 and 18 who are resettled would be permitted to live together.

6.3 Polygamous Marriage

Polygamous marriage is not recognized in Belgium. Only one spouse can benefit from the right to family reunification. This limitation does not apply, however, to the children from a polygamous marriage (decision 95/2008 of the Constitutional Court).

Belgium does not accept UNHCR submissions of cases that include polygamous persons.

6.4 Refugees with a physical or mental disability or a serious medical condition

Belgium asks UNHCR for a balanced caseload on an annual basis. By applying this balance over the quota of the whole year, a flexibility is built in: if within one caseload no/nearly no serious medical cases are submitted, this creates the possibility of receiving (more) serious medical cases within a next caseload. If UNHCR wants to submit a case with a serious medical condition, UNHCR is asked to verify with Belgium in advance of the submission whether there is the possibility to receive such as case. An assessment will then be made, based on the particular circumstances at that time.

6.5 Large families and single adults

We ask UNHCR for a balanced caseload. In general in the context of resettlement to Belgium, the UNHCR is asked not to submit cases which consist of more than six family members, due to a lack of appropriate available housing for large families. All larger family compositions can be requested



on demand by UNHCR, and will then be assessed on a case by case basis. In the near future Belgium will need to be even more conscious as to the acceptance of large family compositions.

7. Dossier Selection Processing

Cases submitted on a dossier basis do not involve resettlement country selection interviews. Acceptance decisions are based solely on the documentation submitted by UNHCR. If the program does not include dossier selection processing indicate "N/A."

7.1 Dossier Selection Policies

In the period 2014-2021 there has been no quota foreseen for dossier selection, although dossier selection on ad-hoc basis and for a limited number of cases was possible.

For the programme of 2022, 50 places are allocated for emergency cases, which will be decided on dossier basis, although a personal interview via videoconference could exceptionally be organized if this would be considered necessary. The Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) for a dossier submission needs to be as comprehensive as possible. Full and exact personal data including full data on family composition are of vital importance. A full examination of the applicant's refugee claim, including a thorough assessment of the present fear needs to be done in each case. The possible application of article 1F of the Geneva Convention is to be examined by UNHCR. The declaration should include and indicate activities e.g. involvement in armed struggle, previous convictions and military background. Copies of all identity and all other pieces of evidence should be added to the RRF. If the CGRS considers the RRF to be incomplete, additional information will be asked. If a case has been submitted to another resettlement country earlier to the submission to Belgium, this information should be included in the RRF and the CGRS will in most cases consult this state to learn more about the reasoning for the refusal.

For reception/integration purposes, data on language knowledge, qualifications, educational background, working experience and medical and other needs are essential, as are possible family links in Belgium which may influence settlement decisions.

7.2 Decision Making Process

All refugee resettlement submissions are considered by the CGRS in accordance with existing guidelines and policy. An applicant must meet the criteria in the Geneva Convention to be eligible for resettlement in Belgium. The RRF will be assessed in detail by a caseworker specialized in the region of origin of the applicant. The caseworker will draft a decision and this will be discussed with a supervisor and/or with the Commissioner-general or one of his deputies. The refugee status cannot be granted outside the Belgian territory. As a consequence, the decision to authorize travel to Belgium will be taken by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. This decision will be taken based on the proposal for selection by the CGRS and if a decision is made to follow this advice, instruction will be given to the Immigration Office to issue travel documents (for applicants for resettlement who do not possess such documents), and a visa, which will be prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After arrival, the resettled refugee will need to lodge an asylum application at the Immigration Office, although this is a mere formality: there will be no more interviews on the substance and a full investigation will not be carried out. Within days after arrival, refugee status will be granted,



and within weeks, the refugee certificate will be handed to the resettled refugee. If a case is rejected based on the analysis of the RRF, the reasons for rejection will be communicated to UNHCR.

8. Interview Selection Processing

Resettlement country interview selection processing means that the resettlement country conducts an interview as part of the selection process. If the program does not include a resettlement country interview indicate "N/A."

8.1 Interview Selection Policies

In-country selection missions are discussed in detail with UNHCR. To facilitate preparations the CGRS uses the *Pre-Mission Questionnaire for Resettlement Interview Missions* supplied by UNHCR. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Belgian embassy are involved to arrange logistical and other support, such as accommodation, transport, security, meetings, etc. Steering Groups, in which all operational partners (CGRS, FEDASIL, Foreign Affairs, Immigration Department, UNHCR Belgium, IOM, and Cabinet of the State Secretary) are represented, are organized on a regular basis to prepare selection missions. During these meetings, all operational aspects are discussed, such as timelines, risks, dossier flow, travel, etc. The delegation for a selection mission consists, as a rule, of a mission leader and two to six caseworkers who are specialized in the region.

All documentation, i.e. RRF and all possible supplementary documentation, should be provided by UNHCR and made available at least one month before the planned date of the mission. All cases submitted are screened by the CGRS and will be interviewed. To ensure that the quota will be filled, the CGRS can ask for more cases than will be selected. This will vary depending on the conditions of each mission, keeping in mind a balance between the risk of not being able to select sufficient cases and the inconvenience to be obliged to refuse cases only because the quota has been reached. Based on the number of RRFs and the profiles submitted, an interview schedule will be prepared and sent to UNHCR or alternatively, UNHCR can be asked to draft the schedule if that would be considered more efficient. In principle, no additional cases can be submitted during the selection mission.

8.2 Decision Making Process

Interviews are carried out on an individual basis (all persons above 18) with the objective to verify and supplement the information provided in the RRF. No decisions are made during the selection mission. After return to Belgium, the caseworker will draft a decision and this will be discussed with a supervisor and/or with the Commissioner-general or one of his deputies. For more detail concerning the decision making process (see section 7.1).

In line with the selection process for dossier cases, the grounds for rejection are given to UNHCR in writing and in some cases also orally.

Face-to-face interviews are the standard procedure for interview selection. During the Covid-19 crisis however, in country missions were impossible and therefore the practice of video interviews in the context of resettlement was launched. All 6 interview selection missions in 2021 were conducted via videoconference. The procedure for selection is broadly similar to the regular procedure, although specific arrangements were made with UNHCR. For example, it was agreed that UNHCR would send Belgium all available documents on the applicants for resettlement present in the UNHCR file a couple of weeks before the start of the mission.



9. Processing Timeframes

9.1 Policies for receiving emergency and/or urgent submissions

In 2022 Belgium included a quota for Emergency Cases within its annual programme. For 2022, this quota is set at 50.

9.2 Average Processing Times for Emergency Cases

For cases submitted under the quota for Emergency Cases, a decision is normally taken within 1-2 weeks.

Fedasil aims to organise the pre-departure arrangements and transfer within 7 days after the decision on selection is communicated to FEDASIL. However, under certain circumstances and due to travel restrictions/visa processing, the actual transfer might be organised at a later time but is still prioritised.

Given the tight timing, Fedasil is not able to implement the full package of pre-departure activities for these cases. A short and remote Belgian Cultural Orientation (BELCO) session will be organised for each case individually by a resettlement officer of the FEDASIL headquarters. It is not possible to provide a full (4 days), in the field Belgian Cultural Orientation (BELCO). Nevertheless, an online meeting of a few hours with the applicants for resettlement is organised to:

- Establish a first contact in order to inform them about the process in the coming days
- Provide information on what to expect of Belgium and their life in this resettlement country;
- Allow them to ask questions and share their fears and doubts;
- Check their personal situation to ensure an appropriate transfer and reception in Belgium.

Through the objectives mentioned here above, Fedasil also ensures a basic social screening to initiate a social file.

Before the transfer takes place a Medical Health Assessment is organised by IOM to ensure the case is fit to travel. If needed – e.g. based on analysis of the RRF – FEDASIL’s medical resettlement staff would request a more in-depth medical examination and/or additional medical tests.

For Emergency Cases, visa issuance and exit permit procedure have to be done in an expedited manner. Embassies/Consulates and local/national authorities are asked to deliver travel documents within the scope of only a few days. In order for this to be possible, the respective agencies are contacted immediately after receiving the RRF.

9.3 Average Processing Times for Urgent Cases

Urgent Cases are usually processed along with the Normal Cases, as the average processing time for the resettlement process in Belgium is under normal circumstances quite short (around 4



months). If normal processing times cannot be respected (e.g. due to COVID restrictions, lack of reception places available for resettled refugees, ...), urgent cases are prioritized for departure to the extent possible.

9.4 Average Processing Times for Normal Cases

The average processing time for the resettlement process in Belgium is 4 months for Normal Cases. However, processing timeframes are not set and can vary depending on various factors. The decisions for persons interviewed - face to face or remote - are taken and communicated within 1 month after the end of the mission of the CGRS.

From the moment the cases are submitted by UNHCR, the CGRS starts preparing for the selection mission. FEDASIL from its part also starts planning the social - & medical screening missions.

As soon as the final selection is determined by the State Secretary of Asylum & Migration, social - & medical screenings are conducted on-site (usually a couple of weeks after the final selection is known). With the support of IOM, FEDASIL prepares the transfer of the caseload (visa processing, booking of flights, additional medical assessments if needed). Depending on the visa procedure and exit procedure in the country of first asylum and the number of people in the caseload, this process takes between 4 to 12 weeks. A pre-departure orientation training (BELCO or Belgian Cultural Orientation) takes place on-site approximately one month before departure.

Prior to departure a medical screening is organised by IOM for the whole caseload, to determine if everyone is fit to travel.

10. Pre-departure Arrangements

10.1 Pre-departure Medical Screening

Medical Health Assessments are initially carried out by FEDASIL's medical resettlement staff on-site. Follow-up is provided by IOM, according to a written agreement by FEDASIL.

FEDASIL's medical resettlement staff prepares a mission on-site for the medical screening of the whole caseload (in the instance of Normal Cases). Preparation for these missions is done based on the RRF's. The medical file is completed with information gathered on an individual/family basis during the on-site medical screenings. Purposes of the compilation of the medical file in this early stage are preparing travel arrangements, analysing if additional physical/mental examinations before travel are needed, determining specific needs during the travel and upon arrival, identifying a suitable reception place and informing the healthcare providers (medical services in reception centre, general practitioners, etc.) about the medical condition of the persons.

Shortly before departure (max. four days), a "Fit-To-Fly" examination is performed by IOM so as to confirm the capacity of each refugee to travel. If one refugee is declared not being fit to travel, he/she will receive the necessary treatment and will be transferred as soon as there is no more risk to him/herself, other persons or for public health. Specific pre-departure medical tests/procedures can be requested on case-to-case basis through IOM.



For all of the above, the costs are covered by FEDASIL and may include transportation of the applicants for resettlement from their place of residence to the medical facility and back, compensation of the medical staff, medical tests (i.e.: sputum smears) and any treatment needed to ensure that the applicants for resettlement are able to travel to Belgium.

FEDASIL coordinates the medical screening needs in general for a whole caseload/individual cases. FEDASIL's medical resettlement staff communicates additional needs for medical examinations/tests directly to IOM that conduct the medical examinations/tests on-site. For Normal Cases these screening needs are based on the information in the medical file - compiled from RRF and on-site FEDASIL medical screening. For Emergency Cases the screening needs are based on the information provided in the RRF's and FEDASIL can ask IOM to conduct additional treatments or medical examinations and/or tests.

10.2 Required Pre-departure Treatment

The treatment of acute diseases and decompensated chronic diseases that could prevent a refugee from being transferred to Belgium is provided by IOM. Costs are covered by the budget allocated to IOM by FEDASIL. Depending on the results of the health assessment, FEDASIL can require additional examinations and treatment if needed to ensure the transfer of a refugee.

10.3 Pre-departure Orientation

A pre-departure Belgian Cultural Orientation - BELCO in short - is provided to the applicants for resettlement whose selection for resettlement in Belgium is confirmed by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. FEDASIL organises these BELCO trainings through on-site missions in close cooperation with UNHCR and IOM. IOM assists with all logistical issues (infrastructural needs, transportation, interpreters, baby-sitters, various necessary materials, etc.).

Trained FEDASIL staff are in charge of providing these BELCO trainings. Usually, the delegation is composed of staff members working in the reception centres - resettlement coaches - which will be hosting the applicants for resettlement in question in the first reception stage. One resettlement officer from the headquarters is in charge of the coordination of the mission.

The programme is based on the BELCO curriculum developed by FEDASIL and covers different themes like housing, employment, education and vocational training, healthcare, family reunification, cost of life, norms and values, etc. Through group reflection and psycho-education, the BELCO training provides information about the mental processes that resettled newcomers may go through when settling in a new country, the culture shock and the adjustments needed to acclimatise to their new environment. The training focuses on managing people's expectations of their future life in Belgium. In doing so, they are empowered to make an informed and considered decision about their (and their family's) resettlement. These trainings also provide the resettlement officers and - coaches with additional information to add to the social files on individual cases in order to better prepare the reception of the applicants for resettlement in Belgium.

If in the current context (COVID 19 safety- & travel restrictions) or because of safety concerns, the BELCO training could not be provided to certain caseload in its regular on-site format, they are then remotely organised. The duration and the content of the BELCO trainings is therefore - under these specific circumstances - adapted. In this case the applicants for resettlement receive a BELCO



manual in their mother tongue through IOM and are additionally informed by the resettlement coaches through remote BELCO trainings of half a day, followed by a short remote individual session (Q&A) per case.

Depending on advice from IOM staff (EUAA staff in TUR) on-site, the availability of infrastructures and transportation considerations, the BELCO trainings can either take place in the refugee camp or in another adequate location (transit centre, hotel, conference centre, etc.). Even when organised remotely, a location will be provided where the applicants for resettlement can gather in the instance of remote BELCO trainings, assisted by IOM (or EUAA in TUR).

Also Emergency Cases benefit from a remotely organised BELCO session. These sessions are planned on a case by case basis and are conducted by a resettlement officer from the FEDASIL headquarters. Providing the selected applicants for resettlement with the opportunity to ask questions about the resettlement program in Belgium and about what they can/cannot expect.

FEDASIL coordinates BELCO missions in close cooperation with IOM (or EUAA in TUR) who assists with logistical issues on-site (infrastructural needs, transportation, interpreters, baby-sitters, various necessary materials, etc).

The BELCO trainings are given in English, translators are present (on-site/remote) to translate in real time in the mother tongue of the applicants.

10.4 Travel Arrangements and Documents

Following a written agreement by FEDASIL, IOM is in charge of several travel arrangements for the applicants for resettlement. These concern both pre-departure – as well as departure arrangements and services.

Pre-departure arrangements concern the appointments for the applications and the reception of travel documents like exit permits and visa, medical screenings to assess if the applicants for resettlement are fit to travel, and the booking of the flight tickets.

Departure activities concern airport assistance like guidance of travellers through immigration and customs and assistance with embarkation/debarkation. In some cases, IOM provides a social escort for the most vulnerable refugees (i.e. single mother with several children). There is also the possibility to arrange for a medical escort if needed in agreement with or at the request of FEDASIL.

Flight tickets, transportation to the embassy and the airport and all IOM services described above are covered by the budget allocated to IOM by FEDASIL. Travel documents are delivered by the Belgian representatives with costs covered by FEDASIL. If additional costs have to be made (e.g. ID pictures), they can be covered by the budget allocated to IOM by FEDASIL.

The required travel documents are issued by the Belgian representatives abroad on the instructions of the Belgian Immigrations Office. They consist of a laissez-passer or visa. Sometimes, a transit visa waiver is needed to go through a transit country.

11. Reception and Integration



11.1 Overview

Different reception models have been developed by FEDASIL within the Belgian resettlement programme. More additional reception models are under consideration at the moment.

At the moment the following reception models are in place:

- a. The standard reception trajectory consists of 2 or 3 stages. In a first stage resettled newcomers are accommodated in collective reception structures for approximately 6 weeks. In a second stage they are accommodated in individual places where they can stay for 6 months (with an extension of 2 months if needed). A third phase only applies if a social welfare organisation offers a house for a minimum period of 1 year and ensures social guidance during this period.
- b. Reception in a collective reception centre (6 weeks) immediately followed by moving to a private house offered by a social welfare organisation and made available for a minimum period of 1 year. This place would be a house or apartment on the private market financed by the social allowance resettled newcomers receive. Extension is possible if the house owner agrees to extend the rental contract. This reception 'pathway' can be considered if the individual places in the Fedasil network are scarce.
Stakeholders: Fedasil and social welfare organisation.
- c. Reception in an individual reception place, immediately upon arrival. Conditions are the same as in the standard trajectory: the duration is maximum 6 months with a possibility to extend 2 times with 1 month. This reception model can be considered if the collective reception centres are saturated. Stakeholders: Fedasil, social welfare organisation and possibly Caritas International.
- d. Immediate reception in a place on the private market. In this case reception is not offered by national or local authorities but the resettled newcomers immediately rent a place on the private market. This model can only be considered if a social welfare organisation offers a house and ensures (social) guidance for a minimum period of 1 year.
Stakeholders: Fedasil and social welfare organisation.
- e. Community sponsorship: housing is offered for a minimum period of 1 year by a sponsor group that also engages to support the newcomers during this period. Rent is paid by the social allowance the resettled newcomers are entitled to.
Stakeholders: Fedasil, intermediary organisation (like Caritas International), and sponsor group.

In the standard reception trajectory, the initial reception phase is organised in FEDASIL's specific resettlement centres: the resettled newcomers are hosted in a federal reception centre for a duration of approximately six weeks. The objectives include: special needs identification (based on previously received information, medical- and social files), administrative steps (opening of social rights), language lessons, specific orientation program for resettled newcomers, liaison with integration actors.

At the end of the stay in the reception centre, the resettled newcomers receive individual housing within the FEDASIL network at the local level, which are individual reception places located in municipalities. They have the right to stay there for six months. These individual reception places



are accommodations made available to all recognized refugees (including resettled refugees) and managed by the Public Social Welfare Centres (in short PSWC's) within the municipalities. The stay in an individual reception place serves as a transition between collective reception with permanent assistance to a more independent life in Belgium. Social workers of the individual reception places will assist the resettled newcomers during this process of transition and integration which will make the search for durable housing for easier them.

Whenever housing can be found on the territory of the involved PSWC and with the agreement of the resettled newcomers, a specific convention can be signed between the managing PSWC and FEDASIL for 12 months to provide additional support for them. Resettled newcomers are also directed to existing specific services such as the civic integration agencies, the regional employment agencies, vocational training organizations, psychological counselling services, etc.

In the Community Sponsorship programme, a local sponsor group provides housing for the resettled newcomers that have been matched to them by FEDASIL. The programme is coordinated by FEDASIL but conducted in close cooperation with partner organisations of the civil society that provide for a network of sponsor groups. These intermediary organisations prepare, train and assist the sponsor groups in their efforts to receive and host resettled newcomers. The housing provided by the sponsor group is available to the resettled refugee for a minimum period of 1 year.

11.2 Placement

In the standard reception model, where resettled newcomers are initially accommodated in collective reception centres for applicants of international protection, the resettlement officers at the FEDASIL headquarters disperse the resettled newcomers over 5 reception centres specialised in resettlement.

Cases with particular vulnerabilities, for whom a stay in a collective reception place is not appropriate, could be directly assigned to an individual place (for example LGBTQ+). In case of a severe medical problem an specific place in a collective or individual structure will be considered.

In the community sponsorship programme, matching is done by FEDASIL, based on the profile of the refugee(s) and sponsor group, language knowledge, location of housing,... Only those people who have given consent will be considered to be matched to a sponsor group.

11.3 Reception

FEDASIL is responsible for the provision of the initial reception of the resettled newcomers.

FEDASIL is responsible for the organisation of the reception of the resettled newcomers itself if the resettled newcomers are hosted in one of the five federal reception centres for applicants for international protection that are also specialized in resettlement. And this during a period of approximately six weeks after their arrival in Belgium.

When secondly, the newcomers are transferred to an individual reception place in the local municipalities for a transition period of approximately 6 months, the local PSWC is responsible for their assistance and their reception.



Also in case of direct designations to an individual reception place, the local PSWC is responsible for the reception of the resettled newcomers.

Reception partners of FEDASIL are responsible for the reception of cases with particular vulnerabilities, for whom a stay in a collective reception place is not appropriate, and are assigned to an individual place (for example LGBTQ+).

In case of reception by a sponsor group according to the community sponsorship model, this sponsor group is responsible for the reception of resettled newcomers. They provide housing for approximately 1 year after arrival.

11.4 Orientation

Upon arrival FEDASIL staff members provide an orientation programme, building on the pre-departure orientation training that resettled newcomers received before the transfer to Belgium. The link between the two orientation trainings is represented in the names of the trainings: BELCO and BELCO+. BELCO+ addresses similar topics as the BELCO training but more detailed and with more practical info. BELCO+ is provided in one of the 5 specialized reception centres or on location, in case newcomers are not accommodated in a collective reception centre upon arrival.

Throughout a convention with FEDASIL, reception partners (PSWC's, Caritas, sponsor groups) are held responsible for further individual orientation. These actors provide tailor-made assistance which aims at fostering the empowerment and the autonomy of the resettled newcomers.

Furthermore, newcomers are obliged to follow integration courses provided by the regional integration services.

11.5 Support Services

Resettled newcomers have access to the mainstream social services available to all newcomers in Belgium. Integration for newcomers in Belgium is a regional competence. Consequently, the policy and rules differ depending on the region they are resettled to (Flemish Region, Walloon Region or Brussels-Capital Region).

In Flanders, newcomers have to enter a “civic integration programme”. This mandatory programme contains individual programme counselling, a social orientation course, a basic Dutch course and a professional orientation component. In Wallonia, newcomers can receive mandatory language courses, orientation courses and socio-professional guidance from different organizations (public, private or associative). In the Brussels-Capital Region, depending on the language that the resettled newcomers know/want to learn (Dutch or French), they can either join the “civic integration programme” provided by “Bon” (and thus receive the same services as the ones provided in Flanders, although not compulsory) or, like in Wallonia, they can access a multitude of support services (language courses, literacy, professional guidance, vocational trainings, etc.) organized by associations, public or private organizations. The two first “reception offices for newcomers” were created at the beginning of 2016 in Brussels. They are the francophone counterpart of “Bon” and will provide direct support and referral services.



The PSWC's and the regional integration actors will also refer the resettled newcomers to a wide range of services/associations, depending on their individual needs.

11.6 Housing

After the initial reception phase in collective reception centres, during their stay at the individual reception places within the FEDASIL network on a local level, the resettled newcomers are assisted in finding a private residence. The stay in an individual reception place prepares the newcomers between collective reception with permanent assistance to a more independent life in Belgium. Social workers will assist the resettled newcomers during this process of transition and integration which will make their search for durable housing easier. Whenever a house can be found on the territory of the involved PSWC and with the beneficiaries' agreement, a specific convention can be signed between the managing PSWC and FEDASIL for 12 months for extra support for the resettled newcomers. Such a convention encourages durable settlement in a Belgian municipality and ensures continuity in the integration process.

Sponsor groups are responsible for the housing of resettled newcomers according to the Community Sponsorship reception model. During their stay in the provided housing for their first year after arrival, the sponsor group will assist the resettled newcomers in finding private housing.

11.7 Health

Similarly to what is done for all applicants for international protection, chest X-rays and mandatory vaccinations are carried out at the Immigration Office upon arrival under normal circumstances. Under COVID restrictions, some RX-thorax were already conducted in a pre-departure stage by IOM and vaccinations will be provided in the reception place (i.e. medical service when hosted in a reception centre or with the general practitioners).

Moreover, a complete medical intake of all the resettled newcomers is carried out in the reception centre or by a general practitioner a few days after their arrival. The medical staff in the centre or general practitioner can rely on the information provided by the medical resettlement staff in the individuals' medical files. These are composed combining information from the RRF, the medical screening conducted on-site by the medical resettlement staff of the Belgian delegation and possible additional information collected by IOM.

Resettled newcomers have access to the medical services provided in the centre or to a general practitioner in the neighbourhood of the individual reception place.

Depending on the statute of the newcomer and the reception place, either FEDASIL, the local PSWC or the mutuality covers the necessary medical costs. They can thus soon after arrival access healthcare under the same conditions as other Belgian citizens.

11.8 Language

Language acquisition starts as soon as possible after arrival in Belgium. People staying in a reception centre will lessons by volunteers during their stay. Afterwards, official mandatory lessons are provided. In some cities or municipalities there are waiting lists to start the lessons.



Adults resettled in Flanders have to take a test that will determine their learning skills and most appropriate learning method. Depending on their results, the beneficiaries will receive language courses adapted to their level. The language component of the programme starts during their stay in the reception centre.

According to the Walloon integration programme, the French language courses must be completed within 18 months after receiving the refugee status.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, depending on the language that the resettled newcomers know/want to learn, they can either benefit from the Dutch classes included in Flanders' "civic integration programme" or they can choose amongst many initiatives specialized in adult literacy and French language courses for newcomers.

11.9 Education

Depending on their level, refugee children are either integrated to a class in the regular school system (corresponding to their age level or lower) or they join, in first instance, a transitional class ("welcome class") to catch up with the children of their age. Besides extra-curricular activities, the school system is regarded as the main civic integration means for children.

11.10 Employment

11.10.1 Employment Opportunities

Persons who receive a refugee status in Belgium are entitled to work. Resettled newcomers have access to the public employment services as any other Belgian citizen and they can receive additional support regarding their socio-professional integration pathway from specific services.

11.10.2 Employment and Vocational Training

The Flemish "civic integration programme" for newcomers includes a career orientation component. Depending on the educational and professional background of the refugee, he/she will be assisted in finding a job or starting a business or he/she will rather be advised to continue his/her education. The staff of the "civic integration programme" collaborates with the Flemish public employment services.

In the Walloon Region and in Brussels, various actors (public/associative) recognized by the public authorities provide socio-professional integration support to which resettled newcomers have access. These schemes and services help them assess their skills and address their needs accordingly.

11.11 Financial Assistance

Recognized refugees, including resettled refugees in Belgium are entitled to social integration revenue/welfare benefits, just like any Belgian citizen with insufficient means of subsistence who does not have any other means to support him/herself. This revenue is a temporary solution that allows its beneficiaries to live a decent life until their socio-economic situation improves. The local PSWC is responsible for conducting the social survey and providing the appropriate social assistance that comes along with the social integration revenue.



Resettled newcomers do not receive a resettlement “loan” which they eventually have to repay. Their needs are covered by the social welfare system, like their access to a social allowance, until they can find a job with a taxable income.

11.12 Supporting Specific Needs

Resettled newcomers with specific needs will be redirected towards appropriate services accordingly. The PSWC’s and the regional integration actors also refer them to a wide range of services/associations, depending on their individual needs.

11.13 Family reunification

Article 10 of the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980 (Law on the entry, residence, settlement and removal of aliens) govern the family reunification policy for third country nationals with an unlimited residence permit in Belgium.

Resettled refugees and persons who were granted asylum have the same right to family reunification as they all have an unlimited residence permit in Belgium. They can be joined by the above-mentioned family members without delay (contrary to other foreigners who have a residence permit in Belgium who must wait 12 months after the permit delivery before an application for reunification can be submitted).

12. References & Resources on resettlement

<https://www.cgrs.be/en/content/resettlement-0>

<https://www.fedasil.be/en/resettlement>

[https://www.fedasil.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/resettlement in belgium.pdf](https://www.fedasil.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/resettlement_in_belgium.pdf)

Addendum on complementary pathways

[https://www.fedasil.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/resettlement in belgium.pdf](https://www.fedasil.be/sites/default/files/content/download/files/resettlement_in_belgium.pdf)

<https://www.caritasinternational.be/fr/projects/asile-et-migration/du-%e2%80%afcommunity-sponsorship%e2%80%af-pour-les-refugie-e-s-reinstalle-e-s/>