Resettlement and humanitarian admission - Belgium

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Belgium is bound by the Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework Regulation (URF)

National legislation

There are no specific provisions on resettlement in Belgian legislation on immigration, reception and integration. Therefore, resettlement is managed within existing legislation. However, Belgium is considering to include resettlement in the Immigration or Aliens Act | Loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers, respecting Regulation (EU) 2024/1350 establishing a Union Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Framework.

Competent authority and stakeholders

Authorities responsible for establishing resettlement and humanitarian admission policy	Federal government (Minister responsible for Asylum and Migration)

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Identification and referral of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (for resettlement and education pathway) Sant'Egidio (for humanitarian corridors) World Health Organisation (WHO) (for medical evacuations)
Selection of refugees for a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Office of the Commissioner General for Refuges and Stateless Persons (CGRS) | Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides (CGRA) | Commissariaatgeneraal voor de vluchtelingen en de staatlozen (CGVS) State Security Services Immigration Office | Office des Étrangers | Vreemdelingezaken Minister/State Secretary for asylum and migration | Secrétaire d'État à l'Asile et la Migration | Staatssecretaris voor Asiel en Migratie.
Pre-departure assistance a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Fedasil) | Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile | Federaal agentschap voor de opvang van asielzoekers International Organization for Migration (IOM) Sant'Egidio

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Travel arrangements a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Immigration Office | Office des Étrangers | Vreemdelingezaken Belgian Embassies Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation | Service public fédéral (SPF) Affaires étrangères Commerce extérieur et Coopération au développement | Federale Overheidsdienst (FOD) Buitenlandse Zaken, Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Fedasil) | Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile | Federaal agentschap voor de opvang van asielzoekers International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Arrival and reception a) resettlement programmes b) humanitarian admission programmes c) community sponsorship programmes	Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Fedasil) | Agence fédérale pour l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile | Federaal agentschap voor de opvang van asielzoekers Municipalities Public Social Welfare Centres (PSWC) | Centres Publics d'Action Sociale (CPAS) | Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW) and regions Civil society organisations (e.g. Caritas International and Sant'Egidio). Sponsor or hosting groups (group of volunteers or associations supported by a community sponsorship organisation (CSO)

Programmes currently in place

- Resettlement programmes (currently on hold)

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- Humanitarian admission programmes (humanitarian visas are granted on a case-by-case basis)
- Community Sponsorship Programme

National quotas on resettlement and humanitarian admission

National commitments for resettlement, humanitarian admission and emergency quota

2-year Union Plan	National commitment for resettlement	National commitment for humanitarian admissions	Emergency quota
Period 2024-2025			
Period 2026-2027			
Period 2028-2029			

Procedural and practical arrangements

The admission procedure

Referral: UNHCR carries out the first identification of refugees who fulfil the requirements for resettlement and selects among them those for Belgium according to EU priorities. The phase is fully managed by UNHCR, no systematic information provision activities are organised by Belgium at this initial stage. For humanitarian admissions, Sant'Egidio is responsible for identification, assisted by

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local partners and possibly by UNHCR.

Selection and assessment of cases:

Selection missions: The CGRS conducts selection interviews with identified refugees in the first reception country. In general, interviews are conducted face-to-face.

Selection on dossier: In exceptional cases (emergency situations or risks connected with selection missions), selections can be based exclusively on dossiers. The procedure overall is the same, but without the interview mission, and the decision is taken based on the dossier submitted by UNHCR. The assessment is carried out by the CGRS, but the final decision on selection is made by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration.

Emergency cases: For cases submitted under the emergency cases quota, a decision is usually made within 1-2 weeks. Fedasil strives to arrange pre-departure logistics and facilitate the transfer within 7 days of receiving the selection decision. However in certain situations, such as travel restrictions or delays in visa processing, the transfer may occur later while still being treated as a priority. Due to the limited timeframe, Fedasil cannot carry out the full range of pre-departure activities for these cases. Instead, a brief, remote Belgian Cultural Orientation (BELCO) session will be conducted individually for each case by a resettlement officer from Fedasil headquarters.

Before departure, the IOM carries out a Medical Health Assessment to confirm travel fitness. If necessary, based on the evaluation of the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF), Fedasil's medical resettlement team may request a more detailed medical examination or additional tests. For emergency cases, visa processing and exit permits must be fast-tracked. Embassies, consulates, and local or national authorities are asked to issue travel documents within a few days. To facilitate this, the relevant agencies are contacted immediately after the RRF is received.

Assessment of cases: There is no set timeline for processing cases. However, the timeframe from the submission of a case to the communication of the decision to UNHCR amounts on average to around 90 days for the cases submitted. The time from the submission of a case to arrival in Belgium can vary greatly depending on various factors. For example, the fragile security situation in countries of first asylum or an interruption of the programme due to lack of reception places or a political decision to slow down the programme.

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Type of protection granted and residence permit issued after the admission procedure

The formal decision and recognition of the status of refugee is taken shortly after arrival in Belgium, following the lodging of an application for international protection

Pre-departure assistance

Prior to departure, Fedasil personnel conduct a medical screening in order to prepare for the transfer and arrival. The medical screening is preferably held as early as possible in the process (during or linked to a selection mission for example). Fedasil also conducts a social screening, the aim of which is to inform refugees about what to expect from resettlement in Belgium and initiate the process of tailor-made support (creation of social file/launch of needs and skills assessment).

Fedasil organises collective cultural orientation sessions, called BELCO trainings, to inform and prepare selected refugees for their transfer to and life in Belgium.

Based on a bilateral agreement, the IOM provides logistical support for missions in the country of first asylum and organises travel arrangements, assisted by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs and Belgian embassies on site, and accompanies refugees in the departure process. For resettlement from Türkiye, Fedasil organises transfers with the logistical support of the EUAA.

Travel arrangements

Under normal circumstances Fedasil provides all information prior to the travel stage (during the social screening/needs assessment and the Belgian Cultural Orientation training). Fedasil has the overall lead when it comes to the planning of the pre-departure travel arrangements. Based on a bilateral agreement, the IOM carries out travel arrangements, assisted by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs and Belgian embassies on site, and accompanies refugees in the departure process.

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During the medical screening carried out by Fedasil, an assessment is made of the medical needs during the journey. The IOM has its own standard operating procedures which include thorough medical screening and a fit-to-fly examination of each traveller. As Fedasil has already conducted medical screenings earlier in the process, only those refugees for whom it was necessary (decided in consultation with Fedasil) are seen again for additional pre-departure medical screenings by the IOM in the weeks before travelling.

On some occasions, Fedasil can assist in the pre-departure travel arrangements and departure. This is for example the case in Türkiye, where there is collaboration with the EUAA for practical support in the field.

Arrival and reception

Upon arrival, refugees need to lodge an application for international protection. The formal decision and recognition of the status of refugee is taken shortly after arrival in Belgium. Post-arrival procedures provide specific measures for assistance to resettled refugees, such as orientation programmes and tailored social support.

Generally, refugees stay in a reception centre for approximately 6 weeks. During this initial period, administrative procedures are undertaken, and refugees are provided with direct and fast access to specialised social and medical services. Every centre prepares a basic integration programme for the resettled refugees.

After this period, resettled refugees are assigned to a local reception initiative (LRI) for a duration of 6 months, after which they should find their own accommodation on the private market. During the stay in the LRI or later, integration support and social assistance is provided by the Public Social Welfare Service.

In addition to the general reception model, reception through the community sponsorship programme or with one of Fedasil’s partners is also possible. These two models are envisaged for a duration of 1 year and can start immediately after arrival in Belgium or after a stay of 6 weeks in a collective reception centre.

Integration support to resettled and admitted refugees

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General integration programmes are available, as well as AMIF-funded initiatives by Fedasil. Fedasil provides funding for local authorities through the Public Social Welfare Services that offer individual reception places for asylum seekers, persons who received a protection status and resettled refugees. Fedasil provides additional funding for local authorities or civil society organisations if they can offer housing to resettled refugees for at least 1 year, combined with intensive social support, based on specific conditions. The aim of this funding is to promote local integration of resettled refugees.

Each resettled person, regardless in which reception structure they are accommodated, has access to a BELCO+ training programme (a follow-up training to the pre-departure BELCO programme). By using similar images, material and methodologies, continuity is ensured and the individuals gradually acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that are useful for gaining more autonomy and helping the integration process.

Fedasil also works together with Caritas International to provide group information sessions on topics that are relevant at that moment (housing, norms and values, participation in society, etc.). The concept is based on peer-to-peer support: role models are involved to share their experiences and knowledge, and an online platform creates a safe space where resettled refugees can exchange and where information can be dispersed.

Resettlement programmes

In 2025, the new government put the resettlement programme on hold as long as the asylum and reception crisis persists, the backlog has not been cleared and the reception network has not been reduced. However, the government granted permission to transfer the refugees who were already selected and were waiting to be transferred.

Humanitarian admission programmes

There is no humanitarian visa programme with a quota, although visas for humanitarian reasons can be (and are) granted occasionally on a case-by-case basis.

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In 2022, Belgium pledged for 500 places for humanitarian admission. 450 places were meant for the Red Kite evacuation from Afghanistan and 50 places for the humanitarian corridors programme. In 2023, a pledge was made for 125 persons, and in 2024 for 75 persons for the humanitarian corridors programme.

Complementary pathways

Community sponsorship schemes related to state-led resettlement programmes

No such programme is currently implemented.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to civil society-led humanitarian admission programmes

The humanitarian corridors programme is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the Belgian State Secretary for Migration and Asylum and the Sant' Egidio community. The objective was to offer a safe pathway to Belgium for 250 vulnerable refugees residing in Lebanon, Libya Syria and Afghanistan (or neighbouring countries). The programme started in 2022 and was supposed to ran until March 2024. It had to be extended by a year, but Sant'Egidio ultimately succeeded in selecting the foreseen 250 people and bringing them to Belgium by mid-2025.

Community sponsorship schemes linked to other complementary pathways

Belgium has initiated two pilot projects for other safe and legal pathways. The Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E) is a project that facilitates the identification of displaced talents in Jordan and Lebanon and enables their recruitment by employers in Belgium. Another pilot project is the EU-Passworld project that has the objective to create additional education pathways for refugees through community sponsorship programmes. The DT4E is for people in need of international protection (can be any nationality), and targets Jordan and Lebanon, as countries of first asylum: Jordan and Lebanon. There is no concrete target set as a quota. The programme is employer-led, talent centred, focuses on family unity, protection safeguards and durable solution, equitable access and implements a whole-of-society approach. The EU-Passworld aims at widening

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complementary pathways linked to community sponsorship in Europe. The project officially ran until 2024, but will be continued with the partners in order to facilitate a student pathway in Belgium over the coming years. The project includes persons in need of international protection (different nationalities), and targets Egypt, Uganda, Burundi and Cameroon as first countries of asylum. Its quota: 10 students during initial project period, 5 in the year after (academic year of 2025). The project is organised around a multi-stakeholder consortium of CSOs, government agencies, universities and UNHCR. It creates a link with the labour pathway.

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