Forms of protection - Belgium

Overview

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Relevant EU legislation

Belgium is bound by the recast Qualification Directive (Qualification Regulation) and has transposed its provisions through:

• Loi modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers, la loi du 12 janvier 2007 sur l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile et de certaines autres catégories d'étrangers et la loi du 8 juillet 1976 organique des centres publics d'action sociale(1)

• Loi modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers en vue d'une meilleure prise en compte des menaces contre la société et la sécurité nationale dans les demandes de protection internationale

• Loi modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers et la loi du 12 janvier 2007 sur l'accueil des demandeurs d'asile et de certaines autres catégories d'étrangers

National legislation

Refugee status	Geneva Convention and Aliens Act, Article 48/3
Subsidiary protection	Aliens Act, Article 48/4

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Temporary protection	Belgium transposed TPD in 2003 by Law of 15 December 1980 on entry, residence, establishment and removal of Foreign Nationals | Loi du 15 decembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers (Title II, Section IV, Chapter IIbis, Articles 57/29-57/36).

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National forms of protection	**Authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons:** Aliens Law, Article 9bis. (In the strict sense not a form of protection, but an exception from the main rule under Aliens Law, Article 9). This allows a person to submit a request for a residence permit to the mayor of the place where he or she resides when exceptional circumstances justify the introduction of this request in Belgium rather than abroad and on the condition that he or she presents an identity document. Anyone who is not exempt must pay a fee and present proof of full payment when submitting their request. **Authorisation to stay for medical reasons:** Aliens Act, Article 9ter. (Not a form of protection in the strict sense, but a certain link with ECHR, Article 3). This authorises the stay in Belgium for applicants whose illness is such that a return to the country of origin would represent a real threat to their life or a risk of inhuman or degrading treatment when no appropriate treatment exists in the country of origin or in the country they reside. The foreign national must send all useful and most recent pieces of information regarding their health situation and the accessibility and availability of adequate treatment in the country of origin or the country he lives in. To lodge the application, the foreign national must notify the intention to apply for medical regularisation to the Immigration office (IO). A person granted leave to stay due to medical reasons, will receive a one-year residence permit (or 2 years in certain cases), extendable if the conditions that lead to its grant continue to exist. Five years after the date of the introduction of the medical regularisation procedure, the person who was granted with a leave to stay due to medical reasons receives a permanent residence card. **Authorisation to stay as durable solution for unaccompanied minors:** Aliens Act, Articles 61/14-61/25. This special residence procedure for unaccompanied foreign minors, known as the Best Interest Procedure, is based on the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is characterized by the search for a durable solution for each minor according to his or her best interests. The

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Competent authority and stakeholders

Refugee status	Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) | Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides (CGRA) | Commissariaat-generaal voor de vluchtelingen en de staatlozen (CGVS)
Subsidiary protection	Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) | Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides (CGRA) | Commissariaat-generaal voor de vluchtelingen en de staatlozen (CGVS)
Temporary protection	Immigration Office (IBZ) | Office des étrangers | Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken
National forms of protection	Immigration Office (IBZ) | Office des étrangers | Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken

Renewal and withdrawal of international protection and national forms of protection

Refugee status

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of refugee status: In accordance with the Aliens Act, refugee status can be reviewed and renewed under Article 57/6/7 and it can be withdrawn under Articles 55/3 or 55/3/1 and Article 49(2).

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: Aliens Law, Article 49:

- First: 5 years, electronic A card valid for 5 years from the moment of the final decision granting refugee status.
- Subsequent: unlimited, electronic B card

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- **Review of the status:** A systematic review of all decisions on the recognition of international protection does not take place. The CGRS may review the status on its own initiative when new elements or facts arise (Aliens Act, Article 57/6/7). The CGRS notifies the person concerned about the review, the new elements that triggered the process and the possible outcomes of the examination (cessation or revocation). Free legal aid is provided.

Renewal of the status: After the first 5 years from the moment of application for an international protection, the residence permit can be renewed and an electronic B card can be granted, unless the CGRS would decide in the meantime on the cessation or revocation of the status according to Aliens Act, Article 55/3 or 55/3/1, or in case the applicant decided to renounce to the protection status. Moreover, the Immigration Office can formally request the CGRS to decide on the cessation or revocation of the international protection status. In that case, the electronic B card will not be granted but the electronic A card will be renewed pending a final decision on the cessation or revocation. Free legal is provided.

Withdrawal of the status: The Immigration Office can formally request the CGRS to decide on the cessation or revocation of the international protection status.

The Immigration Office – International Protection Follow-Up Unit (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the **cessation** of the refugee status during the timeframe of the temporary residence permit - 5 years (Aliens Act, Article 49(2)).

The Immigration Office (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the **revocation** of the refugee status during 10 years counting from the lodging of the application of international protection in two cases. Firstly, when the person should have been excluded from refugee status based on articles 1D,1E or 1F of the Geneva Convention or who were instigators of or participated in any way in the crimes and acts listed under article 1F of the Geneva Convention. Secondly, when the person was granted international protection based on misrepresentation or omission of facts or on false or forged documents which were decisive for the granting of the international protection status or when the personal conduct demonstrates afterwards that he or she does not fear persecution (Aliens Act, Article 49(2)).

The Immigration Office (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the revocation of the refugee status without time

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limit in two cases. Firstly, when the person – having been convicted by a final judgement of a particularly serious crime, constitutes a danger to the society. Secondly, when there are reasonable grounds to consider the person a danger to national security (Aliens Act, Article 49(2)).

The CGRS has 60 working days to decide on the request (not binding time-limit).

The Aliens Act, Article 49(2) underlines that the fact that the CGRS received new elements susceptible to trigger revocation or cessation in itself does not lead to the re-examination of the international protection status. This should be expressly requested.

The CGRS protection officer receives guidance and support from the CGRS Legal Department, which has a reference person of status end.

The Aliens Law, Article 57/6/7(2) notes that as a main rule, the CGRS invites the person for an interview to present the arguments in favour of maintaining the status.

However, it notes that in case of an eventual cessation, the person is either offered a personal interview or the possibility to put forward the arguments in written.

In addition, the personal interview or the possibility to submit arguments in written might be omitted, when the review is based on a request from the Immigration Office (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) as the person should have been excluded from refugee status based on articles 1D, 1E or 1F of the Geneva Convention or who were instigators of or participated in any way in the crimes and acts listed under article 1F of the Geneva convention when the person was convicted by a final judgement for a particularly serious offense, the person constitutes a danger for the society or when there are reasonable grounds to consider the person a danger to national security.

At the level of implementation regulation, the Royal Decree on the CGRS procedure, Article 35/2 notes that the CGRS is not obliged to invite the person for an interview, but it may organise one or request the person to submit the reasons for maintaining international protection.

Grounds for withdrawal of the status:

The CGRS may revoke the refugee status, when:

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- the person was convicted by a final judgement for a particularly serious offense; the person constitutes a danger for the society;
- there are reasonable grounds to consider the person a danger to national security.

The CGRS revokes the refugee status when:

- The person should have been excluded from refugee status based on articles 1D,1E or 1F of the Geneva Convention or who were instigators of or participated in any way in the crimes and acts listed under article 1F of the Geneva Convention.
- The person was recognised as refugee based on facts that were altered or concealed, due to false declarations, false or falsified documents, which were decisive for the recognition of the refugee status;
- The person subsequently behaves in a manner which demonstrates an absence of fear of persecution (for example, travel to the country of origin or contact with the authorities of the country of origin).

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status:

The decision on cessation or revocation ends the international protection status, but it is not automatically accompanied by a return decision, and it does also not automatically end the residence rights.

While the CGRS decides on ending the protection status, the Immigration Office decides separately on the residence rights. If the Immigration Office end the residence rights, it can also decide separately again on issuing an order to leave the territory. The decision to end the status is done on an individual basis, case-by-case, also for family members. The CGRS only examines whether a refugee might still qualify for subsidiary protection, before ending the status, but it will not examine the conditions for any other forms of possible stay.

The person can launch an appeal within 30 calendar days from the notification of the decision at the CALL, which has a suspensive effect. The CALL can confirm, reverse or annul the decision, based on the elements in the dossier.

When the CGRS decides on ending the status (or the CALL confirms the decision), it informs the Immigration Office, International Protection Follow-Up Unit, which reviews the residence rights.

In case of cessation of the status, the residence rights can – in principle - only be ended for as long as the person has a residence permit of limited duration

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(electronic A card) (Aliens Law, Article 11(3)). In case the person has a residence permit of unlimited duration or a more durable residence permit (status of settlement or long-term residence status), the residence rights can only be ended for reasons of public order or national security (Aliens Law, Article 21, 22 or 44bis).

In case the CGRS decided to revoke the status although it was not obliged, the residence rights can – in principle - only be ended for as long as the person has a residence permit of limited duration (electronic A card) (Aliens Act, Article 11(3)). In case the person has a residence permit of unlimited duration or a more durable residence permit (status of settlement or long-term residence status), the residence rights can only be ended for reasons of public order or national security (Aliens Act, Article 21, 22 or 44bis).

In case the CGRS was obliged to revoke the status, the residence rights can be ended at any time (Aliens Act, Article 11(3) or 18(3)).

Before the decision on ending the residence rights, the Immigration Act obliges the Immigration Office to consider the nature and solidity of the person's family ties, the length of stay in Belgium, as well as family, cultural and social ties with the country of origin. If the decision on ending the residence rights is accompanied by an order to leave the territory, the Immigration Office is obliged to consider the best interest of the child, the family life and the medical situation.

Therefore, when considering ending the residence rights, the person concerned is being informed and given the possibility to bring forward any evidence or element deemed necessary in favour of keeping the residence rights or which can influence the decision. This is typically done through a questionnaire, assessing language skills, family situation in Belgium and elsewhere, social and cultural ties, professional situation and training, reasons why the person cannot return to the country of origin or habitual residence, etc.

The Immigration Office's decision on ending the residence rights and the order to leave the territory can be appealed at the CALL, but this does – in principle - not have a suspensive effect.

Subsidiary protection status

Legal provisions relating to review, renewal and withdrawal of refugee status: In accordance with the Aliens Act, Subsidiary Protection can be reviewed

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and renewed under Article 57/6/7, and it can be withdrawn under Article 49/2 and Articles 55/3 or 55/3/1.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits: Aliens Act, Article 49/2:

- First: 1 year (electronic A card)
- Subsequent: 2+2 years (electronic A card)
- Unlimited: after 5 years (electronic B card)

A recipient of subsidiary protection will receive a 1-year residence permit, extendable and renewable if the subsidiary protection status has not been ceased or revoked or the applicant did not renounce to the protection status.

Review of the status: A systematic review of all decisions on the recognition of international protection does not take place.

Renewal of the status: For the first 5 years, the electronic A card, is being renewed automatically. After the first 5 years an electronic B card can be granted unless the CGRS would decide in the meantime on the cessation or revocation of the status according to Aliens Act, Article 55/5 or 55/5/1, or in case the applicant decided to renounce to the protection status. Moreover, the Immigration Office can formally request the CGRS to decide on the cessation or revocation of the international protection status. In that case, the electronic B card will not be granted but the electronic A card will be renewed pending a final decision on the cessation or revocation.

Withdrawal of the status: The Immigration Office can formally request the CGRS to decide on the cessation or revocation of the international protection status.

The Immigration Office – International Protection Follow-Up Unit (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the cessation of the subsidiary protection status during the timeframe of the temporary residence permit - 5 years (Aliens Act, Article 49/2(2)).

The Immigration Office (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the revocation of the subsidiary protection status for 10 years counting from the lodging of the application of international protection in two cases. Firstly, when the person has committed one or more crimes outside the scope of article 55/4 (1) which would be punishable by imprisonment had they been committed in Belgium and if the person left his or

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her country of origin solely to avoid sanctions resulting from those crimes. Secondly, when the person was granted international protection based on misrepresentation or omission of facts or on false or forged documents which were decisive for the granting of the international protection status, or when the personal conduct demonstrates afterwards that he or she does not face a real risk of suffering serious harm (Aliens Law, Article 49/2(4) read in conjunction with Article 55/5/1).

The Immigration Office (or the competent Minister or State Secretary) may request the CGRS to decide on the revocation of the subsidiary protection status without time limit when the person should have been excluded from subsidiary protection status where there are serious reasons for considering that the person committed a crime against peace, a war crime or a crime against humanity, as defined in the international instruments drawn up to make provision in respect of such crimes; has committed a serious crime; has been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations as set out in the Preamble and Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations or constitutes a danger to the society or national security (Aliens Law, Article 49/2(4)).

The CGRS has 60 working days to decide on the request (not binding time-limit).

The Aliens Act, Article 49/2(4) underlines that the fact that the CGRS received new elements susceptible to trigger revocation or cessation in itself does not lead to the re-examination of the international protection status. This should be expressly requested.

The approach and procedural steps are similar to that of refugees. The possibilities to access free legal aid during the procedures are similar to that of procedures cessation or revocation of refugee status.

Grounds for withdrawal of the status:

Aliens Act, Article 55/5/1 notes that the CGRS may revoke subsidiary protection, when the beneficiary committed one or more crimes outside of the scope of exclusion in the country of origin, which would be punishable by prison in Belgium, and the person left the country of origin to avoid punishment for these acts.

The CGRS revokes subsidiary protection, when:

- The person should have been excluded from subsidiary protection, as the person committed a crime against peace, war crime or crime against

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humanity; was found to be guilty for acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN; committed a serious crime; or the persons constitutes a danger to the society or national security.

The person was recognised as refugee based on facts that were altered or concealed, due to false declarations, false or falsified documents, which were decisive for the recognition of the refugee status; or the person subsequently behaves in a manner which demonstrates an absence of fear of persecution (for example, travel to the country of origin or contact with the authorities of the country of origin).

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status: Similar to that of refugees.

National forms of protection

Legal provisions relating to the review, renewal and withdrawal of national forms of protection: Articles 9bis, 9ter, 13 and 61/14-61/25 Article 13 of the Aliens Act provide for the review, renewal and withdrawal of residence permits granted based on national grounds for the right to stay.

Length of the first and subsequent residence permits:

A person granted residence permit on a national ground receives a 1-year residence permit in practice (2-year, in certain cases of an authorisation to stay for medical reasons), extendable and renewable if the required conditions are met. After 5 years, a residence permit on the grounds of medical reasons and on the grounds of statelessness will have an unlimited validity period.

Review of the status: The competent authority to review the status of a person granted residence permit on a national ground (checking whether the reasons for granting this right still exist) is the Immigration Office.

Renewal of the status: The competent authority to renew residence permits granted on the grounds of a national form of protection is the Immigration Office. The beneficiary is responsible for initiating the renewal by applying at the municipal administration of the place where they reside, between 30 to 45 days prior to the date the residence permit is set to expire. Applicants must present documentation to prove that they satisfy the conditions for the renewal of the residence permit. The municipality will then forward the application to the Immigration Office for its examination. When the status is refused, an appeal is

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possible to the CALL. The general rules apply for obtaining legal aid.

Withdrawal of the status: The status can be withdrawn by the Immigration Office. When the status is withdrawn, an appeal is possible to the CALL. The general rules apply for obtaining legal aid. In the case of an authorisation to stay for medical reasons, the right to be heard is exercised: the person concerned is given the opportunity in writing to be heard and to communicate important elements in writing to the Immigration Office and to defend the retention of the status.

Grounds for the withdrawal of the status: The status can be withdrawn (refused to be renewed or refused to be extended) by the Immigration Office if the conditions for its issuance do not continue. Specifically for the authorisation to stay for medical reasons, if the person concerned poses a threat to public order or if the Immigration Office discovers that the person concerned has committed fraud or obtains other information that calls the residence permit into question, the status shall be revoked.

Consequences of the withdrawal of the status: A return decision should be taken together with the withdrawal. If the foreigner esteems they have the right to residence based on another

Content of protection

Overview

Legal provisions detailing the content of protection are the following:

Aliens Law, Article 49(1) – residence permit for refugees, Aliens Law, Article 49(2) – residence permit for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

Ministerial decree of 15 September 2017 amending the ministerial decree of 19 April 2014 concerning the issuance of passports | Arrêté ministériel du 17 septembre 2017 modifiant l'arrêté ministériel du 19 avril 2014 concernant la délivrance de passeports

Royal Decree of 2 September 2018 implementing the law of 9 May 2018 relating to the employment of foreign nationals in a special residence situation | Arrêté royal du 2 septembre 2018 portant exécution de la loi du 9 mai 2018 relative à

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l'occupation de ressortissants étrangers se trouvant dans une situation particulière de séjour

Provision of information on the content of protection

Beneficiaries of protection receive information on their rights and obligations when granted refugee status or subsidiary protection. This information is provided through brochures that explain the rights and responsibilities associated with their status. The brochures for recognised refugees and those granted subsidiary protection include information such as residing and working in Belgium, family reunification, the duty to cooperate, the right to travel, the risk of losing refugee status upon returning to the country of origin and procedures for obtaining travel documents. This information is provided by CGRS and is referenced in the notification letter sent to beneficiaries. The brochures are available on the CGRS website, and staff at reception centres and lawyers also provide this information during the asylum procedure and in reception centres.

Beneficiaries of protection receive information about integration activities during their asylum procedure and in reception centres. The timing and content of integration-related information may vary. For example, in Flanders, integration courses are available only after positive recognition, while in Wallonia, they can begin during the procedure. Basic information about integration, such as employment, education and other services, is provided during the stay at reception centres. This information is also available on the Fedasil website. Information is typically provided by reception centre staff, and integration-related activities may also be organised in reception facilities.

Information about employment is provided during the asylum procedure and in reception centres. While there is no specific set time for when this information is provided, beneficiaries are usually informed early due to the ability to start working after 4 months of their asylum application. The information covers when individuals are allowed to work, the necessary requirements and relevant organisations that can assist with employment. This information is provided by reception centre staff and is also available on the Fedasil website.

Beneficiaries of protection receive information about education during their asylum procedure and in reception centres. For minors, school enrolment is arranged as quickly as possible. For adults, early information about language

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courses is provided to ensure prompt enrolment. Additional information on other educational opportunities may be provided based on the individual's needs or requests. This information is provided by reception centre staff and is also available on the Fedasil website.

Information about healthcare is provided to beneficiaries during their stay in the reception centre. Upon arrival at the Fedasil arrival centre, beneficiaries receive an information leaflet about medical services. This information is then further elaborated during their stay in the reception centre. The medical service and other healthcare-related details are explained by the reception centre staff and are also available on the Fedasil website.

Information on how to obtain a residence permit is provided by reception centre staff upon arrival at the centre. This includes an explanation of the asylum procedure, necessary steps, required documents and available legal support. More detailed information can be obtained through a lawyer. This information is also available on the Fedasil website.

Residence permits

Refugees:

Authority responsible for delivering the residence permit: After the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) sends a positive decision recognising refugee status, the municipalities are then responsible to issue the residence permit to the beneficiary.

Length of first and subsequent residence permits:

First: **5 years,** electronic A card valid for 5 years from the moment of the final decision granting refugee status.

Subsequent: **unlimited**, electronic B card, unless the CGRS would decide cessation or revocation of the status according to Aliens Law, Article 55/3 or 55/3/1, or in case the applicant decided to renounce to her/his protection status.

Long term residence status, upon fulfilling following conditions:

1. having stayed legally and continuously in Belgium for five years immediately prior to the submission of the relevant application (half of the time between lodging an asylum application and the issuance of residence

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permit is taken into consideration, or the whole period is counted, if it exceeds 18 months); The identity of the recognised refugee must be established on the basis of the recognition certificate by the CGRS. (While a person with subsidiary protection status must prove his identity on the basis of a valid passport - see hereunder).
2. possess stable and regular resources which are sufficient to maintain themselves and the members of the family, without recourse to the social assistance system of the Member State concerned. For 2025 the required amount was set at 1.038 euro per month, plus 346 euro per dependent person.
3. sickness insurance in respect of all risks normally covered in Belgium.

The Immigration Office has 5 months to take a decision on a request for long-term residence permit. In the absence of a decision after 5 months, or upon receiving a positive decision, applicants will be included in the civil register and receive an electronic L-card with a validity of 10 years.

Procedure for delivering the residence permit (including timelines): Once a beneficiary receives their positive decision by post on the outcome of their asylum application, they must request a residence permit, an A card, from the municipality of the region in which they are residing in. To apply, they must present the certificate of the CGRS (applicants receive this approximately after 1 month from the notification of the positive decision), and a recent standard photo taken within the previous six months. Additionally, they must pay a fee of 20 euros.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Authority responsible for delivering the residence permit: Following a positive decision by the CGRS granting subsidiary protection status, the municipalities are then responsible to issue the residence permit to the beneficiary.

Length of first and subsequent residence permits:

- First: 1-year, electronic A card.
- Subsequent: 2 times, 2 years. Renewed automatically unless the status has been ceased or revoked or the applicant renounced the status. Renewal of the residence card must be demanded at the commune between the 45 and 30 days before its expiration date.

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- Unlimited: electronic B card, after 5 years from the lodging of the application, unless the CGRS would decide cessation or revocation of the status according to Article 55/5 or 55/5/1 of the Aliens Act or the applicant renounced to the status.
- Long term residence status, upon fulfilling of following conditions:
- having stayed legally and continuously within Belgium for five years immediately prior to the submission of the relevant application (half of the time between lodging an asylum application and the issuance of resident permit is taken into consideration, or the whole period, if this exceeds 18 months). The person with subsidiary protection status must prove his identity on the basis of a valid passport;
- possess stable and regular resources which are sufficient to maintain themselves and the members of the family, without recourse to the social assistance system of the Member State concerned. For 2025 the required amount is set at 1,038 euro per month, plus 346 euro per dependent person.
- sickness insurance in respect of all risks normally covered in Belgium.
- Not belonging to category that is excluded (foreign student, applicant international protection, applicant and beneficiary temporary protection)
- not posing a danger to public order or national security.

The Immigration Office has 5 months to take a decision on a request for long-term residence permit. In the absence of a decision in five months, or upon receiving a positive decision, applicants will be included in the civil register and receive an electronic L-card with a validity of 10 years.

Procedure for delivering the residence permit (including timelines):
Once a beneficiary receives their positive decision by post on the outcome of their asylum application, they must request a residence permit, an A card, from the municipality of the region in which they are residing in. To apply, they must present the certificate of the CGRS (applicants receive this approximately after 1 month from the notification of the positive decision), and a recent standard photo taken within the previous six months. Additionally, they must pay a fee of 20 euros.

Travel documents

Refugees:

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Authority responsible for delivering the travel document: The municipalities are responsible for delivering the travel document.

Validity period of the travel document: An alien’s passport (Blue passport) with a validity of two years is issued to beneficiaries of refugee status.

Procedure for delivering the travel document (including the necessity to pay any fees): Beneficiaries must apply for an aliens passport in person at the municipal administrative service office where they reside by presenting their residence permit and a recent photo. There is a fee (61 euro - regular procedure, excluding municipality tax - for adults, 41 euro - regular procedure, excluding municipality tax - for minors) and the passport is issued within one to two weeks. It must be collected in person from the municipality.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Authority responsible for delivering the travel document: The municipalities are responsible for delivering the travel document.

Validity period of the travel document: The foreigners’ passport is valid for two years.

Procedure for delivering the travel document (including the necessity to pay any fees): Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection may be issued a ‘foreigners’ passport’ only in the case where they can prove that they are unable to obtain one from their national authorities, by presenting a certificate of impossibility. Tibetans and Palestinians are exempt from the requirement to submit this certificate. The certificate is issued by the CGRS when It has been established that the authorities in the beneficiary’s’ country of origin are directly responsible for their need for international protection. The certificate is not granted when subsidiary protection was granted due the general security situation in the country of origin. A beneficiary may apply for a foreigner’s passport at the municipality where they are registered.

Freedom of movement

Beneficiaries of international protection are allowed to freely move within Belgium.

Access to employment and employment-related education

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Right to access the labour market: Beneficiaries have free access to the labour market without restrictions. People with subsidiary protection require a ‘carte professionnelle’ (professional card) only in the case they wish to work as an entrepreneur. Refugees who wish to be self employed do not require a professional card.

Administrative steps for employment: Status holders must have a valid residence permit in order to work.

Access to employment-related educational opportunities for adults and vocational training (including training courses for upgrading professional skills): Applicants and beneficiaries of international protection can enrol for vocational training from the moment the are allowed to work. For this, they can contact VDAB in Flanders and Brussels for Dutch-speaking training courses, Bruxelles Formation (Brussels) and Forem (Brussels and Wallonia) for French-speaking training courses.

Access to education

Minors’ right and conditions to access education (pre-school, primary school, secondary school, post-secondary and tertiary education): Children have the right to go to school and are obliged to receive schooling from 6 years old until their 18th birthday.

Additional support provided to minors for education, including access to grants and loans:

Classes with adapted course packages and teaching methods, the so-called “bridging classes” (in the French speaking Community schools) and “reception classes” (in the Flemish Community schools), are organised for children of newly arrived migrants, a category which includes children of beneficiaries of international protection. Once ready children are integrated in regular classes.

Adults’ right and conditions to access education: Adults with an international protection status have, based on their legal residence, access to education: they can register for Dutch or French language courses, and they also have access to university and college programs.

Additional support provided to adults for education, including access to grants and loans: Language courses, preparatory programs, and guidance are

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available to facilitate the transition to education.

Access to procedures for recognition of qualifications and validation of skills

The recognition system includes level recognition (recognition of the level of study, but not the field) and specific recognition (recognition of the specific field of study). There is a specific track for medical and paramedical professions. The procedure is different for the Flemish and for the French speaking community, and there is also a different procedure for the German-speaking community. In Brussels, there is the choice between the French or the Flemish procedure. The detailed description of the procedures can be found here on the mydiploma.be website. Beneficiaries of international protection are exempted from paying the costs of the procedure. There are also several alternatives for skills recognition for those without diploma – these can be found on the mydiploma.be website here.

Social security and social assistance

Refugees:

Conditions to access social security and social assistance: Status holders have access to social security and social assistance under the same conditions as Belgian nationals. They can apply for welfare whilst still residing in a reception centre, however they will only begin receiving it after leaving the shelter. To receive welfare, beneficiaries must have a habitual residence, a commune in Belgium, they must be an adult who is prepared to work and must lack sufficient means of subsistence.

Special social assistance for refugees: There is no special social assistance foreseen for refugees at the national level.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Conditions to access social security and social assistance: same as for refugees.

Special social assistance for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: There is no special social assistance foreseen for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection at the national level.

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Healthcare

Conditions to access public healthcare, including healthcare covered (core or extended access): Beneficiaries of international protection can get health insurance as soon as their status is confirmed by the CGRS. The beneficiary will have to show the electronic A or B card or the Annex 15 with proof of recognition by the CGRS if the electronic card is not issued yet.

Access to accommodation

Refugees:

Conditions and restrictions to access accommodation as a refugee: Applicants granted international protection, or another type of legal stay may stay in the reception facility for two months. Fedasil may further prolong the provision of material reception in cases when the beneficiary can prove that they have effectively tried to obtain housing but are faced with challenges beyond one’s control (for example illness, vulnerability or having a very large family), One reception facility specialises in accompanying vulnerable beneficiaries in need of additional support to find housing: they can remain here for six months.

Type of accommodation facilities available to refugees: There is no specific facility foreseen for recognised refugees.

National dispersal mechanism for refugees: There is no national dispersal mechanism in place.

Additional support provided for accommodation: The Public Centres for Social Welfare of the Municipalities may provide social assistance to refugees.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Conditions and restrictions to access accommodation as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection: Same as for refugees. Applicants granted international protection, or another type of legal stay may stay in the reception facility for two months. Fedasil may further prolong the provision of material reception in cases when the beneficiary can prove that they have effectively tried to obtain housing but are faced with challenges beyond one’s control (for example illness, vulnerability or having a very large family), One reception facility specialises in accompanying vulnerable beneficiaries in need of additional

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support to find housing: they can remain here for six months.

Type of accommodation facilities available to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: There is no specific facility foreseen for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

National dispersal mechanism for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: There is no national dispersal mechanism in place.

Additional support provided for accommodation: The Public Centres for Social Welfare of the Municipalities may provide social assistance to refugees.

Access to integration measures

Refugees:

Conditions to access integration measures: Status holders above the age of 18 are able to access integration measures as in all three regions in Belgium as it is compulsory for beneficiaries of international protection to follow a mandatory civic integration programme. Specific conditions may differ at regional level.

Compulsory participation in integration measures (if so, indicate in which integration measures/activities, accessibility, cost and consequences for not participating in the activities): Participation in integration courses to receive a civic integration certificate is mandatory for beneficiaries of international protection in all 3 regions of Belgium. Whilst the integration strategies in each region differ, in general, all programmes contain language courses, civic education and vocational training.

Brief description of the integration measures in place for refugees (hyperlink to the scheme, programme or website for additional information), including language courses, civil orientation, integration programmes and vocational training: Information on integration measures in Flanders is available on the website of the Agency for Civic Integration. Further information specific to integration in Wallonia is available here. For Brussels, information can be consulted on the City of Brussels website.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Same as for refugees.

Family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection

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The rules on family reunification with beneficiaries of international protection changed substantially with a recent legislative amendment on 18 July 2025. The rules on family reunification with beneficiaries of subsidiary protection changed and this group is no longer being treated the same as refugees with regard to family reunification.

Refugees:

Right to family reunification for refugees: More favourable rules apply for family members of refugees compared to family members of other third country nationals. Family members of refugees applying for family reunification do not need to pay the retribution (fee) and are excluded from the integration requirements (before and after admission). Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection need to fulfil the general requirements and awaiting period of two years was established, before they can apply for family reunification.

Time period for which exceptions apply for refugees: If the application for family reunification is introduced in the six months following the decision granting international protection and if the family ties precede the entry of the foreigner, family members of a person who was granted refugee status do not have to provide proof for fulfilling the requirements related to the accommodation, healthcare insurance and financial resources.

Eligible family members: Four categories of persons may join a refugee in Belgium:

a spouse or registered partner including same-sex partners. Both partners must be over the age of 21. The spouse or partner must come and live with the beneficiary in Belgium. Polygamous marriages are excluded, only one of the wives can join the beneficiary.

- minor child (below age of 18) of the sponsor or of the spouse.
- a dependent, unmarried child aged 18 or older with a disability.
- the parents of an unaccompanied minor benefiting from refugee status. In this case, the proof of sufficient, stable and regular means of subsistence, adequate housing and health insurance are not required.

Conditions for family reunification: If the application for family reunification is introduced in 6 months following the decision granting refugee status and if the family ties precede the entry of the foreigner, family members of a third country national who were granted refugee status do not have to prove the

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requirements concerning the accommodation, the healthcare insurance and financial resources.

In case the application for family reunification is not done within this six-month timeframe, or if the family ties or relationship did not exist in the country of origin the general conditions for family reunification need to be met:

- The sponsor must have an accommodation suitable for the size of the family;
- The sponsor must have healthcare insurance, covering the sponsor and the family members;
- The sponsor must have sufficient, stable and regular means of subsistence, to cover the needs of the sponsor as well as those of the family members to avoid them becoming a burden on the public authorities. The level of income is set at a net amount equal to 110% of the average guaranteed minimum monthly income + 10% per dependent person in Belgium: this amounts to 2.323,07 euro/month. + 232 euro per dependent person in Belgium.

Family members of refugees are always exempt from paying a fee, regardless on whether the application was submitted within six months.

Every adult applicant needs to include in the application an extract from the judicial records of their file. In addition, every applicant needs to prove not to suffer from any of the diseases that may endanger public health.

Brief description of the procedure to follow:

Applications are lodged by family members at Belgian embassies or consulates in their country of residence. Once the application is received with all supporting documents, the Immigration Office has a 9 months-period to take a decision on the application (extendable by 3 more months, twice).

Persons authorised to stay in Belgium for reasons of family reunification with a third country national must present themselves to the municipal administration of the place of residence within 8 working days. They are registered in the National Register (Foreigners Register) and are issued a residence card (“A-type”) of limited duration. The residence permit of the family member may be withdrawn or not renewed if the requirements are no longer met before the autonomous stay is granted. This may happen, for example, if the condition on sufficient, stable and regular resources is no longer met or if a marriage dissolves

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(the residence permit will not be withdrawn if the separation resulted from domestic violence). The residence permit may also be withdrawn when false or misleading information was used during the family reunification process or fraud was committed, or where there are founded reasons to suspect that the marriage, partnership or adoption has been concluded to allow the person concerned to enter or remain in Belgium. Since the residence of the family members depends on the residence of the sponsor, the residence permit may also be withdrawn or not renewed if the sponsor loses the residence permit, for example when the international protection status of the sponsor is ended.

An application for family reunification can be rejected on grounds of public order or national security.

Reunified family members' rights: Refugees have initially only a limited residence right, which can become unlimited. During the first five years, the residence permit of the family member is of limited duration (one year) and conditional. After this five-year period, and if the sponsor has acquired (by then) a permit of unlimited duration, a residence permit of unlimited duration is also granted to the family member.

It is common that the family member of a beneficiary of international protection, once arrived in Belgium, applies for international protection as they may also be entitled to it. The application will be examined with the content of the asylum application of the sponsor. If the application for international protection is rejected, the family member will keep his or her residence right based on family reunification.

Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Right to family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection:

Time period for which exceptions apply for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection: There are no more favourable conditions applied for the family reunification of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. They have to fulfil the general conditions for family reunification, like any other sponsor, and a two-year waiting period applies for them, before they can launch the procedure.

Eligible family members: Three categories of persons may join a beneficiary of subsidiary protection in Belgium:

- a spouse or registered partner including same-sex partners. Both partners must be over the age of 21. The spouse or partner must come and live with

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the beneficiary in Belgium. Polygamous marriages are excluded, only one of the wives can join the beneficiary.
- minor child (below age of 18) of the sponsor or of the spouse.
- a dependent, unmarried child aged 18 or older with a disability.

Conditions for family reunification: A two-year waiting period applies, before they can launch the procedure. Then, the general conditions of family reunification need to be met:

- The sponsor must have an accommodation suitable for the size of the family;
- The sponsor must have healthcare insurance, covering the sponsor and the family members;
- The sponsor must have sufficient, stable and regular means of subsistence, to cover the needs of the sponsor as well as those of the family members to avoid them becoming a burden on the public authorities. The level of income is set at a net amount equal to 110% of the average guaranteed minimum monthly income + 10% per dependent person in Belgium: this amounts to 2.323,07 euro/month. + 232 euro per dependent person in Belgium.

A fee must be paid when starting the procedure.

Brief description of the procedure to follow: Applications are lodged by family members at Belgian embassies or consulates in their country of residence. Once the application is received with all supporting documents, the Immigration Office has a 9 months-period to take a decision on the application (extendable by 3 more months, twice).

Persons authorised to stay in Belgium for reasons of family reunification with a third country national must present themselves to the municipal administration of the place of residence within 8 working days. They are registered in the National Register (Foreigners Register) and are issued a residence card (“A-type”) of limited duration. The residence permit of the family member may be withdrawn or not renewed if the requirements are no longer met before the autonomous stay is granted. This may happen, for example, if the condition on sufficient, stable and regular resources is no longer met or if a marriage dissolves (the residence permit will not be withdrawn if the separation resulted from domestic violence). The residence permit may also be withdrawn when false or misleading information was used during the family reunification process or fraud was committed, or where there are founded reasons to suspect that the

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marriage, partnership or adoption has been concluded to allow the person concerned to enter or remain in Belgium. Since the residence of the family members depends on the residence of the sponsor, the residence permit may also be withdrawn or not renewed if the sponsor loses the residence permit, for example when the international protection status of the sponsor is ended.

An application for family reunification can be rejected on grounds of public order or national security.

Reunified family members' rights: Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have initially only a limited residence right, which can become unlimited. After a five-year period, and if the sponsor has acquired (by then) a permit of unlimited duration, a residence permit of unlimited duration is also granted to the family member.

It is common that the family member of a beneficiary of international protection, once arrived in Belgium, applies for international protection as they may also be entitled to it. The application will be examined with the content of the asylum application of the sponsor. If the application for international protection is rejected, the family member will keep his or her residence right based on family reunification

Right to family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection: In Belgium, more favourable rules apply for family members of refugees compared to family members of other third country nationals. Family members of refugees applying for family reunification do not need to pay the retribution (fee) and are excluded from the integration requirements (before and after admission). Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection need to fulfil the general requirements and awaiting period of two years was established, before they can apply for family reunification.

Conditions for family reunification:

A two-year waiting period was established for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, before they apply for family reunification. They need to fulfil the general conditions/

Brief description of the procedure:

Reunified family members' rights (in particular, length of first and subsequent residence permits, access to integration programmes/measures):

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If a family member applies for international protection after arrival

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