

Belgium

September 2021

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

The number of **asylum applications** is gradually **catching up with** 2019 levels (-20% cp 2019). The Belgian government is increasing **reception capacity** that is currently reaching saturation (90%).

The **Alien's Office** and the office of the **Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons** are recruiting **700 additional staff** to speed up the processing of claims.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	65,033
Asylum-seekers	29,305
Stateless persons	1,264
Total population of concern	96,542

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syrian Arab Rep.	17,693	Afghanistan	4,689
Iraq	15,515	Palestina	3,275
Afghanistan	4,689	Syrian Arab Rep.	2,165

*Data source: UNHCR 2020 Global Trends Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR advocated for registration, access to asylum and reception conditions to remain effective even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inclusion of persons of concern: People benefitting from a legal stay (incl. asylum-seekers and refugees) are included in the general COVID-19 vaccination plan. Mobile vaccination teams have reached stateless and undocumented persons.

Communication with Communities: UNHCR developed a Help Page with a link to COVID-19 information and a Covid guide for asylum seekers and refugees and remained reachable by phone and email.

More information: for COVID-19 specific information and latest updates, please visit [this information website](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

Code of Migration

UNHCR provided recommendations on the new Code of Migration to the Consultative Commission.

Study day on buddying

On 1 April UNHCR organized with Belgian cities a study day on buddying as a complementary integration tool for refugees and newcomers. [Learn more](#)

Children

Numbers of unaccompanied or separated children significantly increased over the summer (+60% in 3 months). NGOs raised concerns on access to reception conditions and support services.

INTEGRATION IS BETTER TOGETHER



Binta, a young refugee from Guinea wanted to change her career orientation. Through an integration programme she met her buddy Georgine, an encounter which resulted in a trust-based and friendly mentoring relationship. [Read story](#)

Key Priorities

- **Protection (monitoring) / Asylum:** Belgium has a solid asylum system. After a decrease in the number of applications for asylum due to the COVID-19 situation, the number of applications has increased again significantly. Access to the asylum procedure remained guaranteed throughout the pandemic and access to reception has been re-established.
- **Resettlement and Complementary Pathways:** Belgium has committed to resettle 1,400 persons in 2021. It is expected that this objective will not be reached, due to the saturation of the reception network. UNHCR continues to advocate for additional resettlement pledges and complementary pathways opportunities.
- **Family reunification:** In 2020, COVID-19 measures have significantly impacted family reunification. UNHCR monitors the situation, is in regular contact with the authorities, comments draft laws and supports individual cases.
- **Integration:** Following the 2020 “Buddies with Refugees” multimedia campaign, in April 2021 UNCHR organised with the federations of cities and municipalities a study day on buddying as a complementary tool for social inclusion and cohesion, in light of integration challenges faced by refugees in Belgian society.
- **Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance:** UNHCR further implemented the Refugee Committee project which aims at establishing refugee collective representation vis-à-vis authorities and other (integration) stakeholders in Brussels. The six refugee committees established since 2019 go through a training and mentoring phase aimed at preparing their future representation and advocacy roles and eventually their self-reliance and autonomy.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR maintains regular and constructive interactions and coordination with relevant stakeholders (authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, lawyers, academic sector). UNHCR collaborates with two partners: NANSEN (which provides legal support to lawyers and asylum-seekers on the territory and in detention) and Myria, the Federal Migration Centre (which formulates policy advice and provides legal support to beneficiaries of IP, lawyers, and case workers to facilitate family reunification).
- **External Engagement:** The Public Information unit raises awareness about the situation of refugees in Belgium and worldwide to the general public. On World Refugee Day 2021, the unit supported the production of the **Global ‘Hero’ video about Yonas Kinde**, a track and field athlete, former refugee who acquired Luxembourg nationality, to illustrate the power of inclusion in health, education and sport.

Statelessness

- Belgium is party to the 1954 and 1961 statelessness Conventions. Nationality law contains solid safeguards. Statelessness determination is the competency of tribunals and has been recently centralized.
- Despite repeated commitments by successive governments, no residence permit is automatically granted to recognized stateless persons, leaving many of them often *de facto* without rights.

UNHCR Presence in Belgium

Staff¹:

22 National Staff²

14 International Staff

Offices:

1 Multi-country Office in Brussels

¹ Covering the Representation for EU Affairs, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland and the Netherlands.

² 5 covering Belgium and Luxembourg

Financial information (28 September 2021)

Information relates to the Representation for EU Affairs, Belgium, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands and the liaison Offices to EASO and Frontex.

Financial requirements

USD 11.1 M

Funding gap
40%
4.5M



Funded
60%
6.6 M

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to the 2021 global programmes. Donors of USD 10 million or more are:

Norway | Sweden | Private donors Spain | Netherlands | Denmark | Private donors Korea | United Kingdom | Germany | Private donors Japan | Japan | France | Switzerland | Private donors Italy | Private donors Sweden | Ireland | Belgium | Italy | United States of America