

Belgium

February 2022

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

Asylum applications and the protection rate increased by more than 53 per cent and 43 per cent respectively in 2021 compared to 2020. Secondary movements remain a concern.

The **reception** network in Belgium is saturated. UNHCR is calling for access to appropriate reception conditions for asylum-seekers, until a final decision on their claim is taken.

POPULATION OF CONCERN*

Refugees	65,906
Asylum-seekers	22,516
Stateless persons	1159
Total population of concern	89,581

TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Syrian Arab Republic	18,493	Afghanistan	3,396
Iraq	5,094	State of Palestine	2,188
Afghanistan	4,619	Syrian Arab Republic	1,344

*Data source: UNHCR 2021 Mid-Year Statistical Report and UNHCR [data finder platform](#)

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Advocacy: UNHCR advocated for registration and access to asylum and reception conditions to remain effective during the pandemic.

Inclusion: People benefitting from a legal stay, including 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-19 guide for asylum-seekers and refugees and remained reachable by phone and e-mail.

For COVID-19 specific information and the latest updates in Belgium, please visit [this information website](#)

HIGHLIGHTS

Migration Code

In January, the Government adopted the main orientations of the Migration Code. UNHCR will continue to collaborate during the drafting of the legislative text.

Resettlement and legal pathways

Belgium pledged to resettle 1,250, 1,400 and 1,500 refugees in 2022, 2023 and 2024 respectively; expand support for the resettlement programme through community sponsorship; and uphold and expand other legal pathways, including family reunification and humanitarian visas. In December 2021, a humanitarian corridor programme targeting 250 persons was agreed upon with Community of Sant'Egidio.

Statelessness

Belgium has pledged to initiate the legal process to provide stateless persons who are unable to return the right of residence by 2022.

REUNITED AT LAST



In December 2021, a [video](#) and article were published telling the story of Yonas, a refugee from Eritrea, who was reunited with his wife and son in Belgium after years apart. Read their story [here](#).

Key Priorities

- **Asylum procedures:** Belgium has a solid asylum system. The number of asylum applications has increased again significantly after a decrease due to the COVID-19 situation, although access to asylum procedures remained open throughout the pandemic.
- **Reception:** The reception network is saturated and some asylum-seekers are not accommodated. UNHCR is calling for their access to appropriate reception conditions.
- **Family reunification:** In 2021, COVID-19 measures continued to impact family reunification though to a lesser extent than in 2020. UNHCR monitors the situation, is in contact with authorities, comments on draft laws and supports individual cases.
- **Resettlement and complementary pathways:** Belgium has committed to resettle 1,250 refugees in 2022. UNHCR advocates for additional resettlement pledges and complementary pathways opportunities.
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** Refugee representation in Brussels has expanded to nine refugee-led organizations (RLOs), which are building partnerships with local authorities and microfinance, banking, social services, integration and labour market stakeholders. UNHCR has handed over day-to-day management of the refugee empowerment project to refugees. Future RLOs formalization into Belgian ASBL will consolidate their self-reliance and autonomy.
- **Advocacy** messages contained in the [UNHCR Memorandum](#) from 2020 continue to be widely relayed. Specific attention will be devoted in 2022 to the upcoming legislative developments.
- **Detention monitoring:** Detention of asylum-seekers upon arrival at the border is largely systematic in practice. UNHCR's partner Nansen provides legal assistance to asylum-seekers in detention.

- **Capacity-building:** In November 2021, UNHCR organized an event with Plateforme Mineurs en Exil on education for refugee and asylum-seeking children.

Working with Partners

- UNHCR maintains regular interactions with relevant stakeholders, including authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, lawyers and academia. UNHCR signed partnerships with Nansen, which provides legal support to lawyers and asylum-seekers, and Myria, the Federal Migration Centre that formulates policy advice and provides legal support to beneficiaries of international protection, lawyers and case workers to facilitate family reunification.
- **External engagement:** UNHCR raises awareness about the situation of refugees in Belgium and worldwide to the general public. To generate empathy and increase public and political support for [family reunification](#), UNHCR produced a [video](#) and [article](#) about an Eritrean family reunited in Belgium. To highlight how a refugee family found a warm welcome in Belgium, UNHCR published a [web story](#) on a community sponsorship initiative.

Statelessness

- Belgium is party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, and nationality law contains relevant safeguards. Statelessness determination is the competency of tribunals. **No residence permit** is automatically granted to recognized stateless persons, leaving many often de facto without rights.

UNHCR Presence in Belgium

Staff:

26 National Staff
 17 International Staff
 3 Affiliated workforce

Offices:

1 Multi-country Office in Brussels

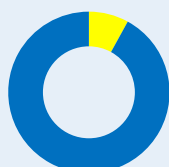
Financial information (22 February 2022)

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

Financial requirements

USD 11.1 M

Funding gap
 92%
 10.2 M



Funded
 8%
 0.9 M

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Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | Germany | Switzerland | Belgium | Ireland

Unearmarked contributions provide UNHCR with vital flexibility in determining how best to protect and assist persons of concern who are in the greatest need or at the greatest risk.