

# Belgium

September 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 for the next three years.

Between January and July 2022, 16,051 have **applied for asylum** in Belgium compared to 9,794 during the same period in 2021. The total recognition rate at first instance was of 43.5%.

The **reception network** is saturated. In 2022, hundreds of asylum seekers have not been accommodated. UNHCR calls for timely access to asylum procedure and adequate reception conditions for all applicants.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN as of 30 June 2022\*

Refugees	<b>127,831</b>
Asylum-seekers	<b>20,368</b>
Stateless persons	<b>1,190</b>

## TOP THREE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN\*

Refugees		Asylum-seekers	
Ukraine	<b>48,238</b>	Afghanistan	<b>5,302</b>
Syrian Arab Rep.	<b>20,086</b>	State of Palestine	<b>1,313</b>
Afghanistan	<b>7,049</b>	Syrian Arab Rep.	<b>1,089</b>

\*Source: UNHCR provisional mid-year 2022 data

## UKRAINE REFUGEE SITUATION RESPONSE

**As of 30 September, 56,464** refugees from Ukraine are currently present in Belgium.

**55,791** refugees from Ukraine registered for temporary protection in Belgium.

**Access to rights:** After some initial difficulties, the process of registration and issuance of temporary protection certificates at federal level and further registration in municipalities is well-functioning. Main challenges remain with integration related aspects (incl. accommodation, education, languages barrier and employment)..

**Community-Based Protection:** Belgium pioneered the use of community-based approaches to address access to services and local solutions for refugees from Ukrainian, thereby enabling refugees to become the primary actors, particularly with the use of special persons of contact and refugee-led organizations in the design and implementation of the response. Results are promising, notably as regards to solutions for persons with specific needs.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Migration Code

UNHCR has been closely consulting with the Government on the drafting of the new Migration Code and will continue its support through close consultations and legislative comments. The future reform aims at increasing legibility, legal security, and coherence among all the norms and laws constituting the national legal framework on asylum and migration.

### Ukrainian refugee consultations and intentions survey

In August, UNHCR conducted focus group discussions and a survey on Ukrainian refugees' intentions with 300 refugees. In addition, several community consultations have been organized on access to services and self-reliance related aspects, with government officials interacting directly with the community.

### Child protection

UNHCR continues to advocate for the interest of the child following the July 2018 Royal Decree allowing detention of families with minor children as a measure of last resort. UNHCR also advocates for providing all unaccompanied and separated children with a guardian.

## BASSEL AND STELLAS JOURNEY TO SAFETY



On the occasion of World Refugee Day, a [video](#) and [article](#) were published about the journey to safety of Syrian refugee Bassel and his dog Stella who were reunited in Belgium.

Read their story [here](#).

## Key Priorities

- **Advocacy** messages contained in the 2020 **UNHCR Memorandum** continue to be widely relayed.
- **Asylum procedures:** Belgium has a solid asylum system. In 2022, the number of asylum applications continued to increase. Between January and July 2022, 16,051 have applied for asylum compared to 9,794 during the same period in 2021. First instance asylum body is facing a significant backlog in decisions (16,593 persons are awaiting a decision).
- **Family reunification:** Strict criteria rule family reunification and the procedure is relatively long and costly. The issuance of humanitarian visas has increased but remains low compared to the needs.
- **Resettlement and complementary 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, labour, and education pathways. In 2021, Belgium agreed with Community of Sant'Egidio to a humanitarian corridor programme for 250 persons. UNHCR advocates for resumption of resettlement currently suspended because of the ongoing reception crisis, supports in finding solutions to housing challenges and in the development and of complementary pathways.
- **Community empowerment and self-reliance:** Refugee representation in Brussels has expanded to ten refugee-led organizations (RLOs), as consultative entities aiming at supporting relevant stakeholders in optimizing refugee integration. RLOs are also building partnerships notably with local authorities, microfinance, banking, social services, and labour market stakeholders. UNHCR has handed over day-to-day management of the refugee empowerment project to refugees.

- **Detention monitoring:** Detention of asylum-seekers upon arrival at the border is largely in practice. UNHCR's partner Nansen provides legal assistance to asylum-seekers in detention.

## 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 bring refugee voices to the fore, UNHCR shared the [story](#) of Bassel, a Syrian refugee who was reunited with his dog Stella and is now an established musician and co-owner of Stella coffee bar in Brussels.

## Statelessness

- Belgium is party to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, and nationality law contains relevant safeguards. Statelessness is determined by the judiciary. **No residence permit** is automatically granted to recognized stateless persons, leaving many often without rights. Belgium has pledged to initiate the legal process to create a legal status for stateless remedy this situation in 2022.

## UNHCR Presence in Belgium

### Staff:

23 National Staff  
 18 International Staff  
 1 Affiliated workforce

### Offices:

1 Multi-country Office in Brussels

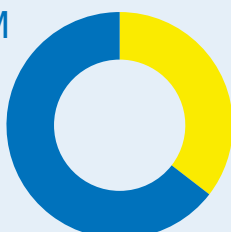
## Financial information\* (September 2022)

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

### Financial requirements

USD 11.4 M

Funding gap  
 61%  
 7 M



Funded  
 39%  
 4.4 M

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