

CHAPTER

BEL

BELGIUM

BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BELGIUM



Belgium 2018 Overview:Resettlement programme since: **2013** | Selection Missions: **Yes** | Dossier Submissions: **No****Resettlement Admission Targets for 2018**

Admission targets for UNHCR submissions:	1.150
Total Resettlement Admission Target:	1.150

Resettlement Admission Targets for 2019 (until 31/10/2019=planning cycle EU-funding)::

Admission targets for UNHCR submissions:	850
Total Resettlement Admission Target:	850

Regional Allocations for 2018:

Africa:	100
Asia:	0
MENA:	1.050
Europe:	0
Americas:	0

Sub-quota features:

Designated sub-quota/acceptance for:	2018 Description, additional comments:
Emergency resettlement procedures	There is no quota for dossier selection, but Belgium will look for ways to adapt its programme to make it more suitable for dossier/emergency resettlement.
Medical cases	
Women-at-risk cases	
Unaccompanied children	
Family Reunion (within programme)	

1. Resettlement Policy**1.1 Description of Belgium's resettlement policy**

In December 2011, the Belgian Government decided to develop a structural resettlement programme (Government Declaration). This decision was based on pilot experiences through different ad hoc resettlement operations (Iraq, Libya) and the development of the Joint European Resettlement Scheme. The size of the quota is decided by the Government (State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). The quota for 2014 was established at 100. Due to the Syrian refugee crisis, the Government announced in November 2014 its decision to double the resettlement quota for 2015 from 150 to 300. In the framework of the Council Conclusions of 20 July 2015 and the EU Resettlement Scheme, Belgium pledged to resettle 550 refugees in 2016 and 550 refugees in 2017. For the 2018 and 2019 AMIF pledging exercise, Belgium pledged to resettle 1.150 refugees in 2018 and 850 for the first 10 months of 2019.

The selection process is managed by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS). In 2017, all the 1.309 resettled refugees were

selected during 9 selection missions, 4 to Turkey, 3 to Lebanon, 1 to Jordan and 1 to Uganda. All the refugees resettled out of Turkey in 2017 (721) were selected in the Framework of the one-to-one scheme of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016. Travel and medical arrangements, pre-departure cultural orientation, initial reception and transition to mainstream and specific integration services are managed by the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FEDASIL). Transportation in the country of asylum, medical arrangements, and organization of the transfer to Belgium are delegated to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Upon arrival in Belgium, resettled refugees stay for a period of six to seven weeks in a reception centre. Afterwards, they move to individual housing, first in a Local Reception Initiative ("LRI", Fedasil's reception network at the local level) and then to a private housing they have to find outside of the reception network.

1.2 Ministries or Departments responsible for resettlement policy

The two main operational authorities, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) and FEDASIL, fall under the State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration. The Immigration Office, competent for issuing the travel documents for refugees who do not possess such documents, and visas, also falls under the State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration.

1.3 Process for deciding the annual resettlement quota and its composition, including the timelines for the process

The size of the quota is decided by the Government (State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). CGRS, the asylum authority in Belgium, and FEDASIL make a proposal on the allocation of the quota based on the UNHCR projected global resettlement needs, the EU priorities in the Joint European Resettlement Scheme and other EU-programmes and national considerations. The final decision belongs to the Government (State Secretary for Asylum and Migration). To optimize the national strategic use of resettlement, coherence with the Belgian Foreign Affairs and Development cooperation policy is sought. The timing of the decision process follows publication of UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs document, European thematic and geographic priorities and ERF/AMF pledging exercises, and Belgian budget cycles.

2. Criteria for Recognition of Refugee Status Eligibility and Asylum

2.1 National legislation defining refugee status eligibility

Refugee status is granted on the basis of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention). The asylum procedure and the competencies of asylum institutions are governed by the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980 (Law on the entry, residence, settlement and removal of aliens). The Aliens Act also includes provisions for subsidiary protection (i.e. complementary protection). The status of subsidiary protection is granted if an asylum applicant does not meet the criteria of the Refugee Convention but when there is a real risk of serious harm if returned to his country of origin.

There are no specific provisions on resettlement in Belgian legislation (aliens act, reception, social integration, etc.). Resettlement can be handled within the existing legislation.

2.2 Distinction, if any, between refugee status criteria for asylum-seekers, and that for resettled refugees

Resettled Refugees are granted refugee status immediately after arrival in Belgium. There is no difference between refugee status criteria for asylum-seekers, and that for resettled refugees.

3. Criteria for Resettlement

3.1 Refugee resettlement eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for resettlement to Belgium, a person must meet the refugee criteria as defined in Belgian Aliens Law. Cases for resettlement are to a large extent assessed in the same way as regular asylum-seekers in Belgium. The candidate must be able to articulate an individual need for protection in relation to his/her country of origin. Belgium is currently developing a system whereby certain aspects related to integration will be assessed. In accordance with the principle of family unity, resettlement is, as a rule, offered to all core family members (spouses and children under 18) in a case.

3.2 Admissibility criteria

All cases submitted for resettlement are screened and cleared by the State Security Services. Public order threats are also taken into account when deciding on the eligibility for resettlement.

4. Resettlement Allocations/Processing Priorities

4.1 Resettlement allocation including sub-quotas

The State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, after a proposal on the allocation of the quota is made from CGRS and FEDASIL, determines the resettlement allocation. Refer to section 1.3 above for more details.

4.2 Processing priorities

The focus is on protracted refugee situations, although other political considerations are also taken into account, e.g. the start of the one-to-one scheme of the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March 2016. Absorption capacities (including integration facilities, housing for large families, specific services e.g. for unaccompanied children, etc.) are taken into account when setting the allocation of the quota.

4.3 Non-UNHCR allocations, including role of referral organisations

Belgium only accepts UNHCR submissions. No places are foreseen for non-UNHCR submissions.

5. Submissions and Processing via Dossier Selection

5.1 Dossier submission policies

In 2013, 20 places were reserved for dossier selection, more precisely for 20 vulnerable refugees, belonging to the subcategories Women-at-risk and/or Survivors of Violence and Torture. For 2014, 2015, 2016; 2017 and 2018 there has been no quota foreseen for dossier selection, although dossier selection on ad-hoc basis and for a limited number of cases is possible. In 2016, 24 Syrian refugees who resided in Egypt, 24 Syrian refugees who resided in Jordan who were selected on dossier basis were resettled to Belgium. In 2017, a group of 15 Syrian refugees who were residing in Iraq and who were selected on dossier basis, travelled to Belgium after a transfer in the ETC in Romania.

5.2 Case documentation

As there is no possibility for a personal interview, the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) for a dossier submission needs to be as comprehensive as possible. Full and exact personal data including full data on family composition are of vital importance. A full examination of the applicant's refugee claim, including a thorough assessment of the present fear needs to be done in each case. The possible application of article 1F of the Geneva Convention is to be examined by UNHCR. The declaration should include and

indicate activities e.g. involvement in armed struggle, previous convictions and military background.

For reception/integration purposes, data on language knowledge, qualifications, educational background, working experience and medical and other needs are essential, as are possible family links in Belgium which may influence settlement considerations.

Copies of all identity and all other pieces of evidence should be added to the RRF or, when this would not be possible, a list of documents available should be included in the RRF. If the CGRS considers the RRF to be incomplete, additional information will be asked.

If a case has been submitted to another resettlement country earlier to the submission to Belgium, this information should be included in the RRF and the CGRS will in most cases consult this state to learn more about the reasoning for the refusal.

5.3 Decision-Making Process

All refugee resettlement submissions are considered by the CGRS in accordance with existing guidelines and policy. An applicant must meet the criteria in the Geneva Convention to be eligible for resettlement in Belgium. The RRF will be assessed in detail by a caseworker specialized in the region of origin of the applicant. The caseworker will draft a decision and this will be discussed with a supervisor and/or with the Commissioner-general or one of his deputies.

The refugee status cannot be granted outside the Belgian territory. As a consequence, the decision to authorize travel to Belgium will be taken by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. This decision will be taken based on the proposal for selection by the CGRS and if a decision is made to follow this advice, instruction will be given to the Immigration Office to issue travel documents (for refugees who do not possess such documents), and a visa, which will be prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After arrival, the resettled refugee will need to lodge an asylum application at the Immigration Office, although this is a pure formality: there will be no more interviews on the substance and a full investigation will not be carried out. Within days after arrival, refugee status will be granted, and within weeks, the refugee certificate will be handed to the resettled refugee.

If a case is rejected based on the analysis of the RRF, the reasons for rejection will be communicated to UNHCR.

5.4 Recourse Processing

Cases dismissed by the CGRS and the State Secretary for Migration and asylum are not subject to appeal.

5.5 Processing Times

The processing time (i.e. time from submission to the communication of the decision to UNHCR) is not set, but amounted to around 40 working days for the cases submitted in 2017. Time from submission to arrival can vary depending on various factors. For the refugees submitted in 2017 who have arrived it was 83 working days on average.

6. Submissions and Processing via In Country Selection

6.1 Selection mission policies

In 2017, the CGRS organized nine selection missions: 4 to Turkey, 3 to Lebanon, 1 to Jordan for the selection of around 1.050 Syrian refugees and 1 to Uganda for the selection of 152 Congolese refugees (this was a combination of the quota for Congolese refugees for 2016, 2017 and 2018). All the refugees resettled out of Turkey in 2017 (721) were selected in the Framework of the one-to-one scheme of the EU-Turkey statement of 18

March 2018. In 2018, at least five selection missions will be organized: three to Turkey, one to Lebanon, one to Jordan, all for the selection of Syrian refugees and probably one to a country on the Central Mediterranean Route

6.2 Preparations and Case Documentation

In-country selection missions are discussed in detail with UNHCR. To facilitate preparations the CGRS uses the *Pre-Mission Questionnaire for Resettlement Interview Missions* supplied by UNHCR.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Belgian embassy are involved to arrange logistical and other support, such as accommodation, transport, security, meetings, etc. Steering Groups, in which all operational partners (CGRS, FEDASIL, Foreign Affairs, Immigration Department, UNHCR, IOM, and Cabinet of the State Secretary) are represented, are organized on a monthly basis to prepare selection missions. During these meetings, all operational aspects are discussed, such as timelines, risks, dossier flow, travel, etc.

The delegation for a selection mission consists, as a rule, of a mission leader, a policy officer from the International Department, and two to six caseworkers who are specialized in the region.

All documentation, i.e. RRF and all possible supplementary documentation, should be provided by UNHCR and made available at least one month before the planned date of the mission. All cases submitted are screened by the CGRS and will be interviewed. To ensure that the quota will be filled, the CGRS can ask for more cases than will be selected. This will vary depending on the conditions of each mission, keeping in mind a balance between the risk of not being able to select sufficient cases and the inconvenience to be obliged to refuse cases only because the quota has been reached.

Based on the number of RRFs and the profiles submitted, an interview plan will be prepared and sent to UNHCR.

In principle, no cases can be submitted during the selection mission.

6.3 Decision Making Process

Interviews are carried out on an individual basis with the aim to verify and supplement the information provided in the RRF. No decisions are made during the selection mission. After return to Belgium, the caseworker will draft a decision and this will be discussed with a supervisor and/or with the Commissioner-general or one of his deputies. For more detail concerning the decision making process, see section 5.3.

In line with the selection process for dossier cases, the grounds for rejection are given to UNHCR in writing and in some cases also orally.

6.4 Processing Time

The length of time needed for in-country selections depends on the number and profile of persons to be interviewed, but lasts on average between one and two weeks. After the selection mission, the results will be communicated to UNHCR as soon as possible.

In 2015, the result of the selection mission was communicated to UNHCR around one month after the end of the mission.

7. Emergency Cases/Urgent Cases

7.1 Policies for receiving emergency and/or urgent case submissions

Belgium does not have a specific quota for emergency or urgent cases.

8. Special Categories/Special Needs

8.1 Sub-quotas dedicated to specific needs cases

There are no specific sub-quotas.

9. Medical Requirements

9.1 Screening procedures, including costs

Health assessments are carried out in the first instance by a medical staff from FEDASIL (initial medical screening) during the selection mission. The follow-up includes further medical care for specific cases referred by FEDASIL based on the initial screening and fit-to-fly examination for all refugees. It is provided by IOM, following a written agreement and ad hoc budget concluded with FEDASIL.

The costs are covered by the allocated budget and may include transportation of the refugees from their place of residence to the medical facility and back, compensation of the medical staff, further medical examinations and any treatment needed to ensure that refugees are able to travel to Belgium.

9.2 Health criteria and exclusion factors

The sole purpose of the assessment is to ensure that the refugees are physically capable of being transferred to Belgium without any risk to themselves or to public health.

The initial medical screening that is carried out by FEDASIL, during the selection mission, aims at performing a superficial examination allowing the detection and treatment of acute diseases and decompensated chronic diseases that might prevent a refugee from being transferred. Besides, it also provides important information on the medical condition of the refugees and therefore allows FEDASIL to better prepare the arrival in case of special needs, that will be managed by the medical staff of the reception centre upon arrival.

No pathology constitutes an exclusion factor, only a delaying factor at worst. A refugee who suffers from a disease that causes a risk to him/herself or to the public health during the travel will be treated until it is determined that he/she can travel to Belgium safely.

9.3 Pre-departure treatment, including costs

The treatment of acute diseases and decompensated chronic diseases that could prevent a refugee from being transferred to Belgium is provided by IOM. Costs are covered by the budget allocated to IOM. Depending on the results of the health assessment, FEDASIL can require additional examinations and treatment if needed to ensure the transfer of a refugee.

9.4 Pre-departure examination procedures, if any

Shortly before departure (max. four days), a “fit-to-fly” examination is performed so as to confirm the capacity of each refugee to travel. If one refugee is declared not being fit to travel, he/she will receive the necessary treatment and will be transferred as soon as there is no more risk to him/herself or to public health.

10. Orientation (pre-departure)

9.1 Pre-departure orientation sessions including eligibility and provider

A pre-departure cultural orientation is provided to the refugees whose selection for resettlement in Belgium is definitely confirmed by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. FEDASIL organizes this training in close cooperation with UNHCR and IOM which assists with all logistical issues (premises, transportation, interpreters, baby-sitter, various material, etc.).

FEDASIL staff is in charge of providing the cultural orientation. Usually, the delegation is composed of staff members working in the reception centres where the refugees will be hosted initially and one staff from the headquarters in charge of the coordination of the mission.

The programme is based on a curriculum developed by FEDASIL and covers different themes: housing, employment, education and vocational training, healthcare, family reunification, cost of life, norms and values, etc. Playful and participative activities are mixed with more “classical” methods such as Power Point presentations and short films. A Skype meeting of +/- 1 hour is organized between the group and a refugee who has been previously resettled to Belgium and can share his experience and answer questions.

Individual meetings with each case are organized to give the opportunity to the refugees to raise specific concerns or ask more personal questions. This also allows FEDASIL to draft social files for every case in order to better prepare the arrival and reception phase in Belgium.

An IOM trainer usually provides some parts of the training (pre-embarkation which focuses on travel-related aspects, cultural shock and cultural adaptation).

In 2017, the cultural orientation training could not be provided to 15 Syrians in Iraq due to the difficult context and limited size of the group. These refugees received an alternative cultural orientation training through Skype and an informative brochure distributed by the UNHCR.

9.2 Duration, location and funding of sessions

FEDASIL provide tailor-made trainings based on the caseload and the local context in the first country of asylum. The duration and therefore also the content of the cultural orientation trainings are adapted accordingly. In countries like Lebanon and Jordan, the cultural orientation usually lasts four days. In Uganda, due to both the context and the higher vulnerability of the Congolese refugees, it was decided to keep the length of the training to three days.

Contrary to the standard procedure, as an answer to the swift processing requirement from the European Commission in the SOP's adopted in the framework of the EU-Turkey deal, it was decided that a two-day cultural orientation training would be provided at the same time as the selection missions in Turkey.

Depending on UNHCR and IOM's advice, available premises and transportation possibilities, the training can take place either in the refugee camp or in another adequate location (transit centre, hotel, conference centre, etc.). The funding of the training is covered by FEDASIL.

9.3 Any other pre-departure preparation courses offered

All refugees selected to be resettled to Belgium (including refugees exceptionally selected “on dossier” who do not benefit from a pre-departure cultural orientation training) receive an informative brochure about resettlement in Belgium translated in their language. This document includes a timeline, some explanations on the travel to Belgium, on the first weeks in Belgium (initial reception phase), on the transfer to private housing, on Belgium in general (geography, climate, languages, etc.) and on the family reunification procedure. For dossier cases, the brochure is generally handed over by IOM prior to departure.

If possible, FEDASIL will try to arrange a Skype session when a pre-departure cultural orientation mission cannot be organized (usually due to the difficult local context), with the support of local partners (UNHCR and IOM). It allows FEDASIL to provide essential information about the resettlement process and manage expectations and it gives the selected refugees the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.

11. Travel

11.1 Travel booking procedures

Following a written agreement concluded with FEDASIL, IOM is in charge of booking the flight tickets for the refugees and helps with the delivery of travel documents. IOM staff accompanies the refugees through immigration and customs procedures at the airport and assist them with embarkation. Assistance is also provided with the transit phase in case no direct travel is possible.

In some cases, IOM provides an escort to the most vulnerable refugees. There is also a possibility of medical escort if needed and in agreement with or at the request of FEDASIL.

11.2 Payment

Payment of the flight tickets and local transportation on the day of departure is covered by the budget allocated to IOM. Travel documents are delivered by the Belgian consular services. The costs involved are covered by FEDASIL. If additional expenses have to be made (e.g. ID pictures), they can be covered by the IOM budget.

11.3 Travel documents issued

The required travel documents are issued by the Belgian diplomatic posts on the instructions of the State Secretariat for Asylum and Migration. They consist of a laissez-passer or a visa when refugees still have a valid passport.

12. Status on Arrival and the Path to Citizenship

12.1 Immigration status on arrival and process for regularization of status

There is no specific legal framework for resettlement in Belgium. As stated in section 5.3, according to Belgian Aliens law, refugee status cannot be granted outside the Belgian territory. As a consequence, the decision to authorize travel to Belgium is taken by the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration. This decision is based on the proposal for selection by the CGRS, and if a decision is taken to follow this advice, instruction is given to the Immigration Office to issue travel documents (for refugees who do not possess such documents), and a visa, which will be prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After arrival, the resettled refugee will need to lodge an asylum application, although this is a pure formality: there will be no interview on the substance and no full investigation will be carried out.

12.2 Documentation issued, including travel documents

Within days after arrival refugee status will be granted, and within weeks, the refugee certificate will be given to the resettled refugee. If the refugee possesses a passport from his/her country of origin, he/she will have to turn it over to the CGRS. In addition, the refugee will also receive a birth and identity certificate. The resettled refugee has the same rights as a regular asylum-seeker that has been granted refugee status. If a resettled refugee wants to travel abroad, he/she needs to apply for a travel document (a "blue" passport).

12.3 Documents issued to children born after arrival, but before naturalization of their parents

Children born after arrival but before acquisition of the citizenship of their parents are not automatically granted refugee status. A request has to be submitted to the CGRS if both parents are refugees in Belgium or an asylum application needs to be lodged with the Immigration Office if only one of the parents has been granted refugee status in Belgium.

12.4 Details on the requirements, costs and timelines for citizenship

Belgian citizenship can be obtained by a person **above 18** years of age who has resided legally in Belgium for **five years** and who knows **one of the three national languages** and:

- who can prove his/her social integration AND economic participation *or*
- who is married to a Belgian citizen or is the parent of a Belgian child aged under 18 AND who can prove his/her social integration *or*
- who cannot work due to a disability or is retired.

The citizenship declaration can also be made by a person **above 18** who has resided legally in Belgium for **ten years** and who knows **one of the three national languages** and who can prove his/her social participation in the Belgian community.

The cost of this procedure is 150€.

The conditions described above are the basic criteria necessary to acquire the Belgian citizenship. The exhaustive conditions can be found in the updated version of the Belgian Nationality Code.

13. Domestic Settlement and Community Services

13.1 Overview of services, including providers and length of eligibility

FEDASIL the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, is in charge of the pre-departure measures, the transfer, the initial reception, the transition towards integration and the overall coordination of all involved actors/partners.

The **initial reception phase** is ensured by **FEDASIL**: the refugees are hosted in a federal reception centre for a duration of six to seven weeks. The objectives include: special needs identification (also based on previously received information – RRF, medical and social files drafted during the CO mission), administrative steps (opening of social rights), basic language lessons, specific orientation program for resettled refugees, liaison with local actors and, to some extent, with regional integration actors.

After this first phase, the refugees receive an individual housing from FEDASIL's local reception network for a duration of six months. During this transition period, they receive social assistance from the local social services in accordance with their grant agreement with FEDASIL. The refugees are also helped in their search for a more permanent private accommodation. An extension can be requested by the social workers on exceptional grounds. After maximum eight months, the refugees start to live independently in a private housing in a municipality.

Throughout the whole process, the involved actors refer the refugees to existing specific services such as the civic integration programme in Flanders, the literacy and language training structures in Wallonia, the regional employment agencies, vocational training organizations, psychological counselling services, etc.

13.2 Reception

FEDASIL is responsible for the initial reception of the refugees. During the first six to seven weeks after their arrival in Belgium the refugees are hosted in one of the four federal reception centres for asylum-seekers that are also specialized in the reception of resettled refugees. Two centres are located in Flanders and two in Wallonia.

During this period, refugees benefit from an orientation programme delivered in the centre, specialized social and medical services and basic language courses and tests delivered by professional organisations and/or volunteers.

Secondly, the refugees are transferred to a “Local Reception Initiative” (LRI) in a municipality for a transition period of six months. This stay in a LRI allows a smooth transition from the collective reception phase where refugees receive permanent professional support to a more independent life in Belgium. Social workers of the LRI’s assist the refugees during this process of transition towards integration. They help for instance with the research for durable housing.

Whenever a house can be found on the territory of the involved PSWC and with the agreement of the refugees, a specific convention can be signed between the managing PSWC and FEDASIL for 12 months for extra intensive support for the resettled refugees. Otherwise, the refugees can still rely on the support of the local PSWC which is competent to provide social support to all citizens in need (outside of a specific “resettlement convention”).

13.3 Orientation

Upon arrival in the reception centre, the FEDASIL staff provides, next to the classical services, information about the life in Belgium, building on the cultural orientation received before the transfer to Belgium: basic integration modules are provided (shopping in the supermarket, use of the Euro, the healthcare system, the education system, cooking, using the public transportation, etc.) as well as basic language courses.

In Flanders, the civic integration programme provides additional orientation courses (see below). However, since 2016, due to the increase of beneficiaries, the civic integration services might not systematically be able to provide their programme during the stay in the reception centre. The refugees will however follow these courses later since they are mandatory.

After the reception centre phase, LRI’s and partner PSWC’s are responsible to facilitate the transition of refugees towards an independent life in Belgium. In the framework of their agreement with FEDASIL, they provide tailor-made assistance which aims at fostering the empowerment and the autonomy of refugees. The main services provided are:

- help with the installation in the municipality
- individual assistance including home visits, particularly intensive in the beginning
- help with all administrative procedures (access to all social rights and benefits, opening of bank account, access to healthcare, family reunification request, etc.)
- specific support for vulnerable cases
- assistance with the reunification procedure where applicable

The refugees have also access to the mainstream social services available to all newcomers in Belgium. Belgian integration policy for newcomers is a community/regional competence. Consequently, the rules differ depending on whether the refugees are resettled in the Flemish Region, in the Walloon Region or in the Brussels-Capital Region. (More information is in the 2012 EMN Annual policy report on Asylum and Migration in Belgium).

In Flanders, refugees have to enter a primary civic integration programme called the “*inburgering programma*”. This mandatory programme contains individual programme counselling, a social orientation course, a basic Dutch as a second language course and a professional orientation component.

In Wallonia, the refugees can receive language courses as well as orientation courses and socio-professional guidance from a lot of different organizations (public, private or associative). The refugees will be invited by the municipality to an appointment at the regional integration centre. There are eight regional integration centres in Wallonia from

which the refugees can receive assistance. These centres are implementing the recent “Reception Disposal for Newcomers” which includes mandatory social orientation and language courses. In the Brussels-Capital Region, depending on the language that the refugees know/want to learn (Dutch or French), they can either join the “*inburgering programma*” provided by “Bon” (and thus receive the same services as the ones provided in Flanders, although not compulsory) or, like in Wallonia, they can access a multitude of support services (language courses, literacy, professional guidance, vocational trainings, etc.) organized by associations, public or private organizations. The two first “reception offices for newcomers” were created at the beginning of 2016 in Brussels. They are the francophone counterpart of “Bon” and provide direct support and referral services.

The PSWC’s and the regional integration actors also refer the refugees to a wide range of services/associations, depending on their individual needs.

As mentioned above, if a durable housing solution can be found in the municipality within the required timeframe of six months, with the agreement of the refugees, the PSCW of the municipality can conclude a specific “resettlement convention” with FEDASIL which provides for an additional period of 12 months of intensive individual support. This allows FEDASIL to stay in touch with the resettled refugees for a longer term through the monitoring of the integration process and reporting made by the PSCW.

13.4 Housing

After the initial reception phase in collective centres, the refugees are transferred to private housing within the FEDASIL network at the local level. These “Local Reception Initiative” are managed by the municipal Public Social Welfare Centres (PSWC’s) according to a grant agreement signed with FEDASIL. The accommodation from the ‘LRI’s” is provided for a duration of six months (exceptional extensions of maximum two months are possible). It is furnished and contains all necessary basic equipment. The refugees receive, at this stage, a mix of in-kind and financial assistance.

Once they move to the more permanent housing they will have identified with the help of the social workers of the LRI, the refugees will start receiving the monthly social welfare allowance with which they have to cover all of their expenses. A single premium is granted to purchase some basic equipment and furniture.

13.5 Health

Similarly to what is done for asylum-seekers, chest X-rays are carried out for all refugees at the Immigration Office upon arrival.

Moreover, a complete medical screening of all the refugees is carried out in the reception centre a few days after their arrival. For the duration of their stay in the centre, the refugees have access to the medical services provided in the centre.

When they move to their private house, the local PSWC’s makes a subscription to a mutual health insurance for the family so they can access healthcare under the same conditions as Belgian citizens.

13.6 Language Training

Shortly after their arrival in the reception centre, the adult refugees resettled in Flanders have to take a language test to assess their level. This test will determine their level for the “basic Dutch as a second language course” of the “*inburgering programma*”: depending on their results, the beneficiaries will receive a specific language program. The language component of the programme starts in the reception centre.

The Walloon integration programme for newcomers currently being developed, the language training of the newcomers who are illiterate and/or who need to learn French are provided by a multitude of recognized/licensed service providers (either local integration

initiatives, organizations recognized by the public authorities or public services themselves). While in the reception centre, the refugees can receive introductory French lessons.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, depending on the language that the refugees know/want to learn (Dutch or French), they can either benefit from the Dutch classes included in the “*inburgering programma*” or they can choose amongst many initiatives specialized in adult literacy and French teaching for newcomers.

13.7 Education

Depending on their level, refugee children are either integrated to a class in the regular school system (corresponding to their age level or lower) or they join, in the first instance, a transitional class (“*welcome class*”) to catch up with the children of their age. Besides extra-curricular activities, the school system is regarded as the main civic integration means for children.

13.8 Employment and employment-related training

Persons who receive refugee status in Belgium have the right to work. Resettled refugees have access to the public employment services as any other Belgian citizen and they can receive additional support regarding their socio-professional integration pathway from specific services.

The Flemish civic integration programme for newcomers (“*inburgering*”) includes a career orientation component. Depending on the educational and professional background of the refugee, he/she will be assisted in finding a job or starting a business or he/she will rather be advised to further his/her education. The staff of the *inburgering programme* collaborates with the Flemish public employment services.

In the Walloon Region and in Brussels, various actors (public/associative) recognized by the public authorities provide socio-professional integration support to which resettled refugees have access. These schemes and services help them assess their skills and address their needs accordingly.

13.9 Financial assistance

The persons who receive refugee status in Belgium are entitled to social welfare benefits as any Belgian citizen with insufficient means of subsistence who does not have any other means to support him/herself. This revenue is a temporary solution that allows its beneficiaries to live a decent life until their socio-economic situation improves. The local PSWC is responsible for conducting the social survey and providing the appropriate social assistance, including the social revenue.

13.10 Supplemental supports for refugees with specific needs

Refugees with specific needs are redirected towards appropriate services accordingly.

13.11 Mechanisms to share information with service providers; including details on expected populations, specific cases, and integration issues

Different channels are used to share information with the involved service providers:

Resettlement Stakeholders’ Meetings (RSM) are organized by CGRS and FEDASIL: their aim is to inform all actors involved in the field (national, regional and local actors, PSWC’s and NGOs, associations, international experts, etc.) on the programme, to share expertise with all of them and to exchange on specific themes. International experts can be invited to these meetings to enrich the discussions.

Information Sessions are organized especially for the municipalities’ PSWC’s to inform them about resettlement, the caseload and country profiles, the modalities of participation in the programme, etc.

Operational meetings are organized regularly on different levels by FEDASIL and gather staff from the reception centres, social workers of the PSWC's, and the staff from the partner NGOs. These actors also exchange on specific cases regularly. The involved PSWC's and NGOs send regular feedback about the cases to FEDASIL to prepare the operational meetings.

An interdepartmental steering group gathering institutional actors (Cabinet of the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, CGRS, FEDASIL, Immigration Office, Foreign Affairs, policy level, UNHCR and IOM) regularly meets (usually once a month) to plan and follow up the successive resettlement operations.

14. Family Reunification of Refugees

14.1 National definition of family

In Belgium the term "spouse" refers to two people joined by the institution of civil marriage. In Belgium civil marriage and legally registered partnerships may take place between people of the opposite sex and, since the adoption of the law of 13 February 2003, between people of the same sex.

A foreigner with unlimited residence permit in Belgium **is entitled to be joined** by:

- **their spouse or registered partner** (legally registered partnership) if both persons are above the age of 21 (or above 18 if the marriage/partnership was prior to arrival in Belgium or if the registered partners have cohabited for at least one year prior to arrival in Belgium). (N.B.: only one spouse of a polygamous marriage can join her husband in Belgium)
- **their children or those of the spouse or the registered partner** if they are under the age of 18 and are single
- **their disabled adult children or those of the spouse or the registered partner** if he/she is unable to support him/herself and is single
- **their mother or father** if the refugee is an unaccompanied child .

Other family members can also apply for a residence permit in Belgium. In that case, as it is not a right, the Immigration Office can either accept or refuse the reunification.

14.2 Legislation regarding family reunification & eligibility

Article 10 of the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980 (Law on the entry, residence, settlement and removal of aliens) govern the family reunification policy for third country nationals with an unlimited residence permit in Belgium.

Resettled refugees and persons who were granted asylum have the same right to family reunification as they all have an unlimited residence permit in Belgium. They can be joined by the above-mentioned family members **without delay** (contrary to other foreigners who have a residence permit in Belgium who must wait 12 months after the permit delivery before an application for reunification can be submitted).

14.3 Details on whether family reunification cases are counted within the resettlement quotas

The family members who join a resettled refugee through the family reunification process are not counted within the Belgian resettlement quota.

14.4 Routing of submissions

The applications have to be submitted at the responsible Belgian Embassy or Consulate of the country of origin or residence and are then forwarded to the Immigration Office in Belgium. If the applicant is already legally staying in Belgium under other conditions,

he/she can, in some limited cases, apply at the municipal administration of the place of stay.

14.5 Case documentation

The application file must contain several documents such as a valid passport, a birth certificate, a marriage certificate (or proof of the registered partnership **and** of the stable and long-term aspects of the relationship), a recent medical certificate written by a doctor appointed by the Embassy/Consulate, the copy of the residence permit of the family member to be joined, etc.

All of the official documents have to be translated (in French, Dutch, English or German) and will have to be legalized (authentication of signature and quality of issuer) by both the issuing authorities and the Belgian authorities. Then, their validity will be addressed by the Belgian authorities.

Only if there is an impossibility to provide the required documents, “other valid proof” can be provided. The authorities will assess their validity. Interviews of the applicant and of the refugee to be joined can be done, as well as “any investigation deemed necessary” and “complementary analysis”.

Normally, the person to be joined in Belgium has to prove that he/she has stable sufficient revenue to support the family, that he/she benefits from a mutual insurance and that he/she has an adequate housing for the family members. However, these criteria are not applicable – unless the applicant is an adult disabled child - if the request for reunification is submitted **within the 12 months** following the granting of the refugee status **and** if the parenthood is prior to the arrival in Belgium.

The stable sufficient revenue condition is **never applicable** if it is children who apply to join their parent(s).

14.6 Processing times

The Immigration Office has six months to give its decision. In particularly complicated cases, the authorities can, twice, issue a reasoned decision to extend the time delay of three months.

The immigration authorities may refuse to deliver a residence permit if e.g. the application is based on incorrect information or false declarations of parenthood, if there is a risk to public security or health or if all required conditions are not met. In this case, an appeal can be submitted within 30 days before the Aliens Litigation Council.

14.7 Entitlements for family members

No special arrangements are made for family members. On arrival, they receive a limited residence permit of one year. This permit will be renewed every year by the municipal authorities if the conditions of reunification remain unchanged (the said conditions are assessed by the Immigration Office). After three years, an unlimited residence permit will be delivered.

No travel allowance, travel assistance or specific assistance upon arrival is provided. The family members are however entitled to use specific services designed for newcomers and mainstream social services designed for Belgian citizens.

15. References/Resources

<https://www.fedasil.be/en/resettlementImmigration> Office website (information on
regularization, citizenship, family reunification):
<https://dofi.ibz.be/sites/dvzoe/en/Pages/home.aspx>