



Asylum and Migration Overview **Belgium 2025**

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The Belgian National Contact Point to the European Migration Network (EMN Belgium) is a multi-institutional entity composed of experts from the Immigration Office, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Myria – the Federal Migration Centre and Fedasil – the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers. It is coordinated by the Federal Public Service Home Affairs.

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FOREWORD

Dear reader,

This year marks the 23rd edition of the Belgian Asylum and Migration Overview. Over the past two decades, asylum and migration have remained at the centre of political debate and public discussion in Belgium. While the policy context, terminology and institutional landscape have evolved over time, many of the core questions relating to migration governance, international protection, integration and return continue to shape the debate today.

In 2025, asylum and migration once again featured prominently in political and societal debate in Belgium. The year was marked by increasing geopolitical instability, continued pressure on the asylum and reception system, preparations for the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, due to apply from June 2026, and the formation of a new federal government. The Federal Coalition Agreement 2025–2029 set out a more restrictive policy direction, aiming to reduce the high inflow of asylum applicants, ease pressure on the asylum, migration and reception systems, and combat irregular migration. It also emphasised legal migration under clear conditions, with a stronger focus on labour and student migration, alongside reinforced integration and self-sufficiency requirements.

Against this background, this report provides an overview of policy and legislative changes, operational challenges, and national activities in Belgium over the past year, including projects and cooperation with civil society. As in previous editions, it aims to bring together a broad range of developments across the different dimensions of asylum and migration, and to present them in a structured, accessible and balanced way.

With this publication, EMN Belgium continues its mission to provide objective, reliable and comparable information on asylum and migration. We hope that this overview will be useful to policymakers, practitioners, researchers, civil society actors and all readers with an interest in these issues. In a field that is often complex and marked by polarised debate, accessible and well-grounded information remains essential to support informed reflection and constructive dialogue. At the same time, we are aware that no single report can fully capture the breadth of developments in such a fast-moving field. Given the diversity of initiatives, legal changes, practices and actors involved in asylum and migration in Belgium, some developments may not be reflected, or may only be addressed briefly. We therefore warmly invite stakeholders from national, regional and local authorities, international organisations, academia and civil society to continue sharing their initiatives, experiences and perspectives with us. In doing so, they help ensure that future editions reflect developments in the Belgian asylum and migration landscape as fully and accurately as possible.

We hope that this overview will contribute to a broader and more nuanced understanding of asylum and migration in Belgium, both today and in the years to come.

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The Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (AgII), Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur Vlaanderen, the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), the Belgian Red Cross, Bruss'help, the Brussels Centre for Intercultural Action (CBAI), the Brussels Regional Public Service Economy and Employment, Caritas International Belgium, CIRÉ, the Council for Alien Law Litigation, Defence for Children International (DCI) – ECPAT Belgium, Enabel – the Belgian agency for international cooperation, Fairwork Belgium, Fedasil – the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, the Federal Police, the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Federal Public Service Home Affairs, the Federal Public Service Justice, the Federal Public Service Social Security, the Flemish Community, the Flemish Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner (KRC), the Flemish Region – Department of Work and Social Economy, the French Community, the German-speaking Community – Department of Social Inspection and Work Permits, the Guardianship Service, Info Integration Belgisches Rotes Kreuz, the Interdepartmental Coordination Unit for Action against Trafficking in and Smuggling of Human Beings, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Belgium and Luxembourg, Medimmigrant, Myria – the Federal Migration Centre, Nansen, the National Crisis Centre, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS/CGVS/CGRA), the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), the Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW/CPAS), the Public Employment Services (VDAB, Forem, Actiris, ADG), the Regional Center for Integration – Province of Luxembourg, the Samilia Foundation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Unia – the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, the Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia (UVCW), the Walloon Observatory for Integration, the Walloon Region, and Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen.

We would like to thank them for their valuable contribution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, Belgian asylum and migration policy was shaped by **the formation of a new federal government and the adoption of the Federal Coalition Agreement 2025–2029, which set out a more restrictive overall policy direction.** Across policy domains, the government announced stricter action against irregular migration, greater emphasis on return, stronger protection of the social system against misuse, and increased expectations regarding integration and access to nationality. At the same time, migration and asylum governance in Belgium continued to reflect the country's federal structure, with federal, regional and community authorities all playing distinct roles in the development and implementation of policy.

In the field of **legal migration**, developments combined federal policy orientation with regional labour market measures. The Federal Coalition Agreement and subsequent policy notes emphasised more selective labour migration, improved coordination between levels of government, more efficient single permit procedures, and stronger safeguards against exploitation and abuse. Regional authorities updated salary thresholds and revised lists of bottleneck professions. In Flanders, a mandatory tailored integration trajectory for third-country workers was announced from 2027 onwards, while further legislative amendments were adopted affecting different categories of labour migrants. At federal level, important legislative changes were also made to family reunification rules, including higher income thresholds, stricter age and housing requirements, and waiting periods for certain sponsors. In parallel, Belgium continued to support labour mobility partnerships and pilot projects with partner countries such as Suriname, Tunisia and Georgia.

International protection and reception remained under significant pressure in 2025, despite a decrease in the number of applications for international protection compared with 2024. Belgium recorded 34 439 applicants for international protection, while the structural backlog in the procedure and the saturation of the reception network remained major concerns. In response, the federal authorities pursued measures aimed at tightening the asylum framework, discouraging certain categories of applications, and reducing pressure on the system. Legislative changes broadened the notion of subsequent applications to include certain cases involving applicants already protected in another Member State, thereby allowing a more limited examination. Although the overall number of applications decreased, the recognition rate also declined. This was mainly attributable to two developments. First, the processing of Syrian cases remained suspended during most of 2025, following a freeze on decisions introduced in late 2024. Second, priority was given to applications lodged by persons benefiting from international protection in another EU Member State; these cases mostly resulted in inadmissibility decisions. Belgium also revised its list of safe countries of origin and adjusted the scope of its accelerated procedure.

The reception system remained under severe strain throughout 2025. Shortages of reception places persisted, and many applicants, especially single men, remained dependent on waiting lists or humanitarian support structures outside the reception network. In response, Fedasil sought to mitigate the impact of reception centre closures through additional temporary measures aimed at compensating for the loss of reception places. Legislative reform of the Reception Act introduced new grounds for limiting material reception conditions, notably for applicants already benefiting from protection in another Member State and for accompanied minors lodging an application for international protection in their own name after a previous application by their parents had been subject to a final negative decision. Belgian courts continued to scrutinise the compatibility of such limitations with the obligation to guarantee a dignified standard of living. Litigation concerning the reception crisis continued, although at lower levels than in 2024. At the same time, Fedasil also pursued measures to improve reception conditions, strengthen labour market integration, and support transition out of reception, including through housing initiatives.

Belgium also continued to implement the Temporary Protection Directive for **persons fleeing the war in Ukraine**. While the number of new beneficiaries continued to decline, refusal decisions increased significantly, notably in cases involving insufficient proof of residence in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 or the existence of temporary protection in another Member State. Following the EU decision to extend temporary protection until 4 March 2027, Flemish and Walloon authorities revised earlier plans to phase out reception capacity and decided to maintain accommodation arrangements for a longer period. In parallel, stricter federal proposals concerning access to social assistance and new restrictions on family reunification also affected beneficiaries of temporary protection.

Developments concerning **unaccompanied minors** focused on age assessment, guardianship, reception, child protection and transition to adulthood. The number of unaccompanied minors entering the reception network declined further in 2025. As a result, places that became available were reallocated to other target groups, such as families. Following a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, Belgium reformed its age assessment procedure with a view to making it more multidisciplinary and better safeguarded. The Guardianship Service strengthened capacity through AMIF-funded recruitment and new partnerships. Fedasil continued to adapt reception capacity for minors and to strengthen its response in several areas, including sexual abuse and disappearances, notably through the introduction of new tools and protocols.

Broader developments concerning **vulnerable groups** in 2025 included measures relating to gender-related vulnerabilities and issues affecting LGBTQIA+ individuals. These comprised a study on the labour market position of women of non-EU origin, GREVIO's first thematic report on Belgium, the launch of a French-language platform on gender-based violence, and the conclusion of a project aimed at creating safer reception places for LGBTQI+ applicants for international

protection. In parallel, developments concerning migrant homelessness included interministerial policy work, continued emergency accommodation support for non-accommodated applicants for international protection, and the continuation of Shelter and Orientation projects for homeless undocumented migrants in five cities.

Integration and inclusion policies continued to evolve differently across Belgium's federated entities. In Flanders, implementation began of the new Policy Note on Integration, Civic Integration and Social Cohesion, with emphasis on Dutch language acquisition, labour market participation and social participation. In the Walloon Region, the governance of the integration sector was further restructured, and amendments to the integration programme entered into force. In Brussels, reflection continued in the absence of a new regional government, while service saturation remained a challenge. More broadly, developments concerned access to social assistance, labour market integration, diploma recognition, language learning, anti-discrimination measures and local inclusion initiatives.

In the field of citizenship and statelessness, Belgium significantly increased the registration fee for applying for nationality, while also debating the proportionality of this measure and considering a reduced fee for stateless persons in the naturalisation procedure. Statelessness issues also remained prominent, including the implementation of the new residence procedure for stateless persons and continuing debate over the withdrawal of Belgian nationality from certain children born in Belgium to Palestinian parents.

In the area of borders, visa and Schengen, Belgium further developed both operational and digital tools. Members of the Frontex standing corps were deployed at Brussels Airport, internal police checks were intensified under Article 23 of the Schengen Borders Code, and visa processing was further digitalised. Belgium also expanded its visa application network and started rolling out the Entry/Exit System and related interoperability measures. These developments were closely linked to broader concerns regarding irregular migration, secondary movements and return. In the field of irregular migration and migrant smuggling, Belgium combined preventive campaigns, internal police checks, anti-fraud measures and law enforcement action. Further measures addressed illegal employment, labour exploitation and the misuse of civil status procedures for residence purposes.

Trafficking in human beings remained an important policy priority in 2025. Belgium combined legislative and policy measures with targeted initiatives to enhance operational capacities, training and awareness-raising activities, and international cooperation. Developments included political commitments outlined in the Coalition Agreement, the GRETA monitoring visit, the deployment of digital tools to detect sexual exploitation online, further training of labour inspectors and dedicated training for asylum officers, and enhanced measures for the identification and protection of minor victims through a revised National Referral

Mechanism. Belgium also remained active in EMPACT and other international efforts targeting trafficking, including child trafficking, forced labour, and sexual exploitation.

Measures to inform and guide irregularly staying migrants towards long-term solutions continued in 2025. These included the further development of the Immigration Office's Individual Case Management approach, the continuation of Shelter and Orientation projects for homeless undocumented migrants in five cities, Fedasil's Reach Out activities, and Belgium's participation in the ICMPD Support to Frontline Workers project. These initiatives aimed to support irregularly staying migrants in exploring possible pathways towards a durable solution, including legal stay, voluntary return or another sustainable outcome.

Return remained central to Belgian migration policy in 2025 and continued to rest on two complementary pillars: assisted voluntary return and reintegration, and forced return. The year was marked by legislative, policy and operational developments at both national and European level. At EU level, negotiations were launched on the proposed Return Regulation. At national level, developments relating to voluntary return included changes to access to reintegration support, strengthened cooperation with EU partners and countries of origin, and continued investment in awareness-raising and capacity-building. In parallel, developments relating to forced return focused on operational efficiency, coordination, digitalisation, and the continued use of detention and alternatives to detention, alongside cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

Belgium also continued to **link migration and development cooperation** through initiatives relating to the reintegration of returnees in countries of origin, climate-related displacement, labour mobility, diaspora engagement and remittances. Enabel, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Belgium and Luxembourg, Fedasil, the Immigration Office and other actors pursued projects in partner countries aimed at strengthening local reintegration systems, building resilience, addressing drivers of displacement, supporting skills and entrepreneurial mobility, and improving the evidence base on remittances and financial literacy. Particular attention was given to the migration-climate nexus, including projects in Mali, the Great Lakes region, Morocco and Senegal, as well as initiatives in Belgium focusing on diaspora engagement in local and sustainable development.

01

LEGAL MIGRATION



Since the sixth reform of the Belgian state in 2014, competences relating to the employment of third-country nationals have been exercised at different levels of government. The federated entities are responsible for the employment-related aspects of labour migration, while the federal level remains competent for matters relating to residence status, access to the territory, family reunification and removal. Developments in the field of legal migration in Belgium therefore reflect the interaction between regional labour market policies and the federal legal framework governing admission and stay.

In 2025, legal migration policy evolved through a combination of federal policy initiatives, legislative amendments and regional labour market measures. At federal level, developments concerned the policy direction set out in the Federal Coalition Agreement and the Policy Note of the Minister of Employment and stricter conditions for family reunification, including for family members of workers holding a single permit (**Sections 1.1 and 1.5**). At regional level, measures included revised salary thresholds, updated lists of bottleneck professions, new integration requirements in Flanders, legislative changes affecting different categories of third-country workers, and the application of short-term mobility provisions for EU Blue Card holders in the Brussels-Capital Region (**Section 1.2**). Additional developments concerned students and researchers, measures to prevent labour exploitation and safeguard equal treatment, and ongoing labour mobility partnerships with selected partner countries (**Sections 1.3, 1.4 and 1.6**).

Overall, developments in 2025 show that legal migration in Belgium continued to be shaped by a combination of labour market needs, administrative coordination, integration objectives and migration management considerations.

1.1 Legislative changes affecting migrant workers in all regions

1.1.1 THE FEDERAL COALITION AGREEMENT 2025-2029

The **Federal Coalition Agreement 2025-2029¹** sets out a **coordinated federal approach to labour migration** that supports regional authorities, improves migrant labour market integration, streamlines and accelerates single permit procedures, and strengthens protections against exploitation and abuse. These measures aim to raise employment levels to 80% by 2030, strengthen the efficiency and coordination of labour migration governance, protect migrant workers against exploitation and fraud, and embed legal labour migration in a selective international strategy that supports return and helps reduce irregular migration. At the same time, the Coalition Agreement states that the conditions for legal residence will be strictly enforced, access to unemployment benefits

(1) [Federaal Regeer Akkoord 2025-2029 / Accord de Coalition Fédérale 2025-2029](#), 31 January 2025.



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will be protected against abuse, and religious workers will be required to meet integration and language requirements. Furthermore, in the **Policy Note** of 24 April 2025², the Federal Minister of Employment specified employment priorities based on the Federal Coalition Agreement published on 31 January 2025. On **labour migration**, the policy note included the objective of supporting regional labour migration policies and facilitating the exchange of information among different governance levels and actors. Furthermore, it stated that the single-permit application procedures will be made more efficient and that single-permit workers who are victims of social security infringements by their employers will be better protected. In line with the objectives stipulated in the Federal Coalition Agreement, these measures pursue integration into the labour market in order to raise overall employment levels (80% by 2030).

1.1.2 COOPERATION AGREEMENT TO EXPAND THE ONLINE PLATFORM ‘WORKING IN BELGIUM’

A **Cooperation Agreement** was published on 31 January 2025 in the context of the implementation of the **Single Permit Directive** 2011/98/EU. It replaces the Cooperation Agreement of 5 March 2021 and provides for the further development and expansion of the digital platform *Working in Belgium*. The Agreement aims to improve coordination and information exchange in the processing of **single permit** applications across the Belgian regions. It also extends the use of the platform to applications for work permits for self-employed persons and for short-term employment of less than 90 days. By the end of 2025, the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the German-speaking Community had approved the new Cooperation Agreement, while formal approval by the Federal Government, required for its entry into force, had not yet been published.

Single permit

A residence permit issued by the authorities of an EU Member State after a single application procedure allowing a third-country national to reside legally in its territory for the purpose of work.

1.1.3 STRICTER CONDITIONS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION WITH THIRD-COUNTRY WORKERS IN BELGIUM

On 18 August 2025, the Law of 18 July 2025 entered into force, amending the requirements and conditions for family reunification laid down in the Law of 15 December 1980 on access to the territory, residence, establishment and removal of foreign nationals, hereafter referred to as the Aliens Act. The legislative proposal presents the legislative changes as aiming to better manage family migration in line with the most recent EU case law and to respond faster and more effectively to changing social needs.

(2) Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers/Chambre des représentants de Belgique, “[Beleidsnota Werk / Note de Politique Générale Emploi](#)” (DOC 56 0856/003), 24 April 2025.

The following amendments are relevant for third-country workers seeking family reunification:

- ▶ **Higher income requirement.** The reference threshold was changed from 120% of the minimum social welfare income to 110% of the average guaranteed minimum monthly income. As of 18 August 2025, this resulted in a further increase in the minimum income requirement, from € 2 131.28 to € 2 323.07 net per month³. In addition, the federal government introduced a supplementary increase of 10% for each additional dependent family member, including dependent family members already residing with the sponsor in Belgium. Where the income requirement is not met, an individual needs assessment must be carried out. In this context, the Law of 18 July 2025 explicitly places the burden of proof on the applicant. According to the federal government, this amendment aims to ensure that sponsors and their family members have sufficient means of subsistence and do not rely on social assistance.
- ▶ **Minimum age requirement.** The minimum age for partners was raised from 18 to 21 years. According to the federal government, this amendment aims to reduce the risk of forced marriages and to support integration.
- ▶ **Removal of the distinction between registered partnerships and partnerships equivalent to marriage.** The Aliens Act no longer distinguishes between registered partnerships and partnerships equivalent to marriage. Both categories are now required to provide proof of a durable and stable relationship. According to the federal government, this amendment reflects developments in the recognition of same-sex marriage across the EU.
- ▶ **Housing requirement.** The Law of 18 July 2025 also introduced a revised housing requirement. Under the new provisions, proof must be provided of decent housing that is considered normal for comparable families and that complies with the applicable safety and hygiene standards. The detailed implementation of this standard is still to be specified by Royal Decree. Until then, the existing specifications remain applicable. For single permit holders who wish to be joined by family members in Belgium, some flexibility may be applied in ex officio cases concerning proof of accommodation, for example through the acceptance of a hotel reservation or confirmation from the employer (**see also section 1.1.4**). According to the federal government, the revised housing standard aims to prevent unsafe or inadequate housing situations.

The implementation of the Law of 18 July 2025 provides for a transitional period. For family members of third-country nationals in Belgium, the new requirements apply where the sponsor obtained their residence permit on or after 18 August 2025. For third-country nationals who obtained their residence permit before 18 August 2025, the previous requirements will continue to apply until 18 August 2027.

(3) On 1 April 2026, this amount was indexed at € 2 408.79.



1.1.4 REVISED INCOME REQUIREMENT FOR EX OFFICIO ISSUANCE OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION VISA FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF WORKERS WITH A SINGLE PERMIT

In certain cases, the Immigration Office may allow the ex officio issuance of a family reunification visa for family members of workers holding a single permit. In such cases, the embassy or consulate may issue the family reunification visa without prior consultation of the Immigration Office, thereby avoiding the regular family reunification procedure in Belgium.

In line with the Law of 18 July 2025, the sponsor must now provide proof of a net monthly salary of € 2 323.07⁴, increased by 10% for each additional dependent family member (see also section 1.5.2). Due to the Law of 18 July 2025 amending the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980, applications for family reunification submitted before 18 August 2025 remain subject to the previous income threshold of € 2 131.28 net per month⁵. The same threshold continues to apply until 18 August 2027 where the sponsor obtained the single permit before 18 August 2025.

To qualify for ex officio issuance of a family reunification visa, the family relationship must have existed before the single permit was issued. In addition, the application for family reunification must have been submitted at the same time as the single permit application, or at the latest within six months following the issuance of the single permit. The applicant must also meet the other applicable family reunification conditions, including those relating to health insurance, housing and sufficient means of subsistence.

For certain categories of single permit holders, compliance with the income requirement is presumed. These categories include highly skilled workers, excluding posted workers; EU Blue Card holders; persons admitted under intra-corporate transfer long-term mobility; researchers, with or without a hosting agreement; post-doctoral researchers; professional athletes and coaches; and persons admitted for employment under international agreements.

(4) On 1 April 2026, this amount was indexed at € 2 408.79.

(5) On 1 March 2026 this amount was indexed at € 2 173.88.

1.2 Legislative changes at the regional level

1.2.1 REVISED MINIMUM INCOME FOR THIRD-COUNTRY WORKERS

On 1 February 2025, the gross guaranteed average monthly minimum income (GMMI), applicable for all migrant workers in Belgium, was increased to € 2 111.89. The GMMI applies as a general condition for obtaining a single or work permit if no specific wage condition applies, except for au pairs, trainees or volunteers. Before, this amount was € 2 070.48.

The minimum gross annual salary standards for the indicated categories of third-country workers were revised as follows:

	Flemish Region ⁶	Walloon Region	Brussels-Capital Region (monthly)	German-Speaking Community
Highly-skilled Workers	€ 48 912	€ 53 220		
	€ 39 129.60 (for persons under 30)	€ 42 576 (for persons under 30)	€ 3 703.44	€ 52 773
Executives	€ 78 259	€ 88 790	€ 6 647.20	€ 88 045
European Blue Card		€ 68 815		
	€ 63 586	€ 55 052 (for juniors, < 3 years work experience)	€ 4 748	€ 63 586
Professional Athletes	€ 101 019	€ 53 220	€ 88 320 (annually)	€ 88 320
Artists	€ 42 313	€ 44 396	€ 3 086.20	€ 44 023
Intra-Corporate Transferees	€ 78 259 (manager)	€ 68 815 (manager)	€ 5 460.20 (manager)	€ 68 896 (manager)
	€ 48 912 (experts and trainees)	€ 55 053 (experts)	€ 4 510.60 (experts)	€ 55 117 (experts)
		€ 34 408 (trainees)	€ 2 611.40 (trainees)	€ 34 449 (trainees)

(6) The Flemish Government is awaiting the publication of the revised wage standards for 2026 by the Belgian Statistical Office, Statbel, before determining its revised minimum gross annual salary thresholds. Once the Flemish Government publishes its revised minimum gross annual salary thresholds for 2026, they will apply immediately.



Labour market test

Mechanism that aims to ensure that migrant workers are only admitted after employers have unsuccessfully searched for national workers, EU citizens (in EU Member States this also means EEA workers) or legally residing third-country nationals with access to the labour market according to national legislation.

(7) VDAB, [Knelpuntberoepen in Vlaanderen - Editie 2025](#), 1 February 2025.

(8) Vlaamse Overheid, [Ministerieel besluit](#) van 1 December 2025 tot vaststelling van de lijst met middengesechoolde functies waarvoor een structureel tekort aan arbeidskrachten bestaat.

(9) Gouvernement Wallon – département de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle du SPW Économie, Emploi, Recherche, "Liste des Métiers en Pénurie".

(10) Brussel Economie en Werkgelegenheid/ Bruxelles Economie et Emploi, "[Nieuwe lijst met knelpuntberoepen in het Brussels Gewest](#)" / "[Nouvelle liste des professions en pénurie en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale](#)", 7 July 2025.

(11) Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, "[Liste des métiers en pénurie en Communauté germanophone pour l'année scolaire 2025-2026](#)", June 2025.

(12) Regierung Der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft - Der Minister Für Unterricht, Ausbildung Und Beschäftigung, Ministerieller Erlass 3 Juli 2025 zur Festlegung der Liste der Berufe, für die ein Fachkräftemangel besteht.

1.2.2 REVISED REGIONAL LISTS OF BOTTLENECK PROFESSIONS

In February 2025, the Flemish Public Employment Service VDAB published the revised list of bottleneck professions for 2025⁷. Professions on this list can apply for a single permit under the category "other", if the employer can prove that no suitable candidate could be found on the Belgian labour market. Compared to the top 10 of bottleneck professions in Flanders in 2024, this new list, published in February 2025, remained almost the same, with only two new professions (machine builder and technician for construction, agricultural and lifting machinery). With a total of 251 professions, the list includes 10 more professions than in 2024.

Additionally, the **Flemish Government** adopted a Ministerial Decision on 1 December 2025, confirming a list of "Middle-level professions for which there is a structural shortage on the labour market", containing 21 professions (down from 29).⁸ Employers who submit the single permit application on behalf of their prospective third-country national workers are not subject to a **labour market test** if the profession is included on this list of "middle-level professions". Additionally, the position must be at least 0.8fte, the employee must have the relevant qualifications, and the employee's profile must have been screened. The revised list applies from 1 January 2026 onwards.

In October 2025, the **Walloon Region** published their revised list of bottleneck professions, valid until 30 September 2026.⁹ The list includes 56 professions, down from 73 in 2024. Single permit applications for professions on this list may be submitted under the category "other" and enjoy an exemption from the requirement of labour market testing.

On 1 July 2025, the Public Employment Service for the **Brussels-Capital Region**, Actiris, published a new list of bottleneck professions.¹⁰ The list includes 81 professions, compared to 84 in 2024. Single permit applications for professions included on this list are exempt from the requirement to carry out a labour market test, as part of the application procedure. The employee must, however, have the relevant qualifications to enjoy the exemption from labour market testing.

In June 2025, the Public Employment Service for the **German-Speaking Community**, ADG, updated its list¹¹ of bottleneck professions, formalised by the Ministerial Decision of 3 July 2025.¹² The list is valid for the academic year 2025-2026 and includes 84 professions. Persons applying for a single permit for a bottleneck profession are exempt from labour market testing if they already possess a long-term residence permit in another EU member state.

1.2.3 MANDATORY INTEGRATION TRAJECTORY FOR THIRD-COUNTRY WORKERS IN FLANDERS

In September 2025, the Flemish Government introduced a **mandatory tailored integration trajectory starting in 2027**.¹³ The new integration trajectory will be specifically designed for first-time residents in Belgium who hold a residence permit for employment, including self-employed persons, and their family members. Seasonal and short-term workers, exchange students, and persons participating in working holiday schemes will be excluded from this trajectory.

The programme will be delivered **digitally** and can be started either in the country of origin or within six months of arrival in Flanders. It will provide essential information on work, rights and responsibilities, and Flemish norms and values. The Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration will develop the modules in 2026, with the full trajectory expected to be available to workers and their partners in 2027. The extension of the obligation to follow a civic integration programme to third-country workers requires an amendment to the legislation, which is scheduled to be submitted to the Flemish Government for approval in the first half of 2026. The mandatory integration trajectory is intended to support third-country workers and their family members from the outset of their stay in Flanders and to facilitate their integration into both the labour market and society. In addition, it aims to increase Flanders' attractiveness for migrant workers in order to respond to labour shortages while further strengthening their integration, in accordance with the Concept Note of 9 May 2025 and the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2024–2029.

1.2.4 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES AFFECTING VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF THIRD-COUNTRY WORKERS IN FLANDERS

The Decision is based on the “**concentric model**” (see the Flemish Coalition Agreement 2024–2029¹⁴ and the Concept Note of 9 May 2025¹⁵), whereby priority is given to activating unemployed persons residing in Flanders, followed by jobseekers in neighbouring regions. Recruitment of jobseekers from outside the EU is considered a final step to fill remaining vacancies. The amendments aim to attract high and medium-skilled workers, to ensure better protection of workers, avoid fraud and misuse of work permits and accelerate application procedures.

(13) Vlaamse Regering, ["Mededeling aan de Vlaamse Regering"](#) (VR 2025 MED.0351/1BIS).

(14) Vlaamse Regering, ["Samen werken aan een warm en welvarend Vlaanderen - Vlaams Regeerakkoord 2024-2029"](#), September 2024.

(15) Vlaamse Regering, ["Mededeling aan de Vlaamse Regering – Conceptnota 'Verscherpt en geïntegreerd arbeidsmigratiebeleid'"](#) (VR 2025 MED.01050/1QUATER), 9 May 2025.



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The **Flemish Government** Decision of 28 November 2025¹⁶ will enter into force on 1 January 2026 and introduces the following changes affecting various categories of third-country workers:

- ▶ **Low-skilled workers** will no longer qualify for a single permit, with the exception of seasonal workers.
- ▶ **Seasonal workers** employed in agriculture and hospitality will benefit from a presumed labour shortage, meaning that no labour market test will be required, provided that the occupation concerned is included on the Flemish list of bottleneck professions.
- ▶ An **administrative fee** will be introduced for applicants for the processing of applications to obtain or renew a work permit, as well as for applications for a permanent work permit. This fee will be charged in addition to the fee payable to the Immigration Office for processing the residence permit application under the single permit procedure. However, this measure has not yet entered into force.
- ▶ The **responsibilities of employers** will be expanded, including with regard to the provision of supporting documents, cooperation with the Flemish Employment Agency, and the burden of proof in certain categories of applications, including the category “other”.
- ▶ The **discretionary grounds for refusing work permits** will be expanded.
- ▶ The **discretionary grounds for withdrawing work permits** will be expanded.

From 1 January 2026 onwards, first applications for a single permit will be subject to the new rules. Applications for **renewal from 1 January 2026 onwards will be subject to the old rules** if it concerns a renewal of a work permit for the same profession and the same employer.

1.2.5 BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION APPLIES SHORT TERM MOBILITY PROVISIONS FOR BLUE CARD HOLDERS

As of 10 July 2025, the conditions governing short-term mobility for EU Blue Card holders in other EU member states (Art. 22 §3, Brussels Decision of 16 May 2024) apply in the **Brussels-Capital Region**. This change implies an exemption from requiring a work permit for a period of 90 days within a 180-day period for blue card holders residing in another EU member state. These changes are part of the further implementation of the Cooperation Agreement of 22 March 2024, in the context of the **implementation of the European Blue Card Directive (2021/1883)**.

(16) Vlaamse Regering, "[Besluit tot wijziging van het besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 7 december 2018 houdende uitvoering van de wet van 30 april 1999 betreffende de tewerkstelling van buitenlandse werknemers](#)" (VR 2025 2811 DOC.1095/2).

1.3 Attracting and monitoring students and researchers

Regarding study migration, the Federal Government stated in the Coalition Agreement that it intends to continue attracting highly skilled international students and researchers, while strengthening control measures in this area. The Agreement provides that procedures for highly skilled students and researchers are to be accelerated, while admission conditions are to be enforced more strictly through enhanced document checks, stricter financial requirements, tighter rules on guarantors, and closer monitoring of study progress. Additional measures referred to in the Agreement include enhanced screening for security risks, such as espionage, restrictions on changes to study programmes, and the possibility of suspending study migration from countries where fraud and misuse are considered widespread.

The objective of these measures is to facilitate the admission of highly skilled students and researchers, while addressing concerns related to abuse, fraud and security risks in the context of study migration. More broadly, the policy direction set out in the Coalition Agreement aims to combine the attraction of international talent with stricter safeguards, increased financial accountability and enhanced monitoring, including through the planned establishment of a guarantor database.

1.4 Tackling labour exploitation and safeguarding equal treatment of third-country workers

On 24 October 2025, the Flemish Government adopted a Decision¹⁷ aimed at **strengthening liability in subcontracting chains** involving irregularly residing third-country nationals, enhancing oversight of subcontracting arrangements, and addressing the employment of such persons. The measure followed research by the Department of Work and Social Economy¹⁸, which identified the use of posted third-country nationals in subcontracting chains, including cases involving irregular residence, fraudulent social security documents and difficulties in establishing liability in complex subcontracting structures (see also Quater Nota of 9 December 2022)¹⁹.

The Decision applies to four sectors identified as high risk: construction, cleaning, meat processing and parcel delivery. It strengthens liability through an extension of the duty of care. Across all sectors, clients and contractors were already required to obtain a written statement from their (sub)contractors confirming that they did not employ irregularly residing third-country nationals. This

(17) Vlaamse Gemeenschap, [Besluit van 24 oktober 2025 van de Vlaamse Regering tot wijziging van het besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 10 december 2010 tot uitvoering van het decreet van 10 december 2010 betreffende de private arbeidsbemiddeling, wat betreft de gedragscode uitzendactiviteiten, en het besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 7 december 2018 houdende uitvoering van de wet van 30 april 1999 betreffende de tewerkstelling van buitenlandse werknemers, wat betreft de zorgvuldigheidsplicht bij ketenaansprakelijkheid](#), C - 2025/008896.

(18) Departement Werk & Sociale Economie, [Intra-EU-detachering in het Vlaams Gewest - Een analyse van de data uit LIMOSA 2010-2020](#), August 2022.

(19) Vlaamse Regering, [Quaternota aan de Vlaamse Regering](#), VR 2022 0912 DOC. 1363/1QUATER.



requirement is now extended to irregularly residing self-employed persons. In the four sectors concerned, clients and contractors must also obtain additional information on the (sub)contractor and on the third-country nationals engaged by them. Where the required statement or information is not provided, or false documents are submitted, this must be reported through the electronic desk of the Flemish Social Inspection. Although compliance with the enhanced duty of care is not mandatory, failure to do so may result in liability in cases involving the employment of irregularly residing third-country nationals and may lead to criminal prosecution or an administrative fine. The measures will apply from 1 January 2026, with a six-month grace period.

1.5 Right to family reunification

1.5.1 THE FEDERAL COALITION AGREEMENT ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Following the elections in Belgium in June 2024, the Federal Government presented their Coalition Agreement 2025-2029 on 31 January 2025. The Coalition Agreement identifies **family reunification** as an important migration channel to Belgium and states that procedures in this area will be streamlined, while admission requirements will be tightened. Measures referred to in the Agreement include an increase in the income requirement, the introduction of pre-arrival integration and language tests, an increase in the minimum age for spouses and registered partners from 18 to 21, and training for officials to detect cases of sham marriage. According to the Coalition Agreement, these measures are intended to promote integration and reduce the risk of poverty.

1.5.2 STRICTER CONDITIONS FOR FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Following the Federal Coalition Agreement, the Law of 18 July 2025²⁰ was adopted and entered into force on 18 August 2025. The Law amends the conditions and requirements for family reunification set out in the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980. According to the federal government, these amendments aim to improve the management of family migration in line with recent EU legislation and case law, and to enable a more timely response to evolving social needs.

The following general amendments were introduced and apply across the different categories of applicants for family reunification:

- ▶ **Higher income requirement.** The reference threshold was changed from 120% of the minimum social welfare income to 110% of the average guaranteed minimum monthly income. As of 18 August 2025, this resulted in a further

Family Reunification

In the context of the Family Reunification Directive, the entry into and residence in an EU Member State by family members of a third-country national residing lawfully in that EU Member State in order to preserve the family unit, whether the family relationship arose before or after the resident's entry.

(20) Federale Overheidsdienst Binnenlandse Zaken/ Service Public Fédérale Intérieur, [Wet van 18 juli 2025](#) tot wijziging van de wet van 15 december 1980 betreffende de toegang tot het grondgebied, het verblijf, de vestiging en de verwijdering van vreemdelingen wat de voorwaarden voor gezinshereniging betreft/ [Loi du 18 juillet 2025](#) modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement.

increase in the minimum income requirement, from € 2 131.28 to € 2 323.07 net per month⁽²¹⁾. In addition, the federal government introduced a supplementary increase of 10% for each additional dependent family member, including dependent family members already residing with the sponsor in Belgium. Where the income requirement is not met, an individual needs assessment must be carried out. In this context, the Law of 18 July 2025 explicitly places the burden of proof on the applicant. According to the federal government, this measure aims to ensure that sponsors and their family members have sufficient means of subsistence and do not rely on social assistance.

- ▶ **Minimum age requirement.** The minimum age for spouses and partners was raised from 18 to 21 years. According to the federal government, this amendment aims to reduce the risk of forced marriages and to support integration.
- ▶ **Removal of the distinction between registered partnerships and partnerships equivalent to marriage.** The Law no longer distinguishes between registered partnerships and partnerships equivalent to marriage. Both categories are now required to provide proof of a durable and stable relationship. According to the federal government, this amendment reflects developments in the recognition of same-sex marriage across the EU.
- ▶ **Housing requirement.** The Law of 18 July 2025 also introduced a revised housing requirement. Under the new provisions, proof must be provided of decent housing that is considered normal for comparable families and that complies with applicable safety and hygiene standards. The detailed implementation of this standard is still to be specified by Royal Decree. Until then, the existing specifications remain applicable. According to the federal government, this amendment aims to prevent unsafe or inadequate housing situations.
- ▶ **Introduction of waiting periods.** For sponsors holding permanent residence in Belgium, a waiting period of two years was introduced before family reunification can take place. Where the family relationship already existed before the sponsor's arrival in Belgium, the waiting period is reduced to one year. An exception applies where the sponsor seeks reunification only with children under 18 years of age or with dependent disabled children over 18 years of age; in such cases, no waiting period applies. According to the federal government, the waiting period is intended to ensure that the sponsor has reached a sufficient degree of stability before family reunification takes place.

The Law of 18 July 2025 provides for a transitional period. For family members of Belgian nationals, the new requirements will apply from 18 August 2027 onwards. For family members of third-country nationals in Belgium, the new requirements apply where the sponsor obtained their residence permit on or after 18 August 2025. Where the sponsor obtained their residence permit before 18 August 2025, the previous requirements will continue to apply until 18 August 2027.

(21) On 1 April 2026, this amount was indexed at € 2 408.79.



1.5.3 REVISED INCOME REQUIREMENT FOR EX OFFICIO ISSUANCE OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION VISA FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF WORKERS WITH A SINGLE PERMIT

In certain cases, the Immigration Office may allow the ex officio issuance of a family reunification visa for family members of workers holding a single permit. In such cases, the embassy or consulate may issue the family reunification visa without prior consultation of the Immigration Office, thereby avoiding the regular family reunification procedure in Belgium. For a detailed description of the revised income requirements for the ex officio issuance of family reunification visas, see [section 1.1.4](#).

1.6 Initiatives on labour mobility

The Skills Mobility Partnership (SMP)²² between Belgium and Suriname, launched in 2024 and implemented by IOM, continued in 2025 with a focus on capacity building as a first step towards medium-term mobility. In this context, two nursing schools in Suriname (QCS and UTOS) and two in Belgium (Hivset and Miras CVO) participated in a structured capacity-building trajectory. The participating institutions compared their nursing curricula to identify common elements and gaps in training content, competencies and teaching methods. On this basis, four peer-to-peer exchanges were organised in 2025. These exchanges supported knowledge sharing, explored possibilities for further alignment, and strengthened the institutional relationships and technical foundations needed to support future mobility under the partnership. As part of this trajectory, a study visit of Surinamese nursing educators and institutional representatives to Belgium was organised. The delegation engaged with Belgian partner institutions, observed clinical training practices, and visited healthcare and elderly care facilities. The study visit allowed participants to gain insight into Belgian approaches to curriculum implementation, clinical supervision and the organisation of care services, and to reflect on how these elements could inform further development of nursing education in Suriname. For the migration and development dimension of this initiative, see [Section 14.4](#) on labour mobility partnerships and skills cooperation.

The Labour Migration Scheme (LMS) between Belgium and Tunisia²³ continued in 2025. Implemented by IOM, the initiative aims to connect recent Tunisian graduates with employers in Belgium through a talent-centred and ethical pathway, taking into account employers' needs and labour shortages in Belgium, while also responding to labour market challenges affecting young graduates in Tunisia. In 2025, 283 employers in Belgium and 20 in Tunisia were contacted. This led to 51 pitches, of which 29 received a positive response, although only

(22) IOM, Establishing the foundations of a Belgian-Surinamese Skills Mobility Partnership in the healthcare sector with link <https://belgium.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1286/files/smp-bel-sur-info-sheet-en.pdf>.

(23) IOM, [Learning Mobility Scheme Tunisia-Belgium](#).

a limited number of recruitment procedures were still ongoing by the end of the year. One remote internship placement was also realised. In parallel, activities in 2025 focused on the development of a structured database of Tunisian students in Belgium, in cooperation with relevant universities. The initiative also gave greater attention to recruitment from a pool of Tunisian nationals already present in Belgium and to remote internship opportunities. For the migration and development dimension of this initiative, see also [Section 14.4](#).

Displaced Talent for Europe (DT4E)²⁴ and its follow-up phase, DT4E 2.0, continued in 2025 with a focus on consolidating and expanding complementary labour pathways for displaced talent in Belgium, France and Slovakia. Building on the initial DT4E model, the project combined employer outreach, pathway development and coordination with public authorities at national and EU level. Across the three countries, DT4E 2.0 engaged in structured outreach to employers in sectors facing recruitment challenges, including healthcare, construction, manufacturing, technology and professional services. By the end of 2025, a total of approximately 519 employers had been reached across Belgium. The project delivered more than 120 bilateral employer pitches across Belgium, complemented by national and transnational employer engagement events and peer-learning exchanges within the consortium. In Belgium, activities focused on consolidating sector-based pathways, including healthcare and technical profiles, while in France and Slovakia the emphasis was on expanding employer engagement and testing pathway feasibility in collaboration with national authorities. By the end of 2025, DT4E had resulted in a growing pipeline of validated vacancies, with a consolidated number of 69 vacancies received for further matching. While employer engagement and matching activities were well advanced in 2025, most recruitments were positioned in the pipeline phase, with relocations and hires scheduled to materialise progressively in the subsequent period.

The Global Skills Partnership in the care sector (GSP Soins)²⁵ between Belgium and Morocco continued in 2025. Implemented by Enabel, the project aims to establish a sustainable and innovative mobility partnership in the care sector that responds to labour market needs in both countries while strengthening training and employment systems in Morocco, and potentially in other partner countries. It also seeks to develop an ethical model of skills development and mobility in a highly demanded and regulated sector, which could offer useful lessons for other European Member States interested in setting up a similar scheme or talent partnership with Morocco. In 2025, the project focused on assessing under which conditions a mobility scheme in the care sector could be mutually beneficial for both countries and feasible within the existing legal framework on migration. Given the complexity of the care sector and the highly regulated nature of the professions concerned, activities centred on an analytical and consultative process involving public and private stakeholders in both Belgium and Morocco. The objective was to identify professions for which the development of a mobility scheme could generate mutual benefit,

(24) IOM, [Displaced Talent for Europe](#).

(25) The Migration Partnership Facility, [The Global Skills Partnership serving talents in the care sector \(GSP Soins\)](#).



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while taking into account ongoing reforms in both countries relating to training pathways and access to employment in care-related professions. The results of these analyses and consultations were discussed during a binational workshop held on 25 November 2025. This process laid the groundwork for the planned implementation, from mid-2026, of a mobility scheme for care assistants and nurses. For the migration and development dimension of this initiative, see also [Section 14.4](#) on labour mobility partnerships and skills cooperation.

In 2025, the **EMLINK project between Georgia and Belgium**²⁶, implemented by ICMPD, came to an end. Running from 2023 to 2025 with a budget of € 500 000, the project aimed to create an enabling environment for a pilot temporary mobility scheme involving Georgian start-ups and Belgian counterparts in the fields of innovation and entrepreneurship. By promoting the managed mobility of entrepreneurs, it sought to facilitate access to new markets and business opportunities, strengthen private sector competitiveness, support job creation and encourage foreign investment. The project was carried out in partnership with the Belgian Immigration Office, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia. It also contributed to stronger economic and political cooperation between Belgium and Georgia and to improved migration management. For the migration and development dimension of this initiative, see also [Section 14.4](#) on labour mobility partnerships and skills cooperation.

(26) ICMPD, [EMLINK: Strengthening the Partnership between Belgium and Georgia through Temporary Mobility of Entrepreneurs \(Entrepreneurial Mobility Link - EMLINK\)](#).

Circular migration

A form of migration that is characterised by a repeated back-and-forth movement of a person between two or more countries, typically for the purposes of work, study or training. It can occur within legal frameworks that facilitate mobility and may be temporary, seasonal or longer-term, depending on the conditions set by the countries involved.

1.7 Circular migration

The **Boosting Gambian Talents project**²⁷ was launched in 2025. The project supports entrepreneurial mobility between Belgium and The Gambia, including through short-term and, where relevant, circular mobility opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors. For the migration and development dimension of this initiative, see also **Section 14.5** on entrepreneurial mobility, diaspora engagement and remittances.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025²⁸

- > EMN Study on Labour migration in times of labour market shortages
- > EMN Study on Family reunification of third-country nationals: State of play of law and practice
- > EMN Study on Illegal employment of third-country nationals: 2017-2022 situation analysis
- > Ad Hoc Query on residence permits for the purpose of studies of third-country national minors
- > Ad Hoc Query on procedures for providing missing or supplementary information in application procedures
- > Ad Hoc Query on processing times of work-based residence permits
- > Ad Hoc Query on proof of necessary funds in study-based residence permit applications
- > Ad Hoc Query on labour mobility agreements with non-EU/EEA countries
- > Ad Hoc Query on the role of the employer in the integration of employed third-country nationals
- > Ad Hoc Query on language proficiency requirements on family reunification and pre-entry language tests

(27) Enabel, [Boosting Gambian Talents](#).

(28) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

02

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION



In Belgium, responsibility for international protection is shared between several authorities at different stages of the procedure. The Immigration Office is responsible for registering applications and applying the Dublin III Regulation, while the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) examines applications at first instance and decides on the granting, refusal or withdrawal of refugee status or subsidiary protection. Appeals against decisions of the Immigration Office and the CGRS are examined by the Council for Alien Law Litigation (CALL). Developments in the field of international protection therefore reflect both changes in the legal and policy framework and pressures affecting the functioning of the asylum system more broadly.

In 2025, international protection in Belgium continued to be shaped by sustained pressure on the asylum and reception system, despite a decrease in the number of applications compared with 2024. Developments concerned trends in applications and decision-making (2.1), policy and legislative changes aimed at tightening the asylum framework and addressing the backlog in the procedure (2.2), and changes on the operational level (2.3).

2.1. International protection in numbers

2.1.1 GENERAL TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

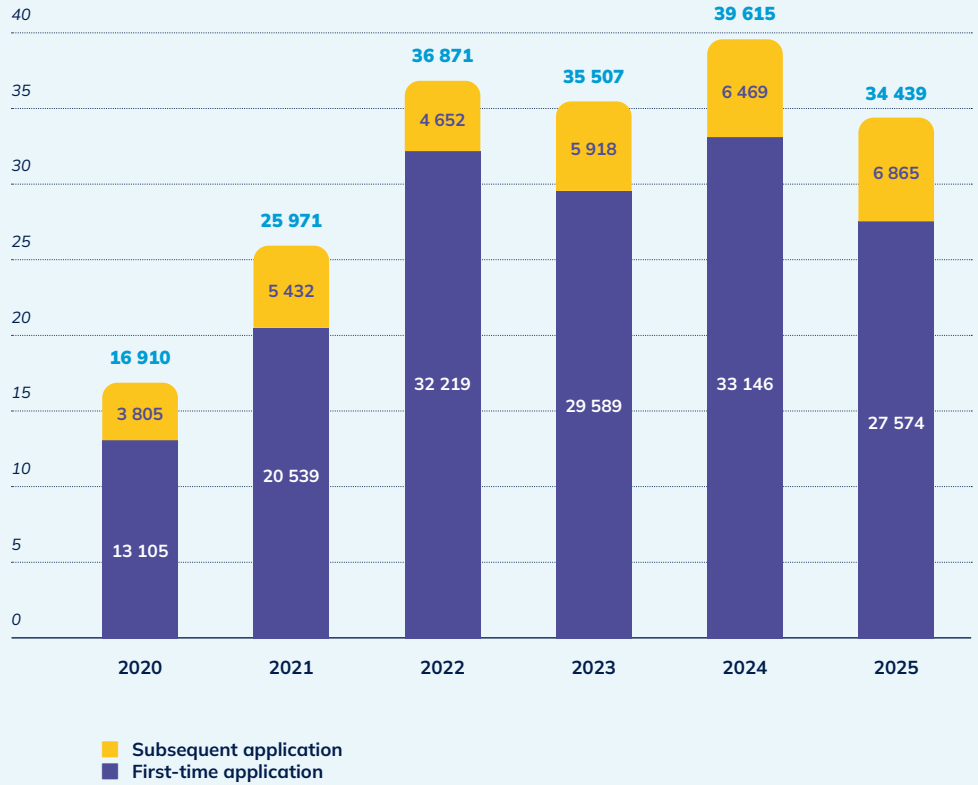
The number of applications for international protection fell to **34 439** individuals in 2025, a decrease of 13.1% from 2024 (when 39 615 applications were submitted). Monthly figures ranged from 2 257 in November to 3 540 in January 2025, making January the peak month of the year.²⁹

(29) Statistics made available by the CGRS.

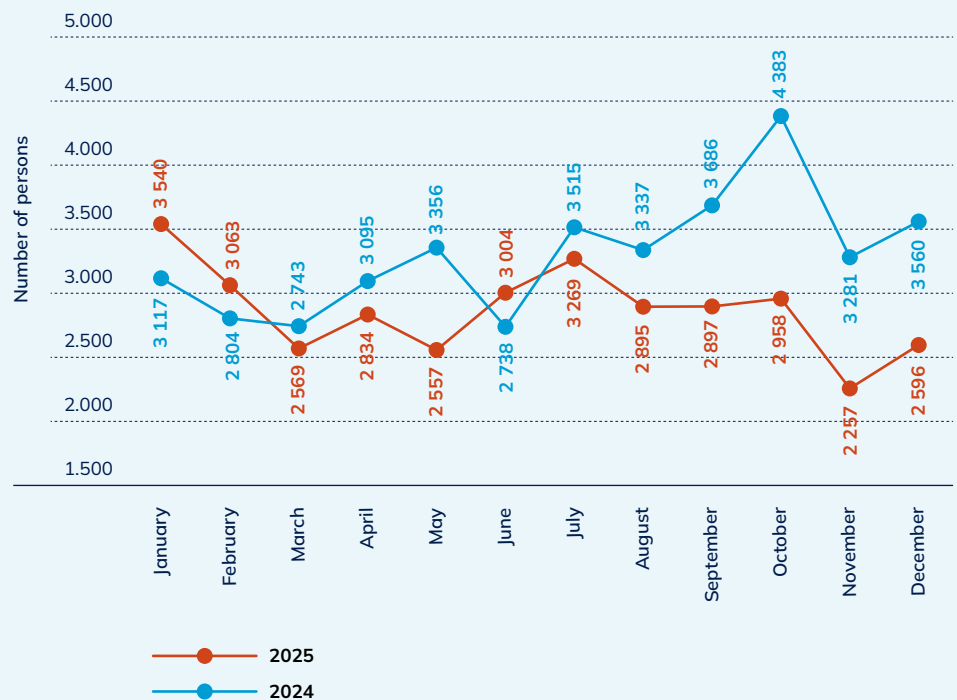


02 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Graph. 1
Applications for international protection between 2020 and 2025













Graph. 2
Total number of applications for international protection lodged in 2024 – 2025 (first and subsequent), by month



The **main countries of origin** of applicants in 2025 were Afghanistan, the Palestinian territories, Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Türkiye (see Table 1). Two notable shifts stand out compared to 2024: applications by Syrians dropped sharply by 74.1%, following the fall of the Assad regime, while applications by Palestinians decreased by 40.4%. Applications by Afghan nationals, by contrast, remained consistent with previous years.

Table 1. Top 10 nationalities by number of persons lodging an application for international protection in 2025

#	Nationality	Total applications for international protection	First-time applications for international protection	Subsequent applications for international protection
1	 Afghanistan	3 947	2 398	1 549
2	 Palestine	3 395	2 814	581
3	 Eritrea	2 671	2 592	79
4	 Congo (DRC)	2 422	2 121	301
5	 Turkey	2 370	2 104	266
6	 Burundi	1 501	1 436	65
7	 Syria	1 454	1 278	176
8	 Cameroon	1 351	1 135	216
9	 Guinea	1 334	1 084	250
10	 Moldova	818	403	415
	Other countries	13 176	10 209	2 967
Total 2025		34 439	27 574	6 865

After registration, the **Immigration Office transferred 26 625 applications** to the CGRS, and issued **6 690 decisions of refusal of residence** due to the application of the Dublin III Regulations (2.1.3), as well as **3 871 technical refusals**³⁰.

In 2025, **the CGRS took decisions concerning 31 457 persons**. Of these, 30 352 cases resulted in a final decision, while the remaining 967 cases (concerning 1 105 persons) involved an admissibility (intermediate) decision.

Among those who received a final decision, 28.4% were granted international protection status, compared with 47.8% in 2024. This decrease is largely attributable to the end of the large number of Palestinian cases related to the war in Gaza processed in 2024, as well as a sharp decline in the recognition rate for Palestinian applications overall. In 2024, the recognition rate for Palestinians was 90.1%. In 2025 this fell to 21%, as a direct result of the realignment of

(30) Technical refusals refer to cases where no substantive decision on international protection is taken. This includes situations where the applicant withdraws the request, where the application no longer has an object, or where the application is declared invalid.



the CGRS' policies for decision-making in applications from people benefiting from international protection in another Member State (2.1.4). This significantly impacted the recognition rate in Palestinian applications in 2025, as a large proportion of Palestinian applicants in Belgium had already obtained international protection in Greece.

In total, **8 369 persons were granted refugee status and 618 were granted subsidiary protection**. The highest numbers of refugee statuses were granted to nationals of Afghanistan (1 432), the Palestinian territories (1 266), Eritrea (1 209) and Türkiye (668). The highest number of subsidiary protection statuses was granted to nationals of Yemen (292).

Despite the decrease in the total number of applications in 2025, the CGRS workload did not decline significantly. At the end of 2025, the workload amounted to 24 406 dossiers, concerning 31 085 persons. Given the current inflow and staffing levels, a workload of 6 500 dossiers is considered the standard operational capacity. Consequently, the structural backlog stood at 17 906 dossiers, remaining well above that threshold.

The Council for Alien Law Litigation (CALL), which examines appeals in international protection cases, recorded **11 438 appeals** filed in 2025. It delivered 7 699 judgments in 2025. The workload of the CALL at the end of 2025 amounted to 10 591 cases pending. In 2025, the CALL followed a majority of CGRS decisions, rejecting 80% of appeals filed in international protection litigation. In 13,5% of cases, the appeal resulted in an annulment of the CGRS decision. In 8,1% of cases, the CALL amended the decision and granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.³¹

Subsequent application for international protection

A further application for international protection made after a final decision has been taken on a previous application, including cases where the applicant has explicitly withdrawn their application and cases where the determining authority has rejected an application following its implicit withdrawal in accordance with Art. 28 (1) of Directive 2013/32/EU (Recast Asylum Procedures directive)³²

2.1.2 SUBSEQUENT APPLICATIONS AND INADMISSIBILITY DECISIONS

The proportion of **subsequent applications** increased compared to 2024, accounting for 19.9% of total applications in 2025 (6 865 subsequent applications out of 34 439 total), compared to 16.3% in 2024.

The number of **inadmissibility decisions** increased in 2025 to 7 444 persons (compared to 4 561 in 2024). This increase is primarily related to subsequent applications or applications lodged by individuals who already obtained international protection in another EU Member State and the higher proportion of subsequent applications (2.1.4).

(31) [De Raad in cijfers | RVV: Le Conseil en chiffres | CCE.](#)

(32) [Directive 2013/32/EU \(Recast Asylum Procedures directive\).](#)

Admissibility procedures are conducted when an EU Member State does not have to examine whether an applicant qualifies for international protection because of specific circumstances or the inadmissibility grounds laid down in Art. 33 of Directive 2013/32/EU³². These are: another EU Member State is responsible for the application under the Dublin III Regulation; another EU Member State has already granted protection; another country is considered to be the first country of asylum or a safe third country for the applicant; the application is a subsequent one with no new elements; or a dependant lodges an application after consenting to be a part of an application³⁴.

2.1.3 DUBLIN

Dublin: Where Belgium is not responsible for examining an application for international protection under Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Dublin III) (previously Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 (Dublin II))³⁵, and another State is deemed responsible (a Member State of the European Union, or Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein or Switzerland), a take charge or take back request is submitted to that State. A take charge request is sent by one Member State to another to assume responsibility for processing an asylum application that has been lodged for the first time, whereas a take back request is sent when the person concerned has previously lodged an application in the other Member State. Where the request is accepted, a reasoned refusal decision accompanied by an order to leave the territory is issued. The applicant is then instructed to travel to the State responsible for examining the application for international protection.

Dublin requests issued by Belgium in 2025 (12 285) remained approximately the same compared to 2024 (12 501).³⁶ In 2025, these were made up of 7 434 take back requests and 4 851 take charge requests (see below). The main countries receiving Dublin requests from Belgium were Germany, France and Italy. Persons with Eritrean nationality were the most represented in these statistics (11%). Ultimately, 6 690 persons received a decision of refusal of residence under the Dublin Regulation in 2025.

(33) [Directive 2013/32/EU \(Recast Asylum Procedures directive\)](#).

(34) [EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary - Migration and Home Affairs](#).

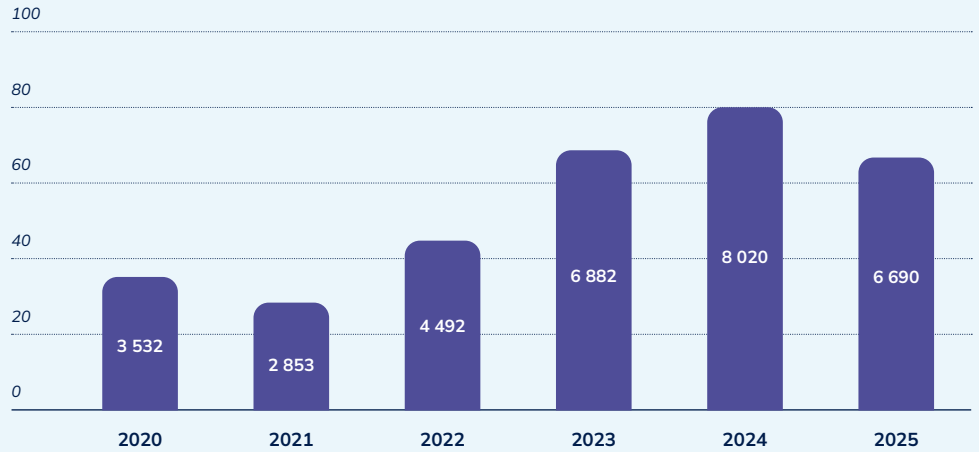
(35) [Regulation - 604/2013 - EN - Dublin Regulation - EUR-Lex](#).

(36) Dublin statistics provide by [the Immigration Office](#).



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Graph. 3
Evolution of decisions of refusal of residence under the Dublin regulation 2020-2025

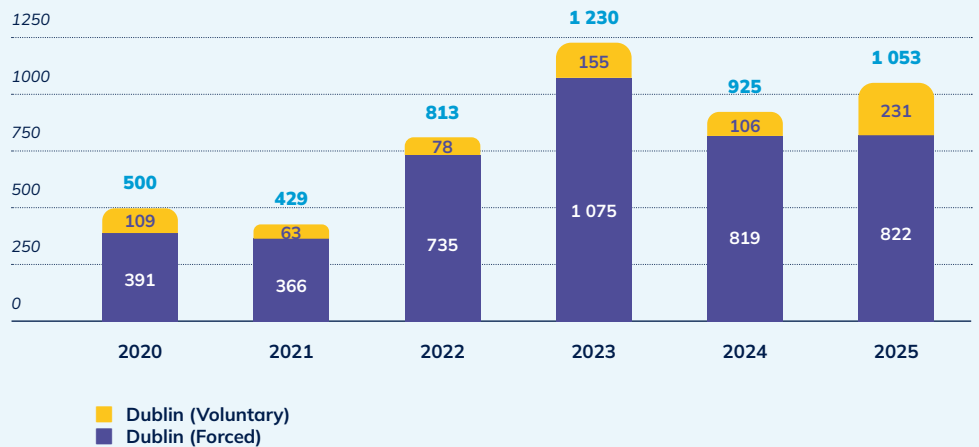


Conversely, Dublin requests received by Belgium in 2025 (3 872) remained practically the same compared to 2024 (3 939) as well. France was responsible for most of these requests (51%), followed by Germany and the Netherlands. In most cases, Dublin requests issued to Belgium concerned people with Afghan nationality (31%).

Dublin transfers carried out in 2025

In 2025, Belgium carried out 822 forced transfers under the Dublin III Regulation and recorded 231 voluntary transfers under the Dublin procedure³⁷, while 587 effective Dublin transfers from other Member States to Belgium took place.

Graph. 4
Evolution of transfers under the Dublin regulation 2020-2025³⁸



(37) Statistics provided by Fedasil at the request of EMN Belgium.

(38) Dublin statistics provide by [the Immigration Office](#).

2.1.4 APPLICANTS WITH AN INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION STATUS IN ANOTHER EU MEMBER STATE

In 2025, 2 629 asylum applications³⁹ in Belgium were submitted by individuals who already obtained a protection status in another EU Member State, predominantly Greece. This marks a sharp decline compared to 2024 when 4 825 applications were submitted by the same category of applicants. Despite this decline, the backlog in this type of applications from previous years continued to put a substantial strain on the asylum and reception services. Since these applicants are not subject to the Dublin regulation, they are entitled to access reception services upon registering their application. The CGRS must assess the admissibility of each application, which includes a personal interview and a well-substantiated decision. Each case requires a thorough individual assessment because the CALL considers the social services in Greece to be inadequate and inaccessible for some applicants. Therefore, applications from individuals who have already received international protection in another EU Member State significantly continued to impact the organisational and administrative capacities of Belgian asylum services. At the CGRS, EUAA experts were deployed in 2025 to address the backlog in applications submitted by persons with international protection status in another Member State (2.3.4).

2.1.5 EXCLUSION AND REVOCATIONS

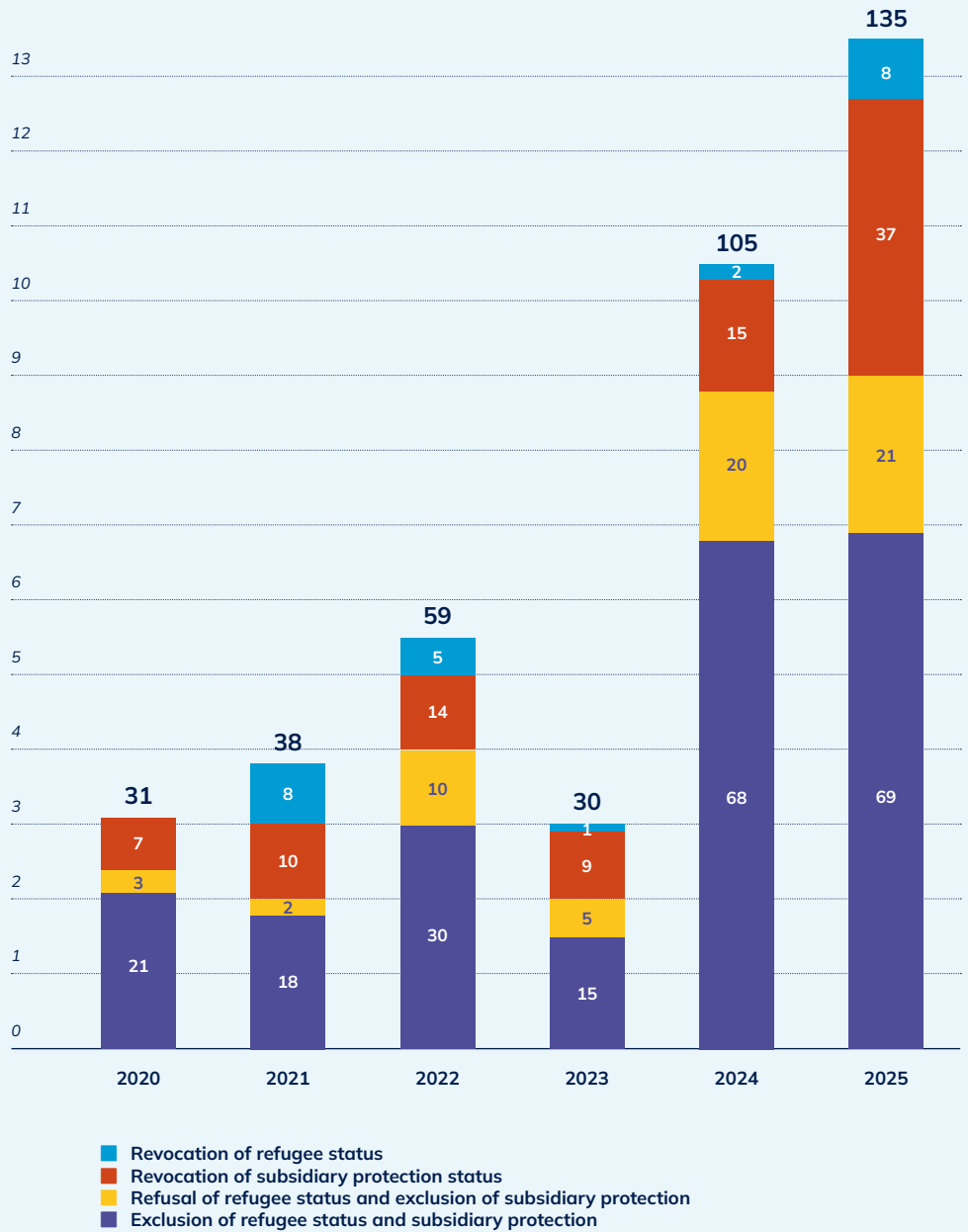
Article 1F of the 1951 Refugee Convention provides that the protections of international refugee law do not apply to persons who have committed crimes against peace, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other serious non-political crimes. In practical terms, this means that someone who fears persecution in their country of origin but who was themselves involved in such acts — whether as a perpetrator or by actively contributing to them — may be excluded from refugee status or subsidiary protection. These cases are known as “1F dossiers.”

(39) Statistics provided by the Chain Monitoring Unit at the request of EMN Belgium.



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Graph. 5
Article 1F decisions
by category
2020-2025⁽⁴⁰⁾



CGRS decisions in this category have increased sharply in recent years, marking a broader and more sustained trend. Since 2015, when 14 individuals were excluded, the annual number has grown tenfold, reaching **135 dossiers in 2025** alone. While the figures remained relatively stable between 2020 and 2023 (ranging from 30 to 59 per year), a marked acceleration is visible from 2024 onwards, with 105 decisions that year followed by 135 in 2025. In the period 2020–2025, applicants from Afghanistan represented the largest share of 1F decisions (95 dossiers), followed by Syria (40), Iraq (36), and Palestine (29).

(40) Statistics provided by the CGRS.

Graph. 6
Grounds for
exclusion and
revocation
2020-2025



The diversity of profiles and grounds is considerable. Under the heading of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Afghan cases predominate, primarily involving individuals who served in military intelligence or the armed forces prior to the fall of the previous regime.⁴¹ The category of serious non-political crimes encompasses a wide range of conduct — including human trafficking, violence, child marriage, and organised drug offences. Involvement in isolated, low-level criminality does not in itself trigger exclusion; however, directing or managing criminal networks does. Cases involving crimes against humanity frequently concern Eritrea, where open-ended and compulsory military service has in some instances amounted to a form of forced labour. While many individuals subject to such a system are themselves victims and may qualify for protection, cases are occasionally identified where a person actively facilitated the conscription of others — and such individuals are excluded accordingly.

The majority of 1F dossiers are subsequently referred to the Federal Prosecutor's Office, where a criminal investigation into violations of international humanitarian law may be opened.

(41) [De Standaard, 'Asielprocedure spoort meer oorlogsmisdadigers op'](#).



2.2. Legislative developments

Against the backdrop of a sustained high number of applications for international protection, a continuing backlog in the procedure, and a structural saturation of the reception network, the Federal Government expressed its intention to exhaust all possibilities for tightening migration policies within the framework of European asylum and reception legislation. Key policy items related to international protection included: taking all possible measures to structurally lower the influx of applicants; limiting reception to material support in collective centres and phasing out small-scale local reception initiatives; limiting irregular secondary movements by tightening legislation concerning applicants who already hold a protection status in another EU Member State; maximally discouraging subsequent applications; intensifying discouragement campaigns for applicants from safe countries of origin and countries with a low recognition rate; tightening the duty to cooperate, including mandatory examination of phones and other devices; increasing the efficiency of the procedure through increased capacity and workforce at the relevant administrations; and suspending the resettlement programme until the reception network has been scaled down significantly and the backlog eliminated.

2.2.1 LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION PROCEDURE

During 2025, the Federal Government adopted several legislative changes to implement these policy objectives. The Law of 14 July 2025, published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 23 July 2025 and entering into force on 4 August 2025, amended the Aliens Act to provide that applications for international protection submitted by persons who have already received protection status or a final decision on a previous application in another EU Member State are registered as subsequent applications. For applicants who have received a negative decision in another EU Member State, the examination may be limited to an investigation of admissibility, based only on new elements that could justify a need for international protection. For applicants who have already received a protection status, the investigation focuses on whether the protection granted in the other EU Member State is effective. If this is not the case, the application is examined on the merits, with regard to the situation in the country of origin. This measure significantly impacts both the procedure and reception entitlements. The same legislative package reduced the standard period for justifying one's absence at a personal interview in the regular procedure from 15 to 8 days.

2.2.2 FAMILY REUNIFICATION FOR BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

On 18 August 2025, the law of 18 July 2025 entered into force, restricting the requirements and conditions for family reunification as stipulated in the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980. General restrictions for family reunification can be consulted in [chapter 1, section 1.5.2](#).

In the context of international protection, the law of 18 July 2025 introduces new distinctions. Firstly, sponsors with refugee status and sponsors with subsidiary protection status are no longer subject to the same family reunification conditions. Additionally, the legislator introduces a distinction between family members who accompanied the sponsor to Belgium⁴² and those who do not.

The changes made to the conditions and requirements for family reunification for **sponsors with refugee status are as follows:**

- ▶ **Reduced period of exemption from material requirements.** The exemption period from the material requirements (i.e. income requirement, housing requirement and proof of health insurance) for family reunification that is applicable to persons with refugee status is reduced from 1 year to 6 months. Proof of identity and family bond must be provided within 6 months following the recognition of refugee status. Family members who accompanied their sponsor with refugee status to Belgium are not subject to material requirements.
- ▶ **Application in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances.** Family members who accompanied their sponsor with refugee status to Belgium, can apply for family reunification in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances.
- ▶ **Application fee.** A fee is now required from family members if the family bond did not exist prior to the arrival of the sponsor to Belgium. Note, this does not apply to minors.
- ▶ **No family reunification for the second parent residing abroad.** Accompanied minors with refugee status no longer have a right to be reunited with their second parent who resides outside of Belgium. The second parent can, however, be granted family reunification on a discretionary basis. Note, if the accompanied minor arrived with both parents to Belgium and obtained refugee status, both parents can apply for family reunification with their minor (see also above: “*application in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances*”).
- ▶ **Exception to the minimum age of 21 for spouse or registered partner.** For the spouse or registered partner who accompanied their sponsor with refugee status to Belgium, the minimum age remains 18 years old (see also above: “*application in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances*”).

The changes made to the conditions and requirements for family reunification for **sponsors with subsidiary protection status are as follows:**

- ▶ **Family bond prior to arrival of the sponsor to Belgium.** Persons with subsidiary protection status can only reunite with family members with whom the family bond existed prior to their arrival to Belgium. For family members with whom the family bond was established after the arrival of their sponsor to Belgium, the sponsor with subsidiary protection status will need to wait until they have obtained permanent residence in Belgium, before they

(42) Family members are considered as **accompanying** their sponsor to Belgium if they:
 1) were in Belgium while the sponsor went through the international protection procedure;
 2) if the family member did not receive a protection status themselves and;
 3) if the family bond between the family member and the sponsor existed prior to their arrival to Belgium (see: Art. 10, §1, (1), 4°, Law of 15 December 1980).



can act as the sponsor to facilitate family reunification. While not stipulated in law, the legislator does clarify in the legislative proposal that children that are born into an existing family in Belgium do enjoy the right to family reunification (in line with the *best interest of the child principle*).

- ▶ **No exemption from material requirements.**⁴³ The one-year exemption period from the material requirements (i.e. income requirement, housing requirement and proof of health insurance) for family reunification is abolished. This measure does not apply to applications for family reunification where the family members accompanied their sponsor with subsidiary protection status to Belgium.
- ▶ **Two-year waiting period.**⁴⁴ Persons with subsidiary protection status are subject to a two-year waiting period before they can facilitate family reunification as the sponsor. Note, this waiting period does not apply to persons who accompanied their sponsor with subsidiary protection status to Belgium. To safeguard the best interest of the child, the legislator facilitates an exception to the waiting periods in cases where the sponsor wishes to only reunite with their child(ren) below 18 years old or disabled child(ren) over 18 years old. In such cases, no waiting period is imposed.
- ▶ **Official proof of family bond.**⁴⁵ The Immigration Office is still allowed, but no longer required, to deviate from the requirement for family members of sponsors with subsidiary protection status to provide official documents proving their family bond. This measure is limited to applications for family reunification where the family member(s) reside abroad and wish to reunite with their sponsor in Belgium.
- ▶ **Unaccompanied minors.** Parents of unaccompanied minors with subsidiary protection status no longer qualify for family reunification, instead they have to apply for a humanitarian visa.
- ▶ **Application in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances.** Family members who accompanied their sponsor with subsidiary protection status, can apply for family reunification in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances.
- ▶ **Application fee.**⁴⁶ Family members who had a family bond with the sponsor with subsidiary protection status prior to their arrival to Belgium, but who did not accompany the sponsor to Belgium, are expected to pay an application fee. Note: not applicable to minors.
- ▶ **Exception to the minimum age of 21 for spouse or registered partner.** For the spouse or registered partner who accompanied their sponsor with subsidiary protection status to Belgium, the minimum age remains 18 years old (see also above: “application in Belgium without proof of exceptional circumstances”).

With the newly introduced distinction between family reunification for persons with refugee status and subsidiary protection status as well as the distinction between family members who accompanied their sponsor to Belgium and those that did not, the legislator aims to address challenges relating to secondary migration in Belgium and the EU and to bring Belgian law more in line with the intentions of the EU legislator as presented in the Qualifications Directive (2011/95/EU).

(43) Following [Decision](#) no. 24/2026 of the Belgian Constitutional Court of 26 February 2026, the abolishment of the exemption from material requirements is suspended pending the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the preliminary questions referred by the Belgian Constitutional Court and the outcome of the action for annulment.

(44) Following [Decision](#) no. 24/2026 of the Belgian Constitutional Court of 26 February 2026, the two year waiting period is suspended pending the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the preliminary questions referred by the Belgian Constitutional Court and the outcome of the action for annulment.

(45) Following [Decision](#) no. 24/2026 of the Belgian Constitutional Court of 26 February 2026, the requirement of official proof of a family bond is suspended pending the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the preliminary questions referred by the Belgian Constitutional Court and the outcome of the action for annulment.

(46) Following [Decision](#) no. 24/2026 of the Belgian Constitutional Court of 26 February 2026, the registration fee is suspended pending the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the preliminary questions referred by the Belgian Constitutional Court and the outcome of the action for annulment.

2.3. Policy and operational developments

2.3.1 SAFE COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

On 15 December 2025, Belgium updated its list of safe countries of origin through the publication of the Royal Decree of 3 December 2025. India and Moldova were removed from the list and Morocco was added. The list of safe countries of origin thereafter comprised Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Morocco.

Following the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, the CGRS had suspended the processing of applications for international protection lodged by Syrian nationals. From 1 November 2025, the CGRS resumed the processing of these applications, after concluding that sufficient objective and up-to-date country of origin information had become available.

On 12 March 2025, the CGRS temporarily suspended the processing of applications involving applicants from the West Bank who are not registered with UNRWA. In this context, the notification of decisions refusing refugee status, as well as decisions relating to subsidiary protection, was put on hold pending an updated assessment of the security situation.

2.3.2 FAST-TRACK PROCEDURE

In 2025, Belgium amended the scope of the fast-track procedure (FTP), which had been in place since 1 February 2024 for applications from safe countries of origin and from countries meeting specific criteria related to low recognition rates. Georgia, Benin and Angola were added to the FTP, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo was removed. Although India and Moldova were removed from the national list of safe countries of origin in December 2025, applications from these countries will continue to be processed under the FTP. For applicants from countries designated as safe countries of origin, a time limit of 15 working days applies from the date on which the application is transferred from the Immigration Office to the CGRS. For applicants from other countries falling within the scope of the FTP, the applicable time limit is 50 working days.

2.3.3 ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES

Besides broader vulnerability initiatives targeting all migrants or even the general population ([see Chapter 6](#)), actors within the asylum and reception system developed targeted measures to address the specific vulnerabilities of applicants for international protection.



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In 2024, Fedasil initiated an inter-agency project on Vulnerability Detection and Referral. The overall objective of the project is to establish a more effective, coherent and harmonised approach to the identification and assessment of the vulnerabilities and specific needs of applicants for international protection. In early 2025, the CGRS formally joined the inter-agency project, thereby strengthening coherence across the different stages of the asylum procedure.

In 2025, as part of an AMIF project on vulnerability and special procedural needs, the CGRS has, among other things, compiled seven practical information sheets for its caseworkers or protection officers. These sheets cover emotional and physical reactions related to trauma that may occur among applicants and that can impact the personal interview. The CGRS has also developed two internal workshops for the protection officers. One workshop focuses on applying the information sheets in practice, and another on reading medical and psychological documents submitted during the asylum procedure. The CGRS also regularly organizes information sessions for protection officers, to which external experts are invited to speak on topics related to vulnerability in the asylum procedure. Finally, the CGRS coordinates two thematic working groups aimed at improving the participation of applicants with physical and/or mental vulnerabilities during the personal interview, and at strengthening the framework used to assess their applications. The CGRS aims to continue this work within the framework of a new AMIF-funded project in 2026–2027.

2.3.4 EUAA SUPPORT

Due to continued pressure on the Belgian asylum and reception system, the Belgian asylum authorities and the EUAA signed a Belgian Operational Plan for 2025–2026 in December 2024, which entered into effect in 2025. The plan covers operational support in the areas of asylum processing, including registration, admissibility and Dublin procedures, as well as reception, notably through the development of data systems and vulnerability tools.

Under this plan, the CGRS is supported by up to 18 EUAA experts involved in case processing, specifically examining the admissibility of applications from applicants who already hold a protection status in another EU Member State. These experts conduct personal interviews but are not responsible for decision-making. In addition, flow managers were deployed to support the CGRS reception helpdesks. Up to 26 interpreters reinforced the EUAA's support, primarily assisting in personal interviews on admissibility. EUAA support to the Belgian asylum services will continue in 2026.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025⁴⁷

- > Currently applicable asylum procedures at the border in view of implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum (EMN Inform)
- > Vocational education and training of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (EMN Inform)
- > Ad Hoc Query on the efficiency of the international protection procedure
- > Ad Hoc Query on the recording of personal interviews in asylum procedures
- > Ad Hoc Query on preliminary decision procedures in asylum applications
- > Ad Hoc Query on registration of applications for international protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on procedures in regard to booking interviews
- > Ad Hoc query on currently applicable asylum procedures at the border in view of implementing the new Pact on Migration and Asylum
- > Ad Hoc Query on needs assessment for determining the extent of legal advice/counselling for asylum applicants

(47) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

03

RECEPTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION



In Belgium, applicants for international protection are entitled to material reception conditions during the entire period of their asylum procedure (2). Reception is organised in open reception facilities, managed by the **Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil)** or one of its reception partners.

In the summer of 2021, Belgium's reception network began to saturate, prompting the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) to prioritise minors, families and other vulnerable groups in the allocation of reception places. Despite various measures to mitigate pressure on the reception network, Fedasil had to switch to 'crisis mode' in September 2021. The saturation of the reception network persisted throughout the years and remained ongoing in 2025.

In 2025, the legislative framework governing reception conditions underwent significant amendments (3.1). At the operational level, Fedasil implemented measures regarding its reception capacity (3.2), measures to accelerate outflow from the reception network (3.3), and to improve conditions for applicants seeking international protection within the reception network (3.4). Despite these efforts, the shortage of reception places continued in 2025 and had important legal and humanitarian consequences (3.5).

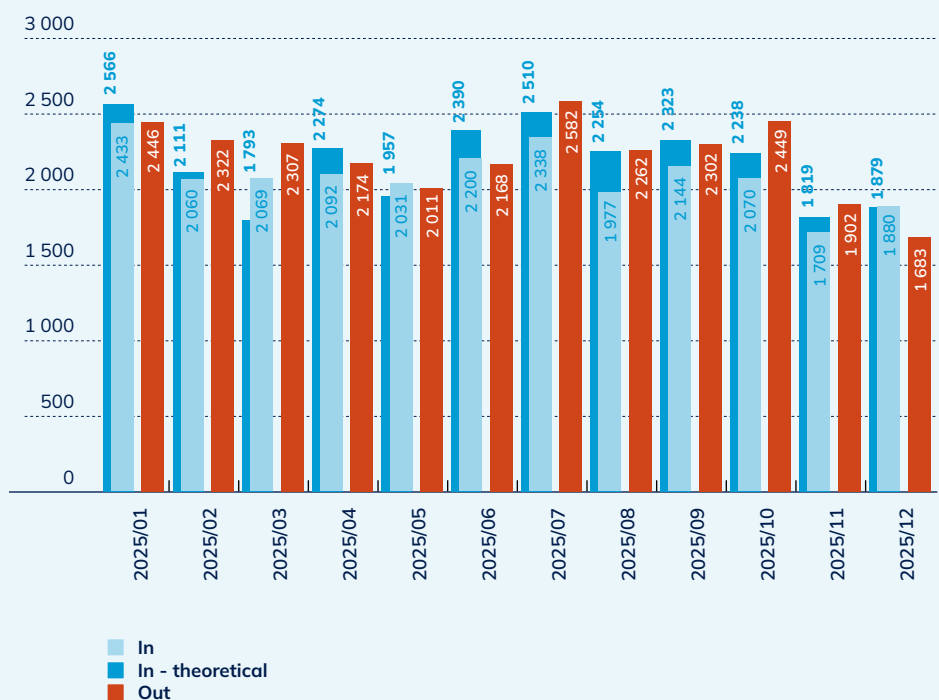
In 2025, 25 003 applicants for international protection entered the reception network (IN)⁴⁸, while 26 602 individuals left (OUT), resulting in an IN/OUT balance of -1 599 individuals⁴⁹.

(48) The total number of 'INs' does not include the 1 111 applicants (single men) who, due to a lack of reception capacity, were not accommodated in 2025. A number of them have registered on the waiting list, to be admitted at a later date to the reception network.

(49) All statistics on reception are derived from Fedasil. More statistics are available on the Fedasil website.

(50) The theoretical inflow is the inflow if the reception network had sufficient capacity to accommodate all applicants for international protection.

Graph. 7
Inflow⁵⁰ and theoretical inflow (of persons) to and outflow (of persons) from the reception network





3.1 Reform of the legislation on reception conditions

On 14 July 2025, in line with the government coalition agreement, the Belgian government adopted a new law revising the Reception Act, which constitutes the legal benchmark for the reception of applicants for international protection and certain other categories of foreigners in Belgium. The reform aims to address secondary movement and combat procedural abuse, with the main amendments introducing two new grounds allowing the limitation of the right to material reception conditions.

First, reception may be limited where an application for international protection already benefits from international protection in another Member State of the European Union (Article 4, §1, 5° of the Reception Act).⁵¹ Second, reception may be limited when a foreign accompanied minor submits an application for international protection on their own behalf, whereas a previous application submitted by their parents has been subject of a final negative decision (Article 4, §1, 6° of the Reception Act).⁵²

Another objective of the reform is to ensure that reception is limited to material support in accommodation centres. For this reason, the reform also repealed the articles allowing the non-designation of the mandatory place of registration and the removal or withdrawal of such a place (the so called 'code 207').⁵³ These provisions allowed Fedasil to not assign a reception place to an applicant, or to withdraw reception in the event of special circumstances. Following a non-assignment or withdrawal of mandatory place of registration, the applicant concerned could previously seek assistance from a Public Centre for Social Welfare. In some cases, the labour courts, in the context of an appeal, required Fedasil to temporarily lift the mandatory place of registration for individuals who, due to the saturation of the reception network, were left outside of the reception system. This allowed them to receive assistance from a Public Centre for Social Welfare (while awaiting the assignment of a reception place). By repealing these provisions, applicants can exclusively be provided with material reception conditions, and financial assistance from the Public Centre for Social Welfare is no longer possible. The withdrawal of the mandatory place of registration remains applicable in the context of the 'cumul' Royal Decree (see Section 3.4).

Regarding Belgium's policy of excluding from reception applicants who have obtained international protection in another Member State of the European Union, several appeals were brought before the courts. Initially, the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking courts adopted divergent case law. However, in March 2025, the Brussels Labour Court delivered several rulings unfavourable to Fedasil. The Court held that the mere recognition of an international protection status in another Member State was not sufficient to justify the deprivation of the right to reception, it pointed to the applicant's individual situation, their belonging

(51) In its judgment no. 23/2026 of 26 February 2026, the Constitutional Court suspended this provision. In parallel, a preliminary question was referred to the CJEU concerning whether applications lodged by applicants already benefiting from protection in another Member State can be classified as subsequent applications.

(52) In its judgment no. 23/2026 of 26 February 2026, the Constitutional Court suspended this provision.

(53) In its judgment no. 23/2026 of 26 February 2026, the Constitutional Court suspended this provision.

to a vulnerable group, the lack of individualised reasoning in the contested decisions, and the absence of sufficient guarantees regarding the respect of a dignified standard of living.

Since then, case law has stabilised on this issue. While the revised legislation allows Fedasil to limit material reception conditions, such a limitation must remain exceptional, be based on individualised reasoning, comply with the principle of proportionality, and ensure that the person concerned is guaranteed a dignified standard of living.

Concerning the right to a decent standard of living, in its judgment of 22 September 2025 (S.23.0030.N), the Court of Cassation ruled that, in order to lawfully restrict or withdraw material assistance in the event of a subsequent application for international protection, Fedasil must verify whether this right remains guaranteed in the specific situation of the applicant concerned. Unlike cases in which material assistance is limited to medical care as a disciplinary sanction — where Fedasil may act without verifying whether a standard of living compatible with human dignity remains ensured — the Agency must, in the case of a subsequent application, expressly set out these factual considerations in its decision to limit material reception conditions.

3.2 Management of reception capacity

In 2025, 997 new collective reception places were created, while 2 231 temporary reception places were closed, resulting in a net decrease of 1 234 places, excluding the accommodation capacity created under the “Brussels deal” (see 3.5), referring to the temporary additional places established through cooperation between the federal government and the Brussels-Capital Region in support of Fedasil’s reception network.

At the end of 2025, the total reception capacity stood at 34 771 places, compared with 36 211 places at the beginning of the year, representing an overall decrease of 1 440 places.

Throughout 2025, the occupancy rate of places for adults and families remained high, averaging approximately 94%. Full occupancy is not feasible in practice, due to factors such as family composition, the availability of isolation places and renovation works. Fedasil therefore considers the reception network to be saturated at an occupancy rate of 94%.



03 RECEPTION OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Since 2023, the number of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) arriving in Belgium has declined. Fedasil therefore gradually reduced reception capacity for UAMs across the network, mainly by converting these places into general reception places.

In parallel, Fedasil implemented several measures throughout 2025 to mitigate the reduction in reception capacity resulting from the closure of several reception centres (Jabbeke, Berlaar and Deurne), and to ensure accommodation for persons entitled to reception. Measures adopted in this context included:

- ▶ the creation of additional capacity in or near existing reception centres;
- ▶ the temporary opening, and subsequent closure, of the Bredene and Theux centres as winter emergency solutions;
- ▶ the use, during the winter period, of places provided by the Flemish youth sector in youth tourism facilities for autonomous families, with each site linked to an existing reception centre responsible for reception, coordination and guidance;
- ▶ preparations for the opening of a new reception centre in Schilde (Antwerp) in early 2026, intended to replace the reception centre in Deurne and to accommodate applicants with specific medical needs and their caregivers.

At the same time, the Belgian government adopted several measures aimed at reducing the number of applicants entering the reception network, with a view to reducing reception capacity and reinforcing the principle that applicants should primarily be accommodated in collective reception centres. Measures adopted in this context included:

- ▶ the gradual phasing-out, in late 2025, of 448 emergency reception places that had been opened for families during the winter of 2024;
- ▶ the discontinuation of the financial initiatives under the Impulse Fund, which had supported municipalities in creating new capacity in local reception initiatives or reactivating places that had been suspended for a prolonged period.

The discontinuation of the grant did not affect the funding provided by Fedasil to these local reception initiatives. In the short term, and given the continued need for reception capacity, no closure of the individual places concerned was foreseen. At the same time, the number of local reception initiatives has decreased significantly in recent years. In addition, the coalition agreement stated the government's intention to phase out local individual places managed by the Public Centres for Social Welfare.

Finally, on 19 December 2025, the Council of Ministers approved the takeover by Fedasil, with effect from January 2026, of reception centres previously operated by private providers in Liège, Marcinelle, Jalhay, Braine-le-Comte and Hasselt.

SPENDING REVIEW ON THE ORGANISATION OF FEDASIL'S RECEPTION CENTRES

In October 2025, the Federal Public Service Policy and Support (BOSA) published a spending review on the organisation of Fedasil's reception centres.⁵⁴ The report sets out a framework for revising the Agency's organisational structure, with a focus on a flexible, centrally supported management model able to respond to changing circumstances and to a possible future integration of the Agency into a Federal Public Service for Migration.

3.3 Improving reception conditions

In 2025, several measures were taken to improve reception conditions. Fedasil launched a new project to streamline a generic support pathway for applicants for international protection. The objective of this pathway is to ensure consistent support and guidance across the entire reception network, thereby helping applicants to achieve greater autonomy during their stay. As part of this initiative, existing tools, procedures, and protocols used in accompaniment and support will be reassessed, analysed, and, where necessary, completed or updated.

3.3.1 INCLUSION OF LGBTQI+ APPLICANTS IN RECEPTION CENTRES

As part of the project "Safer Spaces for LGBTQI+ Asylum Seekers", which was concluded in 2025, Cavaria, a Flemish umbrella organisation representing LGBTQI+ associations, and Prisme, its French-speaking counterpart, organised a conference in October 2025. During the event, several tools were presented, including an e-learning module and a practical tool aimed at supporting the inclusion of LGBTQI+ applicants in reception centres. The two organisations also issued a number of recommendations for the sector, including the structural integration of LGBTQI+ inclusion within the reception network, continued staff training, and the development of safe reception arrangements for LGBTQI+ applicants.

3.3.2 LIVING CONDITIONS OF CHILDREN IN RECEPTION CENTRES

The project "Being a Child in an Asylum Centre"⁵⁵ implemented by Odisee University College, also concluded in 2025. In March 2025, a new tool entitled "The Reception Centre as Seen by Children" was presented. The tool provides

(54) Federal Public Service for Policy and Support, [Spending Review](#).

(55) Odisee University College, [Being a Child in an Asylum Centre](#).



practical methods for documenting children's experiences in reception centres, with the aim of helping professionals better understand their needs and improve the quality of care. At the project's closing conference in December 2025, the Odisee research team presented the final conclusions of five years of research and cooperation with Fedasil, its reception centres and reception partner. The researchers noted gaps between the objective of ensuring a safe and child-friendly reception environment and the situation observed in practice in some reception centres, regarding children's rights, safety and physical integrity.

In its annual report⁵⁶ published in November 2025, the Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner highlighted persistent challenges affecting children in reception centres, including shortcomings in living conditions, safety, hygiene and access to basic needs. The report underlined that non-compliance with minimum standards should never be regarded as an acceptable solution in the reception of these children. It called for structural and financial reinforcement of the reception network, greater attention to the specific well-being of children and young people, and stronger external monitoring.

3.3.3 RESTORATIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN RECEPTION CENTRES

In 2025, the project on restorative practices in conflict management within reception centres came to an end. During the previous two years, reception centres in the North Region worked together with the non-profit organisations Oranje Huis and Ligad on conflict management as a basis for sustainable cohabitation. The project supported the further development of a restorative approach to conflict resolution within the reception network, aimed at fostering more constructive and inclusive ways of dealing with conflict.

3.4 Labour market integration and transition out of the reception network

Throughout 2025, Fedasil continued to use its 'meal voucher scheme' introduced in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheme aimed to reduce the occupancy rate in reception centres by encouraging certain categories of residents to free up their place in exchange for meal vouchers.

In 2024, a Royal Decree introduced the 'cumul' scheme, establishing a notification and contribution obligation for applicants for international protection accommodated in a reception facility while receiving income from employment. In cases of non-compliance, Fedasil may terminate material reception conditions, with the exception of medical care, and assign a 'code 207 no show'.⁵⁷ However, in

(56) Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner, [Annual Report - Rechten op de drempel](#).

(57) Code 207 refers to a mandatory place of registration. If an individual chooses to reside outside the reception network, or if no reception place has been allocated to that person, the code 207 is recorded as 'no show'.

several rulings issued in 2025, the Brussels Labour Court held that, in light of the extraordinary circumstances and the manifest need, and given the inadequate reasoning underlying the decisions concerned, Fedasil was nevertheless required to continue providing reception to the individuals concerned who had vulnerable profiles.

In addition to these measures, Fedasil implemented several initiatives in 2025 aimed at supporting the labour market integration of applicants for international protection. In collaboration with Ghent University and with support from AMIF funding, Fedasil developed a series of tools under the “Digital Skills” initiative to strengthen applicants’ digital autonomy. Fedasil also cooperated with Jobroad, Stebo and Randstad RiseSmart, which operated in different reception centres throughout the year. In addition, Fedasil formalised a structural partnership with Fairwork Belgium, an organisation specialised in labour rights and protection against exploitation. Within this partnership, Fairwork Belgium provides support in cases and queries related to labour exploitation and delivers training to staff across the reception network.

At the same time, the transition from reception centres to independent housing remained a significant challenge both for beneficiaries of international protection and for the staff supporting them. The pressure on the housing market continued to make access to accommodation difficult. In response, Fedasil established a dedicated housing team tasked with developing tools to strengthen applicants’ autonomy and prepare them for independent living, building networks with potential housing partners, and formulating proposals to policymakers aimed at facilitating access to housing and supporting the transition out of reception.

In 2025, Fedasil also continued its cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the non-profit organisation Orbit to implement a pilot housing project for recognised beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium. The PATHS (Providing Assistance for Transitioning Housing Solutions) project, runs from November 2024 to October 2027 and is funded by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). It focuses on both structural and practical measures, including the development of a national housing-matching platform in Belgium, capacity building for existing housing organisations, and awareness-raising among the real estate sector, private landlords and diaspora organisations on access to affordable and sustainable housing. PATHS is implemented in Belgium, France and Greece and aims to facilitate the transition to independent living and reduce the risk of homelessness among beneficiaries of international protection.



3.5 Reception capacity constraints and related litigation

Despite efforts to reduce pressure on the reception network and increase capacity, Fedasil was not able to accommodate all applicants for international protection, resulting in continued legal proceedings and humanitarian concerns. Since 2023, single male applicants for international protection have generally not been accommodated immediately and have first been required to register on a waiting list, unless they presented an exceptional vulnerability, for example, of a medical nature. In 2025, an exemption was made for young men aged 18–19 in view of their vulnerability, allowing them immediate access to reception. At the end of 2025, the waiting list included 1 708 individuals, compared to 2 947 at the beginning of the year.⁵⁸

In 2025, Belgian labour courts handed down 1 740 rulings related to the saturation of the reception network, compared to 3 574 in 2024. Civil society organisations noted that this decrease may also reflect prolonged procedural delays and difficulties related to the enforcement of judgments and the payment of penalties. By the end of 2025, only seven interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights remained active.

Fedasil also continued to face litigation over compensation for moral and/or material harm arising from the lack of reception. In 2025, 108 judgments were handed down in this context, and Fedasil appealed several of these decisions. In total, 31 appeal decisions were delivered by the labour courts, with some resulting in a reduction of the damages awarded and others upholding the initial judgments.

In addition, litigation concerning alleged discrimination based on gender continued in 2025 in relation to the waiting list applied to non-vulnerable single men. In 2025, 65 decisions ordered Fedasil to pay EUR 1 950 in compensation for moral damages. The Agency appealed all these decisions. The Labour Court of Liège repeatedly ruled against Fedasil, holding that the Agency had indeed committed gender-based discrimination by limiting material conditions for non-vulnerable single men. Fedasil filed an appeal in cassation, which was ultimately rejected.

In November 2025, the Brussels Court of Appeal rejected an appeal lodged by several NGOs concerning the seizure of one of Fedasil's bank accounts and recognised that the account was necessary for the Agency to carry out its legal mission. The appeal followed earlier proceedings linked to the non-payment of penalties resulting from judgments finding that Fedasil had failed to fulfil its obligation to provide accommodation to applicants for international protection.

On 23 July 2025, the Dutch Council of State ruled that, under the Dublin Regulation, single male applicants could no longer be transferred to Belgium, citing systemic deficiencies affecting reception conditions.

(58) It should be noted that non-vulnerable single men who benefit from international protection in another EU Member State are no longer invited for an accommodation place, like other applicants with a subsequent application for international protection.

FEDERAL INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON RECEPTION CONDITIONS

In October 2025, the Federal Institute for the Protection of Human Rights (FIRM/IFDH), published a report on the state of the rule of law and human rights in Belgium.⁵⁹ The report noted that the non-implementation of court decisions by public authorities remains a significant issue, particularly since 2021, in the context of the structural shortage of reception places. It stated that, despite court rulings requiring the federal state to provide adequate reception conditions to applicants for international protection, the authorities have continued to fail to comply systematically.

Beyond legal and institutional developments, constraints on reception capacity also had direct humanitarian consequences on the ground.

Applicants for international protection who were not accommodated continued to rely on humanitarian organisations, mainly in Brussels, to meet their basic needs. These NGOs and associations provided emergency accommodation, although available places were generally fully occupied and waiting lists remained common due to capacity constraints. In this context, the support mechanism introduced in December 2022, the 'Brussels deal' under which Fedasil and the Brussels-Capital Region jointly financed 2 000 places within the capital's humanitarian shelter network for registered applicants unable to access Fedasil's reception network due to saturation, remained relevant in 2025. These places were available to persons in need more broadly and were not reserved exclusively for applicants for international protection. No formal referral mechanism directed applicants to these places.

Even with the capacity to accommodate applicants in the humanitarian network in Brussels, many applicants for international protection who were not accommodated faced situations of homelessness or precarious housing, including in occupied vacant buildings. To support this group, the Fedasil Information Point in Brussels provided guidance, while Fedasil's mobile teams operated across the territory, informing and assisting a growing number of applicants outside reception centres. The Information Points function as integrated "one-stop desks" supporting migrants in precarious situations, regardless of their legal status, by serving as central hubs for information, guidance and referral to essential services such as medical care and homelessness shelters.

Applicants for international protection who were not accommodated within the Fedasil reception network could access medical support through the Refugee Medical Point (RMP). In 2025, the RMP recorded 17 188 consultations, compared to 16 691 in 2024, corresponding to an average of 71 visits per day. Over the course of the year, it assisted 4 196 patients, 88.2% of whom were men.

(59) Federal Institute for Human Rights, [Report Rule of law 2025](#).



IMPACT ON THE HUMANITARIAN AID NETWORK

In October 2025, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, CIRÉ, Médecins du Monde, Médecins Sans Frontières, BelRefugees, Caritas International and the Humanitarian Hub published the fifth edition of their report, *Policy of Non-Reception – Dashboard*,⁶⁰ which reviewed the consequences of the shortage of reception places for applicants for international protection between January and June 2025. The report highlighted the extent to which the shortage of reception capacity and the absence of state support continued to affect the humanitarian aid network. It noted, for example, that nearly 18% of the persons accommodated in Samusocial emergency centres were applicants for international protection, while BelRefugees reported an average of 68% across its shelter network.

EMN BELGIUM'S CONFERENCE: BEYOND HOUSING – RECEPTION AND SUPPORT OF APPLICANTS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OTHER THAN IN KIND

In December 2025, EMN Belgium organised a conference bringing together stakeholders from Belgium, EMN Member and Observer Countries, as well as European and international organisations. The event served as a forum to examine forms of reception and support for applicants for international protection beyond in-kind material reception conditions, from legal, policy and operational perspectives, and to explore how these are organised, implemented and linked to broader reception systems.

Discussions highlighted that EU law allows reception conditions to be provided other than in kind, while maintaining the same required standard and ensuring an adequate standard of living, access to healthcare and information, and the identification of vulnerabilities.

The conference showed that alternatives to housing in kind already exist in many Member States, including cash-based support, community-based housing and mixed reception systems. These approaches may relieve pressure on reception centres and support applicants' autonomy, provided that they are accompanied by appropriate monitoring, coordination and access to essential services.

(60) Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, CIRÉ, Médecins du Monde, Médecins Sans Frontières, BelRefugees, Caritas International and the Humanitarian Hub 2025 report, [Policy of Non-Reception – Dashboard](#).

Overall, discussions highlighted that reception other than housing in kind must remain part of a coherent reception system. Emergency or ad hoc solutions cannot replace in-kind reception structures, and civil society actors cannot be expected to fill structural gaps alone. The panellist concluded that diversified and flexible reception system, grounded in rights and dignity, remains necessary to respond to current and future challenges.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025⁶¹

- > Inform on Distribution of international protection accommodation centres and relationship management with local communities
- > Inform on Currently applicable asylum procedures at the border in view of implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum
- > Inform on Access to remedies for international protection applicants
- > Vocational education and training of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (EMN Inform)
- > Ad Hoc Query on provision of healthcare services for applicants for international protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on care for international protection applicants and beneficiaries of temporary protection with serious health conditions in asylum facilities
- > Ad Hoc Query on provision of healthcare services for applicants for international protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on mechanisms for verifying actual residence in allocated asylum accommodation
- > Ad Hoc Query on the waiting period for access to the labour market under article 17 of the recast reception conditions directive.
- > Ad Hoc Query on planning policy for international protection accommodation centres

(61) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

04

TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND OTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO PERSONS FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE



Following the military invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces on 24 February 2022, the Council of the EU adopted the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine.⁶² With this decision, persons having fled from Ukraine could register for temporary protection⁶³ in the framework of Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001,⁶⁴ referred to as the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).⁶⁵ Pursuant to Article 4(1) of the Directive, the initial duration of temporary protection was one year, which was then extended automatically by six-month periods for a maximum of one year, until 4 March 2024. Subsequently, in 2023, the Council agreed to extend temporary protection from 4 March 2024 to 4 March 2025, and in 2024, a further extension to 4 March 2026 was adopted. In 2025, the Council extended temporary protection until 4 March 2027,⁶⁶ thereby continuing the protection framework for the fourth consecutive year.

From the start of the implementation of the TPD, Belgium deployed a wide range of measures⁶⁷ to facilitate the registration process and access to information for persons fleeing the war in Ukraine as well as access to the rights laid out in the TPD, such as accommodation, employment, education, social welfare and medical treatment. The Directive also contains provisions pertaining to the opportunity for family reunification, and for beneficiaries to return to their country of origin.

(62) [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022](#) establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

(63) All definitions provided throughout the report are taken from the [European Migration Network's Asylum and Migration Glossary](#).

(64) [Council Directive 2001/55/EC](#) of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.

(65) In Belgium, this Directive was transposed into the Aliens Act in 2003.

(66) [Council Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2025/1460 of 15 July 2025](#) extending temporary protection in accordance with Article 4 of Directive 2001/55/EC.

(67) The measures that were initially put in place are described in detail in our Annual Reports on Migration and Asylum for 2022, 2023, and 2024, available on www.emnbelgium.be. Most of these measures were still in place in 2025. The focus of this chapter is on measures that have changed or that have been newly implemented in 2025.

(68) All statistics made available by the [Immigration Office](#).

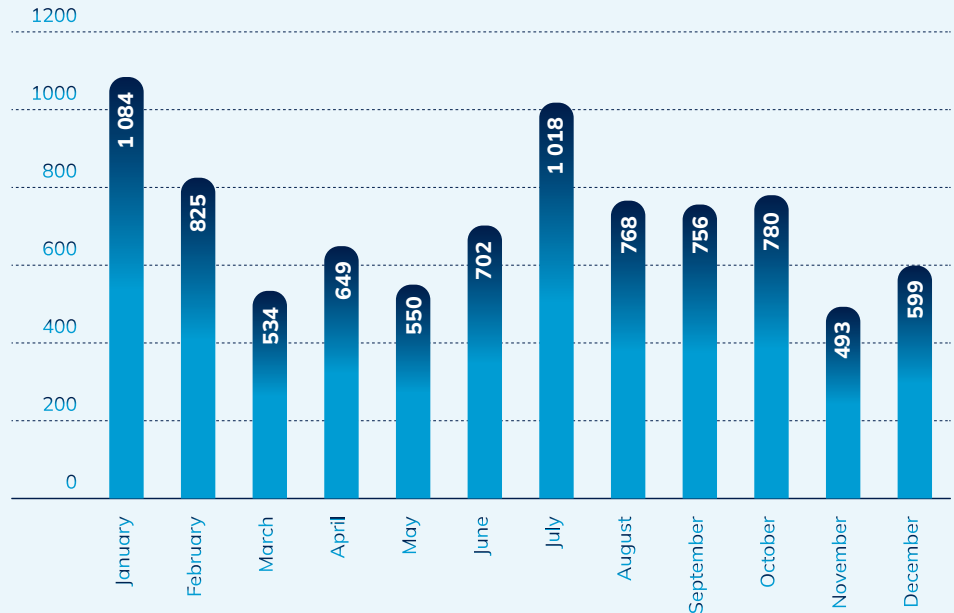
4.1 Temporary protection in numbers

By the end of 2025, **101 013 persons fleeing the war in Ukraine had received a temporary protection status** in Belgium.⁶⁸ The highest influx occurred in the first year of the war, when 63 354 people were granted temporary protection, compared to 15 626 in 2023, 13 277 in 2024, and 8 756 in 2025. The downward trend in new registrations has thus continued uninterrupted since 2022, reflecting both reduced displacement pressure and the stabilisation of the Ukrainian population in Belgium.



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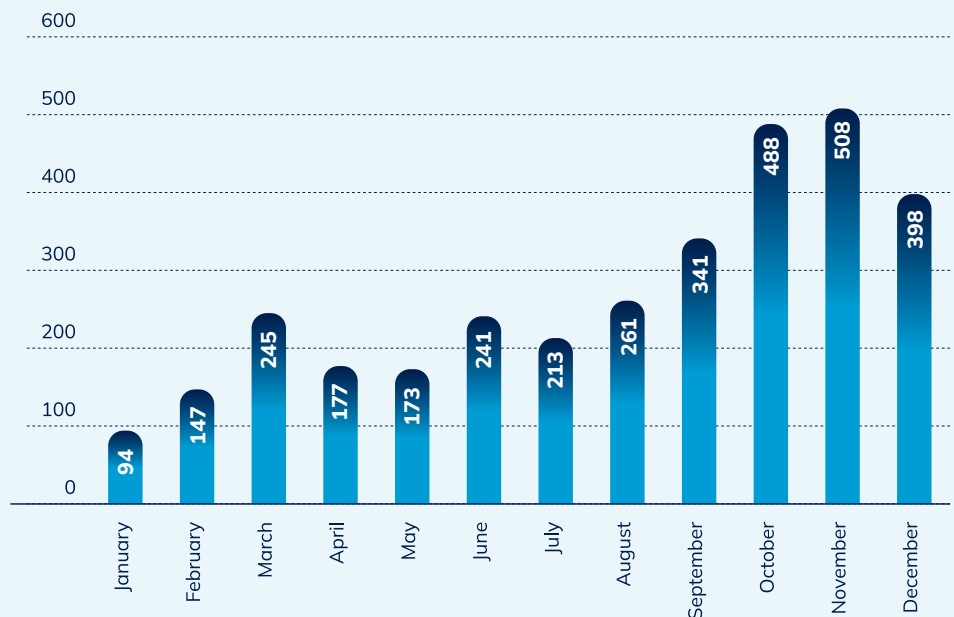
Graph. 8
Temporary protection statuses granted per month, 2025



4.1.2 REFUSAL DECISIONS UNDER THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION SCHEME

A notable shift in 2025 concerns the **significant increase in refusal decisions** under the temporary protection scheme. The Immigration Office issued 3 286 refusals in 2025, compared to 833 in 2024. The upward trend intensified in the second half of the year. Two grounds for refusal have been particularly prevalent.

Graph. 9
Refusal decisions per month, 2025



Requirement to demonstrate presence in Ukraine on 24 February 2022

The first ground for refusal concerns the **requirement to demonstrate presence in Ukraine on 24 February 2022**. Article 2 of Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 limits eligibility to Ukrainian nationals who were residing in Ukraine prior to that date. Persons who cannot provide sufficient documentary evidence of such residence – notably those whose recent passport does not allow the Immigration Office to verify their travel history around the date of the invasion – have faced refusals. In practice, documentation from the Ukrainian Border Service is often required to substantiate these claims, yet it is not always available. Persons who fall outside the scope due to temporary absence from Ukraine at the time of the invasion (whether for a short holiday or for longer-term employment abroad) are equally affected, as are children born after 24 February 2022. The latter must in principle access protection through family reunification procedures or regularisation, unless born to a mother who had already obtained temporary protection in Belgium. In a number of these cases, resubmission with adequate documentation has led to a positive outcome.

Concurrent temporary protection in another EU Member State

The second ground for refusal concerns **concurrent temporary protection status in another EU Member State**. Under Article 57/30, §2, 2° of the Aliens Act and the recital of the latest extension decision⁶⁹, temporary protection and the associated rights in another Member State must be formally terminated before a person can obtain temporary protection in Belgium. Prior to the summer of 2025, the Immigration Office did not, as a rule, refuse applications on this basis. Since then, however, persons in this situation have been refused, though it remains possible for them to obtain temporary protection in Belgium once the status in the other Member State has been formally ended.

4.2 Registration arrangements

In 2025, the registration centre for temporary protection beneficiaries relocated to Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat, now sharing premises with the registration centre for international protection applicants. The consolidation of both centres on the same site represents an organisational change with potential efficiency gains for the relevant public authorities.

However, the transition was accompanied by logistical challenges. A large volume of daily arrivals led to extended waiting times during certain periods. Access to registration was limited to a daily quota based on actual staff capacity on site, and applicants arriving after that threshold had been reached were given an appointment for a later date. In a number of instances, applicants found the

(69) Article 57/30, §2, 2° of the Aliens Act and Recital 6 of Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2025/1460 extending temporary protection.



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centre inaccessible upon arrival. Following the summer of 2025, the combination of a backlog of pending registrations and insufficient emergency accommodation capacity created additional pressure on the reception system. The Immigration Office subsequently increased its processing capacity, and by the end of 2025 the backlog had largely been resolved, with applicants able to lodge their request upon arrival at the registration centre.

4.3 Access to services

4.3.1 SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

In 2025, the incumbent Federal government proposed stricter conditions governing access to social assistance benefits (the non-contributory, means-tested safety net of last resort for persons lacking sufficient resources) and set out incentives for newcomers to integrate – including through entry into the labour market – as quickly as possible ([see 7.3](#)).

On 23 December 2025, the Belgian Council of Ministers approved a draft law linking entitlement to social integration income to participation in the civic integration programme. If adopted, future newcomers will be required to wait five years before becoming entitled to social assistance benefits. For **beneficiaries of temporary protection** (as well as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection), a specific arrangement is foreseen: rather than full access to social assistance, they will be entitled to a reduced benefit that can be supplemented by integration bonuses. These bonuses are linked to demonstrable integration efforts such as participation in language and integration courses, active job-seeking, and enrolment in vocational training.

4.3.2 ACCOMMODATION

Flemish Region

In 2024, the Flemish Government had decided gradually to phase out public reception arrangements for displaced persons from Ukraine, with subsidies initially scheduled to end in April 2026 and collective reception to be dismantled by March 2026. Following the extension of temporary protection at EU level until 4 March 2027, however, the Flemish Government revised this position and decided to maintain reception capacity beyond the original deadline.

For the period from April 2026 until March 2027, the emergency village in Ghent will serve as the central reception facility for displaced persons in need of accommodation. The Flemish Government approved both the operational model

and the financial framework necessary to maintain this reception capacity until March 2027. At local level, subsidies to municipalities for reception facilities were maintained for the transitional period up to March 2026, in line with inter-federal coordination arrangements.

Walloon Region

Similarly, the Walloon Government had previously decided to phase out public accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection by 31 March 2026. In October 2025, following the extension of the temporary protection framework, this decision was reversed. The Walloon Government decided to maintain a capacity of up to 330 places in collective reception centres until at most 31 March 2027, thereby ensuring continuity of accommodation for beneficiaries who had not yet transitioned to independent housing.

4.4 Family reunification

The following legislative changes concern family members who do not themselves qualify for temporary protection.

The Law of 18 July 2025 amending the Aliens Act of 15 December 1980 introduced a number of restrictions affecting, inter alia, beneficiaries of temporary protection acting as sponsors ([see 1.5](#)).

4.4.1 FAMILY BOND PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Sponsors holding temporary protection can no longer reunite with family members where the family bond was not established before the sponsor's arrival in Belgium. The explanatory memorandum clarifies that children born into an existing family already constituted in Belgium retain access to family reunification, in application of the best interests of the child.

4.4.2 TWO-YEAR WAITING PERIOD

From 18 August 2025, sponsors holding temporary protection are subject to a mandatory waiting period of two years before they can initiate a family reunification procedure. An exception applies where the sponsor seeks reunification exclusively with minor children under 18 years of age, or with dependent disabled children over 18 years of age. In such cases, no waiting period applies, again in light of the best interests of the child.



04 TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND OTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO PERSONS FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

4.4.3 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Unaccompanied minors holding temporary protection can no longer be reunited with their parent(s) where the latter do not themselves qualify for temporary protection. In such situations, the parents must apply for a humanitarian visa rather than joining through the family reunification channel provided for within the temporary protection framework.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025⁷⁰

- > Responsibilities and access to rights for beneficiaries of temporary protection (EMN-OECD Inform)
- > Ad Hoc Query on termination of temporary protection residence permit upon granting in another EU Member State
- > Ad Hoc Query on support measures for beneficiaries of temporary protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on voluntary return of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on assessment of BoTP vulnerability for accommodation and social welfare provision

(70) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

05

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS





Age Assessment

Process by which authorities seek to establish the chronological age, or range of age, of a person in order to determine whether an individual is a child or not.

(71) The youngest unaccompanied minors (under 15 years of age), as well as those with a more vulnerable profile, may be accommodated in facilities recognised by youth welfare services, including Jeugdhulp (Flemish Community) and the Administration Générale de l'Aide à la Jeunesse (French Community), or in reception places operated by organisations commissioned by these services. These placements are typically organised in small-scale living groups with intensive and tailored support. Fedasil co-finances these places and is responsible for allocation decisions. In practice, deviations from the intended procedure may occur, as minors under 15 are not always transferred to such facilities and may remain in collective reception centres for periods exceeding four weeks.

(72) Since 2014, the Guardianship Service may also appoint a guardian for unaccompanied European minors in a situation of vulnerability or who have applied for a temporary residence permit on grounds of trafficking and/or smuggling [Loi du 12 mai 2014 modifiant le titre XIII, chapitre VI, de la loi-programme \(I\) du 24 décembre 2002 en ce qui concerne la tutelle des mineurs étrangers non accompagnés / Wet van 12 mei 2014 tot wijziging van titel XIII, hoofdstuk VI, van de programmawet \(I\) van 24 december 2002 wat de voogdij over niet-begeleide minderjarige vreemdelingen betreft.](#)

Minors (under the age of 18) who arrive in Belgium without being accompanied by a parent or legal guardian are subject to a procedure distinct from that applicable to newly arrived adult third-country nationals. Unaccompanied minors who apply for international protection follow a specific procedure that takes their particular vulnerability into account and provides enhanced safeguards. As in the standard procedure (see Chapter 2), the Immigration Office is responsible for registering applications (5.1). The CGRS is responsible for examining these applications, with specific safeguards and arrangements in place where necessary.

The Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) is responsible for the initial observation and orientation of unaccompanied minors, regardless of whether they apply for international protection. Upon arrival, unaccompanied minors are first accommodated in one of Fedasil's Observation and Orientation Centres (Centres d'Observation et d'Oriëntatie / Oriëntatie- en Observatiecentra). This observation and orientation phase aims to identify the young person's vulnerabilities and support network in order to ensure referral to the most appropriate reception facility. During this period, the Guardianship Service may arrange an age assessment where there is doubt as to the individual's age. After approximately four weeks of observation, Fedasil refers minors to designated sections for unaccompanied minors within regular collective reception centres, reception centres exclusively for unaccompanied minors, small-scale residential groups within youth care facilities, or foster care (5.2).⁷¹

Unaccompanied minors are assigned a guardian to support and accompany them throughout their stay (5.3). This process is managed by the Guardianship Service, which operates under the Federal Public Service (FPS) Justice.⁷² The Guardianship Service ensures that unaccompanied minors receive appropriate care as soon as they are reported to the Service, whether by an authority, the police, a private individual or a lawyer. It is also responsible, where necessary, for formally determining whether the person is a minor through an **age assessment** procedure. Once minor status has been established, the appointment of a guardian is mandatory and must take place without delay. In addition, the Guardianship Service coordinates communication and cooperation with the competent authorities involved in international protection, reception, housing and related matters.

Finally, in order to prevent a sudden loss of support when unaccompanied minors reach the age of 18, the Guardianship Service and Fedasil are developing policies targeting young adults aged 18 to 21 (5.4). These initiatives aim to ensure continuity in individual guidance and to support a smooth transition to adulthood.

5.1 Identification and registration of unaccompanied minors

Before entering the reception trajectory specifically designed for unaccompanied minors, young people must first be formally identified as such. The Guardianship Service is responsible for carrying out age assessments ([see definition](#)) and for verifying the existence or absence of family links.

In 2025, the Guardianship Service received 3 328 initial reports concerning persons declaring themselves to be unaccompanied minors, compared with 4 068 such reports in 2024. These initial reports concern persons who declare themselves to be unaccompanied minors, whether or not they apply for international protection, when they are reported to the Guardianship Service by the police, the Immigration Office or other actors. The number of persons ultimately identified as unaccompanied minors may be lower, as some are found to be over 18 following an age assessment and others may no longer be traceable.⁷³ The main reported countries of origin were Eritrea, Ukraine and Afghanistan. Eighty per cent of those reported were registered as male, and 94% declared an age between 11 and 17 years.

In 2025, 1 224 age tests were concluded, compared with 1 713 in 2024 and the Guardianship Service made 1 255 age determinations, of which 282, or 22%, resulted in the person being recognised as a minor.

On 6 March 2025, in the case of *F.B. v. Belgium*, the European Court of Human Rights⁷⁴ found a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights in relation to the age assessment procedure applied to a third-country national claiming to be a minor. Without ruling on the reliability of bone tests or on whether the applicant was in fact a minor, the Court held that the decision-making process leading to the termination of support as an unaccompanied minor had not been accompanied by sufficient safeguards.

The Court underlined that, given the intrusive nature of bone tests, medical examinations should be used only as a measure of last resort, where other methods of age assessment have not produced conclusive results. In the case concerned, the applicant's interview with a Guardianship Service officer trained to work with minors took place only after the bone test had already been conducted. Following this judgment, Belgium reformed its age assessment procedure with a view to making it multidisciplinary. Identity documents must now be examined first, while medical tests may be used only as a last resort and require the written consent of the person concerned. In addition, the Guardianship Service is now present on a daily basis during the registration of unaccompanied minors at the Immigration Office, in order to ensure that each young person is informed from the outset about the age assessment procedure and the rights attached to it.

(73) Disappearances are, by definition, difficult to measure accurately. Figures recorded by Fedasil may include multiple registrations of the same minor, cases where age has not yet been verified, spontaneous departures from reception centres, and refusals of reception. Figures from the Guardianship Service may also include minors who were not registered in Fedasil's reception network.

(74) [Case of F.B. v. Belgium, the European Court of Human Rights.](#)



5.2 Guardianship of unaccompanied minors

Every unaccompanied minor applying for international protection, or identified on the territory or at the border, must be referred to the Guardianship Service. The guardian appointed to the minor represents them in legal proceedings and is responsible for ensuring that the necessary steps are taken during their stay in Belgium.⁷⁵

In order to strengthen the quality of guardianship by increasing the number of professional guardians, the Guardianship Service received AMIF funding at the end of 2024 for the period 2024–2027. The recruitment of new guardians started in 2025. Two new partnerships were established in the Walloon Region, with CIRÉ and Mentor Escale, both of which received funding to employ full-time guardians. In the Flemish Region, the existing partnership with the Centre for General Well-Being (Centrum Algemeen Welzijnswerk, CAW) was expanded to allow for the recruitment of additional guardians.

5.3 Reception and care of unaccompanied minors

In 2025, 3 782 unaccompanied minors were residing in the reception network of Fedasil. Including accompanied minors and young adults aged 18 to 21, the total number of young persons accommodated exceeded 14 312.

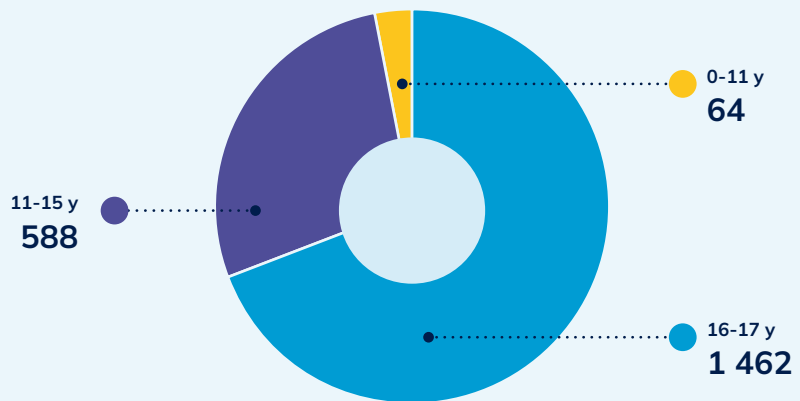
In 2025, a total of 2 114 unaccompanied minors entered the reception network, representing a decrease of 21.5% compared with 2024. By the end of the year, girls accounted for 15% of this group. In terms of age distribution, 3% were under 12 years of age, 28% were aged between 12 and 15, and the majority (69%) were between 16 and 18 years old. The main countries of origin were Eritrea (30%), Afghanistan (14%), Morocco (11%), Guinea (7%) and Algeria (5%).

Given the continued decline in arrivals of unaccompanied minors in Belgium since 2023 and a persistently low occupancy rate, Fedasil continued to gradually reduce reception capacity for unaccompanied minors across the reception network. Most of the places concerned were converted into reception places to accommodate other target groups.

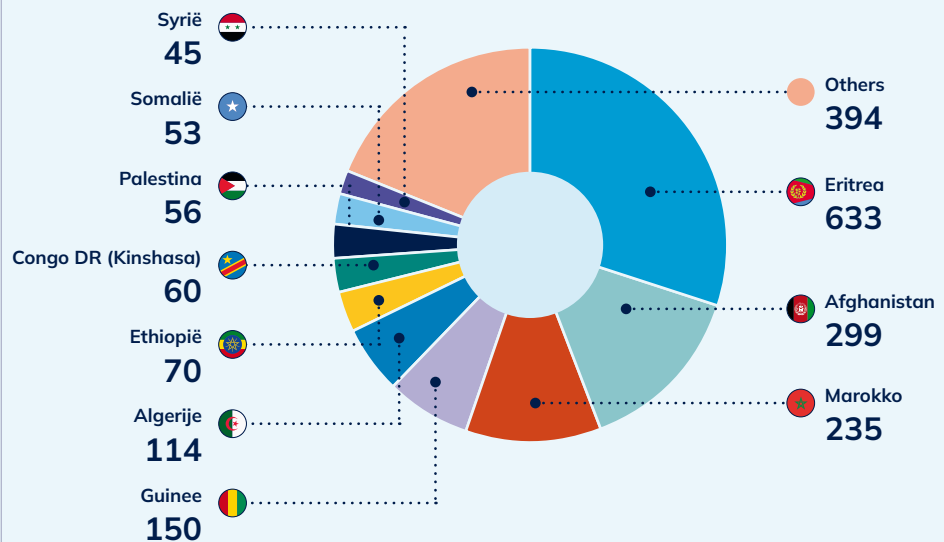
(75) [The guardian's missions are outlined in the General Directives for guardians of 2 December 2013.](#)

The coalition agreement of the government states that vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, should be prioritised in small-scale reception structures providing tailored support. Based on experience gained through existing initiatives, the most appropriate organisational model is to be further examined. In this context, Fedasil continued work in 2025 on the development of small-scale reception.

Graph 10
Number of unaccompanied minors recorded by Fedasil in 2025, by age



Graph 11
Number of unaccompanied minors recorded by Fedasil in 2025, by country of origin





In March 2025, Fedasil developed a protocol to be followed in cases of suspected, reported or confirmed sexual abuse involving an unaccompanied minor, taking into account both the safety of the young persons concerned and preventive measures. The protocol was developed as part of a working group on Afghan minors who are victims of sexual violence, established in spring 2023 by the FPS Justice, with Fedasil's Youth Unit leading the sub-group on reception.

Furthermore, as noted in the chapter on Reception ([Section 3.3.2](#)), the research project *Being a Child in an Asylum Centre*⁷⁷ concluded in 2025. In March 2025, the tool *The Reception Centre as Seen by Children* was launched, followed by the presentation of the final conclusions after five years of research.

In April 2025, Samusocial opened a new shelter for so-called “wandering” minors, mainly targeting young people who do not apply for international protection, including migrants in transit and Maghrebi street children. The shelter is intended for minors with complex needs who do not have access to existing assistance structures. It can accommodate up to 15 young people for stays ranging from a few nights to six months and provides basic material support. In addition, it offers individual psycho-medical-social support through a specialised team, while the Lama Project provides addiction-related support. Local partners, including SOS Jeunes, DoucheFLUX, Macadam and Fedasil, contribute to the initiative through prevention-related activities.

In November 2025, the Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner published its annual report⁷⁸, drawing attention to ongoing challenges affecting foreign children and young people in reception centres. [See also Chapter 3.](#)

DISAPPEARANCES OF UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

In 2025, Fedasil, Child Focus and the Guardianship Service organised two round tables on the disappearance of unaccompanied minors. One focused on young people in transit, while the other addressed minors involved in the international protection procedure. The round tables brought together a range of stakeholders, including reception partners, guardians, police services and magistrates. The discussions aimed to support the dissemination and practical use of the *Handbook on Disappearances of Unaccompanied Minors*⁷⁹ and to strengthen cooperation between the actors concerned.

(77) Odisee University College, [Being a Child in an Asylum Centre](#).

(78) Flemish Children's Rights Commissioner, [Annual Report - Rechten op de drempel](#).

(79) Child Focus, [Handbook on Disappearances of Unaccompanied Minors](#).

5.4 Transition to adulthood

At the age of 18, both the guardian's role and the specific accompaniment for minors end. Young adults have to move to adult reception centres, where a higher degree of independence is required, which can be disorienting.

The transition to adulthood remained an important area of attention in 2025 for unaccompanied minors reaching the age of 18. At that point, both the guardian's mandate and the specific support provided to minors come to an end, and young people are required to move to adult reception centres, where a higher degree of autonomy is expected.

In this context, Fedasil continued in 2025 to develop its policy for young adults aged 18 to 21 through its 'Youngsters' Unit, which coordinates policy relating to unaccompanied minors, accompanied minors and young adults, including former unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable young adults. In several reception centres, young adults received additional support from dedicated counsellors. This support is intended to be structurally embedded in Fedasil-managed reception centres in the future.

Young adults aged 18 to 21 were offered individualised support across key areas of daily life, complemented by group activities addressing themes relevant to their age group. They were also encouraged to participate in meaningful daytime activities aimed at supporting both personal development and group cohesion. To facilitate the transition from the UAM wing to an adult wing or centre, a gradual transition plan was implemented, with the guardian involved as far as possible before the young person reached the age of 18.

In parallel, the Guardianship Service, in cooperation with Red Cross Flanders and in consultation with reception partners and other stakeholders, developed an action plan to support the transition to adulthood. In 2025, Red Cross Flanders organised information and training sessions for guardians on the use of this action plan. The tool is intended to support a more systematic approach to the transition process, covering issues such as administrative procedures, housing, education, employment, residence rights and network building.

A further development in 2025 concerned the funding framework for services supporting the autonomy of unaccompanied minors and former unaccompanied minors aged 16 to 22. Since January 2025, these services have been funded through an accreditation-based system rather than through project-based subsidies. They aim to support beneficiaries in their transition towards greater autonomy.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025⁸⁰

- > Ad Hoc Query on separated migrant children
- > Ad Hoc Query on access to education for migrant children

(80) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

06

VULNERABLE GROUPS





6.1 Gender related vulnerabilities

6.1.1 VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In November 2025, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published its first thematic report on Belgium. The report reviews developments since 2020 in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.⁸¹

GREVIO noted a number of positive developments, including new legislation aimed at strengthening protection against domestic violence, such as the Femicide Law and the reform of the Criminal Code introducing a consent-based definition of rape. It also highlighted progress in victim support services, in particular through the Sexual Assault Care Centres (SACCs), and Belgium's efforts to provide multidisciplinary support across the country.

At the same time, the report identified a number of areas requiring further action. These include data collection, which remains incomplete and fragmented across institutions and levels of government, the need for increased and more accessible long-term shelter capacity, and the need to ensure that civil courts take violence against women sufficiently into account in relevant proceedings.

In addition, in November, the French Community, in collaboration with the Walloon Region and the Cocof, officially launched the first French-language platform in Belgium entirely dedicated to combating violence against women.⁸² The website aims to become a reference point for information, assistance, and guidance on gender-based violence. It centralises reliable and accessible resources for victims, their relatives, professionals, and even perpetrators – filling a previously existing gap in French-speaking Belgium. The website provides information on key themes, including forced marriage, honour-based violence, and female genital mutilation.

6.1.2 LGBTQI+

Regarding LGBTQI+ applicants for international protection, the project 'Safer Spaces for LGBTI+ Asylum Seekers' aiming at the creation of safer reception places, run by Cavia and Prisme, was concluded in 2025 (see section 3.3.1).

(81) [GREVIO Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice Belgium First thematic evaluation report.](#)

(82) [Stop Violences Femmes.](#)

6.2. Migrants experiencing homelessness

6.2.1 INTERMINISTERIAL CONFERENCE SETS PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS

In June 2025, the Interministerial Conference on ‘Social Integration, anti-Poverty Policy and Federal Urban Policy Big City Policy, Social Integration and the Fight against Poverty’ from the French Community identified different common priorities for new legislation, including the revision of the Cooperation Agreement on homelessness.

6.2.2 HOMELESSNESS AND ACCESS TO EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

As described in the chapter on reception, applicants for international protection who are not accommodated in the reception network often rely on humanitarian organisations, mainly in Brussels, to meet their basic needs. These organisations provided emergency accommodation, but capacity remained saturated and waiting lists were common.

In 2025, the **“Brussels Deal”** remained an important temporary arrangement to provide shelter for registered applicants for international protection who were unable to access Fedasil’s reception network due to continuing capacity constraints. Since December 2022, Fedasil and the Brussels-Capital Region have jointly co-financed 2 000 places in the capital’s humanitarian shelter network. These places are available more broadly to persons in need and are therefore not reserved exclusively for applicants for international protection. In 2025, the Brussels-Capital Region continued to organise this shelter capacity according to identified needs, including facilities for women, families and LGBTQIA+ persons. [See also Chapter 3](#) on reception of applicants for international protection.

In 2025, **five Shelter and Orientation projects for homeless undocumented migrants**, coordinated by Fedasil, were operational in Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Ghent and Kortrijk. The projects targeted long-term homeless undocumented migrants and provided 24-hour shelter or ambulatory guidance, combined with social and legal counselling and support in meeting basic needs. This support was intended to provide the stability necessary to reflect on the future and work towards a durable solution. In 2025, 73 persons reached such a solution through these trajectories, while 114 persons were still in an ongoing trajectory at the end of December. For the guidance dimension of these projects, including pathways towards legal stay and voluntary return, [see Chapter 12](#). For the return dimension, including the evaluation requested by the new government and the stronger policy focus on voluntary return, [see Chapter 13](#).

07

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION



In Belgium, integration falls under the responsibility of the three federated entities: Flemish Community, Walloon Region (the competence was transferred from the French Community to the Walloon Region) and German-speaking Community. In the Brussels-Capital Region, both the French and the Flemish Communities co-exist, which called for the creation of specific commissions.⁸³ In Brussels, the Flemish Community oversees the Dutch-language integration programme, while the Joint Community Commission (Cocom/GGC) oversees the bi-communal integration programme.

Each entity is competent to formulate its own integration strategy and to implement it in collaboration with various actors.

- ▶ In the Flemish Community, the implementation of the integration trajectory is a responsibility by the three agencies for integration, i.e. Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (*Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering – Agii*), with contact points at some 70 locations across six regions in Flanders; *Atlas* in the City of Antwerp, and *Amal* in the city of Ghent. In addition, the Dutch Language House Brussels (*Huis van het Nederlands Brussel*) promotes and offers Dutch language courses in Brussels.
- ▶ In the Walloon Region, integration is spread across eight Regional Integration Centres (*centres régionaux d'intégration - CRI*).
- ▶ In the Brussels-Capital Region, integration is managed by the Flemish reception office for newcomers (*Brussels onthaalbureau voor nieuwkomers – Bon*), in cooperation with the Dutch Language House, and three bi-communal integration offices (*bureaux d'accueil pour primo-arrivants: Bapa Bxl, Bapa Via, Bapa Convivial*).
- ▶ In the German-speaking Community, integration is managed by the Info-Integration service of the Belgian Red Cross.

In the EU context, integration is commonly understood as a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation both by migrants themselves and by the host society.⁸⁴ Integration is a multi-faceted process that implies policies and measures at various levels. One of the key components is participation in integration programmes, which are designed to provide migrants with essential knowledge and skills to navigate Belgian society (7.2). Access to basic services such as healthcare, housing, and social welfare is also necessary to ensure a stable and secure living environment (7.3). Integration into the labour market (7.4), as well as language acquisition (7.5), are other critical aspects, enabling migrants to find meaningful employment, contribute economically, and support their self-reliance. Finally, fostering an inclusive society requires opportunities for participation and encounters with the host society, alongside measures to combat racism and discrimination (7.6).

(83) The French Community Commission (COCOF) is competent for policy initiatives relating to French Community matters; the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) is competent for policy initiatives relating to Flemish Community matters; and the Common Community Commission (COCOM) is competent for community matters that do not relate exclusively to one of the two communities.

(84) COM, ([Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#), 2020).



7.1 Formulating and monitoring regional integration strategies

In November 2025, the **Flemish Government** approved the **Integrated Action Plan for Horizontal Integration Polic**,⁸⁵ introducing a cross-government approach aimed at strengthening Dutch language proficiency and its role as a connecting factor in society, enhancing participation and self-reliance, promoting social cohesion, and combating racism and discrimination. The plan operationalises the strategic objectives of the Flemish integration policy and builds on findings from the Survey on Living in Diversity and its follow-up studies, which provided detailed evidence on the experiences and needs of diverse population groups.⁸⁶

The overall objective of the plan is to promote integration through sustained efforts by both newcomers and society as a whole. To this end, it seeks to improve coordination across policy areas such as education, employment, leisure and welfare, and to foster mutual understanding and respect in Flanders. The plan also places particular emphasis on the meaningful involvement of local authorities, civil society, migrants and frontline organisations in the design and implementation of integration measures. In addition, it aims to strengthen cooperation between the Flemish Government and local authorities through the establishment of a structural consultation mechanism to support coordination, knowledge-sharing and effective policy implementation, with particular attention to social cohesion in more rural areas.

In the **Walloon Region**, the governance of the integration sector was further reshaped in 2025 as part of implementing the new Walloon Code of Social Action and Health. In July 2025, **the Walloon Integration Observatory** was officially accredited. Previously, the governance structure included a coordination committee for regional integration actions and a separate support committee. Most of the tasks previously carried out by the coordination committee, such as policy evaluation, the proposal of indicators and the transmission of quantitative data on integration programmes, were transferred to the Observatory. The tasks of the former support committee were assigned to a newly established consultation committee. Since 2025, the governance structure has been formalised around two distinct bodies: a consultation committee, primarily responsible for monitoring the activities of operators, and a support committee responsible for overseeing the activities of the Observatory.

Another development concerned the **Local Integration Initiatives** (ILIs). Until 2025, these initiatives could receive funding from the Walloon Region either through an accreditation procedure or through project-based calls for proposals. As of 2025, funding was provided exclusively through accreditation. The year 2025 served as a transitional period during which ILIs could apply for accreditation. New applications were suspended pending the development of new criteria by the Walloon Government. These criteria are to be based on a needs assessment

(85) Flemish Government, [Integrated Action Plan for Horizontal Integration Policy](#).

(86) Vlaamse Gemeenschap, [Survey Samenleven in Diversiteit](#).

framework developed by the Walloon Integration Observatory, which is tasked with identifying territorial needs and existing provision in order to support the development of a more structured programming framework.

Within this evolving framework, the **Regional Integration Centres** (CRIs) were also given an expanded mandate to contribute to social and socio-professional integration, in complementarity with existing services, including the Walloon Public Employment Service (FOREM). This expanded mandate aims to enable the centres to respond to specific gaps linked to the particular challenges faced by the foreign population, for example with regard to the recognition of diplomas.

In the **Brussels-Capital Region**, in the absence of a regional government, the administration undertook a reflection on possible improvements and further developments to the integration pathway.

In addition, the **German-speaking Community** concluded a Citizens' Dialogue (Bürgerdialog) on the integration of third-country nationals. This participatory policy initiative involved randomly selected residents, who formulated recommendations that were formally submitted to and debated in the Parliament of the German-speaking Community.

7.2 Integration programmes

Integration programme

Set of measures put in place by the State and/or civil society organisations to support the integration of legally residing migrants/third-country nationals into the host society.

In the Flemish Community, 2025 was marked by the implementation of the new Policy Note on Integration, Civic Integration and Social Cohesion, adopted by the Flemish Government at the end of 2024. The policy focused on strengthening the four pillars of the civic **integration programme**: knowledge of Dutch (NT2), shared values, norms and social orientation, employment, and participation through participation and networking pathways. Among the priorities identified by the Flemish Government were the activation of third-country nationals in the labour market ([see point 5.4](#)) and the strengthening of Dutch language proficiency requirements, including a planned increase in the required oral language level to B1 from 2027.

With regard to the fourth pillar of civic integration, the programme “We are participating” (*Wij doen mee*) was launched in 2025 with support from AMIF funding and Flemish co-financing. This led to the establishment of 18 regional organisational networks covering 15 reference regions and the cities of Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels. These networks bring together local authorities, integration agencies and a broad range of actors from different sectors. Each network developed an action plan, to be further implemented in 2026, with a view to addressing regional challenges and needs relating to the provision of a diverse and high-quality offer of participation and networking opportunities.



07 INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

A further development in 2025 concerned the preparation of pre-arrival integration trajectories for newcomers in their countries of origin. The programme targets third-country nationals admitted for the purpose of family reunification and labour migrants who have submitted a visa application and intend to settle in Flanders or Brussels. It consists of a digital self-study package tailored to the specific needs of these target groups. For labour migrants, the content covers areas such as labour law and social security, while for family migrants it focuses on topics including healthcare, education and access to the labour market. The programme also includes follow-up measures intended to facilitate the continuation of the integration process after arrival. Participation in the pre-arrival trajectory is voluntary. However, third-country nationals and their family members who are subject to the compulsory civic integration programme must complete the integration pathway within the first six months following arrival in Belgium. Seasonal and short-term workers, exchange students and certain participants in working holiday schemes are excluded from this trajectory.

In the Walloon Region, legislative amendments relating to the integration programme entered into force in January 2025. One of the main changes concerned the time limit for completing the programme, which was extended from 18 months to three years. For third-country nationals detained in a penitentiary institution, this period could be extended by the duration of the detention. Additional grounds for exemption were also introduced, including for third-country nationals who submitted a medical certificate attesting that they were providing care for a family member, and for beneficiaries of temporary protection. In addition, the conditions for exemption from language courses were adjusted, allowing participants to qualify on the basis of an average A2 level of proficiency in French across all language skills, rather than requiring an A2 level in each individual skill.

A further change concerned citizenship courses. Since 2025, these courses may be attended in a language understood by the participant where their level of French is below A2. Previously, they were delivered exclusively in French. Specific requirements apply in relation to the linguistic proficiency of trainers, both in French and in the language of instruction.

In parallel, the IT tool, intended to support the monitoring, follow-up and management of the integration pathway for third-country nationals, was further defined in 2025. The updates specify the data fields to be entered into the system and enable the Government to extend its future use to French-language and civic integration Local Integration Initiatives (LIIs). However, the tool was not yet operational for these extensions in 2025. API is intended to serve as a shared working tool for the Regional Integration Centres and the Walloon Public Service, with the objective of supporting the monitoring of the integration programme and, in the longer term, enabling statistical follow-up.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, the Brussels Centre for Intercultural Action (Centre bruxellois d'action interculturelle, CBAI) stated in a technical note⁸⁷ published in March 2025 that the integration offices (BAPAs) responsible for the bilingual integration programme remained saturated. The note referred to persistent overcrowding linked to the 2022 legislative reforms and indicated that the available financial resources were insufficient to address the situation.

In the German-speaking Community, integration courses were organised online and in the evening in 2025 in order to better respond to participants' needs. This approach aimed to facilitate access to the integration programme by enabling newcomers to follow the courses remotely and combine them more easily with professional obligations.

7.3 Integration through access to basic services

At the federal level, on 23 December 2025, the Belgian Council of Ministers approved a draft law linking entitlement to social integration income to participation in the civic integration programme.⁸⁸ According to the draft law, recognised refugees who do not participate in the reinforced civic integration programme, or who are considered not to have made sufficient efforts, may face a reduction in their social assistance. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and temporary protection would be able to supplement reduced social assistance through bonuses linked to integration-related efforts, such as attending integration or language courses, actively seeking employment, and participating in training programmes. Other newcomers, including economically inactive EU citizens and third-country national students, would become eligible for social assistance only after five years of legal residence, subject to verification by the competent authorities. These proposed changes follow the federal coalition agreement, which states that newcomers are expected to make efforts to integrate and contribute to the social system. At the end of 2025, the draft law was under review by various advisory bodies, some of which raised concerns regarding several of its provisions. For instance, the Centre d'Action Laïque stated that restricting access to social assistance could undermine integration prospects and called for the maintenance of broader rights for newcomers.

In parallel, in May 2025, the Belgian Court of Audit published a report⁸⁹ on urgent medical assistance for undocumented migrants, providing an overview of the cost and effectiveness of the federal policy in this area. The report identified a number of shortcomings in the implementation of access to healthcare by the Public Centres for Social Welfare. It also noted that restrictions on access to healthcare may aggravate health problems, increase public expenditure and pose risks to public health. The Court of Audit issued several recommendations addressed to the Federal Public Planning Service for Social Integration, the government and

(87) Brussels Centre for Intercultural Action (Centre bruxellois d'action interculturelle, CBAI) [Note technique sur la saturation des BAPA](#).

(88) This draft law amends the Organic Law of 8 July 1976 on Public Social Welfare Centres and the Law of 26 May 2002 on the Right to Social Integration.

(89) Belgian Court of Audit, [Dringende medische hulp voor mensen zonder wettig verblijf. Kosten en doeltreffendheid van het federale beleid](#), 2025.



the legislature. These included replacing the term “urgent medical assistance” with “basic medical assistance” in the relevant legislation, extending coverage to all healthcare services reimbursed under compulsory health insurance, granting access to healthcare for an indefinite period, and strengthening monitoring and procedural safeguards.

At regional level, in the Flemish Region, access to basic local services for newcomers and other residents was further supported through the continued development of the *Welkom+* app. This digital tool, developed in 2024 by the cities of Mechelen and Lier together with the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration, in cooperation with the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) and Flanders Innovation and Entrepreneurship (VLAIO), aims to improve access to information on local services and to facilitate orientation in the host society.

7.4 Labour market integration

Access to the labour market is widely regarded as a key component of integration, with benefits for both migrants themselves and host societies. The European Commission has also highlighted that sustainable labour market integration is essential for supporting inclusion in host societies and contributing to the EU economy.⁹⁰ Against a backdrop of labour shortages across European labour markets, this issue also remained prominent in public debate and policy discussions in Belgium in 2025.

In 2025, the Flemish Government identified the labour market integration of third-country nationals as a policy priority and highlighted the need for an integrated approach. This approach is based on cooperation between the main actors involved, including public employment services, integration agencies, Public Centres for Social Welfare and employers. It aims to place the professional prospects of third-country nationals at the centre of the integration programme from the outset. In this context, pilot projects were developed to strengthen links between third-country nationals and the labour market, alongside accessible support measures tailored to employers’ needs, particularly in relation to Dutch language acquisition and workplace integration.

In addition, the Flemish Government decided in 2025 to discontinue the outsourcing of diploma recognition support for third-country nationals previously provided through the Flemish public employment service (VDAB). Third-country nationals with an ongoing integration programme, as well as those who completed such a programme within the previous three years, can instead seek support from the Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.

(90) European Commission, 'Integration in the labour market', https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-and-integration/integration/integration-labour-market_en.

In 2025, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre Flanders (NARIC-Flanders) temporarily increased its processing capacity in response to the high number of diploma recognition applications received in recent years. A substantial share of these additional resources was allocated to applications submitted by beneficiaries of temporary protection, who have represented the largest group of applicants since 2022. As a result, NARIC processed almost 40% more applications in 2025 than in 2024.

A further development in 2025 concerned NARIC's role as a knowledge centre. Since 2025, its partners have been able to consult a database containing detailed information on decisions on level equivalence, broken down by country of diploma, study programme and year of graduation. NARIC's public website also continued to provide country profiles comparing foreign education systems with the Flemish education system.

In the Walloon Region, the Regional Integration Centres were granted a broader role in contributing to social and socio-professional integration, as described in [point 7.1](#).

In the German-speaking Community, the Government approved the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) project Ready 2 Work in October 2025. The project, led by the Info-Integration service of the Belgian Red Cross, is scheduled to start in January 2026 and focuses on mentoring, labour market orientation and access to professional networks.

7.5. Language acquisition

In July 2025, the Flemish Government introduced the policy approach “Each Child a Language Hero” (Ieder kind taalheld), aimed at strengthening Dutch language acquisition through a broad set of measures across compulsory education, including early childhood education. The overall objective is to improve Dutch language proficiency among all pupils, regardless of background, with a view to reducing educational inequalities and supporting longer-term integration outcomes.

The measures envisaged under this approach include intensified remedial support, the creation of new “language hero classes” (taalheldklassen) for primary school pupils whose Dutch language proficiency is considered insufficient for full participation in mainstream education, and the further professionalisation of teachers. These measures were being translated into legislation in 2025, with implementation in schools planned for the start of the 2026–2027 academic year.



07 INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

In addition, in October 2025, the Flemish Government presented a strategic framework aimed at strengthening Dutch language proficiency among adults, entitled “NT2: Dutch Works!” (NT2: Nederlands werkt!)⁹¹. The framework sets out a number of measures intended to guide adult Dutch language education (NT2) over the coming years, with particular attention to newcomers and parents of school-aged children. A key focus is supporting newcomers in reaching B1 oral proficiency in Dutch, which is intended to become a requirement within the civic integration programme from 2027 onwards.

Alongside formal learning pathways, the project “Opportunities to Practise Dutch” (Oefenkansen Nederlands) was also launched. The project aims to expand the availability of opportunities to practise Dutch outside the classroom and to better align these with learners’ needs. The Agency for Integration and Civic Integration and the Dutch Language House Brussels play a central role in this initiative, in cooperation with local authorities. To support this, the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration launched a call for proposals at the end of 2025 with the aim of jointly developing a higher-quality and more sustainably embedded offer of opportunities to practise Dutch.

In the Walloon Region, a new “alpha-FLE” web portal⁹² was launched in 2025. Originally developed in 2017 on the initiative of two Regional Integration Centres (CRIs), the platform underwent a comprehensive redesign in order to modernise its functionalities. Managed by the Walloon Integration Observatory, the tool aims to centralise information on the French-language learning sector in Wallonia, including literacy provision. Its main objective is to facilitate the referral of beneficiaries to the training opportunities best suited to their needs.

In June 2025, the Walloon Observatory for Integration, still operating in its previous format, published a status report on literacy, French as a foreign language (FLE), and basic skills support in Wallonia,⁹³ in cooperation with Lire et Écrire en Wallonie and in the context of funding linked to the Wallonia recovery plan.

Finally, Caritas International Belgium and the non-profit organisation Saskaa partnered to provide secondary school teachers with an accessible tool for addressing growing diversity in schools, entitled Building Bridges.⁹⁴ The resource is intended to support educators in addressing topics such as identity, prejudice, and media representation.

(91) [NT2: Nederlands werkt!](#)

(92) <https://portailalphafle.be/en/>

(93) Walloon Observatory for Integration, [Rapport de l'Observatoire de l'Alphabétisation et de l'apprentissage de la langue française](#).

(94) Caritas International Belgium - Saskaa, [Building bridges](#).

7.6 Fostering equality and fighting discrimination

7.6.1 MEASURES TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

At local level, the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), with the support of the Flemish Government, developed and tested a pilot project on low-threshold discrimination reporting. The pilot enabled several municipalities to experiment with accessible reporting models adapted to their local context. The initiative targeted the population as a whole and was not limited to third-country nationals. Its objective was to improve accessibility for all residents and to strengthen the capacity of local administrations to detect, register and follow up cases of discrimination in a consistent and supportive manner.

Since 2025, within the Walloon Region, Local Integration Initiatives (LIs) have been able to obtain accreditation for two additional missions: the promotion of interculturality, as broadly defined in the legislation, and the fight against racism. In addition, the Walloon Council for the Fight Against Racism (*Conseil wallon de lutte contre le racisme*) was established in 2025 as part of the Walloon Plan for Fighting Racism.

In the German-speaking Community, a new course entitled *Anti-Bias – Living and Working with Awareness of Prejudices* was offered with the aim of raising awareness of bias and reducing discrimination. The course was organised by Bildungswerk Aachen in cooperation with Info-Integration.

7.6.2 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In September 2025, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men published a study⁹⁵, conducted by KU Leuven and the University of Antwerp, on the labour market position of women of non-EU origin in Belgium. The study followed a June 2025 report⁹⁶ by the Institute on women in vulnerable situations in the labour market and put forward similar recommendations, including more tailored labour market integration pathways, easier recognition of foreign diplomas, particularly in the care sector, and affordable language courses adapted to women's professional needs and family responsibilities.

In December 2025, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men launched GenderStat.be⁹⁷ following GREVIO's recommendation (see section 6.1.2) to improve the collection and analysis of statistical data. The new federal portal brings together key gender statistics and indicators in Belgium on a single platform and aims to support a better understanding of gender inequalities across policy areas, as well as evidence-based policymaking. It centralises data from various federal institutions, including those active in asylum and migration, and provides access to gender-disaggregated statistics, for example on return decisions issued and applications for single permits.

(95) Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, [La position des femmes d'origine externe à l'Union européenne sur le marché du travail belge](#).

(96) Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, [Femmes en situation de vulnérabilité sur le marché du travail](#).

(97) <https://www.genderstat.be>.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025⁹⁸

- > Inform on Access to education for migrant children
- > Inform on Vocational education and training of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection
- > Inform on Language and literacy support measures for adult beneficiaries of international protection (EMN-OECD-Council of Europe joint publication)
- > Ad Hoc Query on newly arrived third-country nationals involvement in the host society in relation with their integration
- > Ad Hoc Query on incentives aiming at participation in integration activities
- > Ad Hoc Query on the role of the employer in the integration of employed third-country nationals
- > Ad Hoc Query on social assistance benefits for beneficiaries of international and temporary protection

(98) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

08

CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS





08 CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

Belgian citizenship is governed by the Belgian Nationality Code and may be obtained through attribution (for minors – Articles 8 to 12) or acquisition (for adults and emancipated minors – Articles 12bis to 21) (8.1). Attribution most commonly applies to children who meet specific legal criteria at birth or during childhood, including situations designed to prevent statelessness. For adults, acquisition generally takes place through the submission of a ‘declaration of citizenship’, in which applicants must demonstrate compliance with knowledge of one of Belgium’s three national languages, proof of social integration, and evidence of economic participation. Another exceptional pathway exists whereby individuals can acquire nationality through naturalisation (Articles 18 to 21). Acquisition through naturalisation is granted by the federal parliament and is reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional merits for Belgium, such as in the scientific, cultural, sporting, or social fields, or for recognised stateless persons who have been residing in Belgium legally for at least two years. Unlike the declaration procedure, naturalisation is discretionary in nature and does not require applicants to meet the usual conditions relating to language knowledge, social integration, or economic participation.

The Belgian Nationality Code provides for a limited number of situations in which Belgian nationality may be lost, withdrawn, or revoked (Articles 22 to 23/2) (8.2). Nationality may be lost on a voluntary basis, notably through renunciation under strict conditions designed to prevent statelessness, or withdrawn by a court where it was acquired through fraud or false declarations. In addition, Belgian nationality may be revoked as an exceptional criminal sanction (*déchéance / vervallenverklaring*) following conviction for certain serious offences, a mechanism that currently applies only to persons holding another nationality.

Persons who are not considered nationals by any state under its law may seek formal recognition of statelessness through judicial proceedings before one of Belgium’s six family courts (*familie rechtbank / tribunal de la famille*) that are competent for statelessness matters (8.3). Judicial recognition of statelessness establishes an individual’s legal status but does not, in itself, confer a right of residence. Stateless persons can apply for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds (Article 9bis of the Aliens Act), or, following a new administrative procedure in place since September 2024, on the grounds of statelessness.

8.1 Acquisition of Belgian citizenship

In 2025, the fee for applying for Belgian nationality was increased from EUR 150 to EUR 1 000. This change was introduced through the Programme Law of 18 July 2025 as part of a broader package of budgetary and policy measures. The new fee applies to payments made from 29 July 2025 onwards and is subject to annual indexation. In 2026, the fee was increased to EUR 1 030.

The measure is intended to bring administrative fees more closely in line with those applied in neighbouring countries. The increase reflects a commitment set out in the 2025 Coalition Agreement, which states that applicants for Belgian nationality are expected to make greater efforts and stronger commitments.

The measure has drawn **criticism from civil society organisations and human rights institutions**, both during earlier legislative debates and in the context of the 2025 reform. In a 2024 opinion on a parliamentary proposal to increase registration fees⁹⁹, Myria, the Federal Migration Centre, indicated that a substantial increase in the fee — at that stage proposed at EUR 1 250 — could constitute a disproportionate obstacle to access to Belgian nationality, particularly for persons with lower incomes. It also noted that such an increase could disproportionately affect applicants and their minor children depending on their financial situation, and referred in this regard to international human rights standards. Similarly, in its February 2025 newsletter, the Association for the Rights of Foreigners (*Association pour le droit des étrangers* – ADDE) commented on the 2025 coalition agreement’s proposed changes to nationality policy.¹⁰⁰ ADDE framed these policy shifts as reflecting a conceptual change in how nationality is understood – emphasising “valorisation” and higher hurdles for applicants – and expressed concern about the implications for inclusion and equal access to citizenship.

On 4 November 2025 a draft law was submitted to the Chamber of Representatives proposing amendments to the Belgian fiscal code¹⁰¹, including the reintroduction of a registration fee of EUR 150 for stateless persons in the naturalisation procedure. The proposal aims to align the fee for this category with the previous standard administrative charge and to take into account the specific legal and socio-economic situation of stateless applicants.¹⁰² The explanatory memorandum for the draft law explicitly frames this measure as a corrective to the general fee increase, recognising the specific vulnerability of stateless persons and the structural obstacles they face in accessing nationality. At the time of writing, the proposal remains under parliamentary consideration and has not yet resulted in a legislative amendment.

(99) Myria, '[Avis concernant la proposition de loi modifiant le Code des droits d'enregistrement, d'hypothèque et de greffe en ce qui concerne le droit d'enregistrement relatif à la déclaration de nationalité et à la naturalisation n°67/1, déposée le 9 juillet 2019](#)' / '[Advies over een wetsvoorstel tot wijziging van het Wetboek der registratie-, hypotheek- en griffierechten wat het registratierecht voor nationaliteitsverklaring en naturalisatie betreft, nr. 67/1, ingediend op 9 juli 2019](#)', 21 March 2024.

(100) Association for the Rights of Foreigners (ADDE), [Newsletter n°215](#), February 2025.

(101) [Projet de loi portant des dispositions fiscales diverses / Wetsontwerp houdende diverse fiscale bepalingen](#), document nr. 56K1127, submitted 4 November 2025.

(102) In practice, this would concern a limited proportion of applicants. According to the draft law, 48 persons had acquired Belgian nationality through this pathway (acquisition through naturalisation) in 2024.



8.2 Loss of Belgian citizenship

In 2025, two legislative proposals were introduced with a view to expanding the circumstances in which Belgian nationality may be revoked. The first, submitted on 30 June 2025, proposed extending the application of loss of nationality (déchéance/vervalvenverklaring) to additional serious offences.¹⁰³ Under the framework in force at the time, loss of nationality for dual nationals was mainly limited to convictions for terrorism-related offences. The proposal sought to extend this to other offences, including genocide, human trafficking, serious sexual offences, organised crime and crimes resulting in death, among others. It also proposed extending the period following acquisition of nationality during which loss of nationality could be applied from 10 to 15 years, while introducing procedural requirements for judges to assess prospects for reintegration and to provide specific reasoning where nationality was not revoked. In addition, the proposal provided that the withdrawal of nationality would entail the loss of the residence rights linked to that nationality.

A related legislative initiative, submitted on 19 November 2025, contained further proposed amendments concerning the revocation of nationality. The draft law proposed that judges would be required to rule on the loss of nationality¹⁰⁴ in terrorism cases even in the absence of a request by the public prosecutor. It also sought to further extend the range of criminal convictions that could lead to revocation, including organised crime, homicide and serious sexual offences. The draft legislation maintained the proposed 15-year period during which revocation could be applied and included a number of procedural safeguards. According to the government, the proposal formed part of a broader effort to strengthen the criminal justice framework and to align nationality rules more closely with public security objectives. At the end of 2025, both proposals remained under parliamentary consideration.

The proposed expansion of the grounds for loss of Belgian nationality also gave rise to criticism. In an opinion issued in January 2026, Myria, together with the Federal Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (IFDH/FIRM), stated that the draft legislation would considerably broaden both the material and personal scope of nationality revocation¹⁰⁵, in particular through the automatic application of loss of nationality for certain offences. The two institutions raised concerns that the proposed changes could affect compliance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as well as judicial guarantees under Belgian and European law. They also considered that automatic revocation could weaken procedural safeguards and noted that the criteria allowing judges to depart from automatic loss were not sufficiently clear. In addition, Myria and IFDH/FIRM pointed to possible consequences for residence rights, particularly for former beneficiaries of international protection and for persons who could not be removed from Belgian territory.

(103) [Proposition de loi modifiant le Code de la nationalité belge et la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers en ce qui concerne la déchéance de la nationalité belge et le retrait du droit de séjour des binationaux condamnés du chef d'infractions portant atteinte à la sécurité publique, de crimes contre l'humanité, de traite d'êtres humains, de faits de mœurs graves et de génocide.](#)

(104) [Projet de loi relatif à la réalisation de tests de drogue dans les maisons de transition et à la déchéance de la nationalité belge / Wetsontwerp betreffende het afnemen van drugstesten in de transitiehuizen en de vervallenverklaring van de Belgische nationaliteit](#), document nr. 56K1164, submitted 19 November 2025.

(105) Myria, 'Gezamenlijk advies aan de commissie voor Binnenlandse Zaken, Veiligheid, Migratie en Bestuurszaken van de Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers', 30 November 2025.

REVOKING NATIONALITY: THE CASE OF CHILDREN BORN IN BELGIUM TO PALESTINIAN PARENTS

Since 2023, the Immigration Office has instructed several municipalities to withdraw the Belgian nationality of children born in Belgium to Palestinian parents, who had acquired it on the basis of Article 10§1 of the Belgian Nationality Code (according to which a child born in Belgium who does not have any other nationality before turning 18 or being emancipated is Belgian), which is a safeguard against statelessness.

The Immigration Office reported that certain families were improperly taking advantage of the nationality registration process for children born in Belgium to parents considered stateless, including Palestinians. According to the Immigration Office, Belgian nationality granted to newborns can create an immediate right to family reunification. The Office indicated that this situation had led some individuals to strategically travel to Belgium to give birth, with the aim of facilitating subsequent family reunification procedures.

The Immigration Office stated that its notifications were intended to promote more consistent decision-making across municipalities.

Minister of Asylum and Migration Van Bossuyt supported this approach, stating that the Immigration Office was acting appropriately by raising awareness among local authorities to ensure uniform application of the relevant rules.

This practice sparked significant criticism: the Federal Ombudsman issued a recommendation urging the Immigration Office to cease this practice immediately, first in January 2024 and again in January 2025.¹⁰⁶

In reaction to continued reports throughout 2024 and 2025 of children having their Belgian nationality revoked by some municipalities, human-rights bodies, including Myria and the General Delegates for Children's Rights in the Flemish Region (*Kinderrechtencommissariaat*) and the French Community (*Délégué général aux droits de l'enfant*), published a joint opinion in January 2026.¹⁰⁷ They warned that, Palestinian nationality being legally uncertain and often inaccessible in practice, these children risk statelessness. They also criticised the role of the Immigration Office, which lacks formal competence in nationality matters, as well as the lack of legal certainty, procedural safeguards, and consideration of the child's best interests.

(106) Federal Ombudsman, Recommendations 2024/04 and 2024/05 to the Immigration Office and the Ministry of Justice.

(107) Myria, '[belge](#)' / '[verliezen](#)', 2 December 2025.



They conclude that these withdrawals may be incompatible with Belgium's obligations under international law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and call for a uniform, child-centred application of nationality law.

This development forms part of a broader debate on whether persons of Palestinian origin should be regarded as stateless. In Belgium, statelessness is assessed independently by one of the six family courts competent in such matters. Belgian case law has not provided a uniform approach to the recognition of statelessness for Palestinians in Belgium. Differences in interpretation between family courts, civil registrars and public prosecutors have contributed to legal uncertainty and to differences in treatment depending on the place of residence of the children concerned.¹⁰⁸

8.3 Statelessness

Following the introduction in September 2024 of a specific administrative procedure for granting residence permits on the basis of statelessness, its implementation continued in 2025.¹⁰⁹ Under this procedure, applications are examined by the Immigration Office, which may request an opinion from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS). Where the application is granted, the person concerned receives a residence permit valid for five years and may benefit from family reunification under the same conditions as recognised refugees. In the event of a negative decision, an appeal for annulment may be lodged before the Council for Alien Law Litigation; this appeal does not have a suspensive effect.

In 2025, the Immigration Office requested eight opinions from the CGRS concerning applications for residence permits on grounds of statelessness. These requests concerned applicants whose country of origin or habitual residence was Palestine (three applicants), Mauritania (one), Iran (one), Armenia (one), former Yugoslavia (one) and Eritrea (one). In the same year, the CGRS issued six opinions, of which two were positive and four were negative.¹¹⁰

(108) For more information on the status of Palestinians in Belgium, [Ad Hoc Query on the recognition of Palestine as a State | EMN](#).

(109) [Loi du 10 mars 2024 modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers en matière de droit au regroupement familial / Wet van 10 maart 2024 tot wijziging van de wet van 15 december 1980 betreffende de toegang tot het grondgebied, het verblijf, de vestiging en de verwijdering van vreemdelingen inzake het recht op gezinshereniging](#), published 22 August 2024.

(110) Statistics obtained from the CGRS upon request by EMN Belgium.

EU PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM: WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR STATELESS PERSONS?

In July 2025, NANSEN published an analysis of the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration from the perspective of statelessness.¹¹¹ The publication examines the Pact's provisions relevant to the identification and protection of stateless persons and aims to raise awareness among public authorities and asylum professionals. It also outlines challenges affecting stateless persons in Belgium and formulates ten recommendations intended to support their effective access to international protection.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025¹¹²

- > Ad Hoc Query on the validity of a stateless person's travel document
- > Ad Hoc Query on the procedures for examining applications for citizenship based on language proficiency and citizenship tests
- > Ad Hoc Query on the recognition of Palestine as a state
- > Ad Hoc Query on determining the citizenship of third-country nationals
- > Ad Hoc Query on passing Iraqi citizenship to a child born abroad

(111) [Statelessness and EU Pact on Asylum and Migration: 10 Recommendations - NANSEN](#).

(112) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

09

BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN



To enter the Belgian territory legally, individuals who do not have Belgian nationality must be able to prove that they meet certain requirements. These entry requirements are laid down in Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (the Schengen Borders Code)¹¹³, which is directly applicable in Belgium. This Regulation eliminates checks at the internal borders of the Schengen area, so that entry requirements are only checked at the external borders (9.1). Whereas the execution of border checks and the operational management of border control posts fall under the responsibility of the Federal Police, the Immigration Office is responsible for issuing visas (9.2), working hand in hand with the diplomatic and consular network of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. Whereas long-term stays (more than three months) are a national competence, access to the territory for short-term stays falls under a common European visa policy, as part of a wider Schengen governance (9.3).

9.1 Border management

The Royal Decree of 15 May 2025 established the operational locations and practical arrangements for the deployment of members of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps (Frontex) on Belgian territory.

The Decree enables the effective **deployment of Frontex officers** under strict and clearly defined conditions. The European officers will always operate under the supervision of a member of the Belgian Federal Police and must comply with the same ethical and operational rules as Belgian police officers. Their main role is to support border control activities under the authority of the Belgian Federal Police. Following the adoption of this framework, Frontex officers began operational activities at Brussels Airport on 8 September 2025. Working in cooperation with the Belgian Aviation Police (LPA), they supported border control tasks and return-related activities. Their deployment was made possible by the new national legal framework and strengthened Belgium's operational capacity at the external border.

In July 2025, Belgium intensified **targeted police checks within its territory**, in accordance with Article 23 of the Schengen Borders Code. These checks were carried out by the competent authorities in the exercise of their police powers on the national territory, as provided for under Belgian law. These measures, based on general information relating to public security and aimed in particular at combating irregular migration and secondary movements, were designed and carried out in a manner clearly distinct from systematic checks at the external borders. They therefore did not constitute a reintroduction of internal border controls within the meaning of Article 25 of the Schengen Borders Code.

(113) [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders \(Schengen Borders Code\)](#).



Following an announcement by the Minister of the Interior and the Minister for Asylum and Migration, the Federal Police, local police zones and the Immigration Office carried out a series of coordinated operations at various transit locations, including international coach services and selected motorway sites, rail arrivals at Brussels-South station, and selected intra-Schengen flights at national airports. These intensified checks continued throughout the remainder of 2025 and formed part of Belgium's broader approach to addressing secondary movements through inter-agency cooperation. [See also Chapter 10](#) on irregular migration, including migrant smuggling.

9.2 Visa Policy

In 2025, the **FPS Foreign Affairs finalised the digitalisation of visa processing across all Belgian diplomatic posts** working with external service providers (VFS Global and TLScontact). The introduction of a fully digital and paperless workflow aimed to improve operational efficiency, reduce administrative costs and support environmental sustainability. In parallel, **the Belgian visa application network was expanded through the opening of five new Visa Application Centres** in Izmir, Rabat, Gqeberha/Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and Dhaka, with the aim of improving accessibility for applicants and increasing regional processing capacity.

In the same year, **the visa section of the FPS Foreign Affairs was reinforced through the recruitment of fifteen new visa officers**, who began specialised training in October 2025, in order to maintain processing capacity and ensure compliance with updated EU security protocols.

On 25 November 2025, the Federal Ombudsman issued a formal recommendation to the Immigration Office and the FPS Foreign Affairs to re-evaluate the mandatory in-person requirement for visa applications, with particular reference to the CJEU judgment in Case C-1/23 PPU (Afrin). While an exceptional "Afrin procedure" existed for certain family reunification cases involving force majeure, the Ombudsman considered that a broader legal framework was needed and recommended the introduction of remote digital submission modalities and alternative verification methods, in particular for long-stay (type D) visas.

In 2025, the Benelux countries also concluded bilateral agreements with Suriname, Belize and Kyrgyzstan combining visa waiver arrangements with readmission provisions. These agreements provide for reciprocal visa exemptions for holders of diplomatic, service and official passports for stays of up to 90 days and aimed to facilitate official travel, strengthen diplomatic relations and provide a framework for cooperation on return and readmission. [See also Chapter 13.2](#) on forced return.

9.3 Schengen Governance

The Entry/Exit System (EES) is an EU automated IT system that electronically records entry, exit and refusal-of-entry data of third-country nationals travelling for short stays at the external borders of the Schengen area. It replaces the manual stamping of passports and stores this information in a central database, thereby supporting external border management and the monitoring of authorised periods of stay.

The EES became operational in Belgium on 12 October 2025. In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2025/1534, Belgium opted for a progressive start of operations during the initial 180-day transitional period. According to the authorities, this phased implementation was intended to allow the competent authorities to gradually integrate the system into border control procedures, gain operational experience, and adapt national border processes and ICT infrastructure where necessary.

In parallel with the operational launch, a national law implementing the EES¹¹⁴ was adopted on 16 October 2025. This law provides the domestic legal framework for the application of the system at national level.

A further step in the modernisation of Belgium's border-related information systems took place on 20 May 2025 with the technical deployment and synchronisation of the upgraded Visa Information System (VIS). This rollout took place simultaneously at European central level and at Belgian national level. As part of this transition, the legacy inqVIS application was decommissioned and replaced at the Immigration Office by the new Smart Borders VIS module.

According to the authorities, the upgrade was intended to enable full interoperability between the VIS and the Entry/Exit System (EES). By connecting these systems through the shared Biometric Matching Service (sBMS), the Immigration Office is able to link visa data with border management records. This is intended to support the monitoring of entries, exits and authorised periods of stay of third-country nationals.

This development took place in the context of the EU Interoperability Regulations, namely Regulations (EU) 2019/817¹¹⁵ and 2019/818¹¹⁶, which provide for greater interoperability between EU information systems in the area of border management and internal security.

(114) [Loi modifiant la loi du 19 mars modifiant la loi du 15 décembre 1980 sur l'accès au territoire, le séjour, l'établissement et l'éloignement des étrangers, en ce qui concerne le système d'entrée/sortie.](#)

(115) [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of borders and visa.](#)

(116) [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/818 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2019 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration.](#)



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025¹¹⁷

- > Ad Hoc Query on application of EU rules on carriers' liability – Sanctions and penalties
- > Ad Hoc Query on application of EU rules on carriers' liability – Responsibility of costs
- > Ad Hoc Query on application of EU rules on carriers' liability – Cooperation with carriers
- > Ad Hoc Query on currently applicable asylum procedures at the border in view of implementing the new Pact on Migration and Asylum

(117) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

10

IRREGULAR MIGRATION – INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING





10 IRREGULAR MIGRATION – INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

In 2025, the Belgian authorities continued to implement measures to prevent irregular migration and combat migrant smuggling.

Measures in this area included preventive actions such as information campaigns targeting prospective migrants, aimed at raising awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration, possible legal pathways, and perspectives in countries of origin and transit (10.1).

The situation of irregularly staying third-country nationals remained an important aspect of migration policy in 2025. Irregular stay may increase vulnerability to exploitation and create barriers to access certain services. In some cases, irregularly staying third-country nationals may also seek to obtain a right of residence through a sham relationship, fraudulent recognition of parentage or other forms of fraud (10.2).

Where the facilitation of irregular movement is carried out for financial or other material benefit, the phenomenon falls within the scope of migrant smuggling. In this area, the police and judicial authorities cooperated in the investigation and prosecution of smugglers and smuggling networks (10.3).

Given the cross-border nature of irregular migration, cooperation with other EU Member States and with third countries also remained an important component of Belgium's response in this field (10.4).

10.1 Preventing irregular migration

In 2025, Belgium further developed targeted social media campaigns aimed at discouraging irregular migration by providing information on asylum procedures, reception conditions, secondary movements and the risks associated with migrant smuggling.

On 20 March 2025, the Immigration Office launched a **WhatsApp channel** titled "Belgian Immigration Office", to address misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations among potential applicants for international protection. In addition, **a first YouTube campaign was launched** targeting potential applicants for international protection in countries of origin and transit. Campaigns were carried out in Greece and Bulgaria and targeted persons from Cameroon and Guinea, including through messages referring to pressure on the Belgian reception system. In 2025, the Immigration Office also assisted the Colombian authorities in setting up an information campaign aimed at raising awareness that applying for international protection in the EU is not a pathway to obtaining legal residence ("Asilo no es la vida"), and that a high number of unfounded applications for international protection could lead to the suspension of visa-free travel for Colombian nationals to the Schengen area.

In July 2025, Belgium also intensified targeted internal police checks. These checks aimed to identify irregularly staying third-country nationals and address secondary movements, in full compliance with Article 23 of the Schengen Borders Code and without constituting internal border controls.

They were carried out by the Federal Police, local police zones and the Immigration Office at several locations, including international coach services, selected motorway locations, rail arrivals at Brussels-South station, and selected intra-Schengen flights at national airports. These intensified checks continued during the remainder of 2025. See also Chapter 9, [Section 9.1](#) on border management.

10.2 Preventing irregular stay and fraud

Following the reform of the Social Penal Code¹¹⁸, an amendment to Article 236 entered into force on 1 July 2025. The **amendment allows labour courts to order, ex officio, the payment of outstanding wages**, including where the employee has not formally joined the proceedings as a civil party. This may be relevant in cases involving irregularly staying third-country nationals.

The amendment forms part of broader efforts to address labour exploitation and to strengthen the financial consequences attached to illegal employment. It also seeks to address the vulnerability of undocumented workers in situations of exploitation.

On 5 November 2025, the College of Prosecutors-General issued a revised **Circular on the misuse of civil status procedures**. The revised Circular extends the scope of judicial and administrative attention from sham marriages and sham legal cohabitations to also include fraudulent recognitions of parentage.

It provides updated guidance to prosecutors and the competent administrative authorities on handling cases involving suspected misuse of civil status procedures for the purpose of obtaining residence rights. The aim of the revision is to harmonise operational practices and clarify the legal framework for detecting and processing such cases, including those involving fraudulent recognition of parentage.

On 24 October 2025, the Flemish Government adopted a **Decision to strengthening liability in subcontracting chains involving irregularly staying third-country nationals**.¹¹⁹ The Decision applies to four sectors identified as presenting a higher risk of illegal employment: construction, cleaning, meat processing and parcel delivery. Liability is strengthened by extending the existing duty of care.

(118) The Belgian Social Penal Code (in Dutch: '[Sociaal Strafwetboek](#)', in French: '[Code pénal social](#)') is the unified legal framework governing breaches of labour law, in force since 1 July 2010.

(119) [Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot wijziging van het besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 10 december 2010 tot uitvoering van het decreet van 10 december 2010 betreffende de private arbeidsbemiddeling, wat betreft de gedragscode uitzendactiviteiten, en het besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 7 december 2018 houdende uitvoering van de wet van 30 april 1999 betreffende de tewerkstelling van buitenlandse werknemers, wat betreft de zorgvuldigheidsplicht bij ketenaansprakelijkheid.](#)



Under the previous rules, clients and contractors were already required, across all sectors, to obtain a written statement from their (sub)contractors confirming that they did not employ irregularly staying third-country nationals. Following this decision, the requirement was extended to irregularly staying third-country nationals working as self-employed persons.

In addition, where the (sub)contractor operates in one of the sectors concerned, the client or contractor must request additional information about the (sub)contractor and the third-country nationals they employ. If the written statement or the requested information is not provided, or where false documents are submitted, this must be reported to the Flemish Social Inspection via the electronic reporting desk.

10.3 Investigating and prosecuting irregular migration and migrant smuggling

In 2025, the Belgian police and judicial authorities continued activities aimed at addressing irregular migration and migrant smuggling. On 13 May 2025, the Belgian authorities participated in a **coordinated international operation targeting an organised migrant smuggling network** suspected of facilitating the irregular entry into the European Union of up to 300 third-country nationals.¹²⁰ Eight house searches were carried out in West Flanders, resulting in the arrest of six suspects. Arrests were also made in Germany and Poland. Europol supported the operation through information exchange, real-time data verification and cross-border coordination, while the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST) facilitated judicial cooperation between the Member States concerned.

On 19 March 2025, several coordinated searches were carried out by the German authorities with the support of investigators from the Belgian Federal Police in **an operation targeting a criminal network based in Germany suspected of facilitating small-boat crossings of the English Channel**.¹²¹ The operation also involved support from Italy and Eurojust. It resulted in six arrests, five in Germany and one in Italy, under Belgian judicial order, as well as the seizure of 90 life jackets, jerrycans, two firearms and more than 47 electronic devices.

In 2025, several judgments were also delivered in Belgium in cases relating to migrant smuggling. In November 2025, the Brussels Criminal Court delivered a judgment in a case concerning a smuggling network that used a bar in Athens as a logistical base.¹²² According to the case file, migrants were offered travel arrangements to Brussels, often involving fraudulent documents. Prison sentences ranging from two to nine years were imposed and more than EUR 800 000 in criminal assets was confiscated.

(120) EMN Belgium, "[Belgium plays key role in joint operation against international migrant smuggling network](#)", News item, 13 May 2025.

(121) EMN Belgium, "[Belgium, Germany and Italy join forces in Europol operation, resulting in multiple arrests for migrant smuggling across the English Channel](#)", News item, 19 March 2025.

(122) Bruzz, "[Gevangenisstraffen voor mensensmokkelaars die opereerden vanuit bars in Athene](#)", news article, 7 november 2025.

10.4 International cooperation to counter irregular migration and migrant smuggling

In 2025, Belgium continued bilateral cooperation with several third countries in the area of migration management. These exchanges with countries of origin and transit focused on unfounded applications for international protection, the prevention of irregular migration, and cooperation on return and readmission. They also addressed information on asylum procedures, the conditions for legal stay in Belgium, and the risks associated with irregular migration, including exploitation by smuggling networks.

In this context, the Minister for Asylum and Migration visited Moldova in 2025, in the presence of the Director General of the Immigration Office. Meetings were held with various stakeholders and with representatives of Roma communities in relation to the relatively high number of applicants for international protection from these communities and the high rate of rejected applications. The visit received significant media attention.

Other high-level meetings were held with, among others, the authorities of Kosovo, Albania, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. [See also Chapter 13.](#)



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025¹²³

- > Ad Hoc Query on extension of SIS alerts
- > Ad Hoc Query on legal restrictions to combat arranged marriages (sensitive, please contact EMN Belgium)

(123) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

11

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS



Trafficking in human beings (or human trafficking) refers to **the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons**, including the exchange or transfer of control over them, by means such as the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control over another, **for the purpose of exploitation**. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services (including begging), slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the exploitation of criminal activities, or the removal of organs, or the exploitation of surrogacy, of forced marriage or of illegal adoption. Though human trafficking does not necessarily entail a cross-border element, migrants are particularly vulnerable to trafficking during their journey, and migrant workers, especially those in an irregular situation, are more at risk of economic exploitation.

COURT OF CASSATION DECISION ON THE INTENTIONAL ELEMENT IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING

On 14 May 2025, the Belgian Court of Cassation issued a decision (P.25.0349.F)¹²⁴ clarifying how the intention to exploit a victim is assessed in human trafficking cases. The ruling concerned a cassation appeal against a 9 January 2025 judgment by the Liège Court of Appeal, Criminal Chamber, which had acquitted two defendants of human trafficking. The Court of Appeal considered that it was not proven that the defendants had the intention to exploit the victim from the moment of recruitment.

The Court of Cassation clarified that the special intent to exploit may arise at any stage during the acts constituting trafficking. These acts include recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, receiving, and taking or transferring control over a person (Article 433quinquies, §1, Criminal Code). The key element of the offence is that these acts are committed with the purpose of exploiting the person. This purpose can exist at any point in the victim's situation, and the law does not require that the perpetrator intends exploitation from the outset or for each individual act.

In Belgium, various actors are closely involved in the fight against human trafficking. The **Interdepartmental Coordination Unit to combat Trafficking in and Smuggling of Human Beings**, under the authority of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Justice, is the main coordinating body (Cellule interdépartementale de coordination de la lutte contre la traite et le trafic des êtres humains /

(124) Court of Cassation (Belgium), [judgement no. P.250349.F](#), Juricaf, 14 May 2025.



11 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Interdepartementale Coördinatieceel ter bestrijding van de mensensmokkel en mensenhandel). A Bureau staffed by representatives from various departments (*inter alia* the Prosecutors' Offices, the Federal Police, the Immigration Office, the Social Inspection Service, etc.) handles the unit's day-to-day work and prepares and executes decisions, recommendations and initiatives. The three specialised reception centres for victims of trafficking run by the NGOs PAG-ASA in Brussels, Payoke in Antwerp and Sürya in Liège, which can accommodate adult and minor victims, are part of the Interdepartmental Unit. Myria, the Federal Migration Centre, acts as the independent National Rapporteur on human trafficking and maintains its role as an observer within the Interdepartmental Unit and its Bureau.

MYRIA'S ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING: FOCUS ON VICTIMS' PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES

On 8 December 2025, Myria published its annual report on human trafficking: "Victims: Seeing them, Listening to them"¹²⁵, focusing on the psychological vulnerabilities of victims of human trafficking and the prevention of secondary victimisation. Secondary victimisation occurs when victims suffer additional harm through interactions with authorities or professionals, for example during criminal proceedings. These vulnerabilities, arising from violence, coercion, poor living or working conditions, migration or administrative status, and cultural factors, can affect mental health, behaviour, memory, and willingness to participate in legal processes, manifesting as anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression, or avoidance. Respectful, tailored support from professionals strengthens trust, reduces secondary victimisation, and encourages victims' engagement with proceedings.

In its report, Myria stresses, among other things, the importance of strengthening training and specialisation of professionals to recognise and respond to the psychological vulnerabilities and specific needs of trafficking victims. Myria also highlights the need to provide a legal basis for extending the reflection period from 45 days to three months for victims who have suffered severe trauma. Additionally, Myria notes the importance of guaranteeing the right to free legal assistance from the outset and throughout the procedure, providing a safe and trusting environment during victim interviews, and taking into account how victims' memory functions in interview protocols, making sure professionals understand how trauma and memory may affect victim statements and avoid misinterpretation of inconsistencies.

(125) Myria, [Rapport annuel Traite et trafic des êtres humains 2025](#) : « Victimes : les voir, les écouter » / [Jaarverslag Mensenhandel en Mensensmokkel 2025](#): "Slachtoffers zien en horen", Brussels, 8 December 2025.

The **2021–2025 Action Plan on Fighting Human Trafficking** serves as the guiding framework for Belgium’s actions in combating human trafficking. It focuses on optimising legislative and regulatory instruments **(11.1)**; pursuing criminal policy, including strengthening investigative capacities and enhancing tools to address evolving forms of exploitation such as online recruitment **(11.2)**; ensuring the training of specialised and non-specialised actors and raising awareness among key stakeholders and the general public **(11.3)**; refining the protection status of victims and improving the position of specialised reception centres, including through adaptations to the National Referral Mechanism **(11.4)**; and enhancing international cooperation, both between (Member) States and with third countries **(11.5)**.

11.1 Legislative and policy frameworks

The year 2025 began with renewed **political commitments** to combat human smuggling and trafficking in human beings. These commitments are reflected in the Federal Coalition Agreement 2025–2029¹²⁶, published on 31 January 2025, and in the General Policy Note on Asylum and Migration of 24 April 2025.

In accordance with these documents, the government envisages **optimising the multidisciplinary cooperation model and strengthening coordination structures** to ensure a more unified vision and coherent policy implementation, while also enhancing efficiency. The Federal Coalition Agreement also announces (i) strengthening social inspection services, the police and the judiciary, and implementing large-scale targeted awareness-raising campaigns to fight human trafficking and exploitation; (ii) the training and designation of specialised judges, investigative magistrates and inspectors, and stricter penalties for such offences; and (iii) a review and optimisation of funding for specialised reception centres for victims of trafficking in human beings. At the European and international level, the Agreement promotes a chain-based approach, cooperation and information exchange, as well as the application of the “follow the money” (or “follow the value”) principle by investigative teams.

Overall, these commitments seek to reinforce the effectiveness and coordination of action against trafficking at national, European, and international levels.

The year 2025 also marked significant anniversaries in Belgium’s legal framework against human trafficking: the **30th anniversary of the Act of 13 April 1995** and the 20th anniversary of the key 2005 reform, which amended various provisions to strengthen the fight against human trafficking and smuggling.

(126) Federal Government of Belgium, [Accord de gouvernement du gouvernement fédéral Bart De Wever / Regeerakkoord van de federale regering Bart De Wever](#), Brussels, 31 January 2025.



11 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

On 20 October 2025, the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, the FPS Justice, the three specialised reception centres for victims of trafficking in human beings (PAG-ASA, Payoke, Sürya), and Myria, with the support of the King Baudouin Foundation, organised a conference titled “Human trafficking: 30 years of efforts, a future to build”¹²⁷. The event brought together around 200 participants, mainly national stakeholders alongside a few European partners, demonstrating strong engagement from professionals across multiple sectors. The conference provided an opportunity to **review thirty years of anti-trafficking policy in Belgium**, highlighting key achievements and persistent challenges.

The main accomplishments included the development of a multidisciplinary and specialised approach, the long-term support offered by the specialised reception centres to victims, the training and designation of judges and inspectors, and the effective exchange of information among stakeholders. At the same time, participants discussed ongoing challenges, including adapting to digitalisation, protecting minors, addressing procedural delays, and ensuring victims receive adequate compensation. Looking beyond the past, the conference aimed to share lessons learned and mobilise actors around a renewed, common vision for the future, focusing on improving victim detection, providing tailored support, strengthening judicial responses, and enhancing coordination at both national and European levels.

Belgium’s implementation of anti-trafficking legislation and policies was also monitored at the international level. In 2025, the country underwent the **fourth evaluation round by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)**¹²⁸, as part of the ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. This round focused on **vulnerabilities to human trafficking**, measures taken by States Parties to prevent them, detect and support vulnerable victims, and punish offenders. It also examined the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on trafficking patterns. In addition to this thematic focus, GRETA reviewed the implementation of the main recommendations from its third evaluation report on Belgium.

Belgium first submitted its detailed response to GRETA’s questionnaire in June 2025, followed by an **on-site monitoring visit from 3 to 7 November 2025**¹²⁹. During the visit, the GRETA delegation met with federal and regional authorities, specialised agencies, NGOs, legal professionals, and other stakeholders, and visited facilities supporting victims of trafficking. The evaluation aimed to assess Belgium’s implementation of the Convention, particularly with regard to identifying vulnerabilities, preventing and detecting trafficking, supporting victims, and sanctioning perpetrators. Following the visit, GRETA will prepare a draft report for comment by the Belgian authorities, with the final report expected in autumn 2026.

(127) EMN Belgium, “[Belgian actors mark thirty years of the fight against human trafficking and reaffirm their commitment](#)”, News item, 20 October 2025.

(128) Council of Europe, Monitoring of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Country monitoring, [Belgium, 4th Evaluation Round](#).

(129) Council of Europe, “[GRETA carries out its fourth evaluation visit to Belgium](#)”, Council of Europe – Anti-Human Trafficking News, 3-7 November 2025.

11.2 Investigative and proactive capacities

In line with the 2021–2025 Action Plan on Fighting Human Trafficking, particular emphasis is placed on **strengthening the operational and investigative capacities** of specialised services, including the police, judicial authorities and social inspection services. This includes ensuring adequate resources, reinforcing specialised teams, and enhancing authorities' ability to detect, investigate and address cases of human trafficking and emerging forms of exploitation, including those facilitated by online recruitment methods increasingly used by criminal networks.

In this context, in 2025, the Central Directorate for the Fight against Serious and Organised Crime (DJSOC) of the Belgian Federal Police deployed **web crawler software** to analyse online content, a capability used to support the detection and identification of potential victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, including **underage sex workers**.

The software enables automated searches across various websites known to contain sex advertisements and offers for sexual services. It can process large volumes of online data, including websites, forums, platforms and open social networks, and supports the identification of content potentially linked to sexual exploitation, the detection of relevant keywords or coded expressions, and the identification of newly published content. The tool also supports the organisation of targeted checks and the monitoring of potential victims in the context of ongoing investigations.

More broadly, the tool is intended to strengthen the capacity of the authorities to detect and monitor cases involving sexual exploitation, including those concerning minors and other vulnerable persons, in a context characterised by increasing volumes and complexity of online content.



SAMILIA FOUNDATION ALERT ON PREVENTING CONFUSION BETWEEN SEX WORK AND POTENTIAL TRAFFICKING CASES

On 31 October 2025, the Samilia Foundation expressed concern about the risks for potential victims of trafficking not being recognised as such. The Foundation referred to a police operation in Alost, conducted in cooperation with the Social Inspection and the Immigration Office, targeting a presumed prostitution network in student housing. Six young women originally from Colombia, Brazil, and Spain were reportedly working without legal authorisation and received orders to leave the country. A seventh individual was taken for questioning.

The Foundation noted that the case was primarily addressed under social criminal law provisions. It highlighted that, in situations where trafficking for sexual exploitation cannot be excluded, attention to potential indicators of exploitation can help ensure that individuals have access to the protection measures provided for victims. Belgium's 2021–2025 Action Plan on Fighting Human Trafficking emphasises the need to ensure the proper application of legal provisions preventing the penalisation of victims and to examine any obstacles that could hinder reporting of trafficking situations.

11.3 Training and awareness-raising

11.3.1 TRAINING

The 2021–2025 Action Plan on Fighting Human Trafficking places particular emphasis on the training of various key actors, including staff from the National Social Security Office (RSZ/ONSS), social inspection services (FPS Employment), police services, officials from the Immigration Office and asylum sector, magistrates, professionals in the youth assistance sector, as well as other frontline actors. This training, whether initial or ongoing, is designed to improve their knowledge and skills in recognising the indicators of human trafficking and to clarify the role they can play when confronted with a human trafficking situation.

In 2025, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the expertise of key actors, the Thematic Directorate on Human Trafficking of the National Social Security Office (RSZ/ONSS) organised **training sessions for labour inspectors**, including

newly appointed inspectors and senior inspectors already in service. Throughout the year, members of the Thematic Directorate also participated in a range of international and national events related to human trafficking and victims' rights. These included an online information session for public authorities on 29 January¹³⁰, organised by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), which focused on challenges and solutions in implementing and upholding the rights of victims of crime. In February, they attended a high-level conference in Brussels on social justice in the digital era¹³¹, examining AI's impact on the labour market, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In April, they took part in an OSCE workshop in Vienna¹³², in partnership with the European Labour Authority (ELA), to strengthen the capacity of labour inspectors in identifying and referring human trafficking victims in the context of the humanitarian crisis. That same month, they contributed as guest speakers at the colloquium "Trafic et traite des êtres humains: comprendre pour mieux combattre" in La Louvière, organised by the Centre Régional d'Intégration – Centre & Wapi, which brought together legal, judicial, institutional, and civil society experts to better understand trafficking mechanisms and identify practical measures to reinforce the fight against human trafficking. In May, they participated in the 2025 Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum¹³³, organised by the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, which focused on harmonising efforts to eliminate forced and child labour and sharing best practices at European and global levels.

These activities strengthened the expertise of labour inspectors, enhanced the exchange of good practices, and improved their capacity to identify and support victims of human trafficking. By participating in these national and international events, inspectors were able to stay up to date with evolving forms of exploitation and to learn new approaches and methods from colleagues and experts across Europe and beyond.

While labour inspectors engaged in ongoing training and international exchanges throughout the year, 2025 also saw the implementation of mandatory instructions and **training sessions for protection officers at the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)**. These actions were taken to ensure compliance with the Circular on multidisciplinary cooperation concerning victims of human trafficking, which obliges the CGRS and other services to provide information on the human trafficking procedure to presumed victims.

Previously, only protection officers working in sections dealing with minors or applicants from countries where trafficking is more prevalent were familiar with the information to be provided to presumed victims. The instructions required **all protection officers to provide the official brochure on human trafficking** (Myria brochure, available in 28 languages¹³⁴) to any applicants exhibiting indicators of trafficking or who self-declared as victims. To support the implementation

(130) European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), "[Public authorities information session on the rights of victims of crime](#)", News item, 30 January 2025.

(131) International Labour Organization (ILO), "[Social justice in the digital era: AI's impact on the labour market](#)", 20 February 2025.

(132) Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, "[Labour inspectors boost skills for identifying and preventing human trafficking of Ukrainian refugees through OSCE workshop](#)", News item, 11 April 2025.

(133) FPS Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Development Cooperation, "[2025 Europe Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum](#)", 5-7 May 2025.

(134) Myria, "[Multilingual brochure for victims of human trafficking](#)", 9 March 2018.



of these instructions, the CGRS organised training and information sessions for all protection officers, explaining the obligation to provide the brochure and guidance on recognising human trafficking indicators. These activities enhanced the officers' ability to detect potential victims and ensured that all applicants exhibiting indicators or self-declaring as victims were informed of the procedure and support available.

PEPS PROJECT: STRENGTHENING TRAINING AND AWARENESS-RAISING ON THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS

In 2025, Defence for Children International (DCI) Belgium and its consortium secured an EU grant of €374,985.03 under the CERV-2025-DAPHNE programme¹³⁵ for the PEPS project (Projet conjoint pour l'Élimination de l'Exploitation Sexuelle des mineurs et la Prévention, la détection et la prise en charge des victimes). The project, which started in 2026, aims to prevent and combat the sexual exploitation of (both Belgian and foreign) minors through an integrated approach, combining professional training, youth-targeted awareness-raising, intersectoral and cross-border cooperation, and advocacy. It builds on findings from frontline professionals and studies by DCI/ECPAT Belgium and ECPAT France, which highlight the scope and severity of child sexual exploitation and the need for a more coordinated response. The consortium brings together stakeholders from French-speaking Belgium and France, including DCI/ECPAT Belgium (BEL), Samilia Foundation (BEL), Esperanto (BEL), the Ministry of Justice (BEL), Koutcha (FRA), ECPAT France (FRA), the General Administration for Youth Care – AGAJ (BEL), and Miprof (FRA).

The project's activities aim to strengthen the capacities of professionals working with children, enhance awareness and resilience among children and young people, and ensure coordinated responses to child sexual exploitation at both national and cross-border levels. In doing so, it also addresses persistent and emerging risks, including increased exposure of vulnerable minors in offline and online contexts, and tackles identified gaps in professional training, youth-targeted prevention, and structured cooperation between sectors and across borders.

(135) Defence des Enfants International Belgique, French-speaking branch (ASBL), "[Projet conjoint pour l'Élimination de l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs et la Prévention, la détection et la prise en charge des victimes](#)" (Project no. 101254691), EU Funding & Tenders Portal.

11.3.2 AWARENESS-RAISING

In 2025, Belgium continued to engage in awareness-raising activities targeting both the general public and key stakeholders. On 28 July, the Belgian **Blue Heart Campaign** was launched at Leuven City Hall, marking the annual activities surrounding the World Day against Trafficking in Persons (30 July). The 2025 campaign adopted the theme **“Human Trafficking is Organised Crime – End the Exploitation”** and focused on educating citizens on recognising indicators of exploitation, while promoting the national hotline (078 05 58 00) as a key tool for reporting suspected cases.

The campaign emphasised a victim-centred approach and reinforced cooperation between the Federal Public Service Justice and specialised reception centres for victims of human trafficking (PAG-ASA, Payoke, and Sürya), ensuring that legal protection and access to justice remain available to all survivors. It also generated broad local mobilisation, with 80 Belgian cities and municipalities participating through a variety of activities, including lighting up town halls in blue, municipal staff wearing Blue Heart pins, and distributing informational brochures in local offices.

By raising public awareness, encouraging reporting of suspected cases, and fostering coordination among local authorities, justice services, and specialised centres, the campaign contributed to preventing exploitation and supporting victims in Belgium.

11.4 National Referral Mechanism

In 2025, Belgium revised its National Referral Mechanism¹³⁶, **particularly to strengthen the identification, referral, and support of minors**. This revision was prompted by the fact that the existing Circular of 26 September 2008 did not include a dedicated section on minors, whose care involves multiple actors and procedures. As a result, there had been no clear guidance on the roles of each actor or the procedures they should follow, which could lead to gaps in the detection and referral of potential minor victims.

The Circular was redrafted to include a specific section on minors, as well as annexes clarifying interactions between federal legislation governing measures against trafficking and the laws of the federated entities responsible for youth assistance and child protection. The revisions provide practical guidance on how the identification, referral, and support of minor victims should be conducted. Following the work of two dedicated working groups (one for the French- and German-speaking Communities, and the other for the Flemish Community), the new text was finalised and approved. Formal signature by the College of Prosecutors General and the relevant ministers, at both federal and federated levels, is expected in 2026.

(136) According to international and European monitoring bodies, including GRETA, National Referral Mechanisms need to be applied to all suspected victims of trafficking, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.



11 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

This update aims to ensure that young victims are properly identified, referred, and provided with appropriate support, taking into account their specific vulnerabilities.

11.5 International cooperation

In 2025, Belgium strengthened international cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings, with a focus on coordinated responses under the EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) framework. Recognising the transnational nature of trafficking, Belgian authorities actively engaged with other EU Member States and relevant third countries to enhance strategic and operational information exchange, coordinate law enforcement activities, and support judicial cooperation across borders.

As part of these efforts, specialised ECOSOC inspectors from the Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue participated in two **EMPACT Joint Action Days**, i.e. multinational operations designed to detect and identify victims while targeting criminal networks and enforcing labour and social regulations:

- ▶ During the **GLOBAL CHAIN Action Days** in June, which focused on trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced begging, and other offences, ECOSOC inspectors participated in inspections organised by the Federal Police. These inspections uncovered several infringements related to social security, including undeclared work, part-time employment, and illegal employment, and led to the detection of two potential victims of human trafficking in Belgium. Overall, the multinational operation, involving 43 countries, resulted in the identification of 1,194 potential victims¹³⁷, most frequently from Romania, Ukraine, Colombia, and China.
- ▶ In September, during the **Labour Exploitation Action Days** focusing on the vineyard sector in several Belgian provinces, ECOSOC inspectors again collaborated with federal police officers to identify social security infringements such as undeclared work, illegal employment and missing social documents, as well as issues related to posted workers. No victims of human trafficking were detected in Belgium during this operation. Across the 32 participating countries, 404 potential victims were identified, including 393 potentially subjected to labour exploitation¹³⁸.

Building on these multinational actions, Belgium also further reinforced **cooperation with third countries under the EMPACT framework**. This cooperation focused on priority trafficking areas, particularly sexual exploitation, forced criminality, and child trafficking.

(137) INTERPOL, "[Global human trafficking operation detects 1,194 potential victims, arrests 158 suspects](#)", INTERPOL News, 11 July 2025.

(138) European Labour Authority (ELA), "[54 persons arrested in action against labour exploitation](#)", ELA News, 6 November 2025.

Belgian authorities, notably the Central Directorate for the Fight against Serious and Organised Crime (DJSOC), participated in 15 Operational Actions (OAs) under the Organised Action Plan on trafficking in human beings, acting as a member in 13 OAs (focusing inter alia on criminal intelligence, judicial cooperation, digital tools for combating trafficking, victim awareness and support, law enforcement training, trafficking in Latin America) and leading two OAs focused on child/minor trafficking and trafficking in Asia. These coordinated actions enhanced cross-border cooperation, supported intelligence-led investigations, and strengthened the identification of victims, including children, in line with a victim-centred and rights-based approach.

DECISION TO RELAUNCH AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN IN VIETNAM WITH PACIFIC LINKS FOUNDATION

In December 2025, the Immigration Office and Pacific Links Foundation agreed to relaunch an information campaign in Vietnam in 2026. This initiative builds on the existing cooperation between both partners in the field of the prevention of trafficking in human beings and unsafe migration. Previous campaigns, carried out in 2022 and 2023, focused on awareness-raising among at-risk groups and strengthening local capacities to prevent trafficking and exploitation. The decision to relaunch the campaign follows the 2024 assessment of earlier initiatives. This assessment showed that the activities reached students, community members, and local stakeholders, contributed to improved knowledge of trafficking risks and protection mechanisms, and strengthened the capacities of frontline actors to identify and support potential victims.

The relaunch aims to inform potential Vietnamese migrants about the risks associated with irregular migration, including human trafficking and exploitation, and to provide reliable information on safe and legal migration pathways. This initiative is prompted by the continued vulnerability of potential Vietnamese migrants, including reported cases in Vietnamese nail salons in several locations in Brussels, and by Pacific Links Foundation's assessment of previous campaigns, which indicated that they contributed to improved knowledge and prevention capacities.

**LEARN MORE:**

Study: Trafficking in human beings – the international dimension¹³⁹,
published on 16 July 2025.

(139) European Migration Network (EMN), "[Trafficking in human beings — the international dimension](#)", EMN Study, 16 July 2025.

12

INFORMING AND GUIDING IRREGULARLY STAYING MIGRANTS TOWARDS LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS





12 INFORMING AND GUIDING IRREGULARLY STAYING MIGRANTS TOWARDS LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Measures targeting irregularly staying migrants are often cross-cutting in nature and cannot easily be assigned to a single thematic chapter. Depending on their design, such measures may combine elements of social support, legal guidance, outreach, housing-related assistance, migration management and return counselling. They are generally aimed at reaching irregularly staying migrants who are not, or are no longer, in contact with migration and asylum authorities and who may therefore remain outside existing guidance and support structures. Such measures can help them explore possible pathways towards a durable solution, which, depending on the individual situation, may include legal stay, voluntary return or another sustainable outcome.

In 2025, measures aimed at informing and guiding irregularly staying migrants towards durable solutions continued to be implemented in Belgium.

The Immigration Office further developed the **Individual Case Management (ICAM)** approach in 2025. ICAM forms part of the Immigration Office's broader Alternatives to Detention (ATD) approach and has been in place since the creation of the dedicated ATD department on 1 June 2021. Within this framework, ICAM provides tailored, individual counselling to irregularly staying migrants who have received an order to leave the territory. Through a series of individual conversations, beneficiaries are supported in clarifying their administrative situation, understanding their rights and obligations, and exploring possible pathways towards a durable solution, including legal stay where applicable, voluntary return or another appropriate outcome. In 2025, the further development of ICAM was part of the Immigration Office's broader efforts to strengthen structured follow-up and expand the implementation of alternatives to detention. For more details on ICAM in 2025, [see Chapter 13](#).

Five **Shelter and Orientation projects** for homeless undocumented migrants, coordinated by Fedasil, continued to operate in Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Ghent and Kortrijk. These projects targeted long-term homeless undocumented migrants and followed a dual-track approach, supporting beneficiaries in exploring pathways towards a durable solution, including legal stay and voluntary return. Guidance was provided by civil society organisations or municipal welfare services, while second-line support was available through the Immigration Office for questions related to legal stay, including through ICAM, and through Fedasil for voluntary return. For the accommodation and homelessness dimension of these projects, [see Chapter 6.2](#). For the return dimension, including the stronger policy focus on voluntary return in 2025, [see Chapter 13.1](#).

In 2025, **Fedasil's Reach Out Team** continued to provide information and guidance to migrants in precarious situations outside the regular reception network. Its target group is broad and includes both applicants for international protection and persons without legal stay; irregularly staying migrants therefore constitute only one component of its wider outreach work. Activities included outreach to hard-to-reach migrants, the provision of neutral and accessible information on rights in Belgium, reception possibilities, social support, the international protection procedure and voluntary return options, and referrals to relevant medical, administrative, legal or social support services in cooperation with frontline organisations. These activities complemented other local and federal guidance measures aimed at reaching persons in precarious situations, including but not limited to irregularly staying migrants. For the broader homelessness-related context and the situation of non-accommodated applicants for international protection, [see Chapters 6 and 3](#) respectively.

Following the conclusion of the Reaching Undocumented Migrants (RUM) project in 2025, **ICMPD launched the Support to Frontline Workers (SFW) project**¹⁴⁰ under the Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF), funded by DG HOME. Belgium, and in particular Fedasil, took part in this follow-up initiative, which built on earlier peer exchanges while placing greater emphasis on multi-level cooperation and the local implementation of national strategies for reaching and counselling irregularly staying migrants outside formal reception structures. Through study visits and expert exchanges in Bilbao and Milan, Fedasil contributed to exchanges with national, regional and local authorities and civil society organisations on governance structures, funding mechanisms, outreach approaches and integrated case management. For the return-related dimension of this initiative, [see Chapter 13.1](#).

(140) ICMPD, [Support to Frontline Workers](#).

13

RETURN AND READMISSION



In 2025, return and readmission remained central components of Belgium's migration policy. The Belgian approach continued to be structured around two complementary pillars: **voluntary return and forced return**, implemented where voluntary return did not take place. Reintegration assistance remained an important element of return policy in both contexts. Assisted voluntary return and reintegration continued to be coordinated primarily by Fedasil through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, implemented in cooperation with Caritas International and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and supported in part through the EU Reintegration Programme (EURP).¹⁴¹ In parallel, the Immigration Office continued to play a central role in the implementation of return policy, both through the enforcement of return decisions and through voluntary return counselling for persons who had received a return decision, including through ICAM coaching.

(141) [EU Reintegration Programme \(EURP\)](#): Reintegration assistance refers to the support provided to migrants who have returned to their countries of origin. In accordance with its legal mandate, Frontex supports EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries in providing reintegration assistance both during the first days following arrival in the country of origin (post-arrival assistance) and in the longer term, for up to 12 months (post-return assistance), in order to facilitate the sustainable reintegration of third-country nationals into their societies. This support may include assistance with starting a small income-generating activity, accommodation, medical assistance, job counselling, education, legal services and other tailored measures.

(142) [New Common European System for Returns](#).

(143) [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union, and repealing Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directive 2001/40/EC and Council Decision 2004/191/EC - General approach](#).

(144) [Returns regulation: MEPs ready to start negotiations](#).

(145) [Move Coalition, Analyse Europees Voorstel Return Regulation, May 2025](#).

(146) [CIRÉ, Il faut rejeter les règles inhumaines qui régissent les expulsions, 15 September 2025](#).

At European level, legislative discussions on the **proposed EU Return Regulation** started in 2025, following the European Commission's presentation on 11 March 2025 of a proposal for a regulation replacing the 2008 Return Directive. The proposal aims to establish a new common EU framework on return¹⁴², including provisions on the mutual recognition of return decisions across Member States, forced return and voluntary return, obligations for returnees, safeguards, and measures to address absconding. Discussions continued at Council level throughout the year and led to the adoption of the Council's general approach on 8 December 2025.¹⁴³ Following the LIBE Committee's decision to enter into interinstitutional negotiations, which was announced in plenary on 12 March 2026, the European Parliament confirmed this decision in plenary on 26 March 2026, thereby allowing interinstitutional negotiations with the Council and the Commission to start.¹⁴⁴

The proposal also prompted reactions from civil society organisations, including in Belgium. In May 2025, the Belgian Move Coalition published an analysis¹⁴⁵ focusing in particular on the provisions on detention and expressing concerns about the possible implications of these provisions. In September 2025, CIRÉ¹⁴⁶ relayed a joint statement calling for the proposal to be rejected in its current form, signed by 209 organisations.



Voluntary return

The process of going back to the country of origin, transit or another third country, based on the free will of the returnee.

13.1 Voluntary return

In 2025, developments in the field of **voluntary return** in Belgium primarily concerned changes to access to assisted voluntary return and reintegration support, adaptations in the delivery of reintegration assistance for certain countries of return, and further efforts to strengthen counselling, outreach and cooperation between the actors involved.

Fedasil reported a total of **3 122 voluntary returns** to the country of origin in 2025, including 3 059 returns registered through Fedasil and 63 through the Immigration Office.¹⁴⁷ Brazil, the Republic of Moldova and the Syrian Arab Republic were the main countries of return.

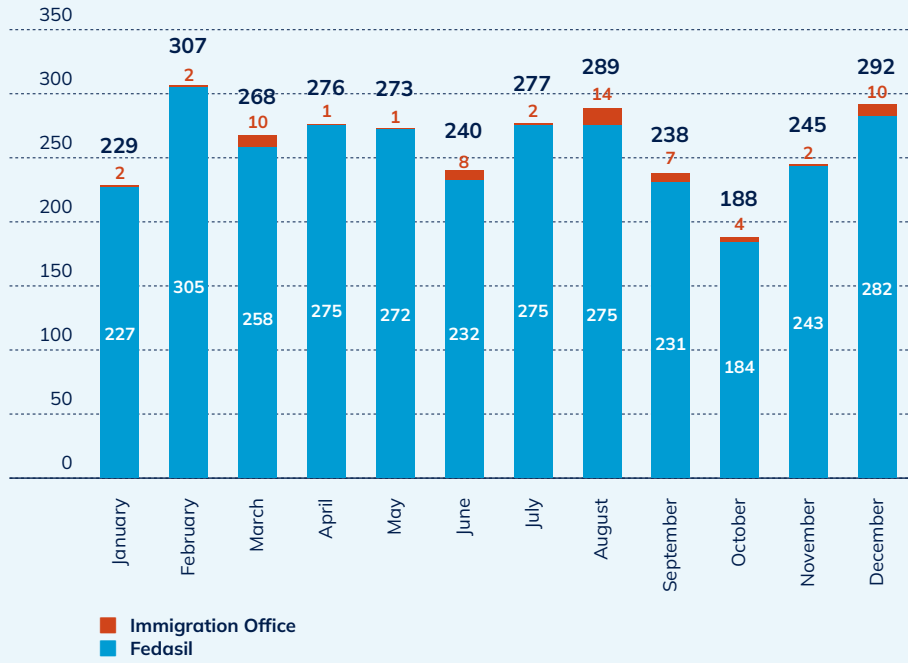
Almost half of the returnees returned as part of a family. The remainder consisted mainly of single men and women, as well as a limited number of unaccompanied minors. The largest age group among returnees was those aged 25 to 44.

FRONTEX-ASSISTED RETURN OPERATIONS

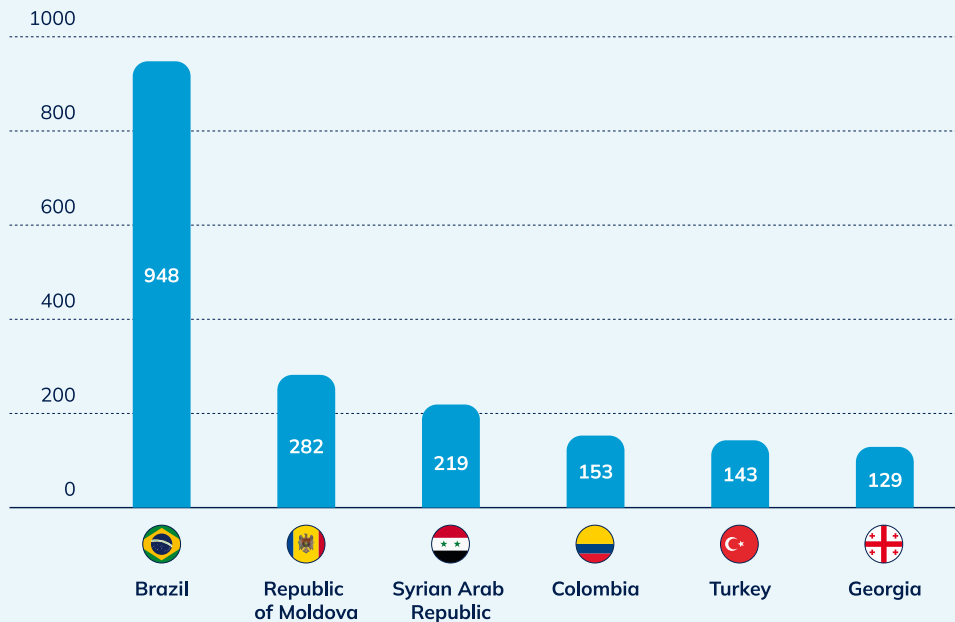
Belgium remained one of the main participating Member States in Frontex-assisted return operations in 2025, ranking among the top five in the EU. In total, Belgium recorded 3 116 Frontex-assisted returns, including 30 charter flight operations, 1 412 forced returns on scheduled flights and 1 674 voluntary returns on scheduled flights. These operations were supported through FAR (Frontex Application for Return), an IT system developed by Frontex to assist Member States in organising and coordinating return operations. FAR is used to register return cases, request operational support and manage practical aspects of both voluntary and forced return, including participation in joint return operations and reintegration assistance.

(147) The Immigration Office data indicated that 2 292 persons returned voluntarily. This difference reflects a difference in statistical coverage. The Immigration Office reports return data in line with the Return Directive and the Regulation on migration statistics, under which only persons who have been issued an order to leave the territory are included in return statistics. Fedasil also reports on the voluntary return of persons who leave voluntarily without having been issued an order to leave the territory, which was possible until February 2025 and remains possible only in exceptional cases.

Graph. 12
Total voluntary return
in 2025



Graph. 13
Main nationalities
in 2025





13 RETURN AND READMISSION

13.1.1 CHANGES TO ACCESS TO AND DELIVERY OF REINTEGRATION SUPPORT

In 2025, 2 481 returnees, representing 79.5% of all persons who returned voluntarily through Fedasil, received reintegration assistance, often provided through the EU Reintegration Programme and Reintegration Programme (EURP). This support was provided in 87 countries worldwide. Under EURP, Belgium recorded 833 registered beneficiaries of reintegration assistance in 2025, representing around 4% of the overall total of 18 943 beneficiaries and placing Belgium fourth among EU Member States.

Several changes affecting access to the assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programme were introduced in 2025.

As of February 2025, **access to the AVRR programme** is conditional upon the prior issuance of an order to leave the territory, in line with the applicable European framework. To this end, Fedasil and the Immigration Office have put in place a modus operandi under which part of the case handling is channelled through the Immigration Office, thereby also improving insight into the profiles of persons registering for voluntary return.

Further changes concerned access to reintegration assistance for specific nationalities. In May 2025, **reintegration assistance for Moldovan nationals was discontinued**, while voluntary return counselling and logistical support remained available and post-return reintegration assistance was limited to specific vulnerable groups. From 1 December 2025, **reintegration assistance for Brazilian nationals was likewise restricted to cases involving specific vulnerabilities**.

From 2025 onwards, **reintegration assistance for Iraqi nationals** returning voluntarily was provided through the EURP, implemented by the local reintegration partner European Technology and Training Centre (ETTC).

From August 2025, **reintegration assistance for Syrian nationals** was also delivered through partners operating under EURP. In parallel, IOM, in cooperation with Fedasil, conducted a Return Intention Survey among Syrians residing in Belgium in the final quarter of 2025. The survey examined the mobility intentions of Syrians in Belgium in light of the political developments in Syria at the end of 2024. It provides insights into the situation of Syrians in Belgium and analyses their current and future mobility intentions, focusing on the reasons, barriers and needs underpinning their decisions.

Reintegration assistance for Afghan nationals also became available through EURP at the end of 2025. In January 2026, Fedasil began implementing return and reintegration assistance through EURP for Afghan nationals returning voluntarily.

13.1.2 COUNSELLING, OUTREACH AND AWARENESS-RAISING

In 2025, voluntary return also continued to be supported through counselling, outreach and awareness-raising activities for persons without a legal right to stay.

Within the framework of the **Immigration Office's Individual Case Management coaching programme (ICAM)**, persons who had received an order to leave the territory were offered individual guidance aimed at clarifying their situation and identifying a sustainable future perspective, including voluntary return or legal residence status where applicable. In 2025, the Immigration Office's Alternatives to Detention (ATD) department also carried out information-sharing and awareness-raising activities with a range of local partners, including municipalities, police services, Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW/CPAS), Centres for General Welfare Work (CAW) and other local civil society organisations. Around 1 000 persons were reached through ad hoc meetings, information sessions and information-sharing activities with these partners. In addition, 23 258 persons were informed about ICAM through the order to leave the territory, around 10 000 persons were sensitised through invitations containing information on ICAM, including return-related aspects, and more than 5 000 persons received oral information on voluntary return during outreach contacts with persons who had been issued an order to leave the territory.

A further initiative was **the launch of a new project at the Zaventem reception centre for persons in the Dublin procedure** accommodated there, under which Immigration Office staff provided continuous counselling on voluntary return and reintegration options throughout the procedure.

Fedasil also continued to support voluntary return through local partnerships, public information and awareness-raising. In 2025, **its CONEX network**¹⁴⁸ reached and informed 7 643 persons about, inter alia, the voluntary return programme.

In 2025, **the Shelter and Orientation projects for homeless undocumented migrants**, coordinated by Fedasil in five cities, continued to include voluntary return as one possible pathway towards a durable solution. During the year, the new government requested an evaluation of the projects and called for a stronger focus on voluntary return, in line with the federal coalition agreement. For the guidance dimension of these projects, including pathways towards legal stay and voluntary return, **see Chapter 12**.

(148) The CONEX network brings together major Belgian cities and several complementary non-urban actors, such as Caritas International and IOM. It aims to reach, inform and orient persons in precarious situations outside the reception system, and to promote voluntary return through a local network of organisations. These activities reflect continued outreach to persons without legal residence in the context of voluntary return.



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From 20 September to 23 November 2025, **Fedasil organised the photo exhibition *Return in Ghent*, in collaboration with IOM and Caritas.** The exhibition presented photographs by Carl De Keyzer and accompanying texts by Catherine Vuylsteke, portraying migrants who had voluntarily returned to their countries of origin and rebuilt their lives. In the framework of the exhibition, Fedasil also organised guided visits and discussion sessions.

13.1.3 CAPACITY-BUILDING

In 2025, both Fedasil and the Immigration Office continued to invest in targeted capacity-building activities to support voluntary return. **For Fedasil, this included training on the voluntary return programme for 475 staff members working in reception centres operated by Fedasil and its partners.**¹⁴⁹ The training portfolio covered topics such as basic counselling on voluntary return, the return trajectory in reception, decision-making, case management, pre-departure counselling, and voluntary return and reintegration for (former) unaccompanied minors.

In addition, within the framework of the CONEX project and in cooperation with IOM, **a training programme was launched for diaspora community leaders**, with a view to strengthening their capacity to provide accurate information, make referrals and support migrants in vulnerable situations, including in relation to voluntary return pathways. Findings from IOM's 2025 pre-return survey showed that diaspora communities were the most frequently cited source of information on the assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme. The survey results also pointed to some uncertainty about the accuracy and completeness of information shared within diaspora communities, suggesting that targeted capacity-building could help support more consistent information provision.

For the Immigration Office, capacity-building efforts focused in particular on **strengthening expertise within the Alternatives to Detention department and the ICAM framework.** In 2025, ICAM coaches participated in internal and external training activities. A dedicated training module was also developed on support for vulnerable persons without legal residence and on case resolution practices. These initiatives aimed to strengthen internal knowledge-sharing and expertise within the department and were implemented in the context of the proactive return policy introduced in 2024 through amendments to the Aliens Act.¹⁵⁰

(149) These training activities supported the implementation of Fedasil's structured "Return Path" within the reception network. Under this approach, applicants for international protection receive neutral information on voluntary return from the moment they lodge their application. The Return Path comprises 11 information and counselling moments throughout the reception trajectory, starting from the arrival centre, and covers both the asylum procedure and return options, including voluntary return and the possible consequences of non-compliance, such as forced return.

(150) [12 MEI 2024. - Wet tot wijziging van de wet van 15 december 1980 betreffende de toegang tot het grondgebied, het verblijf, de vestiging en de verwijdering van vreemdelingen en van de wet van 12 januari 2007 betreffende de opvang van asielzoekers en van bepaalde andere categorieën van vreemdelingen inzake het aanklappend terugkeerbeleid](#) [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 sur la politique de retour proactive.](#)



EVALUATION OF THE BELGIAN APPROACH TO VOLUNTARY RETURN

In 2025, Fedasil and the Immigration Office launched an evaluation of the Belgian approach to voluntary return at the request of the Minister of Asylum and Migration. The evaluation aims to identify possible improvements in terms of optimisation and efficiency and was still ongoing at the end of 2025.

13.1.4 ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION FOR FAMILIES

Belgium also continued in 2025 to implement family units as an alternative to detention for families with minor children in irregular or inadmissible stay. These units consist of individual accommodation in an open setting, where families are supported by coaches and an individual return plan is developed for each family. On 13 October 2025, **the family units** were formally integrated into the Alternatives to Detention department of the Immigration Office, with a view to streamlining coordination and guidance.

13.1.5 EUROPEAN COOPERATION ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

At European level, Belgium continued in 2025 to participate actively in cooperation structures relating to return and reintegration.

Belgium, represented by Fedasil, continued to co-chair ICMPD's **Return and Reintegration Facility (RRF)**¹⁵¹ **Steering Committee** together with Sweden and Germany. The RRF supports EU Member States and Schengen Associated Countries in strengthening the effectiveness, coordination and sustainability of return and reintegration systems, by providing operational and financial support for initiatives with EU added value. It operates under a governance structure involving the European Commission, Member States and Frontex, with ICMPD acting as implementing partner. Belgium, represented by Fedasil and Enabel, also continued to **co-chair the RRF Technical Working Group on Reintegration and Development (TWG R&D)**.¹⁵² This working space brings together migration experts, practitioners and development actors to explore possibilities for meaningful cooperation between reintegration and development stakeholders, with a view to supporting returnees.

(151) ICMPD, [Return and Reintegration Facility \(RRF\)](#).

(152) ICMPD, [RRF Technical Working Group on Reintegration & Development](#).

In this context, Fedasil participated in several RRF activities aimed at strengthening reintegration support and operational cooperation. In cooperation with the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), the RRF organised



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an observation mission to Georgia for return counsellors from several EU Member States, including Belgium. Through exchanges with local partners, a review of the OFII Referral Desk and visits to initiatives run by returnees, the mission provided practical insights into the functioning of referral-based reintegration support and its contribution to sustainable outcomes.

This focus was further reflected in the eighth meeting of the Technical Working Group on Reintegration and Development, co-hosted by Fedasil in Brussels in November 2025, which explored ways to improve referral pathways and strengthen operational coordination between return, reintegration and development actors.

The ATD department of the Immigration Office presented Belgian practice at several **international meetings on alternatives to detention**. Presentations were given in February 2025 to the Albanian Immigration Office, in May 2025 to ICMPD Türkiye, and on 21 October 2025 in Montenegro during the regional Meeting on Alternatives to Immigration Detention in the Western Balkans. These exchanges aimed to share practices and to promote the use of immigration detention only as a measure of last resort. The ATD department also hosted international colleagues under the Frontex Mobility initiative with a view to exchanging operational practices in the field of alternatives to detention. These exchanges reflected broader European interest in this area.

In October 2025, Belgium called for **a coordinated European approach to the return of Afghan nationals** without a legal right to stay, particularly those considered to pose a threat to public order or national security. Twenty countries supported this initiative through a joint letter to European Commissioner Magnus Brunner, urging the European Commission to prioritise return arrangements with Afghanistan and to explore both voluntary and forced return options.

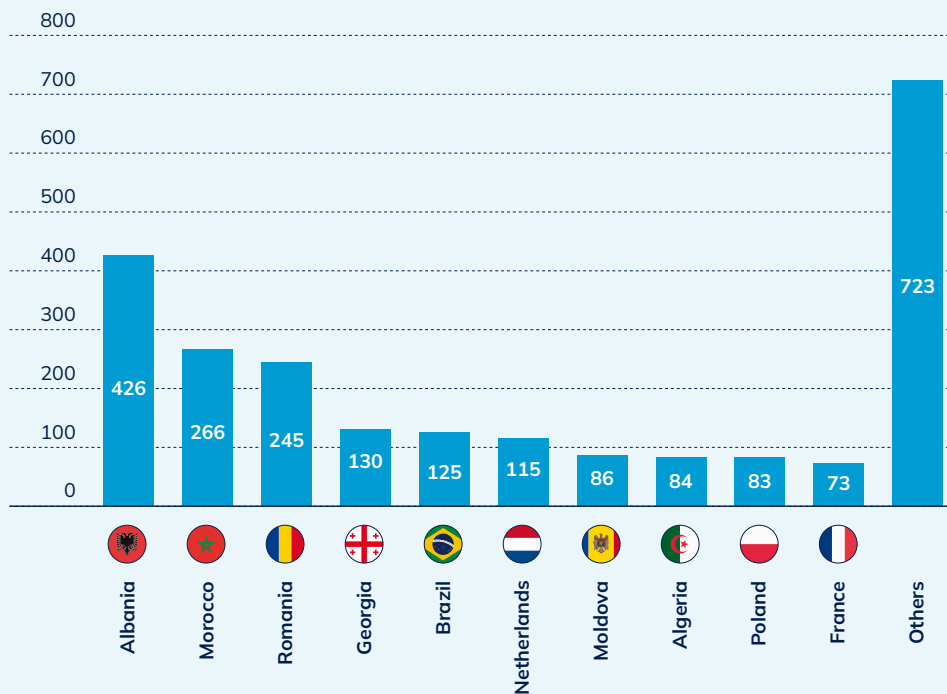
13.2 Forced return

Forced return

The process of going back to the country of origin, transit or another third country, following an administrative or judicial act, which states or declares the stay of the third-country national to be illegal and imposes or states an obligation to return.

In 2025, Belgium recorded **3 472 forced returns**, compared with 3 270 in 2024, corresponding to **an increase of 6.2%**. Of these, 2 356 concerned returns to countries of origin, 822 were Dublin transfers and 294 were removals carried out under bilateral readmission arrangements. Of the total, 711 concerned EU nationals and 2 761 concerned non-EU nationals. The main nationalities concerned were Albanian (439), Moroccan (390), Romanian (246), Algerian (198) and Georgian (163).

Graph. 14
Forced return to
countries of origin,
by nationality,
2025



13.2.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2025, the federal government prepared a preliminary draft law amending the Aliens Act with regard to **home entries** (*woonstbetredingen / visites domiciliaires*), as part of its broader return policy. More specifically, the draft proposed an amendment to Article 74/7 and the insertion of a new Article 74/7/1 of the Aliens Act. The draft aimed to establish a legal basis for home entries, subject to prior authorisation by an investigating judge, in the residence of a third-country national who is subject to an enforceable removal measure, does not cooperate with its implementation, and is considered to pose a danger to public order or national security.¹⁵³

At the request of the Minister of Asylum and Migration, Myria issued an opinion on 11 July 2025¹⁵⁴. In its opinion, Myria raised concerns regarding fundamental rights, including the insufficient demonstration of necessity and proportionality, the broad scope and vague concepts used, the limited margin of assessment left to the investigating judge, insufficient safeguards for vulnerable persons, and shortcomings relating to the right to an effective remedy. On 18 July 2025, the Belgian Council of Ministers approved the preliminary draft law, which was subsequently submitted to the Council of State for an opinion. Public reactions followed later in 2025, including criticism by civil society organisations. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen¹⁵⁵ raised concerns relating to privacy, solidarity and legal safeguards, while CIRÉ launched a public campaign calling for the rejection of the proposal.¹⁵⁶

(153) On 3 April 2026, the Belgian Council of Ministers approved the draft law in second reading. The text was subsequently referred again to the Council of State before being sent to parliament.

(154) Myria, [Advies aan de minister van Asiel en Migratie 11 juli 2025 Voorontwerp van wet tot wijziging van de wet van 15 december 1980 betreffende de toegang tot het grondgebied, het verblijf, de vestiging en de verwijdering van vreemdelingen wat de woonstbetreding betreft](#).

(155) Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, [Pedagogische nota: Arrestaties van mensen zonder papieren in hun woning of bij hun gastheer of -vrouw](#).

(156) CIRÉ, [Ceci-n'est pas une fiction](#).



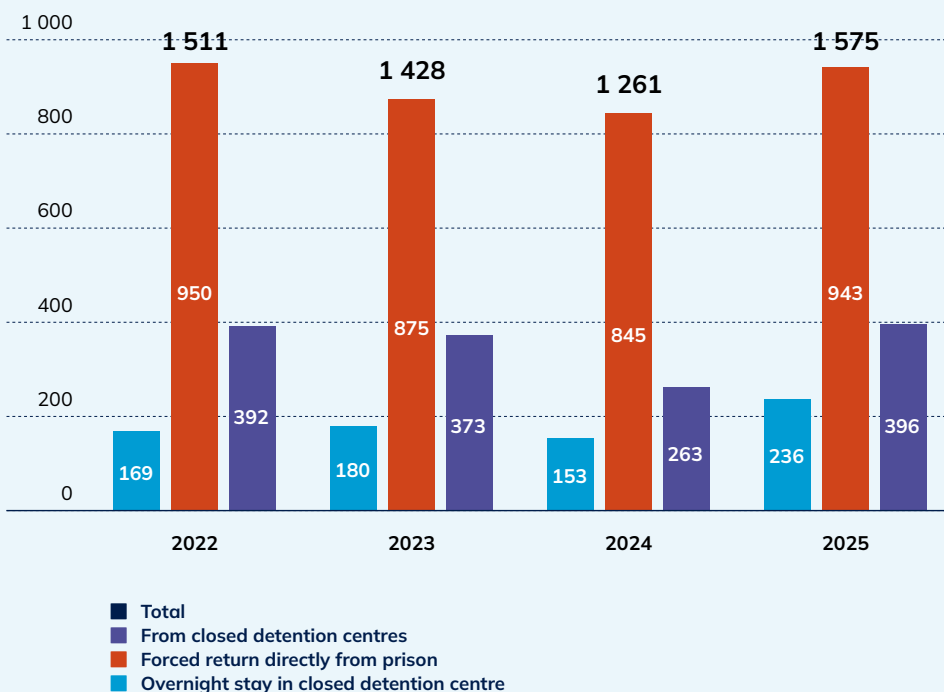
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13.2.2 OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Operational cooperation between judicial and migration authorities was further strengthened in 2025. **The Brussels Public Prosecutor’s Office** continued its policy of systematically identifying third-country nationals in irregular stay who were suspected of criminal offences. Since 7 March 2025, the Immigration Office has been present at the premises of the Prosecutor’s Office under a formal cooperation protocol. This arrangement allows the Immigration Office to verify identity and nationality and, where necessary, to contact the relevant consular authorities.

To help address overcrowding in Belgian prisons, increased attention was given in 2025 to **the return of detainees in irregular stay**, including through measures aimed at facilitating swifter removals. Of the 3 472 forced returns recorded in 2025, 1 575 concerned persons coming from the prison context, including those removed directly from prison or following transfer to a closed detention centre.

Graph. 15
Forced return from
the prison context



In 2025, Belgium further developed a proactive approach to **transferring third-country nationals in irregular stay to closed detention centres**. This approach aimed to improve case management and increase occupancy rates in detention facilities. The measure was driven by an internal analysis identifying possible efficiency gains.

Efforts to digitalise return procedures also continued in 2025. The Immigration Office further developed the **Return Case Management System (RECAMAS)**. During the reporting period, priority was given to the development of a detention module aimed at improving the monitoring and administrative follow-up of cases involving detention. Full operationalisation is foreseen in 2026.

In addition, reintegration support continued to be provided in the context of forced return for medically vulnerable returnees departing from closed detention centres and penitentiary institutions. In 2025, the Immigration Office handled 59 such dossiers. This support was provided either through forced return packages under the EU Reintegration Programme or through the national AMIF-funded Special Needs programme.

More broadly, the operational focus on return was reinforced through additional staffing and practical measures aimed at supporting removals. The Immigration Office continued to develop tools linked to a more integrated migration management system, including digital return case management and Smart Borders-related systems supporting identification, information-sharing and the detection of overstayers. These tools could also support cases involving return from prison, while forming part of the broader institutional framework for the implementation of return policy.

13.2.3 COOPERATION WITH COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN AND TRANSIT

In 2025, Belgium continued to strengthen cooperation with countries of origin and transit in the field of return and reintegration. **Bilateral cooperation agreements relating to identification and return** were signed with Tajikistan and Côte d'Ivoire. Within the framework of Benelux cooperation, agreements were also concluded with Belize, Kyrgyzstan and Suriname. See also Chapter 9, [Section 9.2](#) on visa policy in the context of border management.

Operational initiatives were undertaken in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Uzbekistan, Guinea, Moldova, Tajikistan, Angola, Senegal, Burundi, Algeria and Morocco to improve **cooperation on identification and return procedures** and, in some cases, to address challenges related to applications for international protection considered to be unfounded and linked to socio-economic motives.



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Bilateral meetings and training sessions also took place between the Belgian migration authorities and authorities in partner countries, allowing for exchanges on practices in the field of migration management. Regular contacts were maintained with key countries of origin, embassies, diasporas in Belgium and the countries concerned directly on issues including applications for international protection considered to be unfounded and linked to socio-economic motives, identification and return, information campaigns, trafficking risks, and legal and policy developments. **See also Chapter 10, Section 10.4** on international cooperation in the field of irregular migration, including migrant smuggling.

Particular attention was given to the **Western Balkans**, which has re-emerged since 2018 as a transit route for migrants towards the EU. In this context, support continued in the area of migration management, including return and readmission. Technical and operational preparations also continued in 2025 for the implementation of the electronic Return Case Management System (e-RCMS) with Serbia and Albania. Coordinated by IOM in cooperation with regional partners and the Belgian Immigration Office, and supported by Denmark through the WBCAP project, the system is intended to support the secure digital exchange of information during identification, return and readmission procedures. Full implementation is foreseen for the beginning of 2026.



LEARN MORE: RELATED EMN PUBLICATIONS IN 2025¹⁵⁷

- > Ad Hoc Query on the European travel document for the return of irregularly staying third-country nationals
- > Ad Hoc Query on provision of information in the context of return
- > Ad Hoc Query on the use of new technologies to overcome language barriers in return procedures
- > Ad Hoc Query on searching electronic devices in the context of return
- > Ad Hoc Query on voluntary return of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection
- > Ad Hoc Query on procurement of return service outside Europe
- > Ad Hoc Query on detention without judicial review

(157) All publications are available on the [website of EMN Belgium](#).

14

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT





14.1 Whole-of-Government approach

In 2025, migration and development formed part of Belgium's broader whole-of-government approach to the external dimension of migration policy. This policy area remained cross-cutting in nature, involving several domains, including migration policy, development cooperation and external relations. It therefore required coordination between multiple relevant actors, as well as coherence in Belgium's engagement with third countries.

In Belgian development cooperation, this translated into actions related, inter alia, to reintegration, climate-related displacement, labour and circular mobility, diaspora engagement and remittances. In line with this approach, Minister Prévot renewed Belgium's multiannual contribution to IOM core resources at EUR 4 million for the period 2025–2028. This contribution supports the implementation of IOM's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan¹⁵⁸, including activities related to protection, displacement and regular migration pathways.

At federal level, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) of the FPS Foreign Affairs continued to coordinate the main policy orientations in the field of development cooperation, while the Special Envoy for Migration also played an important role. Migration- and development-related actions were implemented by several federal actors. Enabel, the Belgian development agency, implemented bilateral and regional programmes, often in cooperation with international partners such as IOM, FAO, Expertise France and ICMPD. The Immigration Office, Fedasil and the CGRS also implemented bilateral projects, including in the area of legal and circular migration (**see also chapter 1.6 and 1.7**).

14.2 Reintegration support and governance in partner countries

In 2025, Enabel continued to implement the **Accompagnement, Mobilité, Insertion et Sensibilisation (AMIS) project in Guinea**¹⁵⁹ and the **Réintégration durable des personnes migrantes de retour en Côte d'Ivoire et lutte contre la traite (MIGRET) project in Côte d'Ivoire**¹⁶⁰. These projects support national authorities in implementing national reintegration strategies and in strengthening referral systems at central and local level. In both cases, Enabel worked in cooperation with Expertise France and, in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, also with IOM, in order to ensure continuity with reintegration activities previously carried out under the Multiannual Programme for Reintegration and Resettlement (MPPR). Activities in 2025 included identifying key strengths and weaknesses of centralised and decentralised actors involved in the governance and implementation of reintegration strategies, and reinforcing coordination mechanisms.

(158) IOM, [IOM Strategic plan 2024-2028](#).

(159) Enabel, [Accompagnement, Mobilité, Insertion et Sensibilisation](#).

(160) Enabel, [Réintégration durable des personnes migrantes de retour en Côte d'Ivoire et lutte contre la traite](#).

In 2025, the Immigration Office and Fedasil also participated in technical meetings with a delegation of project partners from Côte d'Ivoire. The meetings provided an opportunity to exchange on the first year of project implementation.

Under the structural partnership agreement between Enabel and Fedasil, Fedasil remained closely involved in the AMIS¹⁶¹, MIGRET¹⁶² and MIRECAM¹⁶³ projects. During Enabel's exchange visit on human mobility projects in Belgium in September–October 2025 for partners from Mauritania and Côte d'Ivoire, Fedasil presented key aspects of the Belgian reception framework, outreach and referral mechanisms, and activation initiatives in reception centres. The visit provided an opportunity to share evidence of impact, identify synergies and explore ways to strengthen the sustainability of actions. It also contributed to efforts to enhance referral systems for returnee reintegration, develop territorial integration roadmaps, foster dialogue between local authorities and civil society, and strengthen cooperation with diaspora networks to promote local development opportunities.

14.3 Climate change, displacement and the environment-migration nexus

In 2025, Belgium continued to finance the IOM-implemented project **“Environment–Migration Nexus in Mali and Strengthening Data on Internal and Cross-Border Displacement in the Sahel (TAAMA)”** (2024–2025)¹⁶⁴, with a total Belgian contribution of € 5 million. The project supported improved understanding of migration and displacement movements in the Sahel and contributed to strengthening community resilience in Mali. Activities included training 677 young people for professions in the green economy, restoring 200 hectares of degraded land, and establishing an early warning system to anticipate conflicts linked to pastoral mobility. The project also supported sustainable livelihoods and local conflict prevention mechanisms in response to climate-related drivers of displacement. It was also presented as a pilot initiative of broader relevance for future programming, linking climate action, stability and the prevention of forced displacement.

On 6–7 May 2025, a regional workshop on cross-border transhumance governance was organised in Abidjan under the TAAMA project¹⁶⁵, bringing together IOM, the United Nations Network on Migration and stakeholders from Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. Discussions focused on the use of reliable data, including through the Transhumance Tracking Tool, to support governance, conflict prevention and resilience in the context of climate and security pressures. Belgium, which funded the workshop through the TAAMA project, was represented by its Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire, who highlighted the importance of data for evidence-based policymaking.

(161) Enabel, [Accompagnement. Mobilité. Insertion et Sensibilisation.](#)

(162) Enabel, [Réintégration durable des personnes migrantes de retour en Côte d'Ivoire et lutte contre la traite.](#)

(163) Enabel, [Intégration socio-économique à base agropastorale des personnes déplacées et des communautés hôtes dans le Hodh El Chargui.](#)

(164) IOM, [Joint Pilot Initiative Aims to Strengthen Resilience to Climate Change in Six Sahelian States.](#)

(165) IOM, [IOM and Its Partners Reflect on the Importance of Data in Cross-Border Transhumance Governance in West and Central Africa.](#)



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In August 2025, the TAAMA project was completed. The project included both a regional and a national component. At regional level, it supported stronger data collection on migration movements across several Sahel countries, including through 14 monitoring points along selected migration routes, and contributed to a better understanding of the impact of climate change on population movements. In Mali, it focused on sustainable livelihoods and conflict prevention linked to transhumance, including support to vocational training centres and 25 village committees trained in transhumance-related conflict management and natural resource governance.

In November 2025, Enabel launched the **Regional Responses to Climate Displacement (RE2CLID)**¹⁶⁶ project in partnership with IOM. The project supports national and local stakeholders in Burundi, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in areas affected by climate-related displacement, with a focus on climate-resilient local development planning around Lake Tanganyika. The first year of implementation is foreseen for 2026, when activities and partnerships will be further specified.

In 2025, Belgium was involved, together with Senegal and Morocco, in the development of the joint FAO–IOM programme **Boosting the contribution of diaspora to climate action in rural areas**¹⁶⁷, which was selected under the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) pipeline. The programme aims to strengthen the resilience of rural communities affected by climate change by leveraging diaspora contributions to climate action in agrifood systems. Activities include mobilising diaspora communities, engaging agripreneurs, strengthening policy dialogue and promoting the role of diasporas in food security and climate action.

On 9 December 2025, IOM Belgium and Luxembourg organised a climate-focused event examining migration through a climate lens. The event explored the role of migrants and diaspora communities in climate action, including their contribution to green jobs and sustainable development in countries of origin, and was accompanied by the publication of a related policy brief.¹⁶⁸

In addition, the IOM Country Office for Belgium and Luxembourg contributed to knowledge development on diaspora engagement in humanitarian action, including through a contribution to IOM Italy's publication Taking Stock: from Insight to Impact – Diaspora Engagement in the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus (HDPN).¹⁶⁹

(166) Enabel, [Regional Responses to Climate Displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa – Cluster 1 Lake Tanganyika Basin](#).

(167) FAO and IOM, [Boosting the contribution of diaspora to climate action in rural areas, Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#).

(168) [Advancing Inclusive Climate Action through the Migration Lens: The Way Forward After COP30 – Belgium, the EU and Beyond](#).

(169) IOM, [Taking Stock: from Insight to Impact – Diaspora Engagement in the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus \(HDPN\), 2025](#).

14.4 Labour mobility partnerships and skills cooperation

In 2025, the **Skills Mobility Partnership between Belgium and Suriname**¹⁷⁰ continued to support capacity-building in the healthcare sector as a preparatory step towards possible future mobility. The initiative focused on strengthening cooperation between nursing education institutions in both countries and on identifying how skills development can benefit both Belgian labour market needs and training systems in Suriname. See also [Section 1.6](#) on labour mobility initiatives.

The Labour Migration Scheme (LMS) between Belgium and Tunisia¹⁷¹ also remained active in 2025. The initiative continued to explore skills-based mobility pathways linking labour market needs in Belgium with opportunities for Tunisian graduates. In 2025, particular emphasis was placed on identifying and engaging Tunisian students already present in Belgium, including through cooperation with Belgian universities and the development of a structured database. The project also further explored remote internship modalities as a complementary form of mobility. See also [Section 1.6](#) on labour mobility initiatives.

The Enabel GSP Care project between Belgium and Morocco¹⁷² continued in 2025. The project examined how a mobility scheme in the care sector could respond to labour market needs in Belgium while supporting skills development and employment systems in Morocco. In 2025, activities focused on assessing the feasibility and mutual benefits of such a scheme, in consultation with public and private stakeholders in both countries. See also [Section 1.6](#) on labour mobility initiatives.

In 2025, the **EMLINK project between Belgium and Georgia**¹⁷³, implemented by ICMPD, came to an end. Running from 2023 to 2025 with a budget of € 500 000, the project aimed to create an enabling environment for a pilot temporary mobility scheme involving Georgian start-ups and Belgian counterparts in the fields of innovation and entrepreneurship. By promoting the managed mobility of entrepreneurs, it sought to facilitate access to new markets and business opportunities, strengthen private sector competitiveness, support job creation and encourage foreign investment. The project was carried out in partnership with Belgium and Georgia. The project illustrated how temporary entrepreneurial mobility can support business links, private sector development and cooperation between countries of origin and destination. See also [Section 1.6](#) on labour mobility initiatives. See also Chapter 1, in particular [Section 1.6](#) on labour mobility initiatives.

(170) IOM, <https://belgium.iom.int/skills-mobility-partnership-belgium-suriname>.

(171) IOM, <https://belgium.iom.int/learning-mobility-scheme-tunisia-belgium>.

(172) Enabel, [The Global Skills Partnership serving talents in the care sector - La GSP au service des talents dans le secteur des soins](#).

(173) ICMPD, [EMLINK: Strengthening the Partnership between Belgium and Georgia through Temporary Mobility of Entrepreneurs \(Entrepreneurial Mobility Link - EMLINK\)](#).



In 2025, the Immigration Office continued to play a role in the growing use of labour mobility as a means of linking migration and sustainable development.

In this context, it participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)¹⁷⁴ alongside the FPS Foreign Affairs and Enabel. The Immigration Office also played a coordinating role by bringing together different ministries and engaging with countries of origin and transit in order to support a more coherent policy approach to migration and development. In addition, it took part in national and international meetings on this topic to help shape and promote the Belgian position. See also **Sections 1.6 and 1.7**, on labour mobility initiatives and circular migration.

14.5 Entrepreneurial mobility, diaspora engagement and remittances

In 2025, **Enabel launched the Boosting Gambian Talents project**¹⁷⁵. The initiative aims to link entrepreneurs and investors based in Belgium with small and medium-sized enterprises in The Gambia. The project combines short-term and, where relevant, circular mobility opportunities, including South–South and South–North dimensions, in sectors such as creative industries, agri-food and new technologies. As with other labour mobility projects implemented by Enabel, the Immigration Office is a key stakeholder in the process, together with the Belgian embassies involved in visa issuance. In view of the specific situation of The Gambia under Article 25a of the Visa Code, stronger coordination was put in place with the Embassy in Dakar and the Immigration Office. See also Chapter 1, **Section 1.7**, on circular migration.

In Senegal, Enabel integrated a Mobility and Entrepreneurship catalytic initiative into its bilateral cooperation programme (2024–2029).¹⁷⁶ The initiative seeks to strengthen local actors' capacity to attract diaspora investments, promote networking between local authorities and diaspora communities, and facilitate South–South entrepreneurial mobility. More specifically, it targets three regions in Senegal and recognises the role of financial, technical and social remittances in local economic development. It is implemented in partnership with diaspora-based and civil society organisations in Belgium.

(174) [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#).

(175) Enabel, [Boosting Gambian Talents](#).

(176) Programme de coopération gouvernementale 2024–2029, <https://senegal.diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/cooperation-au-developpement>.

According to World Bank estimates, personal remittances paid from Belgium amounted to USD 10.11 billion in 2024¹⁷⁷.

The O'REMIT project¹⁷⁸, implemented by IOM Belgium-Luxembourg, concluded in the first quarter of 2025 following a no-cost extension from December 2024 to February 2025. The project, launched in 2022, aimed to improve remittance services and promote development opportunities in countries of origin, in particular Morocco, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During its implementation, it mapped remittance corridors, gathered insights into diaspora behaviours, published three analytical reports, and developed tools to support financial literacy, financial inclusion and investment opportunities. During the extension phase, IOM organised two "Train the Trainers" sessions involving 72 participants and two partner diaspora organisations, Infodev asbl and Oasis asbl, in order to strengthen dissemination of the project's tools and results. These included the MigApp, an interactive dashboard, and a manual on financial and digital literacy. In February 2025, a panel discussion was also held during the second edition of the Salon des Diasporas Noires, focusing on the role of diasporas in the economic development of their countries of origin through remittances.

In 2025, IOM also organised workshops in Brussels on remittances for frontline workers, including social workers from different Centres for General Welfare (CAW) in Flanders during their exchange day, as well as students and teachers. The objective was to enhance the capacity of frontline actors to provide information and guidance on remittance management and financial literacy.

Overall, developments in 2025 show that migration and development cooperation in Belgium continued to cover a broad range of interconnected areas, from reintegration and climate-related displacement to skills mobility, diaspora engagement and remittances. While these initiatives differ in scope and implementation, they illustrate the growing importance of coordinated approaches that link migration governance, development cooperation and partnerships with countries of origin and transit.

(177) [World Bank Group, Personal remittances Paid – Belgium](#)

Converted into euro on the basis of the 2024 annual average ECB reference exchange rate for the US dollar (€ 1 = USD 1.0824), this corresponds to approximately EUR 9.34 billion.

(178) IOM, [O-REMIT Project](#).

ANNEX A – OVERVIEW OF THE MIGRATION AND ASYLUM INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE IN BELGIUM

Belgium is a federal state, composed of Communities and Regions, each with their own set of competences:

- ▶ **The federal government** has competences typically connected with matters of public interest: public finances, armed forces, judicial system, social security, foreign affairs, as well as substantial parts of public health and home affairs. Matters related to migration and asylum include access to and removal from the territory, border security, residence on the territory, international protection, reception, citizenship, etc.
- ▶ **The Communities** have competences typically connected with matters pertaining to the people: culture, education, the use of languages, social welfare, scientific research. There are three language-based Communities: the Flemish Community, the French Community, and the German-Speaking Community. Matters related to migration include integration, access to education, language learning, etc.
- ▶ **The Regions** have competences typically connected with matters pertaining to the territory: economy, employment, agriculture, housing, energy, the environment, foreign trade, etc. There are three territory-based Regions (from north to south): the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region, and the Walloon Region. Matters related to migration include access to the labour market, access to housing, etc.

ANNEX B – METHODOLOGY

This Annual Overview is based primarily on desk research. It was prepared by the Belgian National Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN Belgium). In doing so, extensive use was made of the expertise available within the Belgian National Contact Point, which brings together experts from the Immigration Office, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Myria – the Federal Migration Centre, and Fedasil – the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, under the coordination of the Federal Public Service Home Affairs.

The report was also drafted based on input from a broad range of Belgian authorities, public institutions, international organisations, and civil society actors active in the field of asylum and migration. These contributions are listed in the acknowledgements section of this report.

Information on legislative and policy developments was gathered primarily from official sources. The following types of documents were consulted:

- ▶ official publications of laws, royal decrees, ministerial decrees, cooperation agreements and other regulatory instruments published in the *Belgian Official Gazette*;
- ▶ policy notes, ministerial communications, annual reports and other official documents published by the competent authorities;
- ▶ official websites and publications of Belgian public authorities, institutions, international organisations and civil society actors active in the field of asylum and migration.

To capture broader policy developments and public debate, the report also draws on publicly available information from media sources, institutional websites, and specialised publications. Media reporting was used selectively to identify issues that received sustained public attention and that were relevant to debates on asylum and migration in Belgium.

For statistical data, use was made, where possible, of Eurostat data in order to promote comparability with annual overviews produced by other EMN Member and Observer Countries. Where relevant and appropriate, national Belgian statistics were also used, particularly where these provided greater detail or where no comparable Eurostat data were available. Differences may therefore arise between national and Eurostat figures, notably because of differences in definitions, scope or reference periods.

The purpose of this Annual Overview is to describe the main developments in the field of asylum and migration in Belgium over the reference year. In determining what constitutes a relevant development, the report takes into account not only major legislative and policy reforms, but also smaller initiatives, operational measures, implementation steps and practices that help to illustrate broader policy trends, emerging priorities or developments in implementation.

Criteria for the relevance of legislative and policy developments: The report seeks to provide as complete an overview as possible of relevant legislative and policy developments across the different areas covered. This includes not only substantive legislative amendments and major policy reforms, but also smaller initiatives, pilot measures, implementation arrangements, guidance, coordination mechanisms and other developments that are considered relevant for understanding the evolution of asylum and migration policy and practice in Belgium during the reference year.

Criteria for the relevance of political and societal debates: With regard to political and societal debates, the report does not aim to cover all issues discussed in Belgium during the reference year. It includes a selection of debates that were relevant to asylum and migration and received particular attention in the Belgian context, in particular where they were raised in political, policy or institutional debate at federal, regional or community level and were subject to sustained public, media or stakeholder attention over a certain period of time.

Terms and definitions

Where possible, this report follows the definitions set out in the **EMN Asylum and Migration Glossary**. The use of common EMN terminology aims to promote consistency and comparability between information produced by EMN National Contact Points across Member and Observer Countries.

ANNEX C – ACRONYMS

Acronyms specific to the Belgian context

In text	English	Dutch	French
AgII	Agency for Integration and Civic Integration	Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering (AgII)	/
BOSA	FPS Policy and Support	FOD Beleid en Ondersteuning	SPF Stratégie et Appui
CALL	Council for Alien Law Litigation	Raad voor Vreemdelingenbetwistingen (RvV)	Conseil du Contentieux des Étrangers (CCE)
CGRS	Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons	Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen (CGVS)	Commissariat Général aux Réfugiés et aux Apatrides (CGRA)
COCOF	French Community Commission	Franse Gemeenschapscommissie	Commission communautaire française
COCOM	Common Community Commission	Gemeenschappelijke Gemeenschapscommissie (GGC)	Commission communautaire commune
Fedasil	Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers	Federaal Agentschap voor de Opvang van Asielzoekers	Agence fédérale pour l'Accueil des Demandeurs d'Asile
FPS	Federal Public Service	Federale Overheidsdienst (FOD)	Service public fédéral (SPF)
Myria	Federal Migration Centre	Federaal Migratiecentrum	Centre fédéral Migration
NSSO	National Social Security Office	Rijksdienst voor Sociale Zekerheid (RSZ)	Office National de Sécurité Sociale (ONSS)
PCSW	Public Centre for Social Welfare	Openbaar Centrum voor Maatschappelijk Welzijn (OCMW)	Centre Public d'Action sociale (CPAS)
SIIS	Social Information and Investigation Service	Sociale Inlichtingen- en Opsporingsdienst (SIOD)	Service d'Information et de Recherche Sociale

Other Acronyms

AMIF – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

AVRR – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

CJEU – Court of Justice of the European Union

ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights

EEA – European Economic Area

ELA – European Labour Authority

EMN – European Migration Network

EMPACT – European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats

ESF+ – European Social Fund Plus

EU – European Union

EUAA – European Union Agency for Asylum

EUROJUST – European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation.

EUROPOL – European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation

EURP – EU Reintegration Programme

FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

GFMD – Global Forum on Migration and Development

GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

HDPN – Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus

ICMPD – International Centre for Migration Policy Development

ILO – International Labour Organization

IOM – International Organization for Migration

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

TPD – Temporary Protection Directive

UNHCR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

VIS – Visa Information System



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