Belgium

fedasil
FEDERAL AGENCY FOR THE RECEPTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

cgvs ra
Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons

ibz
Federal Public Service Home Affairs

euaa
EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR ASYLUM

What you need to know about applying for International Protection

ENGLISH

Practical guide to the Request for International Protection in Belgium

Juni 2026

You are now in Belgium, which is an EU+ country.
The EU+ countries are:

- the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU): Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and
- 4 other countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

CONTENTS

What is international protection (asylum)? 3

What is the asylum procedure? 4

- When and where will the registration and lodging of your application take place? 6
- What will happen during the registration and lodging? 7
- What is the procedure if you have arrived with children or a dependent adult ? 10
- Which country will examine your application? 11
- How will your application be examined? 12
- How will you receive the decision on your application for international protection? 17
- Possibility to appeal 20

What are your rights? 21

What are your obligations? 25

What are the consequences if you do not meet your obligations? 29

How will the authorities consider any special needs? 31

Medical examination 31

What if you want to return to your country? 32

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION?

You may need international protection if you cannot go back to your country because you fear persecution or face a real risk of serious harm. This means, for example, that your life or freedom would be in danger and the authorities of your country won't protect you from the danger you face.

It is your right to apply for international protection.

In Europe, international protection can take different forms: **refugee status** or **subsidiary protection**.

International protection is also called asylum.

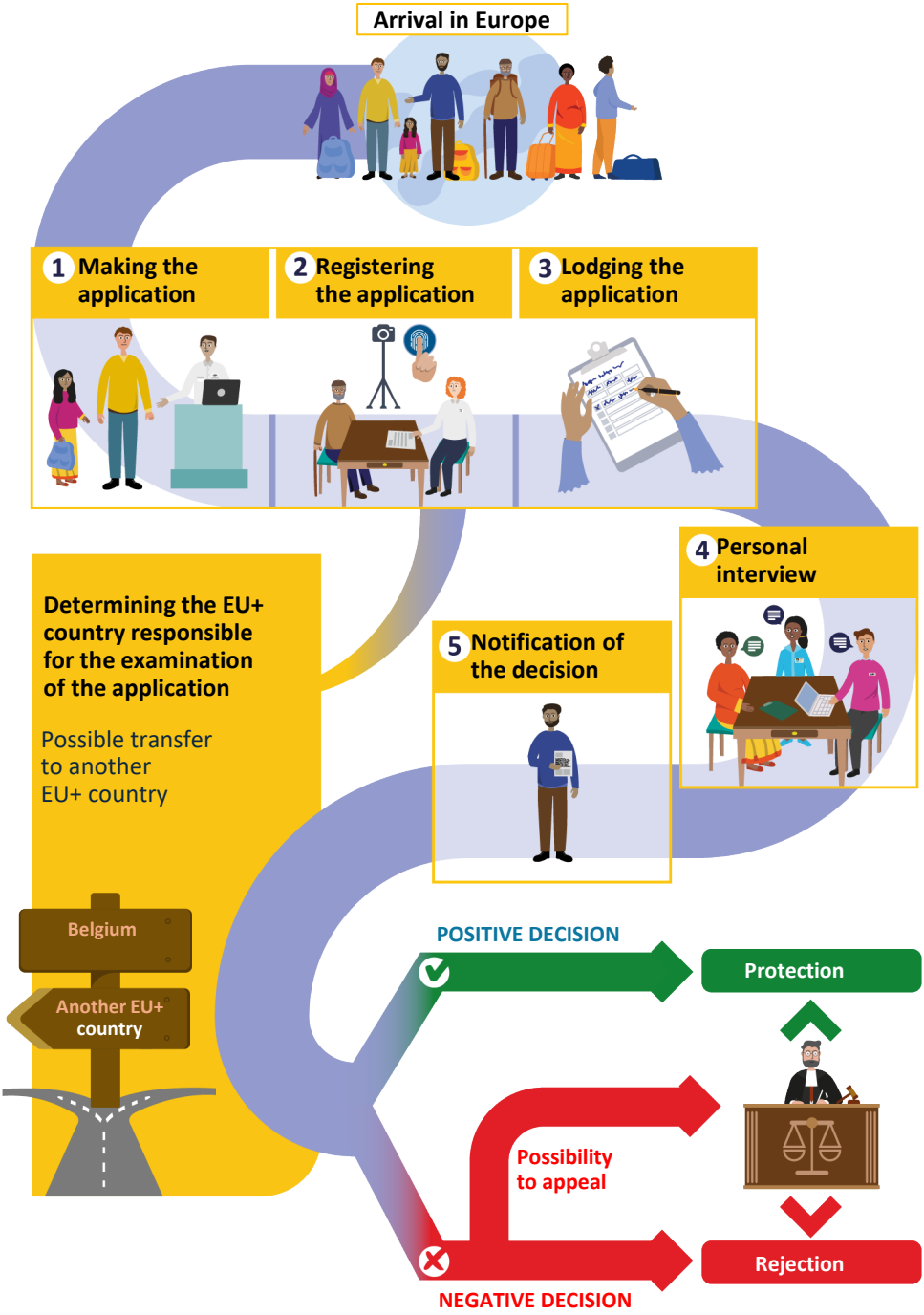
WHAT IS THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE?

During the asylum procedure, the authorities will assess if you need international protection and, if so, which type of protection is relevant to you. In the procedure you will have the opportunity to state all the reasons why you have left your home and your country of origin. Inform the officers truthfully of all the reasons why you left your country.

Once you have asked for international protection, you are considered an applicant for international protection.

Any information you share with the authorities will stay confidential. This information will never be shared with people against whom you are seeking protection.

The asylum procedure includes the following steps.



WHEN AND WHERE WILL THE REGISTRATION AND LODGING OF YOUR APPLICATION TAKE PLACE?

Once you have asked the authorities for international protection, your application will in principle be registered and lodged on the same day and at the same place. It will be registered and lodged at the Immigration Office (OE/DVZ).

As far as possible, the Immigration Office will try to register your application on the same day.

When registering your application, you will receive information on how to lodge your application.

If your application cannot be lodged on the same day, you will receive a document proving that you have applied for international protection and that your application has been registered.

If you apply with an authority that is not competent to register your application, this authority will redirect you to the Immigration Office.

It is very important that you complete the lodging of your application. If you fail to complete the lodging, your application will be considered withdrawn, unless the reason for this failure is beyond your control. This means that you will lose your status as an applicant, your right to support and services and the right to stay in Belgium.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE REGISTRATION AND LODGING?

Registration and lodging include the following aspects.

Your fingerprints will be taken.

Your photograph will be taken.

You will be asked to present all your identity, travel and any other relevant documents.

If you have original identity documents or photocopies, you are required to present them at the Immigration Office.

WAT GEBEURT ER TIJDENS DE REGISTRATIE EN INDIENING VAN UW VERZOEK? (DEEL 2 van 3)

You will be asked to provide your personal details. You will also be asked if you have family members residing in Belgium or another EU+ country.

The Immigration Office will check since when you have been in Belgium, if you have a physical address in Belgium and if you need reception support.

You will also have to 'elect domicile' i.e. choose an address for service in Belgium.

You will also be asked if you need the assistance of an interpreter during the asylum procedure.

You will be asked to provide your contact details (address, a telephone number and an email address).

You and your belongings may be searched. Your personal belongings remain your property and will be returned to you, except for any items considered dangerous.

WAT GEBEURT ER TIJDENS DE REGISTRATIE EN INDIENING VAN UW VERZOEK? (DEEL 3 van 3)

You will be asked to submit all the information and documents available to support your application. This includes information and documents regarding:

- your home country and every other country where you have lived
- the reasons you left your country and why you do not want to return
- your background and that of your family
- details of your journey to and through Europe
- any previous applications for international protection.

The order of these steps may be different but all applicants are treated in the same way. After lodging your application in Belgium, you will be interviewed at the Immigration Office in order to collect the necessary data and information. These will be safely stored in national and European databases.

It is your obligation and in your best interest to tell the truth and to cooperate with the authorities.

After lodging your application, you will receive an official document stating that you are an applicant for international protection.

You must carry it with you at all times.

If your application cannot be lodged on the same day, you will receive after registration a document stating that you have presented an application and that you application has been registered.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE IF YOU HAVE ARRIVED WITH CHILDREN OR A DEPENDENT ADULT?

If you arrived with:

- your children under the age of 18, or
- children under the age of 18 for whom you are legally responsible

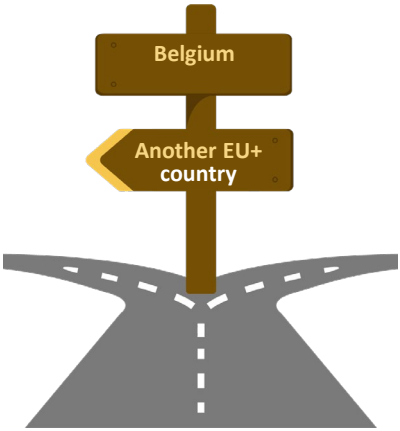
they too have to apply for international protection.

If your children are 18 years of age or older, they have to lodge their own application.

If you are responsible for a person who is 18 years of age or older and has a disability that prevents them from making decisions, you may apply for international protection and lodge an application on their behalf.

This person needs to be present with you during the registration and lodging of their application.

WHICH COUNTRY WILL EXAMINE YOUR APPLICATION?



You are guaranteed that an EU+ country will examine your application for international protection. However, you cannot choose which country will examine it.

The authorities will follow a procedure to decide which EU+ country is responsible for your application for international protection. This is called the responsibility determination procedure.

To this end, you will have to tell the authorities:

- If you have any family members in another EU+ country.
- If another EU+ country has issued a visa or a residence document to you in the past (a visa gives you permission to visit a country. This can be a stamp in your passport. A residence document is a document allowing you to stay in the country).
- If you have previously entered another EU+ country.
- If you have already applied for international protection in another EU+ country.
- If another EU+ country has issued you with an educational diploma or qualification.

If the authorities believe that another EU+ country may be responsible for examining your application, you will receive more detailed information on this procedure and your rights and obligations.

You will find more information in a separate brochure.

HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EXAMINED?

EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION

If Belgium is responsible for the examination of your application, your dossier will be transferred to the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS). The CGRS may invite you to a **personal interview**.

This invitation will be sent to you about three weeks before the date of the interview. If you are staying in a reception centre, the CGRS will email the invitation to the director of the centre, who will hand it to you. If you are staying at a private address, you will receive the invitation by registered mail. The invitation will be sent at the address you chose for service.

You have to take the invitation with you to the personal interview. This will take place at the CGRS in Brussels.

If you are staying in a closed centre or habitation unit, a collaborator of the CGRS will come to interview you. The personal interview can also take place through videoconferencing.

If you have a lawyer, they have to inform the CGRS that they will intervene in the asylum procedure. Your lawyer will receive a copy of every letter sent to you by the CGRS, including the invitation letter for your personal interview.

HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EXAMINED?

EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION

If you cannot come to the personal interview, you have to inform the CGRS. It may happen that you are unable to come to the CGRS for your personal interview, for instance if you are in hospital. **In this case, you must send to the CGRS a document, such as a doctor's certificate, proving that you are unable to come.**

If possible, send this document before the day planned for the interview. This is to avoid the CGRS making practical arrangements for your interview (call up an interpreter etc.) while you won't be there.

If you don't comply with the invitation to a personal interview without giving the CGRS a valid reason, your application may be rejected. If you do not give a valid reason for your absence within 8 days after the day planned for the interview (2 days in case of an accelerated procedure), or if you don't answer the request of information within a month following the date planned for the interview, you may receive a decision refusing to grant international protection.

HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EXAMINED?

EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION

As an adult, you will be interviewed separately at the CGRS. No member of your family will be present at your personal interview. The interview is the opportunity for you to present in detail the reasons why you do not want to return to your home country.

An interpreter will translate the questions of the protection officer (the collaborator of the CGRS taking the interview) and your answers. Your lawyer or a trusted person are allowed to attend the interview.

The protection officer establishes a climate of trust to help you talk about what happened to you and what you fear. The interpreter is independent of the CGRS, which means they are neutral and have no influence on the decision on your application.

Tell spontaneously what happened to you or what you fear but don't rehearse a story. Do not listen to people who urge you to tell something you didn't experience personally. If you are not sure whether you have understood a question, say so immediately. The protection officer will reframe the question. If you don't know the answer to a question, it is better to say so rather than to lie or invent something.

HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EXAMINED?

EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION

Provide documents before the day of your personal interview

Submit any document that backs up your asylum claim (documents about your identity, origin, journey and your grounds for seeking asylum). Submit original documents whenever possible. Withholding documents or other important information may have a negative impact on the examination of your application. You should preferably submit documents to the CGRS before the day of your personal interview, if you did not already submit them during your interview at the Immigration Office.

The personal interview can take up to four hours. If necessary, an additional interview will take place at a later date. There is at least one break during the personal interview. Take some food and drink with you, and bring any medicine you need to take at regular hours.

For the personal interview to proceed smoothly, it is better that no young children are present. **If you have young children, we recommend that you do not take them with you to the CGRS on the day of your personal interview**. You take your children to the CGRS only if you cannot find someone to take care of them. You and your partner can then look after them in turn while the other partner is being interviewed. There is a waiting room for families with children at the CGRS.

HOW WILL YOUR APPLICATION BE EXAMINED?

EXAMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION

The protection officer will write down everything that will be said during the personal interview. This written record is called ‘notes of the personal interview’.

The interview will also be audio recorded (no video recording). You can access the audio record if you lodge an appeal against a negative decision. This access is granted on appointment at the CGRS before lodging the appeal and at the Council for Alien Law Litigation (CALL) after you have lodged it. The audio record can also be submitted as evidence in the appeals procedure before the CALL.

After the personal interview, the protection officer will assess your application for international protection in a totally impartial manner. He will examine the credibility of your statements and check whether you qualify under the Refugee Convention or are eligible for subsidiary protection status.

HOW WILL YOU RECEIVE THE DECISION ON YOUR APPLICATION FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION?

The CGRS will send you by registered post the decision on your application for international protection. This decision will be sent to the address you choose as your domicile.

If you are accommodated in a reception centre, the decision will be sent to the centre. Depending on the procedures followed in the centre, the decision will be handed over to you by an employee of the centre or you will have to go to the post office to collect the letter containing the decision.

If you are staying at a private address, the postperson will deliver the letter with decision to you personally. If you are not at home, the postperson will leave a notice in your mailbox. You have to take this notice to the post office to collect the letter with the decision. If you fail to do so within the time specified in the notice, the post office will send the letter back to the CGRS.

IF YOUR DECISION IS POSITIVE

A positive decision means that refugee status or subsidiary protection status is granted to you. This decision has implications for your possibility to work, to ask for family reunification, to receive material benefits and to arrange your stay in Belgium.

REFUGEE STATUS IS GRANTED

You have received from the CGRS a decision granting you refugee status. About a month later you will receive your refugee certificate. You have to go with this document to the municipal office of your place of residence in order to be registered in the 'Register of foreign nationals‘.

If close family members would like to join you, they can do so through the family reunification procedure. Requests for family reunification are examined by the Immigration Office. It is best to start this procedure within six months of receiving refugee status.

Your status as a refugee means that you can no longer ask your embassy for civil status documents, for instance a birth certificate. Such documents will be delivered to you by the Helpdesk Recognized Refugees and Stateless Persons of the CGRS.

You will find more information in the brochure “You are recognized as a refugee in Belgium” available on **cgrs.be/en/publications**.

IF YOUR DECISION IS POSITIVE

SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION STATUS IS GRANTED

If you don't meet the conditions to be recognized as a refugee, the CGRS may still grant you subsidiary protection status. In this case, the reason why refugee status is not granted to you will be explained in the decision granting you subsidiary protection status.

If close family members would like to join you, they can do so through the family reunification procedure. Requests for family reunification are examined by the Immigration Office. It is best to start this procedure within six months of receiving subsidiary protection status.

You will find more information in the brochure "You are eligible for subsidiary protection in Belgium" available on **cgrs.be/en/publications**

For more information on residence documents, the right to reside, travel abroad and work, see www.newcomersin.brussels/en/welcome, https://www.vreemdelingenrecht.be/, www.agii.be or **parcoursintegration.be/fr/**.

IF YOUR DECISION IS NEGATIVE

POSSIBILITY TO APPEAL

If you receive a negative decision, this means that the CGRS, after a thorough assessment of your application, considers that you are not in need of protection. If you do not agree with the decision, you have in principle 30 or 10 days to lodge an appeal before the Council for Alien Law Litigation (RvV/CCE).

If you decide to appeal, you will have to submit a written petition explaining your case against the decision of the CGRS. This means that a number of legal and formal requirements have to be met. It is important for your petition to be written carefully. It is therefore recommended to enlist the help of a lawyer. You will then be invited with your lawyer to a hearing before the Council. Your presence or that of your lawyer is mandatory at the hearing. You or your lawyer can argue your case orally at the hearing.

For a standard refusal decision, the appeal period is 30 days. This may be reduced in some situations, such as an accelerated procedure or a border procedure. Furthermore, in some cases, the appeal does not automatically have suspensive effect, which means that you may be expelled or forcibly removed while your appeal is pending. In that case, you may still ask to be allowed to remain. This information will be given to you in your decision. You should therefore read it carefully with the help of your social worker and/or your lawyer. Check with them which appeal period applies.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO STAY AND RECEIVE RECEPTION SUPPORT AND SERVICES

As an applicant for international protection, in principle you have the right to stay in the country that is responsible for the examination of your application until the examination is concluded.

You can find information about the reception support and services you will receive in a separate brochure.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE INTERPRETATION

If you do not speak French or Dutch, an interpreter will help you to communicate with the authorities during the registration and the lodging of your application as well as during your personal interview. The interpreter is free of charge.

Interpreters are neutral, meaning they do not favour anyone. They respect confidentiality and will not share anything you say with anyone outside of the competent authorities.

The interpreter has no influence on the decision on your application.

Inform the authorities immediately if you do not understand the interpreter or you think that the interpreter is not neutral.

YOU CAN ASK FOR A MALE OR FEMALE INTERPRETER AND INTERVIEWER FOR YOUR PERSONAL INTERVIEW, IF THIS HELPS YOU TO FULLY EXPRESS YOURSELF

Depending on your reasons and subject to availability, your request will be met.

YOU CAN CONSULT A LEGAL ADVISER (LAWYER)

A legal adviser is a person providing personal legal assistance or representation to you in dealing with the authorities. A legal adviser is independent from the authorities and defends your interests. A legal adviser can assist you with your application for international protection, with the asylum procedure, with official communication and they can stay with you during the personal interview.

It is your right to consult a legal adviser at any stage of the asylum procedure.

Share the details of your legal adviser with the authorities so that they can keep them informed about your application.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED AND REQUEST FREE LEGAL COUNSELLING

You can ask for legal counselling, free of charge, during the asylum procedure. This includes legal counselling to assist you in lodging your application.

Legal counselling means that you can receive explanations on:

- your rights and obligations
- the different procedures
- legal issues.

You can request information and legal counselling at the Immigration Office when registering and lodging your application.

You can also ask for legal advice at a Bureau for Legal Assistance.

YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH THE UNITED NATIONS REFUGEE AGENCY (UNHCR) OR OTHER ORGANISATIONS

You can contact and communicate with UNHCR or its partner organisations at any stage of the asylum procedure.

UNHCR protects the interests and the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. UNHCR or its partner organisations also provide information and assistance to asylum seekers.

UNHCR contact details and information on the asylum procedure can be found on the UNHCR webpage https://help.unhcr.org/.

You can also contact any other organisation providing legal advice or other counselling to applicants.

WHAT ARE YOUR OBLIGATIONS?

RESPECT THE LAWS OF BELGIUM

STAY IN THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU APPLIED FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Do not attempt to go to another EU+ country. You are only allowed to travel to another EU+ country if you are given permission to do so by the authorities.

MAKE SURE THE AUTHORITIES CAN REACH YOU AND THAT YOU KEEP YOUR APPOINTMENTS

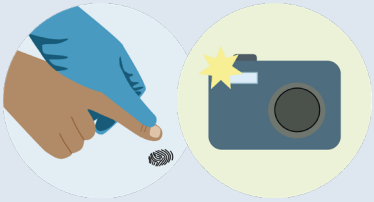
You must attend all appointments in person whenever requested by the authorities. You must be there on time. If you are unable to attend an appointment for a serious reason, inform the authorities immediately and explain the reason.

COOPERATE FULLY WITH THE AUTHORITIES

When requested, you must do the following.

- Provide your personal details.

- Provide identity documents. If you do not have them, explain why.



- Have your fingerprints and photograph taken.

- Lodge your application at a designated date and place.
- Attend the interview at the Immigration Office and the personal interview. Answer all questions during the interview.

- Agree to be searched and to have your belongings searched, if the authorities request to do so. A search will only occur where necessary and justified. The authority will explain the reasons for the search. The search will be carried out by a person of the same sex as you and will be done in a way that respects your dignity.

TELL THE TRUTH

What you say is very important for the credibility of your application. This is why you need to be honest and give full and correct information about your identity, family, country of origin, the reasons why you have left your home country and do not want to return there.

You may not remember everything so you may not be able to answer all the questions. In this case, do not invent answers but explain that you do not remember.

PROVIDE CORRECT CONTACT DETAILS AND BE REACHABLE

The authorities must be able to reach you regarding your application for international protection.

If your address, email or telephone number change, inform the authorities immediately.

Remember, you must not leave Belgium while your application is being examined.

If you are being accommodated in a centre, you should not move elsewhere without the permission of the authorities.

SUBMIT ALL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS THAT SUPPORT YOUR APPLICATION TO THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE

If you have identity documents, you must present them as soon as possible.

You must submit any other information and documents that may help the authorities to determine the country responsible for the examination of your application or to examine your application. These documents can be, for example, a passport, wedding certificate, family record book, military ID card, evidence of employment, membership card of a political party, certificates, court and police reports, photographs and medical or psychological documentation.

You do not need to submit documents that only contain general information about your country. The asylum authorities are aware of the situation in your country.

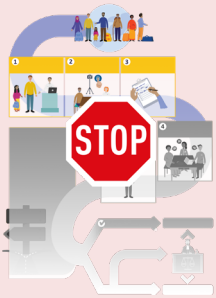
You should submit all information and documents as soon as possible when lodging your application. If you don't have the documents immediately available, you must submit them to the CGRS as soon as you have them if Belgium is responsible for the examination of your application for international protection.

It is mandatory to present original documents whenever possible. You must not destroy or dispose of any identity documents. You must not withhold any relevant documents. You must also submit any fake or forged documents you may possess and explicitly mention they are fake or forged.

If possible, and to the extent that this does not put them at risk, ask your friends or relatives to send your documents to you.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF YOU DO NOT MEET YOUR OBLIGATIONS?

YOUR ASYLUM PROCEDURE WILL BE STOPPED



Your application will be considered **withdrawn** or will be **rejected**. This means that you may lose your status as an applicant for international protection and all related rights.

This will happen if you refuse to:

- provide information when requested to do so
- have your fingerprints or photograph taken
- provide your address
- Answer questions during your personal interview.

It will also happen if you:

- do not lodge your application within the set time limit without a serious reason
- do not attend the personal interview without a serious reason
- do not report to the authorities when requested to do so
- do not remain in the place where you are obliged to stay
- cannot be reached by the authorities
- leave the country.

You can also decide to withdraw your application at any time during the asylum procedure, for example because you have decided to return to your country. In this case, you will lose your status as an applicant for international protection.

SOME TYPES OF RECEPTION SUPPORT AND SERVICES MAY BE REDUCED OR CANCELLED

In some circumstances, Fedasil may decide to reduce or cancel some types of support or some services.

Fedasil will inform you about such a decision in writing after assessing your situation.

YOUR APPLICATION MAY BE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED

If you provide misleading or false information related to your identity or your application, or if you destroy or forge documents, this may have a negative impact on your application, for example as follows:

- Your application may be rejected and you may not obtain international protection.

- Your application may be examined in the asylum border procedure (if this happens, you will receive specific information on this procedure).
- Your application may be accelerated. In this case, the time to examine your application will be reduced to three months. The accelerated procedure can also be applied for other specific reasons. The authorities will inform you and provide further explanations if the accelerated procedure applies to you.

International protection could also be taken away from you if the authorities find out later that you did not tell the truth during the asylum procedure.

HOW WILL THE AUTHORITIES CONSIDER ANY SPECIAL NEEDS?

You should inform the authorities as soon as possible if you need any special support. These needs can arise from a wide variety of situations such as pregnancy, illness or experiences of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

The authorities will assess your situation and may provide additional support to facilitate your participation in the asylum procedure. For example, they may assign specialised staff to your case or adjust the length of the asylum procedure.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION

The authorities may ask you to undergo a medical examination concerning signs of past persecution or serious harm. The examination is free of charge and you will be asked to give your consent to it. You will be informed about the results of the examination, which will be taken into account in the assessment of your application. If no examination is requested by the authorities, you may request one at your own expense.

WHAT IF YOU WANT TO RETURN TO YOUR COUNTRY?

At any time during the asylum procedure, you can decide to return voluntarily to:

- your country or
- a country of transit or another third country, if you have the right to do so.

If you decide to return voluntarily, your asylum procedure will be stopped and you will no longer have the right to stay in Belgium. If you want to end your application for international protection before the end of the procedure, you have to fill in a form available on the CGRS website: **www.cgrs.be/en/forms/declaration-renunciation-application-international-protection**

If you want to return voluntarily, contact Fedasil at **https://www.vrijwilligeterugkeer.be/en-gb** You can receive counselling as well as assistance for your safe and legal return.

ICAM Coaches at the Immigration Office can also give you information about voluntary return.

CONFIRMATION OF RECEIVING THIS INFORMATION

An official will ask you to confirm that you have received this information.

If you did not understand something or if you have additional questions, you can always ask.

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AUTHORITIES

Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)

Rue Ernest Blerot 39

1070 BRUSSELS

T 02 205 51 11

Website: **www.cgrs.be/en/contact-info**

- *Examines applications for international protection*
- *Issues certificates and civils status documents to recognized refugees and stateless persons.*

Immigration Office (DVZ/OE)

Boulevard Pacheco 44

1000 BRUSSELS

T 02 488 80 00

Email: **infodesk@ibz.fgov.be**

Website: **https://dofi.ibz.be/en/contact**

- *Access to the territory, residence, settlement and the removal of foreign nationals in Belgium*
- *International protection: registration of the application and determination of the member state responsible for the examination of the application.*

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AUTHORITIES

Council for Alien Law Litigation (CCE/RvV)

Laurentide – rue Gaucheret 92-94

1030 BRUSSELS

T 02 791 60 00

F 02 791 62 26

E-mail: **info.rvv-cce@ibz.fgov.be**

Website: **www.rvv-cce.be**

- *Handles appeals against decisions of the Immigration Office and the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons*

Fedasil

Rue des Chartreux 21

1000 BRUSSELS

T 02 213 44 11

F 02 213 44 22

E-mail: **info@fedasil.be**

Website: **www.fedasil.be**

- *Reception and support of applicants for international protection*
  Coordination and support for voluntary return

Fedasil Arrival Centre

Rue de Passchendaele 2

1000 BRUSSELS

T 02 793 82 40

This brochure is for information purposes only. It does not in itself create rights or obligations. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) has provided the main body of this material, and reproduction of and alteration to this brochure is authorised by the EUAA only for EU Member States. The EUAA does not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, content, completeness, legality or reliability of the information included in this brochure by EU Member States or by any other responsible third party. Neither the EUAA nor any person acting on behalf of the EUAA is responsible for the use that might be made of the information found in this brochure.

© European Union Agency for Asylum, 2026.

ISBN 000-00-00-00000-0
doi: 00.0000/0000000
AA-00-00-000-NL-C