

## What is the impact on asylum seekers?

On January 31, 2025, a new federal government took office in Belgium. This government also determines asylum and migration policies. In the media, the government has stated that it wants to introduce stricter rules for asylum and migration. As a newcomer, this may cause you concern. That is why we want to explain in this brochure what these plans mean and what their consequences might be.



It is important to know that a **government agreement** announces the plans of a government. These plans give an idea of what the future may bring, but they do not take effect immediately. To take effect, **they must first be turned into laws**, a process that **can take months or even years**.

If you have any questions after reading this brochure, do not hesitate to contact our info line (via phone / WhatsApp or telegram: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/infolijn> or your lawyer.

## What is the impact on asylum seekers?

The new government wants to make the **asylum procedure stricter**. This could mean that you have to hand over your phone, laptop, or other electronic devices. The asylum services will want to go through these to verify if you speak the truth.

The government does not want people to apply for asylum multiple times in Belgium or other European countries. Therefore, in the future, people who do this will no longer receive shelter.

The **deadlines for appeals will be made as short as possible**. Filing an appeal will be less likely to stop the return procedure. This means that the government expects you to cooperate with your return, even while you are still waiting for a decision.

The government wants to resolve the reception crisis for asylum seekers as soon as possible. Until then, vulnerable asylum seekers will be given priority. This means that there's **still a waiting list**, and **single men will still not receive shelter on the day of their asylum application**.

The government plans to close reception facilities as soon as there are fewer asylum seekers in Belgium. Individual reception places and emergency shelters in hotels will be phased out. Where possible, **reception conditions will become even more basic**: you will only receive material aid, such as food and shelter, in large-scale reception centers. You will no longer receive pocket money to buy your own food.

## What is the effect for people with a positive decision?

The government wants to grant asylum seekers temporary residence status more often. This is called **subsidiary protection**. This status provides fewer rights than the status of a recognized refugee. As a result, family reunification becomes more difficult and access to social assistance (leefloon) is more limited.

- **Recognized refugees** will have six months to apply for family reunification without income and housing requirements. Access to social aid will depend on completing an integration program.
- **People with subsidiary protection** must wait two years before they can apply for **family reunification**. They need to have a minimum income of €2,227 per month, plus €228 extra per child. This rule does not apply to unaccompanied minors. In addition, both the person in Belgium and the family member in the country of origin must pass a language and citizenship test.
- **People with subsidiary or temporary protection will not have access to social assistance** for the first five years (after their positive decision). Instead, they will receive another form of support depending on how well they integrate. It is not yet clear what this support will include.

It will be **more difficult to obtain your B-card**, you will have to meet several criteria:

- Pass a language and citizenship test
- Meet the requirements that applied when you first received your A-card
- Not pose a threat to public order or national security
- Pay an administrative fee
- Be financially independent and not rely on social assistance

Applying for **Belgian nationality** will become more difficult. The cost will rise to €1,000, and you will have to pass a language and citizenship test.

## What is the impact on undocumented migrants?

There will be **no collective regularization**. This means there will be no general system to grant residence permits to undocumented migrants. Only the Immigration Office can grant residency in exceptional cases.

People who receive an order to leave the country will have to sign a **return contract**. This states that they are required to cooperate with their voluntary return. If immediate return is not possible, they must present themselves regularly to the authorities. Those who do not respect this contract can be arrested and placed in a **closed center**.

**Families with children will not be detained** for the next two years.

**In some cases, the police may enter your house**. This is only allowed if you are considered a threat to public order or national security and if an investigating judge grants permission.

**Access to emergency medical care may become even more difficult**. The government will put pressure on doctors and hospitals, though the basic right to urgent medical care will continue to exist. Some treatments that are currently reimbursed may have to be paid for by yourself in the future