

## Report to the federal Parliament Asylum seekers in Belgium



**In its report to the federal Parliament, the Court of Audit concludes that Fedasil, the federal agency in charge of asylum seekers, and its partners manage to cope with the refugee flows, though the asylum seekers remain on average far too long in reception centres. There is still a lack of information regarding the costs and quality of reception facilities. Moreover, the regulations have not been fully developed yet. As a matter of fact, a number of implementing decrees on quality standards are still missing.**

Fedasil and its partners (such as the Red Cross or the public social welfare agencies) provide the asylum seekers with material assistance while they stay in reception centres or are granted individual accommodation. The number of applicants varies a great deal from one year to the next. In 2015, 44,760 people sought asylum vs. 18,710 in 2016. The 2016 budget provided EUR 608 million euro to Fedasil. This amount was reduced to EUR 482 million in 2017 due to the decrease in applications.

In early 2017, refugees remained thirteen months on average in reception centres but about three hundred people have even stayed for over two years. When it comes to individual accommodation, however, there are places left. The reason why refugees dwelled for so long in reception centres is that the asylum procedure can drag on for months or years. In addition, the minister decided to grant individual accommodation to vulnerable people or to those who stand a good chance of having their application accepted or have already been informed of a positive decision.

Together with its partners, who were able to double their reception capacities, Fedasil managed to offer sufficient accommodation during the refugee crisis of 2015-early 2016. On the other hand, the creation of additional places through public procurement procedures turned out to be less successful.

After the asylum crisis, the collective reception network was brought back to a lower capacity without concern for the quality and the costs. Fedasil cannot provide any objective data regarding both criteria for each reception centre.

One cannot give an accurate estimate of the costs attached to collective reception. The differences between target groups, for instance, make it difficult to compare the costs. However, it appears that individual accommodation is cheaper than collective.

Fedasil is currently drawing up quality standards and performing audits. It has also started a computerisation project, although its traditional partners have not yet agreed to fully cooperate to these initiatives. This, on the one hand, hinders the implementation of the standards and the network management and, on the other hand, prevents the Court to form an idea of the reception network quality.

Fedasil does not have a complete view of the situation within the reception network. Developing the computerisation project may help it solve the problem.

In the current state of affairs, Fedasil does not know how many vulnerable persons requiring specific accommodation have been living within the reception network. More often than not, there is no assessment of the vulnerability or specific needs of refugees, and when there is one, it is performed partially or too late and hardly leads to a transfer to a more suitable place.

The Court of Audit has made some recommendations intended for the minister and Fedasil, which both largely agree with the Court's conclusions and recommendations.

The report *Asylum seekers in Belgium* is now available (in either French or Dutch) on the Court's website ([www.courttofaudit.be](http://www.courttofaudit.be)).