

Clarification 1. Rationale for counting in-donor refugee costs as ODA

Q1/ Describe in a nutshell the asylum procedure in your country.

Foreigners arriving in Belgium and looking to be officially recognized as "refugees" have to register with the "Immigration Office", which is part of the Federal Public Service of the Interior. Screening of the applicants is done by the "Office of the Commissioner general for Refugees and Stateless Persons", while the "Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers" (Fedasil) host them, offering shelter, food, healthcare. Consequently, Belgium only includes expenditures by Fedasil in its ODA linked to "in donor refugee costs".

For applicants coming from safe countries of origin accelerated procedures apply.

The Immigration Office determines whether Belgium is responsible for processing an asylum application under Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (Dublin III Regulation). In case there is a Eurodac hit and another EU Member State is responsible to assess the application on outgoing Dublin request will be made to the Member State responsible for handling. If this Dublin request is accepted by the other Member state a transfer can be organised. However, in many cases the outgoing request is not accepted or the transfer cannot be implemented due to several reasons, often resulting in a situation where the application is processed in Belgium.

Clarification 2. Meaning of the term "refugees"

Q2/ Indicate the categories of refugees for which costs are included in your ODA reporting: asylum seekers, recognised refugees, persons granted temporary or subsidiary protection.

Up till now, Belgium has only included in its ODA reporting costs for asylum seekers – ultimately accepted, recognized refugees, and persons granted temporary or subsidiary protection. Belgium does not consider including costs for ultimately rejected refugees for the moment being. Discontinued applications are not taken into account in the ODA calculation.

The refugees who are resettled to Belgium are granted a refugee status in Belgium. However, they are not included in the number of positive decisions on asylum applications reported to Eurostat and used for the ODA calculation.

Clarification 3. Twelve-month rule

Q3/ When does the twelve-month rule start (date of application, date of entry into the country, date of start of support)?

Belgium uses in its calculation the number of people "recognised" during a given calendar year, given that these decisions are spread out over the whole year, one could estimate that half of its ODA resulting from this calculation is (in a statistical, overall sense) linked to recognised asylum seekers before their recognition, and half of it after their recognition, but this regards the same people of course.

Since Belgium does not dispose disaggregated data per applicant regarding these dates (nor regarding expenditures), and in order to keep the calculation of this (non-core development co-operation) amount simple, though of course reliable and correct, and in line with the directives, it uses aggregated data.

In practice, Belgium identifies the eligible expenditures by Fedasil in year x. This is rather easy, since the different types of expenditures are linked to different identifiable budget lines. By dividing the sum of eligible expenditures by Fedasil in a given year by the number of persons hosted by Fedasil in the same given year (all persons hosted, so asylum seekers prior to decision, recognized refugees, and persons granted protection combined), Belgium obtains the cost of hosting by Fedasil by person, in general (costFEDpp).

This cost per person (costFEDpp) is then multiplied with the number of persons granted status or protection in the given year x. This results in our ODA amount "in donor refugee costs".

In other words, the 12 month rule is applied by simply taking into account [only the number of persons granted status or protection in the given year x at one hand], and [only the ODA-eligible expenditures by Fedasil in the same given year at the other hand].

This approach is of course based on the **assumption** that persons granted status or protection are hosted by Fedasil for minimum 12 months, which was clearly the case until now.

Clarification 4. Eligibility of specific cost items

Q4/ Provide the list of cost items included in ODA for each category of refugee and a justification for their inclusion.

"Temporary sustenance" expenses include costs for food, shelter (renting or maintaining buildings), and basic healthcare. Administrative costs include salaries of Fedasil staff. Only staff directly affected to the reception centres and the functioning of Fedasil are included, not the staff working on the screening of the applicants. As the school system is by law free of charge in Belgium, the country only includes costs for additional marginal costs such as pencils and draw books etc.

Additional items:

- Remuneration of staff detached from the ministry of defense, working in the Fedasil reception centres, directly with the guests, program in extinction.
- Fedasil is managing a number of reception centres themselves on a structural continued basis. However, the places available are not enough to host all refugees, so on Fedasil's request, a number of NGO's have stepped in to organize/set up additional reception centres, with this budget line covering their expenses.

Rent and adaptations of reception centre building

- Catering, transport (to school or hospital etc.), pocket money, laundry etc.

Excluded cost items:

- Belgium does not count costs related to the Dublin procedure in ODA, since its ODA calculation only takes into account the number of people given status by Belgium's Immigration Office.
- Belgium excludes investment in own buildings
- Belgium has removed IT costs for its 2018 ODA reporting.

Clarification 5. Methodology for assessing costs

Q5/ Describe the methodology used for assessing ODA-eligible costs and provide the actual data points and detailed calculations used to reach the figures reported as ODA.

Does your domestic reporting system allow for tracking expenditures at the level of individual asylum seeker/refugee and for reporting the eligible costs for the first twelve months of stay? If yes, please describe the system used. If not, please describe the assumptions and estimates used to assess costs.

Belgium does not track "expenditures at the level of individual asylum seeker/refugee and for reporting the eligible costs for the first twelve months of stay". Belgium calculates its in-donor refugee costs based on number of persons granted status and eligible expenditures in a calendar year.

As explained in Clarification 3, Belgium uses the following formula to calculate its in-donor refugee costs:



(number of persons granted status in given year X) multiplied with [(eligible expenses Fedasil in year X) / (total number of persons hosted by Fedasil in year X)]

Basic health care and administrative costs are easily identifiable since they are categorized separately in the budget, on a dedicated budget line. All expenses on this budget line are taken into account in calculating the “cost per person”. Since this “cost per person” is only applied on the number of people recognised in the given year, there is no need to distinguish between different categories of refugees.

Is the same methodology used to assess costs for different categories of refugees?

- No. In case of future costs for asylum seekers to a negative decision, Belgium would apply an additional coefficient for this category, based on the duration on average of decision-processes with negative outcome, and capped at 1 year (with also the duration of the underlying individual negative-decision-processes capped at 1 year prior to averaging).

How does your methodology ensure there is no double-counting (e.g. counting the costs for the same person for 12 months as an asylum seeker and another 12 months as a refugee granted status)?

- By taking into account only the number of persons newly granted status in given year X respectively newly received a decision in year X or newly registered with the Immigration Office in year X.

Do you use imputations when refugees benefit from the services available to all citizens (e.g. education or health)? How do you clearly define the estimate of the number of refugees/asylums seekers benefiting from a particular service for up to 12 months?

- Belgium does not include such costs.

What estimates do you use? What is their source and their frequency of updating?

- Belgium assumes that Fedasil hosts persons granted for at least 12 months. In case this does not apply anymore, a coefficient will have to be applied.

How do you assess the share of rejected asylum seekers: based on real data, estimates, well founded expectations? Based on first instance or final rejection?

- With the methodology, Belgium only needs to take into account the number of persons granted status. However, in case Belgium was, at some point in the future, to include costs for asylum seekers prior to a negative decision, it would not make any difference, as Belgium would cap the underlying individual negative-decision-process-durations at 1 year, prior to averaging.
- Belgium does not distinguish between first and final instance since it only takes into account the number of persons who are recognised in a given year, it makes no difference, for a person not recognised at 1st instance but recognised at final instance, is only counted once in any case.

Provide data on the number of refugees and per capita costs (included in ODA), the average time to get a decision on status, the average time on support, the share of rejected asylum seekers.

For all the decisions taken in the first three quarters of 2019, the average processing time was 392 days. We only include in ODA the costs for 12 months, given that we use budgetary information on spending, which is organised per calendar year.

ODA costs in 2018

Fedasil eligible costs = EUR 351 596 442

Number of persons hosted = 16 758

Cost per person = EUR 20 981

Number of recognised refugees = 9 874

ODA for in-donor refugee costs = 9 874 x 20 981

= EUR 207 164 534

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