

Press release

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Nearly 20,000 asylum applications in Belgium in 2010

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In 2010, **19,941** asylum applications were registered in Belgium, which corresponds to an increase of 16% compared to 2009 (17,186 applications).

This figure confirms the upward trend observed in 2009 (+40% between 2008 and 2009).

These figures are provided by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) and are based on the number of registrations at the Immigration Department.

Once again, the increase in asylum applications was particularly notable in the last four months of the year (8,086 applications from September till December 2010, i.e. 40% of the year's total). *"Every year, we can see that there is a significant structural rise in asylum applications during the last months of the year, followed by a decrease in the next months"* says Dirk Van den Bulck, Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons.

Despite this upward trend, the number of asylum applications in 2010 was still largely below the record figures of 1999 (35,778 applications) and 2000 (42,691 applications).

Of the 19,941 asylum applications registered in Belgium in 2010, 3,409 (17%) were multiple applications, i.e. new applications made by persons who already received at least one previous asylum decision in Belgium.

In 2010, the majority of asylum applicants in Belgium came from Kosovo (1,848 applications), Iraq (1,769), Russia (1,526), Afghanistan (1,411), Guinea (1,398), Serbia (1,233), Macedonia (1,082) and Armenia (986). This is a continuation of the trend observed in 2009. *« Many applicants come from countries such as Iraq or Afghanistan where the security situation is problematic, or from countries such as Armenia and the Balkan countries, where a deterioration of economic conditions contributes to an increase in asylum applicants »* says the Commissioner General.

Decisions

In 2010, the Immigration Department transmitted 14,319 asylum applications to the CGRS for examination. A significant portion of asylum applications is not transmitted to the CGRS because the Immigration Department is competent to decide on several kinds of applications: applications falling under the Dublin Regulation (determination of the country responsible for examining the application), multiple applications for which further examination is not justified because they lack new asylum grounds, and renunciations. Applications which do not belong to any of the above categories are transmitted to the CGRS.

In 2010, the CGRS took 13,170 asylum decisions, an increase of 35% compared to 2009.

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Protection

21.4% of the decisions taken by the CGRS in 2010 were **positive decisions** (granting of refugee status or subsidiary protection status), slightly less than in 2009. *"However, this does not correspond to an actual decrease,"* explains Dirk Van den Bulck. *"In 2010, we had to take quite a number of new decisions after the withdrawal of earlier decisions after a ruling of the Council of State on 28 May 2009 (regarding the assistant commissioners' competence to sign a decision). We also examined a considerable number of applications from applicants coming from Armenia, Macedonia and Serbia, for which the recognition rate is very low. If we exclude both these categories, the recognition rate jumps to 36%. Afghanistan and Iraq have a recognition rate of 60% and 75% respectively. Therefore the CGRS fulfils more than ever its mission to grant protection to people who really need protection."*

In 2010, the CGRS granted refugee status in 2,107 asylum dossiers (16% of all decisions). Beneficiaries mainly came from Guinea (268 decisions to grant refugee status), Iraq (264 decisions), Afghanistan (252 decisions), China (mainly Tibet, 146 decisions) and Russia (mainly the Republics of the North Caucasus, 128 decisions).

In 2010, the CGRS granted subsidiary protection status in 711 asylum dossiers (5.4% of all decisions). Beneficiaries mainly came from Iraq (377 decisions to grant subsidiary protection), Afghanistan (252 decisions) and Somalia (31 decisions).

Most negative decisions concern applicants whose statements concerning their identity, their origin or their asylum grounds were found to be unconvincing after a detailed examination of the asylum dossier. Applicants who receive a negative decision from the CGRS can still lodge an appeal with the Council for Alien Law Litigation.

The complete statistics can be found on the website of the CGRS (www.cgrs.be).

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