



Belgian
Red Cross
Flanders



Annual report 2022

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Content

- The 'Third Pillar' as a constant in times of crisis 3
- More volunteering in society 3 focus areas for the next 5 years 4

More volunteering in Flanders

From first aid courses to first aid as 'health literacy'

- SIS anniversary 5
- Study on effect of simulation during first aid training 5
- CEBaP publication: Mental wellbeing of RKV volunteers after Brussels terror attacks 6
- Research in the spotlight: First Aid for Psychological Problems in children and adolescents 6

First aid: emergency assistance and help at events

- Analysis of the registration form in preventive aid operations during major events 7

Enough safe blood from voluntary and unpaid donors for all our patients

- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders asks to donate blood or plasma "for each other" in new campaign" 8
- Therefore, giving plasma is equally crucial 8
- 20 bags of plasma per day 8
- That is why Nalani gives plasma 8
- Wanted: male plasma donors (18-50y) 9
- Blood supply must structurally move to higher level 10
- Bloedserieus 10
- Do people of nobility have blue blood? 10
- 397,403 thanks 11
- Why André, Luc, Liesbeth and Marcel are heroes 11
- Summer campaign for (plasma) donors 2022 11

More volunteering internationally

International activities

- New International Red Cross Committee report on explosive weapons in urbanised areas 12
- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders donates €250,000 for humanitarian aid in Pakistan 13
- Disaster preparedness programme in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda 13
- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders transfers €1 million to International Red Cross for humanitarian aid to victims of conflict in Ukraine 13

Migration approach

- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders releases 250,000 euros for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and is ready to deploy 'Restoring Family Links' for relatives 14
- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders further expands capacity of emergency shelter for refugees from Ukraine 15
- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders supports International Red Cross and Danish Red Cross with €4 million for humanitarian aid in Ukraine 16
- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders warns of imminent shortage of shelters 17
- Emergency village Mechelen 17
- Care bib supports emergency village Mechelen 18
- Refugee crisis squared: Belgian Red Cross-Flanders seeks 170 staff for reception centres 18

Remain credible as a volunteer organisation

Genuine volunteering

- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders celebrates 50th anniversary with historic change: iconic stickers disappear 19

Volunteer diversity

- Less than 3 per cent of Belgian stem cell donors have Turkish, North or Central African roots 20
- WOW! Our new name & logo 21

Good governance by and for volunteers

- Belgian Red Cross-Flanders and Disneyland Paris join hands for annual sticker campaign 22
- Conflict Ukraine 23
- Statistics Library service for hospitals and care institutions 23

The 'Third Pillar' as a constant in times of crisis

The year 2022 was marked by numerous disasters: the conflict in Ukraine, which together with the influx of many migrants from Africa and Asia caused a double reception crisis, as well as the aftermath of the corona crisis. Rarely has Belgian Red Cross-Flanders been so multifaceted in its activities, both nationally and internationally.

The more optimistic note amid these turbulent times is the tireless voluntary efforts of citizens. Crisis after crisis, they have helped find solutions or mitigate damage. This community of voluntary citizens, and voluntary organisations is described as the 'third pillar', and includes all activities that are not carried out by the government or the corporate world.

Three examples in 2022 illustrate the social importance of this 'third pillar':

The 'third pillar' acts as a 'buffer' during a reception crisis: Of the more than 15,000 Ukrainian refugees in need of shelter, the vast majority found shelter with voluntary initiatives by citizens, or organisations such as the Red Cross. More than half of these vulnerable people were accommodated in the transit centre or emergency village of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

The 'third pillar' ensures sufficient and safe blood products: The blood and plasma supply withstood the effects of the lockdowns caused by the corona crisis much better in countries where blood and plasma donations are made on a voluntary and unpaid basis than in countries where they are made for payment as in the United States.

The 'third pillar' limits mortality during the corona crisis: A scientific analysis¹ conducted by Belgian Red Cross-Flanders on mortality rates during the pandemic showed that those countries with higher levels of volunteering performed significantly better than countries where this was less or not the case. This study was the first to empirically substantiate the importance of the 'third pillar'.

¹ Schiltz, F., Van Remoortel, H., Scheers, H., & Vandekerckhove, P. (2023). Societal volunteering and COVID-19 mortality in high-income countries: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ open*, 13(4), e063515.



Voluntary care by people for each other, whether through organisations such as the Red Cross or otherwise, is therefore something to be cherished. Initiatives to move these activities into a more commercial sphere, such as untaxed additional work, can, despite good intentions, cause more harm than benefit in the long run, as the problems with the blood supply in the United States illustrate. This annual report is therefore a striking illustration and call to cherish the many often unnoticed forms of voluntary work in Flanders. ■



Philippe Vandekerckhove
Chief executive officer, CEO
Belgian Red Cross-Flanders



Laurette Steenssens
Community Chair,
Belgian Red Cross-Flanders

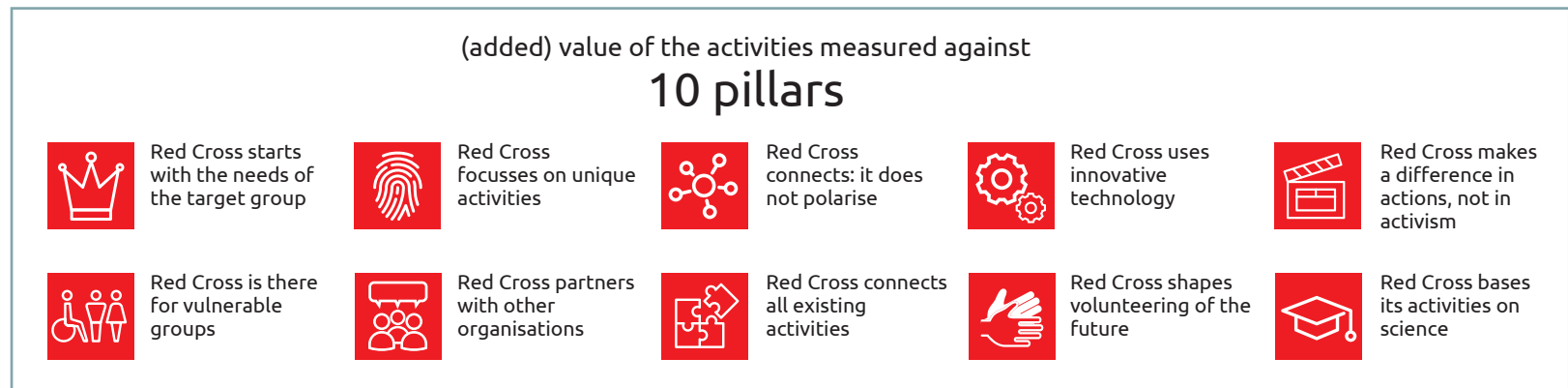
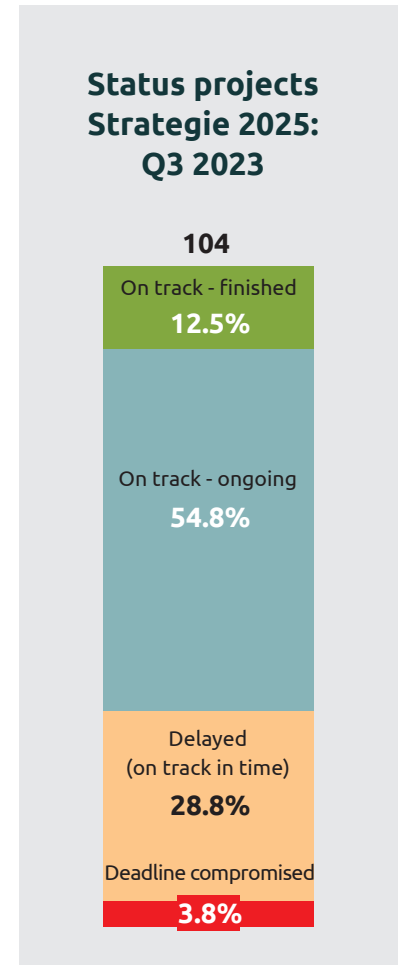
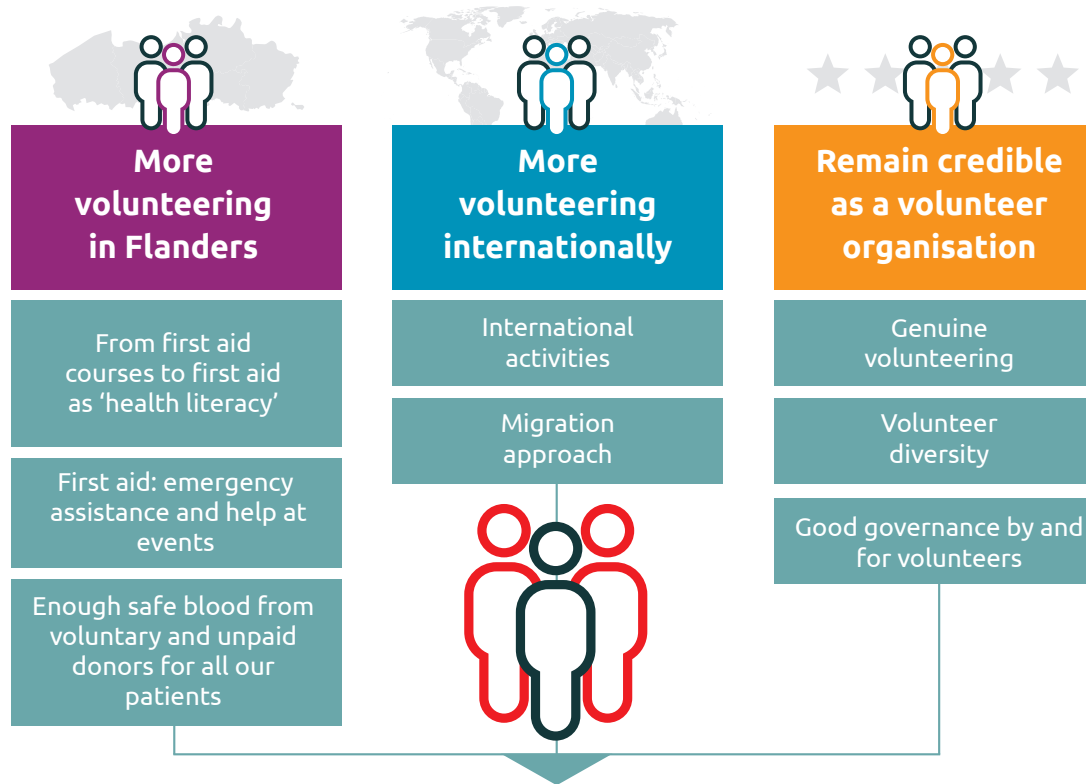
Strategy 2025: Keep connecting. Everyone can help someone.

In 2010, it was efficiency (doing things right). In 2015, effectiveness (doing the right things). And in 2020, we are firmly committed to innovation. Where will we put our focus over the next five years? Today, we live in a world where inequality between people is growing. In which more and more disasters affect the weakest. In which social cohesion takes a hit. As Belgian Red Cross-Flanders, we want to respond to this in our new strategy. Stand ready: no fewer than 14,000 volunteers. And 1,600 employees. Together they form the engine of our aid organisation. Reliable, flexible and robust. This is our plan for 2025.

More volunteering in society

3 focus areas

for the next 5 years



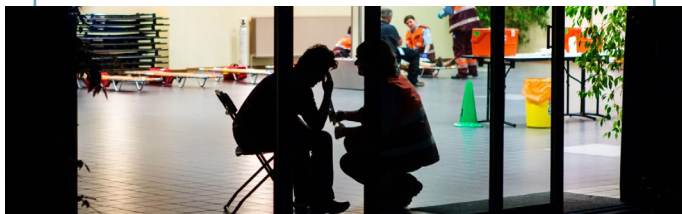


SIS anniversary



In 2022, we celebrated the 40+ anniversary of our psychosocial relief work. For more than 40 years, the volunteers of Social Intervention Service (SIS) have been committed to supporting disaster victims and relatives. After all, disaster relief is a basic mission of the Red Cross and besides medical needs, the importance of psychosocial support is becoming increasingly important. Thanks to the strength and enthusiasm of SIS volunteers, people can obtain additional assistance after a shocking event. Because in major disasters, the focus is mainly on the victims and the physically hurt, but for the people who are emotionally affected, our volunteers can also be of vital importance. In this respect, we focus on clear info and self-reliance. ■

Date of publication: June 2022



Study on effect of simulation during first aid training

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is proud of its evidence-based policy. It is a cornerstone of our operation, which is why research is conducted frequently. From autumn 2018 to the end of 2020, the business first aid services and CEBaP conducted a study on the impact of a simulant - someone who mimics an injury or illness - during a basic business first aid course.

More than a thousand people participated in the study and, thanks to their cooperation, we were able to show that knowledge, skills and self-confidence about providing first aid increased significantly after attending a company first aid course. Moreover, participants' knowledge and self-confidence remained significantly increased even a year after attending the course.

A simulant was used in the intervention group, but not in the control group. We could not demonstrate any difference between participants in the intervention group and participants in the control group in knowledge, skills and self-confidence measured after receiving training.

However, we could show that the intervention group may have higher first-aid knowledge one year after attending the training. These results suggest that the use of a simulant during a corporate first-aid training course may have a positive effect on

the retention of first-aid knowledge. However, the results need to be confirmed in further research. The full results of this study were published in the professional journal 'Simulation in Healthcare', and can be accessed via [this link](#). ■

Date of publication: February 2023





CEBaP publication: Mental wellbeing of RKV volunteers after Brussels terror attacks



Following the terrorist attacks on 22 March 2016 in Zaventem and Brussels, SIS sent out a questionnaire to all deployed and non-deployed RKV volunteers of SIS and the relief service to measure the mental wellbeing and shock processing of these volunteers. The questionnaire was sent out to about 5,900 volunteers each at five different times in the 18 months after the attacks and the data collected was analysed by CEBaP researchers. The results of the study were published in the *peer-reviewed* [TRC Journal of Humanitarian Action](#).

Two hypotheses were tested:

1. Contact with those affected adversely affects a caregiver's shock processing or wellbeing.
2. General wellbeing and shock processing improve as time progresses.

Wellbeing was measured with the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and shock processing with the Shock Processing List (SVL). Volunteers could also indicate whether they were actively deployed in the hours and days following the attacks, were on standby on site or at home, were not called or were unavailable.

At each time point, the questionnaire was completed and returned by about 500 volunteers (9% of the volunteers enrolled). We thus obtained 1,190 unique respondents (20% of 5,900 with proportionally

slightly more men (26%) than women (20%), many more SIS volunteers (64%) than relief service volunteers (19%) and many more volunteers who had been actively deployed in the hours and days after the attacks (63%) than those who had not (18%).

Volunteers who were actively deployed did not have worse scores on the PANAS and SVL than volunteers who were on standby, uncalled or unavailable. They even had slightly better scores on the NA (Negative Affect) component of the PANAS. In other words, hypothesis 1 was rejected. Overall, scores on the PANAS and SVL were already quite good at the start of the study, i.e. 1 week after the attacks. Consistent with hypothesis 2, these still improved as time passed.

We can therefore conclude (despite the limitations of the study) that, in general, contact with those affected did not appear to adversely affect the shock processing and wellbeing of SIS and relief service personnel deployed. ■

Date of publication: February 2023

Research in the spotlight:

First Aid for Psychological Problems in children and adolescents

First aid you probably know that, but did you know **'EHBP'**? This Red Cross training course **'First Aid for Psychological Problems'** teaches you to support loved ones experiencing psychological problems.

As more and more children and adolescents are also struggling mentally, it is important that they learn to help peers who are experiencing mental health problems.

Commissioned by the Flemish Government, a scientifically based guideline **'EHBP for children and young people'** was developed by the First Aid Department in collaboration with CEBaP. Via an expert panel, we received input from specialised organisations such as the CLB, Cachet vzw and Kies Kleur Tegen Pesten. The next step is the development of a didactic package for children aged 8 to 10 (see 'First Aid for Difficult Feelings'). ■

Date of publication: June 2023





Analysis of the registration form in preventive aid operations during major events

An accident happens quickly, especially in a place where many people gather. Being able to help quickly can save lives. That is why our Relief service volunteers are on standby at various events: from concerts to sporting events to festivals and parades. Our experienced and well-trained emergency workers guarantee high-quality assistance!

To better map this emergency response, an analysis was made of the medical data recording HDC607 that is completed when a person enters the emergency room of a major event. The HDC607 data were then collected in the MedTRIS (Medical Triage and Registration Informatics System) database. Through this database, we analysed data related to triage category, type of injury and possible discharge to a hospital of **148,265 people** who visited an RKV aid station during **194 editions of 28 different major events** in the period **2009-2018**.

Some observations below:

- The number of attendances at the aid station were highest during outdoor (electronic) dance music events, while the largest

number of discharges to hospital took place during indoor (electronic) dance music events.

- First-aid was usually sufficient, but some interventions required the presence of a nurse or (emergency) doctor.
- Specialised relief services and associated ambulances were especially important during indoor (electronic) dance music events to provide appropriate relief services.

This is of course closely linked to the [predictive model](#) that CEBaP developed for us. In order to further improve this predictive model, we need to remain committed to good registration. For further details of this study, please refer to [CEBaP's website](#). ■

Date of publication: February 2023





Belgian Red Cross-Flanders asks to donate blood or plasma “for each other” in new campaign

A first blood or plasma donation usually starts out of a very solidary reflex. *“My neighbour, my colleague at work, my sports buddy or my best friend suddenly needs blood or plasma and of course I’m going to donate blood or plasma then”*. But this does not always become a good habit. 84% of Flemings have not given blood or plasma in the past 2 years. With a new campaign, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders wants to rekindle this solidarity reflex because a lot of people need blood or plasma.

Growth needed in plasma

The message is clear: we need lots of donors. Especially plasma donors. That plasma is very important became clear at the end of 2021 when a number of stories appeared in the media about

patients who might not receive their plasma-based medication due to a shortage of plasma. In addition, the demand for plasma also increases every year. This is why Belgian Red Cross-Flanders wants to work very hard to find new plasma donors. Last year there were 9,000 new plasma

donors. For 2022, the organisation is resolutely aiming for 14,000 new plasma donors. An increase of 55%.

Why is more plasma needed? Because more and more plasma-based medication is being made and we are now too dependent on foreign countries (especially the United States). In the foreseeable future, we want to provide Flanders itself with the plasma needed for Flemings.

Clear and ‘recognisable’ call

The new campaign was on TV, online and social media from March and makes a clear and simple appeal: **“Donate blood or plasma via rodekruis.be”** with hashtag **#geefvoorelkaar**. Research shows that people definitely want to do something selfless for their fellow man. The tipping point for taking action is the recognition of someone close to them in need of blood or plasma. The campaign also responds to this. Images and videos of work colleagues, sports friends, students, etc. should emphasise this ‘recognisability’ and thus create the solidarity reflex: *“Of course I’m going to donate blood or plasma!”*. ■

Date of publication: March 2022



Therefore, giving plasma equally crucial

Plasma donation is less known but equally crucial. It is vital for people in acute situations. In victims with burns or massive blood loss, for example. In newborn babies with severe jaundice. Or patients with immune disorders, inflammatory or blood diseases or nerve and muscle disorders. ■

Date of publication: juli 2022

20 bags of plasma per day

Also today, patients undergo plasma exchange. This means replacing all the plasma in their bodies with donor plasma. Each patient then needs as many as 20 bags daily. So with a plasma donation, you make a very big difference for them. ■

Date of publication: augustus 2022

That is why Nalani gives plasma

Last year, Nalani’s sister was told she has an autoimmune disease. But the necessary medicine (for which she has to go to hospital every 4 weeks) causes severe side effects. The solution? The same medicine but by injection. This requires a base of plasma. Nalani: **“So I give plasma with a lot of love**. Because there is a huge shortage. And without it, my sister cannot be helped.” ■

Date of publication: May 2022



Wanted: male plasma donors (18-50y)



Together with UCLouvain, we conducted a study on possible effects of multiple plasma donation in 2022. After all, the need for medicines (such as immunoglobulins) prepared from human plasma is growing worldwide. This is due to advances in medicine in less developed countries and because there are more and more inflammatory, neurological, haematological and immunological disorders that can be effectively treated with these drugs.

Today, 70% of the plasma needed for these drugs is collected in the United States of America. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a 20% drop in plasma donations in the United States. Globally, this created a shortage of drugs manufactured from human plasma. This again highlighted the importance of Belgium and Europe collecting more plasma and thus becoming more self-sufficient, to ensure that patients in Belgium and Europe continue to have access to these life-saving drugs.

This goal can be achieved either by increasing donation frequency (in the US, donors are allowed to donate twice a week) or by further expanding the donor base. To find out how we can safely collect more plasma for our donors, we collaborated with UCL to conduct a randomised controlled scientific study from May 2022 to December 2022 with the aim of investigating the physiological, biochemical and unwanted side effects associated with different donation frequencies.

A total of 63 voluntary donors participated in the study for 3 months.

They were randomly divided into four groups:

- **Very high frequency group VHF** : 2 plasma donations per week (n:16)
- **High frequency group HF**: 3 plasma donations per month (n:16)
- **Low frequency group LF**: 1 plasma donation per month (n:16)
- **Placebo group (sensation of donation)**: 1 notional plasma donation per month (n:15)

Besides donating plasma, participants were expected at UCLouvain three times to perform physical tests and collect blood samples: once before the start of the study, once midway through the study and once in the week after the end of the study.

Physiological parameters, which were tested by cycling tests and strength tests, were not affected by plasma donation. Body composition (bone density and % body fat) also did not change under the influence of plasma donation. Biochemically, it was found on blood samples that immunoglobulins decreased significantly in the VHF group. A small effect on haemoglobin and ferritin was also observed in this study group. A small decrease in immunoglobulins was noticeable in the HF and LF groups. Few adverse side effects were observed throughout the study.

To access the global results, please refer to the website: medrxiv (the preprint server for health science):

[Effects of plasmapheresis frequency on health status and exercise performance in men: a randomized controlled trial | medRxiv](#)

Conclusion

The findings confirm that the plasma donation frequency used by Belgian blood establishments does not have a negative effect on the measured biochemical and physiological parameters. Since increasing the donation frequency results in biochemical changes, it seems prudent to increase the volume of plasma by focusing on a larger donor base that would allow maintaining the donation frequency. At present, the next steps for the continuation of the study have not yet been determined. ■

Date of publication: March 2022



Blood supply must structurally move to higher level

The blood supply in our country needs to go up. Structurally so that periods of lower attendance can be better accommodated. After all, during the summer holidays or with the flu season, there is often a drop in the number of donations. Minister Vandembroucke therefore called for donations during the summer holidays and during the end-of-year period there was a general appeal by Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

“During the Christmas holidays, on average some 19 per cent fewer donors are coming than normal. So we are entering a critical period,” warns Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. *“That is why we are urgently looking for additional donors. And especially people with a negative blood group.”*

The blood supply of all negative blood groups (A-, B-, AB- and O-) was then very low. More so, a critical shortage was looming for each of those blood groups. For O negative, moreover, this is an extra big problem because they are the so-called “universal donors”. In fact, blood from these donors can be given to patients of all blood groups.

“During the Christmas holidays, on average some 19 per cent fewer donors are coming than normal. So we are entering a critical period”

“People are less concerned about giving blood during the end-of-year period than during the rest of the year. For many, the Christmas holidays are a busy period, full of family parties, New Year’s receptions and other holiday plans. This naturally leaves less time to come and give blood. So our message is clear: we make a warm appeal to all Flemish people to come and give blood in the coming days and weeks, especially if you have a negative blood group.” Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: May 2022



Bloedserieus

Twice a year, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders, together with students, organises ‘Bloedserieus’, a blood collection campaign in six Flemish student towns. In this way, we look both literally and figuratively for new blood among students, who could potentially have a long ‘career’ ahead of them as donors. Because for some students it is already a good habit, but for many a donation during Bloedserieus is the first time. As an extra motivation, student donors will receive a well-filled goodie bag afterwards.

Moreover, the blood donations from all these students were especially needed in November, as the blood supply in Flanders was at a low level at that time.

“Normally, we have a constant supply of all blood groups for a full working week, but that is no longer the case for several blood groups. Therefore, it is important that we find enough donors - including non-students, by the way - to get that blood supply to a higher level. Because this is about the blood we need every day for all kinds of patients: every year, thousands of people in our country receive a blood transfusion. Think, for example, of mothers after a difficult delivery, children with leukaemia, patients with clotting problems or people who have had an accident.” Joachim Deman, spokesperson Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: October 2022



Do people of nobility have blue blood?

A remarkable question. But not an impossible task for Wetenschapje! Wetenschapje is a podcast by Het Geluidshuis about science, aimed at big and small thinkers aged 8 and up. For 4 seasons each episode, they have been searching for the answer to one well-defined question and this week it is: “Do people of nobility have blue blood?”. Who better to help answer this question than Biomedical Process Manager at Belgian Red Cross-Flanders Britt Van Aelst? Appropriately, she explains the circulatory system and the importance of giving blood. Because informing the younger generation is also important.

Do you have children with an interest in science? Or are you just curious about talking to Britt?

www.rodekruis.be/nieuws-kalender/nieuws/hebben-mensen-van-adel-blauw-bloed/

Date of publication: October 2022



More volunteering in Flanders



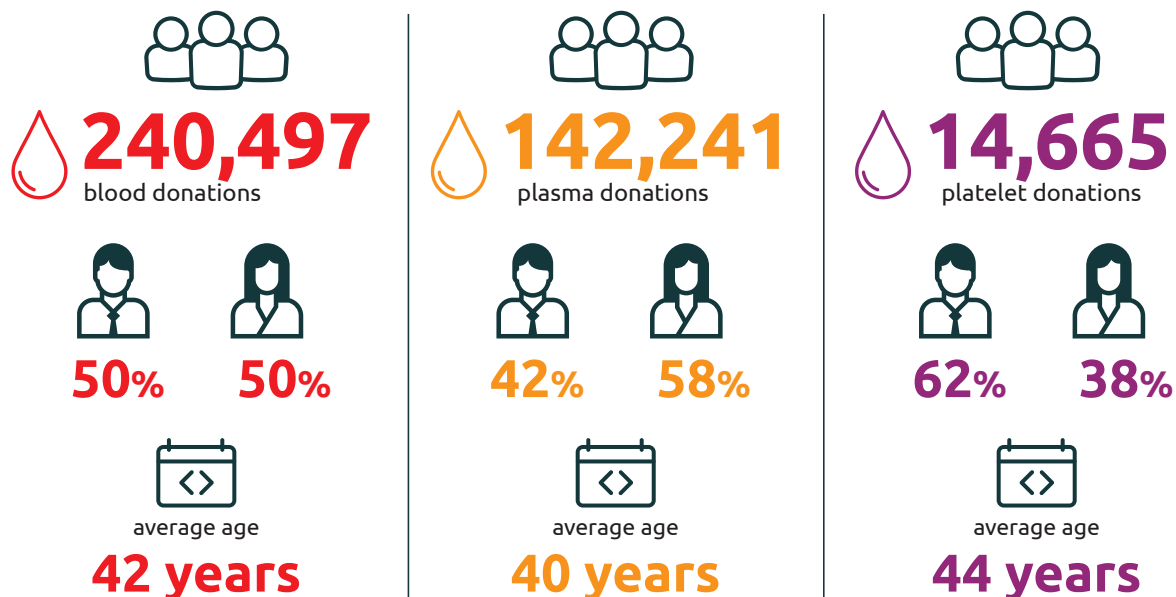
Enough safe blood from voluntary and unpaid donors for all our patients

397,403 thanks

397,403. That is the number of successful donations we have collectively achieved in **2022**. We would like to thank all our donors equally. On behalf of all the patients it helped.

The average age of our blood donors is 42 years. For plasma it is 40 years and for platelets it is 44 years.

Women gave more plasma than men. For platelets, it is the reverse.



Date of publication: January 2023

Why André, Luc, Liesbeth and Marcel are heroes

All our donors are givers. Some take the crown and have been piling up donations for years. To truly unseen numbers. They deserve an extra thank you. Like Luc, Liesbeth, Marcel and André who even came to donate 1000 times!

www.rodekruis.be/nieuws-kalender/blog/helden-van-het-moment/

Date of publication: August 2022

Summer campaign for (plasma) donors 2022

From 1 July 2022 to 30 September, donors could participate in the summer promotion.

This action is designed to keep plasma supplies as stable as possible during the summer holiday months. But, other donations count too! Donors who came to donate 3 or 5 times between 1 July 2022 and 30 September 2022 received an extra gift: a bicycle repair kit, a movie ticket or a bluetooth speaker.

A new feature in 2022 was that appointments did not have to be made in advance, though people had to register online for the action. ■

Date of publication: October 2022

Doe mee aan de zomeractie

Doneer deze zomer* 3 of 5 keer plasma!
*tussen 1 juli en 30 september

Wij zorgen voor een leuke attentie!

Na 3 donaties: fietsreparatiekit
Na 5 donaties: bluetooth speaker of bioscoopticket

Registreer je nu:
rodekruis.be/zomeractie
#geefvoorelkaar



New International Red Cross Committee report on explosive weapons in urbanised areas

Heavy explosive weapons were originally designed for hostilities in open combat areas and not for use in densely populated areas (where military targets are often near civilians). However, as the world urbanises, armed conflicts are increasingly taking place in cities and densely populated areas.

Devastating humanitarian consequences

The use of these explosive weapons in densely populated areas is one of the main causes of civilian suffering and damage in today's armed conflicts. Besides the direct suffering or damage, such as injuring and killing large numbers of people, causing psychological trauma and destroying entire cities, including homes, schools, cultural heritage and essential infrastructures, the use of these weapons also brings indirect consequences or 'domino effects': by hitting roads and essential infrastructures, which are often linked to each other, services indispensable for the population's survival - such as water and sanitation, electricity networks and health facilities - can be disrupted and destroyed. People flee, areas become contaminated by unexploded ordnance and the natural environment is degraded. Fleeing civilians are often unable to return to their homes for years or even at all.

Major challenges to compliance with international humanitarian law

The use of heavy explosive weapons is not prohibited as such under international humanitarian law (IHL), which aims to protect persons who do not or no longer take part in hostilities and limits or prohibits the use of certain means and methods of warfare. However, such use must comply with all rules governing the conduct of hostilities, in particular the principle of distinction and consequently the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, as well as the prohibition of disproportionate attacks and the obligation to take all possible precautions in the event of an attack. Because of their low accuracy and precision and large destructive radius relative to the size of most military targets in populated areas, the use of such explosive weapons is highly likely to produce indiscriminate or non-discriminatory effects. This casts doubt on whether such weapons can be directed against a specific military target in a densely populated area and/or their effects mitigated as required by IHL to comply with the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. It also demonstrates the difficulty of using heavy explosive weapons in populated areas in accordance with IHL.

New report from the ICRC

In its report, the International Committee

of the Red Cross (ICRC) analyses the main problems of the use of such weapons and thus tries to change the minds of conflicting parties. The report shows an evidence-based pattern of extensive harm to civilians - mainly women and children - when military targets in densely populated areas are attacked with explosive weapons. It outlines a technical overview of which weapons are involved and offers an analysis of the consequences of their use under IHL. Finally, the report prescribes several concrete and practical recommendations addressed to policy-makers and armed forces on the precautionary and mitigating measures to be taken to strengthen the protection of civilians against the use of heavy explosive weapons in densely populated areas.

Fundamental recommendations are:

- **Avoiding the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas i.e. these weapons should not be used ("avoidance policy")** unless sufficient risk mitigation measures are taken to limit their large-scale effects and the resulting risk of civilian harm;
- **Explicitly prioritising the protection of civilian populations as a strategic objective** at the highest level, prior to military operations, and integrating this into all military orders;

- **Equipping armed forces with adapted weapons and means and methods of warfare suitable for** use in urban and other populated areas and training them in their proper use;
- **Identify and map critical civilian infrastructure**, and ensure that this information is passed on to military commanders on the front line.

You can find the report here: [ICRC report: Civilians in populated areas must be protected against explosive weapons.](#)

What does Belgian Red Cross-Flanders do?

War in cities is one of the priority themes on which Belgian Red Cross-Flanders engages in its activities on International Humanitarian Law. Through regular, bilateral and confidential dialogue, we also share our positions with the Belgian authorities. Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is also monitoring developments at the international level, specifically the ongoing negotiations for an international political declaration, which prescribes concrete actions for states to limit the humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons. ■

Date of publication: February 2022



Belgian Red Cross-Flanders donates €250,000 for humanitarian aid in Pakistan

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders released 250,000 euros from its emergency relief fund in early September for humanitarian support during the floods in Pakistan. Indeed, the situation on the ground was becoming increasingly worrying: the Pakistani government declared a state of emergency and then the World Health Organisation declared the highest level of alert.

“The needs on the ground are extremely high. That is why we are immediately releasing 250,000 euros from the emergency fund, for humanitarian assistance on site. This money will initially be used mainly to purchase food parcels and hygiene kits for the victims.” Sofie De Jaeger, Manager International Cooperation – Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

The funds will be deployed through the German Red Cross, as they have been active in Pakistan and present on the ground since 1983. There, they provide much-needed support to the Pakistan Red Crescent, the main humanitarian organisation in the country.

“The Pakistani government is now already talking about 33 million victims. That’s one in seven Pakistanis. Moreover, as much as a third of the country is under water. Thus, nearly one million houses have been damaged and more than three million people have been displaced. So it goes without saying that all these people need our help as soon as possible. At the moment, it is mainly about basic needs: shelter, food and potable water.” Sofie De Jaeger, Manager International Cooperation – Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: September 2022

Disaster preparedness programme in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda

With the financial support of the Belgian government, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders worked on a disaster preparedness programme in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda between mid-2019 and early 2022. This project focused on increasing the immediate disaster preparedness and self-reliance of the local population and came about thanks to close cooperation with local sister associations. Indeed, the risk of natural and epidemiological disasters in these countries is significantly higher than the world average. Just think of floods, landslides or earthquakes.

Lack of safe water, inadequate sanitation and insufficient general hygiene also meant that the burden of disease on the population was high. From 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was added to this. Therefore, additional efforts were also made on prevention and sensitisation around the virus and on supporting vulnerable households during and after the various lockdowns.

Sigrig De Lepeleire (Project Manager in Rwanda) explains further in the video: [Rampenparaatheidsprogramma Oeganda, Tanzania en Rwanda - YouTube](#) ■

Date of publication: September 2022

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders transfers €1 million to International Red Cross for humanitarian aid to victims of conflict in Ukraine

On 4 March 2022, we transferred €1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The money comes for €250,000 from Belgian Red Cross-Flanders’ own emergency relief fund and for €750,000 from the provisional proceeds of [the 5353-account](#). The money will be used to purchase food, water, medicine and first-aid equipment for vulnerable people and those affected.

Florence Gillette, head of the ICRC delegation in Kiev: *“The priority of the International Red Cross is to help people in need. As long as the security situation allows, our teams now in Ukraine will continue their work to restore vital infrastructure, support health facilities with medicine and equipment and help families with food and hygiene items.”* ■

Date of publication: March 2022



Belgian Red Cross-Flanders releases 250,000 euros for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and is ready to deploy 'Restoring Family Links' for relatives

Since the start of the conflict in late February 2022, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders shared the International Red Cross' deep concern about the situation in Ukraine and the wider conflict zone.

There was already a humanitarian need in Ukraine itself but the refugee influx caused by the violence, brought additional major concerns. In the border town of Przemyśl, the Polish Red Cross is hosting the influx of refugees, providing them with shelter, relief goods and medical supplies, as well as psychological support.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders therefore released 250,000 euros from its own emergency fund to support the Ukrainian and Polish Red Cross. The money will be used to provide food, water, blankets, tents for sheltering refugees and medical care and psychosocial support.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders also opened an account for those wishing to deposit money. That money will also be used through local Red Cross branches for direct humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is and remains in close contact with the local Red Cross branches in the conflict area (Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Poland, etc.) and with the International Red Cross. Together with them, we continuously analyse which relief operations need to be set up and where financial assistance is needed to help the victims.

Restoring Family Links for family in Ukraine

Tracing and restoring contact with missing relatives is a service that has been active within Belgian Red Cross-Flanders for decades. Anyone who has lost contact with relatives as a result of war, armed conflict, natural disaster or migration can call on this service. Belgian Red Cross-Flanders works together with other Red Cross and Red Crescent societies worldwide and special delegates in conflict areas for this purpose. **People who have relatives in Ukraine and have lost contact with them** (fleeing, sheltering somewhere, no longer having access to a telecommunications network, in one of the refugee shelters in a neighbouring country, etc.) could contact the Restoring Family Links service of

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders from Monday 28 February via the **specially provided telephone number 015/ 44 34 07**.

Respecting international humanitarian law

The Red Cross urged all **parties involved in the conflict to comply with obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL)**. Parties must ensure the protection of the civilian population and those no longer participating in the fighting, such as prisoners, wounded or sick. IHL is clear: all parties to the conflict have a legal obligation to ensure that military operations are planned and conducted in a way that protects civilians and civilian objects. In addition, neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian action must also be protected so that aid providers such as the Ukrainian Red Cross, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can maintain wider access to civilians. Critical infrastructure must be spared. Water, gas and electricity systems that supply civilian homes, schools and medical facilities, for example, are vital. Attacks involving new technologies and

cyber assets must also spare these critical infrastructures.. ■

Date of publication: February 2022





Belgian Red Cross-Flanders further expands capacity of emergency shelter for refugees from Ukraine

On behalf of Fedasil, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders ensured that a larger reception capacity for refugees from Ukraine was already operational by mid-March. In the Ariane building in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe, 1,500 reception places were prepared for this purpose.

Fedasil accommodated some 150 Ukrainian refugees at the emergency reception centre in Molenbeek (Home Sebrechts) since the start of the conflict. These are Ukrainians who were already registered in Bordet or the Heysel and could not immediately be accommodated through either friends & relatives or cities & towns. The current capacity of the emergency shelter in Molenbeek is 250 people. Belgian Red Cross-Flanders helped with the logistical setup of the emergency reception centre and now provides civilian volunteers to help welcome and guide refugees.

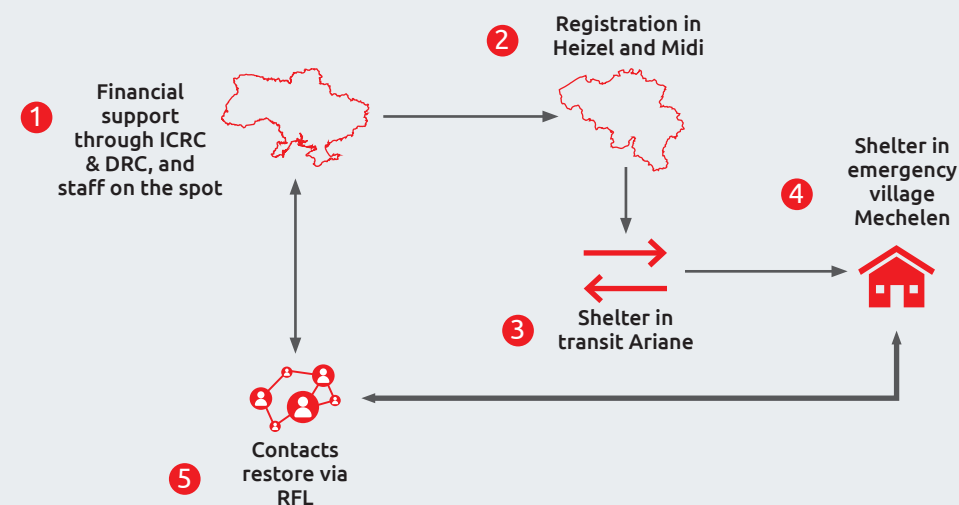
With the new Ariane emergency reception centre, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders wanted to be prepared for a much larger influx of refugees and therefore made 1,500 places available. The intention of the emergency reception centre was and is that people stay there for 1 to 2 days maximum and

then move on to cities and municipalities. This will give the refugees time and space to unwind, refresh themselves, tell their stories and discuss with the counsellors what the next steps in reception are. They can also try to contact friends or family and children can finally play again.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders was preparing to keep this emergency reception centre open and was therefore looking for 70 new staff members, from reception staff over logistics staff to night supervisors and daytime supervisors. ■

Date of publication: March 2022

Victims of conflict in Ukraine are supported every step of the way by the Red Cross





Belgian Red Cross-Flanders supports International Red Cross and Danish Red Cross with €4 million for humanitarian aid in Ukraine

At the end of March, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders, in agreement with the International Red Cross and the Danish Red Cross, committed EUR 4 million to support victims of the conflict. The amount comes from the proceeds of Consortium 1212, of which Belgian Red Cross-Flanders receives a share as a partner. The organisation expressly thanks everyone who has made a contribution.

Robert Mardini, General Director of the International Red Cross: *“The escalating conflict in Ukraine is taking a devastating toll. The number of casualties continues to rise, while health facilities are increasingly struggling.”*

Dominik Stillhart, Director of Operations at the International Red Cross: *“Very disturbing news comes from Ukraine, where millions of people are risking the deadly consequences of the conflict. We call on all parties to abide by International Humanitarian Law and protect civilians and vital civilian infrastructure, and allow neutral, impartial humanitarian action.”*

Since the start of the conflict in 2014, Red Cross organisations have expanded their presence in Ukraine because

of rising humanitarian needs. This is also the strength of the larger Red Cross movement: the combination of international as well as local support and reinforcement from other countries. The Red Cross movement continues to scale up its presence in the conflict zone. For instance, there are now mobile Red Cross teams in several cities such as Kiev, Poltava, Dnipro, Odessa, Donetsk and Luhansk. These try to identify the needs of the population hiding from the violence or fleeing domestically and offer solutions. Those needs are still largely situated in the provision of basic needs such as food, potable water, blankets/mattresses, medicines and medical supplies.

- In Dnipro, for instance, sleeping mats were distributed to some 500 -strong refugee community and sleeping areas at the train station were better equipped;
- Medical equipment was delivered to hospitals in Kyiv, Donetsk and Marioupol to care for the wounded;
- Insulin was delivered to a children’s hospital in Kiev so that 1,500 children can receive their dose of insulin for 4 weeks;
- 14 tonnes of foodstuffs - such as cereals, wheat flour, pasta and various grains - were brought to the municipalities of Toretsk and Avdeevka Hromadas

- for further distribution to vulnerable communities (elderly, sick);
- 200 tonnes of medical and relief goods were distributed to Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odessa, Poltava and other places. The goods included blankets, hygiene products, jerry cans, kitchen sets and tarpaulins;
- Some 1,150 food parcels and 1,150 hygiene kits, plastic sheeting and tarpaulins were distributed in Makeevka and Novoazovsk (Donetsk).

- As there are a lot of refugees in Ukraine itself, the Red Cross is also focusing its attention on them.
- During the week of 25 March, more than 1,200 people in that region received direct support to meet their basic needs of food, hygiene, sanitation and shelter.
 - The Danish Red Cross also helped distribute relief items to refugees at various locations in the Chernivtsi region. This included the delivery of food, distribution of blankets and other items for shelter, as well as hygiene and cleaning kits.
 - In Chernivtsi, there are some 36 facilities accommodating 5,000 refugees. After initial visits by Red Cross teams to collective centres, it was decided to start

twice-weekly recreational activities for children in a number of places and to start establishing three Child Friendly Spaces (CFS). ■

Date of publication: March 2022



Belgian Red Cross-Flanders warns of imminent shortage of shelters

At the Ariane transit centre in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders saw in June 2022 that Ukrainian refugees were forced to stay there for longer and longer periods of time. This while the initial mandate was to provide only very short-term reception at Ariane. The reason is that referrals to the regions are much less smooth than during the first months of the crisis.

In March and April, an average of 92 Ukrainian refugees stayed at the Ariane transit centre in Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe every day. There, they were usually referred to the regions for a place to stay after one, two or a maximum of three nights. Today, that situation is completely different: so far in June, some 800 Ukrainian refugees were staying on average every day, with many being

referred only after more than two weeks. Of the residents currently still in Ariane, one in three have been there for more than 15 days. More so, some 13 per cent have been staying there for more than 25 days today.

This while the mission of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders was initially to provide only transit shelter, of very short duration. And that presents a major challenge. Because neither the building, nor the processes, nor the resources are currently planned for a two- to three-week stay. According to the organisation, this complicates the situation of residents at the transit centre, where almost all Ukrainian refugees have been initially housed since June (98 per cent).

“The longer stay translates concretely into all kinds of consequences. Residents face money problems - because this also delays the allocation of their living allowance - and, in addition, they have no clear perspective, which causes stress and frustration. There are also some practical difficulties involved. For example: if you stay somewhere for two or three weeks, your clothes sometimes need to be washed, even though there is no infrastructure to do so. And also for the children, a longer stay requires more support, both in terms of entertainment

and education.” Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders additionally warned of the larger, underlying problem: the fact that there is an imminent shortage of shelters. The organisation also operates the emergency village in Mechelen, which is already 37 per cent full barely a month after opening.

“So the transit centre is the canary in the coal mine: it is there that we are the first to notice the impending shortage of shelters. The buffer capacity is drying up, even in the emergency village. Remember that this is the largest refugee influx in Europe since World War II, with 6.8 million Ukrainians having left the country. Moreover, in our country, the proportion of Ukrainian refugees in need of shelter has also increased. At the start of the conflict, this was 15 per cent, by early June it had risen to 40 per cent. So it is important that we prepare.” Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: October 2022

Emergency village Mechelen

On 5 May, the cooperation between the city of Mechelen and Belgian Red Cross-Flanders was in the spotlight. The starting signal was given for the preparatory works of the emergency village for refugees finding shelter and psychological assistance there following the crisis in Ukraine.

To make the gravel car park at De Nekker operationally ready, at relatively short notice, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders had to recruit new staff quickly.

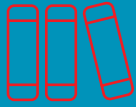
That is why Belgian Red Cross-Flanders organised a job day at its headquarters in Mechelen on Wednesday 20 April. New staff were sought both for the emergency village in Mechelen for Ukrainian refugees and for the new reception centre for asylum seekers in Boom. ■

Date of publication: June 2022





Library service for hospitals and care institutions supports emergency village Mechelen



December was Read Aloud Week, and read aloud to the Ukrainian children currently staying there was also held in the emergency village in Mechelen. This was done in Ukrainian, courtesy of some residents and the numerous Ukrainian books provided to them by Library service for hospitals and care institutions. Ever since the end of September, children and young people staying in the Mechelen emergency village have been able to maintain their mother tongue and relax for a while thanks to Library service for hospitals and care institutions' Ukrainian books. A book area with reading corner was set up and books or comics can be borrowed. Reading aloud, reading together, borrowing books: all additional moments of contact that make it possible to get closer to the residents in the relief village and thus provide additional social support. ■

Date of publication: December 2022

Refugee crisis squared: Belgian Red Cross-Flanders seeks 170 staff for reception centres

In July, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders went in search of 170 new staff to staff their reception centres for refugees and asylum seekers. Because on top of the refugee crisis of the past few years, the Ukrainian refugee crisis had been added in recent months.

The influx of asylum seekers of recent years continues this year too: up to 31 May - the latest figures available - the Immigration Department counted 13,074 asylum applications in our country. But: tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees were added to that in recent months.

"In total, nearly 50,000 Ukrainian refugees have already arrived in Belgium since the start of the conflict. By comparison, that is more refugees than arrived in our country even in the 'record year' 2015, of all nationalities combined. So this is an unprecedented refugee influx - the largest in Europe since World War II - on top of the already existing refugee crisis. That is why it is now really all hands on deck to provide shelter for all these people. It should therefore come as no surprise that we are short of hands." Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

Fedasil asked the organisation to open an emergency reception centre for 750 asylum seekers in Berlaar at very short notice. So we needed extra manpower, lots of extra manpower. *"We are looking for very diverse profiles for different jobs. Think of day and night supervisors, but also reception staff and logistics & administrative profiles. Finally, we are obviously also looking for some people to take on the centre management."* Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

The refugee crisis also made itself felt in West and East Flanders: Belgian Red Cross-Flanders had 40 vacancies in five West and East Flanders reception centres for asylum seekers at the beginning of September. Most of the vacancies are for the new emergency reception centre in Sint-Laureins, which will open its doors in the second half of September. Belgian Red Cross-Flanders was looking for as many as 30 workers for this. But the organisation also needed colleagues for the reception centres in Eeklo, Bruges, Wingene and Sijsele.

"Above all, our future colleagues must like working for and with people, and look at other cultures with an open mind. After all, they will find themselves in a varied working environment with very diverse staff and residents. Motivation is at least as important as experience. Knowledge of other languages is a plus." Els Claes, Manager Reception Asylum Seekers – Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: July 2022





Belgian Red Cross-Flanders celebrates 50th anniversary with historic change: iconic stickers disappear

Everyone knows them, the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders stickers that you could use every year - since 1961 already! - you could financially support the volunteer work of the local sections. But in honour of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders' 50th anniversary, they have now been put away for good. Indeed, the stickers made way for plasters. However, the classic cartoon characters remained: during the sales campaign from 20 April to 4 May 2023, 'De Smurfen' were featured on the plasters. A symbolic choice, as the same Smurfs were the very first cartoon characters on the sticker decades ago.

"The time was ripe for something new. And with the plasters we choose a usable product, which at the same time also has a clear link to one of our activities." - Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders' iconic stickers have been sold since 1961 to support the work of volunteers in local branches. If you count carefully, you may wonder: how is this possible, when Belgian Red Cross-Flanders has been in existence for 'only' 50 years? The stickers existed even when the Belgian Red Cross did not yet have a separate structure for Flanders, Wallonia and the German-speaking Community.

The sticker as we know it today - with a cartoon character on it - has been around for a little less time. It was only in 1983 that a cartoon character appeared on the sticker for the first time, as the years before that it was always an image with a red cross. That first time, it was The Smurfs. And now, 40 cartoon and animation characters later, it is

the blue creatures' turn again. But: from now on, they will no longer be on a sticker, as it makes way for a patch. *"The 50th anniversary of Belgian Red Cross-Flanders seemed like an appropriate time for this historic change. It was half a century in which our 13,000 volunteers have already meant a lot to the Flemish people. Every year, they provide 40,000 first-aid courses, aid stations at thousands of events, dozens of holiday camps for the vulnerable, numerous activities in the 70 Red Cross Youth Societies and tens of thousands of interventions and cares each year. To remain relevant over the next 50 years, the time was ripe for a new, useful product with a clear link to our activities: the plaster."* - Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director Belgian Red Cross-Flanders.

At first glance, this plaster actually looks the same as the former sticker: it is one large piece in a package, where you can cut plasters to size yourself. For the sales campaign, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders is sticking to the same recipe. From 20 April to 4 May 2023, volunteers from the various local departments stood in the traditional places: from intersections to parking lots of department stores or shopping centres. Sales via various local traders and the online alternative also remained as before.

New product, new price

In terms of pricing, there was also an adjustment: pay 10 euros for 1 patch, instead of the 5 euros for 1 sticker. Indeed, that 5-euro price - or 200 Belgian francs in the 1990s - has not been adjusted since 1993, despite inflation. *"The costs incurred by our 225 local departments for their operations - think, for instance, of ambulances, intervention clothing or equipment for first-aid training - have been rising for 30 years, partly due to inflation. While the price of stickers, their main source of income, remained unchanged during the same period. So an adjustment was needed in that area too. With the change to 10 euros for the patch, our local chapters and their volunteers can continue their activities. This way, they can continue to be there for everyone not only today, but also tomorrow."* - Philippe Vandekerckhove, managing director Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: November 2022



Je lokale Rode Kruisafdeling dankt jou voor je steun in 2023!

€10 + Rode Kruis Vlaanderen helpt helpen



Less than 3 per cent of Belgian stem cell donors have Turkish, North or Central African roots

For patients with serious diseases such as leukaemia and lymphoma, treatment with stem cells is often the life-saving last chance to be cured. But there is a problem: one in three patients with Turkish, North or Central African roots cannot find a suitable donor to get stem cells from. While in patients with Western European roots, this is only one in 10. The cause is not far to seek: less than 3 per cent of registered Belgian donors have Turkish, North or Central African roots. So there is an urgent need for more ethnic variation in the stem cell database, because genetic descent plays a major role in the search for a suitable donor. This is why the Belgian Bone Marrow Register, together with Belgian Red Cross-Flanders, made an appeal on World Stem Cell Donor Day (17 September): register en masse, especially if you belong to one of the three ethnic target groups.

Stem cells are a type of primordial cells that can still develop into a body cell with a specific function. In stem cell treatment, they are administered to a patient to replace defective cells in the body. For example, a patient with leukaemia can be cured by making new, healthy blood cells from the stem cells he or she is given.

This is because, simply put, the donor must be someone whose stem cells fit the patient so that his or her body does not reject them. This depends on a number of factors, most importantly the so-called 'tissue type' has to match. And that tissue type is genetic. So the ethnic roots of the patient and the donor play a very big role. *"In other words, you can only get stem cells from someone with a similar genetic origin. And because less than 3 per cent of the donors listed in the Belgian stem cell register have Turkish, North or Central African roots, we are therefore faced with a problem. Because for patients from these ethnic target groups, it is currently searching for a needle in a haystack. Therefore, it is vital that we urgently get more ethnic variation in the stem cell registry."* - Prof Emr Dr Pierre Zachée, chairman of the Belgian Bone Marrow Programme

On the occasion of World Stem Cell Donor Day (17 September), the Belgian Bone Marrow Registry launched a campaign: on the one hand to create awareness about the importance of ethnic roots among stem cell donors and on the other to convince as many Belgians as possible to register as donors. Rode Kruis-

Vlaanderen, Croix-Rouge de Belgique, UZ Brussel, AZ Sint-Jan and the donor centre of Mont-Godinne are also supporting the campaign. ■

Date of publication: September 2022





WOW! Our new name & logo

2022 was the last year under the names 'Adapted Holidays' and '(Adapted) Holiday Camps'. From 2023, a fresh wind is blowing through our holidays & camps. With a strong WOW feeling. Because admit it: going along on WOW holidays or camps is second to none.

It also needs a contemporary and expressive logo. And a name that starts from what you feel when you go on holiday or camp. WOW expresses the connection between our amazing holidaymakers and our equally amazing WOW volunteers. ■

WOW
vakanties

WOW holidays (was: Adapted Holidays)
An unforgettable holiday for adults (18+) with physical, mental or multiple disabilities.

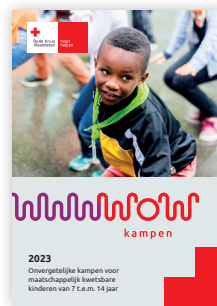
[MORE INFO](#)



WOW
kampen

WOW camps (was: Holiday camps)
An unforgettable camp for socially vulnerable children aged 7 to 14.

[MORE INFO](#)



WOW
kampen +

WOW camps+ (was: Adapted Holiday Camps)
An unforgettable camp for socially vulnerable children aged 7 to 14 with disabilities.

[MORE INFO](#)





Belgian Red Cross-Flanders and Disneyland Paris join hands for annual sticker campaign

In 2022, Minnie Mouse from Disneyland® Paris featured prominently on the Belgian Red Cross-Flanders sticker! The reason? Disneyland Paris celebrated its 30th anniversary and Disney Figures capture everyone's imagination.

"Inclusion and mutual aid are values that Disneyland Paris also upholds. So it seems a natural match for us with Belgian Red Cross-Flanders to help them with their main fundraising campaign, the wellknown sticker campaign. We are therefore very proud that one of our best-known Disney Figures may fill in the sticker this year," said Isabelle Willemsens, Disneyland Paris Country Director Northern Europe.

With this magic sticker, Belgian Red Cross-Flanders wanted to convince all Flemish people to financially support the 228 local Red Cross branches. The annual sticker campaign started on Thursday 21 April 2022 and ran until Thursday 5 May. The price for the sticker remained at 5 euro and could be obtained throughout Flanders at crossroads (finally back after 2 years!), at local traders, in the car parks of shopping centres & department stores and, of course, also online.

Support Red Cross volunteers in your neighbourhood

All proceeds from the sticker campaign go to local Red Cross branches. With this, the volunteers invest in ambulances, intervention clothing, equipment for First Aid training, equipment for First Aid posts. The volunteers were also very active locally in the various phases of the pandemic: from aid posts in vaccination centres, First Aid posts during the authorised events, Care Bib activities, help in residential care centres and much more.

Again at intersections...and in many more places

In the previous 2 editions of the sticker sale, the pandemic threw quite a spanner in the works. But in 2022, the volunteers could again be very actively present at intersections and parking lots of shopping centres and department stores. In addition, additional sales channels via local traders will also be strongly targeted as it is the ambition of the local chapters to catch up again with the results of 2019. Back then, the sticker campaign raised more than €3 million. Last year these additional sales channels were already deployed and this year too we are aiming for this further broadening. Finally, you will also be able to buy the sticker online at www.koopdesticker.be, where you can indicate which local chapter your contribution goes to.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders sticker campaign raises €2,600,000

Local Red Cross branches were able to reinvest in their operations after two difficult years. The Belgian Red Cross-Flanders sticker campaign is over and has yielded a fine result: some 520,000 stickers were sold, good for 2,600,000 euros. These proceeds are extra welcome after two difficult corona years. *"We would like to thank everyone who bought one or more stickers enormously, because the local chapters desperately needed this support. Now they can finally invest in their operations again after two tough years,"* Belgian Red Cross-Flanders sounds.

The sticker sale clearly felt the post-covid effect, as the proceeds went back towards pre-covid results. And the



good weather also made its contribution, according to the local Red Cross-Tienen branch.

"We felt it immediately on the first day: when we kicked off sticker sales on 21 April, the first spring sun was also shining. And so you notice that immediately in sales. People are in a good mood then - both our volunteers and the buyers - so the stickers went out the door like hot cakes that first day." Peter Janssens, department chairman Red Cross-Tienen.

Thanks to this result, the 228 local Red Cross branches can finally start investing in their operations again, in order to make a difference locally. For example, the Oud-Turnhout branch will be able to buy a much-needed new CPR manikin, as well as some other practice equipment for their first-aid training.

Belgian Red Cross-Flanders would therefore like to thank everyone who has done their bit over the past two weeks. *"It is great to see that all Flemish people support their local Red Cross sections so much. So we want to thank all the sticker buyers very much. And of course also a feather in the cap of all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the past 14 days."* Joachim Deman, spokesperson Belgian Red Cross-Flanders. ■

Date of publication: February 2022

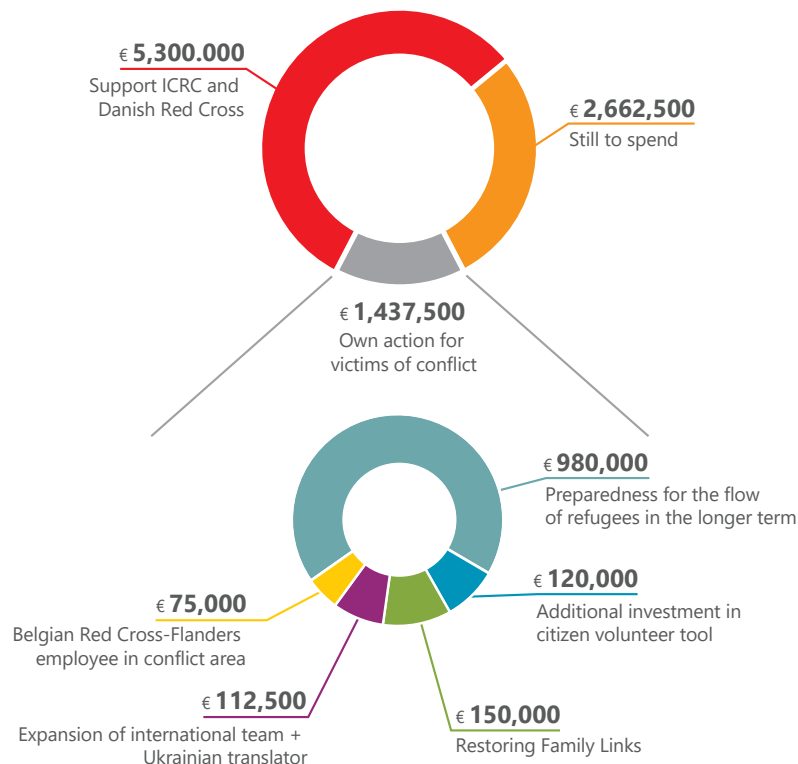


Conflict Ukraine

The ongoing violence in Ukraine leaves no one untouched. We highlight some of the many heartwarming initiatives of local chapters working to support people suffering from the conflict whenever possible. It is also important to remain transparent about the spending of funds raised. ■

Date of publication: June 2022

Spending Ukraine conflict

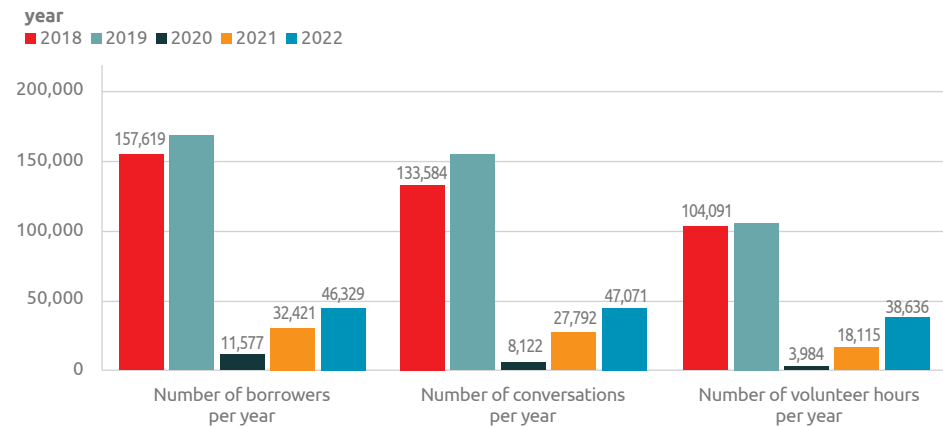


update: 3 June 2022

Statistics Library service for hospitals and care institutions

Library service for hospitals and care institutions keeps track of the number of loans and calls of each Library service for hospitals and care institutions operation using statistics. These figures are very important because the central library has to prepare an annual progress report for obtaining the operation subsidy. The number of loans and calls play a sensitive role in this. ■

Date of publication: February 2023



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