



# INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET IN BELGIUM

STUDY OF THE BELGIAN NATIONAL CONTACT POINT  
OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

May 2016



Co-funded by  
the European Union



The Belgian National Contact Point is a multi-institutional entity composed of experts from the Federal Public Service Home Affairs (Immigration Office), the Federal Migration Centre Myria, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil).

Further information on the Belgian National Contact Point of the European Migration Network and its work can be obtained from:

**[www.emnbelgium.be](http://www.emnbelgium.be)**

The Belgian Contact Point can be contacted through the following channels:

**[Benedikt.Vulsteke@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Benedikt.Vulsteke@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Alexandra.Laine@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Alexandra.Laine@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Peter.Vancostenoble@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Peter.Vancostenoble@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Ina.Vandenberghe@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Ina.Vandenberghe@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Martine.Hendrickx@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Martine.Hendrickx@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Yael.Chemin@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Yael.Chemin@ibz.fgov.be)**  
**[Elisa.Vandervalk@ibz.fgov.be](mailto:Elisa.Vandervalk@ibz.fgov.be)**

Or by ordinary mail at the following address:

EMN Belgian National Contact Point  
FPS Home Affairs  
Leuvenseweg 1  
1000 Brussels

The European Migration Network (EMN) is coordinated by the European Commission with National Contact Points (EMN NCPs) established in each EU Member State plus Norway.



## **Belgian study and EU comparative study**

**Belgian report:** This is the Belgian contribution to the EMN focused study on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market. This national study was drafted by the Belgian National of the EMN, input was provided by various stakeholders and experts. Other EMN National Contact Points (NCP's) produced a similar report on the topic for their (Member) State.

**Common template and Synthesis report:** The different national reports were prepared on the basis of a common template with study specifications to ensure, to the extent possible, comparability. On the basis of all national contributions, a Synthesis Report is produced by the EMN Service Provider in collaboration with the European Commission and the EMN NCP's. The Synthesis Report gives an overview of the topic in all (Member) States.

**Aim:** The overall aim of the study is to inform the target audience (e.g. practitioners, policy officers and decision-makers at both EU and national level as well as academic researchers and the general public), the Commission and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on the application of integration support measures for beneficiaries of international protection in relation to labour market access and participation, identifying existing policies and good practices.

**Scope of the study:** The study focuses on integration measures for beneficiaries of international protection; i.e. those granted international protection status, either as a refugee or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection as stipulated in the Qualification Directive and its recast. Persons granted humanitarian protection status in the framework of an asylum procedure due to obligations under international refugee or human rights instruments are also included. However, other third-country nationals granted first residence permits or alternative statuses (e.g. tolerated stay) are beyond the scope of this study. The target group is thus limited to all persons whose asylum application had a positive outcome.

Although the primary focus is on labour market access and participation, the study also indirectly covers other integration support measures that the State provides which are closely linked to and specifically support labour market access and participation, namely: Language courses, Orientation courses, Counselling, Access to housing, Education, Vocational education and training, Recognition of qualifications (support with); and Guaranteed minimum resources.

**Available on the website:** The Belgian report, the Synthesis Report and the links to the reports of the other (Member) States and the Common Template are available on the website: [www.emnbelgium.be](http://www.emnbelgium.be)



# Table of contents

<b>OVERVIEW</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>I. ACCESSING THE LABOUR MARKET: RESIDENCE PERMITS AND THE LEGAL RIGHT TO ACCESS THE LABOUR MARKET</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>II. LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION POLICY AND ITS ORGANISATION</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 Overview of (labour market) integration policies .....	10
2.2 organisation of employment-related support measures .....	16
<b>III. SUPPORT MEASURES TO ACCESS THE LABOUR MARKET</b> .....	<b>20</b>
3.1 Language courses .....	20
3.2 Orientation courses .....	24
3.3 Education .....	26
3.4 Vocational Education and training .....	29
3.5 Procedures for the recognition of qualifications .....	31
3.6 Counselling services .....	34
3.7 Access to housing .....	37
3.8 Guaranteed minimum resources .....	40
<b>IV. LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION AND PROFILE OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION</b> .....	<b>44</b>
4.1 Profile of the beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium .....	44
4.2 Labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection .....	47
<b>V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	<b>54</b>
<b>VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>64</b>
<b>VII. ANNEXES</b> .....	<b>72</b>
Annex 1: Definitions .....	72



## OVERVIEW

The main objective of this report is to describe the **labour market access of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium** and to provide an outline of the **support measures that facilitate labour market participation**.

Furthermore, another objective of the report is to give an overview of the obstacles beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium are confronted with in their search for employment.

Besides, the report also aims at describing **best practices** with a particular focus on the support measures that are **specifically tailored** to beneficiaries of international protection.

**Section 1** of this report aims at providing an overview of the legal and policy framework and practices concerning the right to access employment for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The differences between the type of residence permit for this target group and the accompanying labour market access rights are explained. There is also a reflection on the extent to which naturalisation has an impact on labour market integration.

In **section 2**, the different components of (labour market) integration policy and civic integration in each region are described. The organisational approach in Flanders, Brussels and Wallonia is examined, and an overview is provided of how coordination takes place between the different public bodies and non-governmental actors involved in (labour market) integration policy. The most important monitoring mechanisms in Belgium are also briefly described.

**Section 3** is the bulk of the report and explores in detail employment-related support measures that aim at advancing labour market integration for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The support measures include: language courses, orientation courses, education, vocational training, recognition of qualifications, guaranteed minimum resources, counselling, and access to housing.

For each of these support measures good practices are identified and measures specifically tailored to refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are highlighted. Furthermore, the obstacles to access the different support measures in practice are described.

**Section 4** aims at providing an overview of the extent to which refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Belgium are actually able to successfully secure employment and also provides an overview of the profile of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium (educational level and profession in the country of origin).

Finally, **section 5** presents a summary, the conclusions and main findings on the access to the labour market for beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium.

# Accessing the labour market: residence permits and the legal right to access the labour market

## Possible outcomes of the asylum procedure

In Belgium, the outcome of an asylum application might be the rejection of the asylum application, the granting of a refugee status or the attribution of a subsidiary protection status. In Belgium, a humanitarian status cannot be granted in the framework of an asylum procedure. Besides the asylum procedure, specific procedures exist to apply for a status on humanitarian or medical grounds.<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore, in accordance with the specifications for this report, people with a residence permit granted on humanitarian or medical grounds are excluded from the scope of this report.

## Residence permit

If an asylum applicant is granted **refugee status**, a residence permit of unlimited duration (electronic card B) is issued. However, due to high influx of asylum applicants since the summer of 2015, the government decided in December 2015 to limit the duration of the residence permit given to recognized refugees to five years (after these five years, it becomes a permit of unlimited duration). The new law is expected to come into force during the course of 2016.

If an asylum applicant is granted **subsidiary protection**, the administration of the municipality where the person lives will provide a residence permit valid for one year (electronic card A). This permit is extended for two years (if extension is granted). In practice, this extension is automatic, unless there has been a durable change in the situation of the country of origin. The person will be authorised to stay in Belgium for an unlimited period of time after five years, counting from the date on which the application for asylum was lodged. The person will then receive an “electronic card B”, as is the case for recognised refugees.<sup>(2)</sup>

---

1 Article 9bis and 9ter of the Belgian Immigration Act.

2 Article 49/2 of the Belgian Immigration Act.

## Labour market access

On 9 December 2015, a Royal Decree came into force which stipulates that **asylum applicants** are granted access to employment after having spent 4 months (instead of a 6 month waiting period) in the asylum-procedure without having received a first instance decision from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS). A work permit (type C) will be issued. For asylum applicants who want to be self-employed workers, a professional card is required.

Persons with a refugee status have access to the labour market under the same terms as Belgians and do not require a work permit, nor a professional card.

Applicants who have been granted **subsidiary protection** need to apply for a work permit (type C) or professional card (in case of self-employment). As indicated above, persons who have been granted subsidiary protection will acquire a permanent residence permit after five years and from that moment onwards, are no longer required to apply for a work permit or professional card.

It should be mentioned that the application for a work permit for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (and other persons with a valid residence permit) is mostly an administrative formality and it is - in practice - always granted if the residence permit is still valid. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection who want to be self-employed and who have to apply for a professional card are confronted with more administrative obstacles.

With the introduction of the **single permit**, the work permit type C will cease to exist. On the residence (single) permit of the person concerned it will be indicated whether there is full, limited or no access to employment. It is expected that beneficiaries of international protection will (continue to) have full access to employment.

## Acquisition of Belgian nationality

On 1 January 2013, a new Nationality Law came into force. Before this reform of the Nationality Law, recognised refugees could apply for naturalisation after two years of legal stay in Belgium. Since the reform and the overall restrictions on the possibility to obtain the Belgian nationality through naturalisation, this is no longer possible. Beneficiaries of international protection can still apply for Belgian citizenship, but under the same conditions as other foreigners, such as an uninterrupted legal stay in Belgium of 5 years and proven economic and social integration.

The gap between the labour market participation of immigrants and the employment rate of natives is considered to be one of the major challenges of integration policies in Belgium. Yet, it is difficult to say **to what extent naturalisation has a positive impact on labour market integration**, since researchers are somewhat divided on this topic:

Researchers of the University of Antwerp and the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy concluded that for non-Western immigrants, having Belgian nationality contributes positively to their chances of gaining employment. They suggested that obtaining Belgian nationality in itself has an impact on the labour market inclusion of immigrants.<sup>(3)</sup> Furthermore, obtaining Belgian nationality could promote the development of an active career, as naturalisation could be considered as a factor of stability by employers and as it removes some barriers to the labour market, such as the work permit requirement.<sup>(4)</sup>

On the other hand, the Belgian socioeconomic monitoring instrument published in September 2013 argued that it might be possible that the groups that are better integrated into the labour market acquired the Belgian nationality more easily. This would also partially explain the employment gap between nationals and non-nationals.<sup>(5)</sup> Besides, there is also an employment gap between Belgians with a migratory background and the Belgians without a migratory background (so called “belgo-belges”), which nuances the impact of naturalisation on labour market participation.

What’s more, the research project CAREERS, which focused on the labour market participation of asylum applicants and refugees, concluded that having acquired the Belgian nationality had relatively little impact on employment, and that other characteristics - such as family situation or the country of origin - have a much bigger impact. In particular the number of years spent in Belgium and employment in the early stages after arrival have a strong positive impact on labour market integration.<sup>(6)</sup>

Furthermore, MIPEX Research Coordinator Thomas Huddleston stated that the more restrictive nationality law introduced in Belgium in 2013 does not simply restrict access to nationality, but also makes the path to citizenship clearer and quicker, but only for the immigrants who can meet the new language, social, and economic requirements. Furthermore, access to nationality in Belgium would remain one of the most favourable for integration among Western democracies, on par with Canada, Australia, and Sweden.<sup>(7)</sup>

---

3 Corluy, V., labour market outcomes and trajectories of immigrants in Belgium, 2014, p.165.

4 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, pp.130-141.

5 Federal Department of Employment and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, 2013, p.308-309.

6 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, pp.129-130.

7 <http://www.mipex.eu/blog/new-belgian-nationality-law-still-something-to-celebrate>



### 2.1 Overview of (labour market) integration policies

#### Components of (labour market) integration policy

In Belgium, the **communities** (Flemish, French and German) and the **regions** (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) are responsible for **integration policies** and also to a large extent for **labour market policy**, especially since the 6<sup>th</sup> state reform in 2014. As a consequence, legal aspects, practices, policies and budgets attributed to integration differ from one entity to the other.

However, various competences, such as social security, taxation and to a limited extent employment regulations are still the responsibility of the federal government. Nonetheless, the granting of work permits is a regional competence. Research shows that considerably more work permits (type C) are granted in Flanders than in the other regions. This would be linked to the particularities of the labour market situation in the different regions, such as the higher employment rate in Flanders.<sup>(8)</sup>

Regarding **labour market policy**, it is important to indicate that policies mainly focus on wage subsidies (or a reduction of social security contributions) for employers who hire people with a certain profile (mainly low-qualified young people, long-term unemployed and older workers).<sup>(9)</sup> Immigrants were traditionally not a specific target group for labour market policy as such.<sup>(10)</sup>

Some researchers recommended mainstreaming immigrant integration into the policy fields of labour and education is essential for achieving better labour market participation. Inspired by the definition of “gender mainstreaming”, mainstreaming immigrant integration can be defined as the process of assessing the implications for people with an immigrant background of all planned actions, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.<sup>(11)</sup>

---

8 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, pp.52-53.

9 Adam I., Van Dijk M., IES, Policy Brief, Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium - high time to mainstream, 2015, p.3.

10 A complete list of the target groups of the Belgium labour market policy can be consulted on the Federal website <http://www.aandeslag.be/web4/fotzweb/measureList.do?method=listAll&language=nl&viewPoint=employer>

11 Adam I., Van Dijk M., IES, Policy Brief, Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium - high time to mainstream, 2015, p.2.

Despite the fact that immigrants or beneficiaries of international protection are not a specific institutionalised target group for labour market policy as such, due to the present asylum crisis, several employment and training centres are working on the development of specific information programmes for beneficiaries of international protection and asylum applicants and encourage employers to employ this particular group.

While there is a framework for the employment of foreign workers, the overall labour market policy is not specifically addressed towards immigrants. Obviously, this is different for **integration policies**, a competence which also falls largely within the competences of the regions. In this respect, the regions cooperate closely with the local authorities.

The Flemish minister competent for Civic Integration and Integration Policy is Liesbeth Homans. In Wallonia, the responsible minister is Maxime Prévot.

## Flanders

In 1998, Flanders introduced integration policies targeted at specific groups, such as minorities (policy for ethnic minorities: “minderhedenbeleid”).<sup>(12)</sup> Presently, the most important target group of the Flemish integration policies are the legal and long-term residents in Flanders, who did not have the Belgian nationality at birth or who have at least one parent who did not have Belgian nationality at birth.<sup>(13)</sup>

Since 2001, Flanders has developed a programme of civic integration (“Inburgeringsbeleid”), that offers a Dutch language course, classes social orientation and a career orientation.<sup>(14)</sup> Flanders has a **(mandatory) integration pathway** for newcomers since 2004, but the (civic) integration sector in Flanders has recently been subject to a structural reform laid down in the Civic Integration Decree of 7 June 2013 that was amended by the Decree of 29 May 2015. This resulted in the creation of **a new autonomous Agency for Integration and Civic Integration**. The implementing decree was approved in January 2016 by the Flemish government. This decree also implements the obligation for civic integration targeted more on achieved results instead of efforts made, as it was before.

The two main components of the Flemish integration policy plan are socio-economic and social-cultural participation. The policy note 2014 – 2019 of the Flemish Minister for Integration stressed the following strategic objectives: a horizontal approach to decrease the ethnic gap in all relevant domains, continuous investment in learning Dutch as a second language, strengthening the local integration policy and providing individual training and coaching. On 3 July 2015, the Flemish government approved the strategic objectives of the **Horizontal Integration Policy Plan**.<sup>(15)</sup> This

---

12 Decree of 28 April 1998 regarding the Flemish policy for ethnical and cultural minorities

13 <http://integratiebeleid.be/vlaams-integratiebeleid/doelgroepen-vlaams-integratiebeleid>

14 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.19.

15 Flemish Parliament, Policy Letter Integration and Civic Integration 2015-2016, 19 October 2015, 525 (2015-2016) Nr. 1, p.8.

Plan aims at reducing the origin gap in all policy areas. The different Flemish ministers worked together to elaborate concrete actions within the framework of the objectives of this Plan. The integration policy in Flanders is intended for a wide range of different target groups. Persons who received an **international protection status are part of the obligatory target group.**<sup>(16)</sup>

The persons who are part of the obligatory target group have to sign a contract regarding the integration program. The **primary civic integration programme** consists of a training programme that is characterized by **individual coaching** (counselling) and guidance tailored to the individual needs.

The training programme consists of **social orientation** to get familiar with Flemish and Belgian society, **Dutch language lessons (Dutch as a second language (NT2))** and **career orientation**.

Persons who have a civic integration obligation and fail to comply with it, as well as persons who are entitled to integrate and fail to comply with the terms of their civic integration contract, can be sanctioned with an administrative fine of €50 to €5000. For the moment, the civic integration obligation, and the system of administrative fines does not apply in the Brussels Capital Region.

A certificate is granted after the successful completion of the initial civic integration programme, and the person can move up to the **secondary civic integration programme**. During this secondary programme, persons can outline the choice they made during the primary civic integration programme, which is to take up employment or to follow further education. The person can follow vocational training or entrepreneurship training. Moreover, he can enroll for 'Dutch as second language', follow-up courses or continue his studies. Unlike the initial programme, the secondary programme is not organised by the welcome offices. Instead, it is made available by the regular facilities.<sup>(17)</sup>

The civic integration of minors does not take place by means of a civic integration programme but mainly by attending school.

## Wallonia

In the past, Wallonia's integration policy was characterized by indirect targeting policies (priority action areas, positive discrimination areas, etc.) based on social criteria (unemployment rate, number of tenants, etc.) and demographic criteria (percentage of foreigners). Public funding was mainly directed at the fight against social disadvantages.<sup>(18)</sup>

The Decree on the **integration pathway** for newcomers in the Walloon region was approved on 27 February 2014 by the Walloon Government. This reception and integration pathway consists

---

16 This contrary to **applicants** of international protection who are since 2012 no longer obligated to follow the civic integration programme. However, they preserve their right to follow one or more components of the civil integration process, as from four months in the asylum procedure.

17 <http://www.inburgering.be/en/civic-integration-programme>

18 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.19.

of a personalized **reception module**, a **French language training**, a **training in citizenship** and a **socio-professional orientation**. The target group consists of foreigners who have been living in Belgium for less than three years and who hold a residence permit valid for more than 3 months.<sup>(19)</sup> Consequently, the target group for specific integration pathways **includes beneficiaries of international protection** who have been living in Belgium for less than three years.

The integration pathway is composed of two parts:

The **initial reception module is obligatory** and consists of information on the rights and duties of each person living in Belgium; a social assessment (including a linguistic assessment); and assistance or orientation towards support services regarding various administrative procedures. The social assessment aims at identifying the needs of the newcomer based on his skills and personal experiences and aims at evaluating the achievements of the newcomer to enable him to valorize them. The newcomer has to follow the initial reception module within a period of three months after registration at the municipality. The **Regional Integration Centre (RIC)** will issue a certificate of attendance that must be returned to the municipality within a period of six months following the registration. If the newcomer fails to comply with this obligation, he can be subjected to an administrative fine of €100 to €2500.

To meet the needs of the newcomer, identified during the social assessment, the **newcomer can** conclude an integration contract<sup>(20)</sup> with the Regional Integration Center. The center commits itself to offer the newcomer an individual follow-up, based on the social assessment:

- a **French language training**: the newcomers have access to training organized by the public services, agencies or other recognized partners.
- a **training module on civic integration**: basic information is provided on the functioning of the Belgian society in general, on social relations in our country and on the functioning of public institutions with the objective to be able to participate fully in the social, cultural and associative life.
- a **social and professional orientation**: this orientation is organised by the public authorities or by accredited organizations in the context of local integration initiatives, or by other partner organisations.

At the end of February 2016, the Walloon government adopted at the final reading the draft decree to introduce a mandatory integration programme in Wallonia. The Decree will make all the components of the programme compulsory (reception module, learning French (120h), citizenship training (20h) and socio-professional orientation for those who need it). This reform is gradually being implemented according to the available budgetary resources.

---

19 With certain exceptions such as EU-citizens, embassy personnel, foreigners younger than 18 and older than 65 years.

20 With a duration of maximum 2 years and extendable for another year.

## Brussels

A decree on the reception and integration pathways for newcomers in the Brussels Capital Region was approved on 18 July 2013. The integration pathway has the objective to better meet the basic needs of newcomers (accommodation, healthcare, education, etc.) and enable them to participate in social, cultural and social life. This should result in better knowledge of and compliance with social standards.

Beneficiaries of the integration pathway are foreigners (**beneficiaries of international protection and other**) who are older than 18 years and who have been legally staying in Belgium for less than three years. They also have to be registered in the foreigners' register of a municipality of the Brussels Capital region and have to hold a residence permit valid for more than three months. Contrary to the Flemish and Walloon integration policies for specific target groups, the **participation in the integration programme in the Brussels Capital Region is currently still optional.**

The integration pathway aims to increase the **social, economic and cultural participation of migrants**. The first component of the integration pathway consists of a welcome session, a social evaluation and a language assessment. The second component consists of an individualised project turned into an agreement (contract) with more concrete objectives to be met and an agreement on the rights and obligations. Based on the needs that were identified, beneficiaries of the integration programme are provided with administrative support and follow-up with regards to housing, social assistance, healthcare and socio-professional integration. There is also an orientation towards actors providing training. Individualised training comprises **language training** (French language and literacy) and **citizenship training**.

At the end of November 2015, the Brussels government announced the beginning of a compulsory integration pathway, including language training, to be voted in 2016 and implemented in 2017. From 2016 onwards, newcomers interested in learning French can contact one of the two 'Welcome Offices for Newcomers' ('Bureaux d'accueil pour Primo-Arrivants – BAPA'): BAPA-BXL and VIA (a cooperation between the municipalities of Molenbeek and Schaerbeek). These 'reception offices' are responsible for the organisation of the integration trajectory for newcomers who opt for the French module in Brussels. The offices ensure the reception, orientation and guidance of newcomers. However, they are not in charge of the organization of language courses, but they will orientate the newcomer to accredited language service providers (these providers will be selected and accredited by mid-May 2016).

### Specific policies for beneficiaries of international protection?

Generally speaking, we can conclude that beneficiaries of international protection do not have to follow a different programme than other migrants in any of the regions; although in Flanders they are **one of the target groups** for whom the integration pathway is compulsory. In the

Walloon Region, beneficiaries of international protection - like other foreigners who have been living in Belgium for less than three years and who hold a residence permit valid for more than three months - are obliged to follow the integration programme.

Due to the current and imminent high influx of beneficiaries of international protection into the Belgian society, policy makers, governmental actors, civil society and the wider public are increasingly interested in the (labour market) integration of beneficiaries of international protection. It is encouraging to see that the different governments in Belgium are fully aware of the challenges and that substantial additional financial resources are being allocated to (labour market) integration programmes.

There are several organizations and NGO's who focus particularly on the target group of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, such as Caritas International Belgium, Flemish Refugee Action, Convivial and CIRÉ. They are mostly specialized in counselling and assistance in the broad sense.

Furthermore, some events or initiatives are not exclusively linked to beneficiaries of international protection, but are obviously linked to the increasing numbers of recently arrived asylum applicants (who have a relatively high chance of obtaining a protection status). For example, on 26 October 2015, the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration and the Flemish public employment service (VDAB) organised a job day with the objective to recruit social orientation teachers, programme counsellors and language counsellors.<sup>(21)</sup>

Some Flemish provinces started a 'Refugees Taskforce'. The aim is to create a platform where different partners who are active in the field of refugees, can coordinate their actions. In addition to this coordination function, an important role exists in informing the various organizations and co-creating actions. The platforms focus on the integration of newcomers, including through facilitating language training and guidance to the labour market. **Task forces** were also set up on a local level (for example in Ghent) to address the issue of integration of beneficiaries of international protection.

Similarly, the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB)<sup>(22)</sup> installed a Taskforce on the "Refugee Crisis", gathering experts, launching an action plan and presenting a mission statement with the labour market integration of refugees as the main objective.<sup>(23)</sup>

---

21 <https://www.vdab.be/nieuws/pers/2015/agentschap-integratie-en-inburgering-en-vdab-organiseren-jobdag-op-26102015>

22 Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen VBO (NL), Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique FEB (FR).

23 <http://vbo-feb.be/nl-BE/Nieuws/Press-Releases/Taskforce-vluchtelingen-een-actieplan-voor-de-komende-maanden/>

## 2.2 Organisation of employment-related support measures

### Organisational approach and federal, regional and local competences

The policy regarding asylum and the reception of asylum applicants, nationality and residence permits is a **federal competence**. In 1991, the federal government also started supporting programmes that enhance the social integration of people of foreign origin, prevent discrimination and promote intercultural dialogue. These projects were funded through the Federal Impulse Fund for Migration policy (FIM). Since 2015, the funds of this Impulse Fund are regionalized.<sup>(24)</sup>

As indicated above, integration policy and the policy regarding employment related support measures are mainly a competence of the **regions and the communities**. In **Flanders**, the integration policy is coordinated by the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration. In **Wallonia**, the integration policy is decentralized and organized through eight Regional Integration Centres created on a territorial basis. These centres cooperate through a supra-structure, the Platform for Consultation and Support for the Regional Integration Centres (DISCRI). In the Brussels Capital Region, the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) is responsible for the integration policy for Dutch-speaking people, while the French Community Commission (COCOF) is responsible for the integration policy for French-speaking people.

Activities in the field are carried out by a large number of partners and organisations, such as the Local Integration Initiatives in Wallonia, the Welcome Offices and Houses of Dutch in Flanders, the Integration Centres in Brussels and the regional public employment services (VDAB, le Forem, Actiris) in each region.

Regarding other employment related support measures - such as guaranteed minimum resources - the **local authorities** play a key role. The Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) are public institutions that exist in each of the municipalities of Belgium. They manage the granting of guaranteed minimum resources. The social assistants of the PCSWs are also amongst the most important actors regarding counselling and the individual guidance of the beneficiaries of international protection.

For some aspects, formal cooperation agreements were concluded between the diverse authorities and stakeholders. For example, a formal protocol was concluded in 2009 between the Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG), the Flemish Employment Service (VDAB) and the Regional Agency for Domestic Governance, which focuses on cooperation between these bodies for persons who have been granted an integration income. The aim is to provide the best possible assistance and stimulate optimal integration and participation in society.<sup>(25)</sup> For other employment-related support measures, the cooperation between the different actors is less formalised or no formal cooperation agreement or mechanism exists.

---

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.diversiteit.be/impulsfonds>

<sup>25</sup> Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, pp. 32 -33.

As a consequence of the rather complex institutional structure in Belgium and the wide range of stakeholders involved, the activities of some **NGOs or other organisations** regarding the integration of beneficiaries of international protection fall in between the competences of the federal, regional or local level. Moreover, the activities of a lot of NGOs and local organisations in this field are project-based and funded as such (directly or indirectly through ERF, EIF, AMIF, etc...). This implies that a stakeholder such as Caritas International Belgium, that focuses on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection, has no structural long-lasting cooperation agreement with a regional or federal government. The most important NGOs involved in the integration of beneficiaries of international protection are: Flemish Refugee Action, Caritas International Belgium, CIRÉ and Convivial.

Besides, a large number of non-governmental and non-profit organisations work on a local basis, such as SAMPA or Cirkant. Some of these organizations have a very broad target group such as migrants in general, for example CINL<sup>(26)</sup> or Espace 28<sup>(27)</sup>; while others have projects with very specific target groups. For example, the non-profit organization Cirkant<sup>(28)</sup> ran a project focused on housing counselling for unaccompanied minor refugees who came to live in the district of Turnhout.

## Coordination mechanisms

The coordination of the support and integration measures takes places at a regional level.

### **Flanders**

One of the most important aspects of the recent structural reform laid down in the Civic Integration Decree of 7 June 2013 was the creation of a **new autonomous Agency for Integration and Civic Integration**.

This new agency was created to **better coordinate the integration and civic integration** policy in Flanders. By **way of derogation**, the Flemish Government can decide to leave the policy implementation to a local administration, which it did for Antwerp and Ghent.

The existing institutions and organisations in the sector (the centre of expertise “Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie”, the Welcome Offices, the Integration Centres, the Houses of Dutch and the social services providing translation and interpretation) were merged and integrated in this Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.

### **Wallonia**

In Wallonia, the integration policy is organized by the Decree of 1996 which describes the

---

26 <http://www.cinl.be/>

27 <http://www.espace28.be/>

28 <http://www.cirkant-vzw.be/site/>

missions of eight **Regional Integration Centers (CRIs)**. In 2014, the organization of the integration pathway in the Walloon Region was delegated to these centers:

- CAI (Centre d'Action Interculturelle de Namur)<sup>(29)</sup>
- CIMB (Mons)<sup>(30)</sup>
- CRIBW (Brabant Wallon)<sup>(31)</sup>
- CRIC (Charleroi)<sup>(32)</sup>
- CRIPEL (Liège)<sup>(33)</sup>
- CRVI (Verviers)<sup>(34)</sup>
- CRI Lux (Province du Luxembourg)<sup>(35)</sup>
- CeR.A.I.C. (Centre Régional d'Action Interculturelle du Centre)<sup>(36)</sup>

These CRIs are responsible for providing support to **local integration initiatives** and for the coordination of integration activities within the Local Integration Plans. They also coordinate the reception, guidance support and integration of foreigners recently settled in the Walloon Region. The CRIs also provide coordination and assistance to various public services, institutions and associations in the implementation of integration policies.<sup>(37)</sup>

The **coordination platform DISCRI**<sup>(38)</sup> aims at providing technical, logistical and pedagogical support for these CRIs to provide a forum for consultation and exchange of best practices.<sup>(39)</sup>

## Brussels

As indicated above, the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) is responsible for the integration policy of the Dutch-speaking people in Brussels, while the French Community Commission (COCOF) coordinates the integration policies for French-speaking residents in Brussels.

Although there is no formal coordination mechanism in Brussels, the implementation of the integration pathway is entrusted to Welcome Offices and other partners in the field, such as the Regional Integration Centre Foyer Brussels (RIC Foyer) and the Brussels Reception Office for Integration (BON). BON welcomes people of foreign origin who have a residence permit valid for a minimum of three months. Both newcomers and non-newcomers can come to BON for a

---

29 <http://www.cainamur.be/>

30 <http://www.cimb.be/indexd>

31 <http://www.cribw.be/>

32 <http://www.cricharleroi.be/>

33 <http://www.cripel.be/>

34 <http://www.crvl.be/>

35 <http://www.crilux.be/>

36 <http://www.ceraic.be/#gsc.tab=0>

37 Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, p.34

38 Dispositif de concertation et d'appui aux Centres Régionaux d'Intégration"

39 <http://www.discrl.be/>

free integration programme. From 1 January 2015 onwards, the activities of BON are part of the Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.<sup>(40)</sup>

On the French-speaking side, the welcome offices for newcomers (BAPA)<sup>(41)</sup> and VIA (a cooperation between the municipalities of Molenbeek and Schaerbeek) are implementing the integration pathway. The Brussels government intends to open several other welcome offices for newcomers in the coming years.

## Monitoring instruments

Although integration policies are a competence of the regions, the federal government still has some instruments to support and monitor the integration policies and labour market integration policy of the regions and communities.

The “**socioeconomic monitoring instrument**” has been set up to collect and analyse data on the labour market situation of people of foreign origin. The first report on this socioeconomic monitoring was published in September 2013<sup>(42)</sup> and a second report was published in November 2015.<sup>(43)</sup> The instrument cross-references individual data and data relating to matters such as national backgrounds with conventional socioeconomic data such as business size and sector, wage structure and location. The instrument is considered a very useful tool for defining and evaluating public policy and the activities of social partners in the area of combating discrimination and promoting diversity. The instrument was developed to analyse the labour market situation of people with a migratory background (first and second generation) but does not allow to present specific conclusions for the target group of this report (beneficiaries of international protection).

Besides, also on the regional level, monitoring instruments were developed, such as the **Flemish Integration Monitor**. But this instrument also provides limited information regarding the target group of beneficiaries of international protection. The reports tells us that in the period 2009-2014, a total of 105,329 persons signed a civic integration contract in Flanders.<sup>(44)</sup> When broken down by reason of stay, family migrants are the largest group of people integrating who sign a civic integration contract (43%). They are followed by the migrant workers (16%) and asylum seekers and recognised refugees (15%).<sup>(45)</sup>

---

40 <http://bon.be/en/about-bon>

41 Bureaux d'accueil pour les primo-arrivants

42 Federal Public Service Employment and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, September 2013.

43 Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, November, 2015.

44 In Flanders, persons integrating who start a civic integration programme sign a civic integration contract. For persons integrating who belong to the compulsory group, signing a civic integration contract is mandatory. Persons who are entitled to do so, can choose whether or not to sign a contract.

45 Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor 2015, Executive Summary, pp.7-8.

## Support measures to access the labour market

### 3.1 Language courses

#### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

In Belgium, the Flemish Community, the Brussels Capital Region and the Walloon Region are the responsible authorities for language training.

#### **Flanders**

Learning and using Dutch is one of the spearheads of the Flemish horizontal integration policy plan. If expertise is needed, the different actors can fall back on the support and coordination provided by the recently created Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.

The **Houses of Dutch** (“Huizen van het Nederlands”) provide information to anyone interested in learning and practicing Dutch. The Houses of Dutch are an initiative of the Flemish government and were set up in 2004. There are eight Houses of Dutch: one for every province and one for the cities of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent.<sup>(46)</sup> With the Decree of 7 June 2013, the Houses of Dutch were integrated in the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.

The Houses of Dutch do not organise language courses but provide information about Dutch as a second language (NT2) courses.<sup>(47)</sup> The Houses of Dutch can organise an interview or a test to find the most suitable course for the candidate.

The Dutch language lessons for **low language skilled** or **‘slow learners’** are organised by the **Centers for Basic Education (CBE)**. A standard course consists of 240 teaching hours. **Illiterate or very low language skilled** persons can also follow Dutch language lessons organised by these centers for basic education, consisting of 600 teaching hours.

**Higher educated or ‘fast learners’** are referred to **Centers for Adult Education (CVO)** where they can follow a standard course consisting of 120 teaching hours. Persons in the integration

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.huizenvanhetnederlands.be/en>

<sup>47</sup> Dutch as a Second Language (often abbreviated to NT2) is the collective name for all Dutch courses, teaching and training programmes for non-native speakers.

pathway who want to follow higher education can follow a course of 90 hours if they fulfil the admission requirements for higher education. These courses are organised by **academic language centers**.

Due to the implementing decree of the Flemish Government of January 2016 candidates who want to acquire a certificate of civic integration at the end of the integration course will have to pass a test and herewith demonstrate they have reached a certain level of Dutch.<sup>(48)</sup>

## Wallonia

In Wallonia, the **eight Regional Integration Centers (CRIs)** are responsible for the implementation of the integration pathway, including language training. The French learning programme is organized through recognized organizations, the so-called **local integration initiatives**, who carry out the frontline operations.

The language programme of the courses in the **French language "FLE" ("Français langue étrangère")** must be completed in six months and be composed of a minimum of 120 training hours. A test is foreseen before the start of the programme in order to evaluate the French language level of the candidate and another test takes place at the end of the programme in order to validate the knowledge acquired by the candidate. The content of these tests is defined by a coordination committee for the purpose of harmonization.

An important player in French-speaking Belgium is the literacy and training agency for adults "Lire et Ecrire". This initiative provides literacy, basic educations and courses in the French language (FLE) and is responsible for coordinating literacy initiatives.<sup>(49)</sup>

## Brussels

The beneficiaries of international protection interested in learning Dutch can contact the Reception Agency for Integration (BON), who can direct them to a suitable Dutch language course.

The beneficiaries of international protection interested in learning French can contact the Welcome Offices for Newcomers (BAPA) and VIA. In the French-speaking welcome offices - contrary to the Flemish organization BON- asylum applicants are not allowed to follow the integration programme. The welcome offices are responsible for organizing a language evaluation through a standard test.

Besides the welcome offices, there are different organizations in Brussels providing information to beneficiaries of international protection (and to other migrants) on French language courses:

---

48 <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.francais/Politique/1.2405527>

49 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.60.

Maison de la Solidarité, Atmosphère Amo<sup>(50)</sup> CIRÉ<sup>(51)</sup>, Convergence<sup>(52)</sup>, SAMPA<sup>(53)</sup>, Convivial<sup>(54)</sup> et La Voix des Femmes.<sup>(55)</sup>

The above mentioned language courses in the different regions are open to all beneficiaries of international protection but are in principle **not specially developed for or specifically target this group**.

## Obstacles and best practices

It is obvious that language training is the most important pillar of (labour) market integration policies in each regional entity. Language is the starting point for many other integration support measures, such as the admission for a specific vocational training or educational programme, the extent to which counselling services provide an added value, etc... The **focus on language training and the wide range of actors providing language courses** in the different regions in Belgium is clearly a good practice.

As mentioned above, in Flanders, beneficiaries of international protection are part of the target group that is obliged to follow an integration programme, including Dutch language lessons (Dutch as a second language). Since February 2016 also in the Walloon Region the second reception module, including French language training, has become compulsory. This **obligation to follow language lessons** could be considered as a best practice since it motivates beneficiaries of international protection and makes the learning of the language less noncommittal. The mandatory character could thus be considered a best practice as long as the sanction mechanism does not create any additional problems for the beneficiary of international protection.<sup>(56)</sup>

In Wallonia, the main obstacles are related to insufficient financial support for the Centers for Regional Integration, especially since their missions are growing with the introduction of the new integration pathway.

In Brussels, the only official integration pathway is the Flemish one. This could lead to obstacles with regards to the application for citizenship. Another obstacle is that some partner organisations providing language training are only using computer tests to establish a person's language level, which are not necessarily culturally neutral.

It is sometimes particularly challenging for women and single parents to be able to participate

---

50 Association d'aide aux jeunes, [www.atmosphere-amo.be](http://www.atmosphere-amo.be)

51 [www.cire.be](http://www.cire.be)

52 [www.convergence.be](http://www.convergence.be)

53 Service d'Aide aux Molenbeekois Primo-Arrivants, [www.molenbeek.be](http://www.molenbeek.be)

54 Mouvement d'insertion des réfugiés, [www.convivial.be](http://www.convivial.be)

55 [www.lavoixdesfemmes.org](http://www.lavoixdesfemmes.org)

56 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, p.11.

in the language courses on a regular basis due to a **lack of (affordable) childcare**, a lack of mobility or pregnancy. Furthermore, beneficiaries of international protection are sometimes depressed or have too much on their mind to be **able to focus on language training**. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that most beneficiaries of international protection are **highly motivated** to follow language courses and fully understand the added value of learning the national language(s).

Although different actors offer a wide range of language courses, the **waiting lists** can still be considerably long, especially in the larger cities. As a consequence, beneficiaries of international protection might have to wait several months before they can start with their language courses.<sup>(57)</sup> Due to the current asylum crisis, the provision of language training has been extended, but it is uncertain that this will be sufficient to deal with the current and imminent inflow. What's more, the housing of all those additional beneficiaries of international protection is expected to become a major problem, which will have an impact on the access to language course. Indeed, as long as the beneficiary of international protection has not found any housing and as long as it is not clear in what municipality, city or region the person will settle, he or she cannot start with his language courses.

Another obstacle is that many beneficiaries of international protection do not only need to learn a new language, **but also a new alphabet**. This is the case for most refugees who recently arrived from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Another practical obstacle is that the Dutch or French language that the person learned during the courses might be quite different from the **local dialect** spoken in the workplace and daily life.<sup>(58)</sup>

Furthermore, not only the local dialects in Belgium, but also the **technical jargon** in the workplace might be an obstacle. In this respect, the Dutch language which is taught in the courses "Dutch as a second language (NT2)" is not always specific enough to have a substantial added value during the vocational training. For example, the students in the NT2 programme will learn what to say in the supermarket, but do not know how to communicate as a nurse to a doctor.<sup>(59)</sup> Therefore, specific programmes were developed by the centers for part-time education in collaboration with the employment services to organize language training adapted to the workplace. Also because employers show more interest in people who are somewhat familiar with the technical jargon.

Since the nineties, Flanders is using the "Covaartest" to **measure the progress rate** of non-Dutch speakers in order to orient them towards an appropriate language training. This test gives an indication of the learning abilities and moreover research has shown that the test is culturally neutral.<sup>(60)</sup>

---

57 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, pp.10-11.

58 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, p.12.

59 ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.9.

60 ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.15.

Another best practice is the development of **digital platforms** to learn a language in a more pleasant and less educational setting.<sup>(61)</sup> On 8 October 2015 a **digital learning platform** ‘**Nedbox**’<sup>(62)</sup> was launched. Instructions on how to use the platform are provided in 15 languages. The development of this digital platforms allows users to learn Dutch in a more pleasant and less educational setting.

## 3.2 Orientation courses

### Organization, implementation and actors involved

#### Flanders

In Flanders, social orientation is organised by the ‘**Welcome Offices**’. As mentioned above, there are eight Welcome Offices: Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp and one in each Flemish province. The Welcome Offices of the provinces and Brussels fall under the authority of the Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration. The cities of Antwerp and Ghent have their own Welcome Offices.

During the social orientation course, the beneficiaries of international protection are informed about the Flemish and Belgian society. Part of this training focuses on **practical aspects** such as: How to use public transport? Where to find medical assistance? What care and educational facilities are open for children?

Participants are taught the know-how and skills needed to actively engage in society. The learning needs and levels of the persons integrating are taken into consideration. Apart from knowledge and skills, **values and standards** also take a central place. It is important for persons in the civic integration pathway to know the values and standards on which a diverse Flemish and Belgian society is based.

A social orientation course in Flanders **typically** entails **60 hours**. The participants can follow the lessons in their own language or in a contact language. The course takes place during the day as well as in the evening and at weekends. Participants are expected to actively contribute to the lessons. They are required to find solutions for problem situations, both on an individual basis and by working together with other course participants.<sup>(63)</sup>

#### Wallonia

After registration in a municipality in the Walloon Region, the candidate to the integration programme has to contact one of the eight Regional Integration Centers (CRI) within three months.

---

61 ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.24.

62 Nedbox, [website], [www.nedbox.be](http://www.nedbox.be).

63 <http://www.inburgering.be/en/social-orientation>

As previously mentioned, the integration pathway in Wallonia consists of a personalized reception module, a French language training, a training in citizenship and a socio-professional orientation. The target group consists of foreigners (including beneficiaries of international protection) who have been living in Belgium for less than three years and who hold a residence permit valid for more than 3 months.

The integration pathway is composed of 2 parts:

The initial reception module is obligatory and consists of information on the rights and duties of each person living in Belgium; a social assessment (including a linguistic assessment); and assistance or orientation towards support services regarding various administrative procedures. Regarding social orientation, nine different topics are addressed during the course on citizenship during the second module: different residence statuses, housing, health, education, social security, taxes, insurance, institutions and daily live.

Since 28 February 2016 also the second module becomes obligatory, including language training (120 hours) and social orientation (20 hours).

## **Brussels**

As previously mentioned, participation in the integration programme in the Brussels Capital Region is optional. In 2015, the Brussels government announced the beginning of a compulsory integration pathway to be voted in 2016 and implemented in 2017. The individualized training courses also include citizenship training. In Brussels, the Welcome Offices, the so-called BAPA (“Bureaux d’accueil pour les primo-arrivants”) are currently being set up. The BAPA have to provide an initial compulsory training programme of 10 hours on the rights and obligations of the newcomer. Besides, there is a second, non-compulsory module of 50 hours organised by the partners of the welcome offices.

## **Obstacles and best practices**

In Flanders, the social orientation course is part of the obligatory civic integration programme. The Walloon and the Brussels government also recently decided to make civic integration - with a social orientation component - compulsory. The implementation of this compulsory program is expected to start in 2016 in Wallonia and in 2017 in Brussels.

The **compulsory character of the social orientation courses** could be considered as a best practice. The civic integration programme and the social orientation course in particular are highly appreciated by most newcomers.<sup>(64)</sup> A report of Caritas International Belgium – which focuses specifically on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection - showed that people with a protection status tend to appreciate the orientation courses. The beneficiaries

---

64 <http://www.hln.be/hln/nl/957/Binnenland/article/detail/2577929/2016/01/07/Francken-90-procent-van-de-asielzoekers-is-dankbaar-voor-de-cursussen-inburgering.dhtml>

of international protection who were interviewed in the framework of this report indicated that they found the orientation course appropriate. According to them, the courses provide an adequate introduction to various aspects of the daily life in Belgium. The courses appeared to be very useful as a first orientation in Belgian society. Some refugees stated that the orientation course should be mandatory for everyone, while others stated that the lack of a social orientation course made it more difficult for them to find their way in the social landscape.<sup>(65)</sup>

For family members of beneficiaries of international protection (and other persons who come in the framework of family reunification) and who are still in the country of origin, a “**starter package Migrating to Flanders**” provides information, a DVD with testimonies of migrants in Flanders, and a brochure with basic information regarding social orientation and cultural customs in Flanders.<sup>(66)</sup>

### 3.3 Education

#### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

Education institutions that provide **education for adults** can decide themselves whether to admit someone to a training course or to allow exemptions because of previous studies. A person wishing to follow such a training needs to contact the education institution to learn about the conditions of admission. An overview of the educational provision in Flanders is available on the website “educational programmes in Flanders” of the Flemish government.<sup>(67)</sup>

The **admission requirements**, application procedure and tuition fees for beneficiaries of international protection are very often the same as those for other international students. Some universities, such as the University of Antwerp, offer Dutch language training and intensive Dutch preparatory courses for highly educated refugees (and other highly educated newcomers).<sup>(68)</sup>

In Wallonia and Brussels, there is a similar autonomy of higher educational institutions. In most of these institutions, recognized refugees are treated in the same way as European students.<sup>(69)</sup> However, access to higher education is linked to several conditions that are described in the targeted programme. For most programmes, an equivalence of the foreign diploma and a good knowledge of French (through a test) are required.

Moreover, education for social promotion in the French-speaking community and the Flemish adult education centers (CVO)<sup>(70)</sup> offer teaching programs, which lead to diplomas of primary

---

65 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, p.13.

66 <http://www.vlaanderen.be/int/nieuws/minister-bourgeois-overhandigt-eerste-starterspakket-migreren-naar-vlaanderen-marokko>

67 <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/default.aspx>

68 <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/education/international/international-students/recognised-refugees/>

69 <http://www.ulb.ac.be/enseignements/inscriptions/criteres-assimilation.html>

70 <http://data-onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/onderwijsaanbod/default.aspx/vwo>

and secondary level. The goal of this kind of education program is strongly linked to professional insertion.<sup>(71)</sup> These educational programmes are not specifically tailored to beneficiaries of international protection.

As previously mentioned, the French-speaking Community (Wallonia-Brussels Federation) is responsible for education and higher education and finances French Foreign Language (FLE) and literacy classes, which are in high demand among asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. In recent years, civil society actors have appeared to emphasize the importance of the FLE course, which is suitable for quick and effective employment.<sup>(72)</sup>

Organizations such as “Bruxelles Formation” and the public employment services (VDAB, le Forem, Actiris), as well as many others,<sup>(73)</sup> are offering educational training programs for job seekers in various areas.

Regarding education that has a direct link with employment, there is no strict delimitation of education that has a link with employment and vocational education and training.

Therefore, please consult the next chapter on vocational training for information on the access to education that has a direct link to employment.

## Obstacles and best practices

Generally speaking, there is a wide range of educational options in Belgium for adults, and the quality of most educational programmes is quite good. Besides the regular educational institutions, there is also a wide range of evening and partial education programmes. However, many practical obstacles arise for beneficiaries of international protection wishing to follow these classes.

One of the biggest obstacles is that the educational institutions determine themselves - to a large extent - what **level of Dutch or what certificates are required** to be eligible to follow a specific educational training. They take these decisions independently from one another, which might make it confusing for beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>(74)</sup> As there is a similar autonomy for educational institutions in Wallonia and Brussels, comparable obstacles arise in these regions.

A good practice definitely worth mentioning is the possibility for beneficiaries of international protection to follow a **subsidised vocational or educational training**. This implies that a beneficiary of international protection can follow an educational or vocational training programme without losing his right to an integration income.

---

71 COLLINET A., L'enseignement de promotion sociale un outil d'insertion sociale et professionnelle, Cahier TRn°3, 2005.

72 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.41.

73 <http://www.actiris.be/part/tabid/798/language/fr-BE/Annuaire-des-partenaires-.aspx?t=vtp&idType=9>

74 ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.35.

Although there is a wide range of educational training programmes, **the beneficiary of international protection has a limited choice in practice.** The social assistant will often encourage the beneficiary of international protection to register for a training programme that could directly lead to employment. Higher education is often out of the question, especially for people who are above the age of 25. Focusing on short training programmes with a focus on direct relevance for the labour market seems defensible in the context of subsidized educational or vocational training and is also the most realistic choice for most beneficiaries of international protection. On the other hand, this focus may be very restricting or discouraging for beneficiaries of international protection who are talented and/or have higher ambitions.<sup>(75)</sup>

Another obstacle is that - until recently - there was only limited knowledge of the **educational background and qualifications of beneficiaries of international protection.** The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons (CGRS) and other organisations started only very recently with in-depth analysis of the educational and vocational profile of asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (see section 4 of this report). Although the dataset is rather indicative, it still provides a good picture of the average educational level of asylum applicants, and beneficiaries of international protection. For all the adults who were granted a protection status in Belgium in 2015,<sup>(76)</sup> about 24% had some form of higher education, 41% had a number of years of secondary education and about 21% primary education. Around 14% of the beneficiaries of international protection who were granted a protection status in 2015 were illiterate or did not benefit from any education at all.

The Flemish minister for civic integration stated that 17% of the people with a refugee status in the civic integration programme in Flanders are illiterate.<sup>(77)</sup>

It should be emphasized that the level of education of asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection varies widely from one country of origin to another. In addition, there can also be major differences for what concerns the quality of a specific educational level for each country of origin.

Overall, we can conclude that most of the adults who were granted a protection status in 2015 are **not highly educated**, at least not according to Belgian standards. In addition to other obstacles, such as the **language issue and the difficulties regarding the recognition of qualifications**, the low average educational level of beneficiaries of international protection is another obstacle hampering a swift labour market integration. This is particularly the case for the higher labour market segment. However, it should be mentioned that the educational level of a beneficiary of international protection does not say a lot about his intelligence, motivation or learning abilities; especially not given the limited educational options in many countries of origin.

---

75 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, pp.17-27.

76 It concerns all the applicants to whom a protection status was granted in 2015. Irrespective of the year of their asylum application.

77 De Standaard, 17% nieuwe inburgeraars is analfabeet, 1/02/2016, [http://m.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20160201\\_02102301](http://m.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20160201_02102301)

## 3.4 Vocational Education and training

### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

The **VDAB**<sup>(78)</sup> is the Flemish Public Service for Employment and Vocational Training. **Actiris** is the public employment service responsible and **Bruxelles Formation** the official organisation for vocational training for the Brussels-Capital Region.<sup>(79)</sup> **Le Forem** is the public employment service of the Walloon Region<sup>(80)</sup> and the employment and vocational training agency **Arbeitsamt ADG** is the service responsible for the German Community.<sup>(81)</sup>

These services offer vocational education and training courses and help people to find a job in many ways. Besides offering training courses (learning a certain profession, learning a language,...) they can provide personal assistance and can bring job seekers in contact with potential employers.

The activities of the employment services do not **specifically target beneficiaries of international protection** but rather target job seekers in general. Although there are **specific courses for people with insufficient language knowledge** (Dutch in Flanders or French in the Walloon Region), these training courses are available to all jobseekers with insufficient language knowledge (European migrants, second generation migrants, etc...).

However, it should be mentioned that the employment services in the different regions are investing in the development of more tailored programmes. For example, the Brussels employment service Actiris has decided to prepare a specific programme for refugees in collaboration with different partners (Public Centres for Social Welfare (PCSW) of the municipalities, "Bruxelles Formation", etc.), composed of specific information moments and actions targeting employers with a potential interest in recruiting refugees.

Transition courses towards a regular vocational training were also set up. Furthermore, the Flemish employment service VDAB also offers courses of Dutch in the workplace and provides specific individualised vocational training courses with a focus on language training.<sup>(82)</sup>

The public employment service in Wallonia, le Forem, has developed initiatives for literacy and teaching French as a foreign language to newly arrived foreigners - including beneficiaries of international protection - to increase their level of employability. The main objective is to allow integration in the labour market as quickly as possible. The training focuses primarily on oral and written skills that are required to find a job and presentation skills that are useful when contacting potential employers (advertisements, telephone contact and personal presentation).<sup>(83)</sup>

---

78 Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling (VDAB). <https://www.vdab.be/>

79 <http://www.actiris.be/>

80 <https://www.leforem.be/>

81 <http://www.adg.be/>

82 (IBOT – Individuele Beroeps Opleiding - Taal) <https://werkgevers.vdab.be/werkgevers/ibo/ibot.shtml>

83 Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.36.

## Obstacles and best practices

Several obstacles exist regarding the admission of beneficiaries of international protection to vocational training. One of the biggest obstacles is that their language knowledge can be insufficient to be **admitted to a specific vocational training**. Therefore, specific programmes were developed by the centers for part-time education in collaboration with the public employment services to organize language training adapted to the workplace. The initiatives to provide **tailored language programmes** increase the chances of a newcomer with limited language knowledge<sup>(84)</sup> to benefit from vocational training.

Furthermore, the demands of the labour market continue to increase: work experience, language and technical skills, diplomas and learning abilities are therefore increasingly important for employers and **a basic vocational training might not be sufficient to meet these high requirements**. Besides, many beneficiaries of international protection only have the option - often due to financial constraints - to choose short subsidized vocational training programmes with a focus on direct access to the (lower segment) of the labour market, sometimes regardless of their talents and intellectual capacities.

Another problem is that beneficiaries of international protection who find themselves in a difficult financial situation sometimes prefer **illegal employment** instead of investing in vocational and/or language training.

A few years ago, the **OECD** concluded that there is a **good range of vocational training options at different levels in Belgium**. Initial secondary education offers full-time and part-time programmes, while continuing “Vocational Education and Training (VET)” provides further learning, and second chance opportunities are provided in centres for adult education and by the public employment services. The Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurial Training (“Syntra Vlaanderen”) was also praised for providing flexible routes to acquire entrepreneurial competences.

On the other hand, this OECD policy review of vocational education and training stated that some parts of the training make **limited use of workplace training** and that the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms for workplace training varies. Another (general) criticism was that the provision of vocational training was too dominated by student preferences, and did **not sufficiently take into account the labour market needs**.<sup>(85)</sup> These strengths and challenges - as identified by the OECD - apply to the provision of vocational and educational training in general and are not specific to the target group of recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

Despite the obstacles and deficiencies, one could conclude that the public employment services in each region do a decent job in informing the beneficiaries of international protection regarding their options and provide qualitative vocational training. This was also the conclusion of the

---

84 ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.12.

85 <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/learningforjobs.htm>

surveys conducted by Caritas International Belgium, although this research also concluded that the assistance provided by the Brussels and Walloon public employment services is sometimes substandard.<sup>(86)</sup>

## 3.5 Procedures for the recognition of qualifications

### Organisational approach and implementation

The equivalence of diplomas is particularly valuable for beneficiaries of international protection (and other foreigners) if they want to continue or resume their studies, take up employment or start a professional training.

In **Flanders, NARIC-Vlaanderen**<sup>(87)</sup> is the diploma recognition service of the Flemish Community and is responsible for recognising the equivalence of foreign study certificates. More specifically, it is competent for the recognition of foreign diplomas of higher education; the recognition of foreign diplomas of adult education and the recognition of foreign diplomas of secondary education. NARIC-Vlaanderen is also responsible for providing information on the recognition of foreign certificates obtained for degrees in higher education, higher vocational education and adult education. Besides, NARIC-Vlaanderen provides information about Flemish and foreign education systems.<sup>(88)</sup>

**Contrary to the Flemish Community, the ENIC-NARIC centre** of the French Community does not manage requests for the recognition of foreign degrees. This centre has an informative role regarding the recognition procedures. Academic recognitions are processed by two other units of the Ministry of the French Community.<sup>(89)</sup> There is a unit responsible for the recognition of academic and professional qualifications of higher education and another unit for the recognition of certificates of secondary education. If a person wishes to continue his/her studies in **secondary education** he/she needs to provide a motivation letter, school reports, a birth certificate and a proof of payment of a specific amount (51 or 76 euros, depending on the country in which the immigrant has obtained the diploma). If a person wants to continue his/her studies in **higher education**, additional documents are required and a higher application fee is applicable (150 or 200 euros). Furthermore, if the certificate presented by the candidate was granted in a country where the teaching language is not French, a French language proficiency exam must be completed in order to continue one's studies in higher education in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels (except for studies in art colleges). This language proficiency exam does not affect the equivalence decision.

If a person needs a certificate of equivalence in order to work or study with a foreign certificate

---

86 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, pp. 26-27.

87 NARIC stands for "National Academic (and professional) Recognition and Information Centre".

88 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/naric/en/index.htm>

89 <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/>

in the French-speaking part of the country, the recognition centre of the French Community in Belgium needs to be contacted. A person who wants to work or study in Flanders with a foreign diploma has to contact NARIC-Vlaanderen. Nevertheless, diplomas issued in Belgium are mutually recognised in the different communities: certificates issued by accredited education institutions in the French Community or the German-speaking Community of Belgium must be considered equivalent to corresponding diplomas given by accredited education institutions in Flanders and vice versa.<sup>(90)</sup>

There is **no specific procedure for the recognition of certificates for asylum applicants or beneficiaries of international protection**. However, there is a bit **more flexibility regarding the documents that need to be submitted by refugees or asylum seekers**.<sup>(91)</sup> In Flanders, asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection are **exempted from the fee for the application procedures**.<sup>(92)</sup> The current legislation of the French Community on academic recognition of foreign higher education degrees is currently under revision in order to harmonize the procedures of recognition, improve transparency and integrate new possibilities concerning automatic recognition (e.g. the decision of the Benelux on mutual recognition).<sup>(93)</sup> The new legislation will also include a specific procedure dedicated to refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary and humanitarian protection.

There is no specific training for the staff of NARIC-centres to interact with beneficiaries of international protection.

Several NGOs, such as CIRÉ, assist by providing **accessible information on the procedure**, offering support regarding the **completion of an application file** and by **acting as intermediaries with the diploma recognition service** for people living in Brussels. For people living in Wallonia, the Regional Integration Centers provide this support. In Flanders, several organisations such as Welcome Offices provide this kind of support.

The regional ombudsman services also arbitrate and make (non-binding) recommendations for the diploma recognition services. An appeal can be lodged against the decision of the diploma recognition service with the Council of State. However, the Council of State will merely verify if the administration has respected the formalities and can only annul but not reform the decision of the administration.

In July 2015, the **Concept paper on the Policy for the Recognition of Competences (EVC)**<sup>(94)</sup> was approved by the Flemish government. The objective is to implement an overall decree on EVC in 2017.

---

90 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/naric/en/frequently-asked-questions/i-have-a-diploma-from-belgium.htm>

91 <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/index.php?id=900>

92 Level equivalence: 90 EUR, full equivalence: 180 EUR, examination into the equivalence of a doctoral degree: 300 EUR, more information on: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/naric/en/procedures/higher-education/index.htm>

93 [http://www.benelux.int/files/1914/3201/9435/basis\\_tekst\\_web\\_FR.pdf](http://www.benelux.int/files/1914/3201/9435/basis_tekst_web_FR.pdf)

94 Flemish government, Deputy Prime Minister – Flemish Minister for Education and Flemish Minister for Labour, Economy, Innovation and Sports, Note to the Government of Flanders, Concept Note Integrated Policy for the Recognition of Competences (EVC).

The aim of EVC is the valorisation of knowledge and skills acquired in school, free time and work experiences. These skills and competences can be tested by recognized EVC-providers and can be converted into qualification certificates or certificates of competence which can be used to access the labour market or to get an exemption for certain training/educational programmes.

## **Obstacles and best practices**

One of the most cited obstacles is that too many **administrative formalities** need to be fulfilled, especially if it concerns the equivalence of a diploma of higher or university education. Certified true copies of the final diploma and of results obtained in the various exams for every year of higher education need to be submitted (in the French Community). Furthermore, the official programme detailed for every year also needs to be submitted. The diploma recognition service of the French Community also requires a French translation of these documents by a sworn translator. The translation costs or other additional costs may be an obstacle for people who want to obtain an equivalence of their diplomas. For NARIC-Vlaanderen the documents of the application file can be in Dutch, English, French or German. Certified translations of the diploma, ID-card and diploma supplements are required if the documents are not drafted in one of these four languages.

As previously mentioned, the diploma recognition services are a bit less stringent regarding the applications of beneficiaries of international protection. However, the procedure for beneficiaries of international protection is also a written one; and an interview could merely be of a supportive nature.

Another obstacle is that falsified diplomas and certificates are circulating. Furthermore, there might not be sufficient guarantees about the level of education in certain countries of origin in order to obtain an equivalence. If a substantial difference is found, an equivalence may still be issued, for example a corresponding certificate at a lower level (for instance 'bachelor' instead of 'master').

The educational institution also needs to be officially recognised in the country in origin. As a consequence, an equivalence cannot be granted for certain degrees issued by private universities or institutions.

Although the procedure can represent a heavy administrative burden for the applicant, there are several initiatives and tools to facilitate the application. The responsible services of both communities have established a series of **detailed and informative brochures on the different procedures** in Flanders and the Federation Wallonia-Brussels. For example:

- The brochure: "What is the value of a foreign certificate in Flanders? NARIC-Vlaanderen in 15 questions."<sup>(95)</sup> NARIC-Vlaanderen has also developed a step-by-step guide to assist

---

95 <http://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/what-is-the-value-of-a-foreign-certificate-in-flanders-naric-vlaanderen-in-15-questions>

the applicant in choosing the right procedure in a simple and clear manner, on the basis of his/her personal situation.<sup>(96)</sup>

- An information guide on higher education diplomas leading to regulated professions in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, a brochure on higher education provisions, a brochure to help young teachers find a job, a brochure to assist field actors involved in the socio-professional integration with the administrative procedures for academic or professional recognition of diplomas, etc...<sup>(97)</sup>

Furthermore, different NGOs (such as CIRE) have developed detailed guides about submitting an application for the recognition of foreign diplomas.<sup>(98)</sup>

Another good practice is the **website** "[My Diploma – Diploma recognition](#)"<sup>(99)</sup> that was created by two non-profit organisations (The Brussels reception agency for integration BON and CIRÉ) supported by the regional employment service Actiris Brussels. It provides contact details of the institutions responsible for vocational training and the above mentioned institutions responsible for the recognition of qualifications and diplomas. The organisations behind the website also organise - on a very regular basis - information sessions on diploma recognition and on the procedures to follow for the recognition of foreign diplomas in the Flemish and French Community.

## 3.6 Counselling services

### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

#### Flanders

From the very start of the civic integration programme, each person integrating is assigned a programme counsellor who guides him through the civic integration programme. If the person integrating does not yet speak (sufficient) Dutch, either the native language of the person integrating or a contact language is used, or the services of an interpreter (by phone) are used. The programme counsellor is responsible for the administrative follow-up of the civic integration programme. He refers to the House of Dutch and the VDAB or Actiris in Brussels, draws up the civic integration contract and makes sure the person integrating attends the courses.

The programme counsellor is first and foremost a confidential advisor who can be contacted by the person integrating for all kinds of questions. If the person integrating has any specific questions or requires special guidance, the programme counsellor will bring him into contact with the appropriate facilities or organisations. For instance, the programme counsellor provides

---

96 <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/naric/en/application-for-equivalence/index.htm>

97 <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1228>

98 CIRÉ, Equivalence of foreign diploma's in French-speaking Belgium, Guide of help for the preparation of the file of equivalence

99 <http://mydiploma.be/>

support to obtain equivalence of diplomas, he can help find a suitable school for the children, or help find a lawyer, a psychologist, or a suitable house,...

It is important that the person integrating is involved in the search to find solutions to his requests for assistance. The programme counsellor pays attention to aspects the person integrating has learnt at the social orientation course and for which he should therefore be able to find solutions on his own. The programme counsellor has an overview of the basic competences, the skills and the network of the person integrating. In the course of the programme, the help offered by the programme counsellor is gradually decreased in order to become superfluous at the end of the civic integration programme.<sup>(100)</sup>

## **Wallonia**

As previously mentioned, a candidate to an integration program - after registration in a municipality in the Walloon Region - has to contact one of the eight Regional Integration Centers (CRI) within three months.

As in Flanders, a counsellor is appointed and a convention is signed between the two parties for two years, renewable for one year. The counsellor organizes a first meeting with the candidate in order to evaluate his or her competences, difficulties and needs. In some CRIs, these counsellors are called "intercultural mediators" and are trained on intercultural relations. The convention provides for follow up measures, with at least one meeting planned every year with the candidate. The counsellor provides basic information on Belgian housing, health, education, social security, taxation and social insurance systems, Belgian laws and daily life. The counsellor also addresses specific questions the beneficiary of international protection might have and informs him about the appropriate steps to take regarding civic integration and language training.

## **Brussels**

The counsellors are social workers with different competences and are not necessarily trained on intercultural or migration aspects. This is left to the appreciation of each Welcome Office Coordinator. Not all the welcome offices in Brussels (BAPAs) are fully operational yet.

Evidently, the providers of specific support measures in Belgium are also involved in counselling in their specific field of expertise. For example, the Houses of Dutch provide counselling on the most suitable language course to follow, whereas the staff of the regional employment services provide counselling on the options concerning vocational training, and the civil servants of the diploma recognition services provide counselling on the recognition of qualifications...

More information on the counselling services provided by the social assistants of the Public Centers for Social Welfare of the municipalities is described under the support measure "access to guaranteed minimum resources".

---

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.inburgering.be/en/programme-counselling>

Besides the official counselling services, there are **several NGOs who provide counselling** on integration, specifically for beneficiaries of international protection. Caritas International Belgium, CIRÉ and Flemish Refugee Action are the NGOs that are best known in this respect. These NGOs provide counselling services on a wide range of support measures such as housing, language courses, vocational training and procedures for the recognition of qualifications. These NGOs also tend to focus on the psychological wellbeing of beneficiaries of international protection. Moreover, they do not only provide direct assistance to beneficiaries of international protection, but also support other counsellors and coaches. For example, the Flemish Refugee Action developed a methodology and guidelines for coaches who are willing to invest in better understanding the psychological aspects that highly educated newcomers searching for employment are confronted with.<sup>(101)</sup>

Other projects set up by NGOs focus on beneficiaries of international protection who are in a particularly vulnerable or difficult situation. For example, a project of Caritas International Belgium, funded by the European Integration Fund, focused on the assistance and counselling of beneficiaries of international protection who applied for asylum at the border. For these people, the asylum procedure is typically very short, implying additional challenges in terms of integration.<sup>(102)</sup>

Finally, in addition to the governmental actors and non-governmental organizations who provide counselling to beneficiaries of international protection, there are also volunteers (natives or integrated migrants) who provide coaching on civic integration. A framework was developed to support these volunteers, including a handbook and guidelines.<sup>(103)</sup>

## Obstacles and best practices

The wide range of public actors involved in counselling and the provision of specific or general counselling is clearly a good practice. The above mentioned counselling services provided by non-governmental organisations, and their focus on psychological aspects and vulnerable groups amongst the beneficiaries of international protection, could also be considered as a best practice. Furthermore, the framework that was developed for volunteers providing coaching on civic integration can also be seen as a good practice.

Translation services are available in each region, which facilitates the communication between the beneficiaries of international protection and the counselling services.

The most common challenges are related to the fact that a single public or non-governmental integration counsellor often **has to provide counselling services to a high number of persons.**

---

<sup>101</sup> Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, Werken aan veerkracht van hoogopgeleide nieuwkomers, 2014.

<sup>102</sup> Caritas International Belgium, Begeleiding op maat: sleutel tot succesvolle integratie, Rapport van 2 jaar ervaring met vluchtelingen die in een gesloten centrum hun statuut kregen, 2011.

<sup>103</sup> ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013, p.49.

This sometimes results in a lack of time to provide very specific personal advice or to build a relationship of trust.

Due to the wide range of actors providing counselling services, beneficiaries of international protection could also lose track of whom they can best contact for which issue.

Finally, the fact that it is not always possible to provide counselling services to a specific person by the same counsellor or during a longer period of time could also be considered as an obstacle.

## 3.7 Access to housing

### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

In principle, an asylum applicant who obtained a protection status has to leave the reception facilities for asylum applicants. It is the objective that the beneficiary of international protection finds housing on the **private or social housing market**. However, article 43 of the Belgian Reception Act foresees a **transition period** for recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection which allows them to stay for an additional period of two months in the reception structures for asylum applicants. During these two months, the beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to the same material aid and allowances as asylum seekers in the collective or individual reception facilities. If the beneficiary of international protection has not found housing during the transition period of two months, he can ask for an extension of his stay in the reception facility.<sup>(104)</sup>

During these two months, the **social workers of the reception facilities will assist the beneficiary of international protection in** finding housing. The social workers are familiar with asylum applicants and refugees, and they are trained to assist them. The social workers look for suitable housing on the internet, advertisements in newspapers and they will contact landlords and estate agencies. The beneficiaries of international protection are provided access to internet and telephones and can obtain tickets for public transportation to search or visit accommodations.

Besides, there are also **non-governmental organisations** who assist beneficiaries of international protection in finding housing, such as Flemish Refugee Action, Belgian Committee for Aid to Refugees, Caritas International Belgium, CIRE, Convivial, etc. These organisations provide assistance in many ways: information on how to search for housing; assistance in contacting landlords; information about the rights and obligations of the tenant and the landlord; information about the maintenance of the accommodation; information on how to make energy savings and ensure domestic security; and act as a mediator in case of disputes between the refugee and the landlord. Some NGOs can also provide accommodation for a short period of time for vulnerable persons or families in an emergency situation.

---

<sup>104</sup> The beneficiary of international protection has no obligation to stay in the reception facilities during the transition period. He can leave and go live on his own and will be entitled to social integration and assistance (this is an integration income or equivalent integration income, paid on a monthly basis (see guaranteed minimum resources).

**Social housing** is meant for single people or families with a limited income, and is run by social housing companies. Beneficiaries of international protection can also benefit from it. Most social housing consists of apartments offered for rent at a moderate price, but houses are also available. In addition, potential property buyers may be able to find a cheap mortgage. Social housing is the responsibility of the regions. The conditions thus vary from one region to another. The rent for social housing is calculated according to the income. Flats are assigned based on social and economic criteria.

## Obstacles and best practices

It is an obvious good practice that a **transition period** exists and that a beneficiary of international protection does not have to leave the reception facility from the moment a protection status is granted. Because it appears to be challenging to find housing within two months, the idea was formulated to create a standard transition period of three months for beneficiaries of international protection living in an individual reception facility. However, due to the very **high influx of asylum applicants** since June 2015, and the consequent lack of accommodation for asylum applicants, this measure has been put on hold and the Federal reception agency (Fedasil) is currently reluctant to extend the transition period.

For years, there has been an acute **shortage of affordable housing** in a reasonable condition both on the private and social housing market. As in most European countries, third-country nationals are less likely to be owner-occupiers. This is particularly true in the case of Belgium, where in 2012 less than one-tenth of third country households were owner-occupiers.<sup>(105)</sup> As a consequence, most third-country nationals, and this is not different for beneficiaries of international protection, are mostly tenants. However, **landlords are often reluctant** to rent to people who are dependent on the Public Centers for Social Welfare. It is therefore a difficult task to find suitable and affordable accommodation for most beneficiaries of international protection. Due to the high number of asylum applicants that arrived in the second half of 2015 and the protection rates being higher than ever before, the challenge to find housing on the private market for beneficiaries of international protection will only continue to increase in the coming months and years. Furthermore, there is a risk that more beneficiaries of international protection will be exploited by slum landlords due to recent and upcoming high influx of beneficiaries of international protection.

Besides, as many beneficiaries of international protection are depending on an integration income or have a **low income and as prices in the larger cities are rather high** - about 600 euro per month for a small apartment in Brussels<sup>(106)</sup> - rent takes a huge bite out of the family income.

Regarding **social housing, the waiting lists are long<sup>(107)</sup> and specific procedures and conditions**

105 OECD, Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, p. 324.

106 <http://www.habitos.be/nl/kopen-huren/huurprijs-daalt-in-vlaanderen-4752/>

107 In Flanders for the moment the waiting list consists of 120.000 households, while the Flemish government only has 152.000 social houses at his disposal (including the house stock undergoing renovation).

**apply.** In Flanders, there is an obligation (or willingness required) to learn Dutch to be allowed to apply for social housing. Since beneficiaries of international protection are part of the obligatory target group to follow the civic integration programme (including Dutch language courses), this condition is considered to be fulfilled.

Other obstacles that could be mentioned are the high concentration of beneficiaries of international protection in the (larger) cities and the unstable housing situation many of them are confronted with. Besides, it appears to be very challenging to align the housing opportunities with the employment opportunities. While many beneficiaries of international protection live in the larger cities, the employment opportunities in the primary and secondary sector or lower segment of the labour market can be elsewhere. The **limited mobility** of many refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection – the absence of a car and/or driving license – is another obstacle in this respect, especially for female beneficiaries of international protection.

Although the actors involved in providing access to (social) housing are not specifically trained to interact with beneficiaries of international protection and even though procedures and conditions to apply for social housing are not specifically tailored to beneficiaries of international protection, several instruments and best practices exist:

- In the same way as nationals and other people who are registered in the “foreigners register”, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are **eligible for social housing**. Although the refugee status or subsidiary protection status in itself is not a ground for priority treatment, beneficiaries of international protection can qualify for an “absolute priority rule” if they are in a particular vulnerable situation.
- As indicated above, the beneficiaries of international protection are supposed to eventually find housing on the private or social housing market. The Public Centers for Social Welfare (PCSW) of the municipalities can provide assistance by paying a **rental deposit** and/or the **installation allowance** to help people who are homeless. The **rental deposit** is a sum of money which is deposited on a blocked account. This amount is held as an insurance for the landlord in case the tenant does not respect his obligations, fails to pay the rent or does not maintain the house properly. The rental guarantee should not exceed two months of rent. The **installation allowance** is a sum of money (1111,62 € since 01/09/2015) to be used to buy furniture (bed, table, refrigerator, etc.) or pay utility bills (gas, electricity, etc....). These support measures provided by the PCSW are not exclusively reserved for beneficiaries of international protection. All persons entitled to social aid who fulfil certain conditions can apply for it. Besides, if a beneficiary of international protection is entitled to social aid (see chapter on guaranteed minimum resources) but has not received this income, he can obtain money up front from the PCSW, for example to pay the first month of rent. This advance must be repaid in full to the PCSW.
- The **rent subsidy** is a contribution to the rent of a compliant property on the private

rental market that is situated in the Flemish Region. The beneficiary is a tenant with a low income and a specific housing need who submits an application to that end. The rent subsidy is foreseen for the relocation from a poor or inadequate accommodation towards an adequate housing.<sup>(108)</sup>

- Tenants on the private rental market who have a very low income and have already been registered on the waiting list for social housing properties for four years qualify for a **lease incentive**.<sup>(109)</sup>
- Landlords of properties on the private market which are found to be uninhabitable by the Flemish public administration may be subject to a tax or may be the subject of criminal proceedings initiated by the Flemish Housing Inspectorate. The increased inflow of beneficiaries of international protection will increase the pressure on the bottom segment of the housing market. To limit the exploitation and to control slum landlords and related crimes, increased attention will be paid to the **monitoring of housing quality** in the near future.
- As front-line authorities, the local authorities will be confronted with the increasing inflow of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers. To meet the local authorities' most urgent needs in terms of support, the Flemish government will provide **€20 million in 2016 to finance an open call for projects**. The focus will be on housing and housing assistance. The call for projects is currently being prepared.

## 3.8 Guaranteed minimum resources

### Organisation, implementation and actors involved

The **Federal Public Service for Social Integration** (FPS SI) is a planning service of the federal government established in 2003 which aims at guaranteeing a dignified existence to all persons who do not qualify for social security and who live in poverty. The Federal Public Service for Social Integration's closest partners are the Public Social Welfare Centres (PSWCs).<sup>(110)</sup>

The **PCSWs** are the public institutions that exist in each of the **municipalities** of Belgium. They manage the granting of guaranteed minimum resources.

---

<sup>108</sup> This rent subsidy is also available for homeless people who received an installation allowance from the PCSWs at the time they moved into a property and consequently lost the status of homeless. As a result, recognized refugees can currently receive this installation allowance and the rent subsidy, if they meet the requirements.

<sup>109</sup> Flemish government, Decree of 4 May 2012 establishing a contribution for potential tenants. Due to this 4-year waiting period, this premium does not immediately satisfy the housing needs of recognised refugees or people with subsidiary protection status. Following the inflow of recognised refugees, the waiting times for the allocation of social housing properties are expected to increase. As a result, the number of candidates will increase substantially as of 2019 onwards.

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.mi-is.be/en/start>

Guaranteed minimum resources (“sociale bijstand” (NL)/“assistance sociale” (FR)) in Belgium can refer to:

- Integration income (« leefloon »/ « revenu d’intégration sociale »)
- Social aid (“maatschappelijke dienstverlening”, “aide sociale”)
- Guaranteed family benefits (“gewaARBorgde gezinsbijslag”/“prestations familiales garanties”)
- Guaranteed income for the elderly (“gewaARBorgd inkomen voor bejaarden”/“garantie de revenus aux personnes âgées”).
- Disabled persons’ benefits (“tegemoetkoming voor personen met een handicap”/“allocations pour des personnes handicapées”).<sup>(111)</sup>

The integration income ensures a minimum income to persons without sufficient resources and unable to procure them by personal effort or other means. One of the conditions is that the claimant must demonstrate his willingness to work unless there is a valid excuse (health reasons, education, vocational training, etc.).

However, the integration income can be denied by the PSCW to a person who is not willing to work or follow educational or vocational training. The PSCW can also propose a job to the person concerned through social employment and can put the person at the disposal of third parties, also from the private sector.

The monthly (maximum) amounts of the integration income and the equivalent integration income (amounts on 1 September 2015) are as follows:

- Person with a dependent family: 1,111.62 €
- Single person: 833.71 €
- Cohabiting person: 555.81 €

Belgians and certain groups of foreigners, such as refugees, are entitled to an integration income. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are not entitled to an integration income but have a right to social aid. Social aid for beneficiaries of international protection implies financial aid identical to the amount granted under the integration income programme for refugees (equivalent integration income).

According to the statistics of the Federal Public Service for Social Integration, the number of persons receiving an integration income increased during the past years. In 2014, there were 11,548 persons with a refugee status receiving an integration income.

A beneficiary of international protection can apply for the integration income (or the equivalent integration income) with the PCSW from the moment he actually moves into the house allocated in a specific municipality. The PCSW has one month to process the application. A meeting between the beneficiary of international protection and the PCSW is arranged and a social assistant of the

---

111 EMN, Centre for Social Policy Herman Deleeck, Migrant Access to social security – policy and practice in Belgium, 2014.

PCSW is appointed to provide guidance and counselling. An inspection of the residence takes place to check if the person is actually living at the declared address.

At the initial stage, the integration income is the most important social benefit, but the beneficiary of international protection can also apply for a one-time installation allowance (see chapter on housing), a prepayment on family benefits and a compensation of medical costs as long there is no health insurance. Once the application for social aid has been approved, the beneficiary of international protection can also apply for other social benefits such as a social pass for public transportation, culture vouchers, a social tariff for gas and electricity, financial compensation for educational courses, etc.

Guaranteed minimum resources clearly differ from unemployment benefits. Beneficiaries of international protection who have worked a certain number of days (minimum 312 days per year) and who are available for the labour market and actively seeking work, can apply for an unemployment benefit which is a certain percentage (decreasing over time) of the last salary. In order to apply for unemployment benefits, registration as a job seeker at the public employment service of the region (VDAB, Actiris, Le Forem) where the person lives is required.

## Obstacles and best practices

As explained above, beneficiaries of international protection are eligible for many forms of social aid and social benefits. Also prepayments of social benefits are possible.

People can be employed in the framework of Article 60 of the law on Public Centers for Social Welfare (PCSW). Employment in accordance with article 60 § 7 is a form of **social employment** whereby the PCSW arranges a job for someone who stepped or fell out of the employment market, with the aim to bring this person back into the social security system and the employment process. In most cases, the PSWC acts as the employer. It can employ the person in its own services or put him/her at the disposal of a third party employer. The PSWC receives a subsidy from the federal government for the duration of the employment and in its capacity as an employer, enjoys an exemption of social security contributions.<sup>(112)</sup>

Yet this type of social employment is no magic solution to increase the employment rate of beneficiaries of international protection. The most important downside of this type of social employment is that this type of work experience is not always appreciated by employers, especially not for those people who have the ambition to perform a highly skilled job. Moreover, the fact that these people are often employed in a job with a different social status than the job they had in their country of origin could be very unsatisfactory for highly educated beneficiaries of international protection.

---

112 Legal basis: organic Act of 8 July 1976 on the Public Social Welfare Centres, article 60, § 7.

Furthermore, research illustrated that this type of social employment often does not lead to regular employment. Besides, the duration of the social employment is often just long enough to allow the beneficiaries to be eligible for unemployment benefits once it comes to an end, and they will therefore no longer depend on an integration income.<sup>(113)</sup>

Besides this social and subsidised employment, **subsidised vocational or educational training** is also a good practice. It implies that the beneficiary of international protection can follow an educational or vocational training programme without losing his right to an integration income (see also the chapter on educational and vocational training).

Regarding practical obstacles, the bureaucratic burden and waiting lists are often mentioned. Sometimes, beneficiaries of international protection (and other people) have to wait several weeks before a social assistant of the PCSW is appointed and a meeting is arranged, and a residence check takes place. The handling time of the application for guaranteed minimum resources can result in severe financial difficulties during the initial period after the protection status has been granted. Time may also be lost due to **waiting times** for the opening of a bank account, alteration of identity, etc.

A situation that might be problematic is when beneficiaries of international protection heavily depend on the support and counselling provided by the social assistant of the PCSW. This is not necessarily an obstacle since most of these social assistants do an excellent job. But these social assistants sometimes do not properly inform the beneficiary of international protection and only respond to specific questions without pro-actively presenting all the possible social benefits a beneficiary of international protection can apply for. The very **large number of files (beneficiaries of international protection and others) a social assistant sometimes has to manage**, especially in some large cities, seems to be one of the most important causes for this shortcoming.<sup>(114)</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014, p. 33.

<sup>114</sup> Caritas International Belgium, Begeleiding op maat: sleutel tot succesvolle integratie, Rapport van 2 jaar ervaring met vluchtelingen die in een gesloten centrum hun statuut kregen, p.27.

# 4 Labour market participation and profile of the beneficiaries of international protection

## 4.1 Profile of the beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium<sup>(115)</sup>

The data on the educational background and profession in the country of origin of the asylum applicants is encoded in the database of the CGRS on the basis of the information in the questionnaire that is filled out at the Immigration Office. The reliability of the data depends on the accuracy of the registration and encoding of the information provided by the asylum applicants and also depends on the accuracy of the statements made by the asylum applicants themselves.

Although the dataset is rather indicative for the above mentioned reasons, it still provides a good picture of the average educational level and professional activities in the country of origin of beneficiaries of international protection. Only since 2015 these indicative data on educational level and professional activities in the country or origin are available in the database of the CGRS.

This analysis was performed on all the adults who were granted a refugee status or subsidiary protection status in Belgium in 2015, this irrespective of the year of the asylum application. It concerns a research population of 7414 persons. For 950 persons no data were registered in the database of the CGRS for what concerns educational level, and for 1142 persons no data were encoded regarding the job in the country of origin.

### Age distribution

For what concerns the adults granted a protection status in 2015, the share within the age group 18-34 years is obviously the largest (65,7%). Due to the that the share of beneficiaries granted a protection status in 2015 and who are aged 65 years or over is less than 2%, this research population resembles to a large extent with people of working age.

Age-class	Number of persons	%
From 18 to 34 years	4869	65,7
From 35 to 64 years	2397	32,3
65 years or over	146	1,97

<sup>115</sup> Source: database Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), data extracted on 12 January 2016.

## Educational level

As already mentioned the data rely on the accuracy and truthfulness of the statements made by the asylum applicants and also depends on the precision of the registration and encoding of the information. Of the 7414 adults who received a status in 2015, there are 6464 usable files due to the fact that for 950 persons the educational level in the country of origin was not encoded in the CGRS database.

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Illiterate</b>	659	10,2
<b>Uneducated, but not illiterate</b>	245	3,8
<b>Primary (1 year)</b>	24	0,4
<b>Primary (2 years)</b>	67	1,0
<b>Primary (3 years)</b>	145	2,2
<b>Primary (4 years)</b>	155	2,4
<b>Primary (5 years)</b>	205	3,2
<b>Primary (6 years)</b>	561	8,7
<b>Primary (7 years)</b>	53	0,8
<b>Primary (8 years)</b>	139	2,2
<b>Secondary (1 year)</b>	201	3,1
<b>Secondary (2 years)</b>	310	4,8
<b>Secondary (3 years)</b>	553	8,6
<b>Secondary (4 years)</b>	201	3,1
<b>Secondary (5 years)</b>	195	3,0
<b>Secondary (6 years)</b>	946	14,6
<b>Secondary (7 years)</b>	40	0,6
<b>Secondary (8 years)</b>	173	2,7
<b>Higher or university</b>	1.592	24,6
<b>Total</b>	6.464	100,0
<b>Not encoded</b>	950	

When looking at the table above, we can conclude that about 24,6% of the adults to whom a protection status was granted in 2015 had some form of higher education, 41% had a number of years of secondary education and about 21% one or more years of primary education. Around

14% of the beneficiaries of international protection who were granted a protection status in 2015 were illiterate or did not benefit from any education at all.

It should be emphasized that these indicative percentages refer to the entire adult population to whom a protection status was granted in 2015 and that the educational level (as well as the standards of a certain educational level) can differ significantly from one country of origin compared with another.

### Profession in the country of origin

In the table below an overview is provided of the occupation or profession carried out prior to the departure from the country of origin. Again, the data encoded in the database of the CGRS are merely indicative and the registration is incomplete (for 1142 persons the occupation in the country of origin was not encoded and there is a big category "other"). Based on these indicative data, the following arbitrary categories appear to be overrepresented: householders, merchants/shopkeepers, students, employees, (skilled and unskilled) workers and farmers/shepherds.

Occupation/profession in the country of origin	Number of persons
Householder	984
Merchant, shopkeeper, small entrepreneur	797
Student	630
Company employee, shop assistant, catering employee	490
Unskilled worker, cleaner	383
Skilled worker, craftsman	349
Farmer, shepherd	283
Government; armed forces (policy, military, security services)	212
Teacher	190
Jobseeker	155
Chauffeur	152
Government official (non-managerial)	125
Military service	67
Health professional (no doctor)	53
Engineer, architect	53
Manager, director	52
Child not attending school	37

Occupation/profession in the country of origin	Number of persons
Journalist, publisher	29
Government official (senior)	24
Athlete	22
Doctor	21
Lawyer, judge	20
Artist	18
Interpreter, translator	17
Social/humanitarian worker	16
Not able to work	15
Scientist, ICT-specialist	12
Religious or traditional occupation	10
Fisherman	7
Politician	2
Sailor	2
Retired	1
Other	1044
Not encoded	1142
Total	7414

## 4.2 Labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection

At the moment, there are no recent data available on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium. To provide statistics on the number of beneficiaries of international protection who are employed, data from the National Register, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the Data Warehouse Labour Market and Social Protection need to be linked and analyzed. However, access to these data is subject to approval by the privacy commission and the analysis is time-consuming. Therefore, it was not possible to analyse these data in the framework of this focused study.

OECD and Eurostat data reveal that the gap between the labour market participation of natives and immigrants in general is large, much larger than the OECD average.<sup>(116)</sup> Though this kind of

<sup>116</sup> Adam I., Van Dijk M., IES, Policy Brief, Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium - high time to mainstream, 2015, p.1.

data does not allow to draw conclusions on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection.

However, a limited number of research projects do specially focus on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium:

### The long and winding road to employment/CAREERS:

The goal of this research project was to map the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection. The project analysed data concerning all (former) asylum seekers who submitted an asylum application between January 2001 and December 2010 and who were still residing in Belgium, regardless of their actual legal status.<sup>(117)</sup> Only people of working age were considered in this analysis.<sup>(118)</sup>

Regarding beneficiaries of international protection or the position of refugees in the labour market, the selected population consisted of 4,869 refugees who obtained refugee status between 2003 and 2006, were aged between 18 and 65, arrived in Belgium after 2001 and were still in Belgium at the end of 2010. In the framework of this **longitudinal research project**, several interesting findings were published on the labour market participation of refugees:

The “careers” in the research project are distinguished by five socio-economic statuses (employed, unemployed, self-employed, social welfare and other) over a period of four years (sixteen quarters). In accordance with the definition of the International Labour Office, “active” was defined as: an individual who is either employed (including self-employed) or who receives unemployment benefits. People who are employed on the basis of article 60 of the law on Public Centres for Social Welfare are considered as employed. Evidently, people working without an official contract on the “black market” are not counted as active.

The study found that 19% of the refugees were active at the moment of recognition of their status, and 55% were active (42% employed and 13% unemployed) four years later. The fact that the labour market integration of refugees significantly improves over time seems to be one of the most essential findings of the research project. At the moment of recognition, 57% of all refugees were in the social welfare category. This proportion decreased until the end of the follow-up period as more and more people became active on the labour market. During the period examined, many refugees could be found in the heterogeneous “other” status. This “other” category (probably mainly composed of housewives) is quite stable over time:<sup>(119)</sup>

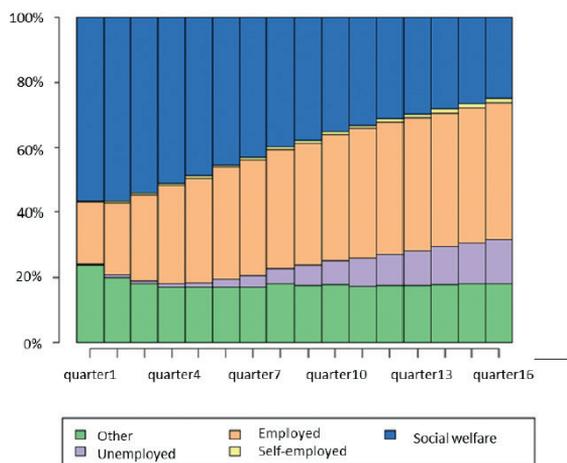
---

117 Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, 171 p.

118 After data cleaning, this resulted in a subset of 71.768 persons between the ages of 18 and 65.

119 Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, pp.109-146.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of socio-professional statuses per quarter



Although the findings of the CAREERS project regarding the labour market participation of refugees are really interesting, there are some important differences with regards to the target population of this focused study (beneficiaries of international protection who obtained a status between 2010 – 2014):

- An overrepresentation in the CAREERS project of nationalities from the Caucasus and an under-representation of refugees from the Middle East compared to the population of persons granted a protection status in the period 2010 – 2014.
- There are no people with a subsidiary protection status in the research population of CAREERS.
- The duration of the asylum procedure for people who have been granted a protection status in the period 2010 -2014 was considerably shorter compared to those granted a status between 2003 and 2006 (an average asylum procedure duration of 2 years). Consequently, it is likely that, for those granted a protection status more recently, a smaller share was active (less than 19%) at the time the status was obtained.

The **general conclusions** on the labour market integration of **asylum applicants and refugees** in Belgium who applied for asylum between 2001 and 2010 were the following:

- **Time is a crucial factor:** the longer a person is present in the country, the more likely that person is to find a job and stop being dependent on social welfare. More ‘time’ implies that the asylum seekers and refugees can better adapt to the new environment and to the new circumstances. Time is needed to learn more about the country and the labour market. Time also means the possibility to learn the language and to create and develop a social network.
- Quickly obtaining **a job**, or being present on the labour market at an early stage, stimulates further labour market participation.
- Gender and the family situation are factors to be taken into account. People living with

their family are apparently slightly better off than e.g. singles, **but single parent families (mainly headed by women) are definitely much worse off**. They are more dependent on welfare benefits than other groups and have more difficulties in finding their way to the labour market.

- Asylum seekers and refugees from poor African countries have a better chance at finding a job than (former) asylum applicants from the Balkans or Central Asia. Some hypotheses can be formulated to explain this fact: Language can play a role, as many Africans speak French (or English). Furthermore, there is already a long standing community of Africans in Belgium and social network may be beneficial when looking for a job. One should however not overestimate its significance.

### Research study on a sample of refugees in Belgium, carried out by Caritas International: <sup>(120)</sup>

This research project by Caritas International also specifically focuses on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection. However, the research is not of a scientific nature (54 beneficiaries of international protection were interviewed)<sup>(121)</sup> and there are no guarantees that the results are representative for the entire population of refugees in Belgium. Nevertheless, the report provides an excellent overview of the wide range of practical obstacles towards employment and contains several interesting case studies.

Of the 54 persons who were interviewed, 19 people had been employed in Belgium (15 refugees and 4 beneficiaries of international protection) and 11 were still employed at the time of the interview but none of them had a contract of permanent duration and just one was self-employed. Most of the interviewed persons who were employed were employed via social employment.

Besides, as mentioned above, several **monitoring instruments** exist that focus on different but relevant populations (for example, former asylum applicants, the migrant population, or people with a migratory background in general), such as the socio-economic monitoring instrument. This instrument was developed to analyse the labour market situation of people with a migratory background (first and second generation) but does not allow to present specific conclusions for the target group of this report, that is to say beneficiaries of international protection. However, we can assume that several findings regarding labour market participation of foreigners in general are also relevant for the specific group of beneficiaries of international protection.

### Socioeconomic monitoring instrument:

The Socioeconomic Monitoring Reports are the result of research carried out by the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue and the Interfederal Center for Equal

---

<sup>120</sup> Caritas International Belgium, Réfugié ch. Travail, Résultats d'une étude sur la formation et l'emploi menée auprès de réfugiés, 2014.

<sup>121</sup> The research population are beneficiaries of international protection with a stay between 2 and 4 years in Belgium.

Opportunities. The first Socioeconomic Monitoring Report was produced in September 2013, the second edition was published in November 2015.

- The employment rate of people of Belgian origin (18-64 years) is 73.3%, while it is 42,5% for people of non-EU origin.<sup>(122)</sup> Even for second generation migrants and migrants who acquired the Belgian nationality, **the employment rate is significantly lower than the one of people of Belgian origin.**
- The Belgian labour market is rather strictly segmented. The primary sector is characterized by job security, high wages and a firm social safety net. On the other hand, the secondary sector consists mainly of low-skilled jobs and jobs of limited duration with more insecurity and lower wages. People of non-EU origin are clearly **overrepresented in the secondary sector.** Moreover, the Belgian labour market is characterised by its low mobility between the primary and secondary sectors (but there is also little mobility within the same sector).
- It is **difficult to enter the Belgian labour market.** The high cost of labour and the relatively high (sectoral) minimum wages hamper job creation.
- In Belgium, there are very big differences in **educational performance** between people with and without a migratory background.
- The lower labour market participation of people of foreign origin is also partly the result of a negative attitude and **discrimination processes** towards persons of foreign origin on the labour market.

### Origin Monitor 2015 (Flemish)

In March 2015, the Department of Work and Social Economy of the Flemish government published the '**Origin Monitor 2015 - Labour market position of people with a foreign origin on the basis of administrative data**'<sup>(123)</sup>.

The Monitor identifies the developments in activity and unemployment of the population in Flanders with a foreign origin - with special attention to the population of non-EU origin - compared to persons of Belgian origin. It also monitors the participation of the population with a foreign origin in the various existing training and employment measures. By taking into account the birthplace of the parents, naturalized Belgians and second generation migrants are also included in the figures.

In accordance with the results of the socioeconomic monitoring instrument, the results of this Flemish monitoring tool illustrate that **employment rate** is a lot higher for native Flemings (71.8 %) than among Flemish people of European (56.3 %) and non-European origin (46.8 %), although there is improvement for the second generation (51.4 %).

---

122 Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, November, 2015, p.240.

123 Flemish government, Department of Work and Social Economy, Origin Monitor 2015 - Labour market position of people with a foreign origin on the basis of administrative data, March, 2015.

## Statistics on labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection

	Refugees					Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Total number granted protection<sup>(124)</sup></b>	2.895	4.235	4.285	4.280	6.910	890	1.315	1.595	2.435	1.615
<b>Stock of total number of persons granted protection<sup>(125)</sup></b>	11.192	14.199	16.634	18.533	23.044	2.516	3.420	4.813	6.944	8.343
<b>Total number employed (including self-employment)<sup>(126)</sup></b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Although there are no recent statistics available on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium, the Federal Public Service for Social Integration could provide statistics on the number of persons with a refugee status who were employed in the framework of social employment (most of them in the framework of Article 60 of the law on Public Centers for Social Welfare). Besides, there are also statistics available on the number of persons with a refugee status receiving an integration income.

	Refugees					Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection				
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Total number unemployed through social employment (mostly via art.60 law on PCSW)</b>	1.427	1.657	1.963	2.293	2.596	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Total number of persons receiving an integration income</b>	6.991	7.988	9.313	10.285	11.548	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>124</sup> This number refers to the sum of first instance decisions and final decisions (source: Eurostat database, consulted on 14/10/2015)

<sup>125</sup> Source: Eurostat database, consulted on 14/10/2015. Beneficiaries of international protection who acquired citizenship or who left Belgium are not included.

<sup>126</sup> In Belgium it is impossible to know by using administrative databases to what extent beneficiaries of international protection are overqualified.

## Overqualification

According to a study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 9.8-14.6% of employees in Belgium perform a job that is 'below' their skills and education level. In the youngest age group (under 30), around 10.2% of the **workers are overqualified**. The issue of overqualification is in particular manifest for immigrants. Immigrants tend to accept a less suitable job in the short run due to their problematic financial situation, but also because they are less risk averse. This effect is stronger for higher educated than for lower educated immigrants. Knowledge of the host country's language tends to be more important for high-skilled jobs.<sup>(127)</sup>

As already mentioned, the educational level of most beneficiaries of international protection is rather low and those who are well-educated often have difficulties to obtain a recognition of their diplomas or professional qualifications. Although no statistics are available on the number of beneficiaries of international protection that are overqualified for their job, we can assume that this is the case for a lot of the well-educated beneficiaries of international protection because of the here above mentioned reasons.

A quite striking observation in the conclusion of the CAREERS project was that, contrary to what might be expected, according to the multivariate analysis, people who were recognised as refugees did not have much better labour market chances than the people with other statuses (asylum applicants, people with a residence permit on non-asylum grounds) in the research population. The argument in the report is that asylum seekers are more willing to work for 3D Jobs (Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning) and that when asylum seekers are granted refugee status, they start looking for a job in line with their qualifications.<sup>(128)</sup> On the other hand the longitudinal analysis in CAREERS showed that people with a refugee status had a higher employment rate compared to other groups.

---

<sup>127</sup> Corluy, V., labour market outcomes and trajectories of immigrants in Belgium, 2014, p.40.

<sup>128</sup> Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014, p.160.

### Policy on access to employment

People with a **refugee status have access to the labour market under the same terms as Belgians** and do not need to apply for a work permit, nor is a professional card required for refugees who want to be self-employed. As long as the single permit is not being issued, **beneficiaries of subsidiary protection still need to apply for a work permit (type C) or a professional card.** With the **introduction of the single permit**, the work permit type C will cease to exist. It will be indicated on the residence (single) permit of the person concerned whether the person has full, limited or no access to employment. It is expected that recognized refugees will continue to have unrestricted access to the labour market, even though their residence permit will in the near future initially be limited to a duration of five years. Also beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will likely continue to have access to the labour market.<sup>(129)</sup>

It is the objective of policymakers in Belgium **to facilitate access to labour market integration through a number of employment-related support measures** (see Q38). The policy of the Belgian government (and regional entities) is to encourage the access to the labour market as quickly as possible, even before a protection status has been granted. Asylum applicants are allowed to work as a volunteer and since 9 December 2015 **asylum applicants are granted access to employment after 4 months (instead of 6 months).**

The fact that the government tries to stimulate the access to the labour market for asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, in combination with the fact that there are **no restrictions on labour market access for refugees** (and limited restrictions for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection), does not imply that beneficiaries easily find a job in Belgium. On the contrary, a number of **practical obstacles** prevent beneficiaries of international protection from finding their way towards the labour market.

---

<sup>129</sup> Without having received a first instance decision from the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGVS).

## Practical obstacles for beneficiaries of international protection regarding access to employment

The **demands of the labour market continue to increase**: work experience, language and technical skills, diplomas and learning abilities are therefore increasingly important for employers. For many beneficiaries of international protection it appears to be very challenging to meet these high requirements.

Overall, the **language barrier** acts as one of the biggest obstacles to access the labour market; consequently language training is one of the cornerstones of (labour market) integration policies in each of the regions in Belgium. A lack of knowledge of the language of the region can also be an obstacle to access employment related support measures, for example to be admitted to some vocational training or educational programmes.

Besides, a lot of beneficiaries of international protection have **limited relevant work experience**, one of the reasons for this is that the **labour market and job requirements in the countries of origin differ largely from those in Belgium**.

Furthermore, the differences in **levels of education** between non-EU immigrants, including beneficiaries of international protection, and natives can explain a substantial share of the employment rate gap between these categories in Belgium. International literature established the importance of human capital (level of education, knowledge of the local language, knowledge about the labour market, etc...) as one of the main factors to explain the employment rate gap.<sup>(130)</sup> Men and women don't have the same probability of entering the labour market. Women can encounter additional obstacles such as difficulties to find affordable childcare. Besides, for a number of countries of origin beneficiaries of international protection originate from, **traditional gender roles** imply that women are supposed to stay at home.

For those who are educated, there might be a **lack of recognition of their qualifications and/or relevant work experience**. The difficulties faced by beneficiaries of international protection regarding the recognition of their diplomas have several causes: One of the reasons lies in the fact that the education level or content of the curriculum in the country of origin significantly differs from the corresponding degree in Belgium. Other obstacles are the substantial administrative formalities that must be fulfilled in order to obtain the recognition of qualifications, particularly the number of documents (and translations) that are required.

Beneficiaries of international protection also encounter several administrative **obstacles to become self-employed** and often do not have the financial assets to start up a business. In addition, beneficiaries of international protection typically have **little relevant references from previous employers**. The professional experience acquired through social employment in Belgium or acquired in the country of origin is not always considered as very relevant by Belgian employers.

---

130 Corluy, V., labour market outcomes and trajectories of immigrants in Belgium, 2014, 192.

Furthermore, many beneficiaries of international protection are carrying **emotional ballast**: they are traumatized, depressed or simply have too much on their mind to focus on vocational or language training or to focus on finding a job.

Obviously, the **situation of poverty** many beneficiaries of international protection are confronted with does not facilitate access to employment. They also risk rapidly ending up in a **vicious circle**. For example, housing in particular is a problem and is expected to become an even bigger problem in the near future due to the recent and imminent influx of beneficiaries of international protection. During the period in which beneficiaries of international protection have not yet found adequate housing and/or have to focus on surviving, it is very difficult to actually start with their integration process and to learn the local language. Poor language knowledge hampers the access to counselling services and to vocational and educational programmes. All these elements can result in not being able to effectively make use of the information and support measures that are being provided, find a job and eventually climb out of a situation of poverty and social deprivation. In this respect it is typical of **how much support measures are linked with each other**.

This, in combination with the **structural characteristics of the Belgian labour market** such as the high cost of labour, the strong divide between insiders and outsiders, the strong labour market segmentation and the low mobility between and within the different labour market segments, makes it an immense challenge for beneficiaries of international protection (and other newcomers) to become active on the Belgian labour market, and especially within the first few years after their arrival.

## Actual labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection

At the moment there are no recent data available on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium. To provide statistics on the number of beneficiaries of international protection who are employed, data from the National Register, the Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the Data Warehouse Labour Market and Social Protection need to be linked and analyzed. However, access to these data is subject to approval by the privacy commission and the analysis is time-consuming. Therefore it was not possible to analyse these data in the framework of this focused study.

OECD and Eurostat data reveal that the gap between the labour market participation of natives and immigrants in general is large, although this kind of data does not allow to draw conclusions on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection.

However, a limited number of research projects do specifically focus on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium. The most important one is the **longitudinal research project CAREERS**.<sup>(131)</sup> A part of this research project refers to refugees who

---

<sup>131</sup> Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014.

obtained the refugee status between 2003 and 2006 and arrived in Belgium after 2001 and were still in Belgium at the end of 2010. The conclusion was that 19% of the refugees of working age<sup>(132)</sup> were active at the moment of recognition of their status, and 55% were active four years later (42% employed and 13% unemployed). In accordance with the definition of the International Labour Office, “active” in this research project was defined as: an individual who is either employed (including self-employed) or who receives unemployment benefits. People who are employed on the basis of article 60 of the law on Public Centres for Social Welfare are considered as employed. Evidently, people working without an official contract on the “black market” are not counted as active.

Besides, **Caritas International Belgium**<sup>(133)</sup> conducted a small scale research project in which 54 beneficiaries of international protection who had been staying in Belgium between two and four years were interviewed. Of those 54 beneficiaries of international protection, 19 people had worked in Belgium (15 refugees and 4 beneficiaries of international protection) and 11 were still employed at the time of the interview. However none of them had a contract of permanent duration and just one was self-employed. A substantial number of the interviewed persons who were employed were employed through social employment.

## Access to employment-related support measures

In Belgium, beneficiaries of international protection are in principle eligible **to access all the available support measures** included in the scope of this report: language courses, orientation courses, educational and vocational training, social housing, recognition of qualifications, social housing and guaranteed minimum resources. However, as indicated throughout this report, **several practical obstacles** may appear, preventing beneficiaries of international protection from accessing or fully benefiting from some specific support measures.

Evidently, the access to employment related support measures for beneficiaries of international protection in Belgium facilitates the access to the labour market. Since the lack of language knowledge appears to be one of the biggest obstacles, we can assume that qualitative and tailored<sup>(134)</sup> language training is one of the most crucial support measures in facilitating the access to the labour market. However, a lot of the impact **depends on individual characteristics** of the beneficiary of international protection. For a French speaking refugee in Wallonia or Brussels, vocational training will be more important than language training, whereas for someone who has a limited social network, counselling services will be crucial. These are just two examples of how much the effectiveness of a support measure to facilitate labour market participation depends on individual features. Furthermore, the motivation of the beneficiary and the **quality of the assistance** provided by a specific social assistant or organisation are also key factors.

---

132 4869 unique persons between the ages of 18 and 65.

133 Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014.

134 Tailored towards the individual or towards a specific vocational or educational training programme.

Nevertheless, the question to what exact extent each support measure facilitates access to the labour market is a very difficult one to answer. Due to a lack of recent statistical data on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection and a **lack of statistical data** on the access to each support measure, it is difficult to establish empirical causal connections. A recent MIPEX policy brief concluded that a lot of European countries (including Belgium) are lagging behind in conducting robust impact evaluations of integration policies that would determine whether policies are cost effective for boosting outcomes, specifically with respect to labour market participation and labour mobility for immigrants.<sup>(135)</sup>

## Tailored support measures for beneficiaries of international protection?

Overall, we can conclude that the integration policies and **most available support measures for beneficiaries of international protection are not specifically tailored towards them**. For many aspects, this is very understandable. There is nothing wrong with tailored programmes, but it would be difficult to justify why beneficiaries of international protection should have higher social benefits or shorter waiting lists for social housing compared to other third-country nationals with a residence permit of unlimited duration or nationals. Instead Belgium opted to give beneficiaries of international protection and own nationals equal or similar access to support measures.

This does not mean that there are no differences at all. An important element is that beneficiaries of international protection belong to the **obligatory target group for the whole or parts of the civic integration pathway**, but the compulsory elements differ from one region to another. This integration or civic integration pathway in each region typically includes language courses, orientation courses, individual assistance and/or professional orientation. There is little debate about the added value of **language training** and most beneficiaries of international protection also find the **orientation courses** appropriate for providing an adequate introduction to various aspects of the daily live and social interaction in Belgian society.

In Belgium, there is a **wide range of vocational and educational training options at different levels**, although the options for beneficiaries of international protection with respect to higher education are in practice sometimes limited. It is also worth mentioning that the employment services in the different regions are investing in the development of more **vocational training programmes tailored** to beneficiaries of international protection.

It also appears that the **diploma recognition services** are a bit less stringent regarding the application to be admissible for beneficiaries of international protection. Moreover, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are exempted from the application fee for recognition of their qualifications in Flanders. At the moment, the French Community is also

---

<sup>135</sup> Bilgili, O., Evaluating Impact: Lessons Learned from Robust Evaluations of Labour Market Integration Policies, Mipex in use, 2015, p. 3.

developing new regulations, including a specific procedure for the recognition of qualifications for beneficiaries of international protection.

It is the objective that the beneficiary of international protection finds housing on the **private or social housing market**. Yet, there is a **transition period** for recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. This implies that they do not have to leave the reception facility at the moment a protection status is granted and have some time to search adequate housing.

Regarding counselling services, there are **several organizations and NGOs who focus on the target group of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection** such as Caritas International Belgium, Flemish Refugee Action, Convivial and CIRE, and who are mostly specialized in **counselling and assistance** in the broad sense. These organisations also focus on the psychological aspects and have a particular attention for vulnerable groups amongst the beneficiaries of international protection.

## Differences with regard to labour market access between beneficiaries of international protection and other third-country nationals

It is clear that people with refugee status are generally better off compared to other third-country nationals with regards to access to the labour market. There **are no restrictions for people with a refugee status with regard to labour market access**.

Depending on their specific status and type of residence permit (permanent or temporary), the access to the labour market for other third country nationals might be restricted.

In case the third country national is working in Belgium with a **work permit type B, several conditions apply**. The work permit type B will only be granted if certain conditions are fulfilled, such as a minimum income. Moreover, a work permit B only provides the authorisation to work for the specific employer who applied for the work permit. Besides, a labour market investigation has to precede the issuing of the work permit type B and the employer has to prove that he cannot recruit someone suitable for the job who has already access to the labour market within a reasonable amount of time. There are less strict conditions for bottleneck occupations: for example, long-term residents who are employed for a duration of at least 12 months in a bottleneck occupation are exempted from a work permit. <sup>(136)</sup>

**Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can apply for a work permit type C.** This type of work permit is in principle granted in accordance with the duration of the residence permit. Besides the restriction in time, there are no restrictions regarding the employer, sector or specific job. The labour market access for other third country nationals who hold such a work permit type C is comparable with the labour market access of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

---

<sup>136</sup> <http://www.werk.be/online-diensten/werknemers-buitenlandse-nationaliteit/bijzondere-categorieen-arbeidskaart-b/langdurig-ingezetenen>

The **position of foreigners or people with a migratory background on the labour market** is monitored through different bodies and instruments as described above. But there is little information available about employment according to migration status. International research illustrated that there is a link between reasons for migration and employment rate and it was found that asylum seekers and refugees are more likely to be unemployed, to take temporary jobs and to have a lower income compared to other third-country nationals.<sup>(137)</sup>

Due to a lack of up-to date data on the employment rate according to migration status, it is not clear to what extent this is also the case in Belgium. Besides, it is complicated to compare the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection with other third-country nationals since the latter is a very heterogeneous group (labour migrants, migrants who came in the framework of family reunification, migrants with a residence permit on humanitarian or medical grounds, students, etc...).

## Differences with regard to labour market access between refugee status and subsidiary protection

As already indicated the biggest **difference between the refugee status and the subsidiary protection status** for what concerns access to the labour market is that people with a refugee status have unconditional access to the labour market and do not **need to apply for a work permit or professional card**. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (as long as the single permit is not applicable) still need to apply for a work permit (type C) or a professional card (in case of self-employment). It should be noted that the work permit for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is granted if they have a valid residence permit. The application for a work permit is therefore rather a formality.

Another important difference between the two statuses is the **length of the residence permit** that is attached to the protection status. If the asylum applicant is granted subsidiary protection, the administration in the municipality where the person lives will provide a residence permit valid for one year (electronic card A). This permit is extended for two years if extension is granted and will become of unlimited duration after five years, a work permit is then no longer required. If the asylum applicant is granted a refugee status, a residence permit of unlimited duration (electronic card B) is issued. However, due to the high influx of asylum applicants since the summer of 2015, the **government decided in December 2015 to limit the duration of a residence permit attached to a refugee status to five years** (renewable with a permit of unlimited duration). The new law is expected to come into force in the course of 2016.

It is difficult to predict whether this legislative change will have an impact on the labour market participation of beneficiaries of international protection. A residence permit with an initial validity of five years could be considered as a hurdle by some employers; while it will probably have little impact on employers who already employ labour migrants with a work permit type B,

---

<sup>137</sup> Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, p.55.

seasonal workers or people with a humanitarian or subsidiary protection status. Besides, it is not unlikely that the extension of the residence permit for many refugees will in practice merely be a formality, as it is also the case now for most beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

Regarding **labour market participation in practice**, research illustrates that obtaining refugee status strengthens the position of those who were already inserted in the labour market, but also concludes that it is not the recognition of the status itself that facilitates the insertion in the labour market. Still, the recognition of this status reinforces the position of this group in the labour market by removing the negative effects of insecurity.<sup>(138)</sup>

Yet, there is no empirical evidence or statistical data available providing information about the extent to which the employment rate of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection differs from the employment rate of people with a refugee status. Moreover, it would be quite challenging to conduct research on this aspect because of underlying variables, such as the fact that most beneficiaries of subsidiary protection typically come from a limited number of worn torn countries where a different alphabet is used, while the population of refugees is much more heterogeneous.

## Good practices of labour market integration support measures in Belgium

It is clear that the challenges regarding labour market policy in the current context are enormous. But it is encouraging to see that the **different governments in Belgium are fully aware of the challenges and that substantial additional financial resources are being allocated** to (labour market) integration programmes due to the high influx of beneficiaries of international protection.

Also on the **local level** task forces were installed and actors of the **civil society and volunteers** launched initiatives to prepare for the increasing influx of beneficiaries of international protection.

It is impossible to list all the concrete existing good practices regarding integration support measures developed by the federal government, the regional entities, the local authorities or the non-governmental organizations. Besides the best practices specifically tailored towards beneficiaries of international protection mentioned above (see Q39), the **following good practices for the different support measures that beneficiaries of international protection (and other target groups) can benefit from** could also be highlighted:

The **focus on language training and wide range of actors providing (compulsory or non-compulsory) language courses** in the different regions in Belgium is clearly a good practice. But sometimes the language training is not always specific enough to have a substantial added value during the vocational training. Therefore the specific programmes that were developed

---

<sup>138</sup> Rea A., Wets J., *The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium*, Academia Press, 2014, p.130.

in collaboration with the employment services to organize language training on the workplace are a best practice.

In Belgium there is a **wide range of vocational and educational training options at different levels**, although the options regarding higher education are in practice sometimes limited for beneficiaries of international protection. Another important good practice worth mentioning is the fact that a beneficiary of international protection can follow a **subsidised educational or vocational training programme** without losing his right to an integration income.

Although there are several obstacles concerning the **recognition of qualifications**, especially of an administrative nature, it should be mentioned that various public counsellors and non-governmental organizations, as well as the official diploma recognition services do their best to provide information regarding the recognition procedure and in providing assistance during the procedure. Besides, several tools and brochures in this respect were developed.

Beneficiaries of international protection can also benefit from **social housing** and several allowances exist with regards to housing such as the installation allowance, a prepayment of the rental deposit, rent subsidies and lease incentives. Although the refugee status or subsidiary protection status in itself is no ground for priority treatment to be granted social housing, beneficiaries of international protection can also qualify for an “absolute priority rule” if they are in a particular vulnerable situation.

Belgians and some other privileged groups of foreigners, such as refugees, are also **entitled to an integration income**. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are not entitled to an integration income but have right to social aid. Social aid for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection implies financial aid identical to the amount granted under the integration income programme for refugees (equivalent integration income). The statistics illustrate that a significant number of beneficiaries of international protection are benefiting from **guaranteed minimum resources** in the form of an integration income, and this number is expected to increase substantially from 2016 onwards.<sup>(139)</sup>

It could be considered as a good practice that beneficiaries of international protection are eligible for this integration income as a social safety net. But evidently it is the objective that people do not stay dependent on social benefits for too long.

In this respect the **subsidized employment**, the so called “employment by the Public Centers of Public Welfare generally under Article 60”, is a useful instrument to provide a first work experience for people who would find it very challenging to find a job on the regular labour market. Moreover, a first work experience in Belgium will facilitate the transition to the normal labour market. In 2014, about 2,596 persons with a refugee status were employed through this type of social employment. On the other hand, the positive impact of an employment in the framework of this type of social employment should not be overestimated. The jobs are almost

---

<sup>139</sup> In 2014, 11,548 (unique) persons with a refugee status received an integration income. There are no statistics available for the number of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection or humanitarian protection receiving an integration income. <http://www.hln.be/hln/nl/34662/Vluchtelingencrisis/article/detail/2561034/2015/12/18/Nooit-zoveel-leeftloners-in-Belgie-en-aantal-zal-nog-toenemen.dhtml>

always low-skilled (for example public gardening) and are not automatically a valuable stepping stone towards regular employment.

Finally, it should be emphasized that many beneficiaries of international protection are remarkably resilient and strongly motivated to find their place on the labour market and this despite the numerous obstacles they are confronted with, their handicaps and the emotional burden they carry along.

It is also clear that numerous official and non-governmental actors who are involved in labour market integration and the provision of support measures do an excellent job. But it is without doubt that in the light of the current refugee crisis they will be confronted with enormous challenges in their ambition to continue to provide high quality training, assistance and support and to guide these new beneficiaries of international protection towards the labour market.

# Bibliography

## Legislation

- Law of 15 December 1980 on access to the territory, the residence, the establishment and the removal of foreigners [referred to as *Immigration Act*].
- Law of 30 April 1999 regarding the employment of foreign employees
- Royal Decree of 9 June 1999 implementing the Law of 30 April regarding the employment of foreign employees.
- Proposition de loi de 24 juillet 2012 modifiant le Code de la nationalité belge afin de rendre l'acquisition de la nationalité belge neutre du point de vue de l'immigration.
- Decree of 7 June 2013 regarding the Flemish integration policy amended by the Decree of 29 May 2015.
- Decree of 27 March 2014 on the integration pathway for newcomers in the Walloon region.
- Decree of 18 July 2013 on the reception and integration pathways for newcomers in the Brussels Capital Region.

## Publications

- Timmerman C., Lodewyckx I., Vanderwaeren E., Vanheule D., MInteGRATIE, Over nieuwe vormen van migratie en integratie, UPA, 2011.
- Torrekens C., Mascia C., Ghesquière F., Zibouh F., La politique d'intégration en Région wallonne et à Bruxelles, Cahiers Migrations, 2013.
- Rea A., Wets J., The Long and Winding Road to Employment, An analysis of the Labour Market Careers of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belgium, Academia Press, 2014.
- Federal Department of Employment and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, September 2013.
- Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue and Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities, Socioeconomic monitoring instrument, November, 2015.
- Flemish government, Department of Work and Social Economy, Origin Monitor 2015 - Labour market position of people with a foreign origin on the basis of *administrative data*, March, 2015.
- Adam I., Van Dijk M., IES, Policy Brief, Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium - high time to mainstream, 2015.

- Bilgili, O., Evaluating Impact: Lessons Learned from Robust Evaluations of Labour Market Integration Policies, Mipex in use, 2015.
- Caritas International Belgium, Vluchteling zkt. Job, Resultaten van een onderzoek naar opleiding en tewerkstelling bij vluchtelingen, 2014.
- Caritas International Belgium, Begeleiding op maat: sleutel tot succesvolle integratie, Rapport van 2 jaar ervaring met vluchtelingen die in een gesloten centrum hun statuut kregen, 2011.
- Homans, L., Flemish Minister for Integration, Policy Note 2014 – 2019, Integration and Civic integration.
- EMN, Centre for Social Policy Herman Deleeck, Migrant Access to social security – policy and practice in Belgium, 2014.
- OECD, Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015, Settling in, 2015.
- CEMIS, ASSESS, Integration of Vulnerable Migrant Groups, 2015.
- De Vos, M., Naar een betere arbeidsmarkt, 2014.
- Service public de Wallonie, La politique d'intégration de la Wallonie, 2014.
- Policy Research Centre for Civic Integration and Integration - Research Institute for Work and Society (HIVA) - University of Leuven (KU Leuven) - Research Department of the Flemish Government (SVR) - Flemish Agency for Internal Governance (ABB), Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor, 2015.
- Corluy, V., labour market outcomes and trajectories of immigrants in Belgium, 2014.
- ESF-Agentschap Vlaanderen Wie een netwerk heeft, is ingeburgerd, projectoverzicht EIF Vlaanderen 2007 – 2013.
- Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen, Werken aan veerkracht van hoogopgeleide nieuwkomers, 2014.

## Information received by email, telephone or interview from the following persons:

- Ann Bogman, Flemish Department for Labour and Social Economy
- Ariane Dewandre, Integration unit Caritas International Belgium
- Bea Van Robaeys, Karel de Grote Hogeschool Antwerp
- Céline Nicodème, NARIC, Ministère de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles
- Debbie Sanders, Flemish employment service VDAB
- Elhasbia Zayou, Flemish Refugee Action
- Frederic Swaelens, Federal Public Service for Social Integration
- Fabienne Crauwels, Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)
- Ina Vandenberghe, Federal Migration Centre Myria
- Inge Hellemans, Flemish Agency for Internal Administration
- Koen Dewulf, Federal Migration Centre Myria
- Lize Haagdorens, Flemish Agency for Housing
- Marlies Stubbe, Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration
- Michel Vanderkam, Interfederal Centre For Equal Opportunities

- Martine Hendrickx, Federal Reception Agency FEDASIL
- Rix Depasse, CIRE
- Sylvie de Terschueren, CIRE
- Sarah Van den Broucke, HIVA-KU Leuven
- Yves Schreel, Flemish Agency for Housing

An expert review was performed by Corinne Torrekens of the ULB and managing Director of DiverCity. She also provided input for the report and contacted several stakeholders:

- Andrea Rea, Université libre de Bruxelles
- Benoit Dessicy, Regional Integration Centre CAI Namur
- Catherine Demeyer, Social Cohesion Molenbeek
- Khalissa El Abadi, Regional Integration Centre CRVI Verviers
- Monica De Jonge, Brussels employment service Actiris
- Mourad Metioui, Brussels employment service Actiris
- Sarah Turine, Municipality of Molenbeek

## Other relevant information sources and literature:

### Relevant studies:

- European Parliament study, 'Comparative Study on the best practices for the integration of resettled refugees in the EU Member States' (2013): [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474393/IPOL-LIBE\\_ET\(2013\)474393\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/474393/IPOL-LIBE_ET(2013)474393_EN.pdf)  
This Study examines the question of the integration of resettled refugees in Europe, by analysing the policy framework for resettlement and refugee integration and the practices at the national and the European level. The study is illustrated with examples from various Member States. Drawing from existing guidelines and global recommendations on integration and resettlement, the study underlines good practices and challenges and puts forward proposals to improve national resettlement programmes and to promote a better resettlement policy in Europe.
- UNHCR, 'A new beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe' (2013): <http://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.html>  
The aim of this study is to review trends in the development of policy areas relevant to integration, to highlight already-used measurable integration indicators and the methods of evaluating integration, and to highlight factors that influence integration outcomes for refugees.
- UNHCR note on Integration of Refugees in the European Union (2007): <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/463b24d52.pdf>
- Refugee Resettlement in the EU: Between Shared Standards and Diversity in Legal and Policy Frames (2013): <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/docs/Know-Reset-RR-2013-03.pdf>  
The report presents and compares frameworks and policies relating to refugee resettlement in EU Member States. The time-frame of the report is from 2003 to 2013. It is based on the research conducted for the Know Reset Project and extensively uses the interviews with different stakeholders involved in refugee resettlement in the EU, which make valuable contribution to the understanding of Member States' options and policies in the domain of refugee resettlement.
- The joint EU/Eurostat report, "Indicators of Immigrant Integration" (2011)  
The report identifies how harmonized data sources can provide adequate data on migrants' populations.
- OECD/European Union (2015), Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris  
This document contains some data on refugees, with regard to health.

- The report from Bijl and Verweij, “Measuring and monitoring integration in Europe” (2012)  
This report describes the impacts of the integration situation on refugees’ integration, due to their vulnerability and often unstable personal situation.
- *Study on Practices of Integration of Third-Country Nationals at Local and Regional Level in the European Union* (2013): [http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/survey\\_integration\\_3rd\\_country\\_nationals/survey\\_integration\\_3rd\\_country\\_nationals.pdf](http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/survey_integration_3rd_country_nationals/survey_integration_3rd_country_nationals.pdf)  
This study contains the final report on the assignment ‘Study on Practices of Integration of Third-Country Nationals at Local and Regional Level in the European Union’. The study was undertaken in 2012 for the Committee of the Regions (CoR) by the Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services (CSES). The purpose of this assignment was to collect and analyse information on projects and policies implemented by Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) in the EU to promote the integration of third-country migrants.
- *Madeline Garlick, Strengthening Refugee Protection and Meeting Challenges: The European Union’s Next Steps on Asylum* (2014): <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/strengthening-refugee-protection-and-meeting-challenges-european-unions-next-steps-asylum>  
This policy brief identifies the main issues that should be included in the strategic guidelines on asylum, and emphasises the need for a strong basis for future action.
- Immigration Integration in time of austerity (2011):  
• <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-immigrant-integration-europe-time-austerity>  
• This report presents a diversity of findings with regard to governments responses to immigrant integration organization, financing, and programming across Europe.
- Commission Staff Working Paper Annual Report 2010 on Immigration and Asylum (implementation of the European Pact on Asylum and Immigration and the Stockholm Programme): [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/pdf/1\\_autre\\_document\\_travail\\_service\\_part1\\_v2\\_620\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/pdf/1_autre_document_travail_service_part1_v2_620_en.pdf)  
This paper summarises the main actions taken in 2010 at both EU and Member State level for each of the commitments made in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum and the relevant asylum and migration objectives in the Stockholm Programme and its accompanying Action Plan. The reporting period is from 1st January 2010 to 31st December 2010.
- Center for the study of democracy, *Integrating Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States* (2012): [http://www.csd.bg/fileadmin/user\\_upload/INTEGRACE\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.csd.bg/fileadmin/user_upload/INTEGRACE_handbook.pdf)  
This Handbook presents the research instruments and findings developed within the project “Integrating Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States: Evaluation and Promotion of Current Best Practices” – INTEGRACE.

The research encompasses twenty-six EU Member States participating in the European Refugee Fund, as well as Denmark, Norway, and four Western Balkan states (Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina). The country reports' main focus is on illustrating successful practices in the educational integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children (RASC).

- Refugee Integration And The Use Of Indicators: Evidence From Central Europe (2013): [http://www.migpolgroup.com/wp\\_mpg/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Refugee\\_Integration\\_and\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_indicators\\_evidence\\_from\\_central\\_europe\\_CONFERENCE-VERSION.pdf](http://www.migpolgroup.com/wp_mpg/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Refugee_Integration_and_the_use_of_indicators_evidence_from_central_europe_CONFERENCE-VERSION.pdf)

This report was commissioned by UNHCR, Regional Representation for Central Europe (RRCE) and was financially supported by the European Refugee Fund. The report is part of the "Refugee Integration: Capacity and Evaluation" project, co-funded by the European Union through the European Refugee Fund - Community Actions 2011 and UNHCR. The project began on 1 August 2012 and was implemented by the UNHCR's RRCE. The project was carried out in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia in partnership with the following organizations: Migration Policy Group (Belgium); State Agency for Refugees/the Integration Centre for Refugees (Bulgaria); Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Poland); General Inspectorate of Immigration (Romania); Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (Slovakia).

- The labour market integration of resettled refugees, Eleanor Ott, UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, November 2013.
- Migration, employment and labour market integration policies in the European Union (2011): IOM, Independent Network of Labour Migration and Integration Experts (Recast Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011)

### **Relevant EMN Studies:**

- EMN Study 2014: Migrant access to social security and healthcare: policies and practice
- *EMN Study 2014: The organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in the different Member States*

### **The following list of (recent) EMN Ad-Hoc Queries is also relevant:**

- Ad hoc query on monitoring integration with follow-up questions on integration policies, IE EMN NCP. Compilation will be circulated week of 22-26 June
- 2015.687, Acquisition of nationality in a Member State by third-country nationals, ES EMN NCP

- 2015.686, Provisions and acts on integration of foreigners, AT EMN NCP
- 2015.657, Educational projects of immigrants, GR EMN NCP
- 2015.645, Asylum seekers integration to labour market, EE EMN NCP
- 2014.630, Research on migrants' perceptions of security and trust in authorities, FI EMN NCP
- 2014.611, Providing social aid for beneficiaries of temporary residence, LU EMN NCP
- 2014.589, Financing language and civics courses of foreign nationals, LU EMN NCP
- 2013.497, Immigrant Integration Plans, PT EMN NCP
- 2013.454, [\*Migrants' Access to Benefits and Public Services\*](#), UK EMN NCP
- 2013.453, [\*Integration Agreements\*](#), IT EMN NCP
- 2012.412, [\*Programmes for the Linguistic Integration of Immigrants\*](#), DE EMN NCP



## Annex 1: Definitions

The following key terms are used in the Common Template. The definitions are taken from the EMN Glossary v3.0<sup>(140)</sup> unless specified otherwise in footnotes.

**Support measures to access to housing:** in the context of this Study, support measures for access to housing include those measures that facilitate finding accommodation for those who cannot find it themselves. This could include social housing, state funded housing in the private sector, provision of financial resources to access housing etc.

**Asylum:** A form of protection given by a State on its territory, based on the principle of non-refoulement and internationally or nationally recognised refugee rights and which is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in their country of citizenship and / or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

**Asylum seeker:** In the global context, a person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In the EU context, a person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Convention in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.

**Applicant for international protection:** means a third-country national or a stateless person who has made an application for international protection in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken

**Application for asylum:** An application made by a foreigner or a stateless person which can be understood as a request for protection under the Geneva Convention of 1951 or national refugee law.

**Application for international protection:** A request made by a third-country national or a stateless person for protection from a Member State, who can be understood to seek refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and who does not explicitly request another kind of protection, outside the scope of Directive 2011/95/EU, that can be applied for separately.

---

<sup>140</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/docs/emn-glossary-en-version.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/docs/emn-glossary-en-version.pdf)

**Beneficiary of international protection:** means a person who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status

**Counselling:** in the context of this Study, counselling is understood as different types of counselling in order to specifically support refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary and humanitarian protection to access employment. This could include counselling for trauma as well as other specific problems relating to the status of refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary and humanitarian protection where this may present a barrier, but could also include counselling to assist in job readiness preparation and support.

**Geneva Convention:** means the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967

**Guaranteed minimum resources** refers to benefits provided to people with insufficient resources. It includes support for destitute and vulnerable persons to help alleviate poverty or assist in difficult situations (Source: ESSPROS Manual, 2008 Edition, Eurostat).

**Durable solutions:** Any means by which the situation of refugees can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives.

**Education:** education in the context of this Study refers to education that has a direct link to employment, for example, by providing support for the development of higher-level (non-vocational) skills.

**Employed persons** are persons aged 15 year and over (16 and over in ES, IT, UK and SE (1995-2001); 15-74 years in DK, EE, HU, LV, FI and SE (from 2001 onwards); 16-74 in IS and NO), who during the reference week performed work, even for just one hour a week, for pay, profit or family gain, or, who were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent because of, e.g., illness, holidays, industrial dispute or education and training. (Source: Eurostat)

**Humanitarian protection:** a person covered by a decision granting authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons under national law concerning international protection by administrative or judicial bodies. It includes persons who are not eligible for international protection as currently defined in the Qualifications Directive ([Directive 2011/95/EU](#)) but are nonetheless protected against removal under the obligations that are imposed on all Member States by international refugee or human rights instruments or on the basis of principles flowing from such instruments. [...] persons granted a permission to stay for humanitarian reasons but who have not previously applied for international protection are not included under this concept."

**Inactive persons** are those who are not in the labour force so are neither classified as employed nor as unemployed. This category therefore does not include job-seekers. (Source: Eurostat)

**Integration:** In the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.

**International protection:** In the global context, the actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin, who lack the national protection of their own countries. In the EU context, protection that encompasses refugee status and subsidiary protection status.

**Orientation courses:** Orientation courses typically provide factual information about the country of destination but may also aim to foster positive attitudes for successful adaptation in the long run. These could include opportunities for migrants to gain (and practice) the necessary skills needed to facilitate their integration and to develop helpful attitudes including pro-activity, self-sufficiency and resourcefulness (knowing how to find the information they are seeking); skills include knowing how to conduct oneself in certain situations, time management and goal-setting, as well as being able to navigate complex systems including banking, social, health and emergency services, transportation etc. (Source: IOM Best Practices IOM's migrant training and pre-departure orientation programmes).

**Refugee:** In the global context, either a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply.

**Refugee status:** The recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or stateless person as a refugee.

**Residence permit:** means any permit or authorisation issued by the authorities of a Member State in the form provided for under that State's law, allowing a third-country national or stateless person to reside on its territory

**Self-employed persons** are persons who are the sole or joint owner of an unincorporated enterprise (one that has not been incorporated i.e. formed into a legal corporation) in which he/she works, **unless** they are also in paid employment which is their main activity (in that case, they are considered to be employees). Self-employed people also include unpaid family workers; outworkers (who work outside the usual workplace, such as at home); and workers engaged in production done entirely for their own final use or own capital formation, either individually or collectively. (Source: Eurostat)

**Subsidiary protection status:** recognition by a Member State of a third-country national or a stateless person as a person eligible for subsidiary protection;

**Person eligible for subsidiary protection:** a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country;

**Unemployed persons** are persons aged 15-74 (in ES, IT, SE (1995-2000), UK, IS and NO: 16-74), who were without work during the reference week, but currently available for work, or who were either actively seeking work in the past four weeks or who had already found a job to start within the next three months. (Source: Eurostat)

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**: The refugee agency of the United Nations (UN) mandated to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide, and to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.

**Vocational education and training (VET)<sup>(141)</sup>**: Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market.