



Labour market integration of third-country nationals in Belgium

Study of the Belgian Contact Point
of the European Migration Network (EMN)

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The Belgian National Contact Point (NCP) of the European Migration Network (EMN) is a multi-institutional entity composed of experts from the Immigration Office, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), Myria - the Federal Migration Centre, and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil). It is coordinated by the Federal Public Service Home Affairs. The Belgian NCP is financed both by the European Union and the aforementioned Belgian entities.

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Belgian report and Synthesis report

Belgian report: This is the Belgian contribution to the EMN focused study on the labour market integration of third-country nationals. Other EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) produced a national report on the same 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 NCPs. 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. policy makers and practitioners at EU and national level, as well as academic researchers and the general public) on the implementation of integration measures for third-country nationals, with a specific focus on labour market integration measures. The study also aims at identifying good or promising practices from public and private actors.

Scope of the study: The study focuses on labour market integration measures for regularly staying third-country nationals with the right to work, including third-country national family members of EU citizens and third-country nationals. The study focuses specifically on first generation third-country nationals. Specific measures that are only designed for beneficiaries of international protection, applicants for international protection, or students, are excluded from this study.

Available on the website: The Belgian report, the Synthesis Report and the links to the national reports of the other (Member) States and the Common Template are available on the website of the Belgian Contact Point of the EMN: www.emnbelgium.be

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Introduction

The overall aim of the present study is to provide an overview of **general and labour market integration policies and practices** targeting third-country nationals in place in Belgium, excluding measures that are only designed for applicants for/beneficiaries of international protection or students. The study also aims at identifying good or promising practices from the public and private sector.

The labour market situation of third-country nationals

Section I of the study provides a brief overview of the situation of third-country nationals on the labour market in Belgium. This includes information on the differences between the **employment rates** of third-country nationals and Belgian nationals, as well as information on the main sectors of activity for third-country nationals. *Section I* also provides information on the **periodic monitoring instruments** used in Belgium to assess the socio-economic situation of third-country nationals (and people of foreign origin).

Institutional framework of (labour market) integration measures

Section I of this study also focuses on the **institutional framework** regarding (labour market) integration in Belgium. It provides a broad overview of the main actors involved in this field. A particular focus is put on the level of the federated entities - that is to say the **Regions** (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital) and the **Communities** (Flemish, French and German-speaking) - as they are largely competent for the different dimensions of integration of foreign nationals.

General integration policies

Section I of the study provides an overview of the general integration policies in place in Belgium at the level of the federated entities. It details how "integration" is defined by the competent authorities. It also includes a broad description of the **(mandatory) integration programmes** for certain third-country nationals provided in Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels and the German-speaking Community (e.g. target group of the programmes, main components of the programmes, etc.). All of these programmes include some elements related to socio-professional integration.

Specific labour market integration policies/plans/models

Section I of this study provides further information on the **specific policies/plans or models** in place at the level of the federated entities to facilitate the **labour market integration** of third-country nationals (and more broadly speaking, people of foreign origin or foreign language speakers). A specific focus is put on the approaches adopted by the Regional Public Employment Services: VDAB in Flanders, Le Forem in Wallonia, Actiris in Brussels and the Arbeitsamt in the German-speaking Community.

Section II of this study further details the **main components** of the labour market integration policies in place in Belgium at the level of the Communities/Regions. It focuses on the following areas: training and qualification; enhancement of soft skills; provision of information and counselling; enhancement of intercultural/civic relations in the workplace; measures adapted to specific groups of third-country nationals; incentives for migrants and employers; and support for self-employment.

In addition to this broad overview, *Section II of this study* presents – in more detail – a **few interesting and promising practices** implemented by public bodies or NGOs to favour the labour market integration of third-country nationals.

Private sector initiatives for labour market integration

Section II of this study focuses on the measures implemented by companies to facilitate the labour market integration of third country nationals. **Employers and employers' organisations** play an important role in the labour market integration of third-country nationals (and other groups) and in the promotion of diversity. A **few examples of promising initiatives** implemented by the private sector are provided.

1. General and labour market integration policies

1.1. Overview of general integration policies for third-country nationals

1.1.1. The situation of third-country nationals on the Belgian labour market (2014-2017)

Categories of third-country nationals coming to Belgium

When analysing the data available regarding **first residence permits** issued by Belgium between 2014 and 2017 by reason (see graph 1 below), it appears that **"family reasons"** was the main ground for legal migration of third-country nationals towards Belgium in the defined period of time. **Over half of the total number of first residence permits issued per year** were issued for family reasons. In 2017, 28,653 first residence permits were issued for this reason, which represents about 51% of the total number of first residence permits. However, it is important to point out that a part of the first residence permits issued for family reasons do not relate to migration strictly speaking, as children of foreign nationals (regularly residing in Belgium) born in Belgium also receive a first residence permit for family reasons.

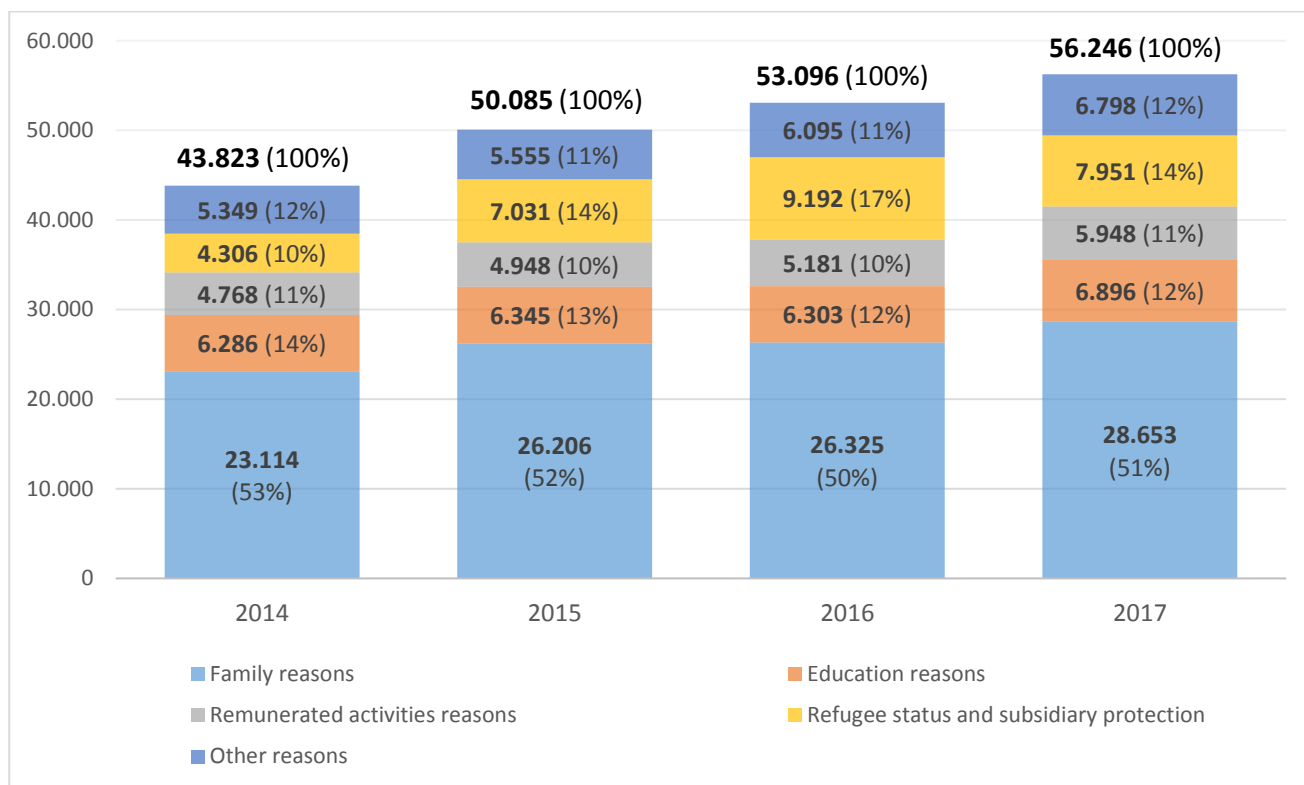
The second main reason for the issuance of first residence permits in 2017 was the granting of **refugee status and subsidiary protection status**: 14% of the total number of first residence permits were issued for this reason. This is however a more recent trend: between 2014 and 2016, the number of first residence permits issued for this reason more than doubled (from 4,306 in 2014 to 9,192 in 2016) following the important inflow of applicants for international protection in Belgium. This meant that "refugee status and subsidiary protection" became the second main reason for the issuance of first residence permits starting in 2015.

"Education reasons" was the third main reason of issuance of first residence permits in 2017 (6,896 first residence permits, representing 12% of the total number of first residence permits). The total number of first residence permits issued for this reason remained stable over the last years (i.e. 6,286 in 2014, 6,345 in 2015, and 6,303 in 2016).

"Other reasons", represented the fourth main reason of issuance of first residence permits in 2017 (6,798 first residence permits, or 12% of the total number of first residence permits).

It was closely followed by **"remunerated activities reasons"** (5,948 1 first residence permits, or around 11% of the total number of first residence permits). The number of first residence permits issued for "remunerated activities reasons" slightly increased over the last years (4,768 first residence permits in 2014; 4,948 in 2015; and 5,181 in 2016).

Graph 1: First residence permits issued by Belgium by reason (between 2014 and 2017)



Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship [migr_resfirst], information extracted on 16/07/2018; and First permits issued for other reasons by reason, length of validity and citizenship [migr_resoth], information extracted on 16/07/2018.

The main countries of nationality of the beneficiaries of first residence permits in Belgium in 2017 (all reasons and lengths of validity) were **Syria, Morocco and India**. As shown in the table below, Morocco and India were already in the top 3 between 2014 and 2016. The number of first residence permits issued to Moroccan and Indian nationals remained relatively stable between 2014 and 2016. However, the number of first residence permits issued to Syrian nationals increased substantially between 2014 and 2016 (from 1,611 first residence permits in 2014 to 6,725 in 2016). In 2015, Syria became the second main country of nationality of beneficiaries of first residence permits in Belgium, and the first country of nationality in 2016 and 2017.

Table 1: Top 6 of the main nationalities of beneficiaries of first residence permits in Belgium (all reasons and lengths of validity) between 2014 and 2017

2014		2015		2016		2017	
Morocco	5,565	Morocco	5,723	Syria	6,725	Syria	6,172
India	2,568	Syria	4,001	Morocco	5,512	Morocco	5,203
United States	2,374	India	2,805	India	2,899	India	3,436
Turkey	1,953	United States	2,417	Iraq	2,472	Afghanistan	2,621
China	1,671	Turkey	1,990	United States	2,265	United States	2,441
Syria	1,611	Afghanistan	1,711	Afghanistan	1,924	Iraq	2,107
Other	28,081	Other	31,438	Other	31,299	Other	34,266
TOTAL	43,823	TOTAL	50,085	TOTAL	53,096	TOTAL	56,246

Source: Eurostat, First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship [migr_resfirst], information extracted on 16/07/2018.

Employment rates of Belgian nationals, EU citizens and third-country nationals

Preliminary note on the statistics:

Different sets of figures on employment are used in the section below. These sets of data are not comparable, due to different factors, including the fact that these figures are based on different data collection methods:

- ✘ **The first set of data** comes from Eurostat, the Directorate General Statistics – Statistics Belgium, and is based on the “Labour Force Survey” (processing of data by the Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue), which consists of a household survey. The figures are therefore based on a **sample** of the Belgian population.
- ✘ **The second set of data** is provided in the framework of the **Socio-Economic Monitoring Report 2017**. Data from the Datawarehouse labour market and social protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) is used (computation and processing of data by the Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue). This is **administrative data (exhaustive population)**.

What’s more, “employment” is not defined in the same way in the framework of these two data collection methods.

As underlined in different national and international studies and reports, the **labour market integration of third-country nationals in Belgium is poor**¹. As indicated in table 2 below, the employment rate (as a percentage of the population between 20 and 64 years of age) for Belgian nationals was **69%** in 2016, whereas the employment rate for third-country nationals (i.e. non-EU 28) was **41.8%**. For third-country national newcomers (i.e. who have been registered in the National Register for 5 years or less), the employment rate was **32.2 %** in 2016. The **gap in the employment rates between third-country nationals and Belgian nationals is thus important**: in 2016, the employment rate of third-country nationals was **27.2 percentage points** lower than for Belgian nationals. Regarding the evolution of the employment rate between 2014 and 2016², both the employment rate of Belgian nationals and the employment rate of third-country nationals remained relatively stable.

Furthermore, when **comparing the situation in Belgium with the situation in the other EU Member States** in the period 2014-2016, it appears that the employment rate of third-country nationals in Belgium is among one of the lowest in the EU, and the gap between the employment rate of third-country nationals and national citizens is among the highest³.

When looking at the **different Belgian Regions**, certain differences can be noted. In 2016, the employment rate for Belgian nationals was the highest in Flanders (73.1%), followed by Wallonia (63.7%) and Brussels (59.6%). The employment rate of third-country nationals was also the highest in Flanders (46%), followed by Brussels (40.1%), and Wallonia (36.7%). This means that the **gap between the employment rates of third-country nationals and Belgian nationals** was the most important in Flanders (27.1 percentage points), closely followed by Wallonia (27 percentage points). The gap in the employment rates is however much lower in Brussels (19.5 percentage points). Regarding the evolution of the employment rates between 2014 and 2016, both the employment rates remained relatively stable in the different Regions in the period 2014-2016, apart from Wallonia where the employment rate of third-country nationals increased by 4.6 percentage points between 2014 and 2016.

Regarding the **gender dimension**, the gap in employment rates between third-country nationals and Belgian nationals is even **more pronounced for women** (see table 2 below). The employment rate of Belgian nationals was 73.2% for men and 64.7% for women in 2016, whereas the employment rate for third-country nationals was 53.2% for men and 31.2% for women. For third-country national newcomers (i.e. who have been registered in Belgium for 5 years or less), the employment rate was 45.3% for men and 21.3% for women in 2016. The employment rate for female third-country nationals is thus **33.6 percentage points** lower than for female Belgian nationals, whereas the employment rate for male third-country nationals is **20.1 percentage points** lower than for male Belgian nationals.

¹ See for example: Pina, A., Corluy V., and Verbist G (2015), “Improving the Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in Belgium”, *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No 1195, OECD Publishing, Paris.

² The year 2017 is excluded from the comparison due to a break in time series (which means the data is not comparable with the date of the previous years).

³ See: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, [lfsa_ergan].

Table 2: Employment rate by nationality in Belgium and the Regions (2014-2017), in percentage of the population aged between 20 and 64 years.

	2017 (b)					2016					2015					2014				
	Belgian citizens	Immigrants*		Recent immigrants**		Belgian citizens	Immigrants*		Recent immigrants**		Belgian citizens	Immigrants*		Recent immigrants**		Belgian citizens	Immigrants*		Recent immigrants**	
		EU	non-EU	EU	non-EU		EU	non-EU	EU	non-EU		EU	non-EU	EU	non-EU		EU	non-EU	EU	non-EU
BELGIUM																				
M	74,2	73,7	56	n/a	n/a	73,2	72,1	53,2	77,4	45,3	72,1	72,7	52,7	77,4	49,2	72,6	70,7	51,1	76,6	49,2
F	65,5	62,7	28,4	n/a	n/a	64,7	63,0	31,2	60,6	21,3	64,9	59,9	33,4	59,3	26,4	64,7	60,5	30,3	62,8	26,7
Total	69,8	68,2	41,6	n/a	n/a	69,0	67,8	41,8	69,3	32,2	68,5	66,4	42,7	68,2	36,6	68,6	65,7	40,5	69,6	37,2
FLANDERS																				
M	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	77,0	76,6	57,8	77,8	48,7	75,9	80,7	59,4	83,1	57,1	76,8	76,1	58,1	78,2	52,2
F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	69,1	63,5	35,5	61,0	21,8	69,5	62,9	39,2	55,9	32,2	68,9	64,1	32,6	64,3	28,5
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	73,1	70,4	46,0	70,0	33,8	72,7	71,9	48,7	69,0	43,4	72,9	70,3	44,6	71,3	39,3
WALLONIA																				
M	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	68,2	65,3	47,2	73,9	:	66,9	63,1	43,4	69,7	:	67,1	61,0	39,5	69,3	:
F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	59,3	56,2	26,7	53,2	:	58,8	52,3	27,1	62,5	:	59,3	51,0	24,2	51,1	:
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	63,7	61,0	36,7	63,2	25,3	62,8	57,8	35,2	66,2	:	63,2	56,3	32,1	60,5	27,2
BRUSSELS																				
M	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	64,9	73,9	51,8	78,3	49,6	63,5	74,1	51,3	75,7	55,5	62,7	74,8	50,6	78,2	55,1
F	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	54,5	68,8	28,7	63,5	21,4	54,3	64,1	30,2	61,0	25,7	54,5	65,6	31,0	65,8	28,0
Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	59,6	71,4	40,1	71,2	34,7	58,9	69,0	40,6	68,2	37,8	58,6	70,1	40,6	71,7	40,4

Source: *For 2014 until 2016 : EUROSTAT, Directorate General Statistics - Statistics Belgium, Labour Force Survey, Processing : Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue. For 2017 : Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, [Ifsa_ergan], data extracted on 12/06/2018.*

* People with a nationality other than the Belgian nationality.

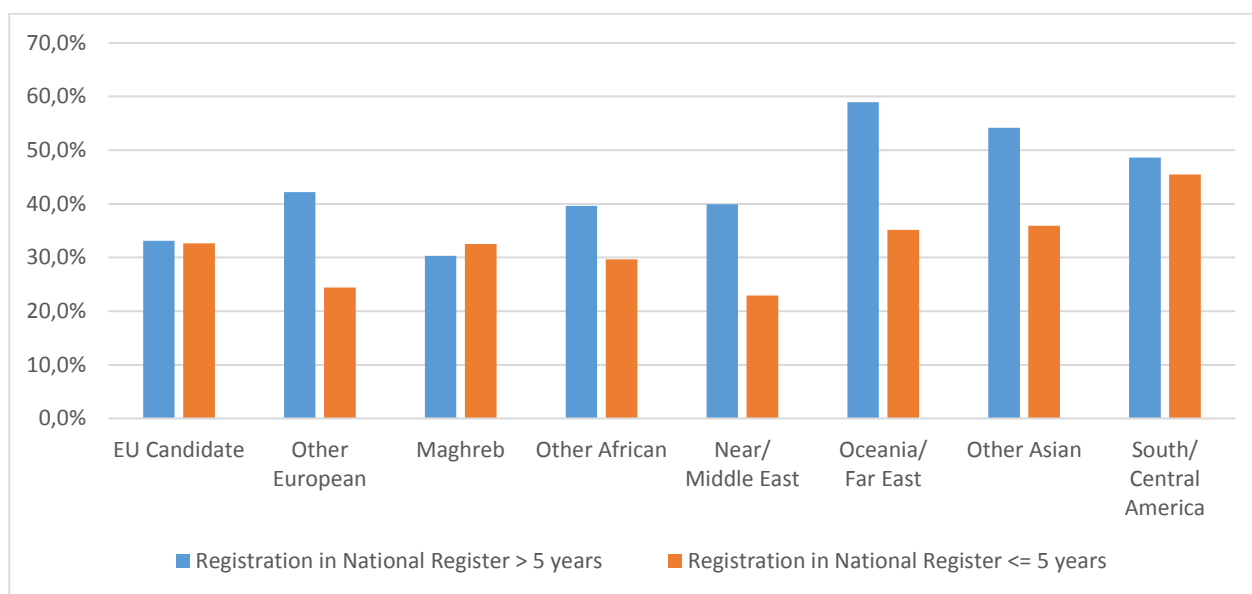
** People with a nationality other than the Belgian nationality who have been registered in the National Register for 5 years or less.

(b) Break in time series.

n/a not available.

In the framework of the **Socio-Economic Monitoring report 2017⁴**, more detailed information is available regarding the employment rates of third-country nationals for the **year 2014** according to their origin (i.e. nationality) and migration background. First of all, Graph 2 below shows that **the employment rate varies** according to whether the third-country nationals are **newcomers** (i.e. registration in the National Register 5 years ago or less) or not. Generally speaking, the global employment rate of third-country newcomers is lower (31%) than the global employment rate of third-country nationals who have been registered in Belgium for longer than 5 years (38%). Furthermore, the employment rate also varies according to **the origin⁵ (i.e. nationality)** of the third-country nationals. For example, it can be noted that the employment rate of third-country national newcomers with a "South/Central America" origin (i.e. 45.4%) is significantly higher than the global employment rate of third-country national newcomers (i.e. 31%). On the other hand, for newcomers of "other European" and "Near/Middle East" origins, the employment rates (respectively 24.4% and 22.9%) are lower than the global employment rate of newcomers.

Graph 2: Employment rate of third-country nationals (20-64 years of age) in Belgium in 2014 by origin and two types of migration background⁶.



Source : Datawarehouse labour market and social protection, CBSS. Computation and processing of data : Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue.

Sectors of employment of third-country nationals

In the framework of the **Socio-Economic Monitoring report 2017⁷**, data is available regarding the main sectors of employment of third country nationals in the **year 2014** (see table 3 below).

⁴ Service Public Fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation sociale & Unia, *Monitoring socio-économique 2017 : marché du travail et origine*, 2017.

⁵ As indicated in the Socio-Economic Monitoring Report 2017 (p.11), the "origin" groups refer to the following countries: EU Candidate (Turkey; Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Albania; Montenegro); Other European (Iceland, Andorra, Lichtenstein, Monaco, Norway, Saint-Marin, Switzerland, Russia, Holy See, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, etc.); Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania); Other African countries (Burundi, Cameroon, South Africa, Congo, Senegal, Rwanda, etc.) Near/Middle East (Iran, Israel, Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrein, Kuwait, Egypt, Pakistan and Afghanistan.); Oceania/Far East (China, India, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Oceania such as Australia and New Zealand, etc.); Other Asian countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc.); Central and South America (Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chili, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, etc.).

⁶ Excluding the North-American origin.

⁷ Service Public Fédéral Emploi, Travail et Cconcertation sociale & Unia, *Monitoring socio-économique 2017 : marché du travail et origine*, 2017.

The **top 10 sectors of employment** of third-country nationals in Belgium in 2014 were⁸:

- Services to buildings and landscape activities (code 81)
- Food and beverage service activities (code 56)
- Employment activities (code 78)
- Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles (code 47)
- Public administration and defence; compulsory social security (code 84)
- Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles (code 46)
- Education (code 85)
- Specialized construction activities (code 43)
- Social work activities without accommodation (code 88)
- Land transport and transport via pipelines (code 49)

Table 3 below provides more detailed information on the distribution per sector of activity of third-country nationals depending on their origin (i.e. nationality). It appears that for many of the origins mentioned, the sector of services related to buildings and landscape activities (code 81) is among the main sectors of activity.

Table 3: Distribution of third-country national workers between the ages of 20 and 64 by origin and sector of activity in 2014 (in %).

	Services related to buildings and landscape activities	Food and beverage service activities	Employment activities	Retail trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Education	Specialized construction activities	Social work activities without accommodation	Land transport and transport via pipelines
EU candidate	13,0%	12,1%	6,5%	7,9%	2,6%	4,1%	1,9%	9,6%	1,8%	4,3%
Other European	11,5%	7,0%	7,3%	7,2%	7,8%	4,5%	4,5%	5,0%	4,5%	3,5%
Maghreb	15,5%	9,3%	10,2%	9,0%	7,9%	3,7%	1,8%	3,5%	3,1%	4,6%
Other African	10,1%	6,6%	14,1%	5,5%	14,7%	2,6%	3,1%	1,6%	5,1%	2,5%
Middle-East	2,9%	12,8%	6,0%	10,2%	14,3%	6,5%	7,5%	1,5%	3,6%	1,8%
Oceania/Far East	1,3%	31,9%	2,1%	8,6%	1,8%	7,4%	8,6%	0,5%	0,6%	0,4%
Other Asian	11,3%	20,4%	5,7%	13,2%	6,8%	4,5%	3,0%	0,7%	3,0%	0,6%
North American	:	3,7%	2,5%	5,6%	1,5%	6,6%	17,2%	:	:	:
South/Central American	30,1%	5,9%	6,3%	5,6%	3,6%	3,1%	4,8%	3,7%	2,7%	:

Source : Datawarehouse labour market and social protection, CBSS. Computation and processing of data : Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue.

Main integration challenges in Belgium

The federated entities (i.e. who are mainly competent for the different aspects related to integration in Belgium) focus on the following main challenges – broadly speaking - in their integration policies and programmes:

- **Knowledge of one of the national languages:** this is an important element of the integration policies in the different Regions/Communities. For example, one of the objectives of the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019 is strengthening the knowledge of the Dutch language,

⁸ Based on the Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE).

as this is seen as essential for a durable and efficient participation in socio-economic life⁹. Furthermore, the website of the German-speaking Community indicates that communication is an essential pre-requisite for a peaceful coexistence¹⁰. Learning the language is often seen as the starting point for other integration measures, although it has recently also been presented as a competence, rather than a pre-requisite to access other support measures.

- **Socio-professional participation:** As mentioned above, the labour market integration of third-country nationals is poor in Belgium. There is an important gap between the employment rates of Belgian nationals and of third-country nationals (and even more so for third-country national women). Measures to favour socio-professional insertion are thus an integral part of all the integration policies of the different Regions/Communities. For example, the Walloon Code for Social Action and Health defines social and economic participation as one of the objectives of the regional action regarding the integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin¹¹. The Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019 includes the socio-economic participation of people of foreign origin as one of its objectives¹².
- **Civic participation (e.g. rights, duties, values):** this also forms an integral part of the different integration policies of the Regions/Communities. For example, the Walloon Code for Social Action and Health defines civic participation as one of the objectives of the regional action regarding the integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin¹³. The website of the German-speaking Community indicates that newcomers do not only need to learn the language, they also need to be informed about their rights and obligations and the values of Belgian society¹⁴.
- **Enhancing mutual respect, promoting diversity and fighting against discrimination:** this aspect is also important in the policies of the different Regions/Communities. For example, one of the objectives of the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019 is to improve mutual respect regarding people of foreign origin, through – inter alia – measures for diversity and against stereotypes, as well as measures to fight against discrimination and racism¹⁵.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.1, Q.1, a), b) and c).

1.1.2. Definitions of “integration”

As integration is a competence of the federated entities, the **Regions/ Communities** defined (or not) the term “integration” in their respective legislation.

Flanders

The Decree of 7 June 2013 on the Flemish Integration and Civic Integration Policy defines “integration” as “a dynamic and interactive process, during which individuals, groups, communities and services – each in a context of enforceability of the rights and obligations which are inherent to our democratic constitutional state – relate to each other in a constructive way and deal with migration and its consequences for society”¹⁶.

⁹ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

¹⁰ http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4795/8506_read-47211/

¹¹ Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>

¹² Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

¹³ Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>

¹⁴ http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4795/8506_read-47211/

¹⁵ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

¹⁶ Article 2, 13° of the Decree of 7 June 2013 on the Flemish Integration and Civic Integration Policy, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 26 July 2013, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/PrintDocument.ashx?id=1023121&datum=&qeannotteerd=false&print=false>

Brussels

In Brussels, the **Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission (VGC)** are responsible for the integration policy for Dutch-speaking people, whereas the **French Community Commission (COCOF)** is responsible for the integration policy for French-speaking people. For the Dutch speaking side, see the definition for Flanders (above). For the French-speaking side, the COCOF has not defined "integration".

Furthermore, the **Common Community Commission (COCOM)** regulates and manages matters common to the two Communities (i.e. French and Flemish) in the Brussels-Capital Region. The COCOM has not defined "integration", but it does provide - in an Ordinance - a series of principles on which the integration policy of Brussels is based: equality of each individual; respect for the individual character, competences and ambitions of each individual; migration as an opportunity for society; anti-discrimination, fight against racism and sexism and gender mainstreaming; the active civil participation of each individual; the empowerment of particular target groups; the acquisition of knowledge of the French or Dutch language¹⁷.

Wallonia

There is no definition of "integration" in Wallonia. However, the Walloon Code for Social Action and Health stipulates that the regional action regarding the integration of foreign nationals or people of foreign origin aims at integrating said people by promoting equal opportunities; citizenship; social cohesion in the perspective of an intercultural society; access to public and private services; and social and economic participation¹⁸.

German-speaking Community

The Decree of 11 December 2017 of the German-speaking Community regarding integration and living together in diversity defines integration as a "long and dynamic process which objective is to integrate into society all people – regardless of their origin – whose domicile or habitual residence is in the German-language region; and to allow them to participate, on equal terms, in all areas of society"¹⁹.

Federal level

Integration is a competence of the federated entities. However, it is worth noting that at the **federal level**, the **Law of 18 December 2016**²⁰ inserted new residence conditions into the Immigration Act, which focus on integration. The law is composed of two parts.

First of all, certain third-country nationals who have been authorized or admitted to reside in Belgium for longer than three months need to provide evidence of their **willingness and efforts to integrate into society**. If the third-country nationals does not make "reasonable efforts" to integrate, the Immigration Office may take this into account when ending his/her residence permit (this part of the law has entered into force in 2017). The law does not define the term "integration", but it does list a series of criteria which the Immigration Office may take into account – in particular but not exclusively - when assessing a third-country national's efforts to integrate into society:

- Attend an integration course provided by the competent authority;
- Be economically active, either as an employee, a civil servant or a self-employed person;
- Provide a degree, a certificate or a proof of registration granted by an officially recognized institution;
- Attend a vocational training recognized by the competent authority;
- Have knowledge of the language of the municipality where the foreign national is officially registered;

¹⁷ Ordinance of 11 May 2017 regarding the integration pathway for newcomers, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 30 May 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/mopdf/2017/05/30_1.pdf#Page110

¹⁸ Article 151 of the Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>.

¹⁹ Article 3, 4° of the Decree of 11 December 2017 of the German-speaking Community regarding integration and living together in diversity, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 20 December 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2017121105&table_name=loi

²⁰ Law of 18 December 2016 inserting a general residence condition into the law of 15 December 1980 on the access to the territory, stay, settlement and removal of foreign nationals, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 16 January 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=2016121816

- Actively participate in civil society organisations;
- Have no criminal record.

Second, certain third-country nationals applying for a Belgian residence permit will have to sign a declaration indicating that they “understand the fundamental values and norms of society and will act accordingly” (the so-called “newcomers declaration”). Signing this declaration will be a condition of admissibility for the application for a residence permit. The text of this newcomers declaration is still being discussed by the relevant authorities. This part of the law has not yet entered into force.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.1, Q.2.

1.1.3. Policies and programmes of the Regions/Communities for the integration of third-country nationals

The Regions/Communities – which are responsible for integration – have each defined their own integration policies and programmes.

Flanders

Integration policies/plans

In order to implement the integration policy of the Flemish administration, different policy documents are drafted. At the start of each government period, the Flemish Minister for Integration presents a **policy note**, which specifies the main objectives regarding integration (see the latest Policy Note of the Flemish Minister for Integration 2014-2019). At the start of each financial year, a **policy letter** is prepared (see the latest Policy Letter on Integration and Civic Integration 2017-2018). Furthermore, **action plans** are also drafted in order to follow-up on the integration policy throughout the different policy domains (work, education, culture, health, ...), to evaluate it or to update it (see the Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019²¹). Finally, the Flemish Government introduces new policies on integration through **concept notes**²².

Integration programme

Flanders introduced a (mandatory) integration programme for newcomers in 2004²³. The (civic) integration sector in Flanders was subject to a structural reform laid down in the **Decree of 7 June 2013 on the Flemish Integration and Civic Integration Policy**²⁴ (this Decree was amended by the Decrees of 29 May 2015 and 3 July 2015). One of the goals of this reform was to achieve a better coordinated approach of the integration and civic integration sector in Flanders. This resulted in the creation of a new autonomous Agency for Integration and Civic Integration as well as two local Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration for the cities of Gent (IN-Gent) and Antwerp (Atlas). An **implementing decision** regarding the Decree of 2013 was approved in January 2016 by the Flemish government²⁵.

The **Flemish integration programme** is **accessible** to people registered in the National Register in a municipality in Flanders or Brussels and who are (i) foreign nationals who are 18 years or older and who come to Flanders or Brussels to reside there for a long period of time (e.g. third country nationals whose reason to stay in Belgium cannot exceed 1 year, even after renewal or extension, are excluded); (ii) Belgians who were not born in Belgium or who have one parent who was not born in Belgium. All persons integrating have a right to a civic integration program. Moreover, the civic integration programme is **mandatory** for certain categories. These include – inter alia: nationals from a non-EU country who are 18 years old or older, who are registered for the first time in the National Register with a residence permit

²¹ See: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

²² For further information and to access these different documents, see : <http://integratiebeleid.vlaanderen.be/beleid>

²³ Decree of 28 February 2003 regarding the Flemish Integration Policy, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 8 May 2003, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1010876¶m=inhoud>

²⁴ Decree of 7 June 2013 on the Flemish Integration and Civic Integration Policy, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 26 July 2013, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/PrintDocument.ashx?id=1023121&datum=&qeannotateerd=false&print=false>

²⁵ Decision of the Flemish Government of 29 January 2016 regarding the implementation of the Decree of 7 June 2013 regarding the Flemish integration and civic integration policy, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 7 April 2016, <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Zoeken/Document.aspx?DID=1026683¶m=inhoud&ref=search>

valid for longer than 3 months (except for labour migrants); as well as non-EU newcomers or ministers of religion in a local church or religious community, recognized by the Flemish authorities. Certain categories are exempted from the mandatory integration programme, such as EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members; people who are 65 years old or older, etc. The entire integration programme is **free of charge**.

The **civic integration programme** consists of²⁶:

- **Language course of Dutch as a second language.** The level to be reached in order to obtain the certificate of civic integration is A2 (with an exception for illiterate people). There is an obligation of result in order to obtain the certificate of civic integration.
- **Social orientation course** (i.e. information about life in Belgium and Flanders, including on work, housing, education, etc.) which is provided in a language that is understood by the third-country national. Participants are provided with the know-how and skills to actively engage in society. The needs of the participants are taken into account to shape the content of the course. The module focuses on practical aspects related to work, housing, education, etc. Furthermore, values and norms take a central place in the module.
- **Individual assistance:** depending on the personal situation and the needs/preferences of the participant in the integration programme, different types of assistance can be provided, focused on socio-cultural, educational or professional aspects. If the participant has a professional perspective, the Agencies may carry out a pre-screening and refer the participant to the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB).

The content of the civic integration programme is defined in a **civic integration contract** ("inburgeringscontract"). If a third-country national signs such a contract, he/she commits to attend the courses on a regular basis. When a third-country national successfully completes the Dutch language course and the social orientation course, he/she will receive a **certificate of civic integration** ("attest van inburgering")²⁷.

Brussels

Integration policies/plans

In the Brussels-Capital Region, there is a French-speaking integration programme and a Dutch-speaking integration programme. For the Dutch speaking side, see Flanders above. For the French-speaking side, see the legislation detailed below.

Integration programme

The **Dutch-speaking integration programme** falls under the responsibility of the Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission (VGC). It is the **same programme** as the Flemish integration programme (see above), but it is not yet mandatory. Foreign nationals wishing to follow this programme can contact the organisation BON (which has been part of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration since 1 January 2015).

The **French-speaking programme** falls under the responsibility of the French Community Commission (COCOF). An integration programme was defined through the **Decree of the COCOF of 18 July 2013**²⁸.

The French-speaking integration programme is **not open** to all foreign nationals or newcomers²⁹. It is **only accessible** to foreign nationals who are older than 18 years and who have legally resided 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. Participation in the integration programme in the Brussels Capital Region is currently still on a **voluntary basis**. The welcome programme is **free of charge**.

²⁶ A graph detailing the different components of the civic integration programme can be found here (in Dutch): <https://integratie-inburgering.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/wat-is-inburgering.pdf>

²⁷ Participants who entered the programme after 29 February 2016 will have to prove that they master the Dutch language and the learning outcomes of the citizenship course in order to obtain the certificate of civic integration. Mere attendance is no longer sufficient.

²⁸ Decree of 18 July 2013 regarding the welcome pathway for newcomers in the Brussels-Capital Region, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 18 September 2013, http://www.etaamb.be/fr/decree-du-18-juillet-2013_n2013031655.html

²⁹ The people who cannot benefit from the integration programme have access to the services provided in the framework of the social cohesion contracts (including French language courses, civil participation trainings, etc.).

Foreign nationals interested in the French-speaking programme can contact one of the Reception Offices for Newcomers ("Bureaux d'accueil pour primo-arrivants" or "BAPA"): BAPA-BXL and VIA. The two reception offices, created in 2016, are responsible for the organisation of the integration programme³⁰.

The French-speaking integration programme consists of two modules³¹:

- **Welcome module:** consists of an individual interview (to define needs and expectations); an information module on rights and obligations (during which questions concerning housing, health, employment, education and others are considered); a linguistic assessment (identification of needs and achievements in literacy and French).

If needs have been identified during the first module, an agreement ("*convention d'accueil*") will be proposed to the newcomer. In this agreement, the content of the second module is defined. It may consist of:

- **Support module:** individualised support programme, that is to say support for administrative procedures and socio-professional guidance; French classes up to level A2 (from 120 to 1150 hours); and a civic integration course with information on the history of Belgium, its political system, its institutions, its economy, its culture, etc. (50 hours).

The newcomers receive a **certificate of attendance** after the primary component - which is not the same as a certificate based on the results as used in Flanders - and, if applicable, after the secondary component.

The integration programmes in the Brussels-Capital Region (both Dutch-speaking and French-speaking) should become **mandatory** in the near future: **The Ordinance of 11 May 2017**³² of the Joint Community Commission of Brussels (COCOM) regarding the integration programme for newcomers established a compulsory integration programme. However, this ordinance has **not yet entered into force**. The Ordinance indicates that the integration programme is mandatory for newcomers who are between 18 and 65 years old; who have not lived in Belgium for longer than three years; and who are registered with a residence permit valid for longer than three months at the national register of a municipality of the Brussels-Capital Region. Numerous categories of foreign nationals are however exempted from this obligation. When the Ordinance enters into force, newcomers will still have to choose between a French-speaking or Dutch-speaking programme. The intention is not to set up a completely new system, but rather to further apply the existing integration programmes. The Brussels Government will therefore conclude a cooperation agreement with the COCOF and the VGC.

Wallonia

Integration policies/plans

The Walloon Code for Social Action and Health foresees the adoption of an Action Plan on integration every five years by the Walloon Government³³, but it has not been developed in practice. Changes to the Walloon Code are planned and an evaluation of the integration policy every five years is foreseen. An **evaluation of the Walloon Integration Programme** was presented to the Government in July 2017.

Furthermore, the Walloon Government tasked³⁴ the **Regional Integration Centres** with the development of a **Local Integration Plan** for their respective territories. The Local Integration Plan is defined as a "plan which favours the integration of foreign people or people of foreign origin, by highlighting their specific needs and by defining the strategies to be developed in order to better meet these needs"³⁵. More precisely, these plans are multi-year programmes of priority actions on a specific territory. The plans are developed,

³⁰ Belgian Contact Point of the European Migration Network, *Integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market in Belgium*, May 2016.

³¹ Decree of 18 July 2013 regarding the welcome pathway for newcomers in the Brussels-Capital Region, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 18 September 2013, http://www.etaamb.be/fr/decret-du-18-juillet-2013_n2013031655.html

³² Ordinance of 11 May 2017 regarding the integration pathway for newcomers, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 30 May 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2017051109&table_name=loi

³³ Article 151 of the Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>.

³⁴ Decree of 30 April 2009 modifying the Decree of 4 July 1996 regarding the integration of foreign nationals or people of foreign origin, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 22 May 2009, http://www.etaamb.be/fr/decret-du-30-avril-2009_n2009202221.html

³⁵ Article 150 of the Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>.

implemented and evaluated with the local partners (public, private and associations) of the Centres³⁶. The plans may include elements related to socio-professional integration.

Integration programme

The **Decree of 27 March 2014 on the integration programme for newcomers in the Walloon Region**³⁷ set up an integration programme. It was composed of two stages: the reception module (mandatory for newcomers) and the integration agreement (which at the time was not mandatory). The **Decree of 28 April 2016** made *all* the stages of the integration programme **mandatory** for newcomers.

The integration programme in Wallonia is **accessible** to all foreign nationals (newcomers or not). Furthermore, it is **mandatory** for certain newcomers, that is to say foreign nationals who have been residing in Belgium for less than 3 years and who have a residence permit valid for longer than 3 months. However, certain categories are not subject to this mandatory programme, or are exempted from it, such as : EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members ; people who registered in the municipal registers before 28 April 2014 ; foreign nationals younger than 18 and older than 65 years ; foreign nationals who are not able to participate in the integration pathway due to medical reasons ; foreign nationals exercising a professional activity (under certain conditions), etc. The entire integration programme is **free of charge**.

The **integration programme** – which is implemented by eight Regional Integration Centres - is composed of two mandatory stages:³⁸

- **Welcome module:** it consists – as a minimum - of information on the rights and duties of people residing in Belgium; a social assessment (to identify – inter alia - the needs of the newcomer); and assistance with administrative procedures. This module is provided in the Regional Integration Centres.
- On the basis of the needs identified during the social assessment, the newcomers conclude a **mandatory agreement** (“convention d’accueil”) with the competent Regional Integration Centre (for a maximum of 18 months). The agreement foresees individual follow-up and the following modules, which are provided by external partners:
 - o **Civic participation course**, which includes information about life in Belgium, housing, health, employment, etc. (minimum 20h – with an increase foreseen to 60h, see below). The civic participation course is provided by different partners of the Regional Integration Centres. The content and methodology of the course is determined by the Coordination Committee.
 - o According to the needs of the newcomer, a **French language course** (minimum 120h – with an increase foreseen to 400h, see below) is provided. Following a completion of the course, a validation of competences test is organized (but the result has no impact on the issuance of the certificate).
 - o According to the needs of the newcomer, **orientation towards the relevant socio-professional insertion scheme** following an individual socio-professional assessment (minimum 4h) is provided. This assessment is carried out – as a minimum – on the basis of qualifications, identification of competences, professional career and the needs of the newcomers. The assessment should bring appropriate solutions to difficulties encountered by the newcomer, through – inter alia – training, coaching, etc. The assessment is carried out by the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem) and the Regional Centres for Integration. In this framework, an information document has been developed by the Regional Integration Centres and the Forem, which allows the sharing of relevant information on the newcomers between the counsellors of the Regional Integration Centres and of the Forem.

Following the completion of the integration programme, the newcomer obtains a **certificate of attendance** (“Attestation de fréquentation du Parcours d’intégration”), which is issued by the Regional Integration Centres. It is based on attendance, not on results.

³⁶ See: http://www.ceraic.be/docs/GuideMethodoPLI_DISCRI.pdf

³⁷ Decree of 27 March 2014 replacing Book II of the Walloon Code for Social Action and Health regarding the integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 18 April 2014, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=27778&rev=29155-19331>

³⁸ See article 152 of the Walloon Code of 29 September 2011 on Social Action and Health, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 21 December 2011, <https://wallex.wallonie.be/index.php?doc=21579>

Changes are foreseen to the integration programme. The Walloon Government decided in December 2017 to **reinforce and improve its mandatory integration programme**, in order to increase its effects and the number of beneficiaries. Additional funding will be allocated to the integration programme.

The following changes are planned – inter alia³⁹:

- The duration of the French language course will increase from 120 hours to 400 hours;
- The duration of the civic participation course will increase from 20 hours to 60 hours;
- The list of foreign nationals who are exempted from following the mandatory integration programme will be re-examined, in order to broaden the target audience;
- Collaboration between the municipalities and the Regional Integration Centres will be improved in order to speed up the contact between the newcomers and the competent Regional Integration Centre.

Furthermore, the Walloon government decided in 2016 to strengthen its policy for the socio-professional integration of migrants, to act as a complement to the integration programme.

German speaking Community

Integration policies/plans

In the German-speaking Community, the integration of third-country nationals forms part of the **Concept of Regional Development**. It was identified as one of the priorities of the second implementation phase of the Concept of Regional Development (CDR II). In this framework, a series of areas of actions and measures to be carried out in a specific timeframe were defined⁴⁰.

Integration programme

In 2017, the German-speaking Community started a pilot integration programme (the language courses already started in 2016). The **Decree of 11 December 2017**⁴¹, which came into force on 1 January 2018, made the integration programme mandatory for foreign nationals who (i) are above 18 years of age; (ii) register at a municipality of the German Community from January 2018; (iii) have a residence permit valid for at least three months. There are however numerous exceptions (e.g. the programme is not mandatory for EU/EEA/Swiss citizens, students, migrant above the age of 65, migrants who have lived in Belgium for longer than 3 years, etc.). Nevertheless, this integration programme is **open on a voluntary basis to all migrants**. The entire integration programme is **free of charge**.

The integration programme **consists of four modules**⁴²:

- **Primary reception:** consists of an individual interview/social assessment (addressing competencies, family situation or the objectives of the newcomer). The different stages of the integration programme are determined with the counsellor from the Info-Integration Centre. An agreement is signed by the newcomer at the end of the interview.
- **Language classes:** following a language assessment, newcomers can follow language courses of German as a foreign language. Different levels of courses – depending on the needs of the newcomer – are available.
- **Integration classes:** focuses – inter alia – on the values of the Belgian society, or rights and duties of citizens.

³⁹ See: <http://greoli.wallonie.be/home/presse--actualites/publications/la-ministre-alda-greoli-et-le-gouvernement-wallon-amplifiant-le-parcours-dintegration-pour-une-wallonie-davantage-inclusive.publicationfull.html>

⁴⁰ German-speaking Community, Concept of Regional Development in the German-speaking Community – Tome 4, March 2016, http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/Concept_de_Developpement_Regional_Tome_4.pdf

⁴¹ Decree of 11 December 2017 of the German-speaking Community regarding integration and living together in diversity, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 20 December 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2017121105&table_name=loi

⁴² Decree of 11 December 2017 of the German-speaking Community regarding integration and living together in diversity, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 20 December 2017, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&cn=2017121105&table_name=loi

- **Social and professional orientation:** according to the capacities and interests of the foreign national, the Info-Integration Centre provides basic information on training, work and leisure activities. Regarding the socio-professional aspect, the information provided focuses on different elements (depending on the needs), such as the recognition of foreign diplomas, which organisations to contact to find a job, what the role of the Public Employment Service is, etc.

At the end of the integration programme, the foreign national (who has at least been present during 80% of the language classes and the integration classes) obtains a **certificate**.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.1, Q.3 and Q.4.

1.2. Overview of labour market integration policies in the Regions/Communities for third-country nationals

1.2.1. Labour market integration of third-country nationals: a political priority

The labour market integration of third-country nationals (and more broadly speaking of people of foreign origin or foreign language speakers) is seen as a political priority in Belgium. The issue is mentioned as a priority by the competent entities in various policy documents.

For example, the Regional Political Declaration of **Wallonia** of 25 July 2017 – which details the main priorities of the government – stipulates that the integration of newcomers in Wallonia is a social, human and economic priority, and that the Walloon integration programme should be reinforced⁴³. The Walloon government also decided in March 2016 to reinforce its policy regarding the integration of newcomers onto the labour market. In **Flanders**, the Government Agreement 2014-2019 also includes integration (including socio-economic) and civic integration of third-country nationals as one of the main priorities of the Government⁴⁴. More specific priorities are defined in the Policy Note of the Flemish Minister for Integration 2014-2019. Furthermore, the **Policy Note 2014-2019 on Work, Economy, Science and Innovation** (by the Flemish Minister for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sports) includes integration-related elements among its priorities. It stresses the importance of an integrated language-work policy, which is based on the principle that rapid contact with the labour market and adapted language support are the best means to activate foreign language speakers⁴⁵. Furthermore, the General Political Declaration of the Government of the **Brussels-Capital Region** 2014-2019 stipulates that – given the differences in the employment rates on the basis of origin – the Government intends to take ambitious measures in order to promote diversity and fight against discrimination in employment. In **the German-speaking Community**, the integration of third-country nationals forms part of the Concept of Regional Development. It was identified as one of the priorities of the second implementation phase of the Concept of Regional Development (CDR II)⁴⁶. Finally, it is also worth pointing out that the latest **annual National Reform Programmes for Belgium** include the labour market integration of people of foreign origin among the priorities for Belgium, and present the actions that have been undertaken by the competent authorities in this perspective in a given timeframe⁴⁷.

The question of integration was also addressed on several occasions in **the federal and federated Parliaments** in recent years, with discussions focusing – inter alia – on the results of the different Socio-

⁴³ *La Wallonie plus forte*, 25 July 2017, http://www.wallonie.be/sites/wallonie/files/publications/dpr_mr-cdh2017.pdf

⁴⁴ *Government Agreement of the Flemish Government 2014 – 2019*, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/het-regeerakkoord-van-de-vlaamse-regering-2014-2019>

⁴⁵ See section 7.5 of the *Policy Note 2014-2019 on Work, Economy, Science and Innovation* of the Flemish Minister for Work, Economy, Innovation and Sports, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/beleidsnota-2014-2019-werk-economie-wetenschap-en-innovatie>

⁴⁶ German-speaking Community, *Concept of Regional Development in the German-speaking Community – Tome 4*, March 2016, http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/rek/Concept_de_Developpement_Regional_Tome_4.pdf

⁴⁷ The annual National Reform Programmes are available on: www.be2020.eu

economic monitoring instruments and the poor integration of foreign nationals on the Belgian labour market, as well as on the on measures taken to favour this integration⁴⁸.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.2, Q.8.

1.2.2. Policies, plans and strategic documents for labour market integration

Flanders

The Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) developed an **Action Plan for 2016-2018 entitled "Integration through work"**⁴⁹. This Actions Plan targets **"foreign language jobseekers with a migration background"**. The target group is thus much broader than the third-country nationals included in the scope of this study. It includes: foreign language speakers; non-EU born or EU born people, as well as third-country nationals; newcomers (i.e. who have been registered for less than 12 months at the population register of a Flemish or Brussels municipality) and longer term migrants (i.e. who have been registered for longer than 12 months at the population register of a Flemish or Brussels municipality); refugees; or people who follow the integration programme.

The **aim** of the Action Plan is "to effectively and efficiently guide jobseekers with a migration background to available vacancies, while providing the necessary support with respect to language requirements, training and the required skills. Where possible, this will involve an integrated career pathway approach that is based on on-the-job training. Acquiring language, technical competencies and general skills via on-the-job training leads to quicker and more effective integration. This approach forms the foundation for our partnerships with agencies that are responsible for integration and assimilation, reception centres for refugees and local authorities, sectors and businesses"⁵⁰.

The Action Plan defines strategic objectives and concrete actions to meet these objectives:

- **Strategic objective 1: For all individuals with a migration background to quickly find a lasting job.**
 - o Concrete action 1: Ensure a quick and lasting pathway to work – tailored to the person's needs.
- **Strategic objective 2: Employers and employers organisations offer a maximum of work and training opportunities to people with a migration background.**
 - o Concrete action 1: Companies recognize competencies.
 - o Concrete action 2: Provision of information to employers about legislation and support foreign language jobseekers with a migration background with employment possibilities.
- **Strategic objective 3: Contribution to a positive social opinion forming (with regards to people with a migration background)**
 - o Concrete action 1: Forceful approach to discrimination in the labour market.
 - o Concrete action 2: Invest in broad support within the entire society.
- **Strategic objective 4: Common processes are entirely client focussed**
 - o Concrete action 1: Coordinated and structured approach with regard to policy areas and levels which manifest itself in strong partnerships.
 - o Concrete action 2: Customized offer for (low skilled) youth.
 - o Concrete action 3: Elimination of barriers hindering access to entrepreneurship.

⁴⁸ See for example: Belgian House of Representatives, *Question n° 16797 from Emir Kir to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment, Economy and Consumer Affairs, in charge of Foreign Trade*, CRIV 54 COM 672, 23 May 2017, <http://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/pdf/54/ic672.pdf#search=%2216797%22> ; or Parliament of Wallonia, *Question from Graziana Trotta to the Walloon Minister for Employment and Training*, 7 December 2015 (https://www.parlement-wallonie.be/pwpages?p=interp-questions-voir&type=all&id_doc=65563) ; or Flemish Parliament, *Question from Emily Talpe to Minsiter Philippe Muyters*, 15 March 2018, <https://www.vlaamsparlament.be/commissies/commissievergaderingen/1237758/verslag/1240691>

⁴⁹ VDAB, *Integration through work*, <https://www.vdab.be/partners/integratie-door-werk>.

⁵⁰ Idem.

- Concrete action 4: Respect of the principles of language courtesy during the mentoring and mediation actions and development of an integrated language policy.
- Concrete action 5: Reinforce skills of VDAB mediators through training, education and coaching.

The Action Plan has been **implemented since April 2016**, and is ongoing. The development of the Action Plan was first started in the framework of the important inflow of applicants for international protection in Belgium in 2015/2016, in order to prepare for an expected inflow of jobseekers at the VDAB and provide appropriate measures. However, the VDAB did not experience a significant increase of registered jobseekers (which is linked to different factors). In this context, the scope of the Action Plan was broadened to a larger target group: foreign language jobseekers with a migration background⁵¹. The main driver for the broadening of the scope was the low employment rate among people with a migration background and non-native speakers in Belgium. In the framework of the slow and ineffective process to integrate this group into the labour market, the VDAB decided to develop a specific approach to address this issue⁵².

The VDAB Action Plan was developed in cooperation with numerous partners. It is based on:

- The advice of the Socio-Economic Council of Flanders, Diversity Committee;
- Research recommendations from the King Baudoin Foundation;
- Agreements with partners (Fedasil, Integration Offices, VVSG Education, etc.);
- Experiments and projects in mediation from the VDAB;
- European exchanges through ENPES, OECD, etc.

The Action Plan is **complementary to the Flemish integration programme**. A cooperation agreement was concluded between the VDAB and the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration, which are in charge of the operational implementation of the integration policy. This agreement details how the two partners collaborate and align the services they provide to the target group. The VDAB and the Agencies also collaborate in the framework of different AMIF and ESF projects.

It is also worth mentioning that a collaboration agreement was concluded in July 2016 between the VDAB and the federal reception agency Fedasil. It aims at facilitating the labour market integration of applicants/beneficiaries of international protection⁵³.

Brussels

There is no specific policy or model for the labour market integration of third-country nationals in Brussels. Third-country nationals have access to the same measures for socio-professional insertion as other jobseekers.

However, the **2017-2022 management contract of the Public Employment Service of Brussels (Actiris)** does specifically mention the integration of "newcomers" (no precise definition of this group is provided). This approach is linked to the important inflow of applicants for international protection in Belgium in 2015/2016, which increased awareness regarding the situation of newcomers in Brussels and the need for an adapted response⁵⁴.

The strategic objective n° 3 of Actiris' management contract (under Area 1: Actiris at the service of jobseekers and employers) is to guarantee that all people have access to the measures proposed, including "newcomers". To this end, the operational objective 3.1 stipulates that the following elements should be implemented: "build upon the network in charge of the integration programme for newcomers in order to ensure that the newcomers register at Actiris and that they are provided with support. More generally, assist newcomers – European or not – in order to help them navigate the Brussels labour market and help them avoid the difficulties associated with social dumping and precariousness in the framework of the EURES scheme and the measures to fight against discrimination"⁵⁵.

⁵¹ Source: VDAB.

⁵² See: European Commission, *PES Practice: Integration through work*, November 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1206&langId=en>.

⁵³ See: <https://www.vdab.be/nieuws/pers/2016/vdab-en-fedasil-zetten-samen-op-integratie-door-werk>

⁵⁴ Source: Actiris.

⁵⁵ *Actiris, 2017-2022 Management Contract : guaranteeing quality for all*, approved by the managing committee and by the Brussels Government on 22 June 2017, http://www.actiris.be/Portals/37/Contrat_de_gestion_Actiris_2017_2022_Garantir_la_qualit%C3%A9_pour_tous_et_toutes.pdf

In this framework, Actiris is currently developing its approach regarding the labour market integration of newcomers. The following **general aims** should form part of this approach⁵⁶:

- **Identification of the target group:** an automatic identification of newcomers in the IBIS-database of Actiris (i.e. the database of jobseekers) in order to be able to provide adapted support.
- **Actiris as the central actor regarding the integration of newcomers on the labour market:** Actiris should have a clear idea about the newcomers who are looking for a job in Brussels in order to plan a specific pathway towards work, in cooperation with the front-line services who are in contact with newcomers (including BON and BAPA). In this framework, partnership agreements are being developed with the relevant organisations.
- **Work towards fast and sustainable employment of newcomers.**
- **Support employers:** Awareness-raising activities focusing on diversity and anti-discrimination and targeting employers will be continued.
- **Monitoring:** Identify the needs of newcomers and map their pathways to employment.

Wallonia

Wallonia reinforced its policy for the socio-professional integration of newcomers into the labour market through the decision of the Walloon Government of 3 March 2016 on "**newcomers: implementation of the scheme for socio-professional insertion**". This decision is linked to the important inflow of applicants for international protection in 2015/2016 in Belgium.

The target group does not include all third-country nationals included in the scope of the study, but is limited to certain "newcomers" residing in Wallonia, more precisely third-country nationals who have been residing in Belgium for less than three years and who meet certain conditions regarding their residence⁵⁷ and work⁵⁸ permits:

- Have a valid registration document ("attestation d'immatriculation") and a work permit type C;
- Have a valid residence permit type A and a work permit type C;
- Have a valid residence permit type A or B and be exempted from a work permit;
- Have a valid Annex 35 and a work permit type C (or be exempted from it)⁵⁹.

The **overall aim** of the Walloon scheme is to **facilitate the integration of newcomers into the Walloon labour market**.

The Walloon government tasked the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem) with coordinating the pathway of newcomers towards the labour market. Following a **socio-professional evaluation** and an **identification of competences**, relevant job offers or services are proposed to the newcomer - either by the Forem or by its partners. This may include professional training, job coaching, assistance with the validation of competences, etc. The rationale behind the programme is that the specific needs of newcomers are difficult to anticipate. It is therefore important to identify the newcomer's skills and competences at an early stage and to adapt the offer of services on the basis of the needs identified. This means that specific measures focused on migrants were not created, but rather that existing ones were strengthened (to be adapted or complemented by other measures if necessary).

In this framework, so-called "**migrants' platforms**" of the Forem were created at the local level. Those **single contact points** are tasked with the organization of the socio-professional integration pathway of newcomers at a local level. They are multi-disciplinary platforms organized around counsellors and trainers; and are led by project leaders. The Forem is also responsible for concluding **cooperation agreements between the relevant external stakeholders** (i.e. dealing with newcomers), in order to formalize the relations between them.

Furthermore, as it often proves difficult for migrants to obtain a recognition of their diplomas or competences, the Walloon government also decided to favour the **validation of newcomers' competences** by strengthening the support provided to newcomers to validate their competences or have their diplomas recognized; develop accelerated modules to learn French in order to prepare for the exams; develop accelerated support processes for newcomers wishing to validate their competences.

⁵⁶ Source: Actiris.

⁵⁷ See: https://dofi.ibz.be/sites/dvzoe/FR/Guidedesprocedures/Pages/Le_droit_de_sejourner.aspx

⁵⁸ See: <http://emploi.wallonie.be/home/travailleurs-etrangers/permis-de-travail.html>

⁵⁹ See: <https://www.leforem.be/accompagnement-primos-arrivants.html>

Other actions mentioned in the Decision of the Walloon government include: **strengthening the translation and interpretation services** and **strengthen the services** provided to newcomers by organisations in charge of socio-professional integration (i.e. Public Centres for Social Action, Regional Missions for Employment, Centres for Socio-professional Insertion and Support Structures for the Self-creation of Employment).

Furthermore, the government also strengthened the services provided by the **Regional Missions for Employment (MIRE)** regarding the socio-professional integration of newcomers. To this purpose, each MIRE could hire a **specific job-coach for newcomers**. They provide individual or collective support to newcomers (e.g. information on the labour market, support with finding a job, contact companies, etc.)⁶⁰.

In the framework of this decision of the Walloon government, the Forem launched a **call for proposals**⁶¹ in October 2017 in order to strengthen the measures and services aiming at the integration of newcomers into the labour market. The main focus action areas are:

- Learning French in direct link with a specific profession and/or active search for a job;
- Direct confrontation with companies via mentoring activities;
- Methodological and pedagogical support to obtain the B or C driver's license.

Implementation of the selected projects started at the end of 2017/beginning of 2018.

The scheme for the integration of newcomers into the labour market is **complementary to the Walloon integration programme**. The Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem) and the Regional Integration Centres provide the socio-professional orientation foreseen in the framework of the integration programme.

It is also worth mentioning that a **collaboration agreement** was concluded in August 2017 between the Forem and the Federal reception agency Fedasil. It aims at facilitating the labour market integration of applicants/beneficiaries of international protection⁶².

German speaking Community

There are no specific policies/strategic documents or models for the labour market integration of third-country nationals included in the scope of this study in the German-speaking Community. Third-country nationals have access to the same measures for socio-professional insertion as other jobseekers.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.2, Q.5 a), b), c), d) and e).

1.2.3. Public debate on (labour market) integration

The topic of (labour market) integration was present in the Belgian public debate over the last few years. The media covered various aspects of this topic, and academia and certain NGOs also dedicated some of their activities and publications to it.

Different aspects of **integration** were present in the public debate, among which the integration programmes at the federated level and their results. The recently introduced "newcomers declaration" and the required "integration efforts" at the federal level were also the subject of debate in recent years.

The issue of **labour market integration** more specifically was also present in the public debate. This included a focus on the poor integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin on the labour market in Belgium (e.g. statistics, international comparison, etc.), its causes, and possible ways to address it.

More broadly speaking, the question of **diversity** as well as **discrimination (on the labour market)** was also present in public debate.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.2, Q.7.

⁶⁰ See: <http://www.bassinefe-bw.be/admin/ckeditor/kcfinder/upload/files/documents/BR-DISPOSITIFS%20ISP%20PUBLIC%20MIGRANTS.pdf>

⁶¹ See: <https://www.leforem.be/partenaires/appel-a-projet-insertion-primo-arrivants.html>

⁶² See: <https://www.fedasil.be/nl/nieuws/opvang-asielzoekers/samenwerking-tussen-fedasil-en-forem>

1.2.4. Impact of the recent migration flows on (labour market) integration measures

The important inflow of applicants for international protection in 2015/2016 had a significant impact on the policies and practices in Belgium regarding the **integration of beneficiaries of international protection** (including on the labour market), at different levels. Many different measures/projects/legislative changes specifically targeting this group were implemented. Collaboration between the different actors involved in the integration of beneficiaries of international protection was also reinforced.

More broadly speaking, the inflow **also had an impact on some of the policies and practices regarding the integration of third-country nationals in general**. Certain measures or projects started in the framework of the important influx, but were also made accessible to other third-country nationals, or they later expanded their scope to include other third-country nationals. For example, in Brussels, the initial intention was to provide accreditation to only one Reception Office to organize the French-speaking integration programme for newcomers. Following the inflow of 2015 and the important number of applicants for international protection who arrived on the Brussels territory, the College of the COCOF decided to provide an accreditation to two Reception Offices for newcomers, in order to significantly increase the number of people who can have access to the services of the offices⁶³. These Reception Offices are also accessible to other third-country nationals. Other example: as mentioned above, the development of the Action Plan of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) on "Integration through work" was first started in the framework of the important inflow of applicants for international protection in 2015/2016, in order to prepare for an expected inflow of jobseekers at the VDAB and provide appropriate measures. However, the VDAB did not experience a significant increase of registered jobseekers (which is linked to different factors) and the scope of the Action Plan was broadened to a larger target group: foreign language jobseekers with a migration background⁶⁴.

However, other integration policies and measures were **not significantly impacted by the recent inflow**, and certain recent developments in the field of integration were already in the pipeline before the important inflow. For example, the integration policy of the German-speaking Community which targets different categories of migrants (and not only beneficiaries of international protection) was already in development before the important inflow of 2015/2016⁶⁵.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.2, Q.6.

1.3. Implementation of labour market integration policies: institutional framework, monitoring and evaluation

1.3.1. Institutional framework of (labour market) integration

The institutional framework regarding (labour market) integration in Belgium is **complex**. The **Regions** (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels-Capital) and the **Communities** (Flemish, French and German-speaking) are competent for the different dimensions of integration of foreign nationals, and also – to a large extent – for labour market policies (especially since the sixth state reform of 2014 which led to a series of competences being transferred from the federal level to the federated level). As a consequence, policies, practices, actors involved, and budgets attributed to (labour market) integration differ from one entity to another.

It is also worth noting that the **federal authorities** are competent for the residence of foreign nationals in Belgium. A recent law has introduced new residence conditions into the Immigration Act that focus on integration (see Section 1.1.2 of this report).

⁶³ Source: French Community Commission.

⁶⁴ Source: VDAB.

⁶⁵ Source: German-speaking Community.

The following paragraphs provide a **non-exhaustive overview** of the main actors involved in (labour market) integration.

Flanders

Regarding **integration policies and integration programmes – generally speaking** - the Agency for Local Affairs (“Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur”) is responsible for policy preparation and evaluation regarding integration in **Flanders**. The **Agency for Integration and Civic Integration** (which includes BON, the Brussels Reception Office), as well as the **two local Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration of the cities of Gent** (IN-Gent) and **Antwerp** (Atlas) are in charge of the operational implementation of the integration policy.

Regarding policies and measures related specifically to **labour market integration**, the **Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB)** plays an important role.

Brussels

In **Brussels**, the **Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission (VGC)** are responsible for the integration policy for Dutch-speaking people, whereas the **French Community Commission (COCOF)** is responsible for the integration policy for French-speaking people⁶⁶. Furthermore, the **Common Community Commission (COCOM)** regulates and manages matters common to the two Communities (i.e. French and Flemish) in the Brussels-Capital Region (e.g. it is the competent entity to enact the Ordinance making the integration programmes mandatory in Brussels). Regarding the integration programmes, foreign nationals wishing to follow the Dutch-speaking programme can contact BON, the Brussels Reception Office (which forms part of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration); whereas the foreign nationals wishing to follow the French-speaking programme can contact one of the two Reception Offices (VIA and BAPA Bxl). The mission of the Reception Offices is to organise the **primary component** of the integration programme. The **secondary component** is implemented by the Reception Offices and **external accredited actors**.

Regarding policies and measures related specifically to **labour market integration**, the **Regional Public Employment Service of Brussels (Actiris)** plays an important role. Furthermore, **Bruxelles Formation** is the official organisation for French-speaking vocational training in Brussels. It collaborates with different partners, such as the **socio-professional insertion organisations** (“OISP”)⁶⁷. Furthermore, VDAB-Brussels is competent in Brussels for Dutch-speaking vocational training and may also assist people with a Dutch-speaking career plan⁶⁸.

Wallonia

The **General Operational Directorate on Local Authorities and Social Action** (« Direction générale opérationnelle des Pouvoirs locaux et de l'Action sociale » or « DGO5 ») is responsible for the coordination of the actions related to the integration of foreign nationals. Together with the DGO5, **eight Regional Integration Centres**⁶⁹ develop, implement and organise the integration programme⁷⁰. The Regional Integration Centres are also responsible – inter alia - for providing support to the **Local Integration Initiatives**, for the coordination of integration activities within the Local Integration Plans, and for coordinating and providing assistance regarding the implementation of integration activities on its

⁶⁶ Belgian Contact Point of the European Migration Network, *Integration of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market in Belgium*, May 2016.

⁶⁷ For further information on the main actors involved in socio-professional integration in Brussels, see (for example) : <https://www.bassinefe-bxl.be/paysage-efe>

⁶⁸ See: <https://www.vdab.be/nieuws/pers/2015/actiris-en-vdab-ondertekenen-een-samenwerkingsakkoord-voor-bemiddeling-brusselse>

⁶⁹ The eight centres are : CAI (Centre d'Action Interculturelle de la Province de Namur) ; CeRAIC (Centre Régional d'Action Interculturelle de la Région du Centre) ; CIMB (Centre Interculturel de Mons-Borinage) ; CRIBW (Centre Régional d'Intégration du Brabant Wallon) ; CRIC (Centre Régional d'Intégration de Charleroi) ; CRILUX (Centre Régional d'Intégration de la Province de Luxembourg) ; CRIPEL (Centre Régional d'Intégration pour les Personnes Etrangères ou d'Origine Etrangère de Liège) ; CRVI (Centre Régional de Verviers pour l'Intégration). See : <http://actionsociale.wallonie.be/sites/default/files/documents/Coordonnees%20des%20Centres%20regionaux%20Integratation.pdf>

⁷⁰ See : <http://actionsociale.wallonie.be/integration>

territories. These centres cooperate through a supra-structure, the Platform for Consultation and Support for the Regional Integration Centres (**DISCRI**).

Various **other actors** are involved in the integration programmes and activities, such as the Local Integration Initiatives; the Associations for continuing education ("association d'éducation permanente"); Social advancement education establishments ("établissements d'enseignement de promotion sociale"); higher education establishments; universities; and the organisation for interpretation in a social setting.

Regarding labour market integration more specifically, various actors are also involved in Wallonia. The **Regional Public Employment Service of Wallonia (le Forem)** plays an important role. Furthermore, other actors include the Regional Missions for Employment⁷¹ ("Missions Régionales pour l'Emploi"), the Support Structures for Self-creation of Employment ("Structures d'accompagnement à l'auto-crédation d'emploi")⁷² or the Centres for Socio-professional Insertion ("Centres d'insertion socio-professionnelles")⁷³.

German-speaking Community

The **Ministry** of said Community is responsible for integration policies. Regarding the integration programme, foreign nationals are accompanied by the "**Info-Integration Centre**". It accompanies participants in the integration programme from start to finish. The centre also has other tasks, such as the organisation of awareness raising measures on migration targeting the host population; or offering consultation services for organisations working with migrants. Furthermore, there are also **two local integration managers** (one working in the South and one working in the North). They are responsible for the coordination of all local initiatives in the integration field and for the analysis of the needs in the integration field. They are also the first contact persons for volunteers in the integration field.

Regarding policies and measures related specifically to **labour market integration**, the **Regional Public Employment Service of the German-speaking Community (Arbeitsamt)** plays an important role.

Local level

At the local level (in the whole of Belgium), the **municipalities** and the **Public Centres for Social Action** (OCMWs/CPASs) also play an important role in the (labour market) integration of third-country nationals. For example, on the basis of **article 60 § 7** of the Law on Public Centres for Social Action⁷⁴, OCMWs/CPAS can provide a job to certain people (including certain third-country nationals) who are not active in order (re)integrate this person back into the social security system and the employment process⁷⁵.

Other actors

Civil society organisations also carry out various projects and activities related to (labour market) integration of foreign nationals, in collaboration with public bodies or not.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.3, Q.9.

1.3.2. Periodic monitoring reports

There are **several periodic monitoring instruments in Belgium** – at federal, regional and local level – on (labour market) integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin.

Socio-economic Monitoring Instrument (labour market and origin)

⁷¹ These missions are organisations that are approved by the Directorate for Employment and Work Permits of the Walloon Public Service. See: <http://emploi.wallonie.be/home/creation-demploi/missions-regionales.html>

⁷² See: <http://emploi.wallonie.be/en/home/creation-demploi/saace.html>

⁷³ See: <http://emploi.wallonie.be/en/home/formation/cisp.html>

⁷⁴ Law of 8 July 1976 on the Public Centres for Social Action, *Belgian Official Gazette*, 5 August 1976, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=1976070834

⁷⁵ In these cases, the OCMW/CPAS acts as the employer. It can employ the person in its own departments or suggest him/her to a third party employer. The Centres receive a subsidy from the government for the duration of the employment and are exempted from paying employer contributions.

At the federal level, the “**Socioeconomic Monitoring Instrument**” (**labour market and origin**) was set up to collect and analyse data on the labour market situation of people with a migration background in Belgium. The instrument cross-references individual administrative data and administrative data related to matters such as national backgrounds with conventional socioeconomic data such as wage structure and location. On the basis of the analysis made, the reports provide a series of political recommendations.

The Monitor is prepared by the **Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue and Unia - the Inter-federal Centre for Equal Opportunities**, with the support of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the National Register. It is published on a bi-annual basis. The first report was published in September 2013, the second one in November 2015, and the third one in December 2017.

The **2017 report**⁷⁶ focuses on the entire population between 18 and 64 years old and combines data on their “origin” and “migration background” with information on the position on the Belgian labour market between 2008 and 2014. This third report includes new variables – such as the level of education – and areas, such as the public sector or the reason of migration, in order to better understand the participation in the labour market. The report covers a variety of **indicators**, including: employment rate, unemployment rate, inactivity rate, sector of occupation, salary level, etc.

The **source** of the data used is the Datawarehouse labour market and social protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS).

As for the **trends** put forward by the 2017 report regarding labour market integration, the report concludes – inter alia – that the main trends observed in the 2013 and 2015 reports are still valid. People of foreign origin are **less integrated on the labour market** than people of Belgian origin. In 2014, the employment rate of people (aged between 20-64 years) of Belgian origin was 73%, compared to 42.5% for people from Sub-Saharan Africa or 44.3% for people from the Maghreb⁷⁷.

The **segmentation of the labour market** also persists: people of Belgian origin are far more likely to get a job, a stable contract or a better salary. This segmentation is linked to the level of qualification, but for most factors (such as salaries, stability of the career, etc.) there are differences according to the origin that are difficult to explain. The report stresses that these differences are an indicator of unequal treatment on the labour market, or even discrimination.

Furthermore, the report indicates that the employment rate increases when the **level of education** increases (for everyone). However, when considering an equal level of education, people of Belgian origin are much better integrated in the labour market than those of foreign origin. The differences in **school performances** according to the origin are very high in Belgium. There are substantially more low-qualified people among the people of foreign origin than of Belgian origin (both for newcomers and people who have resided in Belgium for a longer time). The **level of qualification** has gained in importance: medium-skilled young people of all origins are better integrated in the labour market than low-skilled people of Belgian origin.

The 2017 report also underlines the important role of gender and household composition. The **gender gap** - both in terms of employment and remuneration - has decreased between 2008 and 2014, but it varies strongly according to the origin (e.g. difference of 5.1 percentage points between men and women of Belgian origin; and 20.3 percentage points between men and women of Maghreb origin). Participation in the labour market also varies according to the type of **household**. Women with children are more often unemployed.

The report also analyses the **socio-economic status of people on the basis of their administrative residence status**. It indicates that people who come to Belgium for work related reasons are more likely to be employed than those who come for family reunification or in the framework of the procedure for international protection. However, these differences decrease over time: the employment rate of people who arrived in Belgium in 2010 for work related reasons stagnated between 2011 and 2014 (from 61% to 60%), while the employment rate of people who came for family reunification increased (from 31% to 42%). This was also the case for people who came in the framework of an international protection procedure (from 11% to 33%).

⁷⁶ Service Public Fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation sociale & Unia, *Monitoring socio-économique 2017 : marché du travail et origine*, 2017, https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/1215_UNIA_Monitoring_2017_-_FR-Anysurfer.pdf

⁷⁷ See: <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/publication-du-monitoring-socio-economique-2017-emploi-et-origine>

Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor

The “**Flemish Migration and Integration Monitor**” compiles administrative and other statistical data on migration and integration processes of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin in Flanders, in a Belgian and European context. It also provides information on the social position of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin in Flanders. Three reports have been published so far: in 2013, 2015 and 2018. The 2018 report was a common project of the Flemish Agency for Internal Administration (ABB) and Statistics Flanders.

The **2018 report**⁷⁸ focused on the following **areas**: migration; foreign population and population of foreign origin; civic integration; social cohesion; and social position of the population of foreign origin (including employment and work, education and training, housing, revenues and poverty, health, and social participation). Regarding the area of employment and work, the **indicators** covered are: Population of working age; Employment rate; Status and employment position; Employment by public authorities; Unemployment; Professional inactivity; Work intensity of households.

The **sources of data** used regarding employment were varied: the employment situation was based on data from the Labour Force Survey (“Enquête naar Arbeidskrachten”, EAK Survey) of the Belgian Directorate General Statistics, and on administrative data of the Datawarehouse labour market and social protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS). For the unemployment figures, data on the non-working job-seekers of the Flemish Public Employment Agency (VDAB) were also used. Finally, for the work intensity of households, data of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC-survey) of the Belgian Directorate General Statistics (ADS) were also used. Finally, data from the Service Diversity Policy of the Flemish government was also used for the figures on employment by public authorities.

As for the **trends put forward by the 2018 report** regarding employment, the report concludes – inter alia – that the socio-economic position of people of non-EU origin in Flanders is still less favourable than the position of people of Belgian or EU origin. Various sources show that the employment rate of people of non-EU origin is lower than those of EU origin. The employment rate for all origin categories is much lower for women than for men. However, it is worth noting that the employment rate of women has increased more in the period 2009-2016 than the employment rate of men (in all origin categories), which means that the gender gap has decreased (CBSS data). Furthermore, the report also underlines the more precarious work situation of people of non-EU origin. For example, it appears that the share of people of non-EU origin who are working with short and irregular contracts is four times higher than the share of people of Belgian origin working under such a regime. Furthermore, the report underlines that the unemployment rate for people born outside the EU is four times higher than for people born in Belgium, and almost three times higher than for people born in the EU (data from the EAK-survey).

The Local Civic Integration and Integration Monitor (municipalities of the Flemish Region and the Brussels-Capital Region)

The “**Local Civic Integration and Integration Monitor**” (LIIM)⁷⁹ compiles data on the extent and the social position of foreign nationals and persons of foreign origin for **each municipality of the Flemish Region and the Brussels-Capital Region**. It aims at providing local authorities with reliable data and support them with the planning and development of their policies in these areas. For each municipality, a digital report with key figures can be obtained, which includes the results for the municipality on the basis of different indicators. The Monitor is updated on a yearly basis with the most recent data. 5 editions have been published so far. The Monitor was developed at the request of the Flemish Minister for Civic Integration, and is the result of a cooperation protocol between the Flemish Agency for Internal Administration (ABB) and the research department of the Flemish Government (SVR).

The **2016 “Local Civic Integration and Integration Monitor”**⁸⁰ provides information on different **areas**: demographics; civic integration; employment; education and training; housing; welfare and poverty; and participation in the municipality. Regarding employment, the Monitor includes a series of **indicators**, including on: number of employed people and total population by origin group; number of salaried people and self-employed people by origin group; number of job-seekers and people working by

⁷⁸ Noppe, J., Vanweddigen, M., Doyen, G., Stuyck, K., Feys, Y., Buysschaert, P., *Vlaamse Migratie- en Integratiemonitor 2018*, May 2018, Available at: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/vlaamse-migratie-en-integratiemonitor-2018>

⁷⁹ See: <http://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/monitor-lokale-inburgering-en-integratie>

⁸⁰ Available at: <http://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/monitor-lokale-inburgering-en-integratie>

origin group; number of people in a household with a low work intensity by origin group; or number of non-working job-seekers by origin group.

The **sources** of the data are the Datawarehouse labour market and social protection of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS), as well as the Flemish Public Employment Agency (VDAB).

EMN Common template Part I, 1.3, Q.10.

1.3.3. Main challenges in designing and implementing (labour market) integration policies

A few challenges and obstacles could be identified – on the basis of desk research and input provided by relevant partners - regarding the development and implementation of (labour market) integration policies for third-country nationals.

Generally speaking, the social position of people of foreign origin (including third-country nationals) is worse than that of people of Belgian origin in many domains, including the position on the labour market. This is linked to a **combination of factors**⁸¹. The Socio-Economic Monitoring Report of 2017⁸² puts forward **two main types of reasons** to explain the disadvantaged position of people of foreign origin (including third-country nationals) on the labour market in Belgium:

- **Structural characteristics of the Belgian labour market**, which means that all groups “at risk” experience difficulties integrating the labour market. These characteristics include: high thresholds to access the labour market (e.g. high demands regarding skills, languages, etc.); little mobility of the labour market (i.e. people in Belgium tend to work for a longer period of time in the same job/for the same employer/in the same sector than in other countries); segmentation of the labour market (primary segment with stable jobs, high salaries, etc. and the secondary segment with temporary jobs, lower salaries, more job insecurity, etc.) and little mobility between the segments; unequal educational opportunities; and gender related factors.
- In addition, **specific factors make the situation of people of foreign origin**, including third country nationals, on the labour market even more complex. These factors include discrimination; reproduction of social and cultural capital (absence of role models); and migration to Belgium for other motives than work, such as family reasons.

Favouring the integration of third-country nationals – including labour market integration – thus requires that action is taken in **a variety of policy areas** such as work, education and training, housing, health, youth, culture, etc.⁸³. Adopting **a transversal approach to the (labor market) integration policies** is therefore important⁸⁴. Such an approach has been adopted in Flanders, e.g. through the adoption of the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019, which is an instrument to coordinate policies related to integration. It indicates which objectives Flanders wants to achieve across the different policy areas and which measures will be taken within and across these policy areas. Through this instrument, the different policy areas focus on the same priorities, which should maximise the impact of the policies⁸⁵.

Furthermore, the **complex institutional framework** in Belgium regarding (labour market) integration – involving various actors at different levels – could also be seen as a challenge, as it leads to a strong need for **coordination mechanisms**. A recent research paper found that although Belgium’s complex division of competences is not a main cause of the country’s poor performance regarding the labour market integration of foreign nationals, there was still room for improvement on intergovernmental cooperation⁸⁶.

⁸¹ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

⁸² Service Public Fédéral Emploi, travail et concertation sociale & Unia, *Monitoring socio-économique 2017 : marché du travail et origine*, 2017, https://www.unia.be/files/Documenten/Publicaties_docs/1215_UNIA_Monitoring_2017_-_FR-Anysurfer.pdf

⁸³ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

⁸⁴ https://www.parlement-wallonie.be/pwpages?p=interp-questions-voir&type=all&id_doc=65563;http://www.dekamer.be/doc/CCRI/pdf/54/ic672.pdf#search=%2216797%22

⁸⁵ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

⁸⁶ Adam I. and Van Dijk M., *Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium – high time to mainstream*, Policy Brief 2015/2, Institute for European Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, March 2015.

Furthermore, the wide range of actors involved in (labour market) integration makes the programmes and available measures difficult to read for the (potential) users⁸⁷.

What's more, the **needs of third-country nationals regarding socio-professional integration can vary** greatly (e.g. different levels of education, different family situations, etc.). Developing approaches and measures adapted to the needs of the different profiles is thus one of the challenges faced by the competent authorities and partners. The recent Action Plan "Integration through work" of the Flemish Public Employment Service thus underlines the need for more tailored approaches for certain groups, such as highly skilled people.

In addition, the **gender dimension** is also an important element to be taken into account. As previously mentioned, the labour market integration of third-country national women is poorer than that of third-country national men. Women often face additional difficulties when trying to access the labour market. Developing approaches and measures adapted to their needs is also one of the challenges faced by the competent authorities and partners.

Another challenge regarding the development and implementation of efficient (labour market) integration policies is to **involve employers and employers' organisations as key partners** in the process. Employers have an important part to play regarding various aspects of labour market integration (e.g. development or identification of competences, learning of a language on the workfloor, etc.). The importance of this partnership has recently been underlined – inter alia – in the Action Plan "integration through work" of the Flemish Public Employment Service, which includes cooperation with employers and employers' organisations among its objectives.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that a **series of practical challenges** have been identified by various stakeholders regarding the **participation of third-country nationals in socio-professional integration initiatives**⁸⁸. These include – inter alia- the fact that although different actors offer a wide range of vocational training opportunities/ language courses/ others, the waiting lists to access such measures can be long (especially in large cities). The difficulties associated with the procedures to obtain the official recognition of a foreign diploma have also been underlined. Furthermore, the mobility of third-country nationals may also be challenging (e.g. no drivers' license or car). It can be particularly challenging for women and single parents to participate in the initiatives on a regular basis due to the lack of affordable child care or a lack of mobility.

EMN Common template Part I, 1.3, Q.11.

⁸⁷ See for example : Xhardez C., « L'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Bruxelles : un puzzle institutionnel et politique », *Brussels Studies*, Collection générale, n° 105.

⁸⁸ See for example: Myria, *La migration en chiffres et en droits 2015*, p. 41, http://www.myria.be/files/Migration-rapport_2015-LR.pdf

2. Measures facilitating the labour market integration of third-country nationals

2.1. Overview of the main integration areas

2.1.1. Training and qualification

Training opportunities adapted to the needs

Different actors, most notably the Regional Public Employment Services and their partners, offer vocational and other training opportunities to jobseekers (e.g. learning a certain profession, workplace learning, internships, etc.). Most of these training opportunities are accessible to all jobseekers, and do not specifically target third-country nationals.

However, specific approaches have recently been developed at the regional level to ensure that third-country nationals (among other target groups) are **rapidly directed towards the training/qualification opportunities that best meet their specific needs**, in order to facilitate and accelerate their integration into the labour market.

In **Flanders**, one of the objectives of the Action Plan “Integration through work” of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) is to ensure a quick and lasting pathway to work for foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. Depending on the needs of the target person (identified through screenings), the person is oriented towards one of the four **pathways for integration into the labour market**: rapid mediation to employment, integrated trajectories, combined trajectories, and linear trajectories. Based on the needs of the person, he/she can access training opportunities in combination with other measures (see Section 2.2, Measure 1 of this report,).

If necessary, these four pathways can be further enhanced through **workplace learning** (with or without language coaching in the workplace). There are different types of training opportunities on the work floor (these may be accessible to other jobseekers)⁸⁹ :

- Educational internship (“opleidingsstage”): this is a workplace internship for jobseekers who are following a vocational training provided by the VDAB or a partner - in an integrated/combined or linear pathway.
- Professional exploratory internship (“beroepsverkenkende stage” or “BVS”). The internship lasts for up to four weeks and provides the opportunity to showcase existing competences and/or to identify missing competences.
- Individual vocational training (“Individuele beroepsopleiding” or “IBO”): this training in the workplace lasts for one to six months, during which the participant will acquire the needed competences to carry out his/her job. A training plan is elaborated for the participant. The employer only pays the productivity bonus (in addition to the jobseeker’s benefits) and not a salary or social security contributions. The training is followed by an employment contract.
- Vocational experience agreement (“Beroepsinlevingsovereenkomst” or “BIO”): this is a voluntary internship in the workplace, based on a training agreement. The employer only pays an internship allowance and not a salary or social security contributions.

In **Wallonia**, the government reinforced its policy regarding the socio-professional integration of newcomers in March 2016. It tasked the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem) with coordinating the pathway of newcomers towards the labour market. Following a **socio-professional evaluation** and an **identification of competences**, the newcomer is oriented towards the services adapted to his/her needs. The objective is to ensure rapid and efficient integration into the labour market. Among other options, the

⁸⁹ For further information on workplace learning opportunities via the VDAB, see : <https://werkgevers.vdab.be/werkgevers/werkplekieren>

newcomer may be oriented towards one of the **various training and internship opportunities** provided to jobseekers by the Forem and its partners⁹⁰. This includes, for example, training-insertion plans ("Plan Formation-Insertion"), which provide jobseekers with the opportunity to follow a training in a company for a few months to acquire the needed competences, before being employed by the same company. Another example are insertions in professional situations ("mises en situation professionnelle" or "MISIP"), which provide jobseekers with the opportunity to learn more about a certain profession through an unpaid internship of a few days.

In **Brussels**, the Public Employment Service (Actiris) – in the framework of its 2017-2022 management contract - aims at better identifying newcomers and their needs, in order to be able to provide them with adapted support.

Recognition of academic degrees and diplomas

The recognition (or equivalence) of diplomas obtained abroad is an important element for the socio-professional integration of third-country nationals, as it may be required to start or resume studies, start professional training or take up employment. As an example, 26% of the jobseekers registered in Brussels in 2015 declared to have, at least, one higher educational diploma obtained abroad⁹¹. **Different options** are available to third-country nationals in Belgium to obtain the recognition of their diplomas.

NARIC-Vlaanderen⁹² is the foreign qualification recognition service of the **Flemish Community**. More specifically, it is competent for the recognition of foreign diplomas of higher education, adult education and of secondary education. NARIC-Vlaanderen is also responsible for providing information on the recognition procedures. There are two procedures for the recognition of a diploma: (i) a recognition of the level of a diploma (e.g. bachelor, master, etc.) and (ii) recognition of a specific diploma (i.e. NARIC determines to which specific Flemish diploma the foreign diploma is equivalent)⁹³.

In the framework of the Action Plan "Integration through Work", the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) cooperates with NARIC-Vlaanderen regarding the equivalence of the *level* of a diploma obtained. The aim is to carry out an **accelerated assessment of levels** for foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. This level assessment, combined with a technical screening in a training centre/workplace/individual training, would ensure that the higher educated foreign nationals could integrate into the labour market at the right level (this also forms part of the "@level2work" project, see Section 2.2, Measure 2 of this report).

In the **French Community**, the NARIC centre provides information on the procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications, but it does not manage the applications. The recognition of foreign qualifications is carried out by **different units of the competent department of the French Community**. One unit is responsible for the recognition of foreign diplomas of secondary education, and another unit for the recognition of foreign diplomas of higher education⁹⁴. As in the Flemish Community, two possibilities exist regarding the recognition (or equivalence) of diplomas of higher education: the recognition of the level of a degree or the recognition of a specific academic degree⁹⁵.

The **Walloon Public Employment Service** (Forem) refers those concerned to the competent units of the French Community.

Several public authorities and NGOs **provide assistance** to people wishing to obtain the recognition of their foreign diplomas. For example, in **Brussels**, the **NGO Ciré** collaborates with **BON** (the reception office in Brussels, which forms part of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration) and the **Brussels Public Employment Service (Actiris)** on the provision of information on the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad⁹⁶. Activities include: providing information to employees of Actiris and its partners who are in direct contact with job seekers (e.g. information sessions or the development of information tools, such as flyers) and providing information to job seekers (e.g. information sessions). In 2014, the website "My diplomas – Diploma recognition" was set up, which provides information and contact details of the different institutions in Belgium that are responsible for the recognition of qualifications and diplomas and vocational training. The website is thus very useful as it centralizes information on the different options available in Belgium. In **Wallonia**, the **Regional Integration Centres** can support people with the

⁹⁰ For further information on the training/internships opportunities via the Forem, see: <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/formations-et-stages.html>

⁹¹ See: <http://www.validationdescompetences.be/actualites/comment-faire-reconnaitre-son-diplome-%C3%A9tranger-en-belgique>

⁹² See: <https://naricvlaanderen.be/nl/home>

⁹³ See: <https://naricvlaanderen.be/nl/niveau-erkenning-of-specifieke-erkenning>

⁹⁴ See : <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/>

⁹⁵ See: <http://www.equivalences.cfwb.be/index.php?id=1215>

⁹⁶ Source: Actiris.

preparation of their application. In **Flanders**, the **Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration** provide this type of support.

Assessment and recognition of professional competencies

Some third-country nationals may not have formal qualifications or diplomas, but may have acquired certain skills through formal or informal learning (e.g. work experience, leisure time, etc.). In Belgium, third-country nationals can obtain the **official recognition of their gained competencies**, regardless of how they were acquired. This validation system can play an important role in the socio-professional integration of third-country nationals. It is worth noting that the validation measures are generally not specifically targeted at third-country nationals, but certain specific support measures do exist.

In **Flanders**, the government puts an emphasis on the importance of the recognition of competencies or "EVC" ("Erkennen van Competenties") to highlight, value and use all talent in Flanders to a maximum degree⁹⁷ - as is underlined in the Government Agreement and different Policy Notes for 2014-2019. For example, the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019 underlines the crucial importance of EVC for - inter alia - newcomers who have acquired competencies abroad but cannot provide certificates to prove this⁹⁸.

Skills and competencies can be tested by recognized EVC-providers and can be converted into qualification certificates of competence which can be used to access the labour market or get an exemption for certain training/education programmes. The EVC procedures and practice in Flanders differ per policy domain on the basis of different regulations. In this framework, the Flemish Government approved a Concept Note in 2015 on "Integrated policy for the recognition of competences (EVC)"⁹⁹. It details a common policy framework for EVC and defines the next steps to be taken¹⁰⁰. A Decree is in preparation.

The recognition of competencies is also underlined as an important aspect of integration into the labour market in the **Action Plan "Integration through work"** of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB). Besides the official recognition of skills by recognized providers as described above, the Action Plan stipulates that employers may play an important part in evaluating the competencies of foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. Rapid technical screenings of the target people can be carried out within the VDAB competency centres and/or in the workplace. Career exploration internships and workplace learning opportunities are considered as a possibility for the target people to present their competencies and to have them evaluated by experts (VDAB instructors and employers). The evaluation of competencies by employers would count as a "recognition" of competencies in the framework of the COMPETENT system of the VDAB. The recognized competencies may be used in the search for employment (e.g. include it in CV).

In **Wallonia and Brussels (French-speaking)**, jobseekers can also obtain the recognition of their competencies. This recognition is organized by a Consortium on validation of competencies ("Consortium de validation des compétences"). Validation Centres organize tests to assess the competencies of people. If these tests are passed successfully, a "Certificate of competency" may be issued to the person¹⁰¹.

It is also interesting to point out that, as foreign language jobseekers do not always have the **language skills** necessary to successfully pass the tests to validate their competencies, a specific pilot-project ("Alphaval") was implemented in Brussels (in 2016/ 2017) to address this challenge. Several partners were involved in this project (e.g. Consortium on validation of competencies, Actiris, Local Missions for Employment, etc.) The project aimed at providing these jobseekers with specific language training so that they could pass the tests¹⁰².

In Wallonia, the Walloon government (in the framework of its Decision of March 2016 on reinforcing its policy on socio-professional insertion of newcomers) underlined the importance of facilitating the **validation of newcomers' competencies**. To this end, several measures were foreseen: strengthening the support provided to newcomers to validate their competencies or have their diplomas recognized; develop accelerated modules to learn French in order to prepare for the tests; develop accelerated support processes for newcomers wishing to validate their competencies.

⁹⁷ Flanders, *Note to the Flemish Government, Concept note: integrated policy for the recognition of competences*, http://www.erkennenvancompetenties.be/nieuws/bestanden/Conceptnota_EVC_VR_17_juli_2015.pdf

⁹⁸ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

⁹⁹ http://www.erkennenvancompetenties.be/nieuws/bestanden/Conceptnota_EVC_VR_17_juli_2015.pdf

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.erkennenvancompetenties.be/nieuws/>

¹⁰¹ See: <http://www.cvdc.be>

¹⁰² See: <http://www.cvdc.be/sites/default/files/public/uploads/common/Resume-rapport-validation-competence-2015.pdf>

2.1.2. Enhancement of (soft) skills

A **good command of one of the official languages** of Belgium is seen as essential for social and economic integration by the different federated entities. In this framework, the learning of one of the national languages forms an integral part of the integration policies of the Regions/Communities. Language courses (French, Dutch or German) are included in all the **different (mandatory) integration programmes** provided by the Regions/Communities. Third-country nationals thus have access to **various language courses and tools**, provided by different actors, at different levels (e.g. courses for illiterate people of low language skilled people). This includes digital tools. For example, a digital learning platform 'Nedbox'¹⁰³ was launched in 2015, which allows users to learn Dutch in a pleasant and less educational setting.

Furthermore, the Regional Public Employment Services and their partners provide **language courses that focus more specifically on workplace needs**. However, these courses do not necessarily target third-country nationals (they may also be accessible to Belgian or EU nationals, etc.).

In **Flanders**, the Action Plan "Integration through work" of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) – which targets foreign language jobseekers with a migration background - has caused a fundamental change in the approach of the VDAB regarding employment and learning Dutch. In the framework of this new approach, entry level Dutch for mentoring, screening, training and mediation is no longer needed. The knowledge of Dutch is **seen as a competence, but (not always) as a prerequisite**. This does not imply that the VDAB does not consider knowledge of the Dutch language as important, but it considers that it is also possible to learn a language while looking for a job or while working. This can be done through **flexible language training** during education, training programmes or in the workplace (see Section 2.2, Measure 1 of this report).

In Wallonia, the **Walloon government** also put an emphasis on acquiring language skills in its decision of 3 March 2016 on the socio-professional insertion of newcomers. In this framework, so-called "**migrants platforms**" were created at a local level. Those **single contact points** are tasked with the organization of the socio-professional integration programme of newcomers at a local level. A few **trainers of French as a Foreign Language** are active in the framework of these platforms. Training focuses on acquiring knowledge of French in relation to the labour market (e.g. learning French in order to facilitate the validation of competences of newcomers, learning French to pass the test before having access to a qualifying training). Furthermore, **the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem)** also collaborates with other actors, including in the framework of calls for proposals. The **call for proposals** of October 2017 on the integration of newcomers lists a series of areas of action, including learning French in direct link with a particular profession. Selected projects started at the end of 2017/beginning of 2018.

In **Brussels**, the Regional Public Employment Service (Actiris) provides support to jobseekers to learn/improve a language through different means¹⁰⁴ (e.g. the "language checks" system or the "Brulingua" online platform¹⁰⁵).

In the **German-speaking Community**, the Arbeitsamt (via a partner organisation) also provides language courses focused on a professional environment.

2.1.3. Provision of information and counseling

Information, counselling and coaching on labour market integration

The provision of information and counselling to third-country nationals on (labour market) integration – adapted to their interests and needs - is seen as essential in all the Regions/Communities.

Counselling and assistance is provided to foreign nationals participating in the **different (mandatory) integration programmes**, which include a **module on socio-professional integration**. However, the organisation and content of this module differs per programme.

Furthermore, the Regional Public Employment Services and their partners provide job-seekers with **information, counselling services and assistance regarding** integration into to the labour market. They have also developed various information tools (e.g. websites, brochures, etc.). Many of the activities

¹⁰³ See: www.nedbox.be

¹⁰⁴ See: <http://www.actiris.be/ce/tabid/664/language/fr-BE/Apprendre-les-langues.aspx>

¹⁰⁵ See: <http://www.brulingua.be>

of the Regional Public Employment Services do not specifically target third-country nationals, but **more targeted approaches** have been developed in recent years.

In **Flanders**, the Action Plan “Integration through work” of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) puts an emphasis on the importance of providing tailored information, assistance and counselling to foreign language jobseekers with a migration background in order to ensure rapid integration into the labour market. VDAB counsellors receive specific training linked to the target group of the Action Plan.

Furthermore, the VDAB provides **various information materials** adapted to the target group (which includes third-country nationals). This includes a website with videos in different languages¹⁰⁶; leaflets (e.g. “working in Flanders”), as well as appointment cards (in different languages) where all the appointments with the VDAB can be written down. The VDAB has also recently developed the “Hi-app” for foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. This app functions in the same way as social media does. It aims at connecting jobseekers with the relevant people and provides them with information, links to supporting material, mediation, internship possibilities, mentoring, etc.

In **Wallonia**, the **Walloon Government**, through its Decision of 3 March 2016, reinforced its policy for the socio-professional integration of certain newcomers into the labour market. In this framework, information services and counselling specifically targeting certain newcomers were reinforced/set up. The Forem coordinates the programme that supports newcomers with their integration into the labour market. Following a **socio-professional evaluation** and an **identification of competencies**, job offers or **specific services** are provided (either by the Forem or by its partners).

In this framework, so-called “**migrants platforms**” were set-up at a local level. Those **single contact points** are tasked with the organization of the socio-professional integration programme of newcomers. They are multi-disciplinary platforms organized around counsellors and trainers, and are led by project leaders. They provide newcomers with information and support regarding administrative procedures, the labour market, job offers according to the profile of the newcomer, information on adapted services (such as screenings, training, and others), etc.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Forem provides information to newcomers on the specific services it provides to them on its website¹⁰⁸.

Furthermore, the government also strengthened the services provided by other partner organisations, including the **Regional Missions for Employment (MIRE)**¹⁰⁹, regarding the socio-professional integration of newcomers. MIREs already implemented actions focused on insertion and support to people who are not integrated in the labour market in order to help them find sustainable employment, but the Government decided to put an emphasis on actions targeting newcomers specifically. To this purpose, each MIRE could hire a specific **job-coach for newcomers** in order to provide individual or collective support to newcomers (e.g. information on the labour market, support with finding a job, etc.). Tools were also developed for the provision of information/assistance/counselling to newcomers, namely:

- “**The ABC for the welcoming of foreign persons**”¹¹⁰ which aims at facilitating the welcoming of newcomers by the staff of the MIREs by providing them with information on residence permits, work permits, the specific needs of newcomers, etc.
- “**The basics to promote diversity among enterprises**”¹¹¹ which consists of a non-exhaustive series of arguments to encourage employers to hire vulnerable individuals (victims of discrimination).

In Wallonia, the Regional Integration Centres also provide information, counselling and coaching on socio-professional integration, which is complementary to the integration programme. For example, the **Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi (CRIC)** supports job seekers (foreign nationals or people of foreign origin) through the “**AcOrjob**” project. It includes support provided at the group level and at the individual level, as well as orientation towards the relevant training or job-coaching services (see section 2.2, Measure 4 of this report).

In **Brussels**, the Public Employment Service (Actiris) – in the framework of its 2017-2022 management contract - aims at better identifying newcomers in the database of Actiris and at better identifying their needs, in order to be able to provide them with **adapted support**.

Besides the actors mentioned above, **other actors** also provide information and assistance to third-country nationals regarding their integration into the labour market (although measures do not necessarily target

¹⁰⁶ See: <https://vluchtelingen.vdab.be/en>

¹⁰⁷ See: <https://www.leforem.be/accompagnement-prim-arrivants.html>

¹⁰⁸ See : <https://www.leforem.be/accompagnement-prim-arrivants.html>

¹⁰⁹ See: <http://emploi.wallonie.be/home/creation-dem-emploi/missions-regionales.html>

¹¹⁰ Available at: http://www.intermire.be/images/20170601_Brochures_ABC_InterMire.compressed.pdf

¹¹¹ Available at: http://www.intermire.be/images/20170601_Brochure_BA-BA_InterMire.pdf

this group specifically). This includes the Public Centres for Social Assistance (OCMWs/CPAS) or civil society organisations.

Mentoring activities

Mentoring activities – that is to say professional coaching provided by a mentor to a mentee - can positively contribute to labour market integration of jobseekers (including third-country nationals). Through mentoring activities, mentees can increase their knowledge of the Belgian labour market, expand their professional network, increase their self-confidence, etc.

This **positive role** has recently been underlined by **various stakeholders**. For example, in **Flanders**, mentoring activities are seen as a useful mean to facilitate labour market integration. One of the concrete actions listed in the Action Plan “Integration through work” of the Regional Public Employment Service (VDAB) is to invest in broad support within the entire society regarding people with a migration background through a more intense collaboration with existing mentoring initiatives. In the framework of the Action Plan, the VDAB developed a “vision text” regarding mentoring (focusing on questions such as “what is mentoring?”, “what is the VDAB’s role?”, “what is the role of VDAB’s case workers?”, “How is quality assessed?”, etc.). In **Wallonia**, mentoring activities are also seen as an important mean to facilitate integration into the labour market. In the framework of the Decision of the Walloon government of March 2016, the Public Employment Service (Forem) launched a **call for proposals** on the integration of newcomers – which aims at selecting actions specifically targeting newcomers to be implemented at the end of 2017 and 2018. The call lists a series of areas of action, including the direct confrontation with firms through mentoring activities intergenerational coaching)¹¹². In **Brussels**, the **2017-2022 management contract of the Brussels Public Employment Service Actiris** mentions that one of the means to meet the objective of guaranteeing high quality assistance to jobseekers is mentoring activities (although this refers to all jobseekers, and not specifically to third-country nationals)¹¹³.

Many mentoring projects have been launched in Belgium in the last years. Different actors (NGOs, public bodies, companies, etc.) usually cooperate in the framework of these projects. These mentoring projects often specifically include third-country nationals, people of foreign origin, or foreign-language speakers in their target group. Some also focus on specific sub-groups (e.g. highly skilled).

A few **examples** of mentoring projects that specifically include third-country nationals in their target group can be provided (non-exhaustive overview): in Flanders, “**Connect2Work**” (by HIVA, VDAB, Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration) which targets highly skilled foreign language speakers (see Section 2.2, Measure 3 of this report); “**Mentor2Work**”¹¹⁴ of the Minderhedenforum which targets jobseekers with a migration background, or mentoring projects implemented in the framework of the “**@level2work**” project (see Section 2.2., Measure 2 of this report). In Wallonia, “**MentorYou**” - implemented by the organisation “Pour la Solidarité”, in cooperation with the Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi (among other partners) – targets foreign nationals or people of foreign origin. The Regional Integration Centre of Mons and Borinage (**CIMB**) also implements a mentoring project which targets foreign nationals or people of foreign origin¹¹⁵. The Regional Integration Centre of Namur (**CAI Namur**) – in collaboration with the “Instance Bassin Enseignement qualifiant, Formation Emploi (IBEFE) of Namur”- implements the mentoring project in companies “**Net2work**” which targets foreign nationals or Belgians with a migration background¹¹⁶. In the different Regions of Belgium, “**Duo for a Job**”¹¹⁷ matches young job seekers with a migration background with people over 50 years old who have a professional experience in related fields (see Section 2.2, Measure 5 of this report).

2.1.4. Enhancement of mutual respect, fight against discrimination and promotion of equality of opportunities and diversity

Enhancing mutual respect, fighting against discrimination and promoting equality of opportunities and diversity are important elements to favour the (labour market) integration of third-

¹¹² See: <https://www.leforem.be/partenaires/appel-a-projet-insertion-primo-arrivants.html>

¹¹³ Actiris, *Contrat de gestion 2017-2022 : garantir la qualité pour tous et pour toutes*, http://www.actiris.be/Portals/37/Contrat_de_gestion_Actiris_2017_2022_Garantir_la_qualit%C3%A9_pour_tous_et_toutes.pdf

¹¹⁴ See: <https://www.minderhedenforum.be/wat-doen-wij/werk>

¹¹⁵ See: http://www.diversitewallonie.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Mentorat_Insertion_Professionnelle.pdf

¹¹⁶ See: <http://www.cainamur.be/coordination/net2work.html>

¹¹⁷ See: <https://www.duoforajob.be/en/home/>

country nationals. These elements are presented as **priorities** at the federal level and the level of the federated entities. For example, one of the objectives of the Flemish Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019 is to improve mutual respect regarding people of foreign origin, through – inter alia – measures for diversity and against stereotypes, as well as measures to fight against discrimination and racism¹¹⁸.

First of all, **civic/social orientation modules** are included in all the **(mandatory) integration programmes** of the Regions/Communities. They aim at providing foreign nationals with information on life in Belgium, including on intercultural exchanges and the values and norms of the host society. However, they do not specifically focus on the workplace.

Furthermore, various measures are implemented by different actors to **fight against discrimination on the labour market**. Among the measures adopted is the anti-discrimination **legislation** (federal laws on anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equal treatment between men and women; as well as Decrees and Ordonnances) which define 19 “protected” criteria, including origin, presumed race or nationality. Several legislative texts also focus specifically on **fighting discrimination in the labour market**.

To ensure that anti-discrimination measures are effectively implemented by the different actors, **Unia - an independent public institution** that combats discrimination and promotes equal opportunities¹¹⁹ - is tasked with the fight against discrimination in employment based on all the criteria for which it is competent. Different means are used to this end: providing advice and support to discriminated persons; drafting reports and studies (e.g. the Socio-Economic Monitoring); informing and training employers on anti-discrimination legislation (e.g. through the online training “eDiv”¹²⁰); providing the concerned authorities with recommendations; and consulting with the sector, public authorities and associations¹²¹.

What’s more, the **Regional Public Employment Services** also consider anti-discrimination measures as an important element to favour the labour market integration of third-country nationals. In **Flanders**, one of the strategic objectives of the Action Plan “Integration through work” of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) is to contribute to a positive social opinion with regards to foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. One of the concrete actions foreseen to meet this objective is a forceful approach with regards to discrimination on the labour market. This includes preventive actions, such as the expansion of the VDAB’s “HELP modules”, which are provided to Dutch speaking colleagues and employers of foreign language jobseekers with a migration background in order to help them think about the way they communicate with said colleagues in the workplace¹²². It also includes information sessions for employers in collaboration with Unia (“dealing with discrimination”) or workshops for employers. Furthermore, there is also the possibility to report discrimination through the VDAB – Service Line and to raise an official complaint (via the VDAB website). Furthermore, the **Brussels Public Employment Service (Actiris)** has a specific “anti-discrimination” service (“Guichet anti-discrimination”) – operational since 2013 - dedicated to job-seekers who feel like they have been discriminated against in the hiring process (including on the basis of their origin or nationality)¹²³. People may be re-directed towards Unia for further support. The **Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem)** re-directs people who feel they have been the victim of discrimination in employment or training towards partner organisations, including Unia¹²⁴.

In addition, different projects and measures are implemented in Belgium – at the federal and regional level – to promote equal opportunities and **diversity on the labour market**.

At the inter-federal level, an example that can be provided is **Unia**, the independent public institution that combats discrimination and promotes equal opportunities. It can provide information as well as support to employers willing to develop tailor-made solutions to promote diversity and non-discrimination. This support can take different forms: training, support diversity workgroups, advice regarding internal and external communication, support in creating an action plan, etc.¹²⁵.

Various measures are also implemented at the **regional level**. A few examples can be provided below. In **Brussels**, different tools are available via the **Public Employment Service (Actiris)**. This includes a

¹¹⁸ Flanders, *Horizontal Integration Policy Plan 2016-2019*, VR 2016 1507 DOC.0890/2, <https://www.vlaanderen.be/nl/publicaties/detail/horizontaal-integratiebeleidsplan-2016>

¹¹⁹ The competence of Unia is inter-federal, which means, in Belgium, the organisation is active at the federal level, as well as at the level of the Regions and the Communities.

¹²⁰ See: <http://www.ediv.be/>

¹²¹ See: <https://www.unia.be/en/areas-of-action/work>

¹²² The “HELP modules” are often linked to the modules of Dutch for foreign language speakers in the workplace.

¹²³ See: <http://www.actiris.be/diversite/tabid/959/language/fr-BE/Guichet-anti-discrimination.aspx>

¹²⁴ See: <https://www.leforem.be/particuliers/respect-egalite-des-chances-et-diversite.html>

¹²⁵ See: www.unia.be/en/awareness-prevention/support-training

Diversity Charter¹²⁶ (which can be signed by employers and which describes the measures they commit to implement in order to promote diversity) as well as the possibility for companies/organisations/(local) public authorities to develop and implement **diversity plans**¹²⁷. In the framework of these diversity plans, employers may set targets to reach more diversity, and they may receive support in implementing said plans (e.g. financial support.). Diversity Plans provide an overview of the state of play of diversity for the employer and include objectives and actions to improve diversity. These objectives focus on one or several of the target groups of the Brussels diversity policy (i.e. origin, age, handicap, education and gender). Third-country nationals are included under the “origin” group. Consultants from Actiris’ diversity department provide practical support to Brussels-based companies (public and private) with the development, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of their diversity plans. Companies may also receive a “**diversity label**” following the positive evaluation of their diversity plan¹²⁸.

In **Flanders**, a reform of the policy on “**proportional employment participation**” (“Evenredige Arbeidsdeelname” or “EAD”) was undertaken in 2015¹²⁹. This reform meant that certain existing instruments – including financial support for organisations/companies/local authorities implementing Diversity Plans – came to an end. The new approach “focus on talent” is based on three main points: (i) activate all talents through tailored support; (ii) invest in all talents by supporting the HR policy of organisations; (iii) eliminate preconceptions. In the framework of the *second point*, companies can benefit – inter alia - from the reformed “**SME portfolio**”¹³⁰ (since April 2016) and receive financial support from public authorities for the purchase of services that aim at improving the quality of the company. This includes actions focused on diversity (among many other possibilities). In the framework of the *third point*, several cooperation agreements were concluded with key partners (trade unions, employers’ organisations UNIZO and VOKA, Minderhedenforum, GRIP vzw). These agreements are complemented by projects from civil society. A specific ESF call for proposals “focus on talent” was launched in July 2016, and eight projects were selected (some of them focus on people with a migration background¹³¹).

In **Wallonia**, the two main Walloon **trade unions** (i.e. FGTB and CSC) receive financial support to promote diversity and fight against discrimination.

2.1.5. Tailor-made programmes for specific categories

Certain projects and measures for (labour market) integration provided by different stakeholders – such as the Regional Public Employment Services – are **tailored to specific groups** of third-country nationals, foreign nationals, foreign language speakers, or people of foreign origin. This includes – inter alia - young people or highly skilled people.

In **Flanders**, the Public Employment Service (VDAB) and various partners have developed specific approaches for the labour market integration of various target groups, as detailed in the Action Plan “Integration through work”: highly qualified foreign language speakers; (low) skilled young people and illiterate people.

The specific approach for **(low skilled) young people** targets in particular unqualified unaccompanied minors, to guide them from an educational setting to the VDAB. The approach and measures provided to this target group differ in the different Flemish provinces: as mentioned in the Action Plan “Integration through work”, in Antwerp, VDAB projects are implemented in cooperation with “Arktos” and “Duo For A Job”. A tailored career orientation (“Grow2Work”) and pathway (“Ready2work”) is provided to guide unqualified youngsters from an educational setting towards the VDAB. In the provinces of East Flanders and the city of Gent, a customized VDAB pathway is implemented. In the province of Limburg, a renewed approach is being developed on the basis of a cooperation between VDAB, and “Fonto Nova” or “De Oever”.

Regarding **highly skilled foreign language newcomers**, the specific approach is implemented through the project “@level2work” (see Section 2.2., Measure 2 of this report). This project is also implemented

¹²⁶ For further information, see: <http://www.actiris.be/diversite/tabid/898/language/fr-BE/Charte.aspx>

¹²⁷ See: <http://www.actiris.be/diversite/tabid/899/language/fr-BE/Plan.aspx>

¹²⁸ For further information, see: <http://www.actiris.be/diversite/tabid/980/language/fr-BE/Label-Diversite.aspx>

¹²⁹ Flemish Government, *Concept Note: Focus on talent and competences as tools for a higher employment rate in the framework of Proportional Employment Participation*, VR 2015 1707 DOC.0788/1TER. Also see: <https://www.werk.be/nieuws/focus-op-ieders-talent-niet-op-gebreken-vlaamse-regering-hervormt-ead-beleid>

¹³⁰ See: <https://www.vlaio.be/nl/subsidies-financiering/kmo-portefeuille/wat-is-de-kmo-portefeuille>

¹³¹

See: https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/nl/projectenkaart?vrij_zoek=&field_programs_target_id=All&field_themes_target_id=All&province=&title_1=&field_call_id_value=371&title_2=&title=&field_project_id_value=&field_file_number_value=&field_priority_target_id=All&title_3=

in **Brussels**. The target group of the project is “highly skilled foreign-language speaking newcomers”. The overall objective of the project is to provide support and assistance to these newcomers in order for them to find a job at their level. In this perspective, (existing and new) actions were implemented in Flanders and in Brussels. More precisely, eight “testing grounds” and about 50 concrete actions were implemented.

2.1.6. Incentive measures for migrants and employers

There are different **incentive measures** in place in Belgium to encourage employers to hire jobseekers with a certain profile (e.g. wage subsidies or a reduction of social security contributions for employers who hire certain categories of jobseekers¹³²). But these measures do not specifically target third-country nationals, although they might be included. For example, in the **German-speaking Community**, a reform of the policy regarding the target groups for certain types of employment aid is foreseen (i.e. financial incentives for employers). It should enter into force in 2019. Among the target groups is a new category: jobseekers who do not have a sufficient knowledge of German or French (inferior to level B1), combined with another challenge (e.g. no qualifications or others).

Furthermore, it is also worth noting that certain incentive measures for employers are also in place in the framework of **diversity measures**, including financial assistance (see section 2.1.4 of this report).

Different actors also provide employers with practical tools to fight against discrimination and promote diversity. This includes, for example, the manual “**The basics to promote diversity among enterprises**”¹³³ of the Regional Missions for Employment of Wallonia, which consists of a non-exhaustive series of arguments to encourage employers to hire vulnerable individuals (victims of discrimination). Another example is the **platform e-div of Unia**, which offers online training on anti-discrimination and the promotion of diversity (see section 2.1.4 of this report for other examples).

2.1.7. Support for self-employment

Entrepreneurship is seen as an important element for the labour market integration of third-country nationals. For example, one of the concrete actions listed in the VDAB Action Plan “Integration through work” – which targets foreign language jobseekers with a migration background - is the elimination of barriers towards entrepreneurship.

Different initiatives are in place in Belgium at the national and regional levels to facilitate access to self-employment for jobseekers, including third-country nationals. However, the vast majority of the existing initiatives¹³⁴ facilitating self-employment are not specifically targeted at the third-country nationals included in the scope of this study¹³⁵. There are a few more targeted initiatives. In **Flanders**, for example, the organisation STEBO implemented the project “AZO!” between 2014-2016 (with public funding). It aimed at facilitating access to entrepreneurship (via information sessions and assistance) to people of “ethnic origin”¹³⁶. In 2017, a new “AZO!” project (ESF-funded) was launched, which specifically targets applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection¹³⁷. The project is led by STEBO in collaboration with several other partners (including the VDAB in the framework of the Action Plan “Integration through work”).

A 2016 publication by the OECD/European Commission on **inclusive entrepreneurship policies** in Belgium (which aim at offering all people an equal opportunity to create a sustainable business, including migrants) concludes that many policies and programmes for inclusive entrepreneurship have been introduced at the national and regional levels in Belgium, and these actions are complemented by initiatives of civil society and non-governmental organisations. The report concludes that –overall- the inclusive

¹³² Adam I. and Van Dijk M., *Immigrant labour market participation in Belgium – high time to mainstream*, Policy Brief 2015/2, Institute for European Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, March 2015.

¹³³ *Le B.A.-BA de la promotion de la diversité en entreprise : mémento à destination des équipes des MIRE*, Novembre 2016, http://www.intermire.be/images/20170601_Brochure_BA-BA_InterMire.pdf

¹³⁴ For some examples of initiatives, see for example : OECD/European Commission, *Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies, Country Assessment Notes, Belgium*, 2016, or <https://stebo.be/ondernemen>, or <https://www.atlevel2work.be/nl/ondernemerschap>.

¹³⁵ <http://docs.vlaamsparlement.be/pfile?id=1282679>

¹³⁶ See: <https://www.starterslabo.be/etno/partnership-programmas/>

¹³⁷ See: <https://projectazo.be/> and <https://stebo.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/projectomschrijving-azo.pdf>

entrepreneurship support system is quite strong in Belgium, but that there is a **lack of more tailored entrepreneurship support** for migrant entrepreneurs¹³⁸.

EMN Common template Part II, 2.1, Q.12.

2.2. Promising initiatives by public bodies (and other actors)

Preliminary note on the selection of promising practices:

In order to select some interesting initiatives, the Belgian Contact Point of the EMN used different sources: information from partner organisations contacted in the framework of the study (e.g. Regional Public Employment Services, Unia, etc.); secondary sources such as existing research papers and other publications (e.g. IOM's Background paper for "Guidelines for designing policies to strengthen labour market integration of refugees in the EU"); websites (e.g. EU website on promising practices of Public Employment Services), etc.

Five measures were selected with the objective to provide a diverse sample: different actors; different scopes; different target groups. The practices listed below are thus not an exhaustive list of all promising practices in Belgium.

It is also important to note that the measures described below do not always exclusively target the third-country nationals included in the scope of this study.

Measure 1 : Action Plan "Integration through work" of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB)	
Overview	
Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	<i>N/A</i>
Access	The target audience of the VDAB's Action Plan 2016-2018 "Integration through work" is: "foreign language jobseekers with a migration background". It includes: foreign language speakers; non-EU born or EU born people, as well as third-country nationals; newcomers (i.e. who have been registered for less than 12 months at the population register of a Flemish or Brussels municipality) and longer term migrants (i.e. who have been registered for longer than 12 months at the population register of a Flemish or Brussels municipality); refugees; people participating in the integration programme.
Target group	The action plan targets foreign language jobseekers with a migration background (thus not all jobseekers). It includes third-country nationals, but not exclusively.
Coverage	<i>Local (region, province, municipality)</i> Flanders
Budget	The budget is approx. EUR 2.5M for 2016 and EUR 2M for 2017 (additional budget for the VDAB from the Flemish Government). No additional budget foreseen for 2018. In addition, VDAB funds were also used. It is provided by the Flemish Government and VDAB funds.
Link	https://www.vdab.be/partners/integratie-door-werk

¹³⁸ OECD/European Commission, *Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies, Country Assessment Notes, Belgium*, 2016, pp.16-17.

Description

1. Access of third-country nationals to the measure:

The Action Plan targets “foreign language jobseekers with a migration background”. This is a broad target group which includes different categories.

2. Context in which the measure has started:

a) Introduction of the measure and duration.

The Action Plan has been implemented since April 2016, and is ongoing.

b) Link with the increase of the migration flow starting in 2015.

The development of the Action Plan of the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) was first started in the framework of the important inflow of applicants for international protection in Belgium in 2015/2016, in order to prepare for an expected inflow of jobseekers at the VDAB and provide appropriate measures. However, the VDAB did not experience a significant increase of registered jobseekers (which is linked to different factors, such as a decrease of the inflow of other categories of foreign language jobseekers, shifting priorities towards education or social activities, activation by the Public Centre for Social Welfare and not the VDAB, involvement in an integration programme, etc.). In this context, the scope of the Action Plan was broadened to a larger target group: foreign language jobseekers with a migration background¹³⁹.

c) Need or purpose for the introduction of the measure.

The main driver for the development and the implementation of this Action Plan was the low employment rate among people with a migration background and foreign language speakers. In the framework of the slow and rather ineffective process to integrate this group into the labour market, the VDAB decided to develop a specific approach to address this issue¹⁴⁰.

d) Moment the measure is provided.

No determined time limitation: the Action Plan targets newcomers as well as longer-term migrants. However, it is worth pointing out that the Action Plan strives for a rapid intake and screening of the target people once they are in contact with the VDAB or the partner organisations (OCMWs/CPAS, the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration and Fedasil).

e) Key activities.

The Action Plan’s overall goal is to provide high quality, tailor-made, faster and more intensive employment trajectories for all foreign-language jobseekers with a migration background. The Plan details a series of strategic objectives and concrete actions.

The first strategic objective is for “all individuals with a migration background to quickly find a lasting job”. The concrete action linked to this objective is to ensure a **quick and lasting pathway to work for the target people, tailored to their specific needs**. This is achieved – inter alia – through tailored pathways to work.

The different organisations in contact with the target group (e.g. Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration, OCMWs/CPAS, or the Federal reception agency Fedasil) carry out a rapid intake and first assessment of the person, before **rapidly referring** them to the VDAB for a **screening “distance to the labour market”**. Foreign language jobseekers with a migration background who register at the VDAB before having been referred are immediately screened. This allows for a quick mobilisation into work or dual or integrated pathways. The referral by partners is done through an on-line booking system which immediately arranges a date and time for a screening with the VDAB. In the largest Belgian cities, there is a “one window” approach whereby the 3 partners involved with mobilisation (OCMWs/CPAS, Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration and VDAB) can arrange for an “integrated screening” (depending on the needs, different scenarios are possible: e.g. only first assessment carried out, or assessment at the same time as the screening “distance to the labour market”, etc.). Outside of the cities, a straightforward referral flow is used between the partners. Next, there is a rapid referral to an **accelerated (poor language skills) technical screening**.

¹³⁹ Source: VDAB.

¹⁴⁰ European Commission, *PES Practice: Integration through work*, November 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1206&langId=en>.

Following these screenings, the target person is directed towards one of **four trajectories** (the VDAB and its partners provide different services accordingly):

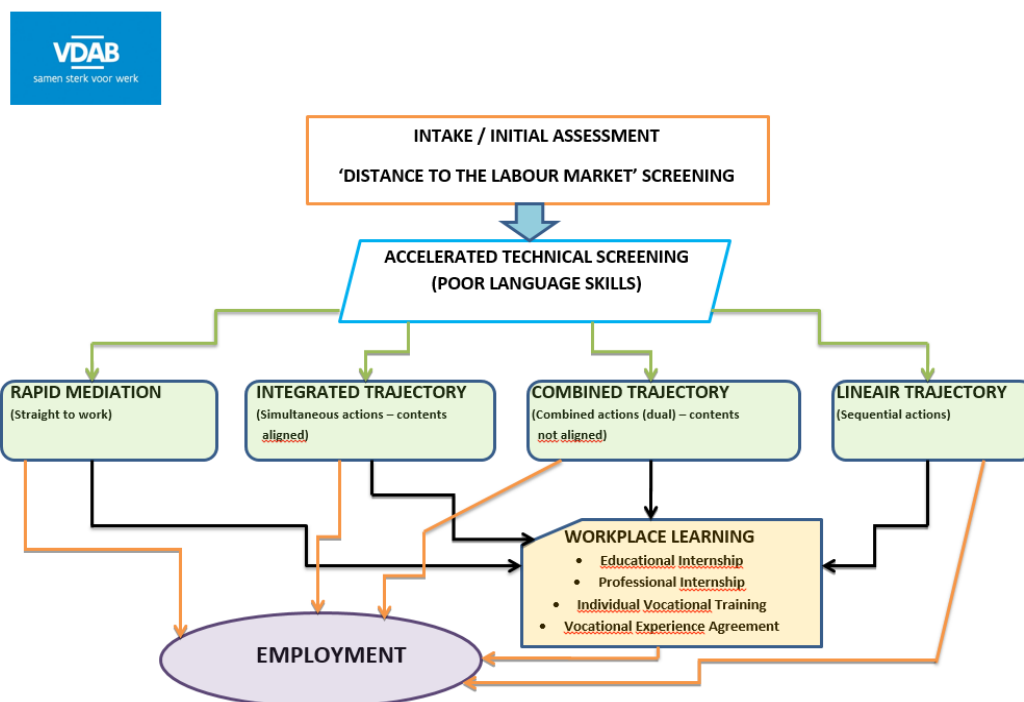
- **Rapid mediation to employment:** A rapid workplace deployment is one of the options (contact language, existing technical skills and/or work experience, motivation and positive attitude, no obstructive preconditions, etc.). Language is not a condition, but rather a competence.
- **Integrated trajectories:** Simultaneous actions are undertaken and the contents are aligned (e.g. e.g. training on the job and language classes or training at the workplace to improve soft skills.)
- **Combined trajectories:** various actions are combined, but they are not integrated (e.g. technical vocational training during the day and Dutch course in the evening, etc.)
- **Linear trajectories:** the different actions are sequential. Each action follows another (e.g. start with social orientation, followed by language training and only then active steps to access employment are taken).

Employment is the end goal of the trajectories. If necessary, the four trajectory models are further enhanced through **workplace learning** (this includes different types of internships or individual vocational training, see section 2.1.1 of this report).

Specific approaches are also foreseen for **certain sub-groups** (e.g. youth, highly skilled, illiterate people.).

The “quick mobilisation approach” has led to a fundamental change in the way the VDAB operates: entry level Dutch for mentoring, screening, training and mediation is no longer required. The **knowledge of Dutch is a competence**, but not (always) a prerequisite. The idea is that it is also possible to learn a language while searching for a job or while working.

Graph 3 : “Integration through work” flow (VDAB)



Source: VDAB.

The second strategic objective is that **employers and employers organisations** offer a maximum of work and training opportunities to people with a migration background, and can evaluate the competences of the target group. Employers are better informed about the legislation related to employing foreign language jobseekers with a migration background. Employers are involved in the integration process as partners.

The third strategic objective is to contribute to a **positive social opinion forming** (with regards to people with a migration background). This is based on a forceful approach with regards to discrimination in the labour market (e.g. organisation of information sessions for employers;

possibilities to report discrimination through the VDAB, etc.) and on investment in a broad support within the entire society (e.g. through mentoring initiatives).

The fourth strategic objective is to ensure that common processes are entirely **client focussed**. A coordinated and structured approach is essential with regards to policy areas and level. This manifests itself through partnerships with key actors (e.g. cooperation agreements with the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration).

3. Implementation modalities, notably:

a) Actors implementing the measure.

The Action Plan is mainly implemented by the Flemish Public Service for Employment (VDAB). It collaborates with a range of partners, such as OCMWs/CPAS, the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration, the Federal Reception Agency Fedasil, local authorities, employers and etc.¹⁴¹.

b) Promotion of the measure.

The VDAB provides various promotional materials to raise awareness on the services available to the target group of the Action Plan. This includes a website with videos in different languages¹⁴²; leaflets (e.g. "working in Flanders"); as well as appointment cards for the target persons (in different languages) where all the appointments with the VDAB can be written down. The VDAB Action Plan is also available online.

4. Impact of the measure:

a) Anticipated objectives.

No strict quantitative objectives were set. The intention was to ensure short pathways to employment. Monitoring of the strategic and tactical objectives of the Action Plan was undertaken.

b) Main outcomes.

Regarding the people reached in the framework of the Action Plan¹⁴³:

- 6,179 people consulted the VDAB in **2015**. Of these people, 43.1% were low-skilled individuals; 33.9% had a secondary education; and 23% were highly qualified. 86.5% of these people were between 25 and 54 years old;
- 8,053 people consulted the VDAB in **2016**: of these people, 44.7% were low-skilled individuals; 31.7% had a secondary education; and 23.7% were highly qualified.

As for integration on the labour market, results from **2015** show that after registration with the VDAB:

- 26.7% of jobseekers found a job after 6 months.
- 37.3% after one year;
- 42.1% after 18 months;
- And 45.2% after two years.

As for 2016, results showed that:

- 22.8% of the jobseekers found a job after 6 months;
- 37.1% after one year;
- 44.5% after 18 months; and
- 47.7% after two years.

Furthermore, at the beginning of 2018, 22.3 % of the foreign language jobseekers with a migration background were no longer looking for work (this can be linked to – inter alia – health reasons, family reasons, education reasons, etc.). What's more, 31% of the foreign language jobseekers with a migration background were still unemployed two years after having registered with the VDAB. The VDAB now considers this last group as a priority group.

c) Monitoring and evaluation of impact.

The VDAB follow-up on the project and its quality by monitoring the strategic objectives and concrete actions and the quality of the trajectories. A report is produced on a three-monthly basis for the

¹⁴¹ See: <https://www.vdab.be/nieuws/pers/2016/vdab-zet-actieplan-op-om-vluchtelingen-naar-werk-te-begeleiden>

¹⁴² See: <https://vluchtelingen.vdab.be/en>

¹⁴³ European Commission, *PES Practice: Integration through work*, November 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1206&langId=en>.

Board of Directors of the VDAB, the Steering Committee and the Cabinet of the Flemish Minister for Work.

d) Challenges during implementation and remedies applied.

A first challenge was to convince partners active in the field of integration and employment activation to move away from linear pathways, and to focus on integrated or combined pathways (as developed in the Action Plan).

Other challenges that can be noted were to rapidly map available competencies, and to overcome obstacles hindering the flow towards actions/training.

Furthermore, it also proved challenging to mobilise employers to provide opportunities for workplace learning, either with or without language coaching. It is important to not only involve employers as clients of the VDAB, but also as partners in the reinforcement of competencies.

e) Likelihood of continuation of the measure.

The Action Plan is still ongoing.

Measure 2: @level2work project in Brussels and Flanders

Overview

Type	<i>Projects (ad-hoc)</i>
Area	<i>Tailor-made to specific group of third country nationals (e.g. programmes/plans/contracts containing different elements of labour market integration for e.g. women, vulnerable persons)</i>
Access	The target group of the project is "highly skilled foreign-language speaking newcomers". Newcomers who already have a job – but not at their skills level – can also benefit from the actions. Third-country nationals are the main target group of the project, but the scope was extended to include EU nationals as well.
Target group	The target group of the project is "highly skilled foreign-language speaking newcomers". Third-country nationals are the main target group of the project, but the scope was extended to include EU nationals as well.
Coverage	<i>Local (region, province, municipality)</i> Flanders and Brussels
Budget	The budget is approx. <i>Please provide approximate budget here</i> It is provided by AMIF and others (VDAB funds for the staff/means it dedicated to the project).
Link	https://www.atlevel2work.be/nl/amif

Description

1. Access of third-country nationals to the measure:

The target group of the project is "highly skilled foreign-language speaking newcomers". Newcomers who already have a job – but not at their skills level – can also benefit from the actions. Third-country nationals are the main target group of the project, but the scope was extended to include EU nationals as well in certain "testing grounds".

The project is voluntary and free of charge.

2. Context in which the measure has started:

a) Introduction of the measure and duration.

It was introduced mid-2016 for a duration of 2 years.

b) Link with the increase of the migration flow starting in 2015.

The development of this project was linked to the high influx of applicants for international protection in 2015/2016. However, the main rationale of the project was the observation that highly skilled newcomers experience difficulties integrating into the labour market at their level.

c) Need or purpose for the introduction of the measure.

The rationale of the project is that highly skilled newcomers often have difficulties finding a job, and if they do find a job, it is often not adapted to their skills level. At the same time, many employers have difficulties finding skilled employees.

Furthermore, the services/measures/projects provided by different actors to this target group in Flanders and Brussels is sometimes fragmented, and there is insufficient coordination between the actors regarding the approach to be adopted. Through the project @level2work, the different actors involved are collaborating in order to coordinate their actions and centralize the information available to highly skilled foreign-language speaking newcomers.

d) Moment the measure is provided.

No determined time limitation.

e) Key activities

The overall objective of the project is to provide support and assistance to highly skilled foreign-language newcomers in order for them to find a job at their level. In this perspective, (existing and new) actions were implemented in Flanders and in Brussels. More precisely, **8 "testing grounds"** (in the different Flemish provinces and Brussels) and about **50 concrete actions** were implemented. The actions are very diverse, but they all aim at supporting the labour market integration of highly skilled non-native speaking newcomers.

There are 3 main clusters of actions:

- **Integrated approach to work.** This includes assistance via a "one-stop shop". This "one-stop shop" is composed of two elements: (i) The "testing ground" in Antwerp developed a portal website that centralizes information related to employment, entrepreneurship, integration, etc. (ii) face-to-face information and assistance through a physical "counter" ("adviesloket")¹⁴⁴.
- **Reinforcing skills and competences** (e.g. languages, recognition of qualifications, etc.).
- **Involving employers** (e.g. through mentoring projects, job-hunting, offering internships, etc.).

The focus of the @level2work project is on further developing and improving existing services/measures; increasing expertise of relevant stakeholders; and improving collaboration between the different stakeholders involved. As finding a job at his/her own level is often the result of a trajectory where different forms of support are combined, the project seeks to align the different services provided to ensure that they complement each other, that there are no missing steps in the trajectory, etc.

3. Implementation modalities:

a) Actors implementing the measure.

The project is implemented by different partners, including the Regional Public Employment Services of Flanders and Brussels (VDAB and Actiris); the Flemish Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration; education establishments and employers. The university KULeuven-HIVA provides scientific support, assistance and carries out the evaluation.

b) Promotion of the measure.

Different tools were used to promote the measures, including flyers and videos (in different languages). These were put at the disposal of the organisations referring the newcomers to the measures, to ensure a wide dissemination of the information and to ensure that the information would reach the target group.

4. Impact of the measure:

a) Anticipated objectives.

¹⁴⁴ See: <https://www.atlevel2work.be/nl/projectpagina#intro>

Most of the actions reached their anticipated objectives.

b) Main outcomes.

The project managed to reach 1,100 individuals between September 2016 and February 2018 through the “one-stop shop” (this does not mean that these individuals necessarily participated in the actions of the “testing grounds”, but all were oriented towards appropriate follow-up actions). This far exceeded the planned number of participants in the project. 110 different nationalities were represented (including Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Afghanistan). 49.9% of them were men, while 50.1% were women. Regarding the level of education, more than 45% of them held a master degree.

After a year, 38.9% of the highly skilled foreign language jobseekers were working. The outflow towards work of highly-skilled foreign language speaking jobseekers was about 24% in previous years, which was much lower than the average outflow towards work. @level2work thus improved the access to work - at their level - of highly skilled foreign language jobseekers¹⁴⁵.

The KULeuven/HIVA - which is tasked with evaluating the project - presented some preliminary results during the closing event of the project (the full evaluation of the project is still ongoing). Regarding the general results at project level, the KULeuven concluded that most of the actions have reached their (formal) objectives. It also underlined that the cooperation between participating partners in many “testing grounds” had improved. A lot of material related to labour market integration of highly skilled foreign-language newcomers is available, but these are not always well-known or built upon. The project’s focus on further building on existing initiatives was thus useful. Finally, the KULeuven also indicated that extending the scope of the project to EU nationals in most “testing grounds” meant the reach of the project was even larger than expected.

c) Monitoring and evaluation of impact.

An evaluation of the project is currently being carried out by KULeuven. Some preliminary results were presented during the closing event of the project (see above). A manual on the project will also be drafted, which will present the lessons learned from the project and will describe good practices and actions that were implemented.

d) Challenges during implementation and remedies applied.

The KULeuven presented some preliminary results of its evaluation of the project. This included some general challenges at the project level. For example, not all the highly skilled foreign-language newcomers could perform at the required level. Furthermore, it also appeared that it was very difficult to provide assistance to certain profiles (e.g. doctors, teachers, etc.).

e) Likelihood of continuation of the measure.

The project as such will not be continued at the end of the planned 2-year period. However, following an evaluation of the measures implemented and the publication of the above-mentioned manual, some of the measures may be embedded at a structural level.

Measure 3: Connect2work (mentoring project for highly skilled foreign language speaking people)

Overview

Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	<i>Provision of information and counselling</i>
Access	The project targets highly skilled foreign-language speakers (this thus includes third-country nationals).
Target group	The project targets highly skilled foreign-language speakers (this includes third-country nationals, but not exclusively).

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.vdab.be/nieuws/pers/level2work-bereikt-meer-dan-1100-hoogopgeleide-anderstaligen>

Coverage	<i>Local (region, province, municipality)</i> Flanders
Budget	The budget is approx. <i>Please provide approximate budget here</i> It is provided by the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration of the city of Antwerp and AMIF funds (until June 2018); and VDAB funds (until end of 2019).
Link	www.connect2work.be
Description	
<p>1. Access of third-country nationals to the measure:</p> <p>The project is accessible to highly skilled foreign-language speakers. More precisely, the participants (mentees) need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a higher education diploma; • Have professional experience in their field of studies (maximum 6 years ago); • Have a good knowledge of Dutch. <p>Furthermore, they are expected to be looking for a job that is in line with their studies/ professional experience in their country of origin; looking for someone active in the sector they are interested in to provide them with information and tips; and are prepared to meet with a mentor on a minimum of six occasions.</p> <p>The measure is voluntary and free of charge.</p> <p>2. Context in which the measure has started:</p> <p><i>a) Introduction of the measure and duration.</i></p> <p>The project was launched in 2014. Between 2014 and 2015, a mentoring pathway was developed and tested in Antwerp. The project is still ongoing (as of May 2018, Connect2Work operates as an independent organisation).</p> <p><i>b) Link with the increase of the migration flow starting in 2015.</i></p> <p>No major changes were made to the project following the important inflow of 2015/2016.</p> <p><i>c) Need or purpose for the introduction of the measure.</i></p> <p>An important part of the highly educated foreign language speakers in Flanders experience difficulties with finding a job at their level. Tackling this challenge was the starting point for the project.</p> <p><i>d) Moment the measure is provided.</i></p> <p>No determined time limitation.</p> <p><i>e) Key activities</i></p> <p>Connect2work matches mentees with mentors in order to facilitate the labour market integration of the mentee. The project is based on a "mentoring pathway", as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening mentors and mentees; • Matching ; • Coaching; • Evaluation. <p>During a period of minimum three months, the mentor shares his professional expertise and experience with the mentee and supports him in his search for a job (minimum of six meetings). Among others, he/she provides the mentee with :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and tips regarding the sector of activity the mentee is interested in; • Tips on drafting a good CV and cover letter; • Advice regarding useful websites and documentation; • Support to expand their professional network; 	

- Feedback on different issues.

A coach from Connect2work closely follows-up on the mentoring pathway.

3. Implementation modalities:

a) Actors implementing the measure.

Different partners were involved in the project: HIVA (a research institute from the KULeuven University); the Flemish Public Employment Service - VDAB; the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration Antwerp - Atlas; and the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.

As of May/June 2018, Connect2Work operates as an independent organisation. The VDAB remains a partner of the organisation.

b) Promotion of the measure.

Flyers were developed to present the project to potential mentees and mentors¹⁴⁶, as well as a website¹⁴⁷.

4. Impact of the measure:

a) Anticipated objectives.

The defined objectives of the project were met. There were more participants than initially foreseen, but they could be integrated in the project.

b) Main outcomes.

The mentoring project was developed and tested in Antwerp between 2014 and 2015. During this time period, a total of 60 duos were created. Of the participating mentees, 40% found a job at their level immediately following the end of the mentoring pathway. 20% of the participating mentees were following a training or an internship.

In 2016, the project counted 83 mentors and 47 mentees. In 2017, 37 new duos were set up¹⁴⁸.

As for qualitative results, the participating mentees have underlined that the project – inter alia - improved their knowledge of the sector of activity that they were interested in and the expectations of the sector; increased their motivation and their self-confidence, etc.¹⁴⁹.

Furthermore, a “Guide on setting up mentoring projects for the employment of highly-skilled foreign language speaking newcomers”¹⁵⁰ was published following the test phase. It provides guidelines to organisations wishing to set up a mentoring project, on the basis of the lessons learned in the framework of the Connect2work project and other projects.

It is also worth mentioning that the Connect2work project became an ESF Ambassador 2016. Each year, this title is given to an organisation which – with the help of the European Social Fund – developed a good method or instrument that strengthens the labour market¹⁵¹.

c) Monitoring and evaluation of impact.

During the test phase (2014-2015), the provision of services in the framework of Connect2Work and the information for the above mentioned guide on setting up mentoring projects was developed in a cyclical manner:

- **Testing** of the provision of services in Antwerp by the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration and the VDAB.
- **Reflection**: this included the evaluation of the mentoring experience by the mentees and mentors; lessons learnt from the project and other international projects.

¹⁴⁶ See: www.connect2work.be/documentatie.html

¹⁴⁷ www.connect2work.be/

¹⁴⁸ Source: VDAB.

¹⁴⁹ See: <https://integratie-inburgering.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Connect2Work.pdf>

¹⁵⁰ Van Dooren G., De Cuyper P., *ConnectWork, Leidraad voor het opzetten van een mentoringproject naar werk voor hooggeschoolde anderstalige nieuwkomers*, 2015, http://www.connect2work.be/attachments/article/5/Connect2Work_Leidraad_website6.pdf

¹⁵¹ See: <http://www.connect2work.be/nieuws/16-nieuws-19-05-2016.html>

- **Adjustment**¹⁵².

Connect2work is now further developing as an independent organisation in the Province of Antwerp.

d) Challenges during implementation and remedies applied.

In the framework of the test phase, some challenges were identified, including¹⁵³: matching mentors and mentees (numbers and profiles); diverse tasks to be carried out by the Connect2work coaches; the expansion of the project to Flanders; etc.

e) Likelihood of continuation of the measure.

The project is still ongoing.

Measure 4: AcOrjob (Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi)

Overview

Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	<i>Provision of information and counselling</i>
Access	The project is accessible to all foreign nationals (i.e. third-country nationals and EU citizens); as well as people of foreign origin (i.e. Belgian nationals with at least one parent with a foreign nationality – including a nationality of an EU Member State).
Target group	The project is accessible to all foreign nationals (i.e. third-country nationals and EU citizens); as well as people of foreign origin (i.e. Belgian nationals with at least one parent with a foreign nationality – including a nationality of an EU Member State).
Coverage	<i>Local (region, province, municipality)</i> Charleroi
Budget	The budget is approx. EUR 1,086,800 (for the whole project) It is provided by the Walloon Region and the European Social Fund.
Link	www.cricharleroi.be

Description

1. Access of third-country nationals to the measure:

The project is accessible to all foreign nationals (i.e. third-country nationals and EU citizens); as well as people of foreign origin (i.e. Belgian nationals with at least one parent with a foreign nationality – including a nationality of an EU Member State). There are no other conditions to access the project.

Third-country nationals (and the other target people) can contact the first assistance service in order to open an administrative file in their name. They are then redirected to a collective information session. Afterwards, an individual appointment is set to carry out a social assessment.

It is voluntary and free of charge.

2. Context in which the measure has started:

¹⁵² Van Dooren G., De Cuyper P., *ConnectWork, Leidraad voor het opzetten van een mentoringproject naar werk voor hooggeschoolde anderstalige nieuwkomers*, 2015, http://www.connect2work.be/attachments/article/5/Connect2Work_Leidraad_website6.pdf

¹⁵³ *Presentation on Connect2work*, <https://integratie-inburgering.be/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Connect2Work.pdf>

a) Introduction of the measure and duration.

The project forms part of the 2014-2020 planning of the Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi, but the implementation of the project in its current form started in 2015. It will end in 2020.

b) Link with the increase of the migration flow starting in 2015.

No link.

c) Need or purpose for the introduction of the measure.

Vulnerable groups have difficulties accessing the labour market in the Walloon Region. Foreign nationals (and people of foreign origin) also face several additional difficulties, such as insufficient knowledge of the language; procedure for the recognition and validation of competences; discrimination; social environment; mobility, etc. The AcOrJob project was thus set up to facilitate the access of the target group to the labour market.

d) Moment the measure is provided.

There is no determined time-limit.

e) Key activities.

The AcOrjob project, implemented by the Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi, aims at improving access of the target group to socio-professional insertion and training opportunities. The project is complementary to the Walloon integration programme.

The first step for a third-country national (as other members of the target group) is to participate in a collective information session. An individual meeting is then organized, in order to carry out a social assessment of the participant. Depending on the needs of the participant, various actions can be taken:

- Orientation towards the specialized services on socio-professional insertion;
- Collaboration with "Technofur TIC" to remotely coach participants in their job search via an IT platform (access and support via the Regional Integration Centre)
- Regular presence of a public writer to meet the administrative needs of the participants;
- Initiation course of French focused on the workplace (technical);
- Administrative support to the participants regarding the documents needed in the framework of their job search;
- Link with the "migrant platforms" of the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem)¹⁵⁴.

At an individual level, a social assessment is carried out in order to identify the obstacles to labour market integration, and tailored support is provided to overcome them.

3. Implementation modalities:

a) Actors implementing the measure.

The project is implemented by the Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi. The Centre collaborates with different partners on the Charleroi territory in the framework of the project.

b) Promotion of the measure.

The Regional Integration Centre uses different methods in order to promote the project to the target groups: social media (i.e. Facebook); the website of the Centre; posters; flyers; leaflets; participation of the representative of the project in events related to socio-professional insertion, etc.

4. Impact of the measure:

a) Anticipated objectives.

See below.

b) Main outcomes.

¹⁵⁴ Some of the listed actions have been developed recently (to adapt to changing needs) and will be fully implemented in 2019.

In 2017, 253 people participated in the project¹⁵⁵. 52 of them have had a positive outcome following their participation in the project (e.g. employment; participation in a training; etc.). The others are still participating in the project.

The main outcome of the project is a “re-energization” of the target group, which has difficulties accessing the labour market. The target group can start a socio-professional insertion process and (re)define a professional project.

There are no obligations of results, but rather of means. The fact that people start a process which could eventually lead to employment is considered as a positive outcome.

c) Monitoring and evaluation of impact.

A platform on socio-professional insertion was set up, which is led by the Regional Integration Centre of Charleroi and is composed of organisations specialized in this field on the Charleroi territory. The project is followed and analysed in this framework, as well as fed by the interventions and inputs from the members.

d) Challenges during implementation and remedies applied.

The main challenges identified by the project are: insufficient knowledge of the language; lack of knowledge on Belgian professional environments; a lack of independence; and precarious situations.

e) Likelihood of continuation of the measure.

The project will end in 2020.

Measure 5 : DUO for a JOB (mentoring programme)	
Overview	
Type	<i>Programme and systematic measures (multi-year / long term)</i>
Area	<i>Provision of information and counselling</i>
Access	The programme is accessible to people between 18 and 30 years of age; who are either a third-country national or a Belgian national with a migration background from a third country; who are able to express themselves in English, Dutch or French; who have a valid Belgian residence permit and are allowed to work in Belgium; who are registered at one of the Regional Public Employment Services (VDAB, Actiris, Forem).
Target group	As mentioned above, the programme is accessible to third-country nationals and Belgian nationals (with a migration background). It is worth noting that third-country nationals represent the vast majority of the participants in the project.
Coverage	<i>National</i>
Budget	The budget is approx. EUR 1,700,000 for 2017. It is provided by foundations (47%); sponsorship (32%); public subsidies (15%); corporate donations (6%) and small/medium sized donors (1%) in 2017. It is worth noting that the share of public subsidies will substantially increase in the 2018 budget.
Link	https://www.duoforajob.be/en/home/
Description	

¹⁵⁵ Source: CRIC.

1. Access of third-country nationals to the measure:

As mentioned above, the programme is accessible to people between 18 and 30 years of age; who are either a third-country national or a Belgian national¹⁵⁶ with a migration background from a third country; who are able to express themselves in English, Dutch or French; who have a valid Belgian residence permit and are allowed to work in Belgium; and who are registered at one of the Regional Public Employment Services (VDAB, Actiris, Forem).

Regarding the process of accessing the project, potential mentees can contact DUO for a JOB. They are invited to participate in a collective information session, during which the DUO for a JOB team presents the projects and answers any questions the potential mentees may have. If the potential mentee is still interested in the project, he/she is invited for an individual interview with DUO for a JOB, in order to discuss his/her professional histories, understand his/her motivations and expectations, etc. The potential mentee can then decide whether or not he/she wishes to continue with the project.

It may also happen that the DUO for a JOB team determines that a potential mentee may not access the project because he/she does not meet certain requirements (e.g. language level). The mentee is then reoriented towards other organisations or actors for further assistance, according to his/her needs.

The measure is voluntary. It is free of charge for the participants.

2. Context in which the measure has started:

a) Introduction of the measure and duration.

The first duos were created in 2013. The project is ongoing.

b) Link with the increase of the migration flow starting in 2015.

The important inflow of applicants for international protection in 2015/2016 did not lead to operational changes to the project. An increase in the number of mentors willing to participate in the project was however noted.

c) Need or purpose for the introduction of the measure.

On the one hand, the employment rate for young people with a migration background in Belgium is low. They experience difficulties when accessing the labour market, as a result of a range of different factors (including inequalities in education, discrimination, recognition of qualifications, validation of competences, language issues, etc.). DUO for a JOB notes that other factors play an important role as well: the lack of social capital and relevant professional networks of these young people, as well as misconceptions about society, the labour market and cultural codes.

On the other hand, the activity rate of people above 50 years of age is relatively low in Belgium, and their experience and skills are underused.

DUO for a JOB thus seeks to meet the needs of both groups of people. It mainly aims at facilitating access to employment for young people with a migration background; favour inter-cultural and inter-generational meetings; and reinforce social cohesion by creating social ties and solidarity.

d) Moment the measure is implemented.

No determined time-limitation.

e) Key activities

Duo for a Job is a non-profit association which - through its inter-generational mentoring programme - connects young job-seekers with a migration background (the "mentees") with people who are over 50 years of age (the "mentors") in order to favour integration on the labour market.

The programme is based on a structured series of steps¹⁵⁷:

- Group information session.
- Individual interview with each candidate mentor or mentee (e.g. finding out about professional histories, understanding motivations and expectations, etc. This information is used when matching the duos).
- 4-day training of mentors.

¹⁵⁶ Since 2015, Belgian nationals (with a migration background) can also benefit from the programme. There are no differences in conditions between third-country nationals and Belgian nationals. The general conditions apply.

¹⁵⁷ For more information see : Duo for a Job, *Annual Report 2017*, <https://fr.calameo.com/read/00509316683734a433384?authid=n6mim4o70uET>

- Matching of the duo based on a number of criteria (sector of activity, languages spoken, nature of career plans, etc.).
- First meeting of the mentor and mentee.
- Signing of agreement and charter if the mentor and mentee wish to continue. Signing these documents clarifies the framework for the duo and marks the start of the mentoring period.
- Period of mentoring: during 6 months, the duo meets once a week. Each duo is monitored by a member of the DUO for a JOB team. "Intervision" sessions also take place: groups of mentors from different sectors/backgrounds can share experiences and give advice to one another. Other optional activities are also organized by DUO for a JOB.
- Evaluation: mentors and mentees are asked to reflect on the mentoring experience.

3. Implementation modalities:

a) Actors implementing the measure.

The programme is implemented by DUO for a JOB, a non-profit association.

Furthermore, DUO for a JOB seeks to complement other existing initiatives for employment. It collaborates with other civil society organisations active in the field, as well as with the Regional Public Employment Services (Actiris, VDAB and FOREM) - mostly on raising awareness on the project among the target group.

b) Promotion of the measure.

DUO for a JOB actively promotes the project to the target groups. Different methods are used to raise awareness on the project. This includes the dissemination of posters or flyers on the project or participation in job fairs. Furthermore, DUO for a JOB collaborates with other public or civil society organisations active in the field of labour market integration to raise awareness on the project.

Furthermore, word of mouth plays an important role in raising awareness on the project among the target groups.

4. Impact of the measure:

a) Anticipated objectives.

The anticipated objectives were met.

b) Main outcomes.

As indicated in the Annual Report 2017 of DUO for a JOB, the number of duos created (and of mentees involved in the programme) has increased every year since the beginning of the programme in 2013: 9 in 2013; 73 in 2014; 153 in 2015; 245 in 2016 and 500 in 2017. In total, 980 duos have been created between 2013 and the end of 2017 (380 in Brussels, 70 in Antwerp and 50 in Liège).

Regarding the profiles of the mentees: in 2017, 38% of the registered mentees had a residence permit for family reasons and 35% have been granted an international protection status. 22% of the mentees were Belgians with a migration background. People from 90 different countries are involved. Mentees primarily come from the African continent (e.g. Morocco, Guinea, DRC, Cameroon and Rwanda). Regarding their level of qualification, 53% of the mentees in 2016 did not have any formal qualifications or their qualifications were not recognized in Belgium. 40% of these mentees have a secondary level or college-level qualification in their country of origin¹⁵⁸. There is also a good gender balance: just over half of the mentees are women.

The mentoring programme led to solid results: on 31 December 2017, out of the 648 duos that completed the mentoring programme since 2013, 63% have resulted in a positive outcome 6 months after the end of the programme (i.e. a short term or permanent contract, traineeship, training programme or a return to studies). 41% of the mentees found a job in this timeframe.

Within 12 months following the end of the programme, 74% of the duos led to a positive outcome (with 55% of them having found a job).

As reflected by the evaluation carried out at the end of the programme, mentees also acquired other skills during the mentoring period, which also favour their integration into the labour market (also in the long-term). This includes: improving self-confidence; learning how to use job-seeking tools; becoming more independent; creating a career plan; etc.

c) Monitoring and evaluation of impact.

¹⁵⁸ Duo for a Job, *Annual Report 2017*, <https://fr.calameo.com/read/00509316683734a433384?authid=n6mim4o70uET>

As mentioned above, each duo formed is **monitored** by a team member of DUO for a JOB during the mentoring period (e.g. answers any questions from the mentee/mentor).

Following the end of the 6-month period, an **evaluation** takes place, during which the mentor and mentee are invited to reflect on their experience.

DUO for a JOB assesses the mentoring experience using a number of quantitative (e.g. results obtained) and qualitative indicators (e.g. skills acquired such as self-confidence).

d) Challenges during implementation and remedies applied.

One of the challenges at the start of the project was to obtain funding. This was linked to the innovative character of the project and the lack of concrete results as the project was just starting. The project was thus initially funded through a "social impact bond" mechanism (i.e. a pilot project is funded for a specific period of time by a group of social investors. An external actor then carries out an evaluation of the pilot-project. If the pilot project meets certain pre-defined objectives, the investors will be reimbursed through public funding)¹⁵⁹.

Furthermore, one other challenge at the start of the project was to recruit mentors over the age of 50. Duo for a Job used different methods to this end: poster campaigns, participation in company meetings, etc. With the project taking off and leading to positive results, word to mouth became the most important factor in raising awareness on the project among the target group for mentors. The number of mentors involved in the project has steadily increased.

e) Likelihood of continuation of the measure.

No end is foreseen.

EMN Common template Part II, 2.2.

2.3. Promising initiatives by the private sector

Preliminary note on selection of promising practices:

Generally speaking, **the importance of involving employers in the integration process** of third-country nationals (and other target groups) on the Belgian labour market is increasingly underlined by the various stakeholders involved. Interesting practices are sometimes put forward (e.g. in publications, media, on websites, etc.).

In this context, some interesting practices of the private sector could be identified through different means.

First of all, **consultations were carried out with key stakeholders** (e.g. Regional Public Employment Services; Employers' organisations; Unia, etc.). Furthermore, **secondary sources** (e.g. media, publications, etc.) were also consulted.

One of the secondary sources used to identify good practices is the "**Action Plan on Diversity**"¹⁶⁰ launched by a number of employers' organisations in July 2017 (i.e. Voka, VBO/FEB, UNIZO, UCM, UWE, Unisoc, BECI and AGROfront). The objective of this action plan is to raise awareness among employers on the advantages of diversity and to provide them with support on how to progressively favour diversity in their companies. The Action Plan focuses on different target groups, including "people of foreign origin". A certain number of initiatives are listed in the Action Plan, including the publication – on a regular basis – of **inspiring practices of employers regarding diversity**. Some examples of good practices have been published online¹⁶¹.

Another source was the report by VOKA – the Flanders Chamber of Commerce and Industry – on "**Migration and Integration: a remedy for a tight labour market**" (June 2018)¹⁶². The paper stipulates – inter alia – that active integration of foreign nationals or people with a migration background – through education and labour market participation – are important factors for the prosperity and economic growth

¹⁵⁹ See: https://www.duoforajob.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SocialImpactBonding_NL_v2.pdf

¹⁶⁰ FEB, UNIZO, UCM, UNISOC, VOKA, AGROFRONT, UWE, BECI, *Plan d'action diversité*, June 2017.

¹⁶¹ Some examples of interesting practices of employers can be found here: <https://www.unisoc.be/pages/fr/public/fr-plan-daction-divesite>

¹⁶² Voka, *Migratie en integratie. Remedie voor een krappe arbeidsmarkt*, June 2018.

of Flanders. The paper contains a series of recommendations to contribute to future-oriented labour migration. Regarding active integration on the labour market, the paper mentions – among others – the importance of supporting the acquisition of competences through learning Dutch in the workplace, training pathways and mentoring projects; fighting discrimination through a focus on competences and adapted hiring procedures; implementation of positive actions on a temporary basis. The paper also **highlights a certain number of interesting practices**, including of employers and employer’s organisations.

In addition, another useful publication was the document **“Time for positive action! Inspiration for employers willing to innovate”**¹⁶³ of the Minderhedenforum, which presents a series of interesting examples of employers implementing diversity related measures (including the examples of the Port of Antwerp and ENGIE Belgium, which are described below).

On the basis of the available information, a few examples were selected which best reflected the focus of the present study and provided a varied overview, in terms of size of the company, sector of activity, type of measure implemented, etc. The case studies were selected from the following **sectors**: transport and communication; agriculture, forestry and fishing; energy and water.

It is important to point out that **none of the measures mentioned below focus exclusively on the third-country nationals included in the scope of the study**. The companies mentioned below often implement a broader “diversity” policy (e.g. through the adoption of a diversity plan), with measures targeting various groups (e.g. people with a migration background; foreign-language speaking people, etc.). Third-country nationals are thus included in the scope of the measures described below, but among other target groups.

The below mentioned initiatives are just a few examples of interesting practices of the private sector in Belgium. It does not constitute an exhaustive overview of the numerous measures, projects and activities that are currently implemented in Belgium.

Private Sector - Measure 1: bpost	
Overview	
Name	bpost Note regarding the status of bpost: bpost is a public limited company subject to the law of 21 March 1991 on the reform of economic public companies, in which the Belgian State has a majority shareholding. In June 2013, half of bpost’s shares were offered for sale to private and institutional investors on Euronext Brussels.
Company size	<i>Large: >250 Employees</i>
Company type	<i>National</i>
Sector	<i>Transport and communication</i>
Area	<i>Enhancement of intercultural/civic relations in the work place inclusion</i>
Access	For the project with Duo for a Job, see Section 2.2 Measure 5 of this report. For the pilot project, the target group is people furthest removed from the labour market.

¹⁶³ Terlien M., Spaas M. (Minderhedenforum), *Tijd voor positieve actie! Inspiratie voor werkgevers met zin voor innovatie*.

Target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Low skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Medium skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>High skilled</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Specific group such us vulnerable, young, female, seasonal workers, etc.</i>
Coverage	National
Budget	<p>The budget is approx. EUR 39,000 excluding VAT (EUR 1,500 per mentor for 4 days training provided by the DUO for a job team)</p> <p>It is provided by the internal bpost budget.</p>
Link	www.bpost.be
Description	
<p>1. Main features of the measure:</p> <p>a) <i>Targeted phase of employment.</i></p> <p>The measures described below (cooperation with Duo for a Job and pilot project) mainly aim at facilitating access to employment of the target group, through different means (mentoring, support before recruitment stage, etc.).</p> <p>b) <i>Objectives and main activities.</i></p> <p>bpost has concluded a Diversity Plan with the Brussels Public Employment Service Actiris. Diversity Plans aim at improving diversity in organisations.</p> <p>In this framework, bpost implements certain measures regarding labour market integration (including of third-country nationals).</p> <p>First of all, bpost collaborates as a partner with Duo for a Job to facilitate the integration of foreign nationals (or people with a migration background) into the labour market. DUO for a JOB is an organization that implements an intergenerational mentoring programme: it matches young job seekers (third-country nationals mainly, but also Belgian nationals with a migration background) with people over 50 years old who have a professional experience in related fields and who can assist and support them in their job search. The young person (mentee) and his/her mentor meet for a minimum of two hours a week over a period of (minimum) six months. bpost has partnered with Duo for a Job to have 26 voluntary mentors from bpost trained and operational by the end of 2018. At present, 5 duos are already operational. bpost is committed to adapting the schedule and workload of volunteer mentors so that they can receive a basic 4-day training and honor their mission with the mentee.</p> <p>Furthermore, bpost launched a pilot project in 2017 in Flanders aiming at fostering the access to the profession of postman for the people furthest removed from the labour market (including but not limited to third-country nationals) by providing them with support (in collaboration with partners) before the recruitment phase. The support measures focused on helping to alleviate the main challenges that have been identified regarding the target group (e.g. insufficient knowledge of the language used in the workplace, obtaining a drivers' licence, etc.). The pilot project is supported by partners such as <i>Huis van het Nederlands</i> which assesses the minimum language level needed to work as a postman and raises awareness internally about the collaboration with people with such a language level.</p> <p>Finally, more broadly speaking, bpost signed a convention in 2016 with public authorities in charge of employment in Brussels (i.e. Actiris, VDAB Brussels and Bruxelles Formation) in order to ensure the widespread dissemination of bpost job offers, internship opportunities, etc.</p> <p>c) <i>Cooperation framework.</i></p> <p>The measures are implemented in cooperation with other parties (see above).</p> <p>d) <i>Access of third-country nationals to the measure.</i></p>	

Regarding the partnership with Duo for a Job, the selection of the young third-country nationals (or other participants) is done by Duo for a Job.

2. Impact of the initiative:

a) Evaluation and monitoring.

No evaluation has been carried out yet.

b) Achievements of set objectives and main outcomes.

Regarding the **cooperation with Duo for a Job**, 5 duos are already operational (with mentors from bpost) in July 2018. Furthermore, the project facilitates the future employment of young people who do not have a professional network, while at the same time recognizing the value of bpost elders' experience. The project has an important human impact on both the mentor and mentee. Among others, it was noted that there was a high motivation from both mentors and mentees.

c) Challenges and remedies adopted.

Regarding the access to the **profession of postman**, the project focuses on addressing a certain number of challenges: the main challenge is to find people with the right command of the regional language and to raise awareness of the internal staff on collaborating with them. Another challenge identified is the acquisition of a drivers' license, which is a prerequisite to exercise the profession of postman.

Private Sector – Measure 2: Port of Antwerp¹⁶⁴

Overview

Name	Port of Antwerp Note on the status of the port of Antwerp: since 2016, it is a semi-public organisation (i.e. "NV van public recht").
Company size	<i>Large: >250 Employees</i>
Company type	<i>National</i>
Sector	<i>Transport and communication</i>
Area	<i>Training and qualification</i>
Access	The measure is accessible to highly skilled foreign-language speaking people ("hoogopgeleide anderstaligen - HOA").
Target group	<input type="checkbox"/> Low skilled, <input type="checkbox"/> Medium skilled, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Highly skilled <input type="checkbox"/> Specific group such as vulnerable, young, female, seasonal workers, etc.
Coverage	Local (region, province, municipality) Antwerp.
Budget	The budget is approx. <i>Please provide approximate budget here</i> It is provided by the Port of Antwerp.

¹⁶⁴ Information extracted from Terlien M., Spaas M. (Minderhedenforum), *Tijd voor positieve actie! Inspiratie voor werkgevers met zin voor innovatie.*

Link	www.portofantwerp.com
Description	
<p>1. Main features of the measure:</p> <p>a) <i>Targeted phase of employment.</i></p> <p>In the framework of the project, highly skilled foreign-language speaking people are offered a paid internship at the Port of Antwerp as a Project Engineer (at Master level).</p> <p>b) <i>Objectives and main activities.</i></p> <p>The objective of the project is to provide internship opportunities to a certain number of people in order to further their language (and other) competencies and facilitate their integration into the labour market.</p> <p>Since the beginning of 2016, the Port of Antwerp proposes paid internships as project leaders (at Master level) to highly skilled foreign-language speaking people. They work in different departments of the Port of Antwerp. Professional experience is not required for the internship, but basic knowledge of the Dutch language is required. However, the participants are not expected to speak or write Dutch perfectly at the beginning of their internship. During the year-long internship, they have the opportunity to practice and improve their level of Dutch in a professional context that meets their talents and interests. At the request of the intern or his/her manager, additional courses (including language courses) or training can be provided.</p> <p>The internship lasts a total of 1 year. The interns are offered two 6-months contracts.</p> <p>c) <i>Cooperation framework.</i></p> <p>The Port of Antwerp closely collaborates with the project "Connect2Work" to offer internship opportunities to highly skilled foreign-language speaking people.</p> <p>d) <i>Access of third-country nationals to the measure.</i></p> <p>The Port of Antwerp offers the internships in the framework of the "Connect2work" project. Connect2work publishes the vacancies, receives the CVs of the candidates and carries out the pre-screening of the received applications. The Port of Antwerp makes the final selection of the interns.</p> <p>2. Impact of the initiative:</p> <p>a) <i>Achievements of set objectives and main outcomes.</i></p> <p>In 2016 (the first year that the project was implemented), 4 out of the 5 intern positions were filled successfully. The contracts of all the interns were extended. Some of them acquired a job following their internship.</p> <p>The project was continued in 2017 and 2018.</p>	

Private Sector - Measure 3: ENGIE Belgium¹⁶⁵	
Overview	
Name	ENGIE Belgium
	Note on the status of ENGIE BELGIUM: It is a private company, in which the French State is a minority shareholder.
Company size	<i>Large: >250 Employees</i>

¹⁶⁵ Information extracted from Terlien M., Spaas M. (Minderhedenforum), *Tijd voor positieve actie ! Inspiratie voor werkgevers met zin voor innovatie.*

Company type	<i>International (e.g. with subsidiaries in the Member State)</i>
Sector	<i>Energy and water</i>
Area	<i>Training and qualification</i>
Access	The measures are accessible to different target groups (see below). Third-country nationals may access these measures but they are not specifically targeted by them.
Target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Low skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Medium skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>High skilled</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Specific group such as vulnerable, young, female, seasonal workers, etc.</i>
Coverage	National <i>If "other", please add further information here</i>
	The budget is approx. <i>Please provide approximate budget here</i> It is provided by <i>Please provide funding body here (i.e. State, EU funds, donations/private funding, other)</i>
Link	<i>Please provide hyperlink to source/project here, if available</i>
Description	
<p>1. Main features of the measure:</p> <p>a) <i>Targeted phase of employment.</i></p> <p>The measures focus on providing early career support, training and hiring.</p> <p>b) <i>Objective and main activities.</i></p> <p>ENGIE launched a Diversity Plan with the Brussels Public Employment Service Actiris in 2017. This presented the opportunity to assess which diversity measures were already implemented by the company. A certain number of measures in place focus on people with a migration background. This includes some projects focused on youth or students. Other projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration with "Interface 3" (which is a centre for continuing training and socio-professional insertion aiming at equipping women with the skills to access a range of ITC jobs¹⁶⁶): ENGIE has collaborated with Interface 3 for several years. ENGIE's focus is exclusively on women who have recently arrived in Belgium, who do not speak the language but who have an interest in ICT. They can follow a course to get familiarized with IT and coding. At the end of the course, an official training certificate is delivered. Every-6 months, about 20 women start this training course. In addition to the training, they receive support to find an internship or a job. They may start working for ENGIE. - Project "NOVELA"¹⁶⁷: In 2008, ENGIE set up a socio-economic company called "NOVELA", in collaboration with different partners. This company was set up as ENGIE Cofely could not find workers for certain technical tasks (e.g. cleaning and maintenance of technical installations). Since 2008, the House of Work of Sint-Joost-ten-Node (Huis van het Werk) refers a maximum of 18 people every 6 months to ENGIE Cofely. These people are willing to work but face certain challenges (e.g. people with a migration background who do not speak the language). They follow a "pathway" of 18 months: They are employed by Novela, and receive training. Language courses 	

¹⁶⁶ See: <http://www.interface3.be>

¹⁶⁷ See: <http://www.novela.be/index.htm>

are also provided. Attention is also paid to other issues (e.g. housing) in collaboration with certain NGOs. After 6 months, an evaluation is carried out and the participants can learn a job with higher qualifications. After completing this stage, they can continue working at NOVELA for an additional 6 months. After these 18 months, they can either get a permanent contract, move to the regular economy within ENGIE Cofely, or look for employment elsewhere.

c) *Cooperation framework.*

ENGIE collaborates with different organisations (see above).

2. Impact of the initiative:

a) *Achievements of set objectives and main outcomes.*

Regarding the **project NOVELA**: it appears that of all the participants taking part in the project, about 80% of them stay with ENGIE Cofely after completing the 18 months programme.

The project is considered a "win-win" situation: ENGIE can find the necessary workforce while people who have difficulties accessing the labour market are provided with assistance to find a job.

Private Sector – Measure 4: Horticultural company Fruit Vanhellemont

Overview

Name	Horticultural company Fruit Vanhellemont
Company size	<i>Medium: 50 - 249 Employees</i>
Company type	<i>National</i>
Sector	<i>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</i>
Area	<i>Training and qualification</i>
Access	The measures implemented in the framework of the Diversity Plans target all the workers, including seasonal workers and permanent workers. These workers may be Belgian nationals, EU citizens, third-country nationals, etc. It thus includes third-country nationals in theory, but it is in no way limited to them.
Target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Low skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Medium skilled,</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>High skilled</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Specific group such us vulnerable, young, female, seasonal workers, etc.</i> The measures target all the workers, including seasonal workers and permanent workers. These workers may be Belgian nationals, EU citizens, third-country nationals, etc.
Coverage	Local (region, province, municipality)
Link	https://www.boerenbond.be/kenniscentrum/boer-in-de-kijker/diversiteit-als-hefboom-bij-fruitbedrijf-vanhellemont http://fruitvanhellemont.be/weetjes/176-diverstiteit

Description

1. Main features of the measure:

a) *Objective and main activities.*

Fruit Vanhellemont is a Flemish horticultural company (activities include fruit production, fruit sorting, sale of fruit and other products in a shop).

It employs a few permanent workers, but mostly recruits temporary and seasonal workers, depending on the period of the year. Many of these workers are foreign nationals (both EU citizens and third-country nationals) or of foreign origin. The company also employs workers older than 50 years old or people with disabilities. Many of the workers first start as seasonal workers, and might later get a permanent job.

Fruit Vanhellemont first introduced a **Diversity Plan** in 2005, with the support of the "Support point for Innovation for agricultural and horticultural companies" ("Innovatiesteunpunt"¹⁶⁸), the organisation "Eduplus"¹⁶⁹ and the Regional Social-Economic consultative committee ("RESOC - Regionaal Sociaaleconomisch overlegcomité"). In 2008, the company developed a growth diversity plan. The aim was to help the different workers get to know and understand one another better in a context of cultural diversity. Other diversity plans have followed in the next years.

In the framework of the diversity plans, Fruit Vanhellemont implemented a **variety of measures** over the years. This includes measures to improve the mutual understanding between workers, such as courses of basic Dutch for the workers, or the introduction of a "god-mother/ god-father system". Furthermore, lists of words and short sentences in Dutch are used in order to allow mutual understanding on the work floor. A visual welcome flyer was also developed for the workers. Security signs in different languages are also made available. Workshops have also been organized, inter alia to improve the understanding of other cultures.

b) *Cooperation framework.*

Fruit Vanhellemont cooperates with other organisations in the framework of the diversity plans (e.g. some organisations provided support with the Diversity Plan, see above).

2. Impact of the initiative:

a) *Evaluation and monitoring.*

Fruit Vanhellemont follows-up internally on the measures implemented.

b) *Achievements of set objectives and main outcomes.*

Some of the outcomes that can be noted is that the Diversity Plans had a positive impact on the work floor and on the company (e.g. business turnover). Mutual understanding and communication in the company strongly improved. The Plans and the measures implemented also contributed to avoid an important outflow of workers and to ensure a better integration of workers in the company¹⁷⁰.

Furthermore, it is also worth noting that Fruit Vanhellemont obtained the "**Jobkanaal Diversity Prize**" in 2012. This prize was an initiative of the employers' organisations VOKA, Unizo, VERSO and VKW. It was awarded to companies that implemented innovative measures regarding diversity and that facilitated the integration of certain groups (e.g. people with a migration background, people over the age of 50, etc.) on the labour market¹⁷¹.

EMN Common template Part II, 2.3.

¹⁶⁸ See: <http://www.innovatiesteunpunt.be/nl>

¹⁶⁹ See: <https://www.eduplus.be/nl/home>

¹⁷⁰ See: <https://www.boerenbond.be/kenniscentrum/boer-in-de-kijker/diversiteit-als-hefboom-bij-fruitbedrijf-vanhellemont>

¹⁷¹ The Jobkanaal project ended in 2015.

Conclusions

The **labour market integration of third-country nationals (and more generally speaking, of people of foreign origin) is poor** in Belgium. There are important employment rate gaps between third-country nationals (and people of foreign origin) and people of Belgian origin. In 2016, the employment rate (as a percentage of the population between 20 and 64 years of age) for Belgian nationals was **69%**, whereas the employment rate for third-country nationals was **41.8%**. This means that the employment rate of third-country nationals was **27.2 percentage points** lower than for Belgian nationals. This employment rate gap is even more pronounced for third-country national women.

This situation is linked to a **combination of factors**. The Socio-Economic Monitoring Report 2017- which is prepared by the Federal Public Service Employment, Work and Social Dialogue and Unia - identified two sets of factors. First of all, the poor labour market integration is linked to the **structural characteristics of the Belgian labour market**, such as the high cost of salaries, the strong labour market segmentation and the low mobility between and within the different labour market segments. Besides those structural characteristics, foreign nationals and people of foreign origin also face **specific difficulties** in accessing the labour market, including discrimination, or the fact that an important number of people migrate to Belgium for other reasons than for work.

In this context, facilitating the (labour market) integration of foreign nationals and people of foreign origin is often presented as a **priority** in Belgium. Different approaches have been adopted as to how to address this issue: given that the different aspects related to (labour market) integration are largely a competence of the **federated entities** (i.e. the Regions and the Communities), policies, practices, actors involved, and budgets attributed to (labour market) integration differ from one entity to another.

Very broadly speaking, **different policies and projects** have been developed over the last years by public authorities - in collaboration with different partners - to contribute to the (labour market) integration of third-country nationals.

General integration policies and measures specifically targeted at certain third-country nationals have recently been developed or reinforced. Mandatory integration programmes – covering a variety of aspects - are now in place in Flanders, Wallonia and the German-speaking Community. The integration programmes in Brussels should also become mandatory in the near future.

Regarding integration on the **labour market** more specifically, third-country nationals have access to a wide range of **support measures** (e.g. vocational or on the job training, language courses, processes for the validation of competences, mentoring projects, support for self-employment, etc.). These are provided by different actors, most notably the Regional Public Employment Services and their partners. It is worth noting that most of these measures do not focus exclusively on the third-country nationals included in the scope of this study, but usually on all jobseekers or on broader targets groups.

However, more **tailored approaches** – which focus on guiding certain target groups towards the appropriate employment related services on the basis of their needs - have recently been adopted. This is the case in Flanders, where the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) is implementing its 2016-2018 Action Plan "Integration through work", which aims at effectively and efficiently guiding foreign language jobseekers with a migration background to available vacancies, while providing them with the necessary support with respect to language requirements, training and skills. In Wallonia, the Government also set up a scheme for the labour market integration of certain newcomers in March 2016. This includes – inter alia – the creation of "migrants platforms" of the Walloon Public Employment Service (Forem) at the local level, which are tasked with the organisation of the socio-professional integration pathway of certain newcomers.

Besides public authorities and their partners, **employers and employers' organisations** can also play an important role in the integration process of third-country nationals (and other target groups) on the Belgian labour market. They are increasingly involved in the labour market integration of third-country nationals and – more broadly speaking - in the promotion of diversity in the workplace.

EMN Common template Q.15.

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