



FROM THE FIRST STEPS TO THE FUTURE

A TOOLKIT
FOR THOSE
WHO WANT TO
WELCOME PEOPLE
ON THE MOVE
(AND FOR THOSE
WHO ALREADY DO)

PREAMBLE



Five regional coordinators for 'Volunteers for People on the move' from the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flemish Refugee Action), provide support and strengthen local volunteer organisations and citizen initiatives that work for and with people on the move. Do you want to know who we are and what we do? Then visit vluchtelingenwerk.be¹

This Starter Kit was created in collaboration with Gastvrij Netwerk vzw (Hospitable Network) and with the support of the Flemish Government. This starter kit builds on previous publications from Gastvrij Netwerk vzw and Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen: the Toolkit of [Gastvrij Netwerk vzw](#)² (2018) and the [Inspiration Guide 'Support Networks for Vulnerable Families on the move'](#)³ (2022).

EDITORIAL

Vluchtelingenwerk
Vlaanderen

PUBLISHER IN CHARGE

Tine Claus,
Botanique Street 75,
1210 Brussels

Vluchtelingenwerk
Vlaanderen non-profit
organisation

DESIGN

Bert Blondeel

With this starter kit, we want to guide you through the world of voluntary work for and with people on the move. **Would you like to warmly welcome people on the move, or are you already doing so?** We offer a package with basic information that can help further your knowledge in this field, as well as information on which organisations you can call upon to find answers and what useful tips other citizens have for you.

READER'S GUIDE

You can read through this starter kit in one sitting or pick out the topics you want to know more about in between other activities. The structure of this kit allows you to easily find the information you are looking for.

In the first part, we consider the procedure that people on the move go through when they apply for international protection in Belgium. Then we examine the steps that newcomers in Flanders and Brussels have to (or should) take when they receive a residence document.

Our goal is not to give you all the information (we cannot do that either). We want to provide you with a basic understanding of the trajectory that people on the move go through in Flanders and Brussels. For each chapter, we offer a network map and tools to get started which can be shared with newcomers and other interested persons. We do this because we believe that getting to better know their situation can give you a clearer picture of the complex journey that people on the move go through and also because a network map gives you the freedom to decide how you want to support people on the move.

Have you read through the entire starter kit and still have questions? At the back, you will find the contact details of our contact points for volunteers. Are you curious about what other citizens are doing? Then sign up on our meeting platform [WeWelcome.be](http://www.wewelcome.be)⁴ and connect with volunteers for people on the move in Brussels and Flanders.



Volunteer Paul

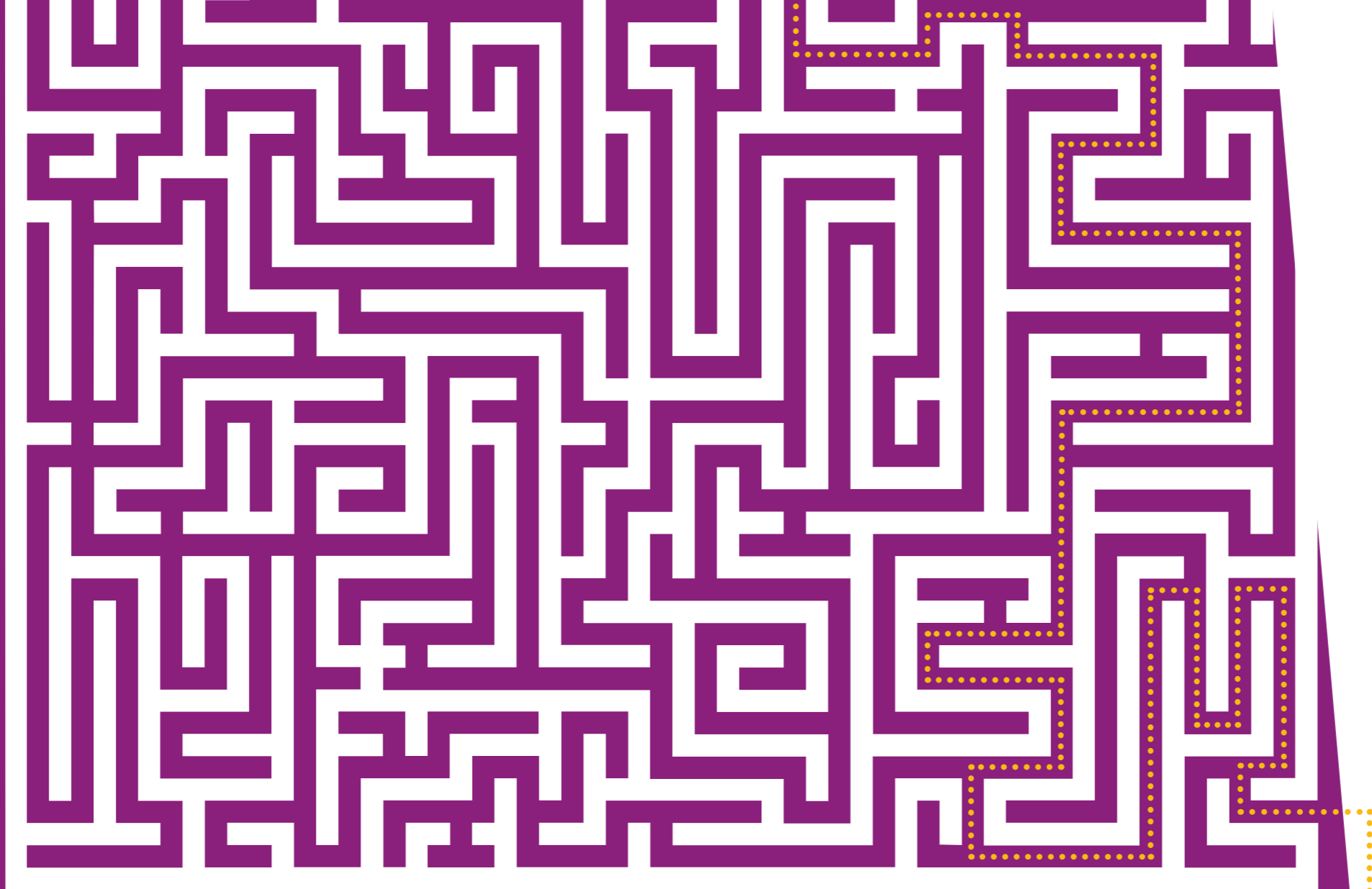
When people are willing to do selfless acts, society moves a step forward. You also learn a lot. You experience great things, meet people, and hear all sorts of stories you would otherwise never encounter. But that shouldn't necessarily be the reason you do it. You should do it to spend your time meaningfully for yourself and for others.

Source: [Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen](https://vluchtelingenwerk.be)⁵

CONTENT

PART 1	Applying for protection	8
	Residence statuses	8
	Procedures	9
PART 2	Reception crisis	16
	Integrating and Civic Integration	22
	Civic Integration Program	22
	Practicing Dutch	24
	Becoming a buddy	25
	Job searching	28
	Reality check	28
	Searching for work	29
	Found a job	32
	Searching for housing	34
	Found housing	36
	Social services	40
	Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW)	40
	House full of papers	42
	Pursuing education	44
	Reception education for non-native newcomers	44
	Waiting lists	45
	What happens after the reception education for non-native newcomers? ..	46
	The path to and choice between educational opportunities	48
Reuniting with family	50	
Challenges during the procedure	50	
Challenges after the procedure	52	
Caring for	54	
The first contact	54	
Support network	55	
Self-care	56	
What now?	60	
Our offer for volunteers	61	

1. <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be>
2. <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/gastvrijnetwerk-toolkit-2018-finaal.pdf>
3. <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/publicatie/inspiratiegids-gezinnen-op-de-vlucht>
4. <http://www.wewelcome.be>
5. <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/week-van-de-Volunteer-paul>



PART 1



APPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

TYPES OF RESIDENCE STATUSES

Every person who has fled their country of origin and is in Belgium has the right to apply for international protection.

The European Union (EU) activated Directive 2001/55/EU in response to the Ukraine war in March 2022 and therefore persons fleeing Ukraine as a result of this conflict can apply for temporary protection status. It is the first time that the EU has activated this directive and the associated exceptional measures. The EU did this to ensure that Member States' asylum systems are less burdened and can thus accommodate and support people coming from this conflict zone. After all, the Member States were already providing asylum to people fleeing from other conflicts.

Other applicants for international protection follow the normal procedure. The media and the general population refer to people who follow this procedure as asylum seekers. They can receive international protection through the recognition of refugee status or subsidiary protection status. We will explain the difference between these two statuses later in this chapter.

First, we will take you through the two types of procedures (the exceptional and the normal) that people on the move go through when they apply for (temporary or international) protection in Belgium. We will also look at their rights during this period and what you can do to support them.

PROCEDURES

Temporary Protection

Individuals who wish to apply for temporary protection must submit their request at the registration centre at the **Immigration Office (DVZ)** in Brussels (at the time of writing, this is at the Eurostation, Victor Horta Square 40, Brussels). DVZ staff will ask the applicants questions and take their fingerprints. If the criteria are met, the applicant will receive temporary protection status. In case of a negative decision, applicants can alternately apply for international protection or appeal this decision.

Since temporary protection status is granted immediately, the procedure ends here. This means that beneficiaries can directly go to the municipality or city where they want to stay. There, the person, or family will either be allocated a collective reception centre, or an emergency village, or will be accommodated by a host family provided by the city, municipality, or host family through #PlekVrij. Beneficiaries of temporary protection status may also look for their own residence or stay with family or friends. If the persons show vulnerabilities, they can (at the time of writing), find shelter in the collective reception centre Ariane in Brussels. They can stay there until the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) refers them to a municipality that has a reception place. The faster this happens, the better since persons staying in Ariane cannot register in a city or municipality. As a result, they cannot access all the rights associated with temporary protection status.

For questions about the status or other residence documents, those with temporary protection can contact the **Centre for General Welfare (CAW)**. In addition, the government developed the [info-Ukraine.be platform](https://info-ukraine.be)⁶ which guides beneficiaries through the procedure in their language and provides information on further steps they can take after receiving temporary protection (read on from [chapter two](#)).

International Protection

To apply for international protection, the person must report to the DVZ at the border (airport, for example) or on the territory (Pacheco Avenue in Brussels). The DVZ will register the request, ask questions, take fingerprints, and have the applicant fill out a standard form. Applicants for international protection do not immediately receive a residence document. Following the lodging of their application for international protection, applicants undergo an assessment by means of in-depth interviews to demonstrate that they meet the criteria to obtain refugee status or subsidiary protection status.

IMPORTANCE OF A LAWYER

It is important to consult a **lawyer** specialised in immigration law as soon as the person applies for international protection. A good lawyer can play a crucial role in determining the likeliness of success in the asylum procedure. The lawyer understands the legal framework and can prepare the procedure together with the newcomer, send evidence, and appeal against a rejection decision.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that lawyers are insufficiently available for their client.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

*You can advise the newcomer that it is possible to change lawyers. The **Legal Aid Office** can help with this. In addition, you can help the newcomer yourself in preparation for the procedure. To know how best to do this, you can consult the applicant's lawyer or call our helpline. A lawyer or our employees can indeed tell you what the newcomer should pay attention to and what your role can be in the preparation stage. You can also go with other questions, such as 'help, I have a document in another language. How can I translate this?' or 'I don't understand these legal terms, can you explain them to me?'. For the latter, the website of the **Agency for Integration and Civic Integration** (AglI) can also be a useful tool for you. The AgII is specialised in Immigration and International Family Law.*

DOCUMENTS TO BE REQUESTED

The first step for those who applied for the status of international protection at the Immigration Office is to obtain a Certificate of Registration or the 'Orange card' at the **municipal office** of the (desired) place of residence. This Certificate is a temporary residence document that proves that the asylum procedure is ongoing, and that the applicant has the right to stay in Belgium pending a decision on his/her claim. They can obtain the Certificate by showing the municipal office the 'Annex 26' they received from the Immigration Office at their registration in Brussels.

INTERVIEWS

After that, the **Immigration Office** can invite the applicant for a 'Dublin interview'. This happens when the Immigration Office sees that the applicant has ties with another European country where he/she should have applied for asylum. This is due to a European regulation (the Dublin III Regulation) that generally has the consequence of obliging people on the move to be processed in the first country of entry (this is often Greece, Italy, Cyprus, or Spain). During the Dublin interview, the Immigration Office asks why someone came to Belgium and thus the reasons for leaving the other Member State.

The Immigration Office can decide to send the person back to the responsible country. However, for various reasons, such as ill-treatment in that country, the Immigration Office may decide to process the request for international protection in Belgium. In this case, the Immigration Office will invite the applicant for another interview. During this interview, a case worker will briefly ask the person why they fled their country of origin using a questionnaire.

Afterwards, the **Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)** will invite the person for the second interview. Here, a case worker will delve deeper into the reasons for fleeing their country of origin over several hours. It is a (emotionally) heavy interview. After about six months (this can take longer depending on the situation), the CGRS will decide whether the applicant will be granted with refugee status, subsidiary protection status, or no status at all. Minors who fled their home country without their parents (unaccompanied minors) can never be expelled from the country by the government until they reach the age of eighteen.

REFUGEE STATUS AND SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION STATUS

A person can be granted refugee status if they meet the criteria defined by the Geneva Convention (and the Qualification Directive in terms of EU law). This is a treaty that defines the term refugee as a person who fears persecution in their country of origin due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion or belonging to a specific social or ethnic group. In Belgium, a recognised refugee receives an electronic foreigner card A which proves that the person is legally residing in Belgium. This card is valid for five years. After five years, the person can convert the A-card into an electronic foreigner card B, which prompts an unlimited right of residence.

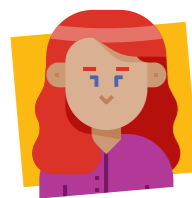
If someone does not meet the criteria defined by the Geneva Convention but still faces danger upon returning to their home country, this person can be granted subsidiary protection status in terms of the Qualification Directive. The danger in this context is described as 'a risk of real harm' due to inhumane treatment, serious threats from an armed conflict, or the death penalty. Consider, for example, the Syrian civil war. Those with subsidiary protection receive an electronic foreigner card A. This is valid for one year, after which you can renew it twice for a period of two years. After this five-year period, the A-card is converted into an unlimited right of residence with a B-card.

! It is possible that a newcomer has a different type of foreigner card, for example, an F-card. If this is the case, look at the [website of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration](#) ⁷ (AglI) to see what this means.

When the applicant receives a negative decision, the person can appeal or submit a new request for international protection to the Immigration Office (subsequent application).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PROCEDURE

The information platform for asylum seekers in Belgium developed by Fedasil is a useful tool that can help you inform the applicant. There, you can find information about the asylum procedure through customised audio clips in the language of the asylum seeker. The CGRS also provides tailored information about the asylum procedure. You can listen to the audio and video clips in the newcomer's language at asylumbelgium.be⁸.



Tip from Christine, volunteer at SIAL Lubbeek

I also just discovered the website 'Helder Recht' and immediately subscribed to their newsletter. This website is very interesting because we often found it difficult to find our way to clear answers to many questions.



WHAT CAN YOU DO DURING THE PROCEDURE?

We would like to emphasize that it is important not to give the newcomer false hope. The Immigration Office and the CGRS indeed treat each asylum application on an individual basis, making it difficult to generalise the likelihood of success. What you can do is 'be there' for the person. As you have read, the asylum procedure involves several steps and can be a long, complex, and emotionally taxing process. The newcomer has just fled their country of origin and often had no chance to process any potential trauma before sharing this with others. Moreover, it remains a procedure where the chance of success is not guaranteed, making this an uncertain period for the newcomer with additional stress. Due to the fact that the persons are still in the asylum procedure, they have limited opportunities to seek the necessary care. How you can provide psychosocial support to the person is explained in the eighth chapter.



Manibu is 21 years old and fled Pakistan

In the village where I lived, everyone knew each other and all doors were open, you could walk into anyone's home. I still miss that feeling here, but especially when I first arrived in Belgium, it was a big adjustment for me. I didn't know the language, had no family and friends around me, and the doors of other houses were closed. We stayed inside much more here, and it took a while before I could make contacts. Those first months were very hard for me.



Source: Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen



Mahaba is 21 years old and fled from Syria

My brother and I initially lived together in an asylum reception centre for a year. That was a difficult time. We lived with so many together. We were all different and we had little to no privacy.



Source: Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

RIGHT TO RECEPTION

During the entire asylum procedure, the applicant for international protection has the right to reception. Under normal circumstances, the newcomer will first stay in the registration centre managed by **Fedasil** in Brussels (Klein Kasteeltje) for a few days. After that, the applicant will move to a large reception centre or a local reception initiative (LOI) where the person will stay until the end of the procedure.

When the newcomer stays in a reception centre, a **social worker** will further inform the newcomer about the procedure and house rules in the centre. The assistant will be an important point of contact throughout the stay for questions about the status of the asylum procedure, contact with the lawyer, translations, applying for documents, and the social well-being of the newcomer.

In the reception centre, the newcomer has the right to material support, such as food, clothing, and pocket money, as well as social, medical, and psychological assistance. In addition, employees and volunteers can provide free activities for or with them, such as practicing Dutch, playing with the children, or yoga workshops. However, these activities are often limited, causing people in the centre to get bored. Especially when they are not allowed to work for the first four months, they are too young to work, or because these centres are located in remote areas. If there are leisure organisations near the centre, they are often not an alternative due to the cost.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Reception centres are always looking for people who want to organise something relaxing! Do you want to help applicants improve their Dutch, take them for a run, or do you have other ideas? Then check out the [Fedasil website](#)⁹ to see if there is a reception centre in your area and talk to them.



Kamal

Life in the reception centre was difficult at first. In Bangladesh, I had a normal life as a child. I went to school, came back home to my family, and went to play. In the centre, I was in a room with 12 to 16 people. That really shocked me. The room looked like an old soldier's barracks. There wasn't much to do, and I had no money to do anything outside the centre. Regularly, a group of volunteers would come by in the centre ([KAJ de Mug](#)¹⁰). That was fantastic (smiles). We did a lot of activities and outings like playing football or a weekend away, and it was all for free.



Source: Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

When newcomers stay in a housing unit (also called a local reception initiative (LRI)), they are more independent than in a reception centre. They live in a furnished private house and are responsible for their daily basic needs, such as grocery shopping. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen supports LRIs because they have a positive impact on the well-being and integration of the newcomer and are more cost efficient than large reception centres.

In an LRI, a **social worker from the Public Centre for Social Welfare** is the point of contact for the residents when they have social and medical questions, or questions related to the asylum procedure. For other matters, they are on their own. This is not obvious for newcomers, due to the language barrier or because they do not know people who can guide them in the city or municipality.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Municipalities with an LRI often look for people to help residents get started. For example, going to the bank together to make an appointment or explaining the waste collection calendar. Check if there is an LRI in your neighbourhood and ask if a newcomer could use some support. Discuss with the newcomer and the social worker what you can do for each other.

The newcomer can also choose to provide their own accommodation, but in this case the person is only entitled to medical assistance. Be sure to tell the newcomer that it is important that the Immigration Office and the CGRS know where the applicant lives and thus that it is also necessary to inform them when their address changes. This principle also applies when the newcomer submits a subsequent application for international protection.

! Regardless of where the newcomer lives during the asylum procedure, they have the right to work (both paid and volunteer work) four months after an application for international protection has been submitted and the person has reached the minimum age to work.

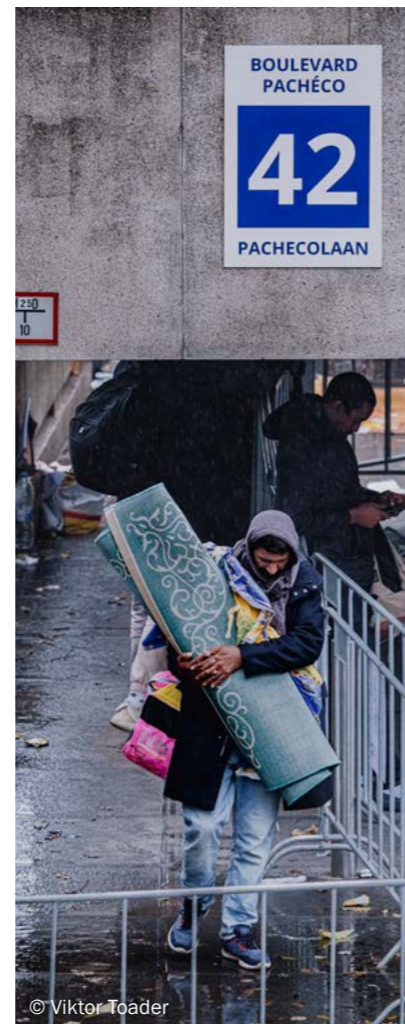
MINORS

Minors who fled their country of origin without their parents (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) have the right to additional safeguards during the asylum procedure. This means that among other things, they have the right to be appointed with a **legal guardian** and may stay in a separate reception centre or LRI designated for minors. However, not all unaccompanied minors are eligible for the latter. When the unaccompanied minor arrives in Belgium, staff in an Observation and Orientation Centre will assess whether the unaccompanied minor has any specific medical or psychological needs. If this is not the case, the minor will be allocated the regular

reception network (see above). This is often not ideal for them, given the age difference with the others, the living conditions, and the lack of material support to develop appropriately. Would you like to know how you can provide extra support? Then quickly flip to the sixth chapter or contact a reception centre or LRI. Another interesting point of contact could be [Minor Ndako](#)¹¹. They are looking for persons who want to support young people. Citizens can become guardians of an unaccompanied minor. Read more about it on the government's website.

RECEPTION CRISIS

At the time of writing, we note that the government is unable to provide sufficient reception capacity for asylum seekers who are entitled to reception. As a result, thousands of people are homeless. During the night, some of them can find shelter in homeless centres or informal reception networks, but these are also saturated.



Meanwhile, citizen initiatives and civil society organisations provide for daily needs, such as food, clothing, or showers.

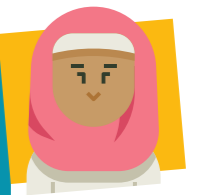
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can also join such an initiative or donate. On our website, we provide an overview of organisations looking for items to donate. If you are looking for an initiative or want to do something but don't know where to start, you can contact one of our regional coordinators via our website. Finally, you can encourage your municipality together with others to be a 'solidarity municipality' that warmly welcomes people on the move.

Volunteer Leyla cooks weekly for homeless people



When I heard that people in Brussels ended up on the street in the cold, Liza and I impulsively decided to take the train to the Petit Château. Once there, we could do nothing but take action and ordered some meals online for those sitting on the street. This led to the idea of cooking regularly, so that these people could be provided with one full meal a day.

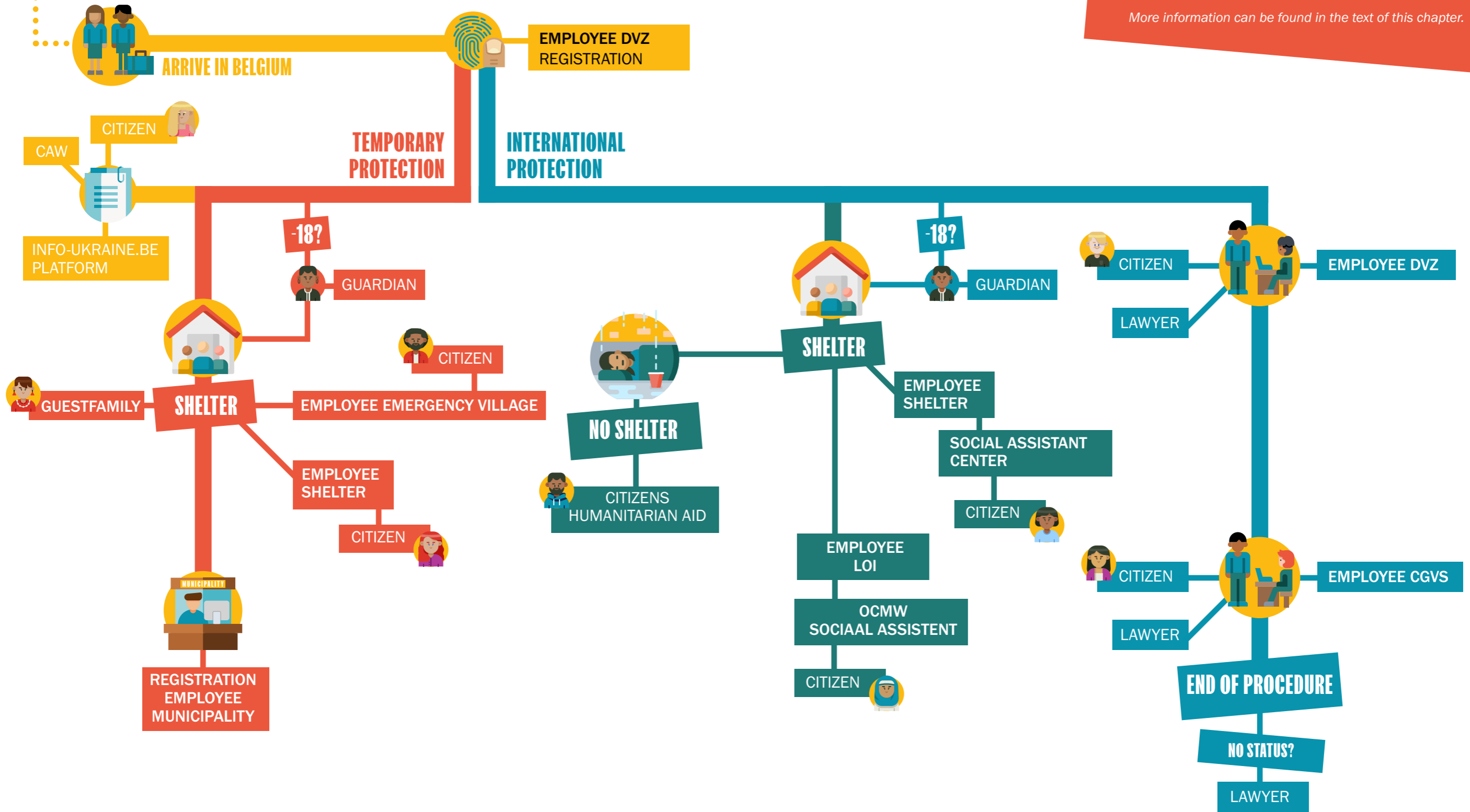


Source: [Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen](#)¹²

Links and sources:

- The info-Ukraine.be platform: <https://info-ukraine.be/nl/ondersteuning-belgie>
- Website of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (AgII): <https://www.agii.be/thema/vreemdelingenrecht-internationaal-privaatrecht/verblijfsdocumenten/elektronische-vreemdelingenkaarten>
- Audio and video clips on asylumbelgium.be: <https://asylumbelgium.be>
- Website Fedasil: <https://www.fedasil.be/nl/opvangcentra>
- KAJ de Mug: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/277784172320771/about/>
- Minor Ndako: <https://minor-ndako.be/watwedoet/steunfiguren/>
- Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (Flemish Refugee Action): <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/blog/Volunteer-leyla-kookt-wekelijks-voor-mensen-op-sstraat>

PROTECTION APPLICATION

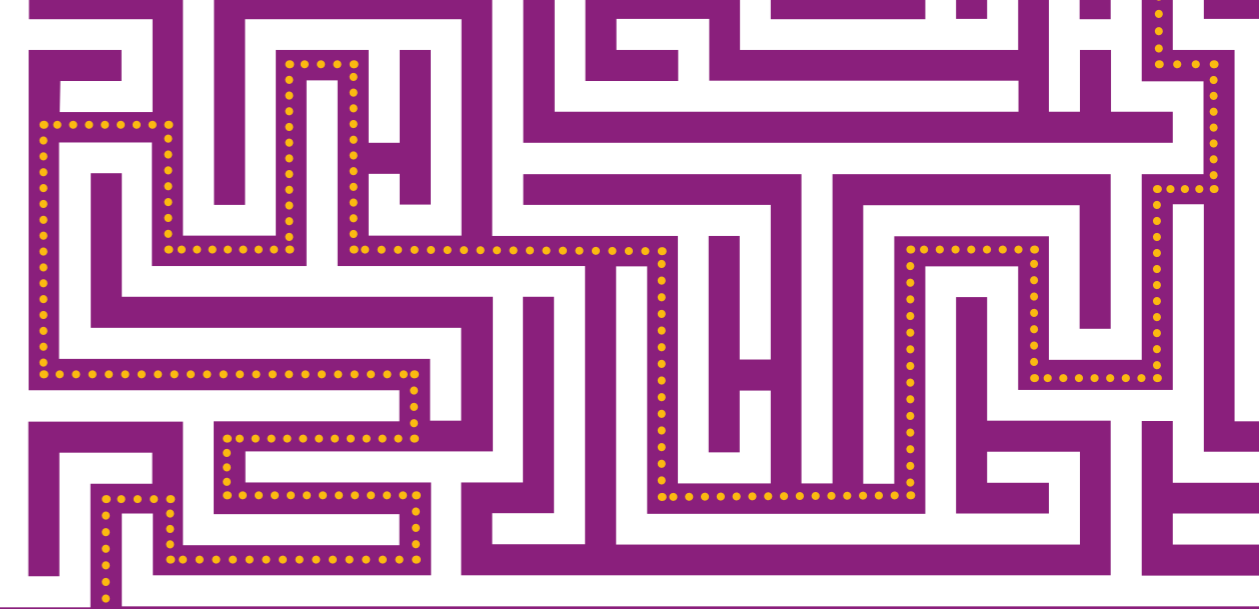


In every phase, we name the organisation and/or person someone meets when they seek protection.

If you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and questions arise, then you must address this with the organisations and/or persons that are part of your trajectory.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter.



PART 2:

Obtaining temporary protection, refugee, or subsidiary protection status means the start of a new life in Belgium for a newcomer. The uncertainty that is linked to fleeing, and the asylum procedure is replaced by stability, more opportunities, and consequently the possibility to build a future.

However, this is not a carefree period since obtaining international protection also means leaving the reception centre or local reception initiative, and thus looking for a more permanent accommodation in an oversaturated housing market which is not easy. A lot of administration needs to be sorted out. In this period, the survival mode in which many were for a long time, gradually switches off. This change can bring unprocessed loss, stress, and even trauma to the surface.

In the following chapters, we will take you through the journey that the newcomer will continue to make. We will also focus on the role you can take on, to make them feel as much at home as possible and to support them in the steps they undertake further.

INTEGRATION AND CIVIC INTEGRATION

CIVIC INTEGRATION PROGRAM

As soon as newcomers receive temporary or international protection and are 18 years old, the [Flemish Agency for Integration and Civic Integration](#) (AgII) or the city agencies in Antwerp ([Atlas](#)) and Ghent ([Amal](#)) will invite them by letter to make an appointment at one of their offices in Flanders or Brussels within three months. There, an employee will welcome the newcomer, ask questions, and refer them to a [trajectory supervisor](#) who will schedule a meeting with the person at a later time.

CIVIC INTEGRATION FOR BENEFICIARIES OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

Individuals with temporary protection status are not obliged to accept the invitation, but they are allowed to do so. If they wish, they can follow a civic integration program. If they follow this program, they will be assigned a trajectory supervisor who provides individual guidance, directs them to local services, information sessions, and Dutch lessons (NT2). We will tell you a bit more about this program below. On the website of the AgII, you can find more information about the program and the [brochures](#)¹³ 'Feel at home in Flanders' and 'Feel at home in Brussels' in different languages..

CIVIC INTEGRATION FOR BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION (RECOGNISED REFUGEES OR SUBSIDIARY PROTECTED INDIVIDUALS)

Beneficiaries of International Protection must follow a [civic integration program](#)¹⁴. The trajectory supervisor will inform them about this. The civic integration program is a program where the newcomer attends Dutch lessons (NT2), learns about society through a social orientation course (MO), meets new people through a participation and networking program, and learns new skills or looks for work (employment trajectory) with the goal of finding their way in society. The newcomer will have to sign a civic integration contract stating that the person will commit to these four goals (or four pillars). The trajectory supervisor will guide the newcomer by discussing practical information throughout the entire civic integration program, reviewing plans, answering questions, and clarifying ambiguities. On the [website of the AgII](#)¹⁵, you can find a video about the civic integration program in different languages.

One of the first steps the supervisor will discuss with the newcomer is making an appointment with a [language consultant](#). The consultant will review the newcomer's educational level and language skills, as well as administer a test to determine their level of Dutch. Afterward, they will look for a suitable school that offers Dutch lessons (NT2). Meanwhile, they will consider when and in what form the newcomer can start the social orientation course (MO). Thus, the AgII offers different course formats depending on the profile of the student.

The trajectory supervisor will also refer the newcomer to an employment agency and explain that mandatory integrators must complete a 40-hour program (participation and networking program) where they participate in social activities that take place in a Dutch-speaking format. Forms of social activities can be activities in pairs or in groups, volunteer work, or an internship.

The integrator can discuss with the supervisor in what order they want to complete the program. If everything goes well, at the end of completing the entire integration process, the newcomer will receive an integration certificate. This certificate is an important proof when the newcomer later wants to apply for Belgian nationality.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can help the newcomer to integrate and feel at home. In practice, it is not so easy for newcomers to follow the integration process and to successfully conclude it. For example, official teaching institutions organise very few opportunities for the newcomers to practice Dutch besides the lessons.

You can practice Dutch together with the newcomer or join a group of citizens who organise Dutch practice tables for non-native speakers. Look up if there are citizens in your neighbourhood organising conversation tables for non-native speakers and send them a message. If you have not yet contacted a newcomer or cannot immediately find a group to join, ask at the **municipality**, for a **school** that gives Dutch lessons, or an office of the **Agli** if there are people who could use support. Then discuss with them how best to approach this. If you are starting, check out oefenkansen.be or the website of the Agli. You can find useful tools and tips there that can inspire you to continue working. Also, feel free to ask for advice from the school or the municipality, or exchange information online with **other volunteers**. You can do this via our online meeting platform for volunteers [We Welcome](#)¹⁸.

Leisure activities can play an important role in the journey of newcomers. It is often through these activities that one can practice the language, meet friends, or better understand the culture. However, it is not easy for newcomers to navigate the leisure offerings in the area. Therefore, municipalities and cities often work with **intermediaries**. These are professional bridge figures who, whether through an



Lieve is a volunteer at Gastvrij Diepenbeek

Weekly, about eight volunteers and non-native newcomers come together to meet and speak Dutch. We talk about ordinary things: parties, traditions, family, children, work, and so on. We also flip through the municipal newspaper 'Teng'. We pay extra attention to news that newcomers must know, such as changes in the garbage collection calendar or the summer activities for children. We also address current themes.

This year, as part of poetry week, we all wrote a poem. Volunteer Ann recorded all the poems and put them online. This way, everyone can listen to their poem. The Wablief newspaper, a newspaper in simple Dutch, published the poems. We are very proud of our writers! For a moment "world-famous in Flanders."

Source: [Brochure Inspiring Practices](#)¹⁹ – Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

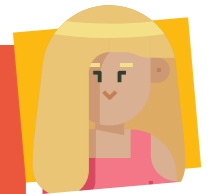
external organisation or not, guide newcomers. The trajectory supervisor can also be involved in this. For example, the supervisor can help search for a suitable activity and call the organisation to ensure that the introduction between the organisation and the newcomer go more smoothly. A third point of contact can be you. This can give the newcomer a push in the right direction, by having a **neighbour**, **classmate**, or **buddy** to whom he/she can turn to with any question.

BECOMING A BUDDY

A **buddy** is the English word for a friend. In this context, it means that you are a friend, confidant, or guide for someone who needs extra support. We want to emphasise the word 'extra' because a buddy does not take over the supportive role of the caregiver or professional but supplements these roles, to give someone a push in the right direction.



Buddy An



I have been supporting Manal and her five children for a while now. I assist them with practical matters, such as taking them to places, figuring things out for them, contacting organisations and agencies. I listen when something is wrong. I help keep and organise the administration.



Source: [Inspiration Guide for Families on the Run](#)²⁰

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Check if there is a need for a buddy in your **city or municipality** and contact the **responsible employee**. Discuss together what the buddy system entails and what you can mean for each other. Do not hesitate to also involve the **trajectory supervisor** when you have a buddy. This applies to every step you take with the newcomer during the integration process. The supervisor remains the contact person for the newcomer during the process and knows the field to orient you as well as possible. If your municipality does not have a buddy system, then contact one of **our regional coordinators**²¹ through our website. They will then search for an alternative with you.

In the following chapters, we will tell you what will happen to newcomers besides the integration trajectory and how you can support newcomers together with others step by step.

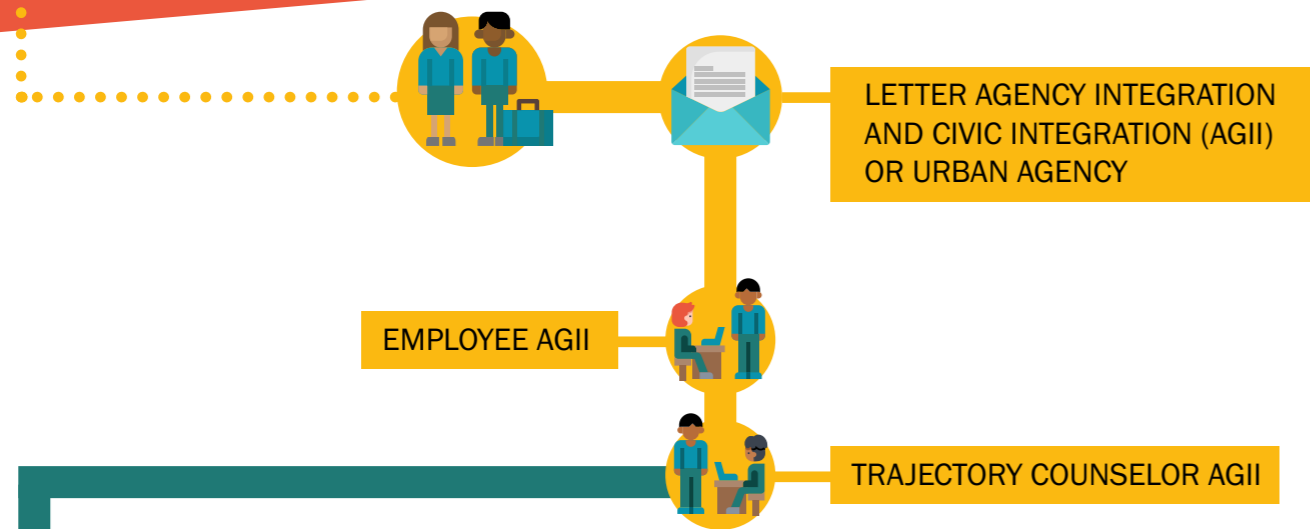
INTEGRATE AND ASSIMILATE

In every phase, we identify the organisation and/or person who meets someone fleeing as they integrate and settle in.

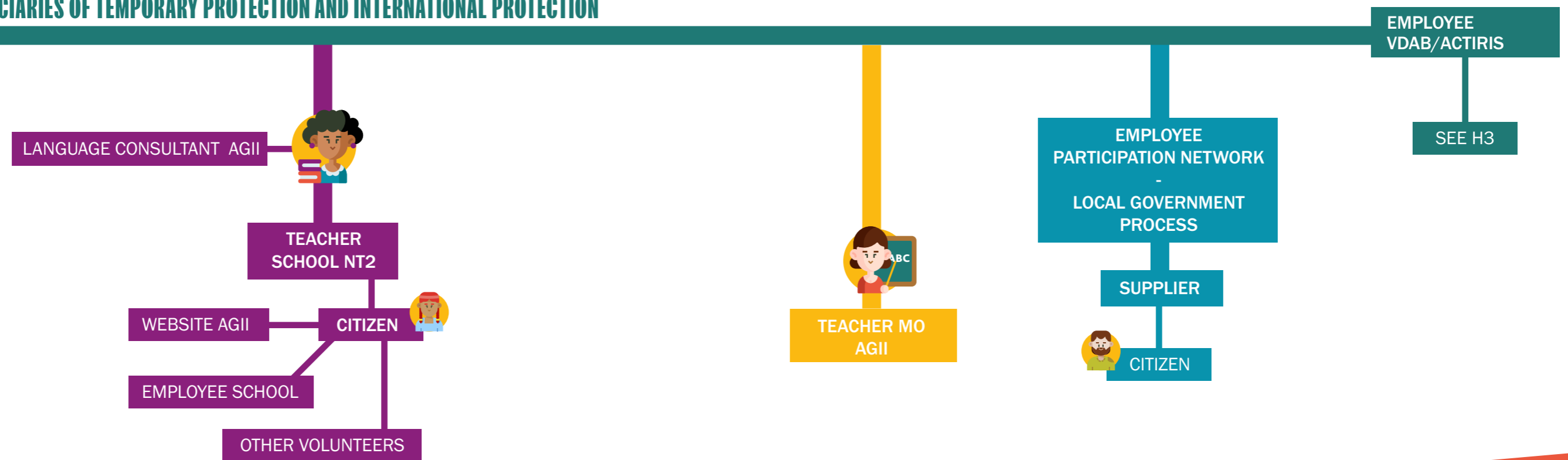
If you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and questions arise, then speak to the organisations and/or persons that are part of your journey.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter.



BENEFICIARIES OF TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION



Links and sources:

13. Brochures website AgII: <https://integratie-inCitizing.be/nl/wat-kunnen-we-voor-jou-doen/inCitizingstraject-en-cursus-maatschappelijke-orientatie/brochure-voel-je-thuis-in-vlaanderen-en-brussel>
14. Civic integration course: <https://www.integratie-inCitizing.be/nl/inCitizingstraject>
15. Civic integration course video (AgII website): <https://www.integratie-inCitizing.be/nl/wat-kunnen-we-voor-jou-doen/inCitizing>
16. Website van het AgII: <https://www.integratie-inCitizing.be/nl/nederlands-leren#waar-nederlands-leren>
17. Practice opportunities: oefenkansen.be
18. We Welcome: <https://wewelcome.be>
19. Brochure *Inspiring practices by volunteers for volunteers*: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/publicatie/inspirerende-praktijken>
20. Inspiration guide for *Families on the run*: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/publicatie/inspiratiegids-gezinnen-op-de-vlucht>

JOB SEARCHING

REALITY CHECK

People benefitting from temporary protection, refugee or subsidiary protection status have unlimited rights to work in Belgium. This means that they can immediately work for any employer in any profession. Their residence document will state ‘access to the labour market: unlimited’. Those still in the asylum procedure are allowed to work four months after lodging their application for international protection and cannot practice all professions. More information about working in Belgium can be found on the [website of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration \(AgII\)](#) and the [information platform for asylum seekers of Fedasil](#). The platform provides information in various languages.

Newcomers often have undergone professional training in their country of origin. They worked there as employees or had their own business. Consequently, it is a dream for many to be able to practice their profession again in Belgium. Holders of a Ukrainian diploma can immediately start working with their diploma unless they want to work for the government or in a regulated profession such as doctors or nurses, or when the employer explicitly asks for it. In such circumstances, they must have their diploma recognised to the level of a Belgian diploma. Other newcomers must also do this. You can refer them to [NARIC-Flanders](#) for this. If they follow the integration trajectory, they can contact [AgII](#) for individual advice and guidance on diploma equivalence. They can consult their [trajectory counsellor](#) for this in the first instance. A useful website about diploma recognition (and alternatives) is [My Diploma](#)²⁵.

Unfortunately, in practice we see that diplomas are often not recognised. As a result, people have to study again or look for different jobs. For those who have already had to leave everything behind, not having their diploma recognised is often a bitter pill to swallow. Along with the loss of a job and diploma, you also lose the status associated with certain jobs (think of doctors, for example). It is important that someone who indicates that this is psychologically difficult also receives the necessary support.

The [Centre for General Welfare \(CAW\)](#) is an organisation that helps people with questions and problems related to welfare. In some regions, the staff offer a [Mind-Springtrajectory](#)²⁶ that caregivers go through with them to increase their resilience and thus help tackle their futures. Skip to the eighth chapter for other tips.

Volunteer **David**



You don't have to tell these people that setbacks are possible, they already know that. It is important to mention the positive things and look to the future.



Source: [Job Coaching by Volunteers: How and Why?](#)²⁷

Tip: *it is possible to have the competencies you have acquired through experience recognised. This can be done through an [EVC-test centre](#)²⁸. [NARIC](#) can also officially recognise the level of education in the respective country of origin or other specific titles. Both can help the newcomer in searching for a job or to follow a shortened course.*




JOB SEARCH

When the status holder wants to work, the person must register with an employment agency. There, an employee can provide the person with information and guidance to find a job that matches the newcomer's interests and competencies. Thus, an employment agency can help with creating a CV or preparing for the job interview. In Flanders, the employment agency is called the [Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training \(VDAB\)](#), in Brussels it is [Actiris](#). If the newcomer has ties with the Public Centre for Social Welfare (read further in chapter five), a [labour trajectory counsellor from the Public Centre for Social Welfare](#) can also support the person with this.

Finding a tailor-made job in a new country (usually with a different language and work culture) can require intensive guidance from a job coach or a consultant. Newcomers

have to find their way through job vacancy databases, complex administrative procedures, and application processes they are not familiar with. Not all professional career counsellors can provide this intensive guidance.



Rasha from Syria

“VDAB is a helpful organisation. But the little things, like the language on the website and the waiting periods, are not easy for people in an uncertain situation. The course on the website is intended for non-native speakers, but I find it difficult. They use old terms in professional jargon that is incomprehensible.”

Source: [Job Coaching by Volunteers: How and Why?](#)²⁹

Therefore, civil society organisations or citizen initiatives offer additional guidance. Examples include the [Bxl@work](#)³⁰ and [Team Up](#)³¹ project of FMDO (Brussels and West Flanders), [Duo for a Job](#)³² (Aalst, Brussels, Antwerp), [Mentoring@work](#)³³ (Limburg and Flemish Brabant), [Alternatief vzw](#)³⁴ (Hasselt), [House for Health](#)³⁵ (Brussels; specifically for the healthcare sector), [At our Home vzw](#)³⁶ (Aarschot), [Welcome in Mechelen](#)³⁷ (Mechelen), or [Hand-in-Hand](#)³⁸ (Ghent). There are also custom companies and (learning) workplaces that offer newcomers with a large distance to the labour market the opportunity to work. Examples include Groot Eiland and Recyclart (Brussels), Timmerwerkt (Ghent), or Gatam (Antwerp)..


WHAT CAN YOU DO?

As a volunteer, you can mainly listen to someone’s ambitions and expectations, search for information together, encourage, and offer support from advice to coaching. If someone is rejected from a job, it is valuable to look at why it went wrong and possibly adjust where possible together. Search online to see if there are people in your area who are active in helping newcomers in their job search and join or lead the newcomer to them.

It can also be useful to advise young and adult newcomers who have the space and desire to work to consider volunteer work in the area in their free time. Volunteer work can indeed be a stepping stone to paid work as it is an ideal way to meet new people, come into contact with the work culture of a company, and practice Dutch.

If the newcomer is interested, let the person contact [Refu Interim](#)³⁹ (Ostend, Bruges, Kortrijk, Ghent, Sint-Niklaas, Lokeren, Aalst, Leuven), or search together


online through databases, such as the [Knowledge Center WWZ](#)⁴⁰ (Brussels), [Flemish Support Point for Volunteer Work](#)⁴¹ (Flanders), [Give a Day](#)⁴² (Flanders and Brussels), or the of het [8400 Talents](#)⁴³ project of FMDO (Ostend). You can also contact the municipality where the newcomer resides or approach a local organisation in the area.



Volunteer Romain

“It’s best to look to the future by asking where the person wants to go, in which sector he/she wants to grow into, and what makes him/her happy.”

Source: [Job Coaching by Volunteers: How and Why?](#)⁴⁴



Volunteer David

“The most important thing is to engage in dialogue and listen. It’s about thinking together and not telling the other what to do.”

Source: [Job Coaching by Volunteers: How and Why?](#)⁴⁴



Tip: through #WorkplaceFree, employers emphasise that they are open to newcomers looking for work. Visit [VDAB](#)⁴⁵ and type the keyword ‘#WorkplaceFree’ under the title “Search for a job” or visit [ACTIRIS](#)⁴⁶ and type the keyword “#Welcome” under the title “Find a job” or “Trouvez un emploi”.



Employee at Refu Interim **Mohanad Alhaj**

“This is my first real job in Belgium. I had already done a lot of volunteer work through Refu Interim, and thus gained a lot of experience, met new people and organisations. I find it great to now be an essential part of this organisation, and thus provide a bridge for new people in this community. It is my passion to help people with a lot of life experience and talent to make their dreams come true. How? Through volunteer work, of course.”

Source: Refu Interim vzw, [Volunteering as a Lever for Integration, Annual Report 2022](#)⁴⁷, p. 22.

JOB FOUND

It is important to occasionally inquire how the newcomer is doing during the first months of the new job. You can ask if the contact with colleagues and the employer is going well, if there are unclear things, and if there are any questions. The newcomer is entering a work culture that may differ from what he/she is used to. For example, the employment contract may differ or there are (un)written rules on the shop floor that were not applicable in the home country.

It can certainly help to share your personal work experiences, because (subtle) differences or misunderstandings are better clarified before the newcomer or employer becomes dissatisfied. When you notice that the working conditions are not correct (for example, the salary is not being paid), we recommend you check out the website of [Fairwork Belgium](https://www.fairworkbelgium.be)⁴⁸. You will find information about working in Belgium and further steps you can take if there are suspicions of exploitation



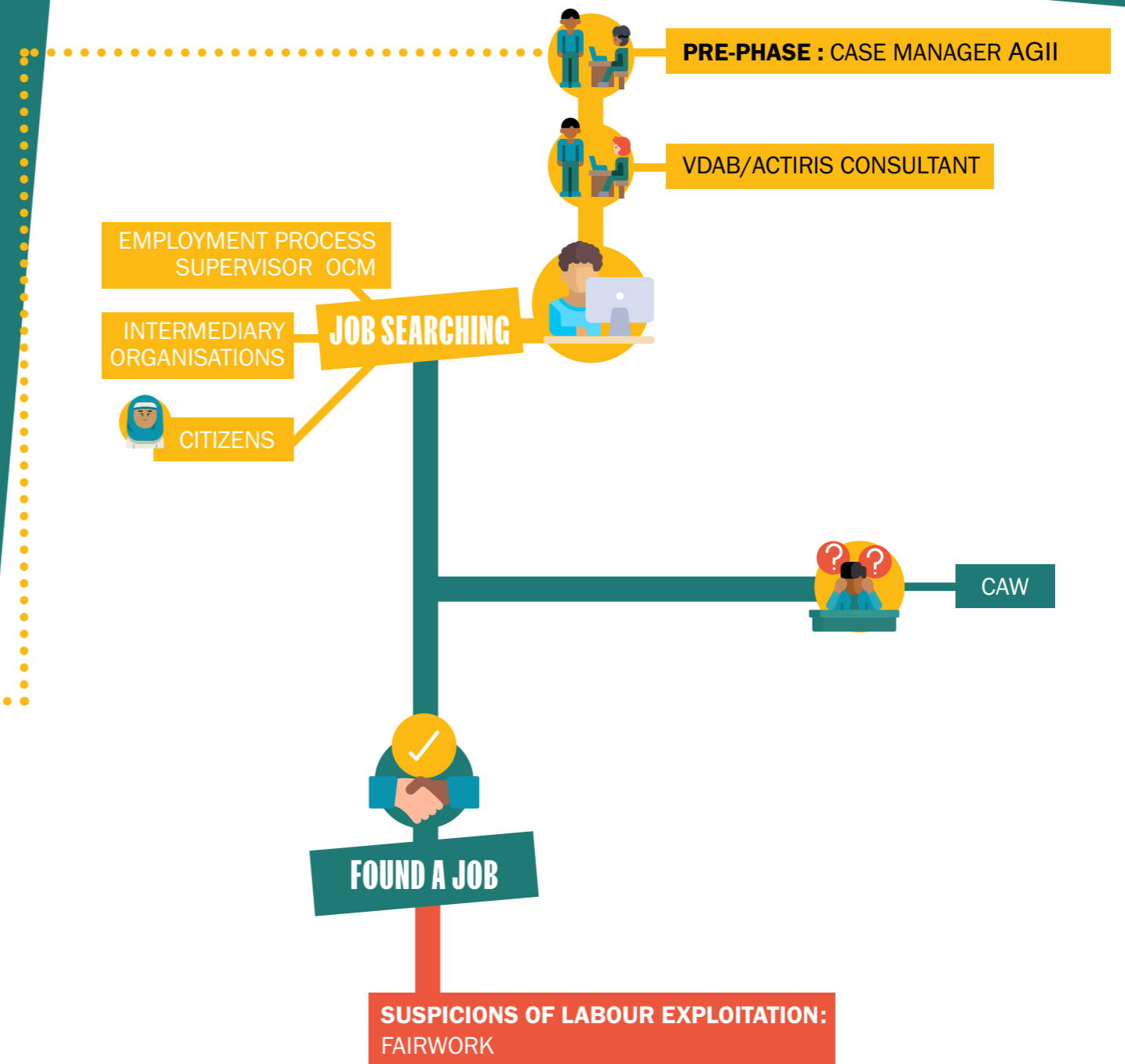
Volunteer Ria
I always keep in touch with people even when they have been hired somewhere. I find this aftercare important for newcomers. Sometimes I send them a message or go to a restaurant if that person is working there.

Source: [Job Coaching by Volunteers: How and Why?](#)⁴⁹

Links and sources:

22. Agency for Integration and InCitizing: <https://www.agii.be/thema/werk/heb-je-recht-om-te-werken/heb-je-recht-om-te-werken-met-je-verblijfsstatuut/heb-je-recht-om-te-werken-als-asielzoeker-subsidiar-beschermde-of-erkend-vluchteling>
23. Information platform for asylum seekers: <https://www.fedasinfo.be/nl/theme/werken>
24. NARIC-Flanders: <https://www.naricvlaanderen.be/nl>
25. My Diploma: <https://www.mijndiploma.be>
26. Mind-Spring program: <https://www.caw.be/voor-professionals/mind-spring-professionals/>
27. Job coaching by volunteers: how and why?: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/jobcoaches.pdf>
28. EVC testing center: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/erkennen-van-verworven-competenties>
29. Job coaching by volunteers: how and why?: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/jobcoaches.pdf>
30. Bxl@work (Brussels): <https://www.fmdo.be/projecten/brussel-werk>
31. Team Up project from FMDO (Brussels and West Flanders): <https://www.fmdo.be/projecten/teamup>
32. Duo for a Job (Aalst, Brussels, Antwerp): <https://www.duoforajob.be/en/homepage/>
33. Mentoring@work (Limburg and Flemish Brabant): <https://www.mentoringatwork.be/>
34. Alternatief vzw (Hasselt): <https://alternatiefvzw.be/>
35. House for Health (Brussels): <https://www.huisvoorgezondheid.be/>
36. At Our Home vzw (Aarschot): <https://www.vzwbijonsthuis.be/>
37. Welcome in Mechelen (Mechelen): <https://www.welcomeinmechelen.be/>
38. Hand-in-Hand (Ghent): <https://www.facebook.com/HandinHandGent>
39. Refu Interim: <https://www.refuinterim.be/>
40. Knowledge Centre WWZ: <https://www.kenniscentrumwwz.be/Volunteersvacatures>
41. Flemish Support Point for Volunteer Work: <https://Volunteerswerk.be>
42. Give a Day: <https://www.giveaday.be/nl-be>
43. 8400 Talents: <https://www.fmdo.be/projecten/8400-talenten>
44. Job coaching by volunteers: how and why?: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/jobcoaches.pdf>
45. VDAB: <https://www.vdab.be/>
46. ACTIRIS: <https://www.actiris.brussels/fr/citoyens/>
47. Refu Interim vzw, Volunteer work as a lever for integration, annual report 2022: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60524262bae9e941d182bfc/t/642c0569f4ca3e7603bf21b0/1680606583030/JAARVERSLAG_RI_2022_compressed.pdf
48. Fairwork Belgium: <https://www.fairworkbelgium.be>
49. Job coaching by volunteers: how and why?: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/jobcoaches.pdf>

JOB SEARCHING



In each phase, we name the organisation and/or person someone meets when they are looking for work while on the move.

If you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and have questions, then speak to the organisations and/or people who are on your path.

You can find more information in the text of this chapter.

HOUSE HUNTING

The search for a house is an important step in the phase after recognition of international protection. People who have been granted refugee or subsidiary protection status and have chosen to stay in a collective reception centre or local reception initiative (LOI) during the asylum procedure must leave these after recognition. Beneficiaries of Temporary protection also cannot stay in the collective reception centre, emergency village, or host family (see chapter one) long-term.

There are no fixed deadlines for beneficiaries of temporary protection to leave the emergency village, host family, or reception centre. Beneficiaries of refugee or subsidiary protection status normally have a few months to find their own housing before they must leave the reception centre or LOI. However, we note that the government limits this period during crisis situations so that asylum seekers can take their place more quickly. This concerns asylum seekers who have not received a place in a reception facility since their registration with the Immigration Office, although they are entitled to it (continue reading in chapter one).

As a result of this situation, upon recognition beneficiaries of international protection have insufficient time to search for a house and prepare for the transition to independent living. These circumstances make the already difficult search for housing even more challenging since the rental market is highly saturated. Moreover, practical research indicates discriminatory practices against people on the move.

Until the moment newcomers have to leave the shelter, their first point of contact remains the **social worker** in the reception centre or emergency village, or the assistant linked to the Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW) managing the Local Reception Initiative (LRI). When the reception period ends, the assistant will inform the newcomer about the matters they need to arrange and will look for further guidance in the professional network. Beneficiaries of temporary protection staying with a host family can contact the municipality for questions about rehousing. Unfortunately, it is not always possible for the social worker or municipal employee to actively search for housing.

The **Centre for General Welfare (CGW)** can guide newcomers in their search for housing, but whether and how strongly depends on the local context. Thus, there are CGWs that organise housing cafes or work with housing seekers. But that is not the case everywhere. Therefore, it may happen that newcomers receive limited guidance initially. Also, the rules for eligibility for guidance vary from CGW to CGW. Some CGWs require the person to be registered in the region where the CGW is active, while others do not.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

*Citizens can play an important role in the housing support network. You can search for housing together with a newcomer. We advise the newcomer to immediately register with a **housing company**⁵⁰ and put themselves on the waiting list for social housing. Meanwhile, you can search the private market through brokers, internet ads, and newspapers, or posters on the housing itself. If you find an interesting property on the private market, it can be helpful for you to contact the owner or broker as an intermediary to facilitate communication and schedule a visit. Then it is important to convince the owner to enter into a lease agreement.*

*If the landlord is interested, the landlord will ask to pay a rental deposit. Know that this is not obvious for some. You can inform the landlord that there are solutions for this. For example, the tenant can submit an application for a **rental deposit loan***

“ **Frank** is a volunteer at Houses of Peace non-profit organisation

With the housing resume, we want to share the story behind a person, in this case, a newcomer, with the landlord of a property. By making the candidacy of someone more personal, we aim to make the search for housing easier. The resume aligns with the resume you use when looking for a job. Through the housing resume, the property owner sees not just a name (and the label ‘refugee’) but can make a better assessment of who that person is based on the information.



Source: brochure [Inspirerende praktijken van Volunteers voor Volunteers](#)⁵¹



“ **Andrea** is a volunteer at Neighbours without Borders Leuven

Landlords often hesitate on whether they want to rent their property to migrants. That's why we surveyed the landlords in our network. We asked them about their experiences renting to recognised refugees with the support of volunteers. We found that landlords have very positive experiences. ”

Based on the results, we created a flyer that we now hand out to prospective landlords. In this way, we hope to better inform other landlords and real estate agencies about renting to recognised refugees. You can find the flyer [here](#).

Source: brochure [Inspiring practices of volunteers for volunteers](#)⁵¹

from the Flemish Housing Fund⁵². Additionally, a bank or a Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW) can stand as a guarantor. Depending on the situation, the OCMW of the current place of residence is competent to provide that guarantee. In other cases, it is the OCMW institution in the municipality where the new home is located.

Unfortunately, the procedures via the bank or the OCMW can take a long time. As a result, there is a high chance that the newcomer will miss out on a rental property. Therefore, there are citizen initiatives that rent properties and in turn sublet them. The people living in the property then pay back the rental deposit to the non-profit organisation at a later date. If necessary, this repayment can be done in instalments. ORBIT non-profit organisation developed a **fact sheet 'Renting and Subletting'**⁵³ to learn more about this.

Look around to see if there are (volunteer) **organisations** in your area that support newcomers in their search for housing, contact them, inquire about the needs of their offer, and discuss how you can strengthen each other. If you cannot find an organisation immediately, you can also contact a **reception centre, LOI, OCMW, or CAW** in your area.

Finally, you can also host a recognised newcomer for several months or a year. Through the Urban Planning Notification Temporary Housing, owners in Flanders can make a room in their home available to recognised refugees for the maximum period of three years. **ORBIT non-profit organisation** offers support in making such a notification. They can also search for a suitable candidate tenant. More information about the Notification Temporary Housing can be found [here](#)⁵⁴.

If you live in Brussels, you can contact **SINGA Belgium**. They also organise temporary housing, search with you for a candidate tenant that fits your profile and provide the necessary support.

Want to know more about renting, leasing, and cohabiting with a refugee? ORBIT vzw recently developed a brochure 'renting, leasing, and cohabiting with singles or families with the status of recognised refugee or temporary protection'. You can download it [here](#)⁵⁵ for free.

APARTMENT FOUND

If the lease agreement is concluded, you can inform the newcomer about practical matters, such as the inventory or recording of the meter readings in the house. But also, about the existence of financial compensations, such as an installation premium to furnish the house, social rate to make the energy costs more affordable, or the rent subsidy.

Attention! Not everyone is eligible for this. Therefore, it is advisable to make an appointment with the **social worker** of the OCMW in the municipality where the person will live (read more in chapter five). The assistant indeed has the knowledge of all the possibilities, and they can go over the options together. If the newcomer does not receive OCMW support, it is recommended to contact the competent **housing worker of the municipality**. Often municipalities also have a housing point or housing shop where people can go with questions about subsidies or rent guarantee loans.

In addition, it is useful to check if the person understands everything well. Many contracts and insurances are not simple or clear. The **V-test of the VREG**⁵⁶, for example, can be a low-threshold tool to find a good energy contract. The **Tenants' Union** supports people in understanding their lease agreement. More information about their services can be found on their [website](#)⁵⁷.

! Did you know that as a host family of a Ukrainian person or family you are entitled to a social rate? You must proactively apply for this with the energy supplier. For this, you (the person connected to the supplier) and the temporary protection beneficiary must request a family composition certificate. You must submit this together with a certificate of receiving the equivalent of social assistance (see chapter 5) to the supplier. You can find this certificate [here](#)⁵⁸. More information about the application for social rate can be found [here](#)⁵⁹.

“ **Volunteer at Thope vzw**

We find that owners like to rent their properties to us because we are a reliable intermediary. We can keep an eye on things and notify them if there are problems. ”

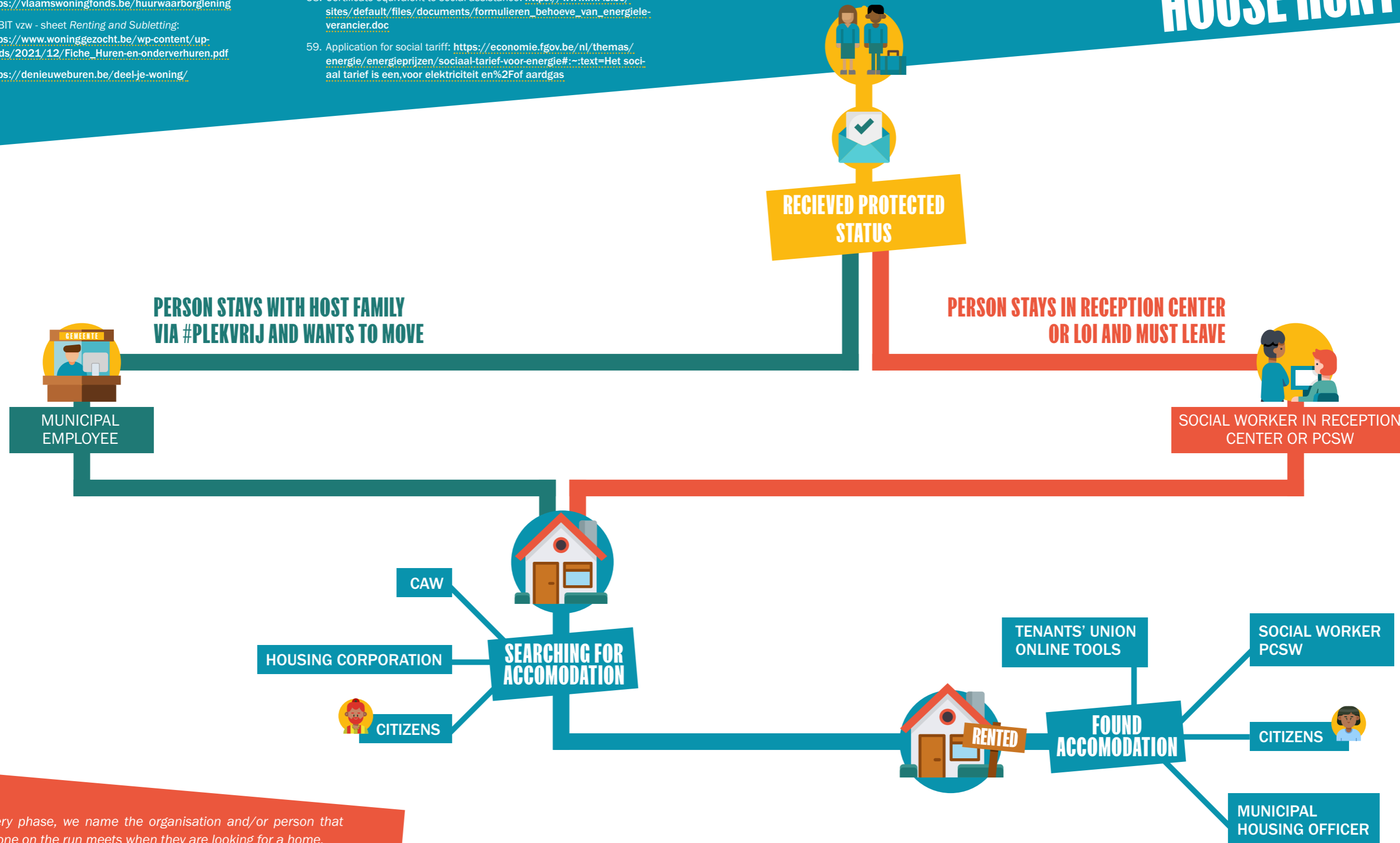
Source: brochure [Inspiring practices of volunteers for volunteers](#)⁵¹



Links and sources:

50. Register housing company: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/lokaal-woonbeleid/woonmaatschappijen>
51. Brochure *Inspiring practices of volunteers for volunteers*: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/publicatie/inspirerende-praktijken>
52. Rent guarantee loan from the Flemish Housing Fund: <https://vlaamswoningfonds.be/huurwaarborglening>
53. ORBIT vzw - sheet *Renting and Subletting*: https://www.woninggezocht.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Fiche_Huren-en-onderverhuren.pdf
54. <https://denieuweburen.be/deel-je-woning/>
55. <https://www.orbitvzw.be/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/HurenverhuursamenwonenBrochureORBITDeNieuweBuren092023def.pdf>
56. V-test of the VREG: <https://vtest.vreg.be/>
57. Tenants' Union: <https://huurdersplatform.be/hb/>
58. Certificate equivalent to social assistance: https://www.mi-is.be/sites/default/files/documents/formulieren_behoeve_van_energieleverancier.doc
59. Application for social tariff: <https://economie.fgov.be/nl/themas/energie/energieprijzen/sociaal-tarief-voor-energie#:~:text=Het%20sociaal%20tarief%20is%20een,voor%20elektriciteit%20en%20aardgas>

HOUSE HUNTING



In every phase, we name the organisation and/or person that someone on the run meets when they are looking for a home.

When you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person. Are you going to work together and do questions arise?

Then speak to the organisations and/or people who are on your path. More information can be found in the text of this chapter.

SOCIAL SERVICES

PUBLIC CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WELFARE (PCSW)

Recognised newcomers who have no or insufficient income to rent a house and to provide for living expenses, can ask for help at the Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW). Every municipality in Belgium has a PCSW. Some municipalities or cities use the term 'Social House' instead of PCSW. In this case, the PCSW is part of the social house where people can also go with other requests for help.

A first form of support can consist of granting a living wage, guidance towards employment (e.g., via Article 60) or a combination of the two. A second form of support can consist of guiding or managing the income of the newcomer. To make use of this support, the newcomer must submit an application at the PCSW in the municipality where the person lives. Then, a **social worker** will first investigate through a social examination whether the person meets the criteria to receive support and assess the various needs. More specifically, the employee will investigate what assets or income a person has to pay for his living costs.

The assistant can offer various types of assistance such as financial aid (e.g., social assistance or equivalent social assistance), food aid, energy aid (e.g., social tariff), health aid (e.g., increased allowance), or other specific aid (e.g., lower municipal taxes). The assistant can then attach conditions to that support. For example, the assistant may ask the person to look for work or to take a course. The support is temporary until the person can build their own life. Know that the Public Centre for Social Welfare is obliged to explain delicate subjects, such as decisions of the Public Centre for Social Welfare, in the client's language. The website '[Clear Law](#)'⁶⁰ can help you find answers to questions related to social law. On the website of the Flemish government, you can find more information about what [social assistance](#)⁶¹ and [equivalent social assistance](#)⁶² is and entails.

The guidance by the Public Centre for Social Welfare can consist of, for example, drawing up a budget plan, inventorying debts, or support with personal administration. In management, the social worker receives all income of the newcomer and pays fixed costs or debts. To pay for food or other necessary purchases, the newcomer receives a living allowance. Additionally, the assistant can help the newcomer with debt mediation. Someone in debt mediation, together with a debt mediator and the creditor(s), looks for an arrangement regarding the payment of the debts.

Moreover, the social service of the Public Centre for Social Welfare is a point of contact for all kinds of problems. This goes very broadly. The assistant will then map out and closely follow up the entire help request of each client from A to Z.

The Public Centre for Social Welfare varies from municipality to municipality. The support provided by a social worker in one city can be completely different in practice



Volunteer at Houses of Peace non-profit organisation

I signed a contract with the Public Centre for Social Welfare so that I am bound by the same confidentiality as the Public Centre for Social Welfare staff. This allows me to exchange information more easily and to collaborate with the social worker.

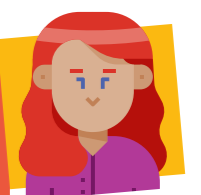


Source: [Inspiration guide support networks vulnerable families on the run](#)⁶³



Griet, social worker at the Public Centre for Social Welfare

The additional support from all involved services led to an expansion of the network, which for me as a social worker was of great added value. It is very pleasant to be part of such a well-founded network that meets regularly and shares its knowledge. This also led to the workload within this complex care trajectory being carried by everyone together.



Source: [Inspiration guide support networks vulnerable families on the run](#)⁶³

from the support in another city. Since the concept of Public Centre for Social Welfare does not exist in many countries, the Federal Public Service for Social Integration developed a [video](#)⁶⁴ in several languages explaining how the social assistance functions to newcomers. In addition, Saamo developed a [brochure](#)⁶⁵ about the rights of newcomers at the Public Centre for Social Welfare.

Since a request for help often coincides with all sorts of other questions or underlying problems, the assistant in the support will make room to involve other relevant actors. If you are supporting a newcomer, you are also part of his/her support network. We therefore advise you to talk to the assistant, to discuss how you can support each other. If the **assistant** does not take the initiative, we strongly advise you to do so yourself. If you engage in conversation, our [inspiration guide 'Families on the Run'](#)⁶³ can be a tool for you, to list the needs and **relevant actors** and bring them together around the table.

HOUSE FULL OF PAPERS

Not every newcomer is eligible for social services through the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW). As a result, besides the **trajectory supervisor** and any possible **referrer** (see the second chapter), they have no direct point of contact when they have a request for help. Yet, they too must arrange various matters. For example, beneficiaries of international protection must register with a health insurance fund as soon as possible after recognition or pay invoices independently.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

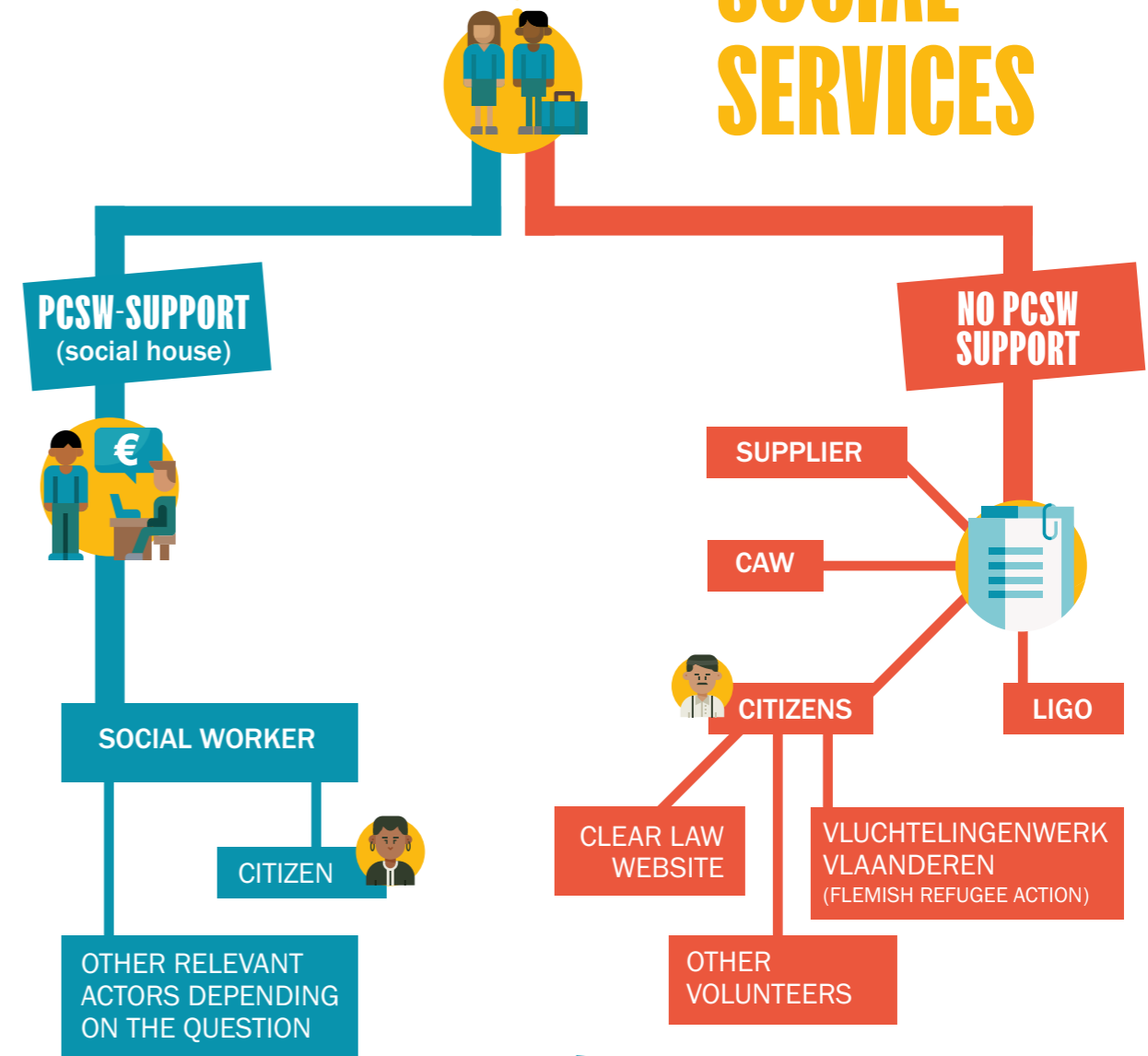
In some regions, **Ligo** offers the course 'House Full of Papers' to familiarise newcomers with paperwork in 15 sessions. The **CAW**⁶⁶ also organises 'Coffee and Forms Moments' in some regions where volunteers and staff review the newcomer's request for help together. This can range from reading a letter together to requesting a document. In addition, there are numerous volunteer organisations that take on this role. You can also join such an initiative! If you want to be made aware of the possibilities and benefits that other volunteers have already discovered, then flip through the [toolkit](#)⁶⁷ of the Hospitable Network.

Tip from the volunteers of the Marrakesh group from Turnhout

Create an administration folder together to keep papers well organised!

Discover in our brochure '[Inspirational practices of volunteers for volunteers](#)'⁶⁸ how you can do this.

SOCIAL SERVICES



In every phase, we name the organisation and/or person who meets someone on the run when they receive or need social services.

If you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and questions arise, then address the organisations and/or persons that are on your path.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter..

Links and sources:

- 60. Clear Law: <https://www.helderrecht.be/nl>
- 61. Flemish government - equivalent social assistance: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/leefloon>
- 62. Flemish government - equivalent social assistance: <https://www.vlaanderen.be/equivalent-leefloon>
- 63. Inspiration guide support networks vulnerable families on the run: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/Inspiratiegids%20Gezinnen%20op%20de%20vlucht%20-%20Vluchtelingenwerk%20Vlaanderen.pdf>
- 64. Video POD Social Integration: <https://www.mi-is.be/nl/themas/amif/maatschappelijke-hulp-belgie-video-10-talen-met-uitleg-voor-de-nieuwkomers>
- 65. Saamo a brochure: <https://www.saamo.be/tool/infobrochure-ocmw/>
- 66. CAW - Coffee and forms moments: <https://www.caw.be/hoe-wij-helpen/ontmoeting/koffie-en-formulieren/>
- 67. Toolkit of the Hospitable Network: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/gastvrijnetwerk-toolkit-2018-finaal.pdf>
- 68. Brochure *Inspiring practices of volunteers for volunteers*: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/Inspiratiebrochure%27van%20Volunteers%20voor%20Volunteers%27.pdf>

RECEPTION EDUCATION

EDUCATION FOR NON-DUTCH SPEAKING NEWCOMERS

Minors arriving in Belgium can attend reception education or regular education or follow distance learning. If parents want their children to follow distance or home education and have questions, they can contact their [trajectory supervisor](#) at the [Agency for Integration and Civic Integration](#).

Non-Dutch speaking newcomers up to the age of 12 generally start in a regular class. A specialised teacher then takes the minor out of class at certain times to practice Dutch together. In some primary schools, non-Dutch speaking newcomers are in a separate class. In secondary education (from 12 to 18 years old), young people start in a reception class for non-Dutch speaking newcomers (OKAN). In OKAN, young people learn the Dutch language at their own pace and level. They are also provided with the necessary basic knowledge such as mathematics and geography, which they will need later in regular education. OKAN thus prepares students to transition to regular education.

The time students spend in OKAN varies from six months to a maximum of three years. During the last months of their OKAN trajectory, a [follow-up school coach](#) assists them in choosing a field of study. After transitioning to regular education, the follow-up school coach supports the teacher team at the follow-up school that includes these young people in their class. Thus, the follow-up school coach coordinates with the teachers as to whether personal trajectories or extra support lessons are needed. This extra guidance does not take place in every school.

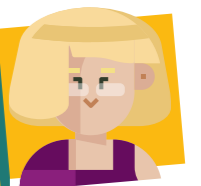
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

[As a volunteer](#), you can offer to help in primary education, OKAN, and the follow-up school. Non-native newcomers could use support. Mastering the language quickly and acquiring the necessary basic knowledge for regular education requires a lot of effort from young people. Therefore, all extra help is welcome. Are you interested? Then be sure to contact the [schools in your area](#) to find out if they organise reception education and if they have students who could use extra support. After that, it is best to discuss with the school how you can best contribute.

Our education worker **Véronique**



Thousands of young newcomers learn Dutch through OKAN, but for some, this step is too big. In such instances a little bridge is welcome.



Source: De Standaard

WAITING LISTS

A shortage of OKAN classes means that not all non-native minor newcomers can immediately enrol in an OKAN class. Hundreds of young people are waiting (as of May 2023) for months for a spot. They stay in reception centres where there is insufficient material and staff to teach the young people.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

[As a volunteer](#), you can contact a [reception centre nearby](#) to check if there are any young people staying who cannot go to school. Do you want to help these young people find their way? Then inquire at the nearest OKAN school about which curriculum and materials you should use to start teaching the young people some Dutch.

You can ask **the municipality** if they have a space where you can assist the young person(s) for a few hours a week. In this way, you can also teach young person(s) to leave the reception centre at fixed times and go to a room for lessons and activities.

Besides offering Dutch practice opportunities, you can also inquire at the municipal youth service whether sports or other activities are organised during the day so that the young people could join. In this way, you offer the young people an extra activity throughout their day. Be sure to also ask for school materials for these young people in the reception centre, such as a notebook, writing materials, or a backpack.

Communicate openly about your support as a volunteer. Indicate to the employee of the reception centre, the municipality, and the school what your commitment to the young person(s) is. Get to know each other so that you can divide tasks.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER RECEPTION EDUCATION FOR NON-DUTCH SPEAKING NEWCOMERS?

When minors end up in regular education, specific attention and tailor-made care are less apparent. For example, teachers and student counsellors often have less knowledge about guiding these students, or there is not enough room for extra support.

Yet, someone's cause for fleeing their country of origin, combined with learning a new language, puts a lot of pressure on young people. Common complaints among young people in OKAN relate to stress and insomnia. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen advocates for giving special attention to the psychosocial well-being of non-Dutch speaking newcomers in OKAN, in the transition from OKAN to further education, and during their educational career. **Therefore, since 2020, we have been organising 'Feel Fine February', a month dedicated to the psychosocial well-being of non-Dutch speaking newcomers in regular education after OKAN. Find the [2021](#)⁶⁹, [2022](#)⁷⁰, and [2023](#)⁷¹ editions on our website.**



Paulien has been supporting an unaccompanied minor for several months

“Recently, I went with him to the parent-teacher meeting. His grades were somewhat poor. I knew this was because he had to prepare intensively for the interview with the CGRS. That teacher did not know. I was glad I could be there for him, to put his results into perspective.”

Source: Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Feel free to check with the **schools** in your area if there are students who have followed an OKAN trajectory and could use support. You could suggest the school to practice Dutch once or twice a week with these students. For educational material, contact OKAN schools or **Centres for Basic Education**⁷² in your region. You can also approach all possible local organisations for leisure activities to put together an activity package for young people to further strengthen their Dutch and to meet other young people in the area. It must be noted that the young people can also seek psychosocial support at the Centre for General Welfare (CAW). For instance, in some regions, they organise a **Mind-Spring Junior**⁷³ workshop series for young people between 14 and 18 years old. In this series, they learn to deal with stress together with other young people in their language. The CAW also has a youth department, the Youth Advice Centre (JAC). Finally, there is **Minor Ndako**⁷⁴, an organisation that supports children and young people on the move and guides them together with citizens.

When you support a student by, for example, practicing Dutch together, it is useful to meet the **parents** if they are in Belgium. Since they are raising the child, they know the child best and are the first points of contact for the school. We also recommend that you exchange how the child is doing during your practice sessions with the parents. It is important that you actively involve them from the start so that they can take over your role in the long term.

You can mention this during your first meeting. It is then important to discuss who will take on which tasks in guiding the child and to express expectations. Also involve a **school** employee in this conversation, as they will also be an important point of contact for you in case of concerns.

Lastly, it is important to note that families with school-aged children and a low income can receive financial support through a school allowance. On the website of the **Flemish government**⁷⁵, you can find out if and how they can apply for the school allowance. You will also find other allowances, such as the school bonus, the preschool allowance, or the study grant for studying young people.

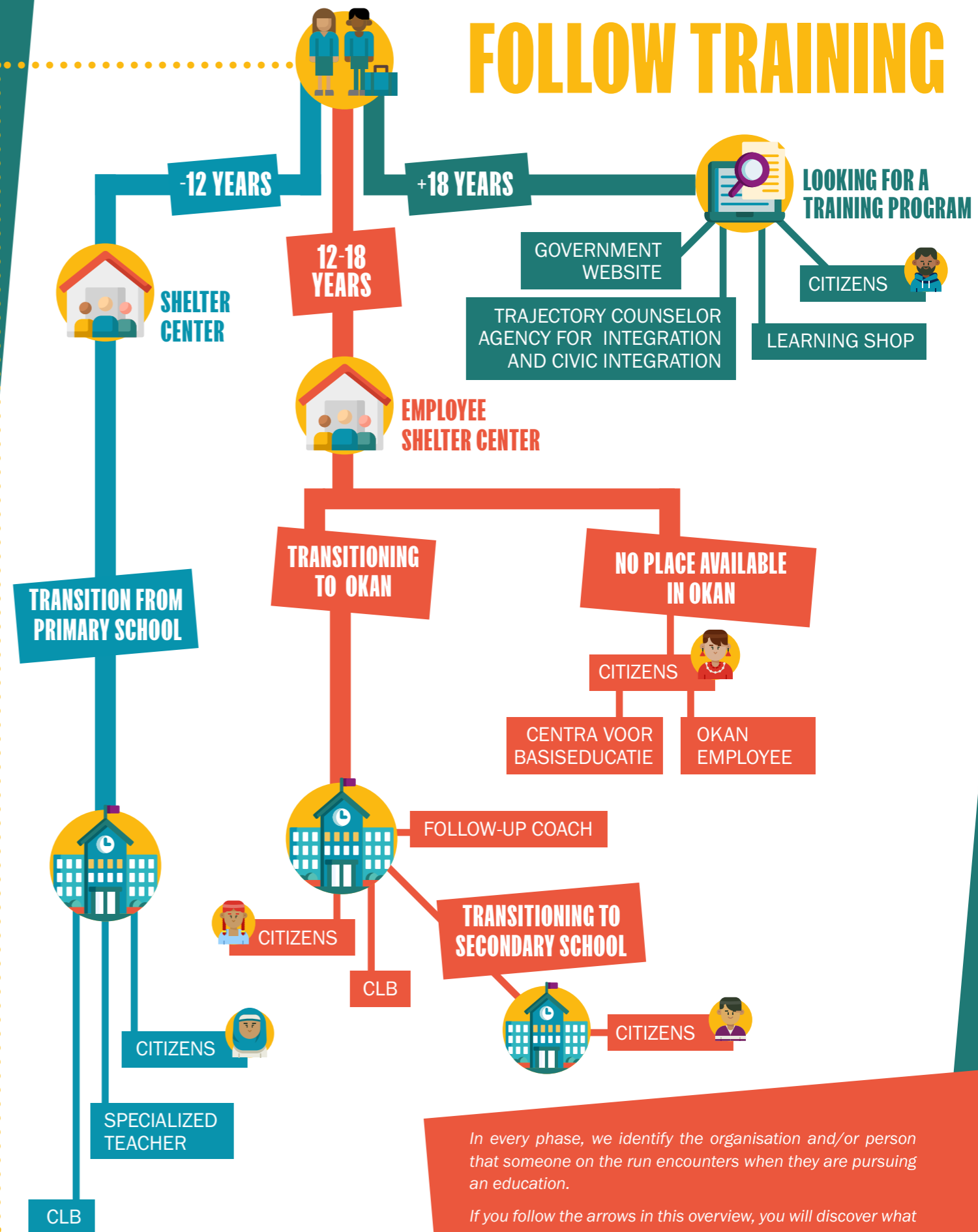
THE PATH TO AND CHOICE BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

When the young person indicates experiencing difficulties at school or with choosing what to study, you can mention that the **Centre for Pupil Guidance** (CLB) in the respective school is a useful point of contact. The CLB is often already aware of the support the young person is receiving or any specific needs, knows the teachers, and has a wide network within the sector. Adult newcomers can be advised to take a look at the website of the **Flemish government** ⁷⁶ where you can find an overview of educational opportunities in Flanders and Brussels.

If the newcomer finds it difficult to navigate the options, you can recommend the **learning shop**. There, an employee who is well-acquainted with the educational field in the region can inform, coach, and orient the newcomer. Both young people and adults can go there. On the website of the **Flemish government** ⁷⁷, you can find where the learning shops are in Brussels and Flanders.

Links and sources:

- 69. Feel Fine February 2021: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/feel-fine-february>
- 70. Feel Fine February 2022: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/feel-fine-february-2022>
- 71. Feel Fine February 2023: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/feel-fine-february-2023>
- 72. Centres for Basic Education: <https://www.ligo.be/>
- 73. Mind-Spring Junior: <https://www.caw.be/hoewijhelpen/begeleiding/migratie/mind-spring/cursussen-ovl/mind-spring-junior-14-18-jaar/>
- 74. Minor Ndako: <https://minor-ndako.be/watwedoens/steunfiguren/>
- 75. Flemish government - school allowance: <https://www.groeipakket.be/tegemoetkomingen/schooltoeslag>
- 76. Flemish government - training opportunities: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/cursisten>
- 77. Flemish government - learning shops: <https://onderwijs.vlaanderen.be/nl/cursisten/waar-kan-ik-studeren/leerwinkels>



In every phase, we identify the organisation and/or person that someone on the run encounters when they are pursuing an education.

If you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and questions arise, then speak to the organisations and/or persons that are part of your journey.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

CHALLENGES DURING THE PROCEDURE

Families that were separated before or during conflicts and situations that cause people to flee their country of origin have the right to family reunification when at least one of the family members has international protection in Belgium. In principle, the family members abroad are the applicants and must submit the application at the embassy or consulate of Belgium in the country where they reside. In certain situations, the application can be submitted in Belgium. It is a complex procedure with other practical barriers.

Thus, the competent embassy or consulate is sometimes difficult to reach or is absent in the country where the family members reside. It is also difficult to obtain the correct documents that prove family ties. For example, documents must be requested from official authorities of the country of origin, whilst recognised newcomers are not allowed to contact them. As a result, the full responsibility falls on the family members in the country of origin. But family reunification is also a challenging procedure since certain forms of relationships are not recognised or are prohibited in the country of origin. The LGBTQI+ community is a vulnerable group in this regard. In addition, the chaos of fleeing can cause family members to lose each other and not be aware of where their family resides. Finally, family reunification is expensive. For example, the costs can be high due to the application fee itself, translation of official documents, travel to and from the embassy or consulate, or the required DNA tests.

If the newcomer talks to you about family reunification and asks for advice, we therefore recommend consulting a **lawyer** or organisations with expertise in this field, such as the **Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (AgII)** ⁷⁸, **the Immigration Office (DVZ)** ⁷⁹, **Myria** ⁸⁰, or the **Centre for General Welfare (CAW)**. The AgII, DVZ, or Myria can help you obtain legal advice. The CAW can follow up on the case and help the newcomer, for example, in gathering the correct documents. The **Red Cross** ⁸¹ can assist in locating family members.

Volunteer during an exchange moment



Make it clear that you cannot answer all questions. Also, expressly state: I cannot help here, but let's look for someone or something that can help us together.



Source: [Inspiration guide support networks for vulnerable families on the run](#) ⁸²

It is also important to know that the procedure can take a long time (about nine months), which can be mentally taxing for family members. Due to the long wait, they often lose hope and trust in the procedure. Various studies show that if people have no prospective for family reunification, they might also find it more difficult to integrate and function in the labour market. Flip to the eighth chapter to read how you can best support the newcomer in this together with others.

CHALLENGES AFTER THE FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROCEDURE

Even when family members have been reunited or the possibility of reunification has been confirmed, a carefree period does not await the family members.

For instance, family reunification brings administrative challenges, and it may be necessary to look for a different home. For example, someone who was assigned a social housing unit as a single person, risks losing it when the family moves in, even if it is a temporary solution. In addition, finding a new balanced division of roles among family members can be challenging. Having lived apart for a long time, they have become somewhat estranged from each other.

If you are supporting someone in this process, it can help to consider the expectations the person has about family reunification in advance. This way, the person can prepare for the possibility of difficult moments. You can also help to arrange certain administrative matters. Some matters can indeed be arranged even before the family members have actually arrived. For example, you could start looking for a school or a suitable home for the whole family ahead of their arrival (read more in the [fourth chapter](#)).

However, the support needs of each family which has fled their country of origin vary. That's why we developed a separate [information guide](#)⁸² 'families on the run' to take you into the experience of a newly arrived family and what having a buddy (remember?) can mean for them. We provide concrete tips and tricks for when you get started.



“When you become a support figure in a family, there are many things to consider. You enter a family where a certain dynamic already exists, where there may be many challenges and even tensions. By listening and being unbiased, you as a support figure can open the discussion for many things. Find out what the context of the family is. There can be a lot going on in the family that can cause tension or stress. By listening to them, you can hear what is going on and you can look for solutions together.”

Source: Inspiration Guide Support Networks for Vulnerable Families on the Run⁸²

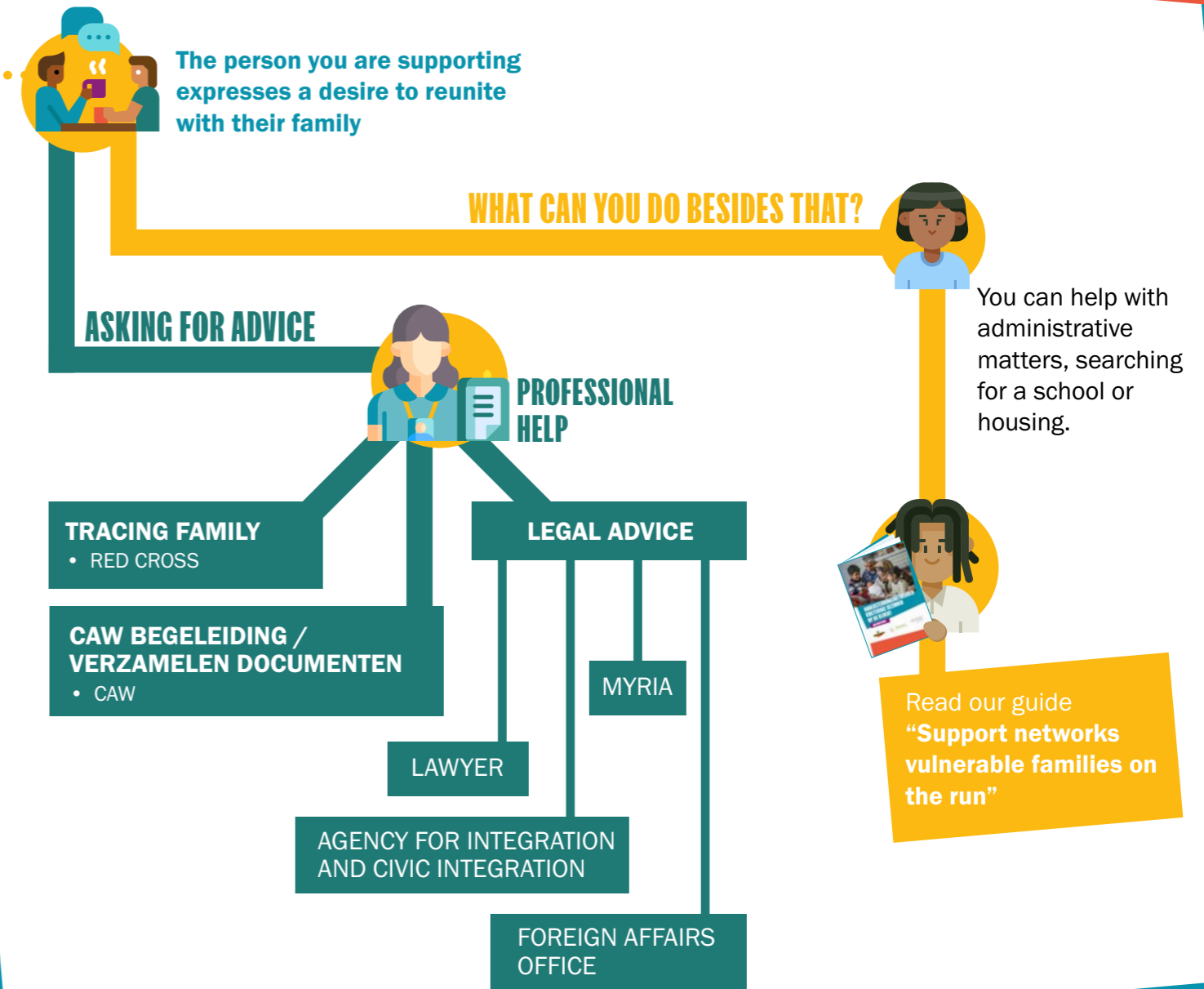
FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In every phase, we name the organisation and/or person who meets someone on the run when they reunite with their family.

When you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

Are you going to work together and do questions arise? Then speak to the organisations and/or persons that are on your trajectory.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter.



Links and sources:

78. Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (AgII): <https://www.agii.be/thema/vreemdelingenrecht-internationaal-privaatrecht/verblijfsrecht-uitwijzing-reizen/gezinshereniging>
79. Immigration Office (DVZ): <https://dofi.ibz.be/nl/themes/third-country-nationals/gezinshereniging>
80. Myria: <https://www.myria.be/nl/grondrechten/recht-op-een-gezinsleven/gezinshereniging-met-begunstigden-van-internationale-bescherming>
81. Red Cross: <https://www.rodekruis.be/restoringfamilylinks/nl/opsporing/>
82. Inspiration guide support networks for vulnerable families on the run: [https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/Inspiratiegids Gezinnen op de Vlucht - Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen.pdf](https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/Inspiratiegids%20Gezinnen%20op%20de%20Vlucht%20-%20Vluchtelingenwerk%20Vlaanderen.pdf)

FINDING A BALANCE...

... BETWEEN PROVIDING SUPPORT AND SELF-CARE

Fleeing is an exceptionally difficult experience that can cause long-lasting fear, stress or even trauma. This does not mean that all people on the move need intensive psychological care or therapy. Often, building a social network, participating in social activities, or a good conversation can already have a positive impact.

When you talk to a newcomer and you notice that he/she is struggling with negative thoughts or needs a chat with you, it is important to have an open mind and listen. Do not push for details from the story, as this can not only worsen his/her emotional state, but also impact you and in extreme cases lead to secondary traumatization. That is an unconscious reaction to the traumatic stories of others. It seems as though you have experienced the traumatic experience yourself because you empathise with the story.

If the person cries, let it happen. Often, we try to comfort the other by saying 'don't cry', but unconsciously, people may interpret this as asking them not to feel or to stop expressing emotions. Use the phrase "I understand you very well" only if you truly have had the same experience that the person has just shared. Then it will be seen as genuine support.

After the person has shared their concerns with you, you can indicate: "I see/hear that it is really difficult for you right now. Is there anything I can do for you?". You can then look at what actions you can take together. Try to pay particular attention to the needs of the person. Often, we immediately think of contacting a therapist, but for many, taking the step towards formal psychosocial help is a big hurdle.

SUPPORT NETWORK

If the step towards professional support is too big or not necessary, people with psychosocial difficulties can benefit from more accessible and informal help. For example, bringing people with a common cultural or social background together can already be helpful. Seeking out like-minded individuals who are in a similar situation (or have been) can indeed be a source of comfort, safety, and familiarity. You can also look for online tools together. For instance, the **Agency for Integration and InCitizenizing** (AgII) developed an [online guide](#)⁸³ in different languages about poor sleep, worrying, and stress for people on the move. They also released a [first aid brochure](#)⁸⁴ (in 12 languages) for people with a migrant background, who experience negative feelings and stress. **Care4refugees** offers [breathing exercises](#)⁸⁵ in 10 different languages.

If the person still indicates the need to talk to a professional caregiver or something you cannot offer, you can contact the person's **social worker** or **case manager**. The assistant is usually best informed about the person's background, the support the person is already receiving, and what possibilities exist to offer the person further support. In addition, you can also look for a professional caregiver together with the person, such as a doctor, psychologist, or organisation that offers psychological and/or therapeutic help. Recommended organisations are [Solentra](#)⁸⁶ or the [Centre for General Welfare](#)⁸⁷ (CAW). The CAW offers, among other things, [Mind-Spring workshops](#)⁸⁸ to people with a refugee background, to make them feel more resilient. They offer this in the participants' mother tongue.

It is necessary to ensure that language is not a barrier if the initial option does not exist in their language. It must be noted that caregivers, recognised social institutions, and local authorities can request an interpreter via the AgII. An **interpreter** may only make literal translations. Therefore, in psychological or psychotherapeutic care, it is often advisable to work with an **intercultural mediator**. An intercultural mediator

helps to bridge language and cultural differences and tries to improve communication between caregivers and care seekers.

Working with an intercultural mediator makes the care 'culture-sensitive'. The mediator focuses on the care seeker, by informing them about the culture and the caregiver's way of working. The mediator also focuses on the caregiver, by providing background information about the reality of the care seeker. This allows caregivers to work more deeply and effectively. In addition, you can call on a **social interpreter** or contact **colleges** that offer a program in Interpreting and Translation. Often, students can see this as an internship opportunity.

SELF-CARE

Do not forget to take care of yourself in every step you take with the person, by guarding your own boundaries. Committing to people on the move is an exciting experience, but it can also be heavy, confrontational, and frustrating at times.

Therefore, look for people who can help you navigate the psychosocial challenges of the newcomer. For example, you can always call a CAW for advice, or you can turn to the **trajectory supervisor** or **social worker** if the person you are guiding has one. But also seek contact with others to discuss your own feelings, because talking helps. **Friends or family** can be a first point of contact, but, if necessary, you can also contact a **caregiver**. In addition, **Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen** regularly organises online and offline meetings where volunteers can share their experiences and give each other tips in a safe environment, under the guidance of an employee or caregiver. You can also visit our online meeting platform for volunteers, **We Welcome**⁸⁹. The AgII also developed an online **information session**⁹⁰ for volunteers about the mental well-being of refugees and yourself.

Finally, there are two useful exercises that can help you when you are frustrated or have trouble letting go: The first is the 'circle of concern'. The second is the sentence 'do I need to do this now'.

The circle is about focusing on the things you can influence and paying less attention to the things over which you have little control. It is an exercise where you draw the 'circle of concern' on one hand. These are things you worry about but cannot change (political decisions, reasons why people are fleeing, the difficult situation people find themselves in, and so on). On the other hand, draw the 'circle of influence'. These are matters over which you have a direct impact, such as helping someone learn the language. Now make a conscious choice not to spend energy and attention on the matters you wrote in the 'circle of concern'.

The sentence '**should** I be doing this now' is about setting boundaries for yourself. Ask yourself this question 5 times, but each time emphasise a different word. Should I be doing this now? Should this be happening? Is this necessary? Should I be doing **this** now? Are you the person who should be doing this? Are you the only one who can? Should I **be** doing this now? Is this task or assignment something that needs to happen? Should I be doing this **now**? At this exact moment? Or can it also be done later? Should I be doing this now?

Xandra growth manager at Walking Together



Sometimes people ask you things that you hadn't thought you would be doing beforehand in the family. Would you, as a volunteer, be willing to drive one of the family members to the hospital in your own car? You can, but you're not their personal chauffeur. One person might not mind driving once, while another might find it very annoying. It's different for everyone. Being conscious of this and taking it into account is very important because it helps the volunteer keep going longer and turns it into a truly long-term trajectory. Ultimately, that's what benefits the family the most; the longer it lasts, the more trust is built, and the more comes to light.



Source: [Inspiration guide support networks vulnerable families on the run](#)⁹¹

Links and sources:

- 83 & 84. AgII - online guide/first aid brochure: <https://www.integratie-inCitizenning.be/nl/slecht-slapen-piekeren-en-stress>
- 85. Breathing exercises Care4refugees: <https://www.care4refugees.com/relax.html>
- 86. Solentra: <https://www.solentra.be/nl/>
- 87. Centre for General Welfare: <https://www.caw.be/>
- 88. Mind-Spring workshops: <https://www.caw.be/hoe-wij-helpen/begeleiding/migratie/mind-spring/cursussen-ovl/mind-spring-junior-14-18-jaar/>
- 89. We Welcome: <https://wewelcome.be/>
- 90. Online info session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fgQyGA1JGo>
- 91. Inspiration guide support networks vulnerable families on the run: <https://vluchtelingenwerk.be/sites/default/files/media/documenten/Inspiratiegids%20Gezinnen%20op%20de%20vlucht%20-%20vluchtelingenwerk%20Vlaanderen.pdf>

CARING FOR



The person you are supporting indicates that he/she is having a hard time

THE PERSON YOU SUPPORT

YOURSELF AS VOLUNTEER



HOW DO I MAINTAIN MY BOUNDARIES?

FRIENDS & FAMILY

OTHER VOLUNTEERS

PROFESSIONAL HELP PROVIDER

- CAW
- PSYCHOLOGIST
- DOCTOR

WE WELCOME

OFFER VLUCHTELINGENWERK VLAANDEREN (FLEMISH REFUGEE ACTION)



INFORMAL LAW THRESHOLD ASSISTANCE



PROFESSIOELE HULP

FRIENDS



DOCTOR

PSYCHOLOGIST

ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS ORGANISATIONS:

- CAW
- SOLERTRA

HELP, I DON'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE

FRIENDS, STUDENTS



INTERCULTURAL MEDIATOR

INTERPRETER

BROCHURES, ONLINE MATERIAL

- CARE4REFUGEES
- AGENCY FOR INTEGRATION AND CIVIC INTEGRATION

In every phase, we name the organisation and/or person someone on the run or you (can) meet when care is needed.

When you follow the arrows in this overview, you will discover what you can do with and for this person.

If you start working together and questions arise, then address the organisations and/or persons that are on your path.

More information can be found in the text of this chapter.

WHAT NOW?

We wrote this starter kit because we want to give you an insight into the journey that people on the move go through as soon as they arrive in Belgium. But also, to give you an overview of the different organisations that people on the move may encounter as they go through this journey. In each chapter, we provided you with information and reflected on what your role could be between the newcomer and the service and/or aid provider (organisation). In addition, us and other citizens offered tips and network cards to help you get started when you and the newcomer start working and walking together.

We advise you to now lay out those network cards next to you. Is there a theme that matches your interests or is there a specific challenge that appeals to you? Then go back to that theme and discover what you can do.

We would like to thank you for reading this kit and thinking about it. The fact that you do this, shows us that you are trying to understand the (complex) reality of people on the move. It gives us hope that you, together with us and many others, want to work on a well-functioning and strong framework for the reception of people on the move in Belgium.

We realise that this kit does not provide you with all the answers and is not the ultimate guide. For us too, understanding the journey and knowing the organisations and citizens who support people on the move is a continuous learning process. That's why we continue to focus on exchanges and meeting through our support for volunteers.



OUR OFFER FOR VOLUNTEERS

Regional Support Centres

In each province, a regional coordinator supports volunteers who are committed to helping people on the move. They do this by guiding those who want to commit to appropriate volunteer work, facilitating collaborations between citizens and formal actors, and being a point of contact for citizens who have needs, questions, ideas, or signals.

Training and Meeting Offer

In addition, the regional coordinator in your province organises trainings and meetings.

Online Meeting Platform for Volunteers We Welcome

Do you have a problem and are curious how others tackle it? Do you come across a handy link or important news article? Through our digital platform We Welcome, you can directly engage in conversation with volunteers in Flanders and Brussels.

Tools

You can also browse through the tools we develop to provide volunteers with inspiration and tips. Find them on our website!

Hospitable Fund

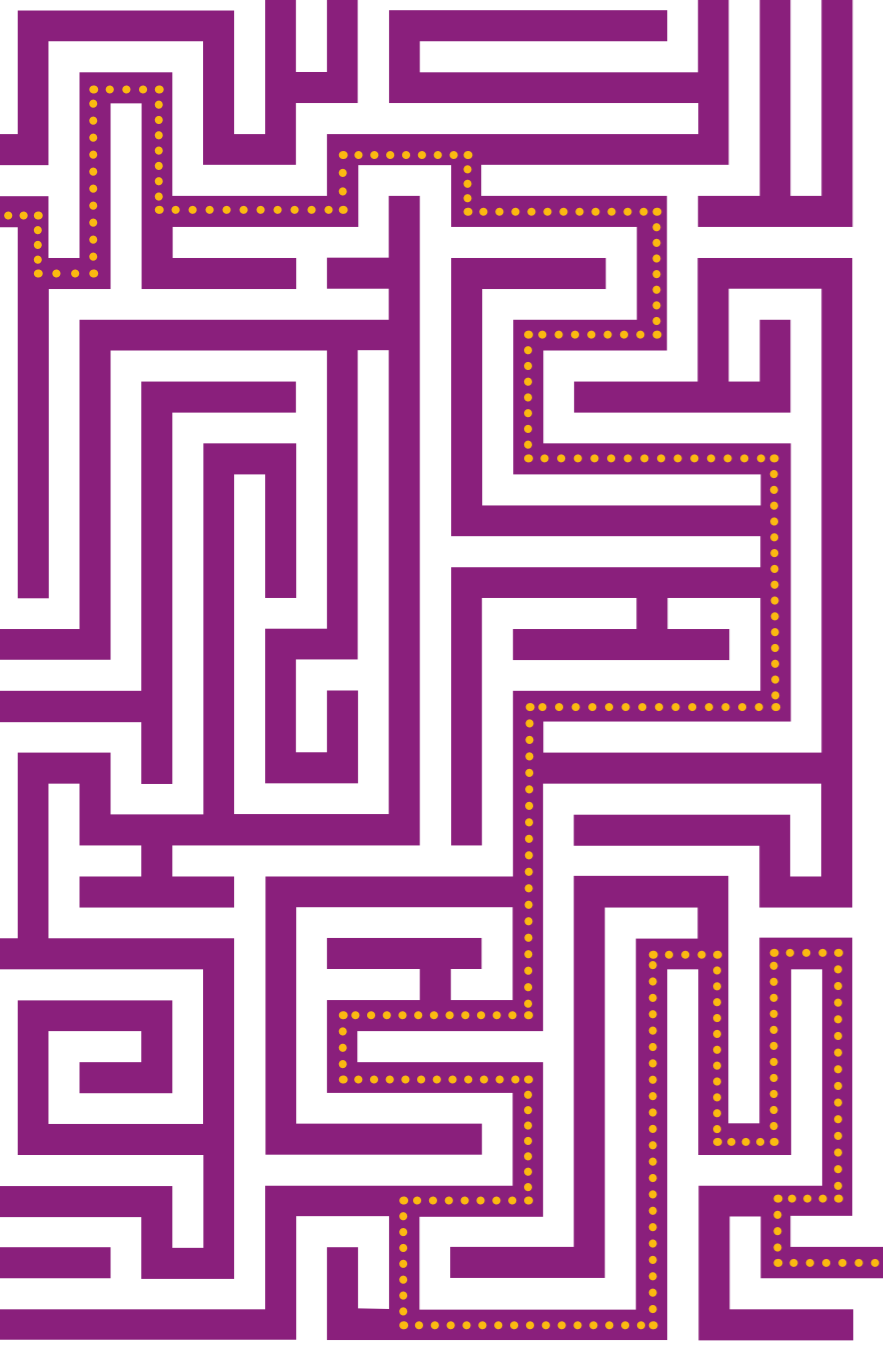
Volunteers can submit a support request for their initiatives via a low-threshold project call. Through the Hospitable Fund, we raise money to better support volunteers.

Solidarity Cities and Municipalities

Furthermore, we provide advice and support citizens who want to make their municipality a solidarity municipality. We do this under the banner of our campaign Solidarity Cities and Municipalities.

Membership

Finally, volunteer organizations with legal personality can become members of Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen.



THANKS

This Starter Kit was made possible with the support of the **Flemish government**.

We thank all **colleagues** who contributed to this starter kit. Thanks to those who shared their knowledge and expertise. Thanks to those whose strong pen we could rely on and those who spent countless hours researching and puzzling to translate the vast amount of information into a clear guide.

In addition, we thank the **Gastvrij Netwerk** non-profit organisation and all the people who generously provided us with tips and advice and shared their story with us.

