

**Project 'POZITIV': integral provision of information and support to intra-European labour migrants and tackling labour exploitation**

**Belgium**

GENERAL INFORMATION	
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	City of Genk
<b>Type of organisation</b>	Public institution at local or regional level
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<b>Topic of the good practice</b>	Information provision on registration and payment of social contributions
<b>Geographical focus</b>	Nation-wide
<b>Duration</b>	4/30/2009 – 5/1/2026
<b>Summary of the good practice</b>	<p>EU citizens often come to Belgium on their own initiative or at the request of companies as an employee or posted worker. The challenges with regard to intra-European labour migration are complex and manifest themselves in the areas of (a shortage of) housing or poor quality housing, problems with registration, exploitation situations, limited access to (basic) health care, poor knowledge of the local language, little participation in society, insufficient insight into rights and obligations, etc.</p> <p>Non-EU citizens also face the above challenges, but their situation is usually better regulated and the minimum wage required by law for non-European workers is relatively compatible. This is less well regulated for intra-European labour migrants and there are sometimes shady constructions, as a result of which EU workers (especially those from Eastern Europe) are usually extra vulnerable. In 2022, we started a project for the fast-growing</p>

Bulgarian community in Genk. There are two main objectives in the project:

**a) Informing and supporting the (Bulgarian) migrant workers**

Two liaison officers (both with Turkish-Bulgarian roots) very quickly managed to reach the Bulgarians in Genk to inform them about their rights and obligations. They also support them in terms of administration, their children's school career, finding a general practitioner, dentist or gynaecologist, monitoring the quality of housing, etc.

**b) Detecting signals and impediments and arriving at structural solutions at local and supra-local level**

The following actions are being pursued, among others:

- A permit policy on temporary housing for workers;
- Enforcement of poor housing quality and exploitation in the housing market;
- Tackling exploitation in the field of employment;
- Providing information, raising awareness and monitoring in the field of bogus self-employment;
- Follow-up of the school career of children and young people with a view to the child's rights to education and increased self-reliance in the long term;
- Improving migrant workers' access to medical rights and social security and to health care in general.

The integrated approach of the project can only be guaranteed by a broad and intense collaboration between many urban services (housing, economy and employment, civil affairs, security, community work, growing up and finance) and organisations (police, family support, integration and integration, employment and housing intermediaries, companies, EURIEC, etc.). Since 2025, we have broadened the target group of the project from only Bulgarians to migrant workers / international workers in general (both EU and non-EU). The partnership with the business world will be further intensified with the aim of creating a platform for good practices in the context of 'fair wage for fair jobs' and solutions to the issues of housing, health and social security. We are also working on a website and other information carriers to inform international employees (in different languages) about rights and obligations, language and integration, free time, etc. and also to inform and support companies and other stakeholders

	<p>to do things right and to motivate them to make an extra effort to give international employees a warm welcome. European, national, Flemish and local law and rules will be included. In addition, there is continued attention to combating social dumping and enforcement of exploitative situations at work and housing. Conclusion: together we are stronger and we will make more progress in achieving structural solutions at the local and supra-local level. These solutions must benefit all stakeholders, but certainly also the international workers themselves. An integrated approach is essential to create progress in the cross-domain tangle of challenges that labour migration entails. All partners in our partnership are aware of this and are taking up their commitment. And that is of course 'POZITIV'!</p>
<b>OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	
<p><b>Background/context</b></p> <p>What challenge, need or gap were you trying to solve or respond to?</p> <p>Why was this issue relevant or urgent in your context (sector, region, country)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Thanks to the free movement of persons within the EU, people can work in another EU country. This offers advantages for migrant workers and helps to compensate for labour market shortages in certain regions. In 2022, approximately 83,000 migrant workers were employed in Dutch Limburg; in Belgian Limburg, the number is estimated at 25,000–35,000, and in the Aachen urban region at 56,000–84,000.</li> <li>► However, a Europe without borders also brings challenges: exploitation, scarcity in the housing market, poor working conditions and inadequate registration. This creates challenges in terms of information exchange, prevention and enforcement, but also opportunities to improve cooperation in coordinating the labour and housing markets. If cooperation remains fragmented, exploitation will actually be encouraged because information remains scattered and incomplete. A cross-border approach is therefore essential to support employers, employees and governments and to combat exploitation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <p>What were the main goals of this practice (e.g. better compliance, faster processing, improved worker protection)? (Please limit to three)</p>	<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► EU migrant workers are better informed.</li> <li>► Closer cooperation between employers' organisations and intermediaries in the employment and housing markets across borders will improve the match between supply and demand.</li> </ul>

<p>Who or what were these goals intended to help or change? (Please limit to three)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Policies of various governments converge into a supported Euregio approach.</li> <li>► “Dumping” on the housing market is prevented.</li> <li>► Malicious “systems” are better identified and tackled more effectively across borders.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Main activities</b></p> <p>What were the main steps or actions you carried out to put the practice into effect?</p> <p>Were any tools, materials, partnerships, or processes created?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Establishment of a Centre for Intra-European Labour Migration in the Meuse-Rhine Border Region</li> <li>► Improving the employment of EU migrant workers in the Euroregional labour market</li> <li>► Providing high-quality, sustainable housing for migrant workers in prime locations</li> <li>► Registration as the foundation for fair work and protection of migrant workers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funding/organisational resources</b></p>	<p>Financing is a serious concern. Allocation of resources from Interreg Meuse-Rhine has not yet been approved. If the outcome of the request for financing is not positive, it will cause serious difficulties for the local authorities.</p>
<p><b>PARTICIPATION</b></p>	
<p><b>Stakeholders involved</b></p> <p>Organisations or entities actively contributing to the design, implementation, monitoring, or support of the good practice (e.g. labour inspectorates, social security institutions, trade unions, employers' associations, or other).</p>	
<p><b>Target groups</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Labour migrants (EU and non-EU).</li> </ul>

<p>Main groups or categories that the practice is directly aimed at, who should receive its services or who engage with it (e.g. employers, mobile or posted workers, labour inspectors and social security officers, or other).</p>	
<p><b>Final beneficiaries</b></p> <p>Individuals or groups that ultimately benefit from the outcomes of the practice, even if they are not the direct target or user (e.g. mobile or posted workers, vulnerable workers at risk of exploitation, employers benefiting from clearer rules or reduced admin burdens, or other).</p>	<p>► Local governments and employers, employees and their families.</p>
<p><b>GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA</b></p>	
<p><b>Achievements and outcomes</b></p> <p>What specific results did the practice achieve? (e.g. How many workers or employers were reached, number of publications created? What processes became faster?)</p> <p>What kind of broader benefits did it bring? (e.g. Did it improve understanding of rights and obligations, enhance cooperation between authorities, or reduce legal uncertainty and inconsistent application of rules?)</p>	<p>► The outcomes are not yet definable, as the process of identifying the necessary financing is ongoing.</p>
<p><b>Cost effectiveness</b></p> <p>How did you keep costs low while still achieving results? (e.g. Did you reuse existing tools, automate processes, or share resources across teams?)</p> <p>Can you show that the outcomes were worth the investment? (e.g. Did small changes lead to big improvements, or were expensive tools avoided?)</p>	<p>► Can not be measured at this point.</p>

<p><b>Transferability</b></p> <p>What are the key features that make this practice work well? (e.g. a digital platform, clear guidelines, a joint inspection process, or strong coordination)</p> <p>What would another country or organisation need to make this work for them? (e.g. certain laws, IT systems, or staff training)</p>	<p>► After the evaluation phase, the practice could be replicated by other Member States and regions who face similar situations.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>How is the practice sustainable from a social, financial or environmental perspective?</p> <p>What makes this practice able to continue over time? (e.g. It is now part of regular work or has been built into law or procedures?) and how are you making sure it lasts beyond the pilot or project phase?</p>	<p>► Indeed, a full evaluation of the practice will offer more information on this.</p>
<p><b>Innovativeness</b></p> <p>What makes this practice new or different in your field or country? (e.g. Is it the first of its kind, or does it combine actors who don't usually work together, or activities not performed before?)</p> <p>How does it improve older or less effective approaches? (e.g. By reaching more people, using data better, or simplifying complex procedures)</p>	<p>► The practice is tailored to the needs of the target community and of the city of Genk.</p>
<p><b>Digitalisation</b></p> <p>What kind of digital tools or platforms were used in this practice? (e.g. online portals, automated case tracking, data sharing, digital databases or other)</p> <p>How did these tools help in reaching your goals? (e.g. Did they save time, facilitate access to data in real time, reduce errors, help detect fraud, or</p>	<p>► More information on the practice is available on social media: Facebook - 'Bulgaren in Genk', as well as on the webpage <a href="http://www.workingenk.be">www.workingenk.be</a>.</p>

improve coordination between  
authorities?)