

## CONTEXT ANALYSIS – LIEGE, BELGIUM

### **Political, economic and social background of the country\local area and general current challenges**

Belgium is a divided country, where the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region have the competences in the fields of economy, employment, agriculture, water policy, housing, public works and energy, transport (except the SNCB), environment, urban planning, credit, foreign trade, guardianship over provinces, municipalities and intercommunal. On the economy of population, the unemployment rate of young people (between 15 - 24 years old) is very high in Wallonia: in 2016, 27.9% of young people entering the labour market do not have a job. In Flanders, the youth unemployment rate is 14.1%. In Brussels, the rate is higher than in Wallonia, since 35.9% of young people in Brussels do not have a job<sup>1</sup>.

Belgium had a negative growth in 2009 due to the international economic crisis. However, in 2010 Belgium recorded a growth of + 2% for a GDP of 395 billion dollars, considered as one of the best performances of euro zone in the post-crisis context. In 2017, Belgium occupies the 24<sup>o</sup> place in the International Monetary Fund (FMI), world economic ranking, with an evolution of 4% comparing to 2016 data. Otherwise, if Belgium seems to recover well from the economic crisis, for immigration the economic crisis has a major impact, mainly on social protection. As explained by Lafleur and Miescoli (2018)<sup>2</sup>, the social protection system became a way to find immigrants that depend on social security system, because this data is being taken into account by the immigration office, that can select the migrants that represent a “burden” by State and then confiscate their residence permit.

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<sup>1</sup> Data are available in: <https://www.iweeps.be/indicateur-statistique/taux-de-chomage-bit/>.

<sup>2</sup> Lafleur, J.M. and Miescoli, E. (2018). *Deserving EU citizenship: the case of undocumented Italian migrants in Belgium*, EASA Anthropology of Economy Network Workshop; Lafleur, J. M. (2018). *Migration and state concerns about the migration & welfare of their citizens*. London: Sage. And also Lafleur, J. M. and Mikolaj, S. (2017). South-North Migration of EU Citizens in Times of Crisis. *Imiscoe research series*, Springer.

We can argue that the economic crisis affected Belgium, but the political and institutional crisis, that let the country without a government (2010 – 2011), due to the division between Wallonia and Flandres, has contributed to a climate of uncertainty and social insecurity. This political crisis is a result of linguistic, institutional, and cultural distinct identities. It represents a big challenge to Belgium nowadays and produces a considerable impact on immigration policies. Bousetta, Favell and Martiniello (2017), discussed this issue<sup>3</sup>, giving a very helpful portray of the Belgium sub-state system influence on the immigration multi-level governance in Brussels. They argued that a context of political instability gave impetus for the emerge of two different immigration and integration systems and that the multilevel decision-making immigration and integration policies are very segmented, involving neighbourhoods, districts, regions, provinces, federals and even third sector actors, sometimes without any coordination.

On the both systems of immigration and integration<sup>4</sup>, the most important distinction is on the linguistic integration. In that case, if the integration will be done in Flanders, migrants have to learn Flemish, conversely if it will be done in Wallonia, they have to learn French. This system limits immigrant's mobility inside Belgium, in the terms that it could be hard to integrate labour market in Flanders if the integration process was done in Wallonia and vice versa.

More generally, Belgium is also concerned by racism, a phenomenon that has evolved and diversified in the years. However, some groups of migrants are particularly concerned: this can be observed in the dimension of integration in the labour market, where some nationalities or second-generation migrants (as Congolese, Moroccan, etc.) are particularly excluded. An interesting research made by King Baudouin Foundation showed that the second generation of migrants in Belgium, even if they are high educated, are much more probably out of labour market than the Belgians origins. They argued that around 60% of Afro-descendants are educated, but they are four times more likely to be unemployed than the national average, and 80% said they have been victims of discrimination from a very young age. Of the total number of interviewees, 61% say

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<sup>3</sup> Bousetta, H., Favell, A. and Martiniello, M. (2017). Governing multicultural Brussels: paradoxes of a multi-level, multi-cultural, multi-national urban anomaly, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Special Issue: Theorising Migration Policy in Multilevel States: the Multilevel Governance Perspective*, 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Inburgering (Flandres) and the pathway of integration (Wallonia).

they feel that they are Belgians, but 86% think they are perceived as foreigners (Damart *et al.*, 2017)<sup>5</sup>. They also explained (by qualitative strategy) “in detail that Afro-descendants are strongly affected by ethnic-racial discrimination and racism and that this has an impact on their feeling of belonging, because they realised they not have the same opportunities than Belgians *de souche*. Almost 80% of the respondents argued that they have experienced discrimination, unequal treatment or insults for at least one of two reasons: their skin colour or origin” (Damart *et al.*, 2017, p. 67). Thus, the study establishes a correlation between second generation of Belgian-Africans labour discrimination and their feelings of belonging.

The fast integration of new refugees in Belgium society is also a challenge at national level, particularly due to the concurrence of the Flemish and Wallonia integration models. Burggraeve and Piton (2016) argue that is essential that new refugees integrate in the labour market, otherwise they will be at greater risk of poverty and more dependent on social security, but they are also more likely to increase the black market<sup>6</sup>.

## **Migration and refugee situation and measures taken by the government, NGOs and other organizations**

### ***Basic facts on migration, asylum seekers and refugees***

Burggraeve and Piton (2016) explored the evolution of immigration in Belgium from a historical perspective. They exposed that despite the doctrine of "zero immigration" (from the 70s), since the 2000s immigration has been particularly important. However, immigration to Belgium is most a intra-European phenomenon which consists on legal entries. In 2011, the number of entries was 138,071 (57% EU nationals). At the regional level, Flanders has the largest number of immigrants: on 40% of the total number of immigrants are living there, and it is in Brussels that the proportion of the immigrants population is the highest (34%). The structure of the immigrant population also

<sup>5</sup> Demart, S. et al. (2017). *Des citoyens aux racines africaines: un portrait des Belgo-CoNgo'slais, Belgo-Rwandais et Belgo-Burundais*. Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Roi Baudouin.

<sup>6</sup> See Burggraeve, K. and Piton, C. (2016). *Les conséquences économiques de l'afflux de réfugiés en Belgique*. available in: [https://www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/economicreview/2016/revecoi2016\\_h4.pdf](https://www.nbb.be/doc/ts/publications/economicreview/2016/revecoi2016_h4.pdf)

varies from one region to another. While the immigrants populations of the Brussels-Capital and Flanders regions are both made up of around 35% of non-EU nationals, in Wallonia this rate drops to 25%<sup>7</sup>. On the humanitarian immigration, from the *Commissariat Général aux Apatrides*, the number of asylum seekers in 2017 was 18.088. Among them, 9.989 people received a refugee status. The main nationalities are Syria (3.703), Afghanistan (1.441), Iraq (1.263), Guinea (840) and Palestine (802).

On the statistics of Liège population<sup>8</sup>, the number of immigrants living in the city in 2015 was 37.377 registered in the city administration, and 1.851 were waiting by the administration decision on their visa. On the intra-european immigration the three main nationalities are: Italy (7.641) France (4.629) and Spain (2.932). European immigration (out of European Union) were Russian Federation (335), Kosovo (180) and Albania (129). The main extra-european nationalities are Morocco (3.858), Democratic Republic of Congo (1.253), and Turkey (1.169).

The number of refugees (recognised by United Nations) living in Liège is 1.368. The main nationalities are Guinea (255), Syria (168) and Iraq (141). However, it is important to precise that the number of refugees in the resettlement program and of migrants in an irregular situation are not represented by this data. We estimate that the number of irregular migrants living in Liège in 2017 is at least 500.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>8</sup> Data from de city of Liege, available in: <http://www.liege.be/telechargements/pdf/vie-communale/carte-de-visite/tableau-de-bord-population-2015.pdf>

The 3 main immigrants' nationalities in Liège (2015)/by neighbourhood

Neighbourhood	1° nationality	2° nationality	3° nationality	All migrants	All Population
Centre	Italy 173	France 340	Spain 112	1417	4666
Avroy	France 569	Italy 242	Spain 193	2108	8088
Guillemins	France 499	Italy 201	Spain 102	1921	11335
Saint Marguerite	Italy 801	Morocco 376	France 317	3723	15786
Saint-Leonard	Italy 598	Spain 348	France 317	3319	12156
Outremeuse	France 426	Italy 383	Morocco 307	2514	9935
Longdoz	Italy 397	France 393	Morocco 375	3000	12518
Sainte-Walburge	Italy 522	Morocco 294	France 180	2259	12810
Laveu	France 210	Italy 205	Spain 95	1037	9418
Thier-a-Liege	Italy 302	Spain 67	Maroc 56	787	4647
Vennes	France 222	Morocco 172	Italy 144	1363	7333
Droixhe	Morocco 123	Spain 52	Italy 42	558	2485
Angleur	France 331	Italy 261	Cameroon 121	1861	10258
Bressoux	Morocco 743	Italy 651	Spain 450	3363	12847
Chenee	Italy 193	France 126	Morocco 58	766	9122

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Grivegnée	Italy 660	Morocco 330	Spain 245	2472	20715
Jupille	Italy 320	Spain 105	Morocco 97	1040	10800
Wandre	Italy 387	Turkey 130	Spain 55	975	6129
Glain	Italy 223	Turkey 105	Morocco 74	661	2674
Rocourt	Italy 355	Iraq 182	Spain 99	890	8057
Sclessin	Italy 663	France 96	Romania 82	1343	6444

Figure 1: Data from the ville de Liège

### *Policies and actions on the national and local level*

On the asylum procedure, and particularly on the responsibility to take in charge asylum seekers, Belgium apply the Dublin regulation. In terms of programs, since 2013, Belgium implemented a structural resettlement program and is committed to hosting a number of refugees defined each year. By the means of this program 2,171 refugees have been resettled in Belgium, including Syrian refugees (1,855) and Congolese refugees (281)<sup>9</sup>. A general picture on the resettlement program can be observed in the table below, where it is possible to see that the program is mainly responsible for Congolese and Syrians.

The integration of immigrants in the Wallonia region is determined by the Integration pathway law of March 2014, which has the main goal of welcome and support new immigrants, living in Wallonia, and so, help them to acquire basic knowledge on language and on the society, and help their integration into Wallonia. It structures the actors in different levels (that will receive funding by the region to carry out the pathway). Actors will regionally be federate by Fedasil and will create conditions for the implementation of the main dimensions of integration, mainly on the linguistic and civic dimensions. The pathway also concerns the immigrants, whose integration

<sup>9</sup> This data is available in Fedasil website: <https://www.fedasil.be/en>.

procedure is compulsory. In fact, as stipulated by the 2014<sup>10</sup> law, the pathway of integration is not compulsory for EU immigrants; it means the generally extra-European immigrants living in Belgium for less than three years and who have a residence permit of more than three months, have to do the pathway and get their certification of integration.

Year	Resettled refugees	Main nationalities	From
2013	100	Burundians and Congolese	Tanzania and Burundi
2014	34	Syrian	Turkey
2015	276	Syrian and Congolese	Lebanon and Burundi
2016	452	Syrian	Lebanon and Turkey
2017	1309	Syrian and Congolese (118)	Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Uganda
Total	2053		

Figure 2: The resettlement program in Belgian from 2013 to 2017

In Belgium reception and integration of migrants and asylum seekers are mainly structured and coordinated at federal level by Fedasil, that is the Federal Agency for the reception of Asylum seekers. The Fedasil partners in Wallonia are: Red Cross<sup>11</sup>, the Ciré<sup>12</sup>, CPAS<sup>13</sup>, *Caritas International* and *l'Union des Villes et des Communes de Wallonie (UVCW)*. Fedasil also maintains collaboration and regular contact with the asylum procedure authorities:

<sup>10</sup> The law is the “Décret remplaçant le livre II du Code wallon de l’Action sociale et de la Santé relatif à l’intégration des personnes étrangères ou d’origine étrangère”.

<sup>11</sup> In Belgian red cross or Croix-Rouge is responsible to host asylum seekers in collective centers in Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders.

<sup>12</sup> The Ciré is the Coordination and initiatives for refugees and foreigners, a Ngo's which groups together 24 associations as diverse as social services for asylum seekers, trade union organizations, continuing education services and international organizations.

<sup>13</sup> The CPAS organize local hosting initiatives called ILA.

[l'Office des étrangers \(OE\)](#), [le Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides \(CGRA\)](#)<sup>14</sup> et [le Conseil du Contentieux des Etrangers \(CCE\)](#).<sup>15</sup>

On the procedure, when the refugees arrive in Belgium as part of the resettlement program, they are hosted in a reception center of Fedasil. This is the phase of administrative procedure (granting of refugee status and issuance of CGRA certificates), that could take from 2 to 6 months. After this period, Fedasil will distribute refugees between Belgium cities, according to each case and the availability of institutions and actors at local level.

### ***Main actors / stakeholders dealing with migration***

Other important actor is the CAP migrants (Centre d'accompagnement pour migrants), which promotes individualized and social action, as psychosocial, legal and administrative follow-up. They also do the reception and information of any immigrant recently arrived in Belgium, especially asylum seekers. On the other side, Ngo's or non-lucrative associations (ASBL), are very active in the region of Wallonia and in city of Liège. Ngo's, as Monde de Possibles, Cipel, Point d'appui and even La Voix des Sans-papiers de Liège (for undocumented immigrants), and so on, are in charge of language courses, juridical assistance, cultural actions, workshops, etc. Some of them as La Voix des Sans-papiers, have the main goal to bring visibility and provide basic services (informally) to irregular migrants.

Integration policy in Wallonia and Flanders are not conceived or applied in a similar way: it follows the different cultural and linguistic identities of the regions, but also different economic resources. Thus, Federation of Wallonia is in charge of immigration issues and distribute subsidies between local actors working on immigration. In Wallonia, Ngo's, the federal agency and institutions, and even trade unions and other actors (as University of Liège, theatres, and other cultural actors) are engaged (collectively or individually) in immigration and integration issues. This multiplicity of actors makes the context complex for analysis, but very rich in terms of facilities

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<sup>14</sup> <https://dofi.ibz.be/sites/dvzoe/FR/Pages/home.aspx>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.rvv-cce.be/fr>.



and innovative projects on immigration issues.

### **Attitudes and behaviours towards migrants and refugees**

In the public debate, and for those who advocate for refugees and migrants, it is sometimes assumed that negative attitudes are mainly based on insufficient information on immigration flows, its consequences and corresponding policies. According to this argument, it would seem that people only need to learn the facts about migration in order to not have a hostile attitude towards migrants, an idea that has emphasis on "demystification". It is certain that providing accurate information on migration flows and policies is important. However, misinformation is not the only problem behind hostile attitudes toward migrants (Dempster, Hargrave, 2017).

It is important to remember that citizens have complex opinions about refugees and migrants. As discussed by Dempster and Hargrave<sup>16</sup> attitudes are formed from a complex network of concerns, through a process that relies as much on emotions and individual values. An analysis of citizens' attitudes towards refugees in Germany, for example, has shown that attitudes are based on a complex combination of feelings, including obligation, scepticism, fear, empathy and guilt. Although perceptions of the threat may be related to deep fears, for most people this is a complex range of emotions and quite related to political discourses or insecurity speeches. While public opinion on immigration is complex, most studies focus on negative positions, but a simple look at Eurobarometer statistics shows that the position on the immigration impact is multiple, and the negative or positive position on immigration represent almost the same percentage in some cases. For example, in 2014, in Belgium, where there is a larger gap, 49% of Belgians consider immigration to have a negative impact, while 27% believe that immigration is positive. However, if we look at the same data for 2017, we would have an opposite trend, where 44% of Belgians will

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<sup>16</sup> Dempster, H. and Hargrave, K. (2017). Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants. Working paper 512, *Chatham House*, the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

say that immigration has a positive impact while 38% say that it has a negative impact. In fact, statistics say that public opinion is slightly more negative about immigration in 2014<sup>17</sup> than in 2017.

The public opinion change: it is constantly shaped by the context and by actors who have the monopoly on the representations of immigration. In this perspective the media with the expression "refugee crisis" and its sensationalism influence the feeling of hostility as well as solidarity. The press is used to present migrants in a binary way, either as victims<sup>18</sup> or as a threat<sup>19</sup>. The public opinion in Belgium is therefore polarized, but especially focused on the economic dimension, more precisely on the "immigration burden", as well as the opinion of politicians at local and European level<sup>20</sup>. In the Belgium attitudes and behaviours towards migrants are correlated with the Belgium political context (sub-state), as argued by Bousseta, Favell and Martiniello in the cited text "Observers of Belgium and 'plur-alisme à la Belge'". They have long suggested that it is a context which offers clues of Europe's fragmentary future beyond the nation-state (Favell, Martiniello 1998; van Parijs, 1995). Recent events show how significant these clues may prove to be, as the complexity, conflict and (sometimes) violence linked to immigrant and cultural diversity in Europe intensifies" (Bousseta, Favell, Martiniello, 2017, p. 14)<sup>21</sup>.

Within political elites and the hostility against immigration, in Belgium, this phenomenon is particularly present. The secretary of State Theo Francken<sup>22</sup> and his obsession with presenting figures on the increase in incarcerations and deportations of undocumented migrants as signs of an effective migration policy also embodies a desire to transform public perceptions. Thus, in Belgian

<sup>17</sup> See: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/59/groupKy/279>.

<sup>18</sup> As the exemple of RTBF "Crise des migrants: plus de 1000 morts en Méditerranée depuis le début de l'année" available in: [https://www.rtf.be/info/monde/detail\\_crise-des-migrants-plus-de-1000-morts-en-mediterranee-depuis-le-debut-de-l-annee?id=9586629](https://www.rtf.be/info/monde/detail_crise-des-migrants-plus-de-1000-morts-en-mediterranee-depuis-le-debut-de-l-annee?id=9586629).

<sup>19</sup> The electronic journal le peuple has several articles expriasing hostility against migrants, as the exemples: "8,6 milliards: le coup de l'immigration en belgique! Available in: <http://lepeuple.be/le-cout-verite-de-limmigration-en-belgique/54402> or in the defence of Theo Franken scandal "Soudan, immigration, violence: les journalistes ne cessent de nous mentir! Available in: <http://lepeuple.be/soudan-immigration-violence-les-journalistes-assassins-de-la-verite/87472>.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.europartv.europa.eu/fr/programme/security/refugee-and-migration-crisis-the-financial-cost>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> See a video "Pas de papiers pour les réfugiés: une campagne choc de la N-VA suscite l'indignation " an exemple of the political tension in Belgian [https://www.rtf.be/info/dossier/drames-de-la-migration-les-candidats-refugies-meurent-aux-portes-de-l-europe/detail\\_pas-de-papiers-pour-les-refugies-une-campagne-choc-de-la-n-va-suscite-l-indignation?id=9476112](https://www.rtf.be/info/dossier/drames-de-la-migration-les-candidats-refugies-meurent-aux-portes-de-l-europe/detail_pas-de-papiers-pour-les-refugies-une-campagne-choc-de-la-n-va-suscite-l-indignation?id=9476112).

political elites he participates in the representation of the immigrant as a threat and intends to justify his repressive policy. As argued by Lafleur and Marfouk (2017) it should also be noted that the insecurity speech on immigration rarely faces frontal opposition from other democratic parties, and it seems linked to the fear of electoral reprisals against parties that would be more nuanced on immigration issues. The Belgians' fear of immigration is certainly perceptible but only a minority of them is opposed to any form of immigration. The Belgian politicians leave the public sphere open for the dissemination of an exclusively insecurity speech (specially on Muslim immigrants): the political class makes more difficult the effort of empathy and understanding of non-migrant Belgians towards immigrants (Lafleur, Marfouk, 2017) <sup>23</sup>.

### **Role of cultural organizations and Ngos in the context of migration**

Liège is a city that counts with the presence of multiple cultural actors engaged in promoting multicultural dialogue. What is remarkable in Liège, is the interaction between multiple actors to promote meetings and events related with immigration in cultural spaces. The Research Center on the study of Ethnicity and immigration (CEDEM) is very active in promoting and/or take part of events that bring together cultural actors, researchers, civil society actors, migrants and Ngos. The local artists are also engaged in projects, meetings and artworks (e.g. dance and theatre), which are generally organised collectively, with stakeholders, Ngo's, research center (CEDEM), etc. Ngo's are also engaged in the integration pathway, thus French courses, civic formation and eventually cultural activities.

A Ngo's that is very active in immigration and cultural/arts activities is La Baraka. Based in the Saint-Margherite neighbourhood, la Baraka developed by the years a range of activities, that goes from help children in their school homework, the creation of theatre (the no future, nos futures) <sup>24</sup>; urban dance courses and groups that empowers immigrants of first and second

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<sup>23</sup> Lafleur, J-M. and Marfouk, A. (2017). *Pourquoi l'immigration? 21 questions que se posent les Belges sur les migrations internationales au XXIe siècle*. Paris: L'Hamarttan.

<sup>24</sup> Information id available in: <http://theatredeleliege.be/evenement/no-future-nos-futurs/>.

generation. The One nation hip-hop crew<sup>25</sup> started in the hip-hop course of La Baraka and today they are artists recognized at international level. To summarise, in Liège the world of arts is connected with the immigration issue and is also perceived as a widely collective construction, where Ngos, regional institutions, and immigrants are working together for elaborating, constructing and presenting their art works.

### Good practices

- **Cripel** and other Ngos mentioned are generally employing artistic disciplines in integration process. A good example was the project of a dramatic spectacle, where Cripel, Red Cross and *Monde des possibles* worked together to help asylum seekers to learn dramatic art and present a performance in 2017. The presentation was public, during the *Fete de la musique*. This is a good practice that mixed different actors and gave visibility to immigrants, showing their histories in a French cultural manifestation.
- **Sans** is a result of a collaboration of artists and the association of migrants *Le voix des sans papiers*. This performance was also supported and presented by the *Cité miroir* and was followed by a public debate with the immigrants and a researcher from CEDEM.
- The cultural space **La Caserna Fonk**, aimed to make a co-relation between the Italian working immigration and the immigration nowadays.
- The **Fils de hasard performance**, followed by a public debate that brought together Ngos, immigrants and researchers.
- **The no future, nos futures performance**, that was created by *La baraka* and was performed by migrants of first and second generation (and intergenerational), supported by the *theatre de Liège*. The **One nation crew** is a good practice supported by *La baraka*, that empowers immigrant women.

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<sup>25</sup>Information about the One Nation Crew is available in: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/OneNationCrewBE/posts/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/OneNationCrewBE/posts/?ref=page_internal).

- **The *Ville de Liège*** is engaged in producing social cohesion by arts and culture. It presented projects as the *Ville hospitalier* (the city of hospitality), and since the 90's it decided to take position against racism, like the project *Reve de Martin*<sup>26</sup>, which linked anti-racism and Martin Luther King image.
- The **Plateforme des réfugiés** created in 2016 by *Université de Liège*: is a project that offers special courses for refugees. They also organize cultural activities proposed by the University and French classes, as well as the promotion of socialization between refugees and citizens<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Information available in: <http://liege-diversites.be/le-reve-de-martin/>.

<sup>27</sup> This information is available in: [https://www.uliege.be/cms/c\\_9191595/fr/accompagnement-des-refugies-offre-de-formation-a-destination-des-refugies](https://www.uliege.be/cms/c_9191595/fr/accompagnement-des-refugies-offre-de-formation-a-destination-des-refugies).

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