

Belgium to send back 'asylum shoppers'



Photo: Belga

Minister of Asylum and Migration Maggie De Block announced on Saturday two new measures aimed to prevent Belgium from welcoming asylum seekers who have bypassed EU asylum rules.

The goal, according to the minister, is to guarantee a welcome of "true newcomers" during the winter months.

These measures are aimed at two specific profiles of asylum seekers. The first are those who have already obtained protection in another EU Member State, but continue their journey to ask for asylum and hospitality in Belgium too, "for reasons that are unrelated to asylum," explained the Government Minister for current affairs. She calls this practice, "asylum shopping."

The second are those who refuse to return to the EU Member State where they were first registered. Yet it is that state which is required by the so-called EU 'Dublin regulations' to process their application.

In these kinds of asylum cases, Belgium has six months to send the applicant back to that first country, before otherwise becoming obliged to handle the case.

"This is why some asylum seekers remain in hiding for six months, with family or friends or people they know, for example, without leaving any trace or address at the Foreign Office. Others change their address almost daily to make it almost impossible to follow up. They reappear six months later to request asylum and welcome," De Block explained.

The Belgian Immigration Office can, however, extend the deadline to leave the country to 18 months if there is a serious suspicion of concealment.

These two profiles will no longer benefit from refuge in Belgium. They will continue

to receive support if they want to return to the country where they have a status (asylum being granted or processed).

However, as Fedasil assesses the refusal on an individual basis, it will take into account “the vulnerability” of some persons, due to sickness, for instance, according to Minister De Block.

An information campaign aimed specifically at these target groups will also be launched to deter abuse in asylum procedures.

The Fedasil welcome network has been overloaded for some time, not only because of the influx of asylum seekers — in Belgium and in other European countries — but also due to the length of the application examination procedures.

It is also increasingly difficult for Fedasil to find welcome premises because of residents’ protesting against shelters, as in Bilzen (where a premise was even burned), or Zoutleeuw or Koksijde.

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Source:

<https://www.brusselstimes.com/all-news/belgium-all-news/87275/asylum-shoppers-no-longer-welcome-in-belgium/>

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