

Your papers, please!

Anyone wishing to settle in Belgium as a migrant worker had to register at the town hall and request a long-term residence permit or a foreign national's card. Moroccan immigrant workers who had followed the official recruitment procedure and had arrived in Belgium with an employment contract faced few difficulties. But most of their compatriots had arrived with just a tourist visa, and in some cases without any official documents at all. This caused trouble for the population's municipal services.

They were in the habit of regularising the situation of "tourists" who had found work. However, this regularisation procedure came up against administrative problems. Belgian documents required a date of birth but many immigrant workers did not know theirs because in their country, only the year of birth was registered. This is why many first generation Moroccans are said to have been born on 1 January or 1 July, according to their passport.