

A person in silhouette stands looking out a window at a city street during sunset. The window is composed of vertical blinds, and the sun is visible through the blinds, creating a bright glow. The person is wearing a dark jacket and glasses. The floor is dark and reflective, showing the person's silhouette and the light from the window. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

T[w]O WORK

OFF WORLD PRESENTS

T[w]O WORK



A DOCUMENTARY SERIES ON NEWCOMERS IN BELGIUM AND THEIR INTENSE STRUGGLE TO FIND A PROPER JOB IN THEIR NEW HOME COUNTRY.

What do you do for a living? It usually doesn't take long before you get this question at a first meeting. People are eager to know what kind of job you do. It seems to be the way to quickly form an image of your personality. Your job as a reflection of your identity. It says something about your status and your place in society: who am I, what do I mean?

But in reality, the search for work turns out to be particularly difficult for many newcomers.

Many find it more difficult to find suitable work because of their name, skin color, cultural or religious background, or any other principle. A study by Eurostat even shows that Belgium is at the bottom of the list in Europe when it comes to employment of foreigners, let alone suitable or desired work, while thousands of vacancies remain unfilled.

The documentary series T[w]o Work follows young people with an immigrant background in their search for suitable and pleasant work. What are the factors that make it difficult for so many migrants and foreigners to find suitable work? And what initiatives are there to help them in their search? The series was made through the eyes of non-European film makers directed by Annabel Verbeke and with original music by Jef Neve.

The project has been made through the eyes of non-European filmmakers and **Annabel Verbeke** with the original soundtrack by **Jef Neve**.

T(w)o Work is an **Off World** production in coproduction with **VRT-Canvas** and **RTBF**.

Follow us






T[w]O WORK

EPISODES

- EPISODE 1 **WASIM** IN **KORTRIJK** DIRECTED BY **NICO FORERO & ANNABEL VERBEKE**
- EPISODE 2 **SARVI** IN **LEUVEN/ANTWERPEN** DIRECTED BY **SETAREH SAMAVI & ANNABEL VERBEKE**
- EPISODE 3 **BATHA** IN **LA HULPE** DIRECTED BY **EKA TSOTSORIA & ANNABEL VERBEKE**
- EPISODE 4 **MARIANNA** IN **ANTWERPEN** DIRECTED BY **FARAH KASSEM & ANNABEL VERBEKE**
- EPISODE 5 **ZEINAB, NIGAR & LILAN** IN **BOECHOUT** DIRECTED BY **ZEINA AL QAHWAJI & ANNABEL VERBEKE**

DIRECTED BY	NICO FORERO EKA TSOTSORIA FARAH KASSEM SETAREH SAMAVI ZEINA AL QAHWAJI	GENRE	DCREATIVE DOCUMENTARY
SUPERVISING DIRECTOR	ANNABEL VERBEKE	COPRODUCERS	VRT-CANVAS RTBF-DOCUMENTAIRE BNP PARIBAS FORTIS FILM FINANCE
WRITTEN BY	ANNABEL VERBEKE FREDERIK NICOLAI	VERSIONS	1 X 90 MINUTEN 6 X 52 MINUTEN
EDITED BY	SIMON ARAZI THOMAS BAUDOUR JAN DE COSTER TOM DENOYETTE	FORMAT	DCP / DIGITAL VERSIONS STEREO 16:9
ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK	JEF NEVE	PRODUCERS	FREDERIK NICOLAI ERIC GOOSSENS



Listen to the original soundtrack of T(w)o Work
door Jef Neve on  Spotify

click icon or go to <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5Ov0ii8ypaLNdU91O1xohs?si=6af3bd9adea54646&nd=1>

EPISODE 1

WASIM

West-Flanders

start own business

Syrian civil war

Wasim fled to Belgium from Syria in 2015. Alone.

Only two years later, his wife Farah and child were able to join him.

They settle in Kortrijk, West-Flanders and try to rebuild their lives. In Syria, Wasim had a flourishing import/export business but in Belgium starting a new career seems very complicated. Despite many attempts, Wasim does not find a job.

Until the moment Wasim wants to do something in return to a new friend in Kortrijk who regularly invites him to dinner.

Non it would be his time to cook. The only problem: he had never cooked before. In full panic, he calls his grandmother, who reassures him and teaches him step by step how to make a Syrian falafel. This goes down so well that it might be the start of a new professional adventure.



PLAY TRAILER



NICO FORERO

Nico Forero was born in Colombia. After many wanderings and life experiences around the world, he graduated from LUCA School of Arts in Brussels in 2017 in the Masters programme DocNomads.

For Nico, migration in Europe is one of the most important issues of our current times. Belgium is also at the center of the debate, both literally and figuratively. Belgium is situated at the transition between north and south, right in the middle between Finland and Morocco. Nico considers Belgium as a country of great diversity in art, commerce, sport, religion, entertainment, finance and politics: a compact arena with an improbable amount of diversity, which is most probably far from exploited.



EPISODE 2

BATHA

from Eritrea to Wallonia

biologic gardening

family reunification

Batha had to flee his homeland Eritrea because, as a conscientious objector, he refused to do his military service. At the time, his son was 2 years old, his daughter just 8 months. His journey to safety took him almost 8 years. All those years he did not see his wife and children, meanwhile 10 and 8 years old. He ends up in Belgium and our film start at the moment he received a provisional residence permit and his children have just arrived in Belgium one month ago. but his wife cannot join them yet and in order to reunify his family, they have to go trough a complicated burocratic process. One of the condition is Batha must be able to present a stable life with steady work. Through a training and an internship in ecological gardening, he hopes to launch his professional career. Until then, his wife has to wait in Ethiopia. In Eritrea, it would be too dangerous. Batha gets the help of his new community, but will they succeed?



PLAY TRAILER



EKA TSOTOSORIA

The year Eka Tsotoria (1989, Georgia) was born, history took a major turn in her country. The Soviet-Union collapsed, and Georgia suddenly found itself in a state of total chaos. Her parents had to survive civil war and raise two children at the same time. Her mother, an economist at the National Bureau of Statistics, became a babysitter and her father, formerly an innovative architect, became a construction worker. In her childhood, she soon learnt that her dreams and professional ambitions were very much limited by the geographical limits of her country. Often she noticed highly educated, intelligent Georgian men and women moving to Western Europe to do jobs for which Western-Europeans themselves had no time: cleaning, childcare,... This was the only way their families left behind in Georgia could survive. For that reason, she always connoted migration with humiliating work. But at some point, she did get the chance to study abroad, something that enriched her life immensely. She got a sense of belonging, something she never experienced in Georgia. At the same time, she also realized that few migrants get to experience that privilege.



episode 3

SARVI

from Iran to Leuven

werken op hoogte

nieuwe start

Sarvi fled from Iran. He is a son of a Christian family whose life has become increasingly difficult ever since the Iranian revolution in 1989. His family always refused to convert to Islam. When he was 2 years old, both his parents were arrested and sentenced to 8 years in prison. So his grandparents had to raise him, until the moment they became too old to care of him and Sarvi strayed from the right path.

By making rap music Sarvi tried to find the straight path again, but because of his very socially critical songs, he was wanted by the Iranian authorities. He managed to cross the border with Georgia just in time and after a long journey he ended up in Leuven, a famous university city in Belgium. Today, he tries to rebuild his life.

By finding work and creating a new social network, he wants to tackle his loneliness: he misses his family, and especially his younger sister, immensely.





SETAREH SAMAVI

Setareh (1982, Iran) originally started as a researcher on this project. She was looking for strong stories of people with a migration background and their difficulties in finding suitable work.

This job was fully tailored. After her studies in Western-Europe, she decided not to return to Iran and wanted to start her professional career in Belgium. So she herself was one of those many newcomers who encounter various obstacles on their way to suitable work.

For the research, she travelled to all corners of Belgium, talking to people and collecting stories. This turned out to be a very confrontational process: it also required a journey into her inner self.

She encountered so many recognizable situations and emotions in the stories of her research that, also for her, the line between hope and despair sometimes blurred.

A little later, she seized the opportunity to direct one of the six films herself. She shares the same origins and sufferings with her main character Sarvi: a youngster from Iran who wants to build a new life in Belgium but encounters a lot of personal, social and emotional challenges during the process.



EPISODE 4

MARIANNA

From Ukrain to Antwerp

search for identity

finding dream job

Marianna would prefer to work in the cultural sector or in film production, but so far, she can only find temporary jobs in sales. Marianna is from Ukraine and lives with her boyfriend in Antwerp. She is originally from Crimea, where her father, brothers and sisters still live. First, she moved with her mother, a psychologist, to Kiev, and ended up later in Turnhout, a provincial town in Northern-Belgium, where her mother settled with her Flemish husband. Ever since, Marianna, who has a bachelor degree in journalism, has been trying to find her path in Belgium. She often struggled with the idea to return, but since February 2022 that has not been an option for obvious reasons. The war has made her past even more unreachable. She gets the help from a mentor Patty, who assists her in her difficult search for suitable work. of cause of financial pressures and her personal ambitions, she is a highly motivated job seeker but keeps bumping into the same rigid obstacles....





FARAH KASSEM

After spending 26 years of her life in Lebanon, Farah Kassem decided it was time to leave and explore other lands, cities and cultures. Although she was grateful to have grown up in the intensity of Beirut, she had reached her point of saturation in a region where conflict and clashes had become daily routine. There was an unstoppable urge to cross borders and look for something else. Over the past seven years, she has moved from one country to another, from Portugal to Hungary, across Germany to Belgium. Geographically, she may have been far from home, but it was precisely the distance allowing her to look at her homeland differently. Critical and caring at the same time. She began to appreciate it again, even in times when hopelessness dominates. She realised she would never be able to settle in Lebanon again and that's exactly why she struggles so much with the concept of home today. She still moves regularly from one place to another, for friends, for projects or new fresh air. In the process, her Lebanese identity is often an unforeseen burden: The temporality of visa, passports, the slowness and unpredictable character of bureaucracy, the suspicion associated with her old Lebanese identity put a heavy pressure on her. The protagonists of T(w)o Work endure similar dilemmas as she does. Making this film was hence a evident step in her life and career



EPISODE 5

ZINAB, NIGAR & LILAN

from Syria to Boechout

Kurdistan

find first job

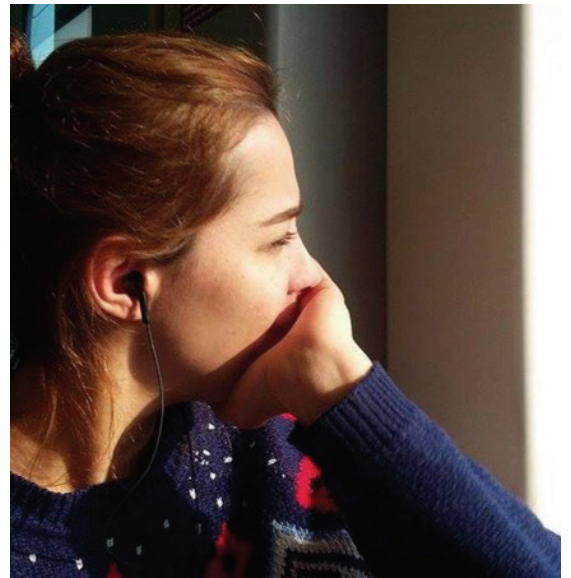
Zinab lives with her five children in Boechout. As a Kurdish family, they fled the exhausting Syrian civil war. After an intensive process, Zinab found permanent work as a kitchen assistant in an retirement home, but both her daughters Nigar and Lilan struggle to find their way to work in Belgium.

To be able to pay their trip to Europe, they worked for several years in hellish conditions in Turkish clothing industry. This has left deep marks, especially on Ngar. She is afraid she will end up again in some kind of slavery. Most of all, she wants to work with people or animals because she had been missing warm interaction all these years. Her younger sister Nigar would like to study, but bureaucratic confusion made her lose precious time....



ZEINA AL QAWHAJI

Zeina was born into a conservative family in Damascus, Syria's capital, in 1984. From a young age, Zeina wanted to become a documentary filmmaker, but because of her conservative background, she did not dare to pursue that ambition. So she studied literature and sought work in the film industry after graduation. She had the privilege to start working at a documentary film production company, which also organised the annual film festival in Damascus.



In 2011, the revolution began, followed by a hopeless and destructive war that destroyed her future and that of her generation. The small Syrian documentary industry was wiped out and only stories of war and blood were left to be told. Her goal seemed completely unreachable. She could only film the daily life of her family and meanwhile, she was mainly trying to find odd jobs to help her family survive. Four hopeless years passed, until she was awarded an Erasmus master scholarship in 2015 which allowed to study in the DocNomads masters in Europa. She would study and work together with filmmakers from all around the world, and be freed from the spiral of war and violence for two years.

Yet it was also far from obvious. Like many people arriving in Europe from the Middle East, political, social, religious and ideological differences consciously or unconsciously play a role. She had to shake off a heavy load in order to succeed as a filmmaker, and actually more importantly as a guest, a newcomer in a foreign country. Consequently, it was not easy to feel at home in Europe. Sometimes people were helpful and welcoming, but often sceptical about her nationality.

As the situation in Syria does not seem to be improving, Zeina decided to pursue her directorial ambitions outside her beloved homeland. Syria and its people are totally exhausted by war, destruction and economic sanctions. Moreover, the censorship imposed by the government does not make a filmmaker's life any easier.

She could no longer stand still, waiting for peace that may never come. Her film from T(w) Work is her first project outside Syria, to which she has contributed her vision, life experiences and heart.

ANNABEL VERBEKE

Image you are at a drink or reception, having conversations with people you didn't know before. How long does it take before the question is asked: What kind of work do you do? Answering with your title and company tells what place you take in society.

You are your job.

It allows you to survive, is giving you a challenge, a goal and a value in life. But imagine you have to emigrate to a country you have never been to and you have to build a new social and professional life from zero.

Finding a good job that matches our skillset, one where we can achieve our ambitions, one we like and, first and foremost, one that gives us a purpose in life, is often a considerable challenge for newcomers, whether they have been granted indefinite leave to remain or not.

Their name, their roots, religion, culture, the language they speak or the accent they have and especially views on these among the general populace, often play a decisive part in this search, making it more of an ordeal for some.

What factors make it so difficult for so many new Belgians and foreigners to find a good job? And what initiatives are there to help them? It seems clear that the situation for foreigners or those with foreign roots has not improved by any means, with terrorist attacks and images of large groups of refugees queuing up at the gates to our prosperity being politically used as 'a threat to everything we have achieved'. Indeed, our values, our culture, our economy could well be irreparably compromised, so we must surely protect ourselves against any attempt at meddling. It is the new, hardline anti-immigration rhetoric that has swept across Europe...

But there is a danger that the issues have now gone beyond discussing among the general public, because 'how dare they question our traditions, we do not question ourselves at all ever, because that would lead us straight to adapting to their customs and traditions, it would lead to our demise.' Yet, does this fear for the other and this anxious clinging to old traditions and values not have more to do with sheer fear for the future? Does it not have to do with the uncertainty of whether our children and grandchildren will be able to lead comfortable lives, like us? Does it not have to do with the fact that we feel we do not have enough control over that uncertain future, hence why we either ignore the inevitable changes in our society or blame them on 'easy' targets?



As if age-old traditions would ever provide us with a guarantee for the future... Our past is glorified and blown up, sanctified, as a straw to cling to for the future. Things were always better in the past, so we want to go back there. Yet all of this is a romantic illusion, because if we flip back more than a few pages in the history books, we would see that most so-called 'traditions' and 'values' are quite young, and that turning back time has never solved current problems.

Nevertheless, these are feelings that certainly make the debate more difficult, because people are either for or against, without much leeway.

Refugees, ex-refugees, new Belgians and non-European foreigners are more than ever the people to blame these days. They are coldly considered as a group (often with an emphasis on their 'numbers'), while their individual personalities, stories, talents and ambitions are largely ignored. On the contrary, the success of an ex-refugee or new Belgian in our society could be counterproductive, as it would only increase how attractive we are to people in the same situation. At the same time, though, there are uncountable jobs in Belgium alone that cannot seem to find people to do them as no-one seems to be qualified, while another 400,000 Belgians will retire between now and the end of 2025.

So we are facing interesting challenges to say the least, on an economic, social and also human level. Precisely this debate is what T(w)o Work would like to contribute to in a positive way, by examining and shining a different light on lots of socially relevant topics, stigmas and taboos. To do so, we will depart from the dynamic stories of people who did not know each other, but have embarked on an intense journey together.

T(w)o Work will be a positive documentary project, with an eye for detail, that will show every human emotion, whether it be fear, anger, sorrow, love, happiness or humor.

The documentary project sets out to closely examine our Western European society, energizing a debate and encouraging the viewer to think and act.



T[w]O WORK

A SERIES PRODUCED BY **OFF WORLD** IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH **VRT-CANVAS** AND **RTBF**
IN CO-PRODUCTIIN WITH **BNP FORTIS FILM FINANCE**

WITH THE SUPPORT FROM **FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND, SCREEN BRUSSELS | BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION,**
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