



Muslims in the EU:

Cities Report

BELGIUM

Preliminary research report
and literature survey

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Researchers:

Dr Hassan Bousetta and Laure-Anne Bernes, University of Liège

CEDEM - National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS), Centre d'études de l'ethnicité et des migrations (CEDEM), Institut des sciences humaines et sociales

(<http://www.ulg.ac.be/cedem>). Contact details: Hassan.Bousetta@ulg.ac.be

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CEOFOR	Centre for Equal Opportunities and Fight against Racism (<i>Centre pour l'égalité des chances et la lutte contre le racisme</i>)
COCOF	French Community Commission (<i>Commission communautaire française</i>)
VGC	Flemish Community Commission (<i>Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie</i>)
RCMP	Royal Commissariat for Migration Policies (<i>Commissariat Royal à la Politique des Immigrés, CRPI</i>) (which in 1993 became the CEOFOR)
ICC	Islamic and Cultural Centre (in Brussels)
INS	National Institute of Statistics



Background

This research paper, focusing on the situation of Muslims in Belgium, was commissioned by the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP)¹ of the Open Society Institute (OSI).² Similar reports have also been prepared for Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK.

The overall aim of this series of research papers is to provide a comprehensive review of available research and literature on Muslims in each of these countries, including a bibliography covering the most relevant recent publications. Another aim is to facilitate the selection of a number of EU cities for inclusion in a proposed new OSI monitoring project to be initiated in 2007 — “Muslims in the EU: Cities Reports”. This project will address policy on Muslims at the city, or municipal, level, as opposed to the national level, which is the more usual level of analysis for cross-country monitoring. It follows on from previous EUMAP reports addressing the situation of Muslims in Europe, in particular the 2004 report *Muslims in the UK: Policies for Engaged Citizens*.³

Each of the research reports follow the same methodology, to provide comparative information across the countries covered, according to a common methodology prepared by EUMAP.⁴ Part I of the report evaluates the availability of data and other information on the situation of — specifically — Muslims in Belgium, in the following areas: population, identity, education, employment, health and social protection, policing and security, and participation and citizenship. Part II addresses the policy context in Belgium, in particular with regard to the perception of Muslims, integration policy and administrative structures. Part III looks more specifically at the potential suitability of three cities in Belgium with significant Muslim populations for inclusion in the OSI “Muslims in the EU” city monitoring project, each representing one of the three main regions of the country — Brussels (Brussels Region), Antwerp (Flanders) and Liège (Wallonia).

¹ Full details on the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) can be found at www.eumap.org.

² Full details on the Open Society Institute (OSI) can be found at www.soros.org.

³ The full report, as well as previous EUMAP reports on the situation of Muslims in France and Italy, can be found at <http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/britishmuslims>.

⁴ The methodology for the research papers is available on the EUMAP website (www.eumap.org).



Executive Summary

The Muslim population in Belgium is estimated at around 500,000 people, or approximately 5 per cent of the total population (10.4 million). Over half of Muslims in Belgium (55 per cent) are naturalised Belgian citizens — the number of naturalisations has been increasing for the last two decades, as access to Belgian citizenship has been facilitated. A further 37 per cent are nationals of predominantly Muslim countries, while 10-15,000 are Belgian-born converts. The remainder are children from Muslim families who acquired Belgian nationality on birth.

People with a Moroccan background (hereafter ‘Moroccans’) and a Turkish background (hereafter ‘Turks’) are the two predominant ethnic groups within the Belgian Muslim population. Together, they represent some 88 per cent of the Muslims who are naturalised citizens, and 67 per cent of the nationals from predominantly Muslim countries. Research about Muslims in Belgium has focused on these two groups, and this report will also reflect this trend.

Muslims mainly arrived in Belgium as economic migrants. The first inflow into Belgium of workers originating from Muslim countries can be traced back to the 1910s, in the wake of French colonisation of the Maghreb. Later, in the 1960s, Belgium concluded bilateral labour agreements with Morocco and Turkey (1964), Tunisia (1969) and Algeria (1970) to address the shortage of low-skilled workers in the country. These workers were concentrated mainly in the coal and steel industries, and the construction sector. Although the Belgian authorities declared a halt to the waves of migration in 1974, the immigration flow remained stable while the number of Muslims increased, as families started reuniting in Belgium and single men were getting married for the first time.

Muslims also arrived in Belgium as students, who chose to settle in Belgium — particularly Moroccans attracted by the French language education system. More recently, a smaller number of Muslims have arrived as asylum seekers, or remained as illegal residents.

Muslims are concentrated in the urban centres of Brussels and Antwerp, which are situated next to the former mining and industrial regions, and are distributed more or less evenly between the north and the south of the country. Moroccans are found mainly in French-speaking areas of Belgium (Wallonia), in the south, as well as in the (bilingual) capital, Brussels (over 50 per cent of Moroccans). Half of the Turks live in the Flemish part of Belgium (Ghent and Antwerp), while a quarter live in Brussels (in particular Saint-Josse and Schaerbeek districts), and a quarter can be found in Wallonia.

In order to facilitate the integration of new generations of immigrants into the country, changes were gradually introduced into the Belgian law, making the current Belgian Nationality Code one of the most liberal in Europe. Recent changes in 1991 were aimed at facilitating access to citizenship for immigrants of the second generation and granting automatic citizenship to people of the third one. In 2000, there was a reduction in the waiting period to become naturalised.

Belgium officially recognised Islam in 1974, a decision that meant the granting of a special status including financial and material support. In Belgium, Islam has not been eroded by the socialisation process, but tends rather to be reshaped, providing a way for the younger generation to dissociate itself from the Islamic practices of the first generation. While the first



generation of Muslims in Belgium tended to isolate itself in the mosques and ethnic cafés, the second generation are more educated, with better linguistic skills, and their practice and conception of Islam differs from the traditionalist and popular one of their fathers.

Islam became more visible after the mid-1980s, as Muslims started to organise pilgrimages to Mecca, to open butcher's shops selling *halal* meat, as well as Islamic bookshops, to broadcast religious programmes and to organise conferences welcoming foreign spokesmen. The more widespread wearing of the *hijab* also started to attract public attention.

The debate regarding the wearing of the *hijab* in schools that took place in France in 2003–2004 also affected Belgium, and raised serious discussions, mainly in Brussels and Wallonia. While previously the issue had mainly been dealt with on pragmatic grounds, in 2003 some schools in Brussels decided to forbid the registration of students wearing the *hijab*. To date, due to divergences between the Flemish and the Francophone populations no decisions have been taken regarding this question at the national level, leaving every school responsible for its own policy. While some schools choose to prohibit the wearing of the *hijab*, others continue to welcome veiled students. In employment situations, there is no specific legal basis regulating the matter. In general, the public sector has adopted a restrictive attitude while the situation in the private sector is more diverse — although there is evidence that wearing the *hijab* significantly impacts on the career development of Muslim women.

There are clear differences between the level of education of native Belgians and of Muslims in Belgium. The educational attainment of working age Moroccans and Turks (i.e. those retaining their nationality of origin) is much lower than of the native Belgians. Similarly, the test results for students in Belgian French-speaking classes reveal the low attainment of both children of the first generation of immigrants and of those born outside Belgium, in comparison with that of the native Belgian children. Surprisingly, there is also little difference between the results of the first generation, as compared to those born abroad.

The underachievement of Muslims in education can be explained by various factors, such as the socio-cultural level of the families (i.e. a mainly rural origin), the language abilities both of the parents and of the children, economic precariousness and lack of knowledge of the Belgian education system. The choices made by Muslims also seem to influence their success rates. In particular, at the high school level Muslims seem to be concentrating in the technical and professional education systems, which offer less professional perspectives than the general channel that leads on to university. In addition, the ability of the Belgian school system to manage ethnic diversity and value multiculturalism needs also to be taken into consideration. For example, a large proportion of Muslim children are concentrated in schools experiencing difficulties, in working-class neighbourhoods. Nonetheless, there are some promising developments, with evidence that more Muslim children are attending pre-primary classes, and that Muslim children seem to be taking a growing interest in higher education and its opportunities.

Teaching on Islam, including in schools, is a competence of the main representative body of Muslims in Belgium — the Muslim Executive of Belgium, EMB. In schools, the average number of students attending classes on Islam has continually increased since they were first established in 1977. In the French-speaking part of Belgium there are 34,283 students attending these classes (with 400 teachers of Islam) and in the Flemish part there are 20,000 students (297 teachers). The issue of teachers of Islam is no longer the focus of public



debates. Nevertheless, some questions remain unsolved, particularly with regard to the curriculum and the methods of inspection.

In employment, Muslims are overrepresented in precarious jobs, working in poor conditions for low wages. Furthermore, they seem to be the victims of discrimination, discarded easier than native Belgians with similar qualification levels. The employment rate for Moroccans and Turks is three times lower than that of the majority of Belgian population, with only a quarter of the working-age population in paid work. The unemployment rate is also much higher among the Muslim population, although there are important regional differences: the unemployment rates of Muslims in the Flemish part are five to six times the regional average, as compared to twice the regional average for the Brussels and Walloon area.

There are a number of factors influencing the poor employment prospects of Muslims in Belgium. Most important are the structural changes in the Belgian economy, which have led to a decreasing demand for the low-skilled jobs in the primary sector (i.e. agriculture and mines) where many Muslims were previously employed. At the same time, there has been an expansion of precarious employment conditions, such as temporary work, low paid practices for young workers, and work financed by the public authorities, with Muslim women particularly affected. Another barrier to work is the poor networking or 'social capital' of the Muslim population, a strategy used more systematically by native Belgians. Language skills, and the requirement for French/Dutch bilingualism (particularly in Brussels), also play a role. Finally, there is evidence of discrimination in the labour market on ethnic grounds, particularly against Moroccan and Turkish job applicants.

Muslims are more likely than native Belgians to live in segregated and disadvantaged neighbourhoods. They are overrepresented in the cheapest rented sector, although rising property prices in the big cities, especially Brussels, have led to an increase in the purchase of formerly rented low-quality housing, in order to remain in the neighbourhood — for example, the Turkish communities in the Schaerbeek and Saint Josse districts of Brussels. Generally speaking, the level of home ownership is higher among Turks (65 per cent) than Moroccans (30 per cent), but this is no indication of housing quality.

There is evidence of differences between the health situation of Muslims and that of the rest of the Belgian population. This can be partly ascribed to socio-economic factors, such as poor living conditions, in dilapidated houses, and harsh labour conditions. Health care professionals have noted that children more frequently suffer from respiratory diseases, and that domestic accidents are much more common within the female population. Stress linked to integration difficulties, or to the promises that Muslims have made to their families still living in Morocco or Turkey, can also impact on their health situation. For example, ulcer cases are five times more common within these populations, a problem made worse by the higher rates of tobacco addiction.

Cultural or religious practices can also impact on health decisions. For example, mortality rates around birth in the Muslims population are much higher than the national average, a situation ascribed to a tendency to pay less medical attention to pregnancy and attend pre-natal consultations later. Similarly, the sedentary habits of women, staying all day long at home, make them more susceptible to obesity. Type 2 diabetes is also more common among the Muslim population. With regard to the identification and treatment of genital problems or



diseases, there exists a strong reluctance to undergo the types of medical examinations that these imply.

The progressive arrival of Muslim doctors seems to have facilitated the transmission of knowledge about the specificities of Islam in the medical framework, although Moroccans and Turks do not necessarily use their services. There is evidence that Muslims regularly consult doctors of the same cultural roots before consulting 'Belgians', in order to get different advice. Health care professionals have noted growing demands based on religious prohibitions or practices, such as the opportunity to be advised by an imam, to be treated by a same-sex doctor, or to make use of adapted areas for funeral rituals. In hospitals, a major complaint of Muslims relates to their specific food and dietary needs, such as the prohibition on eating pork, which are not systematically met.

Integration policy is a prerogative of the Communities, and the French- and Dutch-speaking governments have developed different approaches for dealing with integration issues. The Flemish Community framework adopts a model of integration that is more in line with multicultural ideas, based on the recognition of ethnic-cultural minority groups, and supporting active participation through self-organisations of immigrants. In the Flemish Community, the Government sought from the outset to develop a specific social policy for immigrants. After 1988, and the electoral breakthrough of the extreme right in Antwerp, the Flemish Government placed its effort in the establishment of a coordinated immigration policy, influenced by the Dutch minority policy. In April 1998, the Flemish Parliament agreed on a decree on ethnic and cultural minorities setting out a new policy framework, with the aim of improving the participation of ethno-cultural minorities in Flemish society as full citizens.

The development of a Walloon regional immigration policy is a recent phenomenon. The factors that triggered the political initiative of the Flemish political elite — the electoral success of the extreme right and violent unrest on the part of the youth of ethnic minority origin — did not have the same relevance in Wallonia, which has allocated only meagre resources to immigration policies. The Walloon policy has an important social work component, which is partly "colour-blind" but which also includes the direct funding of intercultural projects targeting immigrants. More importantly, the Walloon Government has promoted the setting up of seven regional integration centres in the major Walloon cities.

The differences between the two Communities can be partially explained by the specific political context in Brussels, with the Flemish Community actively trying to woo immigrant communities in Brussels, as a means of enlarging the Community's sphere of influence. The Flemish/French-speaking cleavage also lead to passionate debates on the question of the enfranchisement of non-EU citizens in the mid-1990s, as it was assumed that the votes of non-EU citizens would mainly benefit the French-speaking political actors. Finally, the Constitution was changed in 1998 in order to allow third-country nationals with residency rights to be granted voting rights at the local level from 2001 onwards (these changes were only to be enforced in 2004).

Already during the late 1990s, the demographic role that ethnic minorities are expected to play in the development of cities such as Brussels drove both Flemish and Francophones to pay greater attention to them, by including candidates of non-EU origin in their electoral lists and adapting their campaigns to target ethnic minorities. However, the elections of October 2000 in Brussels are considered as a landmark for electoral participation by citizens with



immigrant origins. The number of elected Belgian politicians who were non-EU citizens (mainly Moroccans) increased considerably — of 652 municipal councillors, 13.8 per cent is people with non-EU roots. Candidates with origins outside the EU were also successful in the 2004 regional elections. Of the 72 Francophone members of Parliament, 17 were of non-EU origin (including 12 with origins in Morocco, 2 in Turkey, and 1 in Tunisia), and of the 17 Flemish members, one is of Moroccan origin.

PART I: RESEARCH AND LITERATURE ON MUSLIMS

1. Population

1.1 Introduction: Literature on Muslims in Belgium

The literature on Muslims in Belgium lies at the crossroads of two research strands in the Belgian social sciences (see further details below). The first strand of literature has set out to study Muslims as a specific group, while the second instead studies Muslims in terms of their ethnicity or country of origin. However, in the long run, it is likely that the renewed public interest in Muslims in European societies will tend to bring these two fields of research closer together. Anticipating this trend, this literature review has sought to draw lessons from both of these academic resources.

Research on Muslims as a specific group

This first line of research follows in the footsteps of the seminal works of Dassetto and Bastenier (1984). However, this endeavour has run into structural difficulties, notably in terms of funding and institutional support. As Dassetto recalls (forthcoming), Belgian public funding for scientific affairs has never considered it relevant to develop large-scale social science programmes in this area. Those works that have been published resulted generally from *ad hoc* funding, isolated academic research and students' monographs. As a result, the current situation in this area is characterised by many research gaps. What has been missing — and remains so — is a specific and comprehensive set of empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative, on Muslims. Indeed, even though a number of excellent publications have been produced on Muslims in Belgium, many are not supported by solid empirical material.

A second range of difficulties stems from the fact that, unlike the situation in Germany, there does not exist in Belgium any strong tradition of Islamic studies — and furthermore, unlike France, the Netherlands or Great Britain, Belgium did not have any contacts with the Muslim world during its colonial past; and nor does the country have any historic tradition of Islam, as is the case with Spain.

In attempting to chronologically describe the Belgian management of Islamic affairs, Dassetto (forthcoming) identifies three stages that can be observed. First, at the end of the 1970s and in the course of the 1980s, political actors placed an emphasis on the growing worries regarding “fundamentalism” as the most important concern. In addition, the institutional management of Islam — the famous Worship Law — was initiated in a fairly chaotic way. In this context, research did not make sense, especially if it was not aimed at pointing out the “danger of fundamentalism”.

The second stage can be identified as the breakthrough of the extreme right-wing party Vlaams Blok,⁵ following the 1987 local elections, which took advantage of such discourses, and turned Belgium (political authorities and the media) away from raising Islam-related issues. Furthermore, the Royal Commissariat for Migration Policies, RCMP (Commissariat Royal à la Politique des Immigrés, CRPI) — which in 1993 became the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Fight against Racism (CEOFOR), as may be seen in section 8 — was given important responsibilities to deal institutionally with Islam. Alongside these developments,

⁵ The extreme right-wing party, the Vlaams Blok, changed its name to Vlaams Belang in November 2004 following a conviction for its racist propaganda.

the Belgian authorities repeatedly sought to establish a representative organ with the task of “controlling” Islam.

The third stage, from the mid-1990s, can be seen as a new course. If the institutional management of Islam was gradually starting to yield results, its limits started to appear more clearly. Militant groups involved in the defence of Islam began to operate on the ground in Belgium. Tangible tensions were noted within the representative organs. Above all, a new generation was emerging, one that identified itself more and more with Islam. The demands of Muslims gave rise to new questions, and local politics were increasingly responsive to Muslims affairs. In the view of some authors, this new situation could lead to a demand for, or at least recognition of the need for, an in-depth study, able to provide the authorities and the public with real knowledge in this field.

Belgium is characterised by the coexistence of at least two academic traditions: a French one dominant in the French-speaking part of the country and an Anglo-American-oriented one in the Flemish part. The works on Islam came initially from the French-speaking academic world and were very much influenced by ongoing debates in France.⁶ It is only more recently that Flemish academics have paid attention to the dynamics at play within Muslim communities. In both cases, the effect is a tendency to import analytical categories produced elsewhere and to comment on them, rather than to generate new ideas (Dassetto (forthcoming)). The literature on Muslims in Belgium therefore remains tentative and interpretative.

Research addressing Muslims in terms of their ethnicity or country of origin

As in many other European countries, Belgium has witnessed the development of a significant body of literature dealing with immigrants and ethnic minorities. As the realities of Muslims’ experiences in Belgium have been significantly shaped by migration, they are implicitly central in this literature, and it is true to say that much has been achieved in terms of understanding the dynamics at play within immigrant and ethnic minority communities. However, this does not compensate for the lack of specific knowledge on Muslims. Although the literature on ethnicity and migration is a good proxy for studying the two largest Muslim communities in Belgium — Moroccans and Turks — it does not cover the situation of converts, as well as for the most recently arrived Muslims from Pakistan, the Balkans, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

1.2 Migration history

The first inflow into Belgium of workers originating from Muslim countries can be traced back to the 1910s, in the wake of French colonisation of the Maghreb. However, it should be emphasised that there is a significant gap in academic knowledge regarding this period (Morelli, 2001; Bare, 2004).

After World War II, Belgium launched large-scale campaigns to recruit a foreign labour force, in order to revitalise the exploitation of the Belgian coal mines. This process was later extended to the steel industry and construction sector. A bilateral agreement was first signed with Italy in 1946, and Italy remained the major labour force provider until the end of the 1950s. However, two mine accidents, in Marcinelles and Quaregnon (1956), led to increasing safety-related demands by the Italian authorities, and high dropout rates drove the Belgian

⁶ Kepel, Etienne, Roy.

Government to turn to other countries. Bilateral agreements were subsequently signed with Spain (1956) and Greece (1957). But the continued shortage of low-skilled workers in the 1960s, combined with competition for foreign workers from neighbouring countries, led Belgium to also conclude bilateral agreements with Morocco and Turkey (1964), Tunisia (1969) and Algeria (1970).

Thus, the first signs of a Muslim presence in Belgium began in a context of economic prosperity and were mainly the outcome of the last large wave of immigrants to enter the country. Although the Belgian authorities declared a halt to the waves of migration in 1974, the immigration flow remained stable, while the number of Muslims increased. Both the Government and the immigrants themselves had anticipated that their stay in Belgium would be on a short-term basis, allowing them to gain sufficient economic means to build a better future in their homelands. Contrary to these expectations, however, a settlement process gradually started (Timmerman and Van der Heyden, 2004: 2). Families started reuniting in Belgium, while single men were getting married for the first time — some authors insist on the importance of marriage as an “entry ticket” into Western Europe. In both cases, their offspring grew up on Belgian territory, some of them becoming Belgian citizens.

As well as economic migrants, Muslims — especially Moroccans, attracted by the French-speaking education system — also arrived in Belgium as students and in numerous cases, chose to settle in Belgium. Finally, there is a smaller component of people who came as asylum seekers, or remained as illegal residents.

1.3 Socio-demographic elements

Muslim population estimates

It should be stressed that the statistical data cited in this section should be treated with some caution, in that they are elaborated on the basis of extrapolation,⁷ assuming that citizens originating from predominantly Muslim countries, such as Morocco, are *de facto* Muslims. This inclusive term will also certainly bring up a recurrent debate about the different existing ways of adhesion to Islam. Furthermore, it should also be taken into account that apostasy, syncretism and detachment from orthodoxy are becoming relatively more common within the Muslim community (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003: 9).

The media and some experts provide an overall estimate of between 400,000 and 450,000 Muslims in Belgium, which represents about 4 per cent of the total population (10,509,694⁸). This figure is obtained by adding together the people in Belgium with the nationality of a predominantly Muslim country (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003: 8). However, according to the latest estimates, the Muslim community is now approaching 500,000 people. This figure can be divided into the following five different categories:

- *Nationals of predominantly Muslim countries* — estimated at 182,792 (total for foreigners and refugees; see Table 1 below).

⁷ Statistics in Belgium regarding this issue are mainly based on the Ministry of the Interior’s National Register, which registers all the people resident in Belgium. See the National Register website at <http://www.rjksregister.fgov.be>.

⁸ See National Register data, available in French, Flemish and German at http://www.rjksregister.fgov.be/rrn_fr/statistiquebelgique/bevolking_01-01-2006.pdf (accessed on 10 April 2007).



- *Naturalised Belgians* — estimated at 275,353 (total for foreigners and refugees; see Table 2 below). The number of naturalised Belgians has been increasing for the last two decades, as access to Belgian citizenship was facilitated by the enforcement of changes in the Nationality Code. These key legislative developments are making it more difficult to track the number of Muslims.
- *Refugees*.
- *Belgian-born converts* — estimated at 10,000–15,000 people. There are no official statistics on the number of converts, nor any truly reliable sources; this estimate is based on educated guesses advanced by Muslim converts.
- *Offspring of Muslim families*: although it is important to also take into account children who acquired Belgian nationality on birth, these figures are not available, as such children are immediately registered as Belgians.

The estimate of a total Muslim community of 500,000 people takes into account all five of the above categories.



Table 1: Nationals of predominantly Muslim countries (7 April 2004)

Nationality	Number of people		
	Foreigners	Refugees	Total
Morocco	81,339	6	81,450
Turkey	42,733	491	43,240
Algeria	9,024	71	9,950
Iran	5,471	334	5,050
Pakistan	4,713	74	4,870
Albania	4,516	183	4,990
Guinea	3,744	85	3,290
Tunisia	3,490	21	3,110
Kazakhstan	3,058	--	3,580
Iraq	2,947	216	3,630
Afghanistan	2,390	291	2,810
Uzbekistan	2,322	31	2,530
Bosnia	2,239	165	2,040
Syria	2,214	114	2,280
Lebanon	1,937	18	1,550
Kyrgyzstan	1,408	--	1,080
Bangladesh	1,363	6	1,690
Azerbaijan	1,287	46	1,330
Senegal	1,233	3	1,360
Sierra Leone	1,124	--	1,240
Mauritania	1,092	65	1,570
Somalia	1,091	112	1,030
Indonesia	1,051	--	1,510
Egypt	1,006	1	1,070
Total	182,792	2,333	185,125

*The table only includes countries represented by at least 1,000 people

Source: Interior Ministry⁹

⁹ Figures elaborated by the Ministry of the Interior's Foreigners Office, available at http://www.dofi.fgov.be/fr/statistieken/statistiques_etrangers/Stat_ETRANGERS.htm (accessed on 10 April 2007).

Table 2: Naturalisation of non-Belgians originating from predominantly Muslim countries (1990–2003)

Nationality	Number of naturalisations		
	Foreigners	Refugees	Total
Morocco	147,987	32	148,019
Turkey	87,393	5,889	93,282
Algeria	9,516	293	9,809
Tunisia	6,748	16	6,764
Pakistan	2,541	260	2,801
Lebanon	1,989	226	2,215
Bosnia	1,795	314	2,109
Iran	1,399	1,728	3,127
Syria	1,144	350	1,494
Albania	546	478	1,024
Guinea	300	72	372
Kazakhstan	72	12	84
Iraq	291	513	804
Afghanistan	140	468	608
Uzbekistan	17	8	25
Kyrgyzstan	9	--	9
Bangladesh	600	7	607
Azerbaijan	28	18	46
Senegal	572	74	646
Sierra Leone	104	23	127
Mauritania	87	73	160
Somalia	104	314	418
Indonesia	160	1	161
Egypt	635	7	642
Total	264,177	11,176	275,353

Source:

People with a Moroccan background (hereafter ‘Moroccans’) and a Turkish background (hereafter ‘Turks’) are the two predominant ethnic groups within the Belgian Muslim population. Together, they represent some 67 per cent of the nationals from predominantly Muslim countries in Belgium (total 185,125, see Table 1 — Moroccans, 44 per cent, and Turks 23 per cent) and 88 per cent of the naturalised citizens from predominantly Muslim countries (total 275,353, see Table 2 — Moroccans, 54 per cent, and Turks 34 per cent). Research about Muslims in Belgium has focused on these two groups, and this report will also reflect this trend.

Gender

Before analysing the gender break-up of these two groups, the age break-up should be addressed: it can be observed that there is a strong component of adolescents and young adults among the population of citizens of Turkish origin — particularly young people between the ages of 15 and 24, who comprise 42 per cent of their nationality group. This is also the case, to a lesser extent, for Moroccan citizens (30 per cent) (Eggerickx, 2004: 12). This younger generation is currently facing significant difficulties in finding a job, in contrast to the older generations who arrived in Belgium in a climate of economic growth.

While initial migration was male-dominated, today there is gender parity in the foreign population. Although the trend over the past two decades is towards the national average, overall, birth rates remain much higher than the national average within the Turkish and Moroccan female population — 3.57 and 3.03, respectively, versus a national average of 1.57 (Eggerickx, 2004: 18).

There are important variations in the “matrimonial strategies” of the Moroccans and the Turks, as was highlighted by Manço (2000). The proportion of adults who are married is higher for Turks and Moroccans than for Belgium as a whole — 87.4 per cent of Turks and 73.4 per cent of Moroccans over the age of 18 are married, as compared to 60 per cent of Belgians. For Turks, marriage is often concluded with a spouse from the homeland village, a fact that contributes to the arrival of new waves of immigrants. By contrast, Moroccans seem to adopt different strategies; the age at marriage is lower, the partner not so regularly chosen in Morocco, and intergenerational cohabitation is less frequent within this community (Manço, 2000: 31).

Settlement patterns

The first wave of post-war immigrants — who were not from predominantly Muslim countries — settled in the Walloon region. Muslims, who formed the second wave of post-war migration, are concentrated in the urban centres of Brussels and Antwerp, which are situated next to the former mining and industrial regions, such as Liège and Charleroi. This distribution is more or less balanced between the north and the south of Belgium, reflecting the process of their immigration (Manço, 2000: 27).

Moroccans are found mainly in the south and in Brussels, with over half concentrated in the Brussels conurbation¹⁰ (INS, 1999). The remainder are in Antwerp, Liège, Charleroi and Limburg. Half of the Turks have settled in the Flemish part of Belgium (Ghent and Antwerp), a quarter live in the bilingual city of Brussels (in districts such as Saint-Josse and Schaerbeek), and a quarter can be found in Wallonia (Charleroi, Mons, la Louvière and Liège).

Bousetta and Marechal highlight the difficulties inherent in this type of concentration, which can be a barrier to building social contacts with non-Muslim populations. This closeness to other Muslims can be a resource, providing mutual aid in the face of discrimination or hostility and access to proper institutions that respond to some of their special needs. However, geographical concentration can also lead to detrimental effects, such as isolation from both the generalist organisations and the non-Muslim populations (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003: 10).

1.4 Access to citizenship

In order to facilitate the integration of new generations of immigrants into the country, changes were gradually introduced into the Belgian law, making the current Belgian Nationality Code one of the most liberal in Europe (Foblets, 2004).

The Belgian legislation on nationality was harmonised in 1984–1985 and a Code of Belgian Nationality (*Code de la Nationalité belge*) was created that introduced the concept of *ius soli*,

¹⁰ Data based on nationality from the Ministry of the Interior’s National Register.



which allows people born on the territory to be granted Belgian citizenship. Further reforms in 1989 encouraged the voluntary acquisition of citizenship by lowering the cost of registering rights (the cancellation of the costs incurred in the procedure was voted for in 2000). Further changes in 1991 were aimed at facilitating access to citizenship for immigrants of the second generation and granting automatic citizenship to people of the third one.

In 2000, there was a reduction in the waiting period to become naturalised. If this flexibility has raised some opposition in Parliament, it was mainly the result of a compromise, as there was a passionate debate at that time regarding the voting rights of immigrants settled in Belgium. The idea was not to enfranchise non-Europeans alongside Europeans, but to instead facilitate their naturalisation. Finally, in 2004, the franchise for local elections was extended to non-EU citizens.

2. Identities, beliefs and religious practice

2.1 Islam in Belgium: from the invisible to the visible

When the first immigrants entered Belgium, the practice of Islam was limited to the private sphere (for example, prayer halls in industrial buildings or abandoned areas). As a consequence, the Muslim presence was not visible. When families started to reunite, and at the same time the prospects of returning to the country of origin were in question, the first Mosque Associations were set up as voluntary associations (called in Belgium non-profit associations, a.s.b.l) and classes for teaching the Qur'an started to appear. It has been suggested that the withdrawal from the labour market of a substantial part of the first generation of Muslims, due to the economic crisis or retirement, also caused a kind of return to Islam (Grignard, 1996).

Belgium officially recognised Islam in 1974, a decision that meant the granting of a special status including financial and material support (see also Part II) (Manço, 2000: 27–31). Islam became more visible after the mid-1980s. Muslims started to organise pilgrimages to Mecca, to open butcher's shops selling *halal* meat, as well as Islamic bookshops, to broadcast religious programmes and to organise conferences welcoming foreign spokesmen. The more widespread wearing of the *hijab* started to draw public attention in the streets and at school.

The first generation of Muslims in Belgium tended to isolate itself in the mosques and ethnic cafés. The second generation, socialised in Belgium, are less likely to visit mosques on a regular basis; their practice and conception of Islam differs from the traditionalist and popular one of their parents (Manço, 2000: 26). More educated, with better linguistic skills and maybe discovering the diversity of the Muslim world through the mosaic of foreigners living close to them, they seem to be building a different kind of Islamic experience. These differences are illustrated in religious and social activities organised for young people (such as language courses, sports education, and courses on the prevention of the use of drugs) that constitute a new range of modern organisations, more detached from the mosque and from specific ethnic groups (Manço, 2000: 26). The concept of “transplanted Islam”¹¹ of the Belgian sociologist Dassetto (Dassetto, 1984) is now obsolete, as new dynamics are growing.

Specific research also explored special organisations, such as the *Jamaa'at al-Tabligh*, which still plays an important role with respect to mosques, especially the Moroccan ones. Some publications also aimed at understanding the development of radical Islamism (Grignard, 1997) at the end of the 1990s and more recently (Grignard, 2003). The discovery of ‘fundamentalist’ webs in the mid-1990s, and following the terrorist attacks of 11 September, did not provoke in-depth research.¹²

There is a lack of academic knowledge regarding religious practice and beliefs among Muslims' in Belgium. The first large-scale research, undertaken in 1992–1994 by Ron Lestaeghe, *History of Migration and Social Mobility*, provides us with an overview of religious practice within the Turkish and Moroccan communities in Belgium. To the question “Do you feel that the influence of Islam is growing in your life?”, 40.6 per cent of Turks and

¹¹ The experience of Islam of Muslims on the Belgian territory was conceived as an imported form of Islam from the home country, and, as such, was reproducing the habits and way of practicing of the country of origin.

¹² It should be added that, for future literature reviews, one ongoing PhD research project targets the *Frères Musulmans* movement (Maréchal) and another is about Turkish mosques (Kenmaz).



33.5 per cent of Moroccans responded in the affirmative, whereas 14.7 per cent of Turks and 11.8 per cent of Moroccans consider that the situation has remained the same (Lestaeghe, 2000).

V. Saroglou and P. Galand also worked in this field, but their survey aimed more at giving a comparison with the Belgian population as a whole. They concluded that the religiousness of Moroccans and that of Turks are both much higher than that of Belgian people; the same occurs when considering links with traditions (V. Saroglou and P. Galand, 2002; Maréchal, 2004).

Alongside these considerations, the whole range of range of Islamic tendencies can be observed within the Moroccan and Turkish communities, and nowadays also in the Indo-Pakistani sphere — mystical groups, missionary groups, political religious movements, Islamist groups and a few terrorist factions (Dassetto, 2006; Dassetto, 2001; Dassetto, 2004).

To sum up, Islam has not been eroded by the socialisation process in Belgium, but tends rather to be reshaped, providing a way for the younger generation to dissociate itself from the Islamic practices of the first generation (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2000: 16).

2.2 The “headscarf” controversy in Belgium.

The debate regarding the wearing of the Islamic headscarf (*hijab*) in schools that took place in France in 2003–2004 also affected Belgium, and raised serious discussions, mainly in Brussels and Wallonia.¹³ This issue became one of the most urgent on the Francophone political agenda at the beginning of the year 2003–2004. The way in which it had been dealt with for the previous 15 years, mainly on pragmatic grounds, was now called into question. Some schools in Brussels decided in 2003 to forbid the registration of those students who were wearing the *hijab*, by making alterations in their internal rules. Exactly the same occurred in schools of the French-speaking Community (Wallonia and part of Brussels). These decisions provoked collective reactions of young women, who set up an action group called “Don’t touch my headscarf”.

As Bousetta points out, the configuration of the debate was different from its configuration in the 1990s. At this time, opponents of the headscarf put centre stage the family constraints undergone by young girls, and saw the wearing of the *hijab* as a symbol of the radicalisation of Islam and of male domination, which was also seen as an anachronism in the heart of the Western world. In the current debate, by contrast, it seems that academia and the media alike take into account the multiple meanings of the headscarf at the individual level, following some claims for the right to wear the *hijab*, in the name of freedom and tolerance in liberal democracies (Bousetta, 2005: 30).

Political positions regarding this issue were polarised between a rigid one, which aimed at avoiding the wearing of religious symbols according to the neutrality of the State as per the French model, and a more pragmatic approach, which argued that it could be tolerated as long as it does not represent any attempt at proselytising or an obstacle to the organisation of classes (for example during chemistry or sports). This latter position also assumed that banning the headscarf would lead to the double exclusion of young girls: as students and as women (Bousetta, 2005: 31). To date, due to divergences between the Flemish and the

¹³ Flemish schools on the whole take a more pragmatic position in this regard (Bousetta, 2005: 30).



Francophone populations, no decisions have been taken regarding this question of the wearing of the *hijab* in schools, a “political gap” that makes every school *de facto* responsible for its own policy: some schools choose to prohibit the wearing of the *hijab*, whereas others continue to welcome veiled students.

In employment situations, there is no specific legal basis regulating the matter. Up until now, the public sector has adopted a restrictive attitude, which will lead in the future to discrimination cases before administrative courts. The situation in the private sector is more diverse. A recent study showed that Muslim women wearing the *hijab* find that it significantly affects their career development (Ben Mohamed, 2006)

2.3 Ethnicity and social participation

Ural Manço highlighted the differences existing within the Muslim communities in Belgium, in particular with regard to the relationships that Moroccans and Turks have established with their social environment. It seems that the Turks are adopting a more withdrawn attitude than the Moroccans. This can be explained by a number of different factors. The Turks maintain stronger links with their ethnic-familial traditions and also with their mother tongue. The latter is possible as they come from a country in which there is a certain linguistic homogeneity. Moroccans, by contrast, are divided between Berber dialects and Arabic, but they are also drawn together with the French-speaking part of Europe by their colonial past (Manço, 2000: 29–30). However, the degree of membership of associations is most relevant in this context, with the Turkish group more organised than the Moroccan one. Ethnic Turkish organisations reach out to their community in a stronger manner. On the whole, Moroccans seem to adopt a more individualistic mode of behaviour. Some relevant data are provided by a survey by Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw, which analysed, among other elements, the participation of Turks and Moroccans in ethnic and cross-ethnic (i.e. multi-ethnic) organisations in Brussels. The results are summarised in Table 1 below, and can serve to assert that Turks are much more active at a collective (and ethnic) level.

Table 3: Participation of Turks and Moroccans in ethnic and cross-ethnic organisations (2004)

	Participation in ethnic and cross-ethnic organisations (%)	
	Turks	Moroccans
Cross-ethnic participation (Belgian or mixed organisation)	60	17
Ethnic participation (Turkish or Moroccan organisations)	35	10
Total participation	68	19

Source: Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2004

To sum up, Manço assumes that the integration patterns of these two nationality groups are different. The Turks are prone to develop a model closer to the Anglo-Saxon model of ethnic minorities than are the Moroccans, who seem to stick to the French individual model of integration and adapt to their environment more easily and more rapidly (Manço, 2000: 30).

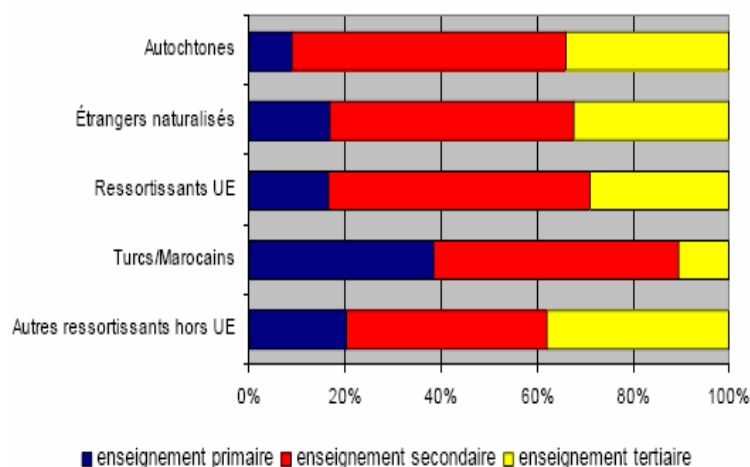
3. Education

3.1 Education attainment levels

The level of education of Muslims in Belgium shows a clear difference in comparison to the *autochthonous* (i.e. native Belgian) population (see Table 4 below), something that forecasts the future of these groups.

A recent INS (National Institute of Statistics) survey (2004) provides an overview of the educational choices of the current population of working age. As shown in Chart 1 below, the educational attainment of working age Moroccan and Turks (i.e. those who, at the time of the survey, retained their nationality of origin) is much lower than of the native Belgians. In fact, here their patterns of educational attainment are inversely proportional to that of the native Belgian population.

Chart 1: Average educational attainment level for of the active population — breakdown by nationality by educational attainment (2002–2003)



Source: Direction Générale Statistique et Information Economique.¹⁴

NB. Exact figures are not presently available, separately from the chart.

*Horizontal axis: Primary education, Secondary education, Higher Education;

**Vertical axis (from the top): Autochthonous (native Belgian) population, naturalised foreigners, EU citizens, Moroccans/Turks, other non-EU citizens.

A large-scale research by the OECD in 2001 (PISA) analysed the test results¹⁵ of students in Belgian French-speaking classes. It highlighted the low attainment of children of the first generation of immigrants (i.e. children who were born in Belgium but whose parents were not) and of *allochthonous* children (i.e. those born outside Belgium), in comparison to the *autochthonous* (or native Belgian) children (and it should be noted that children of the second generation of immigrants form part of this group). Surprisingly, the differences in results are

¹⁴ Direction Générale Statistique et Information Economique (Statistics Belgium), Statistical survey 111, official disaggregated data, *Allochtones et autochtones en Belgique, 2004*. The figures are taken from the INS (National Institute of Statistics) *Labour Force Survey 2002–2003*. Statistics Belgium is the main official statistical institution in Belgium.

¹⁵ The PISA assessment framework used 35 items, varying in difficulty and covering wide ranges of education branches.



the most sensitive between the native Belgian children and the children of the first generation, although these latter were born, grew up, and were educated, in Belgium. One oddity of the French-speaking Community is that there is almost no difference between the results of *allochthonous* and first-generation children, contrary to what happens in France, Germany, Switzerland or Luxembourg (Lafontaine, 2001).

Research by Ural Manço and Altay Manço into the schooling of Moroccans and Turks analyses both the choices of Muslims and their success rates. At the high school level, Muslims seem to be concentrating in the technical and professional education system — two channels that have been offering fewer professional perspectives for the past three decades. Of all Belgian school leavers, 60 per cent choose the “general channel” as a route into university, however this falls to 47 per cent and 42.5 per cent for Moroccans and Turks, respectively. The technical and professionals branches welcome 38 per cent of Belgian students, as compared to 47 per cent and 52 per cent of Moroccans and Turks, respectively.

Most people in Belgium complete high school by the age of 18. Thus, the number of young people aged 18 or over who are still at high school can be used as one indicator of success in the education system.. Here, a significant difference can be observed between the Belgian and Moroccan/Turkish populations: 30 per cent of native Belgian young women are still present, as compared to 68 per cent of Moroccans and 75 per cent of Turks in this category. The same can be detected within the male population: 36 per cent, versus 59 per cent and 69 per cent. The difference in the situation of Moroccans compared to Turks deserves special attention. It seems that different strategies towards education exist in this group; Moroccans appear to be more involved in the school system than Turks are. To the mind of the researchers, this behaviour may be a key element of their more individual integration strategy. While they have similar family migration backgrounds as Turks, Moroccans stand in an intermediary position between Turks and the general population.

Some new trends have also been identified by Ural and Altay Manço. First, pre-school experience has increased in importance in the course of the last few years. For instance, 80 per cent of Turkish children are now attending pre-primary classes (these are free and for children between 3 and 6 years old on average). Second, Moroccan and Turkish children take a growing interest in higher education and its opportunities. The Moroccans remain in this regard more numerous than the Turks (10 per cent against 5 per cent, respectively, choosing to pursue their studies). One oddity is that the medical career attracts twice as many Turks as Moroccans. On the whole, management studies are the first choice among Muslims, perhaps because these skills are more highly valued within the community, since they lead to commercial or professional careers (Manço, 2000: 49).

The difference in educational patterns between the general Belgian population and the Moroccan and Turkish groups can be explained by various factors, such as the socio-cultural level of the families (that is to say, their mainly rural origin), the language abilities both of the parents and of the children, economic precariousness and lack of knowledge *vis-à-vis* the education system (Manço, 2000). Manço uses a concept called “cultural and linguistic break” between school and family to explain the difficulties faced by these populations. The school becomes the area where socio-economic differences are transformed into inequalities that finally lead to exclusion. According to Verhoeven, the cultural origins of students are perceived by teachers as a major obstacle to satisfactory schooling (Verhoeven, 2002). Alongside these considerations, Manço emphasised another interesting aspect through a



concrete example. In the course of one week a Turkish child has to incorporate four different spheres: the public school, or Belgian sphere; the language and culture of origin classes on Wednesday afternoon; Qur'an classes on Saturday; finally the family, which articulates its own values. This can lead to some confusion for the child because of the different models that each of them proposes.

Morelli also insists on the family background to explain difficulties in school trajectory, but does not refer to the specific religion or culture of immigrant families. She points to the working-class background of the parents as an explanatory factor. She highlights research on children of Italian immigrants in Brussels, which provided similar conclusions about concentration in technical and professional channels and lower success rates (Lucchini, 1990). While expounding her viewpoint, she bears in mind the comparison made by Manço, between an immigrant child's school trajectory and that of a child originating from a disadvantaged social environment, both paths being equal according to her. She concludes that bilingualism and diversity are not considered and valued similarly by international and private schools and French "lycées", on the one hand, and mainstream schools, on the other hand, the former being more open to diversity for economic reasons (Morelli, 2000: 59).

It is important, however, not to focus exclusively on the background of Muslim families, but to also consider the ability of the Belgian school system to manage ethnic diversity and value multiculturalism. For example, from the moment when they arrive at primary school, a large proportion of the children of Muslim immigrants are concentrated in schools experiencing difficulties, in working-class neighbourhoods. In most cases, this constitutes the first steps towards marginalisation and difficulties in education. If concrete actions had been undertaken by the Belgian authorities to address these problems, then the current levels of underperformance in education may have been avoided. For example, the so-called "priority education areas" (Zone d'Education Prioritaire, ZEP) experiment in Brussels, which was based on a policy of positive action and providing more economic means to institutions located in underprivileged zones, caused a greater stigmatisation towards these schools, although there was an improvement in the school's success rates (Ouali, 2004).

A different approach has been adopted by the Flemish Community, which emphasised the importance of trying to diminish the number of *allochthonous* students, or students with a foreign background, in each class and school. Manço assumes, however, that the concentration problem is not the cause of recurrent failures. He points rather to the incapacity of the education system to value multiculturalism (Manço, 2000: 48). This would mean that the intercultural education concept and its measures — including "language and culture of origin" classes (LCO) or intercultural training for professors — have been improving over the last decades, but so far this has not had sufficient results.

3.2 Islamic classes for Muslim students at Belgian schools.

Teaching on Islam has been the topic of very little research, but has been a central point in many public debates. The main questions are about the content of subjects to be taught, the place of religion courses in school (Jamouchi, 2003) and the profile of teachers of Islam. The debate on religious symbols at school, in this case the headscarf controversy (see section 2) also gave rise to publications (Bouselmati, 2002) and touches roughly upon the frontier between freedom and public regulation (Bero, 1996).



A volume recently edited by the King Baudoin Foundation (Fondation Roi Baudoin) (El Battuiti and Kanmaz, 2004) tries to summarise the main debates and the pending questions. These are briefly described below:

Since 1999, teaching on Islam has been within the competence of the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique¹⁶ (Muslim Executive of Belgium), which was elected in 1998 and recognised as the main representative body of Muslims in Belgium (see Part II). For example, teachers of Islam in schools are nominated by this organisation, after gaining the approval of the French-speaking Community (and part of the training of these teachers depends on this approval). The average number of students attending these classes has continually increased since they were first set up in 1977. Within the school curriculum, classes are divided according to the student's religion for two hours per week. Nowadays, the French-speaking part of Belgium estimates the number of these students at 34,283 (up from 7,055 in 1977) — including 20,983 students concentrated in Brussels — and the numbers of teachers of Islam at 400. The Flemish part, on the other hand, accounts for 20,000 students (490 in 1977) and 297 teachers (El Battui and Kanmaz, 2004).

The origin and profile of these teachers may be classified in three different groups, which also correspond to the different teaching methods (El Battui and Kanmaz, 2004). The first is made up of Turkish or Moroccan teachers who formed part of the first waves of migration, and who were initially selected and proposed by their own country to the Islamic and Cultural Centre, the local branch of the World Islamic League (WIL). Battui and Kanmaz criticised the fact that these teachers have neither *certified* competences nor sufficient knowledge of the Belgian context, and their linguistic skills, especially their French writing level, appears to be at times insufficient. This group of teachers only had to pass a kind of aptitude exam (Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique) to regularise their situation. As Belgium no longer allows immigration by foreign workers, current policies instead aim at encouraging Belgians, or the children of immigrants, to choose this profession.

The second group is constituted of people who studied in Belgium in a variety of areas, from the sciences to the arts and humanities, and have committed themselves to living in Belgium. Individuals in this group have better language skills and a better understanding of the social context. It has also been observed that they create and encourage debates within the school with students coming from other philosophical or religious backgrounds, through inter-faith dialogues.

Finally, the third group is made up of native Belgians (non-Muslims or converts), or people from the second generation of immigrants. This group remains a minority but, from the authors' point of view, is the one that is expected to build a local — that is to say, a new and emergent — Islam, one that takes into account Belgian specificities.

The issue of teachers of Islam is no longer the focus of public debates. Nevertheless, some questions remain unsolved, particularly with regard to the curriculum and the methods of inspection. The setting up of a concrete education programme (a set of subjects to be discussed and studied), which, even if not homogeneous, would allow controls and counter flourishing stereotypes about Islam, clearly depends on the nomination of inspectors, who

¹⁶ Before 1999, the Centre Islamique et Culturel (Islamic and Cultural Centre), based in Brussels, was responsible for this issue.



only started to work a year ago. In addition, graduates are beginning to emerge from the three-year course for teaching Islam of the Haute Ecole Erasme of Brussels. For this to yield results, however, it must address some problems of dropping out, caused by students facing difficulties during their training period with regard to the wearing of the headscarf. Finally, the obligation to organise Islamic classes, if one family demands it, does not apply to Catholic schools, which can decide themselves whether to provide such a class. This has become an issues in schools located in areas where there is a significant Muslim presence. The ethos of such schools remains inspired by a Catholic conception of education, and in the wake of these developments some difficulties started to be raised and questioned by the ecclesiastic authorities (El Battuiti and Kanmaz, 2004).

4. Employment

4.1 Employment, unemployment and stratification.

Ural Manço has described the everyday situation of Muslims regarding employment as precarious and disadvantaged. Muslim men and women have low skill levels and are, on the whole, working class. They work in poor conditions for low wages in the sectors most sensitive to the current economic fluctuations (such as seasonal jobs) and structural economic alterations (due to globalisation). Furthermore, they seem to be the victims of discrimination (see surveys detailed below), discarded easier than those with similar qualification levels from the *autochthonous* population. It therefore comes as no surprise that the unemployment rate is much higher within these populations than it is for the *autochthonous* one (Manço, 2001: 1).

A statistical survey carried out in 2003 provides a recent overview of the unemployment rate within the Turkish and Moroccan populations. The alarming situation described by Manço is translated into figures in Table 4, below. The employment rate¹⁷ for Moroccans and Turks is three times lower than that of the majority of Belgian population), with only a quarter of the working-age population in paid work. On average, a lower activity rate¹⁸ for Moroccans and Turks can be observed, especially for women. This can be explained by various factors, such as family structures, lower educational attainments and linguistic difficulties. However, it is also important to emphasise the different patterns between the first and second generations of Muslim women, with the latter increasingly likely to look for a job (Manço, 2000: 33).

**Table 4: Employment and activity rates
— breakdown by nationality and gender (2002–2003)**

	Average activity rate (%)			Average employment rate (%)		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Belgians	73	58	66	69	54	61
Naturalised Belgian citizens	72	50	61	61	42	51
(non-Belgian) EU citizens	74	52	64	67	45	56
Moroccans/Turks (i.e. who are not Belgian citizens, but have the right to work in Belgium)	64	21	42	41	11	26
Other non-EU citizens	68	40	54	59	28	38

Source: INS¹⁹

The figures provided by Martens and Verhoeven on ethnic minorities in the Belgian labour market provide an interesting breakdown by region. They show that unemployment rates of Muslims (here meaning Moroccans and Turks) settled in the Flemish part (at 27.4 per cent) is five to six times the average for the region (5 per cent). By contrast, the unemployment rate for Muslims in the Brussels and Walloon area, while still high, is only twice the regional average (Martens and Verhoeven, 2004), taking into account the fact that unemployment is higher in the French-speaking regions than in the Dutch-speaking ones.

¹⁷ The employment rate refers to the proportion of persons who are employed, as compared to the total population aged between 18 and 65, who are legally able to work.

¹⁸ The activity rate refers to the proportion of people who have a job or are unemployed, as compared to the population aged between 18 and 65, who are legally able to work.

¹⁹ INS, *Labour Force Survey 2002–2003*.

Martens and Verhoeven observe that in the Flemish part of Belgium, Moroccans and Turks are concentrated in the so-called services to companies (i.e. temporary work and washing services), and in the construction and industrial sectors. Although the same can also be observed in Brussels, the authors note the absence of Turks and Moroccans in the security forces (police, army, and so on) and the education sectors. The data regarding Wallonia are not sufficient to give an exact picture of the overall situation.

Manço highlighted the differences within Muslim communities, with the Moroccans being more present in the tertiary sector, whereas the Turks tend to concentrate in the industrial and construction sectors. This can be explained by the concentration of the Moroccan population in the main areas for the services sector, such as Antwerp and Brussels. With regard to the female population, it has to be said that if the public sector (such as public administration) absorb more than the half of working Belgian women, Muslims are proportionally still more present in the private sector. Beyond these differences, the “worker status” remains generalised within the Muslim populations, as shown in Table 5, below.

Table 5: Distribution of the Belgian and ethnic minority population by professional status (2002–2003)

Professional status	Average distribution (%) — breakdown by nationality/ethnicity				
	Belgians	Naturalised Belgians	Non-Belgian EU citizens	Moroccans and Turks	Other Non-EU citizens
Worker	26	33	35	74	40
Employee	33	31	35	12	30
Public function (i.e. employee in the public sector)	26	19	13	6	13
Independent	13	15	15	7	14
Others	2	2	2	1	3

Source: INS²⁰

4.2 Barriers to work

There is no single cause for the overall situation described above. Below are summarised the major factors that research literature has placed centre stage, concerning the issue of socio-economic inclusion.

During the 1970s, Muslims were in low-skilled employment, in the heavy industry and mining sector. Since then, the demand for low-skilled jobs in the primary sector (agriculture and mines) has been decreasing. The reduction of low-skilled industrial employment is another trend that characterises the Belgian economy, which is a result of globalisation, technical progress and new management techniques. At the same time, the demand by employers for skilled workers has increased, alongside the generalisation of higher education, also tending to devalue diplomas. Subsequently, these structural changes in the Belgian economy have made it more difficult for Muslims to find a job, in the light of their lower levels of education and choices in education/training (see section 3).

²⁰ INS, *Labour Force Survey 2002–2003*.



Language skills have a particular significance in the Belgian context. The requirement for bilingualism (more specifically, fluency in both French and Dutch), especially in Brussels, constitutes an added difficulty for those whose mother tongue is neither language when applying for a job. The case of Brussels deserves special attention, as it is home to a significant Muslim population and generates many job applicants. As Bousetta emphasises, Brussels has an important pool of vacant jobs that are out of reach for the ethnic minorities (Bousetta, 2005: 172). The Belgian capital is the capital of European institutions and the headquarters of many large foreign private companies. It is, at the same time, a place where bilingualism shapes the everyday reality of Belgian employees

Another barrier to work is the poor networking or “social capital” of these populations. They can scarcely use this as a “job-finding method”, a strategy used more systematically by native Belgians.

A last parameter — but not the least — that should be taken into account is the challenging question of discrimination on ethnic grounds. This appears to be more than relevant in this debate, as it seems that, independently from levels of education, the unemployment rate remains higher in the case of both Moroccans and Turks, and does not decrease when educational attainments increase, as shown by Manço (Manço, 2000: 34).

Research regarding discrimination against applicants with a foreign background reveals alarming results in the case of Moroccans and Turks. The 1998 large-scale survey by the International Labour Organization (ILO),²¹ carried out in various European countries, including Belgium, constituted a breakthrough in this matter. The conclusions provided by this survey quantified the discriminatory behaviours of employers, and also showed the results by region. In particular, the survey found a “net discrimination rate” (i.e. the proportion of instances of differential treatment for the minority population minus that for the majority population) of 39.2 per cent in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), 34.1 per cent in Brussels and 27 per cent in Wallonia. This research, undertaken by Nayer, Arriijn and Feld, also showed that discrimination was preceded by differentiated behaviour on the part of the employers towards Moroccans and Turks in Brussels and Flanders. Concretely, these behaviours are characterised by changes in the selection process and false declarations, especially with regard to the linguistic requisites and when declaring that the application form will be kept in recruitment reserves. Although the ILO research pointed out certain work categories as giving rise to discrimination — in this case especially jobs involving visual contact — the authors could not prove this in all parts of Belgium. It seems, nevertheless, to be a greater problem in Flanders (Nayer, Arriijn and Feld; ILO 1998).

Manço and Brion also insisted on another cause that could lead to some immigrants being excluded from the Belgian labour market, and so increase their marginalisation. The growing flexibility of the labour market due to increasing economic competition has led to the expansion of what Manço calls “atypical work”, such as, for example, temporary work, low paid practices for young workers, and work financed by the public authorities. All kinds of fragile work contracts are flourishing for low-skilled workers, and Muslims, and especially Muslim women, are likely to be found in these ranks. The fragmented path they follow tends

²¹ ILO, *Discrimination in Access to Employment on Grounds of Foreign Origin: the Case of Belgium*, by Peter Arrun ILSA., Serge Feld ULg (Gresp) and André Nayer ULB (CeRP) available at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/papers/imp23/> (accessed on 10 April 2007).



to keep them in a situation of continual job insecurity and precariousness, as it is difficult for people alternating between periods of unemployment and temporary jobs to secure a long-term contract. Coupled with the phenomenon of discrimination, these trends seem to accelerate labour-market exclusion, which in turn could lead to the development of informal activities and to what Manço calls the “normalisation of marginality” (Manço, 2001).

5. Housing

Research comparing the housing conditions of the general Belgian population to that of Moroccans and Turks has placed the emphasis on a number of generic phenomena related to the housing market, which have affected the poor immigrant communities of which Moroccans and Turks form a significant part. These phenomena are reviewed below. However, the specialist works of authors like Kesteloot (2006) also indicate that the two main Muslim groups once again implement different strategies in this area, which are clearly connected to their different integration strategies.

Immigrants in general, and Muslims in particular, are more likely than native Belgians to live in segregated and disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Turks, however, have a higher propensity to live in segregated neighbourhoods in all three regions (Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia). In the case of Moroccans, social mobility usually results in attempts at leaving disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Immigrants are overrepresented in the cheapest rented sector and this is also the case for Muslims in general. However, rising property prices in big cities, especially in Brussels, has led to the development of what Kesteloot (2006) calls the phenomenon of “necessity buying”, which consists of buying formerly rented low-quality housing, in order to remain in the neighbourhood. This is particularly the case for the Turkish community in the Brussels boroughs of Schaerbeek and Saint Josse (also called “Little Anatolia”). Moroccans have responded to the pressure on the housing market by moving in large numbers to the social housing rented sector. Generally speaking, the level of home ownership is higher among Turks (65 per cent) than Moroccans (30 per cent) (Kesteloot, 2006), but this is no indication of housing quality. 64 per cent of Moroccans live in housing built before 1946 and more than 50 per cent live in what the National Institute of Statistics calls “low-quality housing” (Bousetta 2001).

It is important to note that the question of the interest rate taken out on mortgages may play a role in the housing strategies of Muslims, and probably even more so for Moroccans. The position of Islam *vis à vis* the charging of interest and usury may be another factor to take into consideration in understanding the housing conditions of Muslims. However, this has not been the subject of research in Belgium.



6. Health

The question of religious identity has not been raised systematically in the medical sector. The position of Muslims in the health care services has not been a topic for public debate until recently.

Research in this area was commissioned in 2004 by the King Baudouin Foundation, within the framework of an overall programme of research and dialogue on Muslims in Belgium and has been summarised in a report by C. Vassart (Vassart, 2004). The study found that, on the whole, official health structures remain reluctant to have an open debate regarding this issue, for three possible reasons. First, the Hippocratic Oath does not allow doctors to distinguish between their patients on the grounds of race or religion. Furthermore, it seems that previous debates on the issues of the headscarf led health care professionals to think that the issue could become more and more bitter. Finally, the current international political situation and the subsequent difficulties with regard to the crisis surrounding issues of identities, which had a knock-on effect on Belgian society, do not provide an adequate and calm environment to raise this question.

Despite these considerations, it appears that health care professionals have noted the growing demands based on religious prohibitions or practices, not necessarily coming from immigrants just arrived on the European continent, but more frequently from persons of the second and third generations of immigrants or, interestingly, from converts. On the whole, the opportunity to be advised by an imam is requested more often, and alongside this there are more demands to be treated by a same-sex doctor or to make use of adapted areas for funeral rituals.

Louis Ferrand (general practitioner and member of the CUMG (Centre universitaire de Médecine Générale) of the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL), Antwerp) and Philippe Hermans (sociologist and anthropologist at the UCL) highlighted and summarised the different pathologies that are more prevalent in Muslims (Moroccans and Turks) in Belgium, and that are closely linked to their socio-economic position, as well as diseases consequent upon their willingness to integrate into the Belgian society (see below, somatisation process).

- *Imported pathologies* comprise those diseases brought into Belgium from the home country, such as malaria and cholera. These cases remain limited.
- *Acquired pathologies* mainly stem from poor living conditions, such as dilapidated houses and harsh labour conditions, which lead to fragile health. Health care professionals noted that children more frequently suffer from respiratory diseases, and that domestic accidents are much more common within the female population.
- *Adaptation pathologies* come from stress or strong worries linked to the integration difficulties, or to the promises that Muslims have made to their families still living in Morocco or Turkey (usually to send back remittances) and that they swear to keep. Ulcer cases are five times more common within these populations, a problem made worse by the higher rates of tobacco addiction.

Other specific symptoms or behaviour of Muslim women or children should be added to this list:

- *Mortality rates around birth* are much higher: 17.7 per 1,000 for Turkish children and 14.4 per 1,000 for Moroccan children, against a national average rate of 10.7 per 1,000



for Belgian children. This can be explained by the fact that these populations seem to pay less medical attention to pregnancy, and as a consequence tend to attend pre-natal consultations later.

- With regard to the identification and treatment of *genital problems* or diseases, there exists a strong reluctance to undergo the types of medical examinations that these imply.
- The *sedentary habits* of women staying all day long at home make them put on weight to an alarming medical degree, especially in the case of women coming from the countryside, who are used to doing physical work (in the agricultural sector).
- There are also *specific medical demands* based on cultural or religious practices, which doctors or “family planners” have to face. For instance, virginity certificates or hymen reconstruction are existing demands among young Muslim women.
- *Type 2 diabetes* is also more common and represents a problem indirectly linked to religious beliefs. Indeed, some patients tell the story that Prophet Muhammad would have qualified sugar as a “source of wisdom and strength”. The point is that sugar consumption appears to be too high in the case of Muslim children.
- Finally, a *somatisation process* (i.e. physical troubles caused by psychological disturbances) is sometimes induced by the socio-cultural system of marriage and constitutes, according to Vassart, a kind of unconscious resistance.

After checking the more current diseases within the Muslim community, the authors analyse the ways in which Muslims, and their specific demands, are treated by health care professionals (doctors) and hospitals in Belgium. They emphasise the variety of perceptions and attitudes towards these populations.

The progressive arrival of Muslim doctors seems to have facilitated the transmission of information and knowledge about the specificities of Islam in the medical framework, but it should be noted that Moroccans and Turks do not necessarily use their services, a behaviour that could express a certain willingness to not lock themselves into a community health care system (Vassart, 2004).

Some generalist doctors consider that adopting differentiated attitudes towards Muslims is delicate. As an example, issuing a certificate for a Muslim schoolgirl in order to allow her not to participate in swimming classes during the Ramadan period (to prevent water entering the skin) is not considered acceptable, as Ramadan is not a disease. The trend among these doctors is to strictly enforce the norms of the Deontology Code (Code de Déontologie Médicale de l’Ordre Belge des Médecins). With regard to physical examinations, especially for women, the alternative to husbands’ refusals is to consult another practitioner or look for a female doctor, depending on the case (Vassart, 2004).

Other doctors, mainly those living in areas where there is a strong Muslim presence, react differently, supposing that the therapeutic relation cannot be broken, and may be strengthened, through minor adaptations. For example, they try to gradually let Muslims accept physical contact through special gestures and communication, allowing them to reach a certain degree of confidence between the patient and the doctor. However, the one preoccupation of maintaining the therapeutic relation is clearly illustrated by the fact that some of them, without previous examination, issue virginity certificates, in this case, “illicit certificates”. They suppose that the main consequence of a refusal would only drive young women to look for a more accommodating practitioner.



Whether Muslims prefer to consult a doctor coming from their own community also depends on the specific problems that are raised. For instance, in the case of an extra-marital pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease (STD), the trend is to consult a non-Muslim practitioner, for fear that the professional secret would not be respected by a person from their own socio-cultural environment. Regarding everyday problems, they tend to consult doctors from their own community, especially because these doctors usually adopt more flexible attitudes towards demands such as “certificates”, since they may be under community pressure.

However, on the whole, there exists a growing trend that consists of being counselled by an imam. Other behaviour highlighted by professionals is that Muslims regularly consult doctors of the same cultural roots before consulting “Belgians”, in order to get different advice. This constitutes a difficulty for the ongoing establishment of the Individual Medical Register promoted by Belgian authorities, which supposes each person to be “domiciled” in one consulting room (i.e. registered with one GP) (Vassart, 2004).

In hospitals, a major complaint of Muslims relates to their specific food and dietary needs. The option to respect some Islamic rules, such as the prohibition on eating pork, is not systematically available, although some hospitals do provide for Jewish dietary requirements. It remains difficult, however, to refer to these, owing both to the international conflicts and, more specifically, to antagonisms between Arabs and Jews in Belgium, which have for instance already led to some tensions in Antwerp. Indeed, the situation varies from one hospital to another. The Hospital St Pierre, Brussels, which welcomes many Muslims, opted for a general policy of providing food free of pork, whereas others choose to replace meat by eggs or fish, or do not provide Muslims with this possibility at all, so that there are no meat-free options. On the whole, these institutions are criticised by Muslims on the ground that they do not respect Islamic specificities, contrary to the situation for other confessions.

The fact that many hospitals forget to provide information to patients on the availability of an Islamic counsellor²² is also creating certain tensions, alongside the lack of areas adapted for funeral rituals and worship. If some tensions occur at times, the authors insisted on the fact that, on the whole, most Belgian hospitals do not have to deal with major problems. For example, in the St Pierre, Brussels, Hospital, the intercultural mediator only pointed out two cases involving a woman who did not want to enter the delivery room because the doctor was a man. These intercultural mediators assume that such problems originate, in most cases, from communication difficulties rather than from real cultural clashes. On the other hand, in areas such as Antwerp, they noted some cases where religious practices conflicted with biomedical requisites, such as, for example, automatic refusals when a Muslim woman is likely to be treated by a male doctor. These divergences have, at times, led to verbal and physical aggression; the same occurs with regard to specific care such as treatment involving contact with the genitals, especially in the case of a virgin girl (“better to die than accept that”) (Vassart, 2004).

With regard to existing strategies of response, it should be firstly stressed that Belgian legislation (Code de Déontologie Médicale de l’Ordre Belge des Médecins) on patients’ rights does not allude to religious particularities. In fact, the law adopts a more neutral position, by stipulating that no discrimination can be accepted towards patients. Legal articles only refer to

²² The Islamic counsellor is seconded by the Muslim Executive and paid by the State.



the right to be informed in an understandable language, but translation into languages other than the two main national languages (French and Dutch) is not available.²³ The law also does not take into account cultural and religious diversity. There seems to be only one example, regarding the headscarf: the Hospitals Group of Brussels (IRIS) made an alteration in ITS rules stipulating “that no exterior religious or philosophical symbol can be shown by the staff”, which is to say that nurses and other medical staff cannot wear a *hijab*.

The steps that have been taken so far regarding all these comments and complaints by Muslims are judged in the report to be half measures. Regarding nutrition, the decision to offer pork-free diets is still taken at the level of each hospital, which means that it depends on the social sensibility of staff, or on a marketing strategy, if the hospital welcomes many Muslims. Comprehensive answers to these demands are still missing, in contrast to the Jewish Associations that provide hospitals with *kosher* meat. The norms for assigning a practitioner to any patient are an internal management element, so is likely to be treated in an incoherent way. However, certain situations drive hospitals to write norms for their staff, for instance to explain clearly the global Islamic procedure to lay out a Muslim corpse. Before, families were seriously offended when seeing that the dead family member had already, and incorrectly, been washed.

Authors such as Manço suggest that “conscientious objection” could be introduced into health care services, as is already the case in the military, and in the fields of psychology and justice, and that this could be helpful when patients or doctors are facing situations that conflict with their own values.

The development of intercultural mediation in the main health care fields responded to communication and translation needs. In a project that began in Antwerp in 1970 was then extended to the entire Flemish territory, 50 Moroccan and Turkish women were given special training, although the Flemish authorities appeared later to be keener to finance social assistants or nursing staff with Moroccan or Turkish roots. This type of brokerage was launched in the hospitals of the Flemish- and French-speaking parts of Belgium in 1997, but the function still aims more at translating and giving support in administrative tasks. There may be a need to make this brokerage evolve towards a formal mediating function, which could help professionals and patients to improve their mutual comprehension.

²³ This can be explained by the special bilingual environment of Brussels, which creates a sensitive climate around languages issues.

7. Policing and security

Questions of policing and security attracted academic attention following the urban unrests in Brussels (in 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1997).

Starting from an anthropological perspective and using participant observation, Andrea Rea (2001) provides one of the finest analyses of the reaction of young people of Moroccan origin to policing. He analyses a specific type of reaction, although exceptional, of young people from the second generation to prejudice and discrimination — the “race riot”. The focus is on the 1991 events in the municipality of Forest. He introduces a number of concepts developed by American scholars, such as the notion of racialisation, which helps to identify the resulting context of a process of social change marked by symbolic exclusion, domination and inferiorisation (Rea, 2001: 24). Racialisation is the pre-condition for the outbreak of this reactive violence, which is, however, only unleashed when the rioters are collectively and individually experiencing racial discrimination (at school, at work and from the police and justice authorities), on the one hand, and social disadvantage, on the other. Drawing on social movement literature, he further argues that the opening of the political opportunity structure at the turn of the 1990s made possible this confrontational repertoire of collective action. In other words, the confrontation between the young people and the police happened in the context of a reaction to institutional and political racism in Brussels, and not the other way around.

Rea shows how daily confrontation with the police and the justice system created a deep-seated feeling of injustice among his respondents. Introducing Garfinkel’s concept of “ceremonies of degradation”, he shed light on one aspect of a broader theme of central importance in Brussels and other large cities — criminalisation. This is a theme that has attracted many passionate debates, after the former Minister of Justice, Marc Verwilgen, commissioned research on the link between ethnicity and criminality in 1999. The works of Fabienne Brion, to which Rea refers several times in his own study, have most systematically explored this question. Analysing criminal statistics, Brion observed that non-Belgians are statistically overrepresented at every layer of the repressive system. Moroccans and Turks (i.e. non Belgians, not taking into account those who have naturalised) make up 15.5 per cent of all detainees in Belgium (see Table 5). Carefully deconstructing the strategies of the actors in the system, she demonstrated that the overrepresentation of foreigners results both from their overexposure to specific crimes and, more generally, from differential treatment by police and justice authorities (Brion, 2001).



Table 5: Overrepresentation of foreign detainees in Belgian prisons (1998)

Nationality	Number of detainees		Population in Belgium		Detention rate per 100,000	Index of overrepresentation*
	Total	%	Total	%		
Belgians	5,342	62.5	9,289,144	91.1	58	--
Moroccans	1,091	12.8	132,831	1.3	821	14.2
Turks	269	3.1	73,818	0.7	364	6.3
Italians	304	3.6	205,782	2.0	148	2.6
French	228	2.7	103,563	1.0	220	3.8
Other	1,316	15.4	387,126	3.8	340	5.9
Total	8,550	100.0	1,0192,264	100.0	84	--

* Index of overrepresentation: Rate of detention of foreigners/Rate of detention of nationals

Source: Brion 2001

8. Citizenship and Participation

8.1 Enfranchisement of non-EU citizens: a passionate debate.

The question of the enfranchisement of non-EU citizens raised a passionate debate due to the Flemish/French-speaking cleavage, which deepened in the mid-1990s. The Constitution was changed in 1998 in order to allow third-country nationals with residency rights to be granted voting rights at local level from 2001 onwards, but these changes were only to be enforced in 2004, after a first failed attempt in 2001. Generally speaking, French-speaking people favoured enfranchisement of foreign residents, while the Flemish delayed any policy changes. In their discourse, Flemish actors stressed the fear of a breakthrough of the extreme right-wing party, the Vlaams Blok. However, the majority of Belgian authors put centre stage another explanation, related to the political representation of French-speaking people in the Flemish periphery of Brussels, and that of the Flemish within the regional and municipal institutions of Brussels, which is to say, another aspect of the power struggle between the two linguistic Communities. In fact, both sides of the country assumed that the votes of non-EU citizens would straight away benefit the French-speaking political actors, a scenario that drew the attention of the latter and let the Flemish forecast a decreasing electoral influence.²⁴ Whether these considerations proved to be true or false is not the central point of this paper.

In conclusion, it has to be said that alongside this debate about enfranchisement, and the consequences that such a process can have on the make-up of the electorate, the demographic role that these ethnic minorities are expected to play in the development of cities such as Brussels drove both Flemish and Francophones to pay greater attention to them during the late 1990s, by seeking to include candidates of non-EU origin in their electoral lists and adapting their campaigns to target ethnic minorities²⁵ more systematically, especially in Brussels (Bousetta, Gsir and Jacobs, 2005: 24–25).

8.2 Some relevant facts and figures.

In the elections of October 2000 in Brussels, considered as a landmark for electoral participation by citizens with immigrant origins, the number of elected Belgian politicians who were non-EU citizens — mainly Moroccans — increased considerably. Research by Martiniello, Rea and Jacobs aimed at studying the electoral participation of immigrants in Brussels provides us with some interesting figures. Of 652 municipal councillors, no fewer than 90 (13.8 per cent) are people with non-EU roots. 20 to 25 per cent of the politicians of the municipal councils in the boroughs of Brussels, such as Schaerbeek, St Josse, and Molenbeek, are now immigrants of Turkish or Moroccan origin. These figures are significant, as Belgians originating from non-EU countries only constitute 9 per cent of the total electorate even though they represent a higher percentage in Brussels. In addition, after the 2000 elections, several Belgians of immigrant origin became aldermen for the first time. According to Jacobs *et al* this was the sign of a “real changing pattern of political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels capital” — which had started in 1994 — and highlighted the importance of the phenomenon of preferential voting for immigrants of non-EU origin (Jacobs, Martiniello and Rea, 2002).

²⁴ With regard to these considerations, authors have also pointed out the lack of such a debate regarding the access to citizenship.

²⁵ For example, during the elections of 13 June 1999, Flemish parties in Brussels started for the first time to systematically campaign in French in order to address possible Francophone (immigrant) supporters.



Candidates with origins outside the EU were also successful in the 2004 regional elections. Of the 72 Francophone members of Parliament, 17 were of non-EU origin (among others, 12 Belgian Moroccans, 2 of Turkish origin and 1 of Tunisian origin). Of the 17 Flemish members of Parliament, one is of Moroccan origin. Furthermore, a French-speaking politician of Moroccan origin was appointed as Secretary of State in the Brussels government (Mr Emir Kir), and Mrs Fadila Laanan, originating from Brussels and with Moroccan roots, was appointed as Minister of French Culture and, Youth and Public Broadcasting in the Government of the French Community in Brussels.

Alongside the appointment of several Muslims in municipal councils, Parliament or other political bodies, it is worth mentioning the creation of some specific Islam-related parties and to analyse their general electoral score:

- The *Noor* ('*The Light*') Party was the first political party to be created with a clear reference to Islam. Nevertheless, so far it has been unable to push forward any candidates in the elections that have taken place. Despite its lack of success, its overall organisation has been maintained. It competed in elections for the First Chamber in 1999 and 2003, but was absent from the local elections in 2000. In 1999, the party only managed to obtain 1,240 votes (or 0.15 per cent of the total vote) in Brussels Hal Vilvoorde district, and did not improve its share of the vote in the 2003 general elections (1,141 votes) (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003: 20).
- The *Party for Citizenship and Prosperity* (PCP), stemming from the Movement of Young Muslims, unexpectedly managed to get a good average score when it first contested the general elections in 2003, that is to say, 8,258 votes (0.98 per cent). This party, which is only present in the Brussels Hal Vilvoorde district, is largely made up of converts and can be linked to the Islamic Centre of Brussels. It could receive votes in areas with a high concentration of Muslims. If the PCP is able to repeat this result in the next local elections in 2006, it would be likely to obtain one or more seats in some municipalities of Brussels (Bousetta and Maréchal, 2003: 20).
- The *Resist Party*, stemming from a merger between the European Arab League, headed by Abou Jajah, and the extreme left-wing party PVDA, cannot be classified in the same group as the PCP or Noor Party, as it has a different functioning, structure and ideological path. The party received 17,000 votes while competing for the Senate in 2003 (0.27 per cent in Flanders, 0.84 per cent in Antwerp) and 10,000 votes to the Chamber (0.6 per cent in Antwerp). Bousetta, Swyngedouw and Jacobs suggest that these results are not a real success, given the media coverage of Abou Jajah, a fact that drove the leader to announce the creation of a Muslim Democratic Party (Moslim Democratische Partij) for the next 2006 local elections in Antwerp (Bousetta and Swyngedouw, 2004; Jacobs, 2004).

9. Participation level: an overview in Brussels.

Swyngedouw, Phalet and Deshouwer undertook in 1999 a survey aimed at studying the incorporation of immigrants in Brussels into various fields (social, economic and political). It was based on samples²⁶ of the two largest minority groups in Brussels that do not hold Belgian citizenship — Moroccans and Turks — together with a control group of Belgians with low levels of education. Their conclusions are summarised below in Table 6.

**Table 6: Participation of Turks, Moroccans and Belgians
in various types of organisations.**

Type of organisation	Participation rate (%)		
	Belgians	Turks	Moroccans
Political or interest representation	29	59	11
Service organisation	30	25	11
Voluntary association	12	20	7
Social movement organisation	9	2	4

Source: Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2004

As shown in Table 6, for all groups, the greatest interest lies in participation in the political field: 59 per cent of Turks, 29 per cent of Belgians and 11 per cent of Turks are involved in political parties and trade unions. The results show that these associations remain the most significant channel of representation for the working class, involving Turkish people and — to a lesser extent — Moroccans.

Service organisations also have relevance in the “infra-political sphere”, as the authors call it: 25 per cent of Turks and 11 per cent of Moroccans participate in educational or recreational organisations, such as sports or youth clubs. Participation in voluntary organisations remains limited, except for the Turks (who are more active in mosque associations): 20 per cent of Turks, 12 per cent of Belgians and 4 per cent of Moroccans take part in religious or local neighbourhood associations. Regarding involvement in social movements, the marginality of such activities should be noted: 2 per cent of Turks, 9 per cent of Belgians, and 2 per cent of Moroccans participate in anti-racism or women’s movements. The authors point out in their conclusions the higher associational participation level of Turks, as compared to Moroccans.

For the sake of completeness, it should also be noted that in a later survey, in 2000²⁷ in Brussels, the authors showed that Turks were not more politically active than Moroccans. They based their new research on a political participation scale that represented an index of democratic participation, through questions related to their *informal* political activities (in 2000, non-EU citizens were not able to vote). However with regard to formal participation, as there are no data available because of the voting rights issue, it is worth mentioning that people of Moroccan origin were more successful in local and regional elections that took place in Brussels than Turks were. In addition to this first indicator, the authors used a scale of political interest that proved to be highly correlated with informal political participation. The informal political participation was more or less balanced between all groups, although Turks

²⁶ The sample included 587 Turkish citizens, 391 Moroccans and a matched comparison sample of 404 poorly educated Belgians.

²⁷ The survey aimed at testing the idea of link between (ethnic and cross-ethnic) associational membership and political involvement, launched by the Dutch Fennema and Tillie.



appeared to be less interested than Moroccans (see Table 7). Among their overall conclusions, the authors pointed out that Moroccans were likely to be more politically involved than Turks due to the differential ties of these two groups with Belgian mainstream society, a process in which French language proficiency plays an important role, alongside cross-cultural associational ties that proved to be an important incentive for political involvement.

**Table 7: Levels of informal political participation and political interest
— for Belgians, Turks, and Moroccans**

	Informal political participation scale²⁸	Mean score for political interest²⁹
Belgians	2.43	3.30
Turks	2.42	2.86
Moroccans	2.49	3.10

Source: Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2004 (results by gender also available in this book)

²⁸ The informal political participation scale dwells upon three items in the questionnaire, which relate to the following: discussing politics with friends, trying to convince friends about a political opinion and helping to find solutions to neighbourhood problems.

²⁹ The scale is composed of questions about interest in national and Brussels politics and the frequency with which one reads the political news in the newspaper.

PART II: POLICY CONTEXT

1. Administrative structures

Belgium is a very complex federal State. Federalism was gradually introduced in Belgium between 1970 and 1993, as a response to Community conflicts between the Francophones and the Flemish. It is important to note that the kind of multinational federal system introduced in Belgium is permanently evolving. Its architecture is subject to constant political debates, and is increasingly pressured by confederal and separatist claims. Far from settling for good the ethno-national tensions between Francophones and Flemish, Belgian federalism has given centrifugal forces ever more political clout. While mainstream political actors are concerned that the successive constitutional reforms are laying the grounds for State reforms that should theoretically lead to a final status, nationalists, especially in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium), tend to view them as laying the ground to a process of State formation, the endpoint of which is the creation of at least two independent States. Belgium is therefore characterised by a paradox of both high political and administrative stability and a high degree of instability of its multinational and federal power-sharing system.

What is clear from a *post hoc* analysis is that Belgian State reformers have been guided by the gradual logic of small steps and mutual concessions. No one single actor can pretend to have pursued a logic of foresight and coherent planning. It is true that, in 1999, a number of Flemish parties agreed within the Flemish Parliament on a strategic vision for the future of the Belgian State, which slightly diverges from the current model. However, this vision is far from being accepted by the Francophones (Pagano, 2000). As a consequence, the systemic evolution of the federal State can hardly follow a pre-established plan, and is always the result of successive partial agreements. Insofar as constitutional reforms require a special majority in the Federal Parliament, each and every institutional reform has a negotiating cost for one or the other Community that will, in turn, need to be compensated in one way or another. In addition, before a round of institutional talks, everybody knows what the starting point is, but no one can predict where it will end. Considering that nearly all State reforms in the past were centrifugal ones, consisting in stripping off competences from the federal State, one can reasonably envisage confederalism, negotiated separation, or even a profound reorganisation of current federal arrangements, as likely outcomes in the future.

Belgium now comprises two kinds of federal subunits: *Regions* and *Communities*. The federal structure of Belgium is often referred to as a “3+3” federal pattern (i.e. 3 Regions, 3 Communities).

The *Regions* are competent for so-called “space-bounded” matters (such as the economy, the environment, employment, housing and agriculture), while the *Communities* have jurisdiction over so-called “person-related matters” (such as culture, education, sports, youth, and radio and television broadcasting). The Regions are territorially bounded federal sub-units. The three Regions are Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels (the Brussels Capital Region). The Communities were constructed as partly non-territorial units, and consist of the Flemish Community, the French Community (French-speaking, also known as the Wallonia Brussels Community) and the German-speaking Community.³⁰ The rationale for this option was to

³⁰ Note that the German-speaking Community is part of the Walloon Region as far as regional competences are concerned.

avoid creating sub-nationalities within mixed regions, and especially within the bi-national territory of Brussels.

Both the French-speaking and the Flemish Community have a local surrogate in Brussels, namely the French and Flemish Community Commissions (COCOF and VGC, respectively).³¹ Both the COCOF and the VGC have an Assembly and a Government. Their assembly is composed of the French-speaking and Flemish elected representatives in the Brussels regional council.

In addition to these federal units, Belgium has three other institutional levels: the *provinces*, *municipalities* and *arrondissements*. There are 10 provinces (5 each in the Flemish Region³² and the Walloon Region³³), 43 *arrondissements* and 589 municipalities in Belgium. For the Muslim population, the most relevant level to be considered is the municipality. Belgium is indeed a very decentralised country, where the municipalities have very broad competences on their territory (including for housing, education, employment, security and land planning).

³¹ Representatives from the COCOF (Commission communautaire française, Flemish Community Commission) and the VGC (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, Flemish Community Commission) are brought together within the common community assembly, which is responsible for managing bi-cultural institutions, such as hospitals, for instance. Note that common community assembly has the same composition as the Council of the Region of Brussels.

³² Provinces of the *Flemish Region*: Antwerp (Antwerpen, Anvers) Limburg (Limburg, Limbourg), Flemish Brabant (Vlaams Brabant, Brabant flamand), East Flanders (Oost-Vlaanderen, Flandre orientale) and West Flanders (West-Vlaanderen, Flandre occidentale).

³³ Provinces of the *Walloon Region*: Hainaut (Hainaut, Henegouwen), Walloon Brabant (Brabant Wallon, Waals Brabant), Namur (Namur, Namen), Liège (Liège, Luik) and Luxembourg (Luxembourg, Luxemburg).



2. The status of officially recognised faith

2.1 The institutional framework

The Belgian policy approach to its religious diversity is built upon a small number of constitutional rules (the Constitution of the Belgian Federal State), of which three are particularly relevant in this context. The first (Article 19) establishes the basic principle of freedom of worship. The second (Article 20) decrees that individual citizens must not be restricted in their religious choices and that they are therefore free to change their religious affiliation. The third (Article 21) concerns the neutrality of the State in its relations with religions. This article states that the State is impartial and must not interfere with the internal organisation of religious groups. This framework is complemented by the provision that the salary and pensions of clergymen and clergywomen, as well as those of recognised secularist delegates, are to be paid by the State.

In Belgium, the principle of secularism is not tantamount to a radical breach between State and religions. What has historically been at work is a form of secularism grounded in the concept of the neutrality of the State *vis-à-vis* the internal organisation of religions. Although the Belgian system reflects the very liberal conceptions of the nineteenth century, the place of religions within the public sphere has never gone undisputed. The argument goes that a form of ambiguity exists inasmuch as the legislation on the management of the temporal aspects of religions refers to the concept of “recognised religions”. Indeed, the State commits itself to providing a financial contribution to a number of faiths that have previously received the official approval of both the Federal Parliament and the Government. Whereas Parliament has jurisdiction over the granting of the label of “officially recognised religion”, the Government alone is responsible for the crucial aspect of organising the procedure in practice. This latter stage involves the recognition of a chief interlocutor (meaning that decentralised churches have to unite or federate) and the provision of subsidies as set out in the Constitution. Six religious groups have hitherto received official approval from both the Parliament and the Government. These are the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Jewish, Greek Orthodox and Islamic religions.

The social transformation brought about by the post-war labour migration and the post-1974 new migrations contributed to a reopening of the debate about the place of faith in the public sphere. Some academic interest has followed on this path (Panafit, 1999; Christians, 1998; Husson, 2000). Contrary to the public debate about the Belgian Government’s recognition of the Orthodox religion in 1985, public and political debates about the recognition of Islam involved a greater element of contentious politics.

In 1974, Islam unexpectedly received official recognition from Parliament. The legislation that afforded Islam this status was indeed voted in at the time of the oil crisis and in tandem with bilateral negotiations between Belgium and Saudi Arabia on oil contracts. This unexpected recognition did not really come as an answer to ethnic claims raised by Muslim communities, but rather as a symbolic step towards Arab oil-producing countries and towards the World Islamic League, an organisation heavily influenced by the Saudi Arabian politico-religious doctrine and represented in Brussels by the Islamic and Cultural Centre (ICC). In practice, Belgian concern for its foreign policy and its energy supply led to the institutionalisation of Saudi Arabian influence on Belgian Islam. Pending the appointment of an interlocutor for Muslim communities, the Government gave the ICC some important prerogatives, including a monopoly on the selection of Islamic teachers.



This sudden progress at the parliamentary level did not take concrete form until 1999. This very long delay was due to the extreme difficulty encountered by both Muslim communities and the Belgian government in identifying a representative head of the Islamic religion. The infra-political resistance of mosque-organised and grassroots Islamic networks to the attempt by State actors to impose an intermediate body “from beneath” is an important explanation for this late recognition. The superimposed recognition afforded to the ICC in 1974 has come to be challenged by new developments within Islamic communities. Environmental changes, such as the growth of the size of the Islamic community as a consequence of family reunion, and the emergence of a second generation with specific demands with regard to education, are factors that led to “bottom-up” and mostly infra-political pressures on the traditional representatives of Muslims, such as the ICC, and also to organisational pressures on the State. The decision taken by the Belgian Federal Government on 3 May 1999 has brought the resolution of the issue of the legal recognition of the Islamic religion closer. However, it is worth summarising the stages that this issue has gone through, as such a summary indicates that institutional Islam did not emerge out of the blue, but from a network of mobilised local actors.

After a long period of indecision, the issue of Islam resurfaced in the headlines in 1989 after a series of events, including the Rushdie affair, the headscarf affair and, more dramatically, the killing in the heart of Brussels of the Director of the ICC of Belgium, after he had expressed a tolerant and moderate viewpoint about Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*. In this context, the Royal Commissariat for Migration Policies (RCMP) — a consultative institution appointed to lay the groundwork for a new Belgian policy in relation to the integration of immigrants — endeavoured to unlock the public debate by proposing the establishment of a High Council for Muslims. This proposal did not receive much support and was eventually rejected. The blockage mainly came from a consensus among Belgian traditional parties, who saw the institutionalisation of Islam as opening the way up for Islamic fundamentalism. However, the debate proceeded and, in July 1990, the Government established a preparatory “Committee of the Wise Men”, in charge of proposing a final solution to the organisation of the temporal aspects of Islam. However, in October 1991, the committee ceased its activities without any results. The failure of the committee has to be interpreted bearing in mind the fact that it had been composed of representatives appointed by dominant parties without real consideration for their legitimacy within the infra-political networks of mosques.

2.2 The Muslim Executive of Belgium (EMB)

From 1993 until 1996, representatives of the Muslim community entered into unobtrusive and discrete negotiations, far away from public and media attention, with the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Justice. The aim was to cut the Gordian knot and resolve the hidden struggle between Belgian policy-makers and political parties, on the one hand, and grassroots Islamic organisations and mosques, on the other. While the former favoured a selective representation of liberal Muslims, the latter expressed their preference for a truly representative and democratic process.

On 3 July 1996, the Government finally agreed to change the course of its policy of non-recognition and gave the task and the material means to a group of representatives of the Muslim community, known as the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (Muslim Executive



of Belgium, EMB³⁴), to prepare the setting up of a chief representative body for Islam. This preparatory work led to the decision to adopt a democratic procedure and to organise elections to this body from among the Muslim community across the Belgian territory.

The first elections took place on 13 December 1998. An assembly of 51 persons was elected, while a further 17 persons joined the elected members through co-option. The assembly then agreed on the selection of 16 members to compose the Executive Office. With the governmental decision of 3 May 1999, the Executive Office has been recognised as the chief representative body and official interlocutor of the State for the management of temporal issues linked to the Islamic faith, such as education, subsidies for mosques, and the payment of the salaries of imams.

The first spectacular outcome of the electoral process was the very high registration rate of Muslim voters: 74,000 Muslims aged over 18 registered for the electoral process, out of a Muslim population of approximately 350,000 persons (3 per cent of the Belgian population, with Moroccans and Belgian Moroccans accounting for more than half). Another indication of the massive response to this institutional overture is the number of candidates. No fewer than 280 candidates from all over the country engaged in the electoral competition. The electoral system was designed as a way of guaranteeing a fair representation of minority ethnic groups and minority Islamic branches. It hinged on quotas by nationality and was open both to candidates representing mosques and to those who were independent. The turn-out on the day of the election was 46,000, and 51 candidates were chosen (21 Moroccans, 12 Turks, 9 other nationalities, and 8 converts).

The EMB functioned from 1999 to 2005. However, in 2005 Parliament voted a quite unique law of its kind, which called for a new general election for the EMB. Although the EMB members elected in 1998 had a ten-year mandate, Parliament argued that internal divisions had blocked the EMB's institutions. A second general election therefore took place on 20 March 2005. This time, the total number of registered voters amounted to 70,000 people, but Moroccans registered far less than the other electoral categories (Turks, converts, and other cultural appurtenance). The result was as follows: 40 Turks, 20 Moroccans, 6 other and 2 converts.

The second general election took place in a passionate climate. The idea of a second election was boycotted by parts of the previous Executive and several actions were introduced before the courts. The argument was that the State had intruded into the autonomy of religious organisations. An independent electoral commission was appointed to look into the matter, which, in September 2005, rejected the petition from the previous EMB members, to annul the second election.

³⁴ See the website of the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (bilingual French/Dutch) at <http://www.embnet.be/Home/tabid/97/Default.aspx>.

3. Integration policies

3.1 The overall policy framework

Integration policy is a prerogative of the Communities. These have taken over, as a guideline to devise their own policies, the overall integration framework of the semi-official Government institution, the Royal Commissariat for Migration Policies (RCMP) — which in 1993 became the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Fight against Racism (CEOFOR). The definition of the term integration given by the RCMP is of particular importance, as it is the central point of reference for Government policies. According to this definition, integration aimed at supporting immigrants' participation in mainstream Belgian society follows the following three principles:

- Assimilation, where public order demands it;
- Consequent promotion of the best possible “fitting in”, according to guiding principles, which support the culture of the host country, and which are related to “modernity”, “emancipation” and “true pluralism”, as understood by a modern Western State;
- Unambiguous respect for cultural diversity as providing mutual enrichment, in all other areas.

However, at the same time, the definition targets the development of a multi-ethnic society, since its second key element refers to integration as the “promotion of structural involvement of minorities in the activities and aims of the government” (CRPI, 1989: 38–39).

The French- and Dutch-speaking governments have distinctively emphasised one dimension or another of these definitions of integration, and as a consequence their approaches for dealing with integration issues are quite different. The Flemish Community framework is based on the recognition of ethnic-cultural minority groups and supports active participation through self-organisations of immigrants. It adopts a model of integration that is more in line with multicultural ideas influenced by the former Dutch minority policy. On the French-speaking side, ethnic minorities are defined as immigrants or as people of foreign origin (viewed as individuals to be inserted in mainstream Belgian society, rather than members of a group) (Bousetta, Gsir and Jacobs, 2005: 20).

These differences can be linked — and partially explained — by the specific political context in Brussels. Indeed, the Flemish Community actively tried to woo immigrant communities in Brussels, financing, for example, local participatory initiatives. These strategic attempts can be understood as a way of enlarging the Community's sphere of influence within the Region of Brussels Capital. Some consequences have been emphasised by academic literature. Martiniello and Favell assumed that this “multi-levelled governance situation in Brussels enables and encourages new types of immigrant opportunities and political voice” (Martiniello and Favell, 1998). Concretely, foreigners can now “go shopping for funding and influence in either the Flemish or Francophone Community, and can strategically opt for different forms of collective mobilisation”, stressing either ethnic identity or neutral forms of social insertion (Jacobs and Swyngedouw, 2002).



3.2 Integration policies of the Belgian federal authorities

In response to post-war immigration, the Belgian public authorities were quickly led to develop a number of specific policies aimed at incorporating immigrant populations.³⁵ The emerging Belgian immigration policy was at the outset an issue falling within the competence of the national Government. More precisely, it was an issue associated with national employment policy. It was the Minister of Employment and Social Affairs who was responsible for dealing with the problems deriving from Belgium's labour force recruitment policy (Martens, 1976).

Within provinces hosting significant immigrant groups, such as Limburg, Liège, Hainaut and Brussels, integration policy measures were also taken at the provincial level. This was reflected in the creation of immigration agencies by a number of provincial authorities.³⁶ At the municipal level, the most significant initiative was the creation of local consultative councils. It should be said that when such measures were taken at the decentralised level, they were mainly the result of the free will of provincial and municipal authorities. The consultative councils were never implemented in a systematic way on the whole territory (Martens, 1997: 65–66).

The political and administrative organisation of the Belgian State in the wake of the immigration problem was quite simple. Belgium was a unitary State composed of three levels of power: the State, the province and the municipality. The gradual federalisation of the Belgian State, which took place between 1970 and 1993, created and substantially empowered the Regions and Communities (see Part II, section 1). From then on, these institutions had been allowed to adopt, within their sphere of competence, decrees equivalent to the federal law. As a consequence, new venues for the management of integration policy have been created, and differentiated approaches have come to the fore in Flanders and in the French-speaking part of the country.

Between 1988 and 1993, the question of immigration was regularly placed at the top of the political agenda. In order to address the issue openly and to respond to pressure exerted by the Vlaams Blok on Flemish democratic parties, in March 1989 the Government appointed two Royal Commissioners and set up a permanent forum between relevant ministries, the “Intergovernmental Conference on Immigration Policy”. Over a period of four years, the two Royal Commissioners thoroughly explored the problem, and proceeded to a large consultation of the academic and associative expertise. The Royal Commissioners finally made no fewer than 262 proposals, addressed to federal, regional and municipal authorities, a number of which were discussed within the Intergovernmental Conference on Immigration Policy. They also proposed a concept of integration that was intended to serve as the backbone of Belgian immigration policies. The integration concept of the Royal Commissioners was seriously criticised by the extreme right, but also, and for different reasons, by pro-migrant associations, as well as by social scientists (see Blommaert and Verschuere, 1994). For the latter, the main criticism was that this official concept of “integration” was culturally oppressive.

³⁵ Belgium officially became a Federal State in 1993. Therefore, when reference is made to the federal level of Government or to federal authorities, it is only to refer to the Belgian national level of Government or to Belgian national authorities after 1993. For the period prior to 1993, reference is made to the Belgian national level and to Belgian national authorities strictly so called.

³⁶ Provincial agencies specifically dealing with immigrant affairs were created in Liège in 1964, in Limburg in 1964, in Hainaut in 1965 and in Namur in 1965.



Beyond its obvious weaknesses, the works of the Royal Commissioners remain one of the rare attempts to date at elaborating a strategic vision for the inclusion of ethnic minorities at the Belgian federal level. Among the 262 proposals of the Royal Commissioners, a number were implemented immediately, *inter alia*, measures pleading for the facilitation of nationality acquisition. However, as the Royal Commissioners only had advisory powers, the majority of their recommendations have not received a proper follow-up. The complexity of the architecture established by the federal reforms and the absence of a consensus between the French-speaking and the Flemish political elite, are among the many reasons why a coherent policy framework at the federal level has been so difficult to establish until now (Réa, 1993; Martens, 1997).

After the two Royal Commissioners completed their mission in April 1993, the Government decided to establish the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism. The Centre was empowered with a mediation function between immigrant populations and the public authorities. It is also responsible for the administrative management of a federal fund for the integration of immigrants (FIPI). This fund has remained up until now the major source of funding for municipalities, para-public agencies and immigrant and ethnic minority associations at the Belgian federal level. In the framework of its anti-racist policy, the CEC has set up a number of local complaints offices in big cities such as Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, Ghent and Charleroi. Their mission is to collect complaints from victims of racism and, when necessary, to assist them in suing the perpetrators before the courts.

Pushed to the fore by the anti-discrimination political agenda of the European Union, the Belgian normative context has swiftly evolved. In February 2003, the Federal Parliament adopted a new anti-discrimination law pursuant to Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, as modified by the Treaty of Nice in February 2001. At the same time, the mission of the Centre for Equal Opportunities was extended, so as to allow it to play the role of watchdog for the new legislation. The older, 1981, anti-racist law was modified in January 2003 in order to make it more effective.

3.3 Integration policies of the Flemish regional authorities

In the Flemish Community, the Government sought from the outset to develop a specific social policy for immigrants. After 1988, and the electoral breakthrough of the extreme right in Antwerp, the Flemish Government placed its effort in the establishment of a coordinated immigration policy, influenced by the Dutch minority policy. The Flemish Government quickly made use of the constitutional prerogatives that it received after the 1988 constitutional reform. Since 1989, the Flemish Government has gradually developed its own policy instruments and its own conception of integration. These ideas are reflected in a significant number of policy documents drafted by Flemish Ministers and pleading for a more substantial and more coordinated policy of integration for immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Until 1998, the Flemish Community had a specific, but indirect, immigration policy. The main idea of the policy, contained in a regional decree of 18 July 1990, was to provide funding and give an official agreement to a network of relatively independent local and regional integration centres. From 1991 until 1998, this network was coordinated by the Flemish Centre for the Integration of Immigrants (Vlaams Centrum voor de Integratie van Migranten, VCIM), which was the successor of a regional consultative commission, the VOCOM (Vlaams Overleg Commissie Migranten).

In April 1998, the Flemish Parliament agreed on a decree on ethnic and cultural minorities setting out a new policy framework. This decree provided a significant reorganisation of the immigration policy and gave rise to the establishment of a “Flemish minority policy”. Its objective was to create the conditions for improving the participation of ethno-cultural minorities in Flemish society as full citizens. Three population categories are central to the definition of ethno-cultural minorities. These are as follows: allochthonous people, namely immigrants and/or people of immigrant descent who find themselves in a precarious socio-economic position regardless of their nationality; refugees and refugee applicants; caravan dwellers.³⁷ According to the specific problems that they raise, the Flemish minority policy identifies three basic orientations. The first is a policy of emancipation for all groups, the second is a policy of reception and orientation for newcomers (family dependants and asylum seekers), and the third is a social assistance policy for all groups. In January 2004, the Flemish Government decided to set up a policy of active civic integration (*inburgeringsbeleid*), which makes it compulsory on certain categories of newcomers to take a programme of integration.

3.4 Integration policies of the Walloon regional authorities

The development of a Walloon regional immigration policy is a recent phenomenon. Compared to Flemish immigration policies, the amount of resources, as well as the number of projects, initiated by the Walloon immigration policies are meagre and were cut down in 2006. Currently, the annual budget is €1.2 million. The inception of an immigration policy at the Walloon regional level did not occur on similar grounds to those in Flanders or Brussels. The factors that triggered the political initiative of the Flemish political elite did not have the same relevance in Wallonia. This latter region has not been confronted with the electoral success of the extreme right and has also not confronted violent unrest on the part of the youth of ethnic minority origin, as did the Region of Brussels.³⁸ Furthermore, the “integration of immigrants” was initially within the constitutional competence of the French-speaking Community and has only fallen within the competence of the Walloon Region since 1994. After being formally empowered on integration matters, the Walloon Government has begun developing its own institutional framework.

The Walloon policy has an important social work component, which is partly “colour-blind” but which also includes the direct funding of intercultural projects targeting immigrants. More importantly, the Walloon Government has promoted the setting up of seven regional integration centres in the major Walloon cities (Liège, Charleroi, Namur, Mons, Verviers, Tubize and La Louvière).³⁹ The objectives of the integration centres consist, broadly speaking, of providing social and cultural work to groups defined as “people of foreign descent”. The Walloon regional centres are constructed so as to allow representation of both ethnic minority organisations and local solidarity organisations on a par with provincial and municipal representatives.⁴⁰ In 2002, the Walloon Government set up the Carrefour

³⁷ Under certain circumstances, undocumented immigrants may also apply for social assistance in the framework of the Flemish minority policy.

³⁸ It should also be noted that the make-up of the foreign population is different in Wallonia and in Flanders. Non-Belgian European citizens, Italians in particular, are overrepresented in Wallonia, while non-European citizens, essentially Moroccans and Turks, are mostly represented in Flanders (see Chapter 7).

³⁹ Other measures targeting immigrants have been developed by the Walloon Government, in partnership with its regional training agency (FOREM), in the field of vocational training.

⁴⁰ This is done through the so-called representative council, which is a parallel assembly to the body of administration. The representative councils are not involved in the administrative management, but are responsible for defining strategic orientation, stimulate policy-thinking and planning.



Interculturel Wallon as a complement to the local integration centres. The organisation aimed at developing cross-cutting intercultural projects on the whole territory of the region. However, in 2005, the decision was taken to stop funding the Carrefour, which was accused of not delivering the expected results.



4. Perception of Muslims

One of the consequences in Belgium of the terrorist attacks of 11 September in the USA is, without any doubt, the fact that the issues of multiculturalism and the position of Islam within Belgian society have been put centre stage in political and public debate. Any observer who undertakes a quick scan of the focus of contemporary Belgian media attention would have to conclude that the issue of cultural diversity — and in particular the position of immigrant Muslim minority groups — is currently seen to be at the core of public life. The preoccupation with managing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the public space did not suddenly appear with the tragic events in New York and Washington. Indeed, it has been a recurring issue for constant, albeit fragmented, debate in Belgium ever since the mid-1970s (Dassetto, forthcoming; Jacobs and Swyngedouw, 2002).

Dassetto (forthcoming) identifies three periods in the public management of Muslim affairs. Starting in the mid-1970s, the perception of Muslims was characterised by the fear of a perceived growing “fundamentalism”. Muslims were seen through political and ideological lenses. This first period ran until the turn of the 1980s and the first electoral successes of the extreme right in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium). Then, in the second period, the tendency in public and political discourse evolved towards depoliticising the issue. Mainstream political parties discovered that the alarmist discourse of the earlier period had only benefited extremist parties. The third period started in the mid-1990s and is marked by increasing involvement of the public authorities, at both the federal and the local level, in the management of Muslims’ affairs. It is also during this period that a new generation of Muslim leaders and organisations started voicing their claims in a more articulate way.

In the Belgian context, the question of dealing with ethno-religious diversity — at least when being considered independently from the linguistic divide in the country — was initially conceived of as an issue that was limited to handling the consequences of recruitment of a temporary foreign labour force on an *ad hoc* basis. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the issue of multiculturalism gradually came to be seen independently from issues of migration and mobility. If the management of cultural diversity in the public space can today no longer be thought of in the framework of earlier waves of migration alone, nor can it be understood as a matter to be dealt with merely in the private sphere.

One might wish for a serene climate for pursuing the debate on Islam, Muslims and multiculturalism, but this is far from being a readily available condition. These debates are, on the contrary, developing in an increasingly nervous atmosphere. In Belgium, the context is marked by the fact that the question has reached a high level of political centrality, especially in Flanders, where the extreme right-wing party, the Vlaams Blok, obtained no less than 25 per cent of the popular vote in the June 2004 federal elections. Under pressure from this strong xenophobic far-right movement, the Government and the political parties are ceaselessly led to comment and make political statements about the perceived failures of multicultural coexistence. By way of consequence, public deliberations on the issue of dealing with ethno-religious diversity take place against a backdrop of political manoeuvres seeking to woo either ethnic minority voters — especially in Brussels (see Jacobs, Martiniello and Rea, 2002) — or, more often, the anti-multiculturalism and/or xenophobic voters (Jacobs and Rummens, 2002).



Not surprisingly, tensions generated by international developments also shape the debate. In 2004–2006, the war in Lebanon and Iraq, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the unstable situation in Afghanistan all contributed to a mutual lack of confidence between the West and the Arab-Muslim world. The consequences are not merely diplomatic; they also have an impact on domestic politics in Belgium, as in other European countries. The relationship between the Arab and Muslim minorities, on the one hand, and the majority groups of the European societies where these minorities live and reside, on the other, bears the repercussions of these tensions. The worries raised in mainstream public opinion by acts of political violence happening in the world in the name of Islam raise open questions about the nature of European Islam and the degree of loyalty of European Muslims. This was exacerbated in Belgium in November 2004 by the murder in Amsterdam of the controversial Dutch film director and publicist, Theo Van Gogh, by a young Dutch Muslim extremist of Moroccan origin.

Interestingly, the focus on Islam and the pressure on multicultural discourse in Belgium have, however, not directly led to an overall change in actual policy. As has been the case in the past, policy is still often of a pragmatic nature and a wide variety of (sometimes mutually contradictory) policy practices coexist in Belgium. In some instances, a crude assimilationist line is taken, while in other instances ethnic diversity is promoted. Ethnic difference can both be neglected and denied, or be accommodated, depending on the issues and actors involved. On the ground, policy may be *de facto* of a multicultural nature, while all those involved will vigorously deny that it has anything to do with the idea of multiculturalism. Or a strict assimilationist policy scheme may be announced, but in the end it might not be implemented so strictly.

PART III: CITY SELECTION

This section contains additional information on cities in Belgium that would be a priority to include in the new OSI project, “Muslims in the EU: Cities Project”. As the vast majority of Muslims in Belgium are people of immigrant origin, the selection of cities reviewed in this section corresponds to the three main cities of immigration, each representing one of the three main regions of the country – Brussels (Brussels Region), Antwerp (Flanders) and Liège (Wallonia).

1. Antwerp

Administrative structure

Antwerp is a province in the Flemish Region. Administratively, it is divided into three *arrondissements* (Antwerp, Mechelen and Turnhout) and 70 municipalities.

The city of Antwerp, as it stands today, is the result of a political and administrative merging of eight formerly independent municipalities:⁴¹ Antwerp, Berchem, Borgerhout, Deurne, Ekeren, Hoboken, Merksem and Wilrijk. The merger was part of a national policy aimed at reducing the number of small municipalities, by incorporating them into larger entities. This major reorganisation of Belgian municipal life took place in 1976 and reduced the number of municipalities from 2,675 to 589. In Antwerp, the merging was slightly delayed and was only implemented in 1983. This 1983 modification of the boundaries of Antwerp’s territory was not the first time that such a modification had occurred, however; in 1958, three small communes, Berendrecht, Zandvliet and Lillo, were incorporated into the city. At that time, the city of Antwerp corresponded to the current district of Antwerp.

The municipality of Antwerp comprises nine *districts*, with the following population shares

Table 8: Population share of the districts of Antwerp Municipality (1996)

District	Population	Share of the total population (%)
Antwerp	159,428	35.2
Berendrecht	5,787	1.3
Zandvliet	3,535	0.8
Berchem	40,560	9.0
Borgerhout	39,921	8.9
Deurne	68,744	15.2
Ekeren	22,043	4.9
Hoboken	33,214	7.3
Merksem	40,767	9.0
Wilrijk	38,620	8.4
Total	452,619	100

Source: City of Antwerp, *Statistical Yearbook*, 1996.

⁴¹ In this study, the word ‘municipality’ is used exclusively to refer to the city as a political and administrative unit. This concept is directly derived from Belgian public law. It should be distinguished from the neighbourhood, or district, as those are intra-municipal subdivisions.

Immigration history

International immigration in Antwerp has existed throughout the twentieth and now the twenty-first century with varying degrees of intensity. It is by no means a new phenomenon in the history of the city. In 1910, 6 per cent of the population of the Province of Antwerp were of a foreign nationality, whereas foreigners composed only 2.5 per cent of the population in 1961. In absolute figures, the foreign population of the Province of Antwerp exceeded 58,000 persons prior to World War I, but underwent a sharp decline as a consequence of the war. Ten years later, immigration resumed and gathered momentum, with an important Jewish immigration originating from Central and Eastern Europe. Within a decade, between 1920 and 1930, the foreign population in the Province and in the *arrondissement*⁴² of Antwerp more than doubled, exceeding the pre-war level. The 1920s are the period in which immigration was the most important in quantitative terms, and the most rapid in the recent history of Antwerp. Many of those immigrants settling in Antwerp between World War I and World War II were refugees originating from Central and Eastern Europe, fleeing persecution or simply seeking better opportunities.

After World War II, immigration in the major Belgian cities was mainly driven by economic needs. The labour force shortage in a number of industrial sectors led the Belgian national authorities to sign bilateral labour force agreements for the recruitment of foreign workers.⁴³ In Antwerp, this political option is reflected in the immigration of a number of South European immigrant workers, such as those from Spain (see Table 10, below). However, this immigration of South European workers was not as significant as it was in Wallonia.

If considered from a national perspective, Antwerp was not a very attractive city for the Mediterranean workers officially recruited by intergovernmental agreements. In fact, between 1947 and 1970 the foreign population of Antwerp decreased.⁴⁴ The reason for this may be partly linked to the structure of Antwerp's labour market and its selectivity in the recruitment of some key sectors of economic activity for semi-skilled workers. This can be seen in sectors such as the work in the port, where employment is mainly through family-based co-option, and with regard to the "closed-shop" system, namely tacit agreements between employers and trade unions, which leave the latter the right to allocate available jobs to their clientele. The fall in the population of Antwerp is also linked to the fact that the most important immigrant group between 1947 and 1960 in Belgium was that of Italians, who were predominantly recruited in the Walloon mines.

After 1960, there were two groups of non-European Mediterranean workers who emigrated in large numbers to Antwerp – Moroccans and Turks. From a small number of pioneering young male workers in 1960, these two nationality groups grew very quickly until 1980. The very rapid increase of the share of these groups was due in large part to the composition and recomposition of family units.

Analysis of the main nationality groups in Antwerp also shows that the Dutch population residing in Antwerp is quite significant. As early as 1961, Dutch citizens composed 48 per cent of the total foreign population in the *arrondissement* of Antwerp. From 1961 to 1980, the statistical

⁴² It should be noted that the sub-sections on immigration history in Antwerp and Liège are described according to the unit of the *arrondissement*, while those for Utrecht and Lille are discussed from the point of view of the city. For more recent periods, the data collected allow this study to focus on the unit of the city only.

⁴³ As mentioned in Part I, Section 2, such an agreement was signed with Morocco in 1964. Similar agreements were signed with Italy in June 1946, with Spain in November 1956, with Tunisia in August 1969, and with Algeria in January 1970.

⁴⁴ The same holds true for the Flemish region as a whole (Grimmeau, 1991).



representation of the Dutch has decreased proportionally to 26 per cent of the foreign population, but has remained stable in absolute terms. It is also noticeable that immigration flows towards Antwerp in the period 1947–1970 were relatively homogeneous in terms of their qualitative composition. There was not much diversity in the origins of the immigrants; counting only those groups comprising at least 200 people of the same nationality, there were fewer than ten groups, of which the majority were immigrants from neighbouring countries.

It is clear from this that Antwerp is a city that experienced industrial immigration and the settlement of resident ethnic minorities relatively late.⁴⁵ The industrial immigration of Moroccans and Turks, which became somewhat problematic in public discourse during the 1980s and 1990s, changed this, but it is important to note that this had no precedent. In addition, the biggest part of the growth of the foreign population after 1960 is essentially due to a small number of groups. Only three nationality groups account for the majority of the growth in numbers of foreigners after 1960 – Moroccans, Turks and Spanish. Together, these three nationality groups represented 35 per cent of the foreign population in Antwerp in 1980, and 51 per cent in 1996.

Current population

During the last 15 years, Antwerp has undergone a constant decrease in its population. This demographic trend has its roots in the transformations that have affected the urban environment in most Belgian cities over the course of the 1970s and 1980s (Vranken and Ben Abdeljelil, 1995). A key feature of this process of urban change is the migration of the middle classes towards suburban areas, and the immigration of groups with lower incomes towards urban areas (Kesteloot, 1997). It should be said that the immigration towards the city, both internal and international, does not compensate for the amount of yearly departures. In the period 1983–1996, the difference between entries and exits led to a net deficit of more than 2,700 inhabitants per year. The emigration of population groups belonging to the middle class, who often have two incomes per household, created new financial pressures for the authorities of the city, insofar as the funding of Belgian cities is partly based on a complementary taxation of personal income.

In 1999, the foreign population in Antwerp amounted to 13.2 per cent of the population (see Table 10). Since 1986, the share of the foreign population has continuously grown. One third of the immigrant foreign population in Antwerp is composed of Europeans, among whom a majority are EU citizens. In 1999, the Dutch population was the most significant group among the EU citizens, as has traditionally been the case since the beginning of the century. However, its representation has drastically decreased, due to a high rate of naturalisation and to (re)emigration. The traditional overrepresentation of the Dutch population in the foreign population of Antwerp has been overshadowed in recent years by the fast-growing group of Moroccans. Virtually unrepresented in 1961, Moroccans today represent the most important group of non-nationals in Antwerp (34.9 per cent of the foreign population). Alongside the Turkish population (11.3 per cent), it is the group that represents most strongly the immigration flow of an industrial labour force in the 1960s and 1970s.

The point should be made that municipal data only allow us to have an indirect measure of the ethnic composition of the city, in that they exclusively rely on nationality groups. It is important to note that this statistical picture overlooks the representation of naturalised citizens and the presence of the long-established Jewish minority.

⁴⁵ The long-established Orthodox Jewish community is an exception.

Table 9: Population of foreigners in Antwerp – breakdown by main nationalities (1999)

Country of origin		Total	Share of total population (%)	Share of foreign population (%)
EU countries	Netherlands	6,192	1.4	10.4
	UK	2,185	0.4	3.6
	Spain	2,032	0.4	3.4
	France	2,006	0.4	3.3
	Portugal	1,838	0.4	3.1
	Italy	1,295	0.3	2.2
	Germany	1,144	0.2	1.9
	Other EU countries	1,072	0.2	1.8
Non-EU countries	Morocco	20,768	4.6	34.9
	Turkey	6,709	1.5	11.3
	Other countries	14,156	3.1	23.8
Total EU countries)		17,764	4	30
Total non-EU countries)		41,633	9	70
Total		59,397	13.2	100

Source: NIS 1999

2. Liège

Administrative structure

Liège is a province in the Walloon Region. Administratively, it is divided into four *arrondissements* (Huy, Liège, Verviers and Waremme) and 84 municipalities.

Like Antwerp, Liège underwent major administrative reorganisation in 1976, when the core city of Liège merged with a number of suburban localities (including Grivegnée, Chênée, Angleur, Herstal, Glains and Saint-Nicolas). This artificial expansion of the city significantly increased the population of the city, which reached 227,974 inhabitants in 1978. Over the next two decades, however, the population of the city decreased steadily. In 1989, Liège passed below the administrative threshold of 200,000 inhabitants, an administrative threshold fixing the amount of subsidies provided to local authorities by federal and regional governments. The current population of Liège amounts to 188,390, including 33,818 foreigners.

The municipality of Liège comprises 21 *districts*, with the following population shares

Table 10: Population of the districts of Liège Municipality (1998)

District	Population	Share of the total population (%)
Angleur	10,333	5.5
Bressoux	11,316	6
Centre	4,273	2.2
Chênée	9,172	4.8
Droixhe	4,804	2.5
Glains	2,339	1.2
Grivegnée	19,464	10.3
Guillemins	11,292	6
Jupille	10,325	5.5
Laveu	9,138	4.8
Longdoz	11,593	6.1
Outremeuse	9,398	4.9
Pont d'Avroy	6,835	3.6
Rocourt	6,597	3.5
Sainte-Margueritte	15,017	7.9
Sainte-Walburge	12,292	6.5
Saint-Léonard	11,633	6.2
Sclessin	6,430	3.4
Thiers à Liège	4,096	2.2
Vennes	6,383	3.4
Wandre	5,660	3
Total	188,390	100

Source: Kagné & Martiniello 1999.

Immigration history

Like all big industrial cities in rural areas, Liège has been the final destination for several waves of international immigrants throughout its history, particularly during the twentieth century. Prior to World War I, 5 per cent of the population of the Province of Liège were foreigners. These immigrants mainly originated from neighbouring countries, namely France and the Netherlands, but also came from more remote countries, such as Poland and Russia. As a consequence of World War I, the foreign population had sharply decreased by the time of the 1920 census. However, their presence tripled during the period from 1920 to 1930.

After World War II, immigration flows in Liège again became very significant. Immigration from Italy, which had been interrupted by World War II, resumed after 1947. Parallel to this, there was a significant Polish immigration until 1961. After 1961, Italians remained the largest immigrant group by far, but new profiles also appeared, mostly other Mediterranean workers from Southern Europe, namely Spain, Greece and Portugal, and from Morocco and Turkey. These migratory movements were fundamentally linked to the needs of a labour force for reconstruction and industrial development. The recruitment of a cheap foreign labour force, massively employed in the mining sector and in metallurgy, relieved the pressure on local industry, a pressure that had itself resulted from the unavailability of a sufficient labour force locally. The strategy of industrial

employers of the Liège region, sustained by the national recruitment policy, continued until the mid-1970s. After 1974, the deterioration of the international economic situation, following the oil crisis, led to a drastic decrease in international migration flows towards Belgium, and consequently to the industrial basin of Liège. However, what is noticeable is that the size of the foreign population grew constantly between 1947 and 1970. When Moroccans and Turks started to immigrate to Liège in the 1960s, they had been preceded by several very significant waves of industrial immigrants.

Current population

The population of foreign nationality in Liège amounts to 32,721 persons, representing 17.4 per cent of the total population. The immigrant ethnic minority population in Liège is mainly composed of EU citizens (Table 11). Indeed, 62 per cent of the foreign population are EU citizens, while 37 per cent are third-country nationals (including recognised refugees). It is interesting to note that each of these two main categories (EU and non-EU citizens) is strongly dominated by one group. Among EU citizens, the first group of non-Belgian nationals is that of Italians, who make up 65 per cent of the EU population and 40 per cent of the total foreign population. Among non-EU nationals, Moroccan citizens make up 39 per cent; they rank second at the city level after Italians, who make up 14.5 per cent of the foreign population.

Table 11: Foreigners in Liège – breakdown by main nationalities (1999)

Country		Total	Share of total population (%)	Share of foreign population (%)
EU countries	Italy	13,192	7.0	40.0
	Spain	2,868	1.5	8.7
	France	2,397	1.2	7.3
	Greece	619	0.3	1.9
	Other EU countries	1,324	0.7	4.0
Non-EU countries	Morocco	4,752	2.5	14.5
	Turkey	1,951	1.0	5.9
	Other countries	5,618	3.0	17.1
Total EU countries		20,400	11	62
Total non-EU countries		12,321	7	38
Total		32,721	17.4	100

Source: NIS, 1999

3. Brussels

Administrative structure

Brussels consists of a cluster of 19 municipalities, only one of which is officially named Brussels. Together, these 19 autonomous municipalities form the Region of Brussels Capital.

Immigration history

The Region of Brussels Capital is the touchstone of the architecture of the quite unstable Belgian federal state. As a bi-national Region, it has always been a problematic and conflicting issue for Belgian State reformers. This is partly due to the diverging social and ideological representations of the city. The Flemish tend to see Brussels as a historically Flemish city, which has evolved into a Francophone-dominated city as a result of Walloon intra-national migration in the course of the last century. It is also seen as a territorial enclave within the territory of the Flemish region, an idea that reinforces the symbolic link of the city with Flanders. The idea of Brussels probably does not correspond to such a coherent representation among the Francophones. The Francophone inhabitants of Brussels usually see themselves as a distinctive population from the Walloons, as do the most vocal partisans of Walloon autonomy. In that sense, Brussels's Francophones refuse to be reduced to a segment of the Walloon population. They usually reject the dualistic representation widespread among the Flemish, which tends to oppose Flemish, in other words Dutch-speaking, and Francophone, and to ignore the distinction between Brussels and Walloon Francophones. However, there is a widespread recognition among all Francophones that there is still a cultural continuum between Brussels and Wallonia.

Current population

Brussels hosts a large share of the immigrant presence in Belgium. One in three non-Belgian citizens lives in Brussels, and more than a third of the city population has family roots outside the country. Foreigners make up 26.3 per cent (see Table 12) of the total city population of 1,006,749 inhabitants (this excludes the large and fast-growing group of foreigners who have become naturalised in the course of the last 20 years). The majority (62 per cent) of foreigners are from EU countries. But both groups (EU citizens and non-EU citizens) include a number of well-off immigrants such as those highly skilled workers attracted by Brussels being the capital of the EU, as well as the headquarters of several international public organisations and private corporations.



Table 12: Foreigners in Brussels – breakdown by main nationalities (2006)

	Country	Total	Share of total population (%)	Share of foreign population (%)
EU citizens	Italy	27,451	2.7	10.3
	Spain	20,078	1.9	7.6
	France	17,776	1.7	6.7
	Portugal	15,900	1.5	6.0
	Other EU	84,101	8.3	31.7
Non-EU citizens	Morocco	41,388	4.1	15.6
	Turkey	11,030	1.0	4.2
	Refugees	4,963	0.4	1.8
	Other non-EU	42,524	4.2	16.0
Total EU countries		165,306	16	62
Total non-EU countries		99,905	10	38
Total		265,211	26.3	100

Source:



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