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## **MIGRANTS IN BELGIUM**

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## MIGRANTS IN BELGIUM

### I. Number of migrants

Statistics on migration are established according to citizenship. The following table presents the evolution of foreign citizens established in Belgium, during the last years.

**Table 1: Population of foreign citizenship in Belgium<sup>i</sup>**

Year	1.1.1981	1.1.1991	1.1.1997	1.1.1998	1.1.1999
Number	860.608	895.910	911.921	903.120	864.616

We may observe a decrease in the number of migrants after 1997, which is explained by a recent law which makes it easier to gain Belgian citizenship, notably for the second and third generation of migrants. This means that a certain number of persons who share the same characteristics of migrant communities do not appear in statistics.

Population of foreign citizenship represents about 9% of the total population (1996). They represent 30%, 5% and 10% in respectively the Brussels, Flemish and Walloon area<sup>ii</sup>. The highest percentage can be found in Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode (Brussels), where migrants represent 54%.

**Table 2: Distribution of foreign citizens by country of origin, 1999<sup>iii</sup>**

Country	Italy	Morocco	France	Net/lands	Turkey	Spain	Germany
Number	202.645	125.082	105.113	84.213	70.701	46.635	34.043

We may observe that the main groups are of Italian, Moroccan, Turkish and Spanish origin. The high number of French, Dutch and German people can be explained by the high number of frontier workers who have been established in Belgium.

It is interesting to note that the population of non European origin (mainly Moroccan and Turkish) is relatively young, contrary to the citizens of European origin.

**Table 3: Distribution by age group and country of origin, %<sup>iv</sup>**

Origin/Age group	0-14	15-64	+65	Total
Belgians	18	66	16	100
EU citizens	11	78	11	100
non EU citizens	31	66	3	100

Most children of non EU citizens are born in Belgium and it would have been erroneous to conclude that they lack a knowledge of the language of the country of residence.

## II. Labour market

Migrants are over-represented in the traditional heavy industry sector, the hotels and restaurants and the cleaning services.

In general the wage level of migrants is lower compared to nationals, notably for Turks and Moroccans<sup>v</sup>. Also, the unemployment rate is higher.

**Table 4: Unemployment, June 1998<sup>vi</sup>**

	Men %	Women %	Total %
Nationals	83	88	86
Migrants	17	12	14
Total	100	100	100

Finally, a study realised by the International labour Office reports a significant degree of discrimination in hiring by employers<sup>vii</sup>.

## III. Reintegration policies

In the Flemish area, employers and the regional government agreed to define every year a plan aiming to achieve a better integration of migrants in the labour market.

In the Walloon area, six regional Centres have been established in order to promote a better integration of ethnic minorities and migrants. The questionnaire focuses on the activities of one of these Centres.

Also, a Centre for equal opportunities and fight against racism was created in Brussels.

Reintegration policies favour notably:

- guidance, counselling
- assessment of skills, training,
- work experience, employment initiatives,
- networking at local/regional/level,
- counselling to companies,
- information and sensitisation,
- dissemination of good practices.

In general, NGOs created by migrants or representing migrants are underrepresented in funded projects.

#### IV. The survey

It is important to say that we received 8 questionnaires where migrants were the main target group, even if they were treating at the same time other disadvantaged groups. Overrepresentation of migrants in the survey reflects:

- the higher number of persons in this target group,
- a well developed network of NGOs, and
- a longer history of projects in this field.

The regional Centre for Intercultural action in Namur has run a certain number of interesting projects. The goal was, notably:

1. vocational re-integration of migrants,
2. creation of partnerships to support job placement of migrants,
3. fight against discrimination in job hirings,
4. setting up of a social network.

The project considers that efforts have to be developed towards two directions:

- the migrant himself, and
- the abolition of discriminatory obstacles that society might create.

In order to attain the second axe, the project develops information and sensitisation campaigns.

The project proposes a certain number of indicators, notably:

1. Migrants
  - hiring by companies
  - putting down administrative bottlenecks in the participation of migrants
  - involvement in the social and cultural life of the immigration country
2. Public and private institutions
  - rate of employed migrants
  - involvement in fighting discrimination in hiring
  - modification of existing practices by employees which might be discriminatory

Other projects follow more traditional paths, notably:

1. definition of an individualised reintegration path and tailor made assistance,
2. favour synergy of different partners providing vocational training and job placement,
3. training of migrants in the intercultural mediation.

Finally, another interesting project promotes intercultural dialogue as a vehicle of mutual understanding and cooperation.

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<sup>i</sup> Conseil de l'Europe, "Evolution démographique récente en Europe"; 1999, p. 127; Strasbourg, France.

<sup>ii</sup> "Annuaire de statistiques régionales 1998", Institut national de statistique, p. 260, Bruxelles.

<sup>iii</sup> Conseil de l'Europe, "Evolution démographique récente en Europe"; 1999, p. 127; Strasbourg, France.

<sup>iv</sup> Observatoire de l'emploi, SYSDÉM, Tendances N° 32, Eté 1999, p. 9; Emploi et affaires sociales, Commission européenne, Bruxelles.

<sup>v</sup> Observatoire de l'emploi, SYSDÉM, Tendances N° 32, Eté 1999, p. 10; Emploi et affaires sociales, Commission européenne, Bruxelles.

<sup>vi</sup> Observatoire de l'emploi, SYSDÉM, Tendances N° 32, Eté 1999, p. 11; Emploi et affaires sociales, Commission européenne, Bruxelles.

<sup>vii</sup> Observatoire de l'emploi, SYSDÉM, Tendances N° 32, Eté 1999, p. 12; Emploi et affaires sociales, Commission européenne, Bruxelles.

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Research done for the NASCENT project, 2000.

You can find more information on the project on the following web-site:

[http://www.nascent.org/body\\_index.html](http://www.nascent.org/body_index.html)