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Verandering van de demografische structuren en van de geografie van de Europeanen in Brussel tussen 2000 en 2018

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1. Introduction

- 1 On 1 January 2018, the Brussels-Capital Region had a population of almost 1,2 million. European Union nationals represented 23 % of the population of Brussels, i.e. 275 000 individuals, thus making a major contribution to the demographic structures and dynamics of Brussels. This presence is due in particular to the introduction of free movement within the European Union, whose borders have expanded considerably since its creation. In addition, the main European and NATO institutions are located in Brussels, as well as many international firms based around them. Paradoxically, this foreign population has been studied relatively little [Hermia, 2015; Rea, 2013; Caillez, 2004], particularly from a statistical point of view, and aggregate data are lacking in order to establish its socio-demographic profile. It therefore seemed appropriate to provide an overview of the contribution of European Union nationals to the demographic dynamics and geography of Brussels since 2000. To do this, I shall focus on their impact on the growth of the total population, their demographic characteristics and their distribution over the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region. I

shall present a general overview covering all nationals, as well as present specific details according to nationality, with a special focus on significant changes between 2000 and 2018. This study is therefore essentially descriptive in nature and is based exclusively on data from the National Register, described below. However, I shall try to provide interpretations of these phenomena by examining them with respect to elements in the literature on European migration in Belgium or in the EU.

- 2 In order to assess the presence of Europeans in Brussels, I have used data on foreign European Union nationals residing in the Brussels-Capital Region, taken from the National Register and aggregated by BISA (Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis) at municipal or neighbourhood level. The Register considers any person who does not have Belgian nationality as foreign; residents who have Belgian nationality and another nationality are considered as Belgians [BISA, 2017]. Among the available data, I have chosen to work with “current nationality”¹ rather than “nationality at birth”² to further target newly arrived European nationals. However, there is only a marginal difference between these two indicators,³ as these foreigners have a strong tendency to retain their nationality [Martiniello *et al.*, 2013]. The information in the National Register concerns the legal population, i.e. individuals who are legally domiciled with their municipal administration, with the exception of applicants for refugee status, who have not been counted. Undocumented migrants, diplomats, foreigners who stay less than three months in the country and, more generally, non-domiciled individuals are not listed [BISA, 2017]. Unlike diplomats, European civil servants have a strong presence and are therefore included in the population figures [Federal Public Service Interior, 2018]. Thus, some components of the European presence in Brussels are not included in the statistics, leading to an underestimation of this presence in the official figures. For the entire period studied (2000-2018), all individuals with the nationality of a member state in 2018 were considered as European Union nationals, regardless of the date of accession of the member state. For example, although Romania only joined in 2007, Romanians are counted as EU nationals as of 2000 in this article.

2. A major contribution to the growth of the Brussels population

- 3 Between 2000 and 2018, the Brussels Region was characterised by a significant increase in its population, from 960 000 to almost 1 200 000 inhabitants. This process is the result of strong natural growth and positive international net migration, which largely offset a very negative internal net growth.⁴ Of these three components of the evolution of the Brussels population, international migration has determined the intensity of population growth in Brussels since the 2000s [Hermia, 2018]. EU nationals make a significant contribution to these movements, with their numbers almost doubling between 2000 and 2018, from 145 000 to 275 000, and their share of the Region's population rising from 15 % to 23 %. They thus represent 55 % of the 240 000 additional Brussels inhabitants over the period. Moreover, between 2008 and 2017, these foreigners accounted on average for 57 % of international entries into the Brussels-Capital Region and 54 % of international exits. However, since 2016, the numbers have stabilised somewhat in this group, probably due to the cessation of new accessions to the European Union after the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements.⁵

- 4 This growth in the European population in Brussels is the result of the various contributions of nationalities linked to their own migration histories. With the exception of the United Kingdom and Greece, the various national groups are all characterised by an increase in their numbers, some in proportion to their situation in 2000, others much more strongly. First, nationals of the new member states⁶ have the highest growth rates among EU citizens between 2000 and 2018, in connection with the significant recruitment of workers from these countries [Réa, 2013]. While they were almost absent from the Brussels Region in 2000, there are 85 000 EU nationals living there, representing 7,2 % of the population in 2018. They account for 62 % of the increase in the number of European nationals between 2000 and 2018, thus playing a decisive role in the growth of the Brussels population. Polish, Bulgarian and Romanian nationals are the largest groups from the new member states. With nearly 40 000 individuals in 2018, Romania now represents the second largest European nationality in Brussels. Then, the French – already numerous in 2000 – experienced a significant absolute increase in their numbers between 2000 and 2018. Their population almost doubled from 35 000 to nearly 65 000, representing 22 % of the increase in the number of Europeans between 2000 and 2018. Their establishment is linked to the international functions of the Brussels Region as well as to relations between France and Belgium as neighbouring countries [Bastin, 2001]. French nationals living in Brussels have therefore experienced a variety of social situations [Kesteloot, Van Der Haegen, 1997, 112]. Despite their large numbers, the literature provides few additional interpretative elements. Finally, the number of Dutch, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian nationals increased relatively moderately between 2000 and 2018. However, this observation does not reflect the special evolution of the labour migration of the past, which has seen a new generation of young and skilled workers drawn to the international functions of Brussels [Triandafyllidou, Gropas, 2014; Pion, 2016]. These arrivals are the result of the significant emigration from Southern European countries, which has been boosted by the economic crisis and the particularly high rate of unemployment it is causing among young people [Hermia, 2015]. After a slight decline since 2000, the number of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian nationals therefore resumed a fairly significant growth rate in 2008, while that of Greek nationals from 2012 onwards has not compensated for their previous decline (Figure 1).

Box 1. European students in the Brussels-Capital Region

Part of the European population present in Brussels, not registered in the National Register, escapes quantitative analyses. The case of Europeans studying in higher education in Brussels illustrates this gap, if it is looked at in other statistics. During the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 5550, 250 and 1550 students from the European Union outside Belgium registered at Université libre de Bruxelles, Université Saint-Louis and the medical field⁷ of Université catholique de Louvain (based in Woluwe) respectively, i.e. 23 %, 9 % and 28 % of registrations (CREF data). To this should be added the 7150 registrations in the higher education institutions and art colleges located in the Brussels-Capital Region (ARES data). In total, 14 500 Europeans were studying in Brussels in 2013-2014 (excluding Erasmus agreements). Some of them are probably not domiciled in Brussels and are therefore not included in the foreign population statistics. For example, in 2017-2018, there were 6400 EU nationals studying at a higher education institution

or art college in Brussels, while only 2900 were domiciled there (ARES data). At Belgian level, the situation remains the same: there were 14 600 students from the European Union in Belgian French-language higher education institutions (excluding universities) in 2017-2018, while only 5 100 were domiciled there.

Figure 1. Evolution of different European nationalities between 2000 and 2018

The right represents the situation of groups which experienced a perfectly stable situation between 2000 and 2018. The distance between a group and the right is proportional to the increase/decrease in their numbers.

SOURCE: BISA

3. Contrasting demographic structures between European nationalities

- 5 With an increase in their share of the total population, European Union nationals are playing an increasingly important role in the demographic dynamics of Brussels. Their age pyramid thus presents a structure which is typical of young adult populations, influencing that of the Region as a whole: Europeans between the ages of 25 and 54 are over-represented, while other age groups are under-represented, particularly as of age 65 (Figure 2). It is also a slightly younger population: in 2017, the median age⁸ of European nationals in Brussels was 30,4 compared to 30,8 for all inhabitants of the Region. Since 2000, these foreigners have been slightly younger than the Brussels population, with a median age of 31 in 2000 (compared to 31,9 for the Region). Secondly, the distribution between European women and men is fairly equal, with a sex ratio⁹ of 0,98 in 2017. This ratio is stable with respect to 2000 (0,97). However, this balance masks disparities according to age group: in 2017, there were more women between the ages of 20 and 39, while there were more men between the ages of 40 and

64. The European presence thus contributes partially to the decrease in the proportion of women in the Brussels-Capital Region, where the sex ratio rose from 0,91 to 0,96 between 2000 and 2017. However, this stability in the gender distribution and median age among EU nationals does not reflect the diverging trends among different nationalities since 2000 (Figure 3, Figure 4).

Figure 2. Pyramid of the European population and the total population in the Brussels-Capital Region (2017)

SOURCE: BISA

Figure 3. The demographic profile of Europeans in 2000

SOURCE: BISA

Figure 4. The demographic profile of Europeans in 2017

SOURCE: BISA

- 6 The populations from the new member states are generally young and very female: their median ages are mostly below 31 and their sex ratios rarely exceed 0,8. Some of these nationalities experienced a significant feminisation between 2000 and 2017, resulting in particular from a significant emigration of skilled young women employed in the international sector. In 2018, women accounted for 68 % of European Commission employees from the new member states. Their average age was 41,2, compared to 47,2 for those in the EU-15 [European Commission, 2018]. This activity represents a significant share of the jobs of the reduced numbers of Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Slovak, Czech, Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian nationals.¹⁰ For example, there were 1100 Lithuanians domiciled in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2017 (750 women and 350 men) and the Commission employed 300 women and 110 men in 2018 [BISA; European Commission, 2018]. However, this feminisation is counterbalanced by the marked increase in the proportion of men among Polish, Bulgarian and especially Romanian nationals: between 2000 and 2017, their sex ratios increased from 0,65 to 0,79, from 0,74 to 0,95 and from 0,72 to 1,21 respectively. In these three groups, the international sector, which is largely feminine, accounts for a small proportion of total employment. The population of these nationalities is mainly employed in two low-skilled sectors: cleaning for women and construction for men. Since 1991, Brussels has seen an increase in the number of Polish-born housekeepers, who find employment with the Belgian middle and upper classes as well as with international workers. This market is mainly informal and has been modified significantly by the introduction of “service vouchers” in 2004, which has resulted in the regularisation of many jobs. In 2010, 75 % of service voucher workers in Brussels were foreigners, with Polish as their first nationality. Many Polish men also arrived in the early 1990s to work in construction, mostly on an irregular basis. They were then partially replaced by Romanians [Rea, 2013: 28-30]. The high proportion of young men of the latter nationality is therefore probably linked to a strong specialisation in construction: in 2009, Unizo (Unie van Zelfstandige Ondernemers) reported that 60 % of Romanians living in Brussels worked in the construction sector.¹¹ The higher proportion of women among Polish nationals, although decreasing since 2000, may be partly explained by different registrations according to sector of employment. Through the introduction of service vouchers, the cleaning sector has a smaller share of undeclared work than the construction sector. Women, who work in the former sector, are therefore more likely to be domiciled than men, who are therefore invisible in the statistics.
- 7 In 2017, French nationals also constituted a feminine and young population with a sex ratio of 0,92 and a median age of 27,8. This situation shows that the population has been getting younger since 2000, when the median age was 28,8. There are many young adults: 20-24 year olds represent about 10 % of the French nationals in Brussels and 25-29 year olds represent 15 %. Among other things, this development is linked to the increase in the number of French students in Brussels, which is at least partially reflected in the National Register. During the 2013-2014 academic year, there were 3100 at ULB (i.e. 13 % of students registered at the university), compared to 1300 in 2004-2005 (6 %), and there were 100 at Université Saint-Louis in 2013, compared to 30 in 2004 (CREF). There were 4400 in non-university higher education in 2017-2018 (13 % of students in this sector). This important integration into French-speaking higher

education, facilitated by linguistic proximity, is linked in particular to selection policies in French education.

- 8 On the other hand, there was a significant ageing of the Italian, Portuguese and Greek populations between 2000 and 2018: their median ages increased from 33,6 to 37,3, 26,6 to 32,8 and 34,6 to 38,6 respectively, making them the oldest European populations in Brussels. The median age of the Spanish population decreased very slightly from 34,7 to 34,3. This situation is probably the result of the ageing of the generations of people who arrived in the post-war period, which has not been compensated for, or only slightly, by the arrival of new nationals since the 2008 crisis, and of a statistical bias: the newborns in these groups have Belgian nationality and are therefore no longer counted as foreigners. Between 2000 and 2017, the proportion of men among Italian and Greek nationals decreased, whereas it increased among Spanish and Portuguese nationals. With the exception of Greece, these national groups maintain higher sex ratios than other nationalities.

4. An ever stronger presence in south-east Brussels and the emergence of new “European areas” in the west

Figure 5. Europeans in the Brussels-Capital Region (2015)

Source: BISA

- 9 In 2015, Europeans represented more than 10 % of the population in almost all of the neighbourhoods in Brussels (Figure 5). The geography of these foreigners was fairly stable between 2000 and 2015, with their preferred neighbourhoods changing little

overall, if not by an increase in their numbers. In general, these nationals are distributed according to a concentric and sectoral logic: their share in the population gradually decreases as the distance from the centre of Brussels increases, and is particularly high in the south-east quadrant. In the inner ring, the highest concentrations of Europeans are found in the neighbourhoods east of the Pentagon between Avenue Louise and Square Ambiorix, where they sometimes account for more than 40 % of the population. In the outer ring, they are mainly distributed in the municipalities of the south-east, in particular along Avenue Louise and Avenue Tervuren. In parallel with this continued presence, their numbers are also increasing in certain neighbourhoods located in the western part of the Brussels Region.

Figure 6. The French population in the Brussels-Capital Region (2015)

SOURCE: BISA

Figure 7. Spanish, Greek, Italian and Portuguese populations in the Brussels-Capital Region (2000, 2005, 2010, 2015)

SOURCE: BISA

- 10 This reinforced presence in the south-east of the Brussels Region is due in part to the concentration of French nationals in the south of the city and the transformation of the geographies of the former nationalities comprising the workforce. In 2015, they represented at least 1 % of the population in all of the neighbourhoods of the capital (Figure 6), but they were particularly numerous in the south-east of the Brussels Region, and in particular in Uccle, Ixelles (traditionally a student municipality), the European Quarter and the upper part of Saint-Gilles. In the neighbourhoods located along Avenue Louise and to the west of Bois de la Cambre and Forêt de Soignes, they represent more than 10 % of the population. This geographical distribution was already seen in 2000, yet a dispersion has not accompanied the growth in their numbers: between 2000 and 2015, the segregation index¹² of French nationals rose from 0,23 to 0,33 (Figure 9). On the other hand, Italian, Spanish and Greek nationals (Figure 7) saw their share decrease in their favourite neighbourhoods (Anderlecht, Forest and Saint-Gilles) between 2000 and 2015, and increase in the south-east of the inner ring and around the Cinquanteenaire and the European Quarter. The Portuguese presence decreased slightly in Saint-Gilles but remained stable overall. This eastward trend seems to reflect a replacement of the existing populations rather than a movement within Brussels of people who were already there. Although the migration resulting from the 2008 crisis catalysed these dynamics, they already existed earlier. Thus, Pion's analyses [Pion, 2016] based on the register of Italians residing abroad in 2008 show that after several waves of Italian immigration since the 19th century and in particular the massive labour force immigration during the interwar period and after World War II, a third wave, more diffuse in time but concentrated in space, has existed since the 1980s. These are highly qualified Italians, unlike in previous waves, who come to work in jobs related to international functions. They come from the Italian regions where Italian

political, administrative and economic power is concentrated, such as Lazio, Lombardy and Piedmont, and settle in the wealthy municipalities of south-east Brussels. Their geographical path depends on their “integration”: the more recently they have arrived in Belgium, the closer they live to the European institutions; the more they integrate into Belgian society, the more they settle in the middle-class municipalities of Flemish and Walloon Brabant [Pion, 2016].

Figure 8. Romanian, Polish and Bulgarian populations in the Brussels-Capital Region (2015)

SOURCE: BISA

Figure 9. Segregation indices of the main European nationalities in the Brussels-Capital Region (calculated at neighbourhood level)

	Nationality	Numbers 2018	Segregation index	
			2000	2015
1	France	63 394	0,23	0,33
2	Romania	39 703	0,31	0,25
3	Italy	33 109	0,20	0,19
4	Spain	28 341	0,21	0,16
5	Poland	24 352	0,21	0,20
6	Portugal	19 474	0,33	0,29
7	Bulgaria	11 829	0,44	0,49

8	Germany	10 659	0,43	0,42
9	Greece	9 161	0,26	0,25
10	Netherlands	8 275	0,29	0,20
11	United Kingdom	7 627	0,42	0,43
EU nationals (except Belgians)		255 924	0,24	0,22

SOURCE: BISA

- 11 In contrast to the groups described above, between 2000 and 2015, Romanian, Bulgarian and to a lesser extent Polish nationals tended to differ with respect to the “classical” geography of Europeans (Figure 8). The distribution of Bulgarians is uneven: their segregation index is high (Figure 9) and a large part of their population resides in Chaussée d'Haecht (where they represent 10 % of the population) or in adjacent neighbourhoods. This concentration in areas which are traditionally those of Turkish immigration is probably linked to the considerable emigration of the Bulgarian Turkish-speaking minority [Markova, 2010: 214]. The Romanian and Polish populations are more diffuse: concentric for Polish nationals and more westward for Romanian nationals, particularly in Anderlecht and Laeken. Romanian, Bulgarian and Polish nationals thus make a decisive contribution to the extension of the European presence to the west of the Brussels Region, in particular in Saint-Josse and north-east Anderlecht, around the Basilica of Koekelberg and in the old part of Laeken, where they have opened up “new fronts of the European presence”.

5. Conclusion

- 12 An increasingly significant presence of European nationals in Brussels since 2000 therefore exists, resulting from the high level of immigration from the new member states, the continued growth in the number of French nationals and the resumption of emigration in the countries of southern Europe as of 2008. The presence of these foreigners is now a major component of the Brussels population, and contributes massively to its growth and demographic structures. However, since 2016, there has been a certain stabilisation of these numbers, whose medium- and long-term impact on the Brussels demography is difficult to determine. In geographical terms, the presence of Europeans was strengthened between 2000 and 2015 in the south-east of the inner urban ring. This is the result in particular of the establishment of many French nationals in the south of the Region and the relocation of former labour immigration to the “typical” neighbourhoods of European Union nationals. On the other hand, the significant increase in the number of Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals in the west and in more working-class neighbourhoods contributes to the creation of “new fronts” for the European presence in Brussels.
- 13 The purpose of this article was essentially descriptive. However, it shows the decisive contribution of European Union nationals to the structure of the Brussels population and its development. This result should be further developed using socio-economic data for these foreigners such as income, education, labour market situation and sector

of activity. These elements would make it possible to further question this heterogeneous population and its impact on urban dynamics in Brussels, such as the evolution of property prices, the commercial fabric or the Brussels labour market. Qualitative methods such as interviews with Europeans or a review of the press intended for them would make it possible to go beyond the limits of quantitative data. In particular, the populations of the new member states would be interesting case studies due to their recent appearance and their size, as well as their unique geography.

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NOTES

1. The current nationality is the nationality of the individual at the data reference date [BISA, 2017].
2. Nationality at birth is the first nationality registered for each individual in the National Register [BISA, 2017].
3. In 2018, there were 300 000 EU nationals (excluding Belgians) according to nationality taken at birth, and 276 000 according to current nationality.
4. In 2017, 25 000 individuals from another Belgian region settled in BCR (internal entries) and 39 500 left it for another Belgian region (internal exits). The internal balance is therefore - 14 300 inhabitants. In the same year, 56 000 individuals from abroad settled in BCR (international entries) and 38 000 left it for abroad (international exits). The international balance is therefore + 12 500 inhabitants. In 2017, 17 500 births and 9 000 deaths were recorded in BCR. The natural balance is therefore + 8 500 [Hermia, 2018].
5. In 2004, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Malta and Cyprus joined the European Union. In 2007, Romania and Bulgaria joined, and in 2013, Croatia.
6. That is, countries which joined the European Union in 2004, 2007 and 2013. See note 5.
7. That is, medical sciences, public health sciences, dental sciences, biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences and motricity sciences.
8. The median age divides the population into two equal groups according to their age: one half is older than that age and the other half is younger. Median ages were calculated based on the distribution of five-year age groups for each population.
9. Average number of men per woman. A value of 1 represents a balanced situation (identical numbers of men and women). A value of less than 1 means that there are more women, and a value greater than 1 means that there are more men.
10. Respectively: 580, 1143, 781, 1218, 1453, 964, 752 and 2578 nationals in the Brussels Region in 2018 (BISA).
11. S. VANDENBERGH, 2011, De Roemeense bouwvakkers van Brussel. In: *Bruzz* [online]. 13/01/2011. [Retrieved on 23/11/2018]. Available at the address: <https://www.bruzz.be/samenleving/de-roemeense-bouwvakkers-van-brussel-2011-01-13>
12. The segregation index is a measurement of the segregation of a group in an area. It is between 0 (perfectly equal distribution) and 1 (perfectly unequal distribution). In red, nationalities whose segregation was reduced significantly (> 0,01) between 2000 and 2015, and in green, those whose segregation increased.

ABSTRACTS

In 2018, European Union nationals represented 275 000 individuals in the Brussels-Capital Region, i.e. 23 % of the population domiciled there. This is the result of the continuous increase in the number of people in this group between 2000 and 2018, linked to significant immigration from the new member states, the continued growth in the number of French nationals and the resumption of emigration from southern Europe from 2008 onwards. In geographical terms, the presence of Europeans was strengthened between 2000 and 2015 in the south-east of the inner urban ring, although at the same time, the significant increase in the number of Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian nationals has contributed to increasing the European presence in certain neighbourhoods in the western part of Brussels.

En 2018, les ressortissants de l'Union européenne représentaient 275 000 individus en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, c'est-à-dire 23 % de la population domiciliée. C'est le résultat de l'augmentation continue des effectifs de ce groupe entre 2000 et 2018, liée à l'importante immigration issue des nouveaux États membres, de la croissance continue des effectifs français et de la reprise de l'émigration depuis le Sud de l'Europe à partir de 2008. En termes géographiques, la présence des Européens est renforcée entre 2000 et 2015 dans le Sud-Est de la première couronne urbaine, bien que simultanément, l'augmentation importante des effectifs polonais, roumains et bulgares contribue à accroître la présence européenne dans certains quartiers de l'Ouest de Bruxelles.

In 2018 waren er 275 000 onderdanen van de Europese Unie in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, ofwel 23 % van de bevolking die in het Brussels Gewest gedomicilieerd is. Dit is het gevolg van de aanhoudende stijging van de omvang van deze groep tussen 2000 en 2018 door de sterke immigratie vanuit de nieuwe EU-lidstaten, maar ook de constante toename van het aantal Fransen en de herneming van de migratie vanuit Zuid-Europa sinds 2008. Op geografisch gebied is de aanwezigheid van Europeanen tussen 2000 en 2015 toegenomen in het zuidoosten van de eerste stadsgordel, hoewel de sterke toename van Polen, Roemenen en Bulgaren tegelijkertijd bijdraagt tot de versterking van de Europese aanwezigheid in bepaalde wijken in het westen van Brussel.

INDEX

Mots-clés: population, immigration, Union européenne, institutions internationales, boom démographique

Trefwoorden bevolking, immigratie, Europese Unie, internationale instellingen, demografische boom

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