

European Network Indicators of Social Quality
- ENIQ -

“Social Quality”
The Belgian National Report

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Preface

This national report and the 13 others that accompany it are published as part of the final report of the European Network on Indicators of Social Quality (ENIQ). The network began in October 2001 and completed its work in January 2005 and was funded under the Fifth Framework Programme of Directorate-General Research. Also published simultaneously are reports by the European Anti-Poverty Network and the International Council of Social Welfare, European Region based on the work of ENIQ. All of these reports and the deliberations of the Network contributed to the final report which contains a comprehensive overview of all of ENIQ's activities both theoretical and practical.

ENIQ has been focussed mainly on the operationalisation of the four conditional factors of social quality: socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. This huge collective effort has produced a very original and theoretically grounded instrument for comparative research aimed at understanding the nature and experience of social quality in different countries and in assessing the impact of policy changes. These national reports also reveal the highly differentiated character of the European Union (EU) which cannot be captured by reduction to a small number of social models. At the same time there is clearly an intrinsic affinity in the emphasis on equity and solidarity between most of the countries involved. This intrinsic, philosophical affinity is intriguing for future research.

The work presented in the national reports and the Network's final report will contribute substantially to the major book that will be published by the end of this year. There will also be articles based on the national reports in the European Journal of Social Quality.

The preparation of these national reports was an extremely difficult task. Developing a new approach, a new instrument, and analysing important social and economic trends and their consequences entailed considerable efforts for both established scientists and their junior assistants. The whole network had to grapple with the theoretical aspects of social quality as well as the empirical dimensions. Therefore we want to express our deep gratitude, on behalf of the European Foundation for Social Quality, for the work done by all participants in ENIQ. We will endeavour to ensure that this effort is not wasted and that Europe benefits from their expertise. We also want to acknowledge the excellent contributions of the staff of the Foundation - Margo Keizer, Helma Verkleij, Robert Duiveman and Sarah Doornbos - to the successful completion of this project. They made substantial inputs to all stages of the Network. Finally our thanks to the European Commission for funding ENIQ.

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1 Introduction

This document is the Belgian report on the indicators of Social Quality. It describes the Belgian situation regarding the set of indicators the ENIQ has developed within the theoretical framework of social quality. We would like to stress the fact that the report confines itself to explaining the national (or regional) situation concerning the social quality indicators without reflecting upon the theory itself or linking the results with the broader theoretical framework. Before presenting our findings, we would like to make some introductory remarks.

First, we would like to point to the fact that this report is not a comprehensive study on Social Quality in Belgium. The Social Quality theory (and also its domains, sub-domains and indicators) covers many societal aspects and interpreting the indicators for these societal domains generally requires (at least some) expertise on the subjects. Time and available resources did not allow to mobilize expertise outside the Centre for Social Policy. Inevitably, this will make the commentary on many indicators less informative and sometimes rather limited.

Second, because of the previous remark we opt for gathering relevant existing sources on the subjects concerned, rather than giving an own interpretation of the indicators for Belgium. Therefore this report can be considered as a compilation of information cited or extracted from other sources and referring to literature, studies etc for further readings.

Third, the information given in this report does not always exactly match the indicators suggested by the Social Quality Foundation. In several cases data for the required indicators were not immediately available (or not pre-existing). Where possible we gave a description of similar data which, in our opinion, allowed us nevertheless to gain some information on those specific aspects of Social Quality. When even this was not an option we tried to give a more qualitative description (legal framework, policy measures etc.) on the Belgian situation regarding those aspects of Social Quality.

Finally we would like to mention the specific structure of the Belgian state. Being a federal state, governmental responsibilities for the different fields are spread over three types of entities. The relevance of this for the Belgian Report on Social Quality Indicators has to do with the fact that legal and policy measures may differ between the three regions or the three communities and this depending on the subject matter. Moreover data gathering often takes place within or is presented by the three regions or communities, again depending on the subject matter. For example data on housing will be presented by region (responsibility of the regions), education will be presented by community (responsibility of the communities).

1.1 The Belgian federal structure

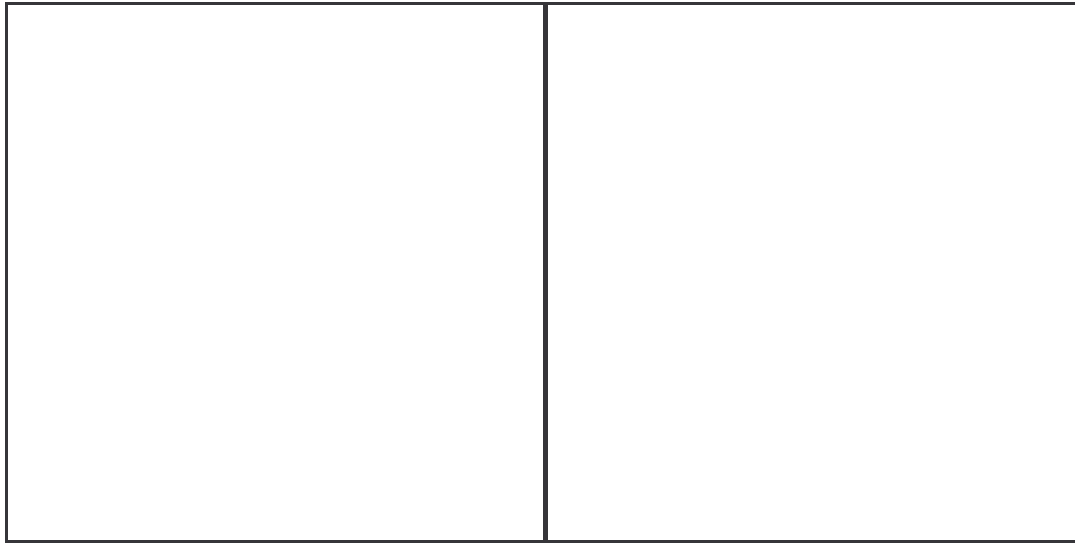
Belgium is a federal State where three types of entities have separate powers: the federal (national) Government, the Communities and the Regions. All three are equal from the legal viewpoint. They are on an equal footing but have powers and responsibilities for different fields.

The federal Government is primarily competent in matters of general interest that affect the whole of the population, such as finances, the armed forces, justice, social security, foreign affairs, an important part of public health care and home affairs.

The Belgian Federal State has three Communities which are based on the "language": the Flemish Community, the French-language Community, and the German-language Community. The Flemish Community exercises its powers in the Flemish provinces and in Brussels, the French Community in the Walloon provinces, with the exception of German-speaking communes, and in Brussels, the German-speaking Community in the communes of the province of Liege that form the German language area. Since the Communities are based on the concept of "language" and language is "dependent on the individual", a number of other powers are obviously associated with the Communities. The Community has powers for culture (theatre. libraries. audiovisual media. etc.). education. the use of languages and matters relating to the individual which concern on the one hand health policy (curative and preventive medicine) and on the other hand assistance to individuals (protection of youth. social welfare. aid to families. immigrant assistance services. etc.) They also have powers in the field of scientific research in relation to their powers and international relations associated with their powers (Federal Government. 2004).

Figure 1 The three Belgian Communities

Figure 2. The three Belgian Regions



Flemish Community = green
French-language Community = red
German-language Community = blue

Flemish Region = green
Walloon Region = red
Brussels Capital Region = blue

Source: Federal Government. 2004

Apart from the Federal State and the Communities, there are also three Regions whose existence is based on the notion of "territoriality". The names of the three regional institutions are borrowed from the name of the territory they represent. So we refer to (from north to south) the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region. Regions have powers in fields that are connected with their region or territory in the widest meaning of the term. They have powers relating to the economy, employment, agriculture, water policy, housing, public works, energy, transport (except Belgian Railways), the environment, town and country planning, modernisation of agriculture, nature conservation, credit, foreign trade, supervision of the provinces, communes and intercommunal utility companies (Federal Government, 2004).

2 Socio-economic security

2.1 Financial resources

2.1.1 Income sufficiency

The social-quality approach presents the pattern of spending as an indicator of income-sufficiency¹. This indicator (showing which part of total household consumption is spent on food, clothing, health and housing) is used as well outside the framework of social-quality, then as an indicator of prosperity at the micro level. The smaller the part of household income spent on basic needs like food, housing and clothing, the higher the standard of living.

Table 1 shows how three items take up the largest part of the Belgian household consumption. In 2001, a Belgian household spent on average 16% of its consumption on food & drinks, 27% on housing and another 16% on transport & communication. While the consumption pattern for most expenditure categories remained stable since the mid nineties, the expenditure on transport & communication has been steadily rising as a share of total spending while the expenditure on food has been declining.

Table 1. Evolution of household expenditures (as a proportion of total consumption). Belgium, 2001

	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1999	2000	2001
Food, drinks, tobacco	17.5	16.7	16.4	15.8	15.6	15.9
Clothing	6.1	6.0	5.6	5.3	4.9	4.7
Housing	26.4	28.1	26.9	26.1	26.1	26.5
Furniture	6.6	6.5	6.3	6.5	6.6	6.1
Health	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.7	4.2	4.7
Transport&communication	12.5	12.4	13.9	14.5	16.2	15.5
Cultural activities, leisure and education	8.1	9.0	9.2	9.0	8.8	8.8
Other	18.2	16.9	17.4	18.1	17.5	17.7

Source : Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek (N.I.S.)

The figures in table 1 however, count for the population as a whole. If we look at the consumption patterns of different income groups we notice considerable differences between the highest and lowest income deciles (figure 3).

Food consumption and housing

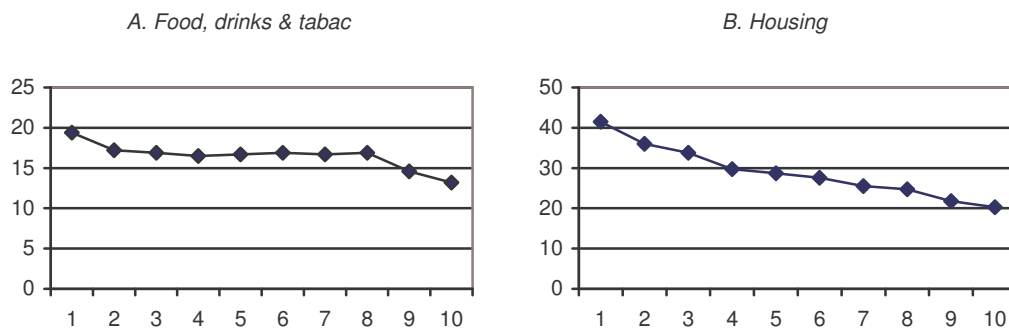
For example, the share of food consumption (figure 3A) in household spending is getting lower as income increases. Whereas households in the lowest decile spend 19 percent of their consumption on food & drinks, those in the 10th decile spend 13 percent on it. This finding is perfect in line with Engel's

¹ An international comparison on household consumption is published on a regular basis by Eurostat (Eurostat, 2002)

law² . which states that the lower a family's income is. the bigger is the proportion of it spent on food and the lower the standard of living is.

Also the part of consumption dedicated to housing (figure 3B) diminishes with an increase of income level. The difference between the lowest and the highest income decile is even more pronounced than is the case with food consumption. All income groups dedicate a significant part of their consumption to housing. yet in the 10th decile housing takes up about 20 percent of the total consumption compared to more than 40 percent in the 1st decile.

Figure 3 Household expenditure on food and housing as a proportion of total consumption by household income deciles. Belgium. 2001



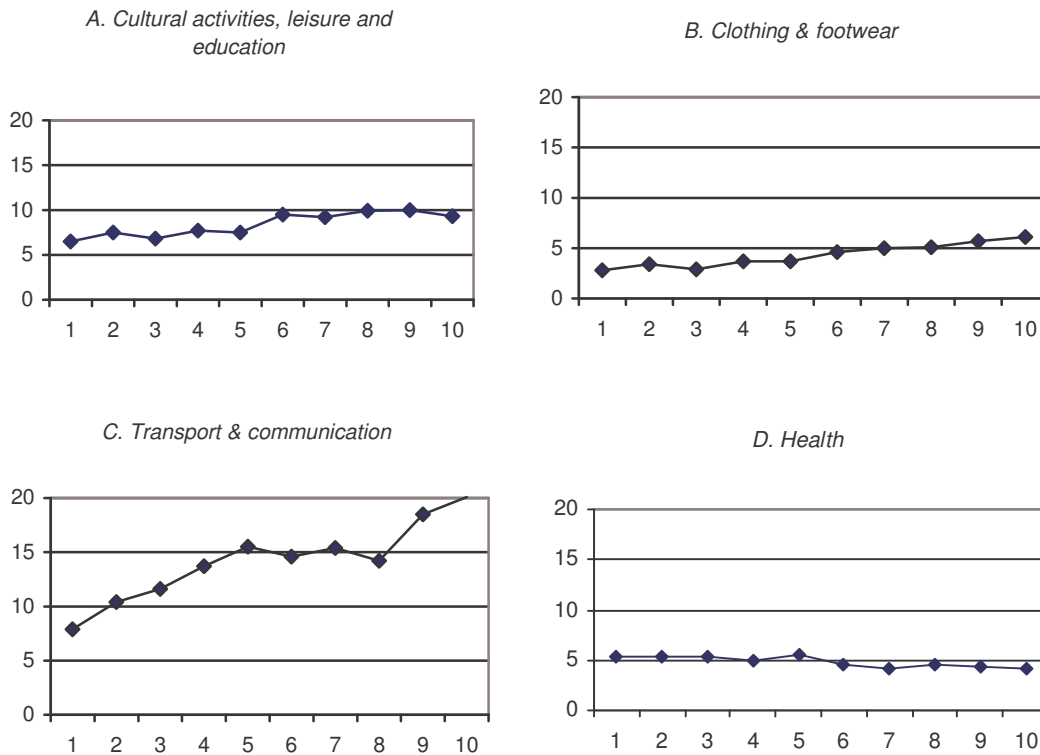
Source : Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek (N.I.S)

Clothing, leisure and transport

An opposite trend can be found with respect to clothing, leisure and transport (figure 2A-2C). In the higher income groups a bigger share of the total household consumption goes to these type of expenses. This positive relation is the most explicit with respect to transport & communication. The part of household consumption the highest decile spend on this item is two and a half times that of spent by the lowest decile.

² Ernst Engel was a German Statistician who analysed Belgian household budget surveys during the 19th century.

Figure 4 Household expenditure as a proportion of total consumption by household income deciles. Belgium. 2001



Source : Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek (N.I.S)

Health Care

The lowest deciles spend (proportionally) slightly more on health care than does the highest decile (the difference is about 1.5 %-points). However, results of the Belgian Health Survey reveal that a significantly higher proportion of people in lower income households postpone medical treatment because of financial reasons. In 2001 28.4 % of the households living below 60% of median income reported that during the last year one of their members postponed health treatment because of financial reasons. This is in sharp contrast with the group of households living at or above this threshold ; “only” 8% of them reported to have faced this kind of problem (National Action Plan Social Inclusion). Table 2 illustrates the link between household income and forced postponement of medical care by showing the percentage of people in households postponing medical treatment by income quintile.

Table 2 Percentage of people living in a household where one of the members had to postpone medical care due to financial problems during the last year. Belgium. 2001

First quintile	24.8%
Second quintile	12.0%
Third quintile	9.1%
Fourth quintile	4.3%
Fifth quintile	2.7%
< 60% median income	28.4%
> 60 % median income	8.0%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiting 2003-2005

Limiting the impact of household expenditures by policy measures

The Belgian government makes some efforts to limit the impact of certain expenditures on the household budget, especially for low income families. Some population groups for example are able to use public transport at reduced tariffs (cf. social inclusion), for education related expenses some households with children can count on compensations such as study allowances or interest-free loans (cf. infra) and the government provides social housing for low income families (cf. social inclusion). Since a few years the Belgian government also tries to limit the expenses for health care services by the introduction of a system of social and fiscal exemption (cf. infra).

2.1.2 Income security

The occurrence of certain biographical events (sickness, unemployment, retirement etc.) might endanger the security of income. An elaborated system of social security has to prevent Belgian people of becoming financially insecure in case of job-loss, retirement, illness, etc. We will first give a short overview of the system, its benefits and replacement rates, then we try to find out if and to what extent certain events (despite the existence of an elaborated system of social security) cause financially precarious situations.

Belgium's social insurance and social assistance system

(Extracted from Deleeck H., 2003 : 350-353)

Under Belgium's social security system, a distinction is made between social insurance and social assistance schemes.

A. Social insurance

The purpose of social insurance is to provide cover for the financial repercussions of a number of risks: incapacitation to earn a living through illness, disability, parenthood, old age, an industrial accident, professional disease or unemployment; the death of the household's breadwinner; the financial burden of children and medical care. Two types of benefits provide protection against these risks:

- So-called replacement incomes are wage-related benefits that are substituted for income from work if the latter falls away as a result of illness, old age or unemployment. They (usually and within certain margins) amount to a fixed percentage of the previously earned wage and thus, taking into account a maximum and a minimum, their purpose is to safeguard as much as possible the acquired standard of living.
- So-called complementary benefits are (in principle at least) lump sum payments that are intended to alleviate certain burdens or problematic expenses. They include the refunding of medical expenses and child benefits.

In order to be eligible for social insurance, the beneficiary typically has to comply with a number of technical conditions. It is, for example, not sufficient for a risk to materialise; the beneficiary must also have contributed enough to the system and have worked a required number of years.

Protection through social security extends to practically the entire population. However, this does not happen through a national unitary system, but within the framework of multiple schemes. After all, the Belgian social security system applies separate regulations for the various groups of workers: employees, self-employed persons and civil servants fall under distinct social security regimes with differences in terms of, among other things, manner of funding and level of protection offered.

B. Social assistance

The social insurance benefits are the backbone of the Belgian social security system. They provide the beneficiary with automatic protection against certain social risks. To the extent that the right to an allowance depends on social contributions paid, social security benefits only offer protection to the (adequately) insured. The system cannot provide every citizen with subsistence income at all times. Those who have not worked or have only paid social insurance contributions for a short period of time are not entitled to this kind of benefits.

The purpose of the social assistance system is to ensure a minimum income to those who are inadequately covered by the social security system. Social assistance allowances are means-tested. They are granted to households who are in financial poverty and are unable to acquire sufficient means of existence, either through their own efforts (labour) or by claiming social security benefits. So unlike the right to social insurance benefits, the right to social assistance does not depend on the payment of contributions, but on the existence of a need (the needs principle). As such, social assistance provisions are not funded through contributions, but from general means, i.e. tax revenue.

Figure 5 Belgium's social insurance and social assistance system

Social Insurance				Social Assistance
Complementary benefits				Assistance allowances
	<i>Employees</i>	<i>Self-employed</i>	<i>Public servants</i>	- guaranteed minimum income for disabled
- child benefits	lump sum	lump sum	lump sum	- guaranteed minimum income for the elderly
- refunding of medical expenses	lump sum	lump sum	lump sum	- subsistence income
Replacement incomes				- guaranteed child benefit
	<i>Employees</i>	<i>Self-employed</i>	<i>Public servants</i>	
- sickness & invalidity	wage-related	lump sum	wage-related	
- unemployment	wage-related	-	-	
- retirement	wage-related & lump sum	contribution-related & lump sum	wage-related	
- accident-at-work	wage-related	-	wage-related	
- occupational disease	-	-		
- right based on payment of contributions				- right based on a situation of need
- structured by profession				- uniform. national system

Source : Deleeck. 2003

Belgian benefit levels and replacement ratio's

Table 4 gives an overview of the Belgian benefit levels and replacement ratio's. For salaried persons, social benefits (unemployment, sickness, pensions) are a proportion of the former gross wage (with minima and maxim). The replacement rate depends on the family situation of the beneficiary and the duration of the inactivity. Benefits for the self-employed are fixed; however since 1984 pensions are also calculated on the basis of previous income.

Table 3 Level of Belgian social security benefits for employees. 1/10/2004

	Replacement ratio (% of previous gross wage)	minimum	maximum
Replacement incomes			
<i>Old age pensions (complete career)</i>			
Family	75%	1061€	
Single person	60%	894€	
Survivor's pension	60%	836€	
<i>Sickness and invalidity benefits</i>			
<i>Sickness</i>			
		+7 th month*	
Cohabiting persons with dependants	60%	1007€	1610€
Single persons	60%	812€	1610€
Cohabiting persons without dependants	55%	721€	1476€
<i>Invalidity (after 1 year)</i>			
Cohabiting persons with dependants	65%	1007€	1745€
Single persons	50%	812€	1342€
Cohabiting persons without dependants	40%	721€	1074€
<i>Unemployment</i>			
Cohabiting persons with dependants	60%	877€	1026€
Single persons			
- first year	60%	737€	1026€
- after first year	50%	737€	855€
Cohabiting persons without dependants			
- first year	55%	552€	940€
- 13th tot 18th month	40%	552€	684€
- after first year	Lump sum	389€	
Assistance allowances			
<i>Subsistence minimum</i>			
Cohabiting persons	Lump sum	409€	
Single persons	Lump sum	613€	
Lone parent	Lump sum	818€	
<i>Guaranteed minimum income for the elderly</i>			
Cohabiting persons	Lump sum	429€	
Single persons	Lump sum	644€	

Source : Ministerie van Sociale Zaken. 2004

As table 4 shows, most benefits under the insurance scheme are in principle unrestricted in time. Only for unemployed persons belonging to households with other earners (so-called cohabiters, mostly married women and children living at home) benefits may also continue for a long time, though the maximum entitlement period for this group is reduced (De Lathouwer, 2004).

At-risk-of-poverty when living on a social benefit

Empirical evidence from different international sources (Eurostat-data) reveal that employment offers the best protection against poverty. In most European countries, the at-risk-of-poverty rate of employed is far below that of non-employed. Figures for Belgium (for 2001, table 5) show for the employed population a poverty rate of 4%, compared to 22% for the non-employed. The loss of earnings, and consequently the transition towards a situation of inactivity, increases the risk of poverty significantly.

Table 4 At-risk-of-poverty rate by most frequent activity status. Belgium. 2001 (individuals)

Employed	4%
Non-employed	22%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Inclusie 2003-2005

Moreover, the poverty risk of Belgian non-employed is strongly dependent on the nature of the inactivity. Compared to pensioners and 'other inactive' individuals, a considerably higher share of the unemployed is living in financial insecurity. Whereas one out of five retirees live in a situation of financial poverty, the proportion poor/non-poor within the population unemployed is about one into three.

Table 5 At-risk-of-poverty rate by most frequent activity status. Belgium. 2001 (individuals)

Employed	4%
Unemployed	32%
Retired	21%
Other reason for inactivity than retirement or unemployment	21%

Source : Eurostat

A. Outcome of a Tax-Benefit Model

In 2001, the Centre for Social Policy (CSP) carried out standard simulations that took into account both household composition, taxation and parafiscality to determine the extent to which households on minimum benefits are protected against poverty (Cantillon, Marx, De Maesschalck, 2003). The results of this research indicate that Belgian households with one or two earned incomes, even if it is a minimum income, find themselves above the poverty line. However, this does not hold for households living exclusively on a minimum benefit. With the exception of lone-parent households, the minimum benefits for single persons and single-income households are generally insufficient to keep these households out of poverty. The income (after taxes) of a single person and a single-income household on social assistance amounts to respectively 87% and 77% of the poverty line (60% of median income), while in unemployment it amounts to respectively 91% and 85% (Table 6). Although not all beneficiaries receive a minimum benefit, these figures do suggest that households who, as a result of their making certain transitions, must fall back on the barest minimum of the welfare state (i.e. subsistence benefits) are not necessarily safeguarded against financial poverty (Cantillon, Marx, De Maesschalck, 2003).

Table 6 Net disposable household income of families living of a social benefit (for employees) as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Belgium. 1997

	Invalidity	Unemployment	Social assistance	Minimum wage
Single person	116%	91%	87%	142%
Single earner family without children	96%	85%	77%	107%
Single earner family with two children	93%	82%		99%
Dual earner family without children	172%	152%	-	201%
Dual earner family with two children	145%	131%	-	155%
One parent family with two children	123%	108%	101%	114%

Source : CSP-calculations based on STASIM

Table 7 Net disposable household income of families living of a social benefit (for employees) as a proportion of the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Belgium. 1997

	Old age pensions
Single person	124%
Non married couple. female partner not having own pension rights	83%
Non married couple. both partners having own pension rights	165%
Married couple. female partner not having own pension rights	103%
Married couple. both partners having own pension rights	155%

Source : CSP-calculations based on STASIM

B. Results from panel analyses

(Based on Dewilde C.. 2004)

In her doctoral research, Dewilde (University of Antwerp, 2004) models the impact of a range of 'actual' demographic and labour market events on poverty dynamics³. Her analyses are based on longitudinal panel data from two countries, Belgium and Britain (both belonging to a different welfare regime type). She concludes that, while in Britain most demographic and labour market events are related to poverty entry risks, the two main events associated with an entry in poverty in Belgium are partnership dissolution (for women only) and forced inactivity of the household reference person due to unemployment or disability.

According to Dewilde's research the household reference person becoming unemployed or disabled has a positive and highly significant effect on the poverty entry probabilities in Belgium. The impact however is different for single and dual-earner families. The poverty entry risk is lower for the respondents belonging to a household where both partners have a job. About 8.6% of the respondents in dual-earner households enters income poverty upon forced inactivity of the head of household compared to 42.3% of respondents belonging to a single-earner household. The transition into forced

³ Dewilde links the observed mobility patterns to the ways in which financial welfare in Belgium and Britain is distributed between three main systems of resources distribution : the welfare state, the labour market and the family

inactivity for the so-called 'secondary earners' on the contrary. does not lead to significantly higher poverty entry rates. Retirement of the household reference person has a limited positive effect on the poverty entry risks. Risks are relatively low for all social classes. with the exception of the self-employed and the farmers. which can be linked to the fact that these professional groups reside under a separate and less generous social security scheme.

Dewilde analysed also the impact of several demographic transitions. In the case of partnership dissolution there is a positive and strongly significant effect on the probability of becoming poor. The effects are gender-specific. The economic burden of partnership dissolution mainly falls on the shoulders of women (and the children who live with them). For Belgian women experiencing partnership dissolution. poverty rates increase from 8.1% to 20.3%. Also the effects of widowhood appear to be gender-specific. In our country. where most pensioners are dependent on earnings-related social security pension. there is some evidence that widowhood has a negative impact on the economic situation of widows. The negative impact is non-existing for widowers as none of the men enter poverty upon widowhood. Furthermore Dewilde studied the impact of the birth of a child and the departure of an adult child on the poverty entry probabilities of households. Her analyses for Belgium show no significant effects for those life-events (Dewilde. 2004a).

Policy measures

Both the analyses of the Centre for Social Policy and Dewilde are based on data gathered during the mid nineties. After 2000. several fiscal measures were taken which. together with a gradual increase of several (minimum) benefits. resulted in a substantial improvement of the minimum income protection provided by our Belgian welfare state (Cantillon. Marx & De Maesschalck. 2003).

Proportion of total population living in households receiving entitlement transfers that allow them to live above EU poverty level.

That paid work. despite an elaborated system of social security and social assistance. offers the best protection against poverty becomes clear also if we look at the poverty figures by major source of income (at household level). Households mainly living on an income out of paid labour have a poverty risk of 3% ; of all households being primarily dependent on social transfers 34% is at risk of poverty.

Table 8 At-risk-of-poverty rate by main source of income. Belgium and EU-15. 2001

	Employment	Social Transfers
Belgium	3%	34%
EU-15	10%	29%

Source : Eurostat

Social benefits may not offer the best protection against financial insecurity. they are nevertheless an essential instrument for combating poverty. Poverty rates would be much higher if social transfers would be non-existing.

According to the European relative poverty line, approximately 13% of the Belgian population was living in financial poverty in 2001. This means that 13% of the population had an income of below 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income. Without social security transfers, the poverty risk in our country would be three times as high. About 40% of the total Belgian population would, in that case, be facing a real poverty risk. It should however be noted that, in this reasoning, pensions are regarded as social transfers. If pensions are considered not to be social transfers but a part of primary income, then the poverty risk of the total Belgian population before social transfers is around 23%.

Table 9 At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after transfers. Belgium and EU-15. 2001

	Before social transfers	After old age pensions	After social transfers
Belgium	38%	23%	13%
EU-15	39%	24%	15%

Source : Eurostat

The table above indicates that, in Belgium, all social transfers put together (including pensions) reduce the poverty level by as much as 66% (from 38% to 13%). Pensions account for 40%, compared to 26% for all the other social transfers. If pensions are considered to be part of the primary income, then the reduction by (the other) social contributions amounts to 43%. In other words, social transfers have a significant redistributive impact.

2.2 Housing and environment

2.2.1 Housing Security

Finding data on the proportion of people who have certainty of keeping their home is not obvious. Therefore we give only a description of the way housing security is (supposed to be) guaranteed in Belgium. According to the Belgian constitution, every citizen has to have access to decent housing. The Belgian government tries to assure this right by means of several (legislative) initiatives.

A. Housing security in the rental market

In 1991, the federal government introduced the so-called rent act, with the purpose of, among other things, providing better legal protection for the renter (Federale Overheidsdienst Justitie⁴, 2003a). For this reason, the law includes stipulations that are intended to provide better housing security and to control pricing. The landlord is required to respect a number of fundamental principles concerning the duration of the rental agreement, the terms of notice, the rent amount and the state of the dwelling.

⁴ Federal Ministry of Justice

Duration of the contract

In order to provide the renter with greater housing security, the duration of rent contracts is subject to a number of rules. Nine-year leases are the rule. During this period prices can only be increased in step with the consumer price index, while contracts cannot be cancelled without proper motivation (cf. infra). There is however still the possibility of concluding short-term contracts with a duration of three years or less⁵. In order to prevent landlords from offering their tenants successive short-term contracts, with an adaptable rent and housing insecurity for the tenant, the lawmaker stipulated in 1997 that short-term rent agreements must be one-off contracts (Federale Overheidsdienst Justitie, 2003a: 15-20).

Dissolution of the contract

Dissolving a rental contract in Belgium is subject to a number of regulations, whereby a distinction is made between long-term and short-term contracts. In the case of short-term rental agreements (three years or less), neither the tenant nor the landlord can terminate the contract prematurely, unless the contract states otherwise. Likewise, long-term rental agreements can only be terminated after the agreed rental period has elapsed. A landlord can only end an agreement sooner for two reasons: the need for work to be executed or the fact that he intends to occupy the home himself. In both cases, he is required to give the renter 6 months' notice, he must motivate the decision and provide the renter with proof (e.g. a copy of planning permission or the identity of the person who is to occupy the home). Finally, the tenant can also terminate the agreement at the end of the first or the second three-year period, on condition that he provides 6 months' notice and payment of 9 months' rent (at the end of the first three-year period) or 6 months rent (at the end of the second three-year period) (Federale Overheidsdienst Justitie, 2003a: 15-20).

Pricing

Rents are not regulated in Belgium. Every time a lease is agreed, the rent amount is determined freely between the contracting parties. If a lease between two parties is extended, the rent cannot however be altered. Rents can be adapted yearly in accordance with an index, but this is not mandatory.

Quality of housing

The civil code stipulates that the landlord must, in every sense, provide the tenant with properly maintained accommodation. He must also upkeep the property so that it may continue to serve its purpose throughout the lease. As this stipulation is not enforceable, the lawmaker has added a mandatory stipulation which states that the landlord must take care that, at the moment when the rental agreement is concluded, the home meets all the elementary requirements of safety, health and habitability. Moreover, homes must meet minimum requirements in terms of amenities, dampness, stability etc. If a home does not meet these requirements, the tenant can demand a premature dissolution of the lease and claim compensation, or request that the necessary works be carried out (Federale Overheidsdienst Justitie, 2003a).

⁵ But not for longer than three years, because then they are considered to be nine-year contracts.

In Flanders, the regional authorities have introduced a housing code consisting in a number of tools to safeguard the quality of dwellings. Some of these instruments have already been made executable, including certain housing quality standards. Homes that fail to meet these standards can be declared unfit or uninhabitable by the mayor, upon the recommendation of civil servants of the Flemish Community. Landlords can demonstrate by means of a conformity licence that their property meets the standards of quality.

Alongside these housing quality standards, the authorities introduced a right of pre-emption and a social management right. These two instruments can be used as a punitive measure against owners who fail to maintain their property in accordance with the required standards of quality. The right of pre-emption entails that a premises may be purchased for the official price by local welfare centres, social housing companies, municipalities and social rental companies. The social management right, on the other hand, entails that a property may be rented by the authorities in order for them to rent it out socially. It should be noted that these new tools have barely been put into practice thus far. (Cited from Deleeck, 2003a).

B. Housing security for homeowners: free insurance for guaranteed housing

Both the Flemish and the Walloon authorities have recently introduced an insurance against loss of income for homeowners. The stipulations of the system differ in the two regions, but they share the same basic principles. The insurance against loss of income is free (the premium is paid by the regional authorities) in order to provide security of housing for people who have taken out a mortgage in order to build, buy or renovate their own home. The insurance, which is valid for up to 10 years after the moment of purchase, temporarily helps the mortgage taker (max. of 36 monthly instalments) to pay off part of the loan in the event of loss of work (and income) through involuntary dismissal, sickness or injury.

In order to be able to claim the insurance, a number of conditions need to be met at the time of application. These relate to the applicant's fitness to work, the net taxable income, and the amount and purpose of the loan. If the mortgage taker falls fully unemployed or becomes incapacitated for work, it takes three months before the first allowance is paid out. The allowance is paid for as long as the mortgage taker remains fully unemployed or incapacitated for work (with a maximum of 36 months). The maximum amount is 500 euro and the money is transferred directly to the banking company of the insured person (Vlaamse Infolijn & Afdeling Woonbeleid en financiering Huisvestingsbeleid van de Vlaamse Overheid).

2.2.2 Housing conditions

Overcrowded households

Because data on the number of square metres per household member are not immediately available for Belgium, we use the proportion of overcrowded households as a first indicator of Belgian housing conditions.

In Belgium 5% of all households are overcrowded (table 6). meaning that there is less than one room per person in the dwelling. This is far below the EU-average. Differences between income groups however are very pronounced. About 10% of all families with an income below the poverty line have less than one room per household member at their disposal (in 2001 12%). This figure is twice as high as that of households with an income above the poverty line (table 11). Only a single household having an income higher than 140% of the poverty treshold. is living in a place where there is less than one room a person.

Table 10 Overcrowded households by income group. Belgium and EU-15 1999

	EU-15	Belgium
All households	10%	5%
Household income less than 60% compared to median actual current income	16%	10%
Household income between 140% and greater compared to median actual current income	5%	1%

Source : European Commission - Eurostat. 2003a

As table 11 shows. there is some regional difference with respect to the share of overcrowded households. The proportion households living in a dwelling with less than one room per household member is. compared Walloon region. slightly higher in the Flemish region.

Table 11 Percentage of the population living in a dwelling with less than 1 room per household member (bath room and toilet. etc not included). Belgium. 2001

Belgium	7.2%
Flanders	8.0%
Wallonia	5.8%
<60% of median income	11.8%
>= 60% median income	6.5%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiting

Lack of functioning basic amenities

Regional differences are small as well with respect to the availability of functioning basic amenities. In both Flanders and Wallonia. only 2% of all households lack on of the following three basic amenities : hot running water. an indoor flushing toilet or bath/shower. Differences between financially poor and households living above the poverty line on the contrary are substantial. For about 1% of the non-poor families at least one of the tree basic amenities is not available in the house compared to 8% of the households below the poverty treshold.

Table 12 Percentage of household lacking at least one of the three basic amenities (bath or shower, hot running water, indoor flushing toilet) by income group. Belgium, 2001

	All households	<60% median income	>=60% median income
Belgium	2.2%	8.0%	1.3%
Flanders	2.0%		
Wallonia	1.9%		

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiving, 2003-2005

The figures in table 12 need to be considered with some caution. The data presented in the Belgian National Action Plan Social Inclusion differ substantially from the data presented by Eurostat in the publication 'Living conditions in Europe' while in both cases figures are based on the ECHP. According to the Eurostat publication about 19% of all Belgian households are lacking at least three of the basic amenities. Compared to the EU-average the proportion of the total population lacking functioning basic amenities is lower in Belgium, though the difference is rather small (see table 12). The conclusion regarding income as an important determinant of the availability of basic amenities nevertheless remains valid.

Table 13 Percentage of households lacking at least one of the three basic amenities by income group. Belgium and EU-15, 1999

	EU-15	Belgium
All households	21%	19%
Household income less than 60% compared to median actual current income	35%	33%
Household income between 140% and greater compared to median actual current income	10%	8%

Source : European Commission - Eurostat, 2003a

The finding that housing conditions are linked with the level of income appears also when we consider the number of households with housing problems like a leaking roof, the lack of an adequate heating system, mould and moisture of rotting doors-windows. The higher the household income, the lower probability of being faced with these kind of problems. While in the lowest income decile about 1 out of 10 households sees themselves confronted with one of the problems mentioned above, this is the case for 6% in the 3rd decile and for slightly less than 4% in the highest decile. Again the differences are most pronounced when we compare financially poor with non-poor households (more than 30% for the first, 14% for the latter).

Table 14 Percentage of the population living in houses with two or more of the following housing problems : leaking roof. no adequate heating system. mould and moister. rotting doors and windows. Belgium. 1999

Belgium	6.2%
Flanders	5.0%
Wallonia	7.7%
1st quintile	10.6%
2nd quintile	6.1%
3rd quintile	5.7%
4th quintile	4.8%
5th quintile	3.7%
<60% of median income	31.2%
>60% median income	14.4%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiging

2.3 Health and care

2.3.1 Security of health care provisions

(Cited from Federale Overheidsdienst Sociale Zekerheid. 2004)

A.The system

The key features of the Belgian health care system are:

- liberal ideas of medicine: the majority of providers are self-employed. are paid per item of service (fee-for-service) and enjoy complete freedom of diagnosis and prescription
- a compulsory health insurance system. managed jointly by all the stakeholders of the sector
- patients are free to choose both their health care provider and their hospital (private or public). which implies that they have free access to medical specialists as well.

Who is covered? The health care insurance scheme covers self-employed and salaried employees. either from the private or the public sector. as well as the unemployed. pensioners. minimum income recipients. the disabled. students. foreign nationals. etc.. as well as all of their dependants that fulfil the required conditions (principally related to income): spouses. co-habitants. children. ...

Consequently. we may say that practically the whole population in Belgium has access to the health care services in the context of the compulsory insurance plan. However. every beneficiary must meet a number of conditions to become eligible (on a yearly basis) for insurance benefit. These conditions are: i) membership of an insurance body : in general the choice of the insurer is free ii) payment of the minimum contribution. if required (certain categories. such as those on minimum income. are exempt from any payment or have a different entitlement (as dependent. for example)) iii) having completed a six-month qualifying period. However. this has become exceptional for in nearly all cases health care insurance is available without any qualifying period.

Extent of the coverage

The coverage for wage earners (and similar persons) is distinct from that of the self-employed. While wage earners are covered for 'minor health risks' (doctor's visits, physiotherapy, Medicines) as well as for 'major health risks' (mainly hospitalisation costs), self-employed persons are in principle only covered for major health risks. If they wish to be covered for the minor health risks, they can take out additional insurance with a health care fund, on payment of a specific contribution. An agreement has been reached within the Council of Ministers to include also the minor health risks in the obligatory insurance for the self-employed.

What is the insurance contribution to health care costs? Health care insurance does not provide health care services; it only grants a financial contribution to the costs of health care. All reimbursable health care services are (either totally or partially) listed in a nomenclature of health care services, that is to say a list that contains not only the relative value of the services but also the specific implementation rules, the criteria governing the health care providers' qualifications, and so on. There is a similar list for proprietary medicinal products that qualify for reimbursement. The amount of the insurance contribution to the cost of health care services varies mainly according to the nature of the service and the status of the beneficiary. In principle, the "own contribution" is 25 % but may be higher or lower depending on the type of service rendered. The pharmaceutical specialities are classified according to their social and therapeutic usefulness into five reimbursement categories. The personal share of the beneficiaries is fixed for each category and varies between 0 % and 80 %. However, patients admitted to hospital pay for their medicines no more than a daily flat-rate amount of 0.62 EUR.

Patient contributions to health care costs Patients bear the non-reimbursed portion of the health care services reimbursed by social security (the patient's own contribution), as well as all the services that are not reimbursed by the social security scheme (certain kinds of medicines, alternative medicines, homeopathy, aesthetic surgery, etc.), for example when the patient chooses to stay in a single room.

Contributions by private insurers

Complementary private insurance (on a voluntary basis introduced by private profit-making companies) bears essentially on the employees' own contributions and on supplementary fees for semi-private or private hospital rooms but may not cover the own contributions for ambulatory services. These private insurance plans currently cover but a small percentage of expenses but are constantly growing. The insurers also offer their members the possibility of taking out hospitalisation insurance as well as complementary insurance covering other types of services that are not reimbursed under the social security scheme: conveyance by ambulance, homeopathic medicines, osteopathy. The possibilities for registering into these plans with mutual insurance funds are totally distinct from their role in compulsory health insurance.

Obtaining reimbursements of health costs There are actually two systems existing side by side obtaining reimbursements of health costs. The first is the standard procedure with an a posteriori reimbursement. Patients pay the care provider of their choice, who in turn gives them a medical

certificate mentioning the service(s) he has delivered. Patients subsequently hand this certificate in with their insuring body to get reimbursement. The second is the special rule called third-party payers. The system of payment by a third party is compulsory for hospitals. Hospitals send patients a bill stating the overall costs of the services provided although patients are not required to pay the entire amount of this invoice; they only pay their own contribution as well as any possible supplementary costs. Hospitals also send a bill to the patient's insuring body, which will pay the amount of the insurance contribution directly to the hospital. A similar system is in effect with respect to medicines: patients fetching their reimbursed medicines prescribed by their doctor in a retail pharmacy only pay part of the total costs of the medicines (a quota that has been fixed as their personal contribution). Third-party payment is also possible in outpatient care on certain conditions and for the benefit of only some categories of the population.

B. Policy measures aimed at improving access to health care

Over the last few years a number of different steps have been taken to improve access to health care services.

There was the introduction of a system of increased reimbursement (preferential rate or rate applicable to widows, invalids, pensioners and orphans) for health benefits to certain categories of individuals laid down by law; they are persons in a particular social situation (e.g. invalids, pensioners, the disabled....) whose income does not exceed a certain threshold (12.732.29 EUR increased by 2.357.09 EUR for every dependent - figures as of 1 June 2003) or persons who, on the basis of their social situation, are presumed to fulfil these conditions with regard to income. This benefit, added to the insurance contribution, applies both to medical and paramedical health care services and to medicinal products.

In 1993 the Belgian Federal Government introduced a system of so-called social and fiscal exemption. It intended to guarantee the accessibility of medical care by limiting the medical costs of households. The social exemption system exempted certain categories of insured beneficiaries of any patient fee from the moment the annual amount of personal fees in the costs of reimbursable medical care exceeded a certain limit. Households then had no longer to contribute to the medical costs, the costs became directly at the expense of the health insurance fund. The system of fiscal exemption applied to the rest of the insured households. It provided a tax reimbursement for all insured whose patients fees (personal payments) exceeded a certain floor amount. This floor amount was income related (depending on the annual gross taxable income) and increased with level of income. When households paid more patient fees than the floor amount, the surplus was brought to balance through the income tax that may be due later.

Because of some shortcomings (the social exemption only applied to certain social categories, the tax exemption only provided for a reimbursement after a period of two years on average and costs for medications were not taken into consideration) the system of social and tax exemptions has recently been replaced by a system of Maximum Billing. It basically adopts the same ideas and mechanisms

but i) more medical prestations can be brought in and ii) the Social Maximum billing includes from now on all low income families. In the new system all households with a net taxable income below 21796 euro a year are exempted of patient fees from the moment the annual amount of their personal fees in the costs of reimbursable medical care exceeds a certain limit. The system of Fiscal Maximum Billing is comparable with the previous system of fiscal exemption. Households with an income higher than the limit for Social Maximum Billing, who have paid more personal contributions than the reference amount that applies to them taking into account their net year income, are eligible for Fiscal Maximum Billing. The insurance funds communicate the information with regard to the personal contributions to the tax administration. If too large amount of personal contributions has been paid, the tax administration will adjust this when the taxes are levied (2 years after date). (Source : Health Care Structure in Belgium)

Table 15. Income scales within the system of maximum billing. 2004

Net taxable income (year)	Maximum	Repayment
0 - 14178.07 euro	450	Immediately by the health insurance fund
14178.07 - 21796.13euro	650	
21796.13 - 29414.22 euro	1000	Two years later by tax system
29414.22 - 36714.86 euro	1400	
36714.86 - 52480.02 euro	1800	
52480.02 euro and more	2500	

Source : RIZIV. 2004

These important changes to which compulsory health care has been subjected allowed the reintegration into the health care insurance system of a whole group of individuals that had been previously excluded. Therefore the Ministry of Social Affairs dares to say that currently over 99% of the population is covered by compulsory health care insurance.

2.3.2 Health services

In 1999 there were 405 medical doctors per 100.000 inhabitants in Belgium. This is a significantly higher number than in most other European Member States. Since the end of the nineties the number of physicians increased steadily.

Table 16 Number of physicians (practicing or licensed) per 100.000 inhabitants. EU. 1997-2001

	EU15	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
1997	-	386	345	410	428	325	214	578	-	306	296	278	168
1998	368	395	350	426	436	426	219	583	295	312	300	278	172
1999	375	405	355	438	444	328	227	589	311	318	306	283	176
2000	-	411	359	-	454	329	250	599	321	325	308	-	180
2001	-	419	362	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: European Commission - Eurostat. 2003

Licensing and quota systems for health care professionals

Health care providers wishing to practise in Belgium must be licensed by the federal authorities. In 1996, the federal government decided to slow down growth in the number of health care providers (doctors, physiotherapists, dentists, ...), who were considered to be in excess and to be the root cause of the increase in health care expenditure. A limitation of the number of applicants having access to the profession and to medical practice in the context of the compulsory health care insurance system was imposed as a solution to balance supply and demand in the sector. The quotas were fixed for each Community individually and distributed between general medicine and specialised medicine. The establishment of the various criteria and methods for selecting candidates at faculty level (university) was left to the discretion of the Communities, who are responsible for education (Federal Overheidsdienst Sociale Zekerheid, 2004). In the Flemish Community, the number of graduated physicians who, after completing 7 years' medical training, may start the training programme for general practitioners has been restricted by the Flemish authorities to 420 per year between 2004 and 2011.

As the authorities want to restrict the number of medical students to the positions that will be available upon graduation, prospective medical students have been required since 1997 to take an entrance exam. Only candidates who pass this exam are admitted to the training programme.

Not only are there many physicians in Belgium; providers of medical care (both general practitioners and medical staff in hospitals) are also easy to reach for patients (Table 17). Approximately 90% of Belgians indicate that they can reach their GP in less than 20 minutes. This is relatively quickly in European comparative perspective. However, not all income groups appear to have equal access to GPs. 96% of those from the highest income quartile indicate that they live less than 20 minutes away from their GP, compared to only 82% of the lowest income group. This means that Belgium is among the countries with the greatest difference in terms of proximity of GPs between the highest and the lowest income quartile (13.4 percentage points). It should however be noted that our country still performs quite well in European comparative perspective as far as the latter group is concerned.

Table 17 Percentage of the population having access to a general practitioner's surgery in less than 20 minutes by quartiles of household-equivalence income. Europe. 1999

	Total	Lowest quartile	Highest quartile	Difference in %- points
Greece	58.1	50.8	65.7	14.9
Portugal	64.6	64.4	64.7	0.3
Hungary	74.3	66.5	81.9	15.4
Austria	75.8	85	67.1	-17.9
Finland	76.1	68.9	83.3	14.4
Slovenia	80	76.2	84.2	8
Germany	81.9	82.9	81	-1.9
Ireland	83.2	80.8	85.7	4.9
UK	83.4	77.4	89.7	12.3
Luxembourg	84.4	85.7	83.1	-2.6
EU15	84.7	83.3	86	2.7
France	87.8	86.9	88.6	1.7
Belgium	89	82.5	95.9	13.4
Spain	90.7	92.2	89.4	-2.8
Sweden	91.1	86.6	96.6	9
Denmark	91.4	88.5	94.2	5.7
Italy	91.9	90.1	92.1	2
Netherlands	91.9	89	94.6	5.5

Source : European Foundation for the improvement of working and living conditions. 2004

Hospitals. too. are easy to reach for most Belgians (Table 18). About 66% of those interviewed say they live less than 20 minutes from the closest hospital. Again. there are notable differences between the various income groups. While 80% of those belonging to the highest income quartile indicate that they live less than 20 minutes from a hospital. this proportion drops to just 54% for the lowest income group. As regards the proximity of hospitals for the population as a whole. Belgium is one of the best-performing countries in Europe (after the Netherlands and Luxembourg). Yet. it also belongs to the group of countries with a pronounced difference in terms of proximity of hospitals (25 percentage points) between the highest and the lowest income quartiles (only Italy and Hungary report bigger differences).

Table 18 Proximity to hospitals by income (% having access to a hospital in less than 20 minutes by quartiles of household-equivalence income). Europe. 1999

	Total	Lowest quartile	Highest quartile	Difference in %- points
Sweden	58	56	60	4.0
Spain	41.4	38.4	44.2	5.8
Finland	50.9	48	53.8	5.8
Ireland	44.6	40.5	48.7	8.2
Greece	39.9	35.7	44.3	8.5
Germany	52.7	48	56.8	8.9
Netherlands	72.5	66.8	77.8	11
EU (15 countries)	52.8	44.9	60.4	15.5
Slovenia	37.9	30.5	46.2	15.7
France	54.4	43.4	65.3	21.9
Portugal	37.8	27.2	49	21.9
UK	45.5	34.2	57.8	23.6
Belgium	66	53.6	78.9	25.3
Italy	60.9	47	75.2	28.2
Hungary	31.4	16	46.8	30.8

Source : European Foundation for the improvement of working and living conditions. 2004

2.4 Work

2.4.1 Employment security

Based on : Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid. Arbeid & Sociaal Overleg⁶.
 Humblet P. & Rigeaux M.. 1999

Length of notice

The Belgian lawmaker has tried to provide a degree of employment security by imposing strict conditions for the unilateral termination of labour agreements. For that matter, under Belgian labour law, only indefinite-term labour contracts can be terminated by notice. An agreement cannot be terminated prematurely unless by mutual consent or for urgent reasons.

The employer who wishes to terminate an indefinite-term labour contract unilaterally must abide by certain rules, including in relation to the length of notice, which must always be proportional to the employee's years of service and gross annual salary. An important distinction is moreover made between notice for blue-collar and white-collar workers, whereby the regime for the latter is generally speaking more favourable.

⁶ Federal Ministry of Employment

A. Blue-collar workers

In principle, the length of notice for manual workers is 28 days. If the worker has been with the same company uninterruptedly for at least 20 years, the length of notice is doubled to 56 days. On the suggestion of the equal-representation committee of employers and employees, other terms of notice may be agreed in certain sectors of industry. These deviant terms may be either longer or shorter than the statutory length of notice for blue-collar workers.

Table 19 Length of notice for blue-collar workers in a situation of unilateral termination of the contract

Termination of the contract	Seniority		Start of notice
	<20 years	>20 years	
- by the employer	28 days	56 days	First Monday of the week following the week of dismissal
- by the employee	14days	28 days	

Source: Humblet P. & Rigeaux M., 1999

The above lengths of notice were adapted in 2000 under the terms of a collective labour agreement (which was subsequently declared to be binding by Royal Decree), so that blue-collar workers are now better protected against dismissal. Table 18 offers an overview of the new lengths of notice.

Table 20 Length of notice for blue-collar workers in a situation of unilateral termination of the contract

Seniority	Termination of the contract by	
	the employer	the employee
6 months – less than 5 years	35 days	14 days
5 years – less than 10 years	42 days	14 days
10 years – less than 15 years	56 days	14 days
15 years – less than 20 years	84 days	14 days
More than 20 years	112 days	28 days

Source : Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid, Arbei & Sociaal Overleg⁷

B. White-collar workers

The statutory length of notice for white-collar employees varies in accordance with the employee's years of service and annual gross earnings. In the case of a white-collar employee with an annual gross salary below 26.418 euros, the employer must give at least 3 months' notice, on condition that the employee has been with the company for less than 5 years. For each additional 5 years' service, the length of notice is extended by 3 months. If the employee wishes to terminate the labour contract, the length of notice is half as long as that applying to the employer, providing that it does not exceed 3 months.

⁷ Federal Ministry of Employment

Table 21 Length of notice for white-collar workers (gross wage of less than 26418€ a year) in a situation of unilateral termination of the contract

Seniority	Termination of the contract by		Start of notice
	the employer	the employee	
6 months – less than 5 years	3 months	1.5 month	First Monday of the month following the month of dismissal
5 years – less than 10 years	6 months	3 months	
10 years – less than 15 years	9 months	3 months	
15 years – less than 20 years	12 months	3 months	
20 years – less than 25 years	15 months	3 months	
25 years – less than 30 years	18 months	3 months	

Source : Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid. Arbeid & Sociaal Overleg⁸

If the employee's annual gross salary is over 26.418 euros. the length of notice is determined by mutual consent. no earlier than the moment at which notice is given. If the notice is given by the employer. then it may not be shorter than the statutory term for employees earning less than 26.418 euros. If it is given by the employee. then the maximum term is four and a half months for those on an annual gross salary of between 26.418 and 52.836 euros. and up to 6 months for those earning an annual gross salary of more than 52.836 euros.

Table 22 Length of notice for white-collar workers (gross wage higher than 26418€ a year) in a situation of unilateral termination of the contract

Seniority	Termination of the contract by		
	the employer	the employee 26418€- - 52836€	Higher than 52836€
6 months – less than 5 years	3 months	1.5 month	1.5 month
5 years – less than 10 years	6 months	3 months	3 months
10 years – less than 15 years	9 months	4.5 months	4.5 months
15 years – less than 20 years	12 months	4.5 months	6 months
20 years – less than 25 years	15 months	4.5 months	6 months
25 years – less than 30 years	18 months	4.5 months	6 months

Source : Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid. Arbeid & Sociaal Overleg

If the labour contract is dissolved for other than urgent reasons and without the term of notice being respected. then a notice fee is due to the other party that amounts to the corresponding salary for the term of notice that should have been respected.

Temporary employment

A. Legal framework

Belgian labour contract law prohibits employers to offer the same employee successive fixed-term contracts (apart from a number of well-defined exceptions). As indefinite-term contracts provide more guarantees for security of employment than a fixed-term contract. employers often used to offer

⁸ Federal Ministry of Employment

employees successive fixed-term contracts rather than an indefinite-term contract. In order to prevent this, the lawmaker stipulated that, if parties have concluded successive fixed-term agreements, they are assumed to have concluded an indefinite-term agreement (Humblet P. & Rigeaux M., 1999).

B. Incidence of temporary employment in Belgium

Approximately 9% of employees in Belgium are employed under a fixed-term contract. This is a substantially smaller proportion than the European average (13.5%).

Temporary employment is more common among women than men. Just over 12% of female employees are employed under a fixed-term contract, compared to just 6% in the case of men. Although the proportion of women employed under a fixed-term contract is higher than that of men throughout the European Union, there are few countries where the difference is as great as it is in Belgium. Only Finland and the Netherlands exhibit comparable gender differences in relation to fixed-term employment.

The differences in relation to age are also striking. The greatest proportion of employees with a fixed-term contract is found in the youngest age group. Approximately a third of the 15- to 24-year-old employees work under a fixed-term labour contract. The proportion of temporary workers declines with age. In the 25 to 39-year category, just 9% work under a fixed-term contract, and the proportion further declines to a mere 3.3% among those aged between 55 and 64.

The impact of schooling on the likelihood of employment under a fixed-term agreement would appear not to be particularly strong. Only employees who have enjoyed higher education of the long type seem to be more likely to obtain an indefinite-term contract, certainly in comparison with university graduates, 10% of whom are employed under a fixed-term labour contract.

Table 23 Temporary employment in proportion (%) of the wage earners aged 15 - 64 years . Belgium. 2000

Group	Proportion
EU-15	13.5%
Belgium	9.1%
Gender	
males	6.7%
females	12.3%
Age	
15-24 year	30.8%
25-39 year	9.0%
40-54 year	4.9%
55-64 year	3.3%
Educational level	
Primary Education	9.6%
Lower Secondary Education	9.2%
Higher Secondary Education	8.9%
Higher education of the short type (3 years)	8.7%
Higher education of the long type (4 years)	6.7%
University	10.9%

Source : Steunpunt Arbeid. Werkgelegenheid en Vorming & Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiting

Regional differences regarding temporary employment are rather small. At least, if we consider the general figures. A breakdown by gender however shows a considerable higher proportion of females with an indefinite-term contract in the Walloon region compared to the Flemish region and the region of Brussels.

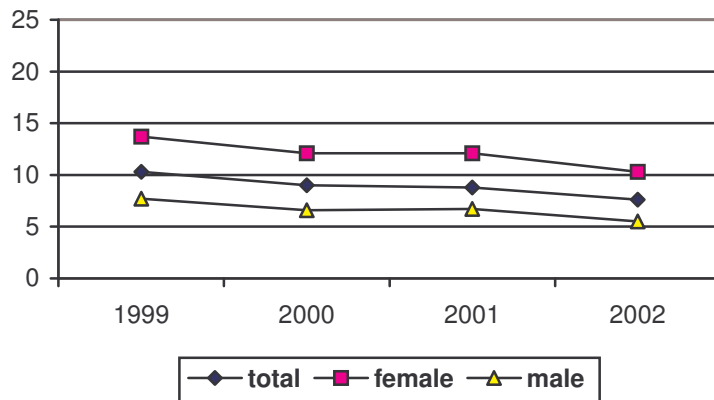
Table 24 Temporary job contracts. Belgium and its regions. 2001

	Belgium	Flemish region	Brussels	Walloon region
Female	12.3%	12.0%	11.3%	13.1%
Male	6.7%	5.9%	6.9%	8.4%
Total	9.1%	8.5%	9.0%	10.4%

Source : Steunpunt Arbeid. Werkgelegenheid en Vorming

Since the late nineties, the share of temporary employment is steadily decreasing, both for women and men. In 1999, 10.3 % of all employed had a temporary job contract. In 2002 this share was 7.6%

Figure 6 Evolution of people with temporary job contracts



Source : National Action Plan Social Inclusion

C. Temporary job contracts and risk of poverty

Poverty rates for those in work vary in Belgium according to job characteristics as contract type. We observe that the poverty risk for temporary workers (7% in 2001) is substantially greater than that for other employees (3% in 2001). This is in line with observations in all other EU Member States (European Commission, 2004e). With the exception of Austria, all EU countries have higher poverty rates among temporary workers than among workers under indefinite-term labour contracts. Still, Belgium performs quite well in this respect in European perspective. Despite the fact that, in Belgium, the poverty risk for temporary employees is twice as high as it is for employees under indefinite-term contracts, it is among the lowest in the European Union.

2.4.2 Working conditions

Reducing working time

(Partly extracted from Debacker M., De Lathouwer L. and Bogaerts K.)

Belgian employees have several possibilities to reduce their working time or interrupt the working career. Two systems shape the legal framework : the time-credit system and the system of thematic leaves.

A. time-credit system

The Belgian system of time-credit allows the employee to reduce working time or interrupt the working career without the obligation of motivating this decision. The employee thus, does not have to specify the reason for taking leave. Reducing working time or interrupting the working career is however limited in time. Depending on the extent of the working time reduction (20%, 50% or 100%) the employee can use time credit for a period of 3 to 12 months (in some sectors 5 years) (cf. infra figure 7).

An important feature of the Belgian time-credit system is that job security is provided for leave takers and this through the job protection regulations that have been built into the system. Employees taking time credit are protected from dismissal from the moment they apply for time credit until three months after the termination of their career interruption or reduction in working hours. Hence persons taking up a time credit remain under labour contract with the same employer. Another crucial characteristic of the time credit system is that it is embedded in the social security system. Users of the time credit maintain their rights in social security (except for annual holidays): unemployment, sickness and invalidity, child benefits and pension rights. Furthermore, they receive a benefit to compensate for income loss. In order to be entitled employees should have worked at least 12 months in a period of 15 months prior to the application. This benefit is paid out by the general unemployment insurance. The integration of the time credit system within the unemployment insurance can be explained by the fact that originally the career break system was set up as an employment measure (see further).

As a result of those characteristics, the time credit appears to be a strong collective system, shaped by federal regulations. Although its basic design is stipulated by federal law putting forward minimal standards, the specific regulations of the time credit system are negotiated at the sector level and established by collective labour agreements. The minimal standards include the entitlement conditions and the flat rate level of the benefit. The sectoral agreements can result in intersectoral variation with regards to the maximum duration of the time credit. The federal standard defines a period for a time credit of one year, but sectors can enlarge the duration up till maximum 5 years (Debacker, De Lathouwer & Bogaerts)

Figure 7 Modalities of the Belgian time credit system

Reductions of working time with :	Level of the monthly benefit (net)	Duration
100 percent	3612€ - 482€	Minimum: 3 months - Maximum: 1 year <i>(Maximum duration can be extended on sectoral level until 5 years)</i>
50 percent	167€ – 222€	
20 percent	192€ (cohabiting persons) 142 € (single persons)	Minimum 6 months – maximum 5 years Minimum 6 months – maximum 5 years

Source : Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening, 2004

B. Thematic leaves

In the second half of the nineties three so-called thematic leaves were introduced : the parental leave, the palliative care leave and the medical care leave. The thematic leaves have in common that the use of it is related to a specific reason. As in the general career break system, employees on thematic leave are entitled to a benefit, maintain their rights in social security and are protected from dismissal. Important to note, is that the thematic leaves have been introduced as a bonus: they are not counted in the calculation of the total period of leave taken by an employee throughout his career.

The palliative care leave and medical care leave are very similar to each other. The palliative care leave was the first to be introduced in 1996. Three years later, a right to career break in order to care for a seriously ill family member was installed. This latter system can be taken up for a longer period of time, but the circumstances under which leave is granted are more restricted. Employees can take up palliative care leave for anyone who is terminally ill, but the use of the medical care leave is restricted to family members. Parental leave was introduced in 1997 and gives employees the opportunity to take per child under 4 years old a full time break during three months, a half time break during six months or a reduction of working time with 20 % during 15 months (Debacker, De Lathouwer, Bogaerts, 2004).

Figure 8 Modalities of the Belgian system of thematic leaves

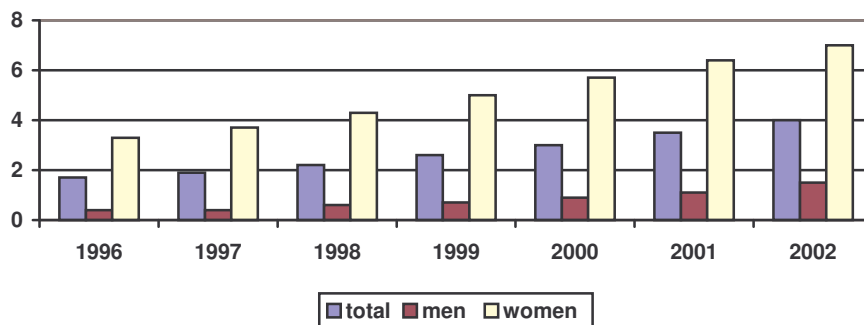
Type of leave	Reduction	Level of monthly benefit (net)	Duration
parental leave	100%	502€	3 months
	50%	231€ – 463€	6 months
	20%	93€ – 185€	15 months
medical leave	100%	502€	12 months
	50%	231€ – 463€	24 months
	20%	93€ – 185€	24 months
palliative leave	100%	502€	1 month
	50%	231€ – 463€	extensible with 1 month
	20%	93€ – 185€	

Source : Rijksdienst voor Arbeidsvoorziening, 2004

C. Reducing working time : a rising success

Figure 9 shows the number of people reducing their working time as a % of the individuals being insured against unemployment (the latter being a proxy of people entitled to reduce their working time within the framework of the time credit or thematic leave system).

Figure 9 Number of people reducing their working time as a % of the individuals insured against unemployment by gender, Belgium, 1996-2002



Source : RVA-data

The strong integration of the time credit system, as well of the previous career break system, into the social security system (with compensation and maintained social security rights), employment protection system and collective bargaining traditions, together with the lack of any conditions concerning the reason why leave should be taken, have undoubtedly led to the rising success of the career break system and later the time credit system. The number of users has risen sharply since the installation of a career break system in 1985. Moreover, it appears that share of women reducing their working time is much higher than that the proportion of men. Breakdowns of these figures by age and the type of leave shows that i) more women than men are reducing their working time within the system of thematic leaves and ii) that women reducing their working time are to be found in more younger age groups than their male counterparts. Therefore it is often concluded that Belgian women are reducing working time mostly for care reasons while men prefer to work less for personal reasons when they are older and at the end of their career.

D. From an employment measure to a policy instrument aimed at reconciling work and private life

Although the basic characteristics of the career break system and the time credit system have remained the same, the 'system' has undergone some changes since its introduction in 1985. Shift from career breaks as an employment measure to a measure aimed at reconciling paid work and private life. This shift in fact reflects the changing context in which the reforms took place

The career break system was first introduced in 1985, in a context of economic hardship and its related problems of high unemployment and budgetary difficulties. The improvement of the economic competitive position and the lowering of the high unemployment levels were two elements put forward as the most adequate instruments in the battle against the sky-high public finances. The career break system was implemented by a law specifically aimed at the reorganization of the public finances and formed a part of the economic and budgetary recovery policy that was implemented by the federal government since 1981. The system was specifically designed as a work redistribution tool. The work redistribution objective was ensured through the obligation to replace every employee on leave by a person entitled to unemployment benefits. Although a clear economic rationale predominantly influenced the creation of the career break system, the discussion that preceded its introduction was not confined to economic arguments.

With the introduction of the time credit system by the Collective Labour Agreement (14 th February 2001) negotiated between the social partners in the National Labour Council and implemented by the Law on Reconciliation of Employment and Quality of Life (15 th September 2001), the 'quality of life' aspect has been growing more dominant. The context in which the time credit system was created was quite different from the period of the introduction of the career break system. First the time credit is established in a context where the widespread proliferation of dual earner ship has increased the number of employees that have to deal with both work and care responsibilities. Several policy documents in the beginning of the new millennium stated that the aim of the career interruption system was not only to provide 'more work', but also to provide 'more time' to the households in order to improve their well-being (Employment Plan 2000, policy document 2000-2004 Flemish minister of

Employment). The introduction of the new time credit system largely illustrates this evolution: as the legal framework suggests, the goal to allow individuals to combine paid work with other life spheres (family, leisure, education, social life...) in a better way is placed on the same foot as the goal to increase employment levels. Second the time credit has been installed at a moment of a temporal improved economic and budgetary situation. We witness a strong employment growth for the year 2001 and in particular 2002 and a general loosening of budgetary restrictions (e.g. social security benefits in several sectors were increased, taxes were reduced, etc..) in an 'optimistic' climate of Belgian public finances, which have succeed in eliminating budgetary deficits since 2000.

The system of time credit is increasingly the subject of public discussion for various reasons. First, the growing success and thus rising expenditures in the time credit system is problematic in a context of weak economic growth and budgetary tensions. The increasing expenditures for health and pensions due to ageing leave indeed little room for increasing expenditures in other sectors of social security. A second point of discussion deals with the questions to what extent systems like time credit can stimulate employment rates. Under the pressure of the discourse around the 'active welfare state', it is often argued that time credit could stimulate people to work more and especially longer. However, the age pattern of time credit suggests that time credit in the first place enlarges the options for early exit. The present knowledge on the working of systems like time credit does certainly not allow us to state that these system leads to more employment over the life cycle. A third subject of discussion is situated at the level of firms. It is often argued by employers that the time credit results in a loss of productivity. This is especially true in productive environments that imply a lot of shift work: temporary reductions can less easily be set off by a reshuffling of existing task divisions.

Because of the increased use of time credit in the present context of savings in social security, the federal government has recently decided to promote the introduction of an alternative system of 'timesaving', whereby employees can save up extra hours and holidays on a "time account" and take them up at moments when they need more time to invest in their private life. In such a way the link between work history and acquired rights is strengthened, which alleviate the pressure on social security (Debacker, De Lathouwer & Bogaerts, 2004).

Number of hours a full-time employee typically works a week (actual working week)

Since 2001, a standard working week (maximum) of 38 hours was introduced for full time employees in all sectors. Nevertheless, it appears that the average working week of a Belgian full time employee is longer than the standard working week. According to Eurostat data, a full time employee work about 41 hours a week in 2003.

Table 25 Hours worked per week of full time employment. Europe. 1996-2003

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
EU (15 countries)	42.1	42.1	42.1	41.9	41.7	41.6	41.4	:
Belgium	40.3	40.6	41.2	38.4	38.5	41.2	41.4	41.3
Germany	41.6	41.7	41.7	41.8	41.8	41.6	41.4	41.0
Greece	44.6	44.4	44.5	44.7	44.2	44.2	44.2	44.4
Spain	42.2	42.3	42.3	42.2	42.1	42.0	41.8	41.6
France	41.2	41.1	41.0	40.9	40.2	39.6	38.9	40.7
Ireland	43.9	43.2	42.9	42.1	41.9	41.5	41.2	41.0
Italy	40.6	40.5	40.6	40.5	40.6	40.6	40.5	40.5
Hungary	42.1	42.0	41.8	42.0	41.9	41.5	41.4	41.4
Netherlands	41.5	41.3	41.0	41.0	41.0	40.9	40.7	40.6
Portugal	43.7	43.1	43.1	42.4	42.0	41.9	41.9	41.6
Slovenia	43.6	43.8	43.9	43.6	43.1	43.2	43.1	42.6
Finland	40.5	40.9	40.9	41.0	40.9	40.7	40.6	40.6
Sweden	41.4	41.4	41.3	41.3	41.2	41.0	41.0	40.8
UK	44.8	44.9	44.8	44.4	44.2	44.2	43.9	43.8

Source: Eurostat : free data

Towards shorter working hours: the 38-hour working week

In recent years, the Belgian government has taken a number of initiatives aimed at reducing working hours. In August 2001, for example, a law was introduced that strove to reconcile work and quality of life. The law implied among other things a mandatory reduction in working time to 38 hours a week with retention of pay for all full-time private-sector employees and some full-time public-sector workers (Ministry of Employment).

Also in 2001, the government passed a measure (the so-called “collective working-hours reduction” measure) that allowed companies to further reduce working hours to under 38 hours a week. This measure, which applies only to the private sector, is entirely conventional in nature, i.e. it is not compulsory for companies. The collective nature of the working-hour reduction envisaged, however, implies that this cannot be dependent upon individual decisions on the part of employers or employees. A working-hours reduction can only take effect after an agreement between employers and employees, and it must be introduced indefinitely. Unlike in the case of the mandatory working hours reduction, the law does not prescribe retention of wages for workers employed under a collective labour-reduction scheme (Ministry of Employment).

2.5 Education

2.5.1 Security of education

Belgium tries to guarantee basic security of education through a system of compulsory school attendance from the age of 6. Pupils are required to attend school full-time until age 16 (or 15 in the case of pupils who have completed the first two years of secondary education). Above the age of 16,

there is compulsory part-time school attendance. Compulsory education ends the day the pupil reaches the age of 18 or the moment that he or she obtains a diploma of secondary education.

A. Compulsory school attendance until age 18 as a form of poverty prevention

In 1983, compulsory school attendance was extended from 14 to 18 years. The purpose was twofold: i) to combat youth unemployment (which had been an issue since the second half of the 1970s) and ii) to better prepare youngsters for life in a complex society. Education was seen as a means of making young people more resilient in societal, social and economic life. The most explicit goal of mandatory school attendance was to reduce 'unqualified outflow'. This objective has, for that matter, recently been translated into operational terms at the European level as a striving to reduce premature exits from school (De Rick & Nicaise, 2004: 109).

B. Premature exit

In 2002, the proportion of early school leavers was approximately 14%. In other words, 14% of the total population of 18- to 24-year-olds indicated in the survey that they had left school having obtained a lower secondary diploma at the most and were not receiving training or education. A breakdown by gender shows that boys exit school prematurely more often than do girls. While about 11% of the female school population aged 18 to 24 exits with a lower secondary school diploma at the most, this proportion amounts to 17% among the male school population. Gender is not the only variable to impact on premature school exit. The level of schooling of the parents also appears to be a determining factor. The higher the parents' level of educational achievement, the less likely their children are to exit school prematurely. Of all 18- to 24-year-olds whose parents are higher educated (tertiary education), just 3% leave school early. Among youngsters whose parents have obtained a secondary school diploma, the premature outflow rate is already four times as high. About 12% of these youngsters leave school holding a lower secondary school diploma at best. Premature outflow is most commonly found among children of low-schooled parents. Over a quarter of these children leave school early. Besides gender and level of schooling of the parents, nationality is a determining variable for premature school exit. More specifically, the difference between children with EU nationalities and those with other nationalities is quite pronounced. It appears that over 40% of 18- to 24-year-olds holding a non-EU nationality leave school without having obtained a secondary diploma. This proportion is almost three times as high as in the case of youngsters with an EU nationality.

The proportion of premature school leavers varies regionally from 11.7% in Flanders to 16.1% in Wallonia and 22.4% in the Brussels capital region. These differences are retained if we break the figures down by gender.

Table 26 Early school-leavers - males and females - Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training. 2002

	Belgium	Flanders	Wallonia	Brussels
Gender				
Females	11%	8.8%	12.6%	18.7%
Males	17.1%	14.4%	19.4%	26.3%
Total	14.4%	11.7%	16.1%	22.4%
Employment status				
Employed	18.7%	16.9%	21.4%	26.1%
Unemployed	34.4%	26.8%	35.3%	50.9%
Economic inactive	7.1%	4.8%	9.0%	13.2%
Parents with				
Low educational level	28%			
Higher secondary education	12%			
High educational level	3%			
Country				
EU	14.1%			
Non-EU	43.8%			

Source : Nationaal Instituut voor Statistiek & Steunpunt W.A.V (based on LFS-data)

C. Effects of the extension of compulsory school attendance on premature exits

The most explicit objective of extending mandatory school attendance was to reduce the unqualified outflow. In a recent publication by De Rick & Nicaise (2004), an analysis is made two decades after the introduction of the measure. The authors' assessment is not entirely positive. While the unqualified outflow was reduced quite strongly in the first decade after compulsory school attendance was extended, the situation has stagnated since 1996, despite Belgium's recent commitment to further halving the number of youngsters who drop out of school prematurely. On the basis of some detailed empirical evidence, De Rick and Nicaise conclude that the extension of mandatory school attendance has moreover not led to greater social equality within Belgium's educational system. Rather than impact primarily on youngsters from the poorest social strata, the extension of compulsory school attendance seems to have resulted in a proportional decline in premature outflow in all strata (De Rick & Nicaise, 2004 : 118). The authors therefore put forward the idea that, in the light of the Strategy of Lisbon, preference should perhaps be given to replacing compulsory school attendance with an obligation to qualify, i.e. an obligation in principle to attain a starting qualification for the labour market (higher secondary education) (De Rick & Nicaise, 2004 : 120).

D. Study grants

The law stipulates that education is free during the period of compulsory school attendance. The less well-off can however claim allowances for secondary as well as higher education through the system of study grants (Deleeck, 2003 : 397).

Study grants are financed from the community budgets (education has been devolved to the communities). According to the Flemish government, it receives about 175.000 applications yearly:

120.000 in secondary education and 55.000 in higher education (Flemish Government: Department of Education).

The decision to grant a study allowance and the calculation of the amount take into account the number of dependent children in the household. the number of children in higher education. the type of student involved (at home. in digs. commuting). the rent value of the parental home and the household's net disposable income (Deleeck. 2003). As the system is intended to provide financial support for less well-off households and students. the latter criterion is very important. both in deciding whether an application should be approved and in the calculation of the amount.

As the size of the grant depends on household income in Belgium. it is not easy to calculate the indicator put forward (study fees as a proportion of national mean net wage). Depending on the household income and the number of dependent persons. grants for secondary education may vary between 93 euros to 618 euros per school year (for the fourth grade of secondary education. the maximum allowance is 1.403 euros). In the case of higher education. grants may vary between a minimum of 198.30 euros per academic year and a maximum of 1.842 euros for a student who is not living in digs (Flemish Government : Department of Education).

2.5.2 Quality of education

(Cited from Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling⁹ (VDAB))

The Flemish employment agency (VDAB) regularly examines the transition from school to the labour market in the Flemish region. Newly graduated Flemish youngsters are required to register with the VDAB¹⁰ as a jobseeker. in order to start their 9-month waiting period before becoming entitled to unemployment benefit.

Of all school leavers between February 2002 and 2003. almost 70% registered as a jobseeker with the VDAB. In other words. approximately 31% of school leavers sought and found employment without having been registered as a jobseeker by the employment agency.

Table 25 indicates that over 85% of all school leavers. irrespective of whether or not they registered with the VDAB. were no longer looking for a job after 1 year. About 15% were still registered as a jobseeker with the VDAB.

Of those youngsters who were still looking for a job 1 year after leaving school. about 45% (7.7% of all school leavers) had gained some work experience over the previous 12 months. 55% of those still registered as jobseekers (9.6% of all school leavers) were still waiting for their first work experience. In other words. they had not been active at all in the labour market since leaving school.

Table 27 Situation of school leavers one year after leaving the educational system. Flanders. February

⁹ Flemish Employment Agency

¹⁰ Youngsters in Wallonia register with that region's counterpart to the VDAB.

2002- January 2003

	Total	Males	Females
not registered as a job-seeker with the bureau for Employment Exchange	31%	30.7%	31.4%
registered as a job seeker and found work after 1 year	54.4%	53.9%	54.8%
still unemployed after 1 year - with some working experience	6.9%	7.7%	7.6%
still unemployed after 1 year - without working experience	7.7%	7.7%	6.2%

Source : VDAB. 2004

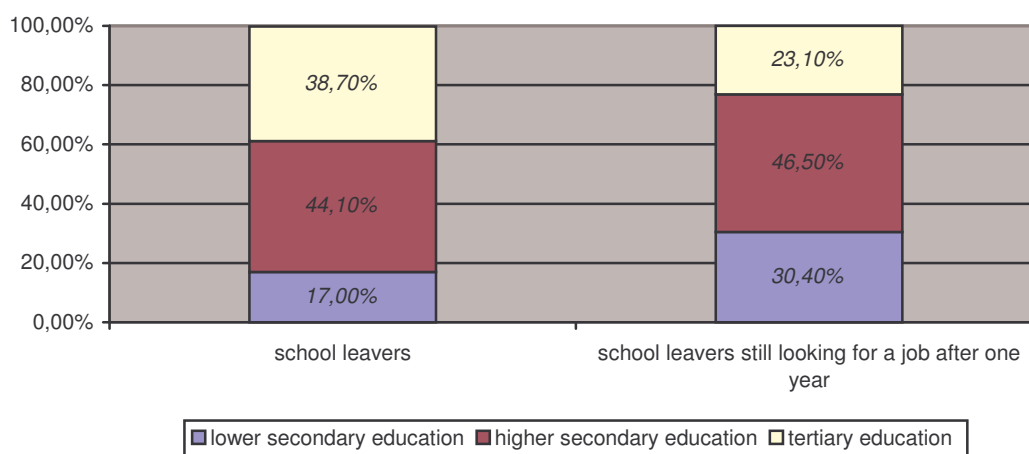
The higher the level of schooling, the smaller the likelihood of unemployment after leaving school

The proportion of school leavers who may be regarded as low-skilled is 17%. However, more than 30% of those who are still registered jobseekers 1 year after leaving school are low-skilled.

As regards the group of youngsters whose highest degree obtained is that of higher secondary education, we observe that their proportion in the total number of school leavers is about the same as their proportion in the number of jobseekers one year after leaving school.

Among those who have graduated from higher education, finally, we observe the opposite than among the low-skilled: while their proportion in the total number of school leavers amounts to almost 40%, they account for less than a quarter of all school leavers who are still looking for work 1 year after graduating.

Figure 10 School leavers by educational attainment. Flanders. 2002-2003



Source : VDAB. 2004

3 Social Cohesion

3.1 Trust¹¹

According to two European surveys (European Values Study and Eurobarometer) monitoring the Europeans' attitudes and values. Belgians do not put a lot of trust in their fellow men or institutions.

3.1.1 General trust

Among other things, the 1999 European Value Study looked into the trust of Europeans in other people. In Belgium, only a minority of respondents (just under 30%) believe that most people are to be trusted. In other words, over 70% of the Belgians feel that you cannot be careful enough in trusting others.

In comparison to other European countries, the Belgians' trust in other people is rather low. 33% of the Italians, 35% of the Germans and Irish, and 38% of the Spanish believe that other people can be trusted. Even more trustful are the Dutch (59.7%), the Fins (58%) and above all the Swedes, 66% of whom trust others fully. By contrast, trust in other people is low in Greece, France, Hungary and Slovenia. In these countries, approximately 80% of those interviewed agree with the statement that you cannot be careful enough in trusting others.

Table 28. Proportion of the population which thinks that most people can be trusted. Belgium, 1999

Most people can be trusted	29.3%
You cannot be too careful	70.7%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

3.1.2 Specific trust

The Eurobarometer survey measures the confidence of Europeans in various institutions on a regular basis. The most recent survey (2004) suggests that, of all the institutions with which Belgians are confronted in daily life, they trust the media the most. More specifically, radio and television are two institutions in which Belgians have the most trust. They are trusted by respectively 69% and 65% of respondents. The press, on the other hand, is beaten into fourth place by volunteer organisations.

Belgians are most distrustful of the legal system and the political institutions. Only 30% of the Belgian population trusts the judiciary, 38% trust the national parliament and 34% trust the Belgian government. Political parties, finally, are trusted the least of all the institutions with which the

¹¹ The topics in this section are for Belgium extensively analysed and described by among others Dobbelaere et al. (2000) and Elchardus (2002)

population comes into contact in daily life. Only one in five Belgians has trust in political parties (Eurobarometer 60).

Table 29 Trust in different Institutions. Belgium. 2004

	Tend tot trust	Tend not to trust	Do not know
Radio	69%	27%	4%
Television	65%	31%	4%
Charitable or voluntary organisations	64%	29%	8%
The press	59%	37%	4%
The army	52%	35%	14%
The police	52%	44%	5%
The EU	49%	41%	11%
Trade unions	43%	46%	10%
The UN	43%	43%	14%
The Belgian parliament	38%	53%	9%
Big companies	37%	52%	12%
The Belgian government	34%	57%	8%
Religious institutions	33%	54%	13%
Justice/the national legal system	30%	65%	6%
Political parties	20%	73%	7%

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer 61

Another European-level survey that gauges the trust that people put in institutions is the European Value Study (EVS). The set of institutions that is presented to the respondents differs from that in the Eurobarometer survey and, in the case of Belgium, leads to a striking observation. It appears from the EVS that, of all institutions considered, Belgians trust the welfare state institutions the most. The health care system (83%), the education system (78%) and the social security system (69%) are all trusted noticeably more than the other institutions (level of trust below 55%). Belgians not only have greater trust in the institutions of the welfare state than in other institutions, but the trust in these specific institutions is also great in comparison to measurements in other countries. Trust in social security, for example, is only greater in Luxembourg and Finland, and trust in the health care system is the second highest in Europe, behind Finland.

Table 30 Proportion of the Belgian population who has a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in various institutions. Belgium. 1999

The health care system	82.6%
The education system	77.9%
The social security system	69.4%
The police	55.4%
The EU	50.2%
The NATO	46.5%
The UN	46.4%
Civil service	46.1%
The church	42.9%
The armed forces	39.8%
The Parliament	39.1%
The press	38.3%
Trade unions	37.8%
The legal system	36.4%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

Importance...

The results of the EVS show that Belgians attach the greatest importance to their household/family. Almost 98% of the Belgian respondents indicate that they find their household/family important or very important. Second-most important to Belgians is their work, with friends coming third. Approximately 93% find work important or very important, and 89% respond similarly with regard to friends. On the other hand, just under half find religion important and only 33% of Belgians attach any importance to politics. (The French, Spanish, Portuguese and Slovenians find work even more important than do the Belgians)

Table 31 Importance of... Belgium. 1999

Family	97.6%
Work	92.8%
Friends	89.1%
Leisure time	86.2%
Religion	47.6%
Politics	33.1%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

Although almost half of all Belgians find their household/family important, the proportion of Belgians indicating that parents and children command unconditional respect is significantly lower. About 67% of Belgian respondents feel that one should always respect and love one's parents, irrespective of their merits and faults. So approximately one-third of Belgians believe that one is under no obligation to respect or love one's parents if, through their behaviour or beliefs, they are not deserving. Conversely, about 78% of the Belgian population feel that it is a parent's duty to do well for their children, even at the cost of their own well-being (this proportion lies higher only in Portugal). On the other hand, 17% of the Belgian respondents indicate that parents should be able to lead their own

lives and should not be expected to sacrifice their personal well-being for the benefit of their children.
Just under 5% agree with neither statement

Table 32 Respect for parents and children. Belgium. 1999

Respect for parents	67.2%
Respect for children	77.6%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

About 16% of the Belgian respondents have fewer than three good friends or acquaintances. This number varies by region. In Flanders, the proportion is 13.8%, compared to 19.5% in Wallonia. A breakdown of these figures shows that the proportion of people with fewer than three good friends becomes smaller as income increases. Where almost 20% of the population belonging to the lowest two quintiles has fewer than three good friends or acquaintances, this proportion drops in the third and fourth quintiles to respectively 15 and 16.3%. In the highest income quintile, only 1 in 10 respondents has fewer than three good friends or acquaintances. In other words, the proportion of people with fewer than three friends in the lowest quintile is twice as big as that in the highest quintile. If one compares people who find themselves below the poverty line to those who are not living in financial poverty, it appears that those in financial poverty are more likely to have fewer than three friends. About 20% of people in financial poverty have fewer than three friends, compared to 15.5% among the other group. The proportion of people with fewer than three friends also declines as level of schooling increases. Just over 1 in 10 people holding a degree from higher education or university have fewer than three friends. Among those whose highest attained degree is that of secondary education, the proportion is approximately 20%. Strikingly, the widest gulf in this respect is between the highly educated and the others, as still 17.3% of those holding a higher secondary degree indicate that they have fewer than three friends. If one considers the group with fewer than three friends in relation to their activity status, one notices that those in work and the economically inactive are least likely to have fewer than three friends. This is the case for about 13% of these respondents. Among pensioners, the proportion is slightly higher (19.8%). And it is substantially higher among the unemployed and the sick or disabled. Respectively 28.4% and 34.9% of these people indicate that they have 3 or fewer friends.

Table 33 Percentage of the population (older than 15) having less than 3 good friends or acquaintances. Belgium. 2001

Belgium	15.7%
Region	
Flanders	13.8%
Walloon	19.5%
Brussels	17.1%
Income	
1st quintile	19.6%
2nd quintile	19.9%
3rd quintile	15.0%
4th quintile	16.3%
5th quintile	10.2%
Educational attainment	
Low	19.8%
Midden	17.3%
High	11.2%
Student	7.4%
<60% of median income	20.3%
> 60% median income	15.5%
Activity Status	
Retired	19.8%
Employed	13.2%
Unemployed	28.4%
Economic inactive	12.8%
Sick-disabled	34.9%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Social Insluiging

3.2 Other integrative norms and values

3.2.1 Altruism

In 2004 the Eurostat released a pocketbook with statistics on how Europeans spend their time. It sheds a light on how women and men organise their everyday life in 10 European countries. According to this source. Belgians spend about 10 minutes a day to volunteer work and help. This is 3% of their total free time (being 4 hours and 50 minutes a day). Unlike in several other European countries (France. Germany. Hungary. Estonia and Slovenia) the differences in spending time on volunteer work and help between men and women are rather negligible. It is somewhat more common for men to do some volunteer work whereas women are bit more likely to give some informal help but nevertheless differences are small¹².

¹² Volunteer work is defined as work for an organisation or work directed to people via an organisation. It is done free of charge or for a minor fee. Informal help is defined as help given by persons not arranged by any organisation.

Table 34 Volunteer work and informal help to other households among persons aged 20 to 74 in hours per day. Belgium

	Women	Men
Total volunteer work and help	0:10	0:11
Volunteer Work	0:04	0:06
Informal Help	0:06	0:05
Volunteer work and help as a % of total free time	3%	3%

Source : Eurostat, 2004

Differences between men and women are also small when it comes to the proportion of people who spend any time on volunteer work or informal help. There is however a difference in the share of people doing some volunteer work and that of people providing informal help. Compared to volunteer work, far more people are giving informal help to other households. Four times more women are reporting to give informal help compared to those doing work free of charge for an organisation. with men it is more than double.

Table 35 Proportion of people (aged 20 to 74) spending any time on the activity. % per day. Belgium

	Women	Men
Volunteer Work	2%	3%
Informal Help	8%	7%

Source : Eurostat, 2004

The kind of organisations Belgians are doing unpaid voluntary work for is very diverse. However, most volunteer activity takes place on educational, artistic or cultural activities. Sports and recreation are on the second place. Unpaid voluntary work is done the least for organisations with societal engagement. Of all the organisations questioned, trade unions, peace movements and organisations working on issues like poverty, employment, housing and equality are receiving the less support from volunteers.

Table 36 Proportion of population doing voluntary work for Belgium. 1999

Education. arts. music or cultural activities	9.3%
Sports or recreation	8.1%
Other groups	7.4%
Religious or church organisations	6.1%
Social welfare services for elderly. handicapped or deprived people	5.9%
Third world development or human rights	5%
Youth work	4.3%
Voluntary organisations concerned with health	4.2%
Conservation. the environment. ecology. animal rights	3.3%
Women's groups	3.1%
Professional associations	2.9%
Political parties or groups	2.9%
Local community action on issues like poverty. employment. housing. racial equality	2.7%
Trade unions	2.2%
Peace movements	1.3%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

3.2.2 Tolerance

A. A typology of tolerance

In 2001 the Institute for Social Research and Analysis (SORA) published a report on the attitudes towards minority groups in the European Union. This report, based on the Eurobarometer 2000 survey, gives an insight into the level of tolerance in the different EU Member States and the views on immigration and multiculturalism of its citizens. According to this study, Belgium turns out to be a rather intolerant country with fairly negative views on immigrants and cultural, racial or religious minorities. This holds certainly true when Belgium is compared to other European countries. These findings are confirmed by the results of the third wave of the European Values Survey.

The SORA-team constructs in its report a typology of people according to their attitudes towards minority groups and identifies the following four types : 'the actively tolerant', 'the intolerant', 'the ambivalent' and 'the passively tolerant'. Although in Belgium all four types are nearly equal in size, our country appears to be rather intolerant compared to other member states.

About 25% of the Belgians are classified as intolerant, meaning that they display strong negative attitudes towards minority groups. They feel disturbed by people from different minority groups and see minorities as having no positive effects on the enrichment of society. Furthermore, the intolerant are for a very restrictive acceptance of immigrants, have a strong wish for assimilation and support even the repatriation of immigrants. Not only has Belgium a higher percentage of intolerant people than the EU-average (14%), it has the biggest share of intolerant citizens within its population of all the EU member states, except for Greece.

Another 28% of the Belgians is what is called 'ambivalent'. This means that on the one hand they do not see minority groups making positive inputs in society. They greatly desire the assimilation of

minority groups. On the other hand, they do not feel disturbed by minority groups. Furthermore, they have medium scores on the dimensions 'restrictive acceptance and repatriation. The ambivalent do not support anti-racism policies.

Furthermore, the Belgian population exists for 26% of people classified as 'passively tolerant'. They have positive attitudes towards minority groups, but they do not support policies in favour of minorities. They do not feel disturbed by minorities, they think that minorities can enrich society and therefore do not wish minorities to abandon their own culture in order to accept the culture of the majority. The passively tolerant neither support anti-racism policies, nor do they favour the repatriation of immigrants.

The least represented amongst the Belgian people is the 'tolerant' type. Only about 20% of the Belgian population can be classified as actively tolerant, meaning that they do not feel disturbed by people from different minority groups, do not support repatriation of immigrants or restrictive acceptance of immigrants. They show the strongest support for anti-racism policies.

Table 37 Typology of people according to their attitudes towards minorities : proportion of the population that is intolerant, ambivalent, passively tolerant or actively tolerant. Belgium

	Belgium	EU15
Intolerant	25%	14%
Ambivalent	28%	25%
Passively tolerant	26%	39%
Actively tolerant	22%	21%

Source : Thalhammer et al

A. Attitudes towards inflow and acceptance of migrants

In 2000, the EVS also gauged the attitude of Belgians vis-à-vis people from less developed countries who come to Belgium to work. It emerged that only a small minority (7%) feel that everyone who wants to come to Belgium should be allowed to do so. The majority of Belgians are in favour of a controlled inflow of migrants. Just over half of respondents (50.5%) indicate that the number of immigrants should be strictly limited and another 34% feel that workers from less developed countries should only be granted access to the extent that jobs are available for them. Only a small minority (9%) of those surveyed are in favour of a total ban on immigration for these groups of foreigners. People from less developed countries who wish to work in Belgium should, in their opinion, be banned from travelling to our country.

Table 38 Views on people of less developed countries coming here to work. Belgium. 1999

Strict limits on the number of foreigners	50.5%
Come when jobs available	33.5%
Prohibit people coming here	8.6%
Anyone come who wants to come	7.4%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

However, we notice that the Belgian population's opinion on the inflow of foreigners depends strongly on the place of origin of the migrants, as well as on the reason for emigration. This is apparent from

the results of the Eurobarometer survey (Halman. s.d.). which -like the EVS- gauges the attitudes of Europeans towards the inflow of foreigners. Again. a majority of Belgians feels that immigrants should only be allowed into the country under certain conditions. However. the Belgian population makes a distinction between EU citizens and other migrants. While 54 to 58% of Belgian respondents agree that the inflow of non-EU citizens should be subject to restrictions. only 45% of Belgian respondents feel this is necessary in the case of EU citizens. Moreover. only 13% of the Belgian population believes that citizens from other EU member states should not be allowed to settle in Belgium. compared to 30% who believe access to the country should be denied to people from Muslim countries or Eastern Europe who wish to work in Belgium. Belgians hold a less negative attitude towards people who have fled their country because of internal conflicts or for humanitarian reasons. Nevertheless. 20% of Belgians believe that these people too should be denied access. The fact that Belgians adopt the most open attitude towards other EU citizens is also apparent from the fact that 38% of Belgian respondents indicate EU citizens should be able to settle in our country without any restriction. A comparison with the attitude towards migrants from other places shows that three times as many Belgians are in favour of an unconditional inflow of EU citizens than of foreigners from the Muslim world or Eastern Europe. About 12% of the Belgian population believe that the latter should be allowed to settle and work in Belgium without restrictions. Again. Belgians are more tolerant in relation to people who have left their country because of conflict or for humanitarian reasons.

In European comparative perspective. our country exhibits a low level of acceptance towards foreign migrants. Belgium has one of the smallest proportions of citizens who believe that foreigners should be able to settle in their country without any restrictions. and it also has the largest proportion of citizens who feel that foreigners should not be allowed to settle in the country under any condition.

Table 39 Attitudes towards acceptance of immigrants. Belgium

	Acceptance		No acceptance	Don't know
	Without restrictions	With restrictions		
Citizens of other countries of the European Union. who wish to settle in Belgium	38%	45%	13%	4%
People fleeing from countries where there is serious internal conflict	21%	55%	20%	4%
People suffering from human rights violations in their country. who are seeking political asylum	15%	58%	22%	5%
People from Muslim countries who wish to work in the EU	12%	54%	30%	4%
People from Eastern Europe who want to work in the West	12%	57%	27%	4%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

B. Attitudes towards the multicultural society

Besides the low acceptance of foreigners, a larger proportion of Belgians than the European average fear that the presence of immigrants induces a negative dynamics in society. 64% of the Belgian population are convinced that the presence of minorities increases unemployment and 66% believe that members of minority groups abuse the social security system. Moreover, 6 in 10 Belgians believe that the quality of education has deteriorated in schools with large groups of ethnic minority pupils. Finally, approximately 67% of the population think that immigrants are more often involved in criminal activities than Belgians are. In comparison to citizens in other European countries, Belgians hold a negative view of immigrants.

Table 40 Blaming minorities. Belgium

	Tend to		Don't know
	agree	disagree	
In schools where there are too many children from minority groups, the quality of education suffers	63%	9%	29%
People from minority groups abuse the system of social welfare	66%	9%	26%
People from minority groups are given preferential treatment by the authorities	40%	48%	12%
The presence of people from minority groups increases unemployment in Belgium	64%	26%	10%
Immigrants are more often involved in criminality than the average	67%	25%	8%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

The level of optimism regarding multiculturalism appears not to be very high in Belgium when compared to that in other European countries. Less than half the Belgian respondents (45%) feel that minorities enrich the country's cultural life and only 37% agree that cultural, religious and racial diversity is to the benefit of Belgian society. Nevertheless, 56% indicate that the presence of various cultures, religions and races is a positive thing for any society.

Table 41 Multicultural optimism. Belgium

	Tend to		Don't know
	agree	disagree	
Where schools make necessary efforts, the education of all children can be enriched by the presence of children from minority groups	56%	31%	13%
It is a good thing for any society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures	56%	35%	9%
People from minority groups are enriching the cultural life of Belgium	45%	44%	11%
Belgium's diversity in terms of race, religion and culture adds to its strengths	37%	50%	13%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

Despite the fact that a majority of Belgians are convinced that immigrants enhance certain negative dynamics, only a minority say that the presence of people of a different nationality, religion or race actually bothers them in their daily lives. One in five Belgians indicate that they are bothered by the

presence of other nationalities and about one in four say that they find the presence of people of a different religion or race a nuisance. Nevertheless, Belgium (together with Greece and Denmark) belongs to the EU Member States with the lowest tolerance towards cultural and religious minorities.

Table 42 Do you personally find the presence of people from another... disturbing in your daily life?. Belgium

	Disturbing	Not disturbing	Don't know
Another nationality	20%	78%	2%
Another race	27%	70%	3%
Another religion	26%	71%	3%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

In Belgium, more so than in other European countries, there is a stronger perception that immigrants should adapt to our customs and traditions in cultural and religious matters. Over 70% of the Belgians feel that people belonging to ethnic minorities should give up those elements of their cultures or religions that are contrary to Belgian law. An equally large group is convinced that it is better for Belgian society if minorities do not hang on to their own traditions and customs, but adopt those of our country. These results do not however imply that Belgians are proponents of full cultural assimilation. Only 36% say that minorities, in order to achieve full acceptance in Belgian society, should entirely abandon their own cultural identity.

Table 43 Views on cultural assimilation. Belgium. 1999

For the greater good of society it is better if immigrants	
Maintain their distinct custom and traditions	28.1%
Do not maintain their distinct custom and traditions but take over the customs of the country	71.9%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

Table 44. Views on cultural assimilation. Belgium. 1999

	Tend to agree	disagree	Don't know
In order to become fully accepted member of Belgian society, people belonging to these minority groups must give up their own culture	36%	54%	10%
People belonging to these minority groups must give up such parts of their religion and culture which may be in conflict with the Belgian law	73%	21%	7%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

Although the Belgian population is not particularly in favour of multicultural society (certainly not in comparison to people in other European countries), the majority of respondents (65%) are not in favour of an unconditional repatriation of non-EU citizens. Nevertheless, 1 in 4 Belgians agree that all immigrants from outside the EU (both legal and illegal), as well as their children, should be sent back to their country of origin, even if they were born here. Moreover, 43% share the opinion that legal migrants from outside the EU should be sent back to their own country if they are unemployed. In

comparison with other Europeans. Belgians are great proponents of repatriation. be it conditional or not.

Table 45. Views on conditional repatriation. Belgium

	Tend to agree	disagree	Don't know
Legally established immigrants from outside the European Union should be sent back to their country of origin if they are unemployed	43%	48%	9%
All immigrants, whether legal or illegal, from outside the EU and their children, even those who where born in Belgium should be sent back to their country of origin	25%	65%	10%

Source : Thalhammer et al.

D.Tolerance of other people's self-identity, beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle preferences

Belgians show themselves the least tolerant towards people addicted to alcohol (43%) or drugs (51%), and towards fellow men with extreme political opinions (both left and right wing).

Table 46 Proportion of the population that would not like to have as neighbours. Belgium, 1999

Large families	8.5%
Jews	11.2%
People who have aids	12.1%
People of different race	14.3%
Immigrants and foreign workers	16.1%
Homosexuals	17.9%
Muslims	20.1%
Emotionally unstable people	21.5%
People with criminal record	27.7%
Gypsies	33%
Left wing extremists	35.5%
Heavy drinkers	43%
Right wing extremists	48%
Drugs addicts	51.3%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

Table 47 Tolerance of other people's self-identity, behaviour and lifestyle preferences can it be justified? (10 = always). Belgium, 1999

Taking and driving away a car belonging to someone else (joyriding)	1.2
Throwing away litter in a public place	1.48
Driving under the influence of alcohol	1.64
Taking the drug marihuana or hashish	1.72
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	2
Scientific experiments on human embryos	2.07
Speeding over the limit in built-up areas	2.39
Avoiding a fare on public transport	2.39
Genetic manipulation of food stuff	2.42
Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	2.57
Married men/women having an affair	2.72
Having casual sex	2.86
Smoking in public buildings	2.92
Suicide	3.27
Lying in your own interest	3.62
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	3.64
Paying cash for services to avoid taxes	4.29
Abortion	4.45
Homosexuality	5.22
Divorce	5.64
Euthanasia (terminating the life of the incurably sick)	5.83

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

3.2.3 Social Contract

Beliefs on causes of poverty

A. Theoretical framework

In their article 'Blame or fate, individual or social', the Dutch researchers Van Oorschot and Halman make an international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. Based on a review of existing theoretical and empirical literature they conclude that there seem to be two dimensions involved in the process of explaining people's poverty. One relates to the question of whether factors leading to poverty are controllable or inevitable, the other to the question of whether poverty is based on individual or social factors. Both dimensions combined result in a distinction between four types of explanation (table x) : the individual blame (laziness), the individual's fate (bad luck), social blame (injustice) and social fate (inevitable part of progress).

Figure 11 Two dimensions and four types of explanations of poverty

	Individual	Social
Blame	The poor are lazy. lack thrift. good morals	The poor are victims of the actions of others. are victims of social injustice
Fate	The poor are unlucky	The poor are victims of uncontrollable societal and global developments

Source : Van Oorschot & Halman. 2000

Ideal-typically, the authors argue, the individual blame type holds that poverty is the result of personal behaviour and shortcomings of the poor themselves, such as laziness, lack of thrift, loose morals, etc. The individual fate type holds that poverty is exceptional, and happens to individuals as a matter of bad luck, personal misfortune, etc. Seen from the social blame type perspective, poverty is the outcome of processes of social exclusion that are induced and controlled by actions of certain groups and parties in society, and who therefore could be blamed for it. The poor are seen as victims of a fundamental injustice that exists in the way in which groups in society operate and interact with each other. In the social fate view, societal factors and processes are held responsible for the existence of poverty, but they are regarded as being beyond any (collective) actor's effective control, that is impersonal, objective and unavoidable. In this type the poor are seen as victims of broad societal and global developments (Van Oorschot & Halman, 2000, 7&8)¹³.

A similar kind of typology for the explanation of poverty is in Belgium used by Vranken (Vranken et al., Yearbook on poverty and social exclusion-series). This typology is contracted around two dimensions, the first being the level on which poverty is caused (micro or individual versus macro or societal), the second the (nature) of the cause (intern or extern). In recent publications he adds a third level to the first dimension : the meso-level

Figure 12 Six explanatory models of poverty

Level of the cause	Nature of the cause	
	Internal	External
Micro : the individual	Personal shortcomings (Individual)	Personal accidents (Individual accidents model)
Meso : groups, communities, institutions and organisations	Structure and/or functioning of groups, communities, organisations or institutions (Institutional guilt model)	External bodies (Institutional accidents model)
Macro 'the' society	Structure of society (Societal guilt model)	Changes and evolutions in society (Societal accidents model)

Source : Vranken, De Boyser & Dierckx, 2003

B. Beliefs on causes of poverty : empirical evidence

For Belgium, European Values Study-results (1999) reveal that the most popular way of explaining poverty is by use of the social blame model. About 35% of the Belgian population believes that

¹³ The author's stress however, that being ideal types, the four analytically distinguished views do not have to preclude one another in reality. Individuals may have views somewhere in between, tend to regard one of the two dimensions as more important than the other, explain poverty from the perspective of more than one of the four types of reason, etc.

injustice in society is the most important cause of living in need. More than one out of four Belgians think that poverty happens to individuals as a matter of bad luck or personal misfortune. Thus the individual fate model appears the second most popular model for explaining living in need. Furthermore, 20% of the Belgians is holding societal factors and processes responsible for the existence of poverty and only 16% blames the individual for their living in poverty. The social fate and the individual blame model are thus the least mentioned by Belgian respondents as being the most important reason for living in need.

Table 48 Proportion of the population which considers unluckiness, laziness, injustice and the modern progress as the most important reason for living in need. Belgium

	1990	1999
Injustice in society	33%	35.3%
Unlucky	28%	26.8%
Part of the modern progress	11%	20%
Laziness or lack of willpower	22%	16%
None of these		1.9%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study & Van Oorschot, Halman, 2000

According to the study of Van Oorschot & Halman analyses of the European Values Study 1990 yielded to evidence that social blame (injustice) is most frequently mentioned as a reason why there are people living in need, and individual fate (bad luck) least frequently. Moreover they indicate that from 1976 to 1990 the individual blame explanation has lost importance all over Europe, while the social blame explanation has gained ground (Van Oorschot & Halman, 2000).

C. Attitudes regarding a just society and solidarity

According to a majority of Belgians, a just society should ensure that all citizens can satisfy their basic needs. About 92% of Belgians agree that it is important or very important for everyone's basic needs in relation to food, housing, education and health care to be satisfied. Moreover, a just society must, according to 80% of the respondents, recognise the merits of its citizens. Belgians are however far less convinced that differences in income are undesirable. About 60% of the population believe that a just society should eliminate large income differences. One in ten Belgians indicate explicitly that this is not important, while about 25% find this aspect neither important nor unimportant.

Table 49 In order to be considered "just", what should a society provide?. Belgium, 1999

	Very	Quite	medium	Not	Not at all
Eliminating big inequalities in income between citizens	38.6%	24.9%	23.7%	7.3%	5.5%
Guaranteeing that basic needs are met for all in terms of food, housing, cloths, education, health	74.6%	17.8%	5.2%	1.6%	0.8%
Recognizing people in their merits	53.3%	27.8%	14.0%	3.1%	1.9%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

Most Belgians are, to some extent, concerned with the circumstances of life of other people. About 60% of those interviewed claim to be generally concerned with the circumstances of life of others. However, Belgians are most concerned with the conditions of life of people in their direct environment or of those who are often considered to be the most vulnerable in society. Over 98% are concerned with the conditions of life of people in their own families and 80% are concerned with people in their neighbourhood. A large majority of those interviewed are concerned with the circumstances of the elderly (90%), the sick and disabled (90%) and the unemployed (76%). Belgians are far less concerned with the fate of people who do not belong to their immediate life sphere. Over one in three Belgians are not or not very concerned about people in their own region or country. Finally, 45% of the Belgian respondents are not or not very concerned about the circumstances of immigrants, and about half are not or not particularly concerned about their fellow Europeans.

Table 50 The extent to which people feel concerned about the living conditions of their fellowmen (percentages). Belgium, 1999

	Very much	much	To a certain extent	Not so much	Not at all
Immediate family	75.7%	16.5%	5.5%	1.5%	0.7%
Elderly people in your country	22.2%	35.8%	32.6%	8.0%	1.4%
Sick and disabled in your country	16.5%	34.9%	37.7%	9.2%	1.7%
Unemployed people in your country	9.7%	23.7%	43.0%	18.4%	5.2%
People in you neighbourhood	7.7%	26.2%	45.5%	15.6%	4.9%
Human kind	6.8%	15.8%	38.1%	26.0%	13.3%
Immigrants in your country	5.2%	13.7%	35.5%	29.7%	16.0%
Your fellow countrymen	4.2%	12.2%	46.8%	27.7%	9.0%
People in the region you live in	3.2%	12.8%	47.5%	27.8%	8.8%
Europeans	2.2%	8.4%	37.1%	35.1%	17.2%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

The fact that one is generally concerned about the conditions of life of other people by no means implies that Belgians are prepared to undertake action for the benefit of those people. If it concerns close relatives, then Belgians are prepared to act, but if it concerns other groups in society this preparedness is much smaller. It emerges that, although 90% of the Belgians indicate that they are concerned with the conditions of life of the elderly, the ill and the disabled, only 66% are actually prepared to do something in order to improve these people's quality of life. However, this does not mean that 35% are not prepared to take any action for the benefit of those groups (that proportion is between 5 and 8%), as a third of respondents say they do not know whether or not they are willing to do something about the circumstances of elderly, sick or disabled persons in their neighbourhood. The only group for whom a substantial proportion of Belgians are not prepared to act are immigrants. About 30% indicate that they are not willing to do anything to improve migrants' conditions of life.

Table 51 The extent to which people are prepared to actually do something to improve the conditions of their fellowmen (percentages). Belgium. 1999

	Absolutely yes	Yes	Maybe yes/no	No	Absolutely no
Immediate family	82.6	13.5	2.7	0.6	0.5
People in your neighbourhood	18.2	44.0	29.9	5.5	2.4
Elderly people in your country	19.6	45.8	29.3	4.3	1.1
Immigrants in your country	8.6	22.3	36.5	19.1	13.6
Sick and disabled in your country	22.1	44.4	28.5	3.8	1.2

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

In 2002. Debusscher and Elchardus conducted research into the extent of solidarity in Flanders. They concluded that a large majority of the population subscribe to the key principles of the social security system. One in three people in Flanders believe that benefits and allowances should be maintained, even if this implies sacrifices. A similar proportion believes that these sacrifices should be proportional to income. For a clear majority (56 to 58%), this solidarity has an ethical basis. The welfare state and support for the social security system are considered by them to be a matter of moral duty or a logical consequence of an equally self-evident notion of solidarity. This ethical foundation of the system is rejected by just 15% of the population. The authors go on to argue that the broad support for the general principles is qualified somewhat if the respondents are asked whether they would be prepared to pay more in social contributions or taxes in order to maintain benefit levels and allowances. Still, about a quarter of those interviewed say explicitly that they would be prepared to pay more in taxes or social contributions if this could keep our social security system intact and create greater social equality. Just under half of the respondents would not be prepared to make this sacrifice.

Four statements may be divided into two groups: the first two gauge perceptions regarding the necessity to contribute and the general principle that is applied in this respect; the latter two gauge the willingness to contribute in reality.

Table 52 Willingness to contribute. Flanders

	Absolutely no	No	Maybe	Yes	Absolutely yes
The level of our social benefits may not be lowered even if this means that some have to make an extra financial sacrifice	4.9%	8.0%	19.9%	31.6%	35.6%
High income individuals should contribute more to the social security system compared to individuals with a low income	7.2%	9.7%	15.4%	29.6%	38.2%
I am willing to pay more taxes in order to maintain the current level of benefits (like unemployment and sickness benefits) in the future	22.6%	24.2%	27.4%	16.8%	8.9%
I am prepared to pay more social security contributions to establish a more equal society	20.1%	26.6%	29.7%	15.5%	8.1%

Source : Debusscher. M. & Elchardus. M.. 2002

Division of household tasks between men and women

Belgian women aged 20 to 74 spend far more time on domestic (4.5 hours) than on gainful work (2 hours). The situation is just the opposite with men. They spend more time on gainful work (3.5 hours) than on domestic tasks (2.5 hours). When we consider the time use of employed women and men, we notice that the average amount of hours and minutes spent on gainful work increases for both and that hours and minutes spent on domestic labour decreases. Table x shows however that women's and men's shares of domestic work do not become more equal when both partners are employed. Women perform two thirds of all domestic work, even when they are employed.

Table 53a Domestic and gainful work of persons aged 20 to 74 in hours and minutes a day. Belgium

	Domestic	Gainful
Total	3:36	
Women	4:32	2:07
Men	2:38	3:30
Employed Women	3:52	3:53
Employed Men	2:15	5:03

Table 53b Time spent on domestic work by men and women. Belgium

	Women	Men
Share of total time spent on domestic work by women and by men %	63%	37%
Share of total time spent on domestic work by employed women and by men %	62%	38%

Source : Eurostat. 2004

These findings are in line with the conclusions of research done by J. Ghysels¹⁴ (Ghysels.2004). In his doctoral research (based on ECHP-data) J. Ghysels addressed the joint decision making of male and female partners about the time they spend on paid work and childcare and this for Belgium, Denmark and Spain. For Belgium his results "point at preference heterogeneity among couples. In some households, both parents are fairly job-oriented and spend relatively little time on childcare. In others, parents are more care-oriented and end up with a less time-consuming job. Caution applies however, because the latter should be understood in relation to the average choice among men and women. In all countries women spend considerably more time on childcare than men. Consequently, so called care-oriented men are not too likely to spend more time on childcare than job-oriented women. Moreover, a certain minimum level of government action seems required for the household clusters to develop. In Spain, for example, the scarcity of formal childcare and other employment facilitating policies often causes women to feel "left without a choice": they either opt for a career or choose for children."

¹⁴ Post-doctoral researcher at the Centre for Social Policy, University of Antwerp

3.3 Social Networks

Membership of organisations

Belgians involved in some kind of organisation are most likely to be found in sport or recreation clubs. About 24% of the Belgian population says to be a member of a sport or leisure club. Almost one fifth of the Belgians is a member of some kind of cultural organisation and 15% is engaged in a trade union. The least active are Belgians in peace movements and organisations striving for better social circumstances of the less well off.

Table 54 Organisations which you belong to. Belgium. 1999

sports or recreation	23.8%
education. arts. music or cultural activities	18.9%
trade unions	15.7%
religious or church organisations	12.2%
social welfare services for elderly. handicapped or deprived people	11.4%
other groups	10.6%
conservation. the environment. ecology. animal rights	10.4%
third world development or human rights	9.8%
women's groups	8.7%
professional associations	8.3%
youth work	7.5%
political parties or groups	7%
local community action on issues like poverty. employment. housing. racial equality	5%
voluntary organisations concerned with health	5%
peace movements	2.3%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

Frequency of contacts

Most Belgian have contact with their friends on a regular basis. According data from the European Values Study. eight out of ten Belgians spend some time with friends every week. Only 5% says never to meet friends. The contact with colleagues is significantly less frequent. One out of three Belgians indicate to spend some time with their colleagues on a weekly basis ; another 30% spends time with people from work only a few times a year.

Table 55 Frequency of spending time with friends and colleagues. Belgium. 1999

	Friends	Colleagues
every week	50.2%	12.9%
once a week	30.9%	22.5%
few times a year	14.1%	33.4%
not at all	4.9%	31.2%

Source : Halman. L. - European Values Study

Support from others

About 13% of the Belgian population cannot count on neighbours, family or friends to provide assistance in case of an unexpected emergency, to solve problems or simply to talk to. This proportion becomes smaller as the level of schooling of the respondents increases. Whereas 17% of the low-schooled has no-one to fall back on in difficult situations, this proportion is 14% among holders of a secondary school diploma at the most, and just 10% among the highly educated. A similar trend unfolds with increasing income. Approximately 17% of those in the lowest income groups have no-one to rely on in emergencies. In the highest income quintile, this proportion is only 10%. Further, we notice that the extent to which people can rely on others also varies considerably with the activity status of the person concerned. Whereas 10% of those in work indicate that they cannot fall back on family, friends or neighbours if something happens to them, this proportion increases to respectively 16% and 18% among pensioners and the unemployed, and to almost 40% among the sick and disabled. Finally, there are strong regional differences: the proportion of individuals who cannot fall back on people around them in cases of emergency amounts to 11% in Flanders and to between 16 and 17% in Wallonia and Brussels.

Table 56 Percentage of people older than 15 years which cannot count on neighbours, family or friends for help in case of an emergency, to solve a problem or to talk with when they have need to it, Belgium, 2001

Belgium	13.3%	Income	
Regions		1st quintile	17.5%
Flemish region	11.1%	2nd quintile	16.0%
Region of Brussels	16.5%	3rd quintile	13.4%
Walloon region	17.2%	4th quintile	11.7%
Educational attainment		5th quintile	10.4%
Lower secondary	16.9%	<60% median income	16.6%
Higher secondary	12.9%	>= 60% median income	13.3%
Tertiary	9.7%	Retired	16.1%
Activity Status		Sickness-invalidity	38.4%
Employed	10.9%		
Unemployed	18.5%		
Other economic inactive	12.1%		

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Inclusie

3.4 Identity

3.4.1 National – European identity

Sense of national pride

The results of the Eurobarometer survey of autumn 2003 indicate that Belgians are proud of their national identity. Just over 80% of the Belgian population feel proud or very proud to be Belgian. The sense of pride is far less strong in relation to the European identity. About 64% of Belgians say they feel proud to be European. The sense of national pride varies slightly according to region. It emerges that inhabitants of Brussels are proudest to be Belgian.

Table 57 Proportion of the population which is proud of being Belgian/European. 2003

	National pride	European pride
Belgium	83%	64%
Belgium	3.21 (mean)	2.77 (mean)
Flanders	3.15	2.74
Walloon	3.28	2.72
Brussels	3.31	3.11

Source: European Commission - Eurobarometer 60.1

Table 58 Proportion of the population which is proud of being Belgian. Belgium. 1999

	National pride
Very proud	24.3%
Quite proud	50.9%
Not very proud	17.5%
Not at all proud	7.3%

Source: Halman. L. - European Values Study

Identification with national and European symbols

Although 64% of the population is proud to be European, only a minority identifies with the European flag. About 35% of the Belgian population identifies with this European symbol, which is a noticeably smaller percentage than the European average (43%). Again, we observe regional differences. The outspoken pride of inhabitants of Brussels about their European identity is reflected in the extent to which they identify with the European flag. 55% of respondents in Brussels say that they identify with this symbol, compared to 40% in Wallonia and just 30% in Flanders.

Table 59 Identification with European symbols : proportion of the population that identifies themselves with the European flag. 2002

	Agree	Don't agree
Wallonia	40%	46%
Brussels	55%	37%
Flanders	30%	51.5%
Belgium	35.5%	50%
EU	43.5%	40%

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer 58

3.4.2 Regional, community, local identity

The fact that inhabitants of Brussels identify more with the European flag and feel prouder to be European is probably due to their stronger sense of a European identity. Although the results of the latest Eurobarometer survey (60.1) indicate that the sense of identity of Belgians is connected more with their country of origin (Belgium) than with the European Union¹⁵. 76% of those living in Brussels

¹⁵ Just over 40% of respondents consider themselves to be Belgian and European. A similar proportion feels Belgian only. 10% feel European first and Belgian second, and a mere 6% consider themselves to be European only.

have some sense of being European. By way of comparison: in Wallonia the proportion is 63% and in Flanders only 49%. In other words, the strongest national identity is found in Flanders, with 88% of Flemish respondents indicating that, first and foremost, they feel Belgian (in Wallonia and Brussels, this is the case for respectively 75% and 69% of respondents).

Table 60 Percentage of citizens which see themselves as a Belgian, European or both, 2004

	Belgian	Belgian & European	European & Belgian	European
Wallonia	32%	43%	13%	10%
Brussels	17%	52%	16%	8%
Flanders	48%	40%	5%	4%
Belgium	40%	42%	9%	6%

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer 6.1

It emerges from Table 59 that the Flemish, more so than the Walloons or inhabitants of Brussels, feel locally connected. Although people in all regions feel greater affinity with Belgium than with Europe, those living in Brussels clearly have a stronger sense of being European than inhabitants of Wallonia and Flanders do.

Belgians feel the greatest affinity with their own town or village. About a third of respondents indicate that, first and foremost, they consider themselves to be members of their local community. 27% of Belgians feel Belgian before anything else. Belgians identify the least with world citizenship. 55% of the Belgian population indicate that the sense of belonging to the world comes last.

Table 61 Sense of regional/community/local identity : degree of attachment to city, region, Belgium and Europe, Belgium, 2004

	Wallonia	Brussels	Flanders
City or village	3.37	3.33	3.41
Region	3.39	3.27	3.34
Belgium	3.34	3.33	3.23
EU	2.71	3.03	2.83

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer 6.1

Table 62 Geographical groups you feel you belong to first, second and least, Belgium, 1999

	1st	2nd	least
Locality or town	31.1%	18.9%	11%
Region of a country	20.3%	31.4%	11.5%
Country as a whole	27.9%	28.1%	9.7%
Europe	9.3%	15.8%	11.9%
World as a whole	10.4%	5.8%	55.7%

Source : Halman, L. - European Values Study

4 Social inclusion

4.1 Citizenship rights

4.1.1 Constitutional & political rights

Citizenship in Belgium is connected with nationality. Obtaining the Belgian nationality and thus becoming a Belgian citizen is possible in three ways :

- by award (on the ground of birth or nationality of the parents)
- by acquisition (marriage)
- by naturalisation (Naturalisation is the normal procedure to be followed by foreigners wishing to obtain the Belgian nationality. To start the procedure one has to be 18 years old and Belgium has to be the main place of residence)

In Belgium the proportion residents with citizenship corresponds more or less with the number of inhabitants minus the number of foreigners as well as the number of individuals being dismissed from their civic rights (because of a conviction for example).

Table 63 Proportion of residents without citizenship (non-Belgians as a % of all Belgian resident)

		Belgium	Flanders	Wallonia	Brussels
2002	Number of foreigners	846.734	275.223	311.471	260.040
	as a % of the total population	8.2%	4.6%	9.3%	26.6%
2003	Number of foreigners	850.077	280.743	309.065	260.269
	as a % of the total population	8.2%	4.7%	9.2%	26.2%
2004	Number of foreigners	860.287	288.375	308.461	263.451
	as a % of the total population	8.3%	4.8%	9.2%	26.3%

Source : Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek

Of all 10.4 million Belgian inhabitants in 2004, there were 860.000 individuals without Belgian nationality¹⁶. This means that about 8% of all Belgian residents were without citizenship at that moment. As table 63 shows, there are big regional differences. The proportion non-Belgian residents ranges from 4.8% in Flanders over 10% in Wallonia, to 25% in the region of Brussels (which is among other things probably due to the presence of the European institutions).

A. Who is entitled to vote?

Belgian citizenship entitles holders to participate in elections, on condition that they have reached the age of 18, are enrolled on the civil register of a Belgian municipality (or, in the case of Belgians living

¹⁶ Of which 64% from EU-countries

in foreign country, a diplomatic or consular post) and have not been disqualified or suspended on grounds of the electoral code¹⁷ (Belgian Federal Portal).

As regards municipal elections, citizens of other EU Member states who are living in Belgium were already eligible to vote. In 2004, however, Belgian parliament approved municipal voting rights for migrants. So, as EU citizens residing in Belgium, other foreigners will also be able to participate in future municipal elections, on condition, that is, that the person in question has been living in Belgium for at least 5 years, is registered on an electoral list and has signed a statement pledging that he or she will abide by Belgian law. For that matter, these foreigners only receive active voting rights (i.e. they can vote), not passive ones (i.e. they are not eligible to stand as a candidate) (Belgian Federal Government).

B. Compulsory voting

Belgium is one of the few countries¹⁸ where voting is compulsory. The Belgian constitution and the various electoral laws stipulate that voting is a duty. This means that every Belgian citizen who is eligible to vote, both in Belgium and abroad, must turn up at the assigned polling station to conduct the required formalities and drop a ballot paper (or a magnetic voting card) in the appropriate ballot box. However, the polling station staff do not check whether a vote has been cast and whether the vote was valid. Voting by proxy, not filing in the ballot paper or casting an invalid vote are all allowed, so that one could argue that Belgium has “compulsory turnout” rather than compulsory voting (Belgian Federal Portal).

Those who fail to present themselves at a polling station and cannot provide a valid explanation are in breach of the law and risk a fine of between 25 and 120 euro. In practice, these fines are rarely imposed.

C. Election turnout¹⁹

As Belgium has compulsory voting, turnout is invariably high. Comparative international research has shown that countries without compulsory voting have significantly lower turnouts (10 to 20 percentage points). In countries where compulsory turnout has been abolished (e.g. the Netherlands), turnout immediately declined after the introduction of the measure.

Data from IDEA show that, for Belgium, if one relates the total number of votes to the total population of voting age, turnout is around 83%. However, this proportion also takes into account citizens of voting age who are nevertheless ineligible to vote.

¹⁷ Detainees, the incapacitated and the imprisoned are suspended in the execution of their right to vote; persons who have been convicted of criminal offences (life imprisonment, forced labour, detention and incarceration) are disqualified indefinitely from voting rights.

¹⁸ Others are Luxembourg, Austria, Cyprus and Australia.

¹⁹ For an extensive international study on voter turnout during the second half of the 20th century see Pintor, G. & Gratschew (2002).

If one bases the calculation exclusively on those who can vote, then turnout is substantially higher: over 90% of registered voters in our country participate in elections. So compared to other democracies, Belgium has high election turnouts (still according to IDEA). The flipside of compulsory voting is that the proportion of invalid votes is also a lot higher in this country than in other democracies.

Table 64 Voter turnout. Belgium

Year	Total Vote	Registration	Vote/Reg	VAP	Vote/VAP	Invalid	FH	Pop. Size
1946	2.460.796	2.724.796	90.31%	5.856.900	42.02%	3.9%	n/a	n/a
1954	5.463.130	5.863.092	93.18%	6.173.300	88.50%	5.5%	n/a	n/a
1965	5.578.876	6.091.534	91.58%	6.338.200	88.02%	7.1%	n/a	n/a
1974	5.711.996	6.322.227	90.35%	6.664.000	85.71%	7.9%	2	9.800.000
1985	6.552.234	7.001.297	93.59%	7.590.660	86.32%	7.4%	2	9.858.000
1995	6.562.149	7.199.440	91.15%	7.887.360	83.20%	7.5%	2	10.112.000
1999	6.652.005	7.343.464	90.58%	7.999.572	83.15%	6.6%	2	10.199.967

Source : IDEA

The existence of compulsory voting regularly gives rise to the hypothetical question of how high turnout would be if compulsory voting were abolished. Political scientists have tried to answer this question on a number of occasions. Research by Billiet (Billiet, s.d.) on the basis of survey results in the mid-1990s, suggests that about a third of the Belgian electoral body would no longer cast a vote if compulsory voting were abolished.

4.1.2 Social rights

Pensions

Belgium has three types of pensions: a retirement pension, a survivor's pension and an income guarantee for the elderly. The former two are an integral part of the social insurance system (and consequently they depend on the individual's professional career), while the latter is a form of social assistance.

A. Retirement pension

(Based on Federale Overheidsdienst Sociale Zekerheid, 2001)

Under Belgium's social security system, one accumulates pension rights on the basis of one's working career (this applies to employees, as well as self-employed persons and civil servants, though for each category the pension is calculated differently). The number of years worked are taken into account, as are equivalent years of non-activity (unemployment, illness and disability, on condition that the individual was on a social security benefit during these periods) and regularised years. In order to be eligible for a full pension, men are required to have completed a working career of 45 years.

compared to 43 years for women (in 2005)²⁰. Although the size of a retirement pension for a full working career depends on previously earned income (60% of average career earnings for lone persons and 75% for households). it may not be smaller than a certain minimum (amount). If the individual has not completed a full career. but at least two-thirds (30/45 in the case of men and 28/43 in the case of women). the same minimum is guaranteed. In the case of inadequate pensions rights (on the basis of income or length of working career). individuals can claim the guaranteed income for the elderly (cf. infra).

B. Survivor's pension

Apart from the retirement pension there is also the survivor's pension within the system of social insurance. A survivor's pension is only granted to widows or widowers according to the professional past of their deceased spouse. Just like with retirement pensions. one has to satisfy a few conditions to be entitled. Two of them are :

- In the first place. one should have reached a given age. In principle. one has to be 45 years to be entitled to a survivor's pension. If. however. you do have a dependent child or if you have an incapacity for work of at least 66%. this age condition is not valid.
- Secondly. one must have been married to the deceased. The marriage should have lasted at least one year or a child should have been born in the marriage.

The way survivor's pensions are calculated boils down to the same thing for salaried and self-employed persons. Nevertheless. the calculation depends of the fact whether or not the deceased spouse was retired.

Obviously. a survivor's pension is only reserved to spouses who were married on the date of the decease. Still. divorced spouses can demand a part of the retirement pension of their former husband / wife for their years of marriage together. Yet. that is only possible if they have not created any pension entitlement themselves during that period.

C. Income guarantee for the elderly

If individuals have accumulated insufficient pension rights. or even if they have acquired no income at all. they are still entitled to an allowance. known as the income guarantee for the elderly.

The income guarantee for the aged is a sort of subsistence minimum granted from the age of 63 to both men and women (64 years in 2006. and 65 years in 2009). The conditions one should satisfy for entitlement are almost the same as those for the subsistence minimum (cf. supra). Here too. every grant is preceded by a means test. The amount differs also according to the applicant's family situation. The income guarantee is a lump sump annual amount (in 2001) of :

- 4.681.82 EUR for a single person
- 7.022.72 EUR retiree with dependants(s)

²⁰ The required number of working years for women to acquire full pension rights is gradually being increased from 40 to 45 years (by 2009) in the context of equal treatment of men and women.

Given the individualisation of entitlement. two beneficiaries with the same principal residence shall receive 9363 euro a year together.

Many Belgians can. in other words. claim an individual pension. be it on the basis of their own working career. the working career of their partner. or –in the case of inadequate pension rights- the social assistance system. If one has accumulated no or insufficient pension rights in the past. but is presently co-residing with a partner who is eligible for a retirement pension. then one cannot claim an individual pension. but a (higher) household pension.

Gender pay gaps

A. Empirical evidence for Europe

In September 2003. the Commission of the European Communities published a working paper on the gender pay gaps in the European labour markets. Based on empirical evidence they draw the following conclusions: “In 2000. women in the EU had. on average. 16% lower hourly earnings than men. Gender pay gaps range from below 10% in Portugal and Italy to 20% or more in Austria. Germany. the Netherlands and the UK.” “The difference in earnings between men and women was generally smaller in the public sector (12%) than in the private (21%). Moreover “the gender pay gap varied with personal and job characteristics as well as across sectors and occupations. It was found to be particularly high among older workers (25%). the high skilled (22%) and those employed with supervisory job status (17%) as well as in financial services (29%). manufacturing (27%) and among craft workers (32%). Men are both more concentrated in higher paid sectors and occupations and more likely to hold supervisory responsibilities within these sectors and occupations (Commission of the European Communities :2003).

Table 65 Gender pay gap (the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees). European countries. 1997-2001

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
EU 15	16	16	15	16	16
Belgium	10	9	11	12	12
Germany	21	22	19	21	21
Greece	13	12	13	15	18
Spain	14	16	14	15	17
France	12	12	12	13	14
Ireland	19	20	22	19	17
Italy	7	7	8	6	6
Hungary	22	18	19	20	19
Netherlands	22	21	21	21	19
Portugal	7	6	5	8	10
Slovenia	14	11	14	12	11
Finland	18	19	19	17	17
Sweden	17	18	17	18	18
United Kingdom	21	24	22	21	21

Source: Eurostat: free data

Table 66 Earnings of men and women : annual gross earnings of women as a percentage of men's. 1999

	Belgium	EU	Difference B-EU
Annual gross earnings of women as a percentage of men's	84.4%	74.1%	10.2

Source: Nationaal Actieplan Werkgelegenheid based on Eurostat figures

B. The case of Belgium

Compared to other European Member States the gender pay gap in Belgium appears to be rather small. Wage differences between both sexes are, of all Member States, the least pronounced in Belgium (cf. supra). In 2000 the gross hourly wage of Belgian women was on average about 88% of that of men. Like in other European countries the situation in the public sector is different from that of the private. In the latter the gender pay gap is much bigger. Remarkable yet is the fact that wage differences in the Belgian public sector are disadvantageous for male wage earners. The gross hourly wage of female employees in the public sector, is about 7% higher than that of men. Belgium's position in this is nearly unique in the European Union (EU-15). Only in Portugal female employees in public sector have a higher hourly wage than their male colleagues.

4.1.3 Civil rights

As regards free legal advice in Belgium, a distinction should be made between front- and second-line assistance.

Legal frontline assistance is entirely free in Belgium, irrespective of income. An initial advice, practical information, legal information or a referral to a specialised service is provided by legally trained professionals in so-called "Justice Houses" or at other institutions offering legal advice (Federale overheidsdienst Justitie²¹, 2003).

For second-line legal assistance (further counsel and defence), one needs to call on a lawyer who one needs to pay. Certain population groups may, however, be eligible for free or partially free legal assistance. With a view to making the legal system more accessible, the maximum income for free legal advice was increased in January 2004. Table 5 provides an overview of the income conditions that need to be met in order for one to be able to call on partially or entirely free legal assistance (Federale overheidsdienst Justitie, 2003c).

²¹ Federal Ministry of Justice

Table 67 Income (net income per month) criteria for partially or entirely free legal assistance.

	Legal advice :	
	entirely free	partially free
Single persons	>750 €	750-965 €-
Single persons with dependants	>965 €	965 €- - 1177 €-
Cohabitants	+ 79.4€ per dependant	+ 79.4€ per dependant

Source: Federale overheidsdienst Justitie. 2003c

Social assistance claimants. persons on a replacement benefit for the disabled. certain categories of social renters. minors. asylum seekers and the accused who are presumed to have an inadequate income are also entitled to entirely free legal assistance.

Discrimination

In 2003 a Eurobarometer survey on discrimination was commissioned. Citizens in all fifteen member states were asked about discrimination they may have experienced or seen at work. in education. in seeking housing. etc. . One of the most often cited grounds for discrimination is racial or ethnic origin. In Belgium about 3% of the respondents report discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin (table 6.). There are some huge differences between different countries of the European Union. The Dutch are more likely to report discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin (7%). followed by Luxembourg (6%) and France (5%). This is high compared to 1% in Spain. Italy. Ireland and Finland. According to the report these figures must be interpreted cautiously and this for three reasons. First. these country differences depend on the size of the minority populations in each country. second the survey design excluded non-EU citizens. third people do not always know they have been actively discriminated against or may be unwilling to admit it.

Table 68 Proportion of respondents experiencing discrimination on grounds of race or ethnicity by country. 2002

Spain	1%
Luxembourg	6%
UK	3%
Denmark	2%
Sweden	3%
France	5%
Italy	1%
Portugal	3%
The Netherlands	7%
Finland	1%
Ireland	1%
Greece	4%
Belgium	3%
Austria	3%
East-Germany	1%
West Germany	3%
EU15	3%

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer . 2002

According to the same study. 20% of the respondents reports having witnessed discrimination on grounds of ethnic and minority group membership. However. the authors of the report mention that reports of witnessed discrimination should not be taken as evidence of the likely extent of discrimination. A single incident of discrimination might have been. witnessed by many people and could have potentially been reported by more than one respondent. Such reports are in themselves as much evidence of sensitivity and social awareness on the part of the witness as they are of the frequency of their occurrence.

Table 69 Proportion of respondents witnessing discrimination on grounds of race or ethnicity by country. 2002

Spain	19%
Luxembourg	20%
UK	19%
Denmark	25%
Sweden	31%
France	28%
Italy	17%
Portugal	20%
The Netherlands	35%
Finland	31%
Ireland	15%
Greece	22%
Belgium	20%
Austria	22%
East-Germany	15%
West Germany	19%
EU15	22%

Source : European Commission - Eurobarometer . 2002

4.1.4 Economic and political networks

Women and men in decision-making positions

A. Political domain

The proportion of women in national political decision-making bodies varies strongly between the different member states of the European Union. The Scandinavian countries and Germany have a relatively high proportion of female representation compared to the Southern European member states. With a proportion of female parliamentarians and members of government of one in five. Belgium scores rather poorly in European comparative perspective.

Table 70 Proportion of women in national governments and parliaments. 2001

	B	D	EL	ES	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK	Total
Government	22.2	38.6	12.5	17.6	29.4	21.9	10.3	36	9.8	38.9	50	32.9	24.7
Parliament	24.6	29.8	8.7	27.1	8.3	14.2	10.2	32.4	20	37	44.3	17	20.5

Source: Europäische datanbank Frauen in Führungspositionen

Parliament

Women are, until today, a minority in Belgian parliament. At present, one in three Belgian parliamentarians are female. In the present legislature, women are slightly better represented in the Chamber than in the Senate. Table 6 provides an overview of the evolution in terms of female MPs. Nevertheless, since the 1980s, a steep increase has occurred in the proportion of women parliamentarians. In 2003, three times as many women had taken the parliamentary oath as in 1987.

Table 71 Female representation in the national parliament. Belgium. 1987-2003

	females in Chamber	% females in Senate	% females in Parliament
1987	8.4%	8.1%	8.3%
1991	9.4%	10.8%	10.1%
1995	12.0%	23.9%	15.8%
1999	23.3%	28.2%	24.9%
2003	32%		

Source : Federal Government

Women's participation in politics as a governmental objective and strategy

(extracted from Meier, P.)

Women's participation in politics became a governmental objective in 1991, when it was taken up as an issue of concern in the coalition agreement of Dehaene I (1991-1995). The objective was to increase the participation of women in decision-making. According to some, a rather vague definition that has not become much more precise over the various years and coalition agreements.

Legal framework for the promotion of a balance between men and women in political decision-making

(cited from Meier P.)

At the end of the nineties the most important existing legal framework in this context was the law Smet-Tobback of 24/05/1994. It stipulated that electoral lists may contain a maximum of 2/3 of candidates of the same sex. If a party did not manage to fill up at least 1/3 of the places with candidates of the under-represented sex, these places had to be left open. The initial bill was more far-reaching. It not only specified a maximum of 2/3 of candidates of the same sex for the entire list. It also defined such a quota for the sum of the safe and combative seats, as well as of the first successor's place. A working group consisting of the governing parties' chairmen dropped the stipulation of how to spread candidates of both sexes over the lists because this would interfere too much in the parties' privilege to compose the lists. During the parliamentary debates on the law, various amendments were introduced in order to define the ranking of both sexes on the lists but none of these amendments made it. The law was first applied during the European, federal and regional elections of June 1999. During those elections, electoral lists should comprise a maximum of 3/4 of candidates of the same sex. The law was very controversial, given the fact that it guarantees no result at all.

The new coalition that became in power since 1999 placed the item of reviewing mechanisms in order to increase the participation of women in political decision-making on the agenda. This resulted in

2002 in the so-called 'quota-laws'. These laws dictate that electoral lists may contain a maximum of half the candidates plus one, of the same sex. This rule applies for all electoral levels. On each of the electoral lists the difference between the number of candidates of each sex should not exceed one. The first two candidates on the list have to be of different sexes. During the first election after the institution of these quota-laws a great increase in female parliament members could be observed, especially in the House of Parliament.

The Belgian political scientist Petra Meier has conducted research to determine whether the recent significant increase in women parliamentarians is the result of legal quotas or of recent reforms of the electoral system, whereby larger electoral districts were introduced. On the basis of her analysis, she concludes that the decisive factor was not the introduction of new legal quotas, but electoral reform (Meier, 2003).

Government

Women are also underrepresented in the Belgian government. In 2001, the 18-member government included only 4 women. Their proportion within the executive power amounted to just over 22%. While Belgium performs much better in this respect than the Southern European Member States (e.g. Portugal 10%), our country performs worse than its neighbours and the Scandinavian countries (e.g. Sweden 50%). After the parliamentary elections of 2003, the Belgian government was recomposed and extended to 21 members (15 ministers and 6 state secretaries). Five of these government members were women, which amounts to 23%. The recent expansion of the executive power has, in other words, not resulted in a higher proportion of women in this decision-making body.

B. Public domain

In Belgium, the number of women holding key positions within the central administration is very small. First and foremost, their presence at the highest echelon under the ministerial level is almost negligible. About 6% of those key positions are held by women. This implies that Belgium, together with Denmark, scores the worst in this respect of all EU member states. One level lower (level n-2), our country performs slightly better. In comparison to level n-1, there are twice as many women in key decision-making positions (11%). Still, this is pretty poor in European perspective. Only in Austria and Spain are women worse represented at this level of decision-making. The table shows, for that matter, that there are substantial differences between the EU member states.

Table 72 Women and men in decision making positions (first and second level below the minister) in the central administration²²

	Number of Ministries		Level n-1		Level n-2	
	In Country	In Database	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Austria	12	12	7	93	9	91
Belgium	16	16	6	94	11	89
Germany	13	13	7	93	12	88
Denmark	18	18	6	94	21	79
Greece	18	13	20	80	25	75
Spain	16	15	8	92	10	90
Finland	13	13	23	77	13	87
France	14	14	9	91	35	65
Hungary	15	15	13	87	17	83
Ireland	14	14	11	89	12	88
Italy	14	13	14	86	23	77
Luxembourg	19	18	10	90	36	64
Netherlands	13	13	11	89	15	85
Portugal	14	13	15	85	34	66
Sweden	10	10	34	66	38	62
Slovenia	14	13	18	82	46	54
UK	16	15	33	67	21	79
Average (%)	.	.	17	83	25	75

Source : European Commission - Database women and men in decision-making

C. Economic domain

Likewise, in business, women are rarely found in key positions. In none of the 50 selected Belgian companies in the table below is a woman involved in daily management. A very small proportion of women are found in the highest decision-making bodies of these enterprises: 95% are men, with just 5% women. Again, in international perspective, Belgium scores poorly in terms of gender equality in this domain. On the other hand, Belgium is one of the only countries where the highest corporate decision-making body is sometimes chaired by a woman. This is the case in 2% of companies.

²² A central administration is a department of a government, led by a minister. Central administrations are also referred to as ministries.

Table 73 % of women and men in decision-making positions in the highest decision-making bodies of top 50 publicly quoted companies. EU-15.

	Number of Companies		Highest Decision Making Body				Daily Executive body	
	On Stock Exchange	In Database	President		Members		CEO	
			Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)
Austria	49	47	0	100	6	94	0	100
Belgium	50	48	2	98	5	95	0	100
Denmark	50	48	2	98	12	88	0	100
Finland	50	50	0	100	11	89	0	100
France	50	49	2	98	5	95	2	98
Germany	50	49	0	100	10	90	0	100
Greece	50	42	0	100	8	92	5	95
Hungary	47	47	4	96	13	87	9	91
Ireland	49	46	0	100	7	93	0	100
Italy	49	48	4	96	2	98	1	99
Luxembourg	28	25	0	100	3	97	4	96
Portugal	50	45	2	98	4	96	3	97
Slovenia	41	30	4	96	22	78	3	97
Spain	49	46	2	98	4	96	0	100
Sweden	49	49	0	100	17	83	2	98
Netherlands	49	48	0	100	7	93	1	99
UK	50	49	0	100	16	84	2	98
Average (%)	.	.	2	98	10	90	2	98

Source : European Commission - Database women and men in decision-making

4.2 Labour Market

4.2.1 Access to paid employment

Long-term unemployment (12+ months)

In comparison to other EU member states. Belgium has a relatively high unemployment rate (8% in 2003. Eurostat figures). Moreover, unemployment in Belgium is often of a long-term nature, both in relation to the total labour force and in relation to the population of unemployed persons. The long-term unemployment rate in our country is approximately 3.5%. This means that 3.5% of the labour force have been unemployed for longer than a year, while actively seeking a job. Long-term unemployment occurs slightly more often among women than among men (4.1% vs. 3.1%). A comparison with other EU member states shows that these are relatively high figures. The long-term unemployment rate is not only above the average for the EU-15 (3.6%); it is actually one of the worst in the entire EU. Only Spain (3.9%), Germany (4%), Greece (5.1%) and Italy (5.3%) perform even worse. Although long-term unemployment in Belgium is slightly more common among women than men, in European perspective our country does perform better in relation to the first group. Belgium performs even worse if one expresses the number of long-term unemployed as a percentage of the unemployed population. About half (49%) of Belgium's unemployed have been out of a job for over a

year. compared to a European average of under 40%. Only Greece and Italy perform worse in this respect.

Table 74 Long-term unemployment: females and males. Belgium. 1997-2003(in % of the active population 15 years and older)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total	5.4	5.5	4.9	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.7
Females	7.1	7.0	5.9	4.6	3.6	4.1	4.0
Males	4.2	4.5	4.1	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.4

Source : Eurostat : free data

There are substantial differences between the various regions of Belgium in terms of the scope of long-term unemployment. While nationally the long-term unemployment rate stands at about 3%. only 1.4% of the labour force in Flanders has been out of work for longer than 12 months. This means Flanders scores a lot better in this respect than the average for the EU-15 (3.2%). However. the proportion of long-term unemployed persons in Belgium's other regions is much higher. Approximately 5.6% of the Walloon and 6.9% of the Brussels labour force have not performed paid labour in the past 12 months. even though they are considered active jobseekers. Unlike in the other regions. there was no gender difference in long-term unemployment in Brussels in 2002. Figures show that men were equally likely to be long-term unemployed as women. The differences in Flanders are minimal (0.3 percentage points). while in Wallonia women (7.1%) are considerably more likely than men (4.4%) to find themselves in a situation of long-term unemployment.

Long-term unemployment as a consequence of low outflow

In the late 1990s. research by De Lathouwer et al (Centre for Social Policy. University of Antwerp) showed that there is a correlation between long-term unemployment and outflow from unemployment. Countries with a low long-term unemployed rate invariably have a strong outflow. Belgium. despite a fairly favourable inflow. has the largest proportion of long-term unemployed of all member states. In the second half of the 1990s. an unemployed person in Belgium had an almost 50% likelihood of finding a new job within the first month of unemployment. Those who failed. however. subsequently saw their chances on the labour market diminish spectacularly. Up to the third month of unemployment. the likelihood of re-entry was 10%. but it further declined to 7% after the sixth month and to 4% after the first year.

Table 75 Probability of leaving a situation of unemployment before the first. the third. the sixth and twelfth month of unemployment. %

Administrative data	Month 1	Month 3	Month 6	Month 12
Austria	28.6	26.8	23.5	15.1
Belgium	47.2	10.4	5.9	4.0
Finland	14.2	13.5	12.5	10.5
France	37.6	14.2	5.3	2.8
Germany	22.5	15.9	10.7	6.2
Spain	48.8	12.8	7.9	2.2
Sweden	37.5	22.6	14.3	7.8
UK (LFS°)	21.0	14.6	12.2	9.8
Denmark	21.4	14.6	12.7	10.4
Ireland	33.5	10.3	5.4	2.5
Italy	34.9	10.0	3.6	1.2
Netherlands	36.3	14.7	8.9	7.2

Source : De Lathouwer et al. 1999

The researchers concluded on the basis of these findings that a policy aimed at reducing the inflow into unemployment is not the most effective means of fighting long-term unemployment. and that countries such as Sweden or Austria. whose long-term unemployment statistics read favourably. achieve success mainly by enhancing the outflow.

Enhancing the outflow has thus become the favoured employment policy tool since the late 1990s and certainly since the early 2000s. The government has. for example. reduced indirect labour costs (through lower social contributions for employers). activated social benefits. and introduced financial incentives for the unemployed (De Lathouwer. 2004).

Involuntary part-time or temporary unemployment

One of the indicators in the National Action Plans Employment is the number of involuntary part-time workers expressed as a percentage of the working population. The National Action Plan of Belgium shows that involuntary temporary employment is rather limited. In 2002. about 3.5% of all people working were employed on a part-time basis in spite of their preference to work full time.

Table 76 Involuntary part-time employment in % of the total population working. Belgium

	2001	2002
Males	1.3%	1.3%
Females	6.6%	6.5%
Total	3.5%	3.6%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Social Insluiving

As a share of the number of part-time workers this number is much higher. In 2002 about 19% of all part-time employed were not working on a full time basis just because they were not able to find a full time job. There are however big gender differences. Men indicate more frequent than women to be employed part-time because a full time job is not immediate within their reach. More than 27% of men employed part-time indicate to be in this position involuntary compared to 17% of the female part-time

workers. Again, there exist significant regional differences. Involuntary part time employment is much lower in Flanders (11%) than in Brussels (28%) and Wallonia (32%). Also on another point Flanders differs from the two other regions. The pronounced gender differences we find in Wallonia en Brussels are in the Flemish region nearly non existing. A final conclusion applying to all three the regions is that involuntary part-time employment is steadily decreasing since the end of the nineties.

Table 77 Involuntary part-time employment in % of the total population part-time workers. Belgium and EU-15. 1999-2002

	1999	2000	2001	2002
Flanders				
Males	18.3%	21.6%	17.0%	13.6%
Females	17.3%	15.5%	13.5%	11.3%
Total	17.4%	16.3%	13.9%	11.6%
Wallonie				
Males	53.3%	48.5%	43.5%	46.2%
Females	33.2%	32.2%	31.3%	30.1%
Total	36.5%	34.8%	33.2%	32.7%
Brussels				
Males	49.1%	52.2%	48.0%	40.8%
Females	32.9%	31.5%	30.0%	23.2%
Total	37.2%	37.2%	35.3%	28.5%
Belgium				
Males	33.9%	34.0%	29.6%	27.3%
Females	23.1%	21.5%	19.6%	17.4%
Total	24.6%	23.4%	21.1%	19.0%
EU-15				
Males	24.4%	22.7%	19.9%	18.8%
Females	15.0%	14.1%	13.4%	12.7%
Total	16.8%	15.8%	14.7%	14.0%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Werkgelegenheid

4.3 Services

4.3.1 Health services

In the first part, we already provided an overview of Belgium's health care structure. We explained that the health care system covers about 99% of the population and may therefore be regarded as quite inclusive. There is even a stipulation that entitles illegal aliens to urgent medical care. Nevertheless, it also emerged that some Belgians, particularly those belonging to the lower income groups, are sometimes forced to postpone medical expenses for financial reasons, and despite the efforts the government has made in this respect.

4.3.2 Housing²³

Belgian housing policy has always been geared towards stimulating property acquisition. As a result, the large majority of Belgian households owns a dwelling (approx. 70% in Flanders), while the rental housing market is relatively small, with a modest segment consisting in social rented homes.

Approximately 15% of Flemish rented homes are made available by public housing companies (Deleeck, 2003), which accounts for just over 5% of the total housing stock (Winters, cited in Vranken et al.). In comparison to other Western European countries, the degree of government intervention in the rented housing market is very limited indeed. In most countries, the combined proportion of private and social rented homes is considerably higher, with the social rented sector accounting for between half and three quarters (and as much as 86% in the Netherlands) of all rented homes (Deleeck, 2003).

In our country, social rented homes are dwellings that are made available by (officially recognised) social housing companies (SHCs) at a social rate, i.e. a rent that is lower than that for a comparable home in the private rented market. The government intervention consists in a subsidy to investors in social housing (primarily the SHCs). A person who is in need of a social dwelling is defined by the SHCs concerned as anyone registered on the waiting list who, at the moment of registration, was not living in social housing and, taking into account his/her preferences, may be granted a social dwelling in the short or intermediate term. Access to the social rented sector is dependent on income criteria that vary according to household composition. Prospective renters are registered with the social housing companies. In principle, homes are assigned chronologically, though some priority rules are applied.

Waiting lists and profiles of prospective renters

Waiting lists of prospective renters are however long. At the end of 2003, some 72,287 candidates were registered on the lists of the Flemish SHCs. Tables 78-84 provide a profile of the prospective renter. The breakdown by age, for example, shows that the largest group are 30-39 years of age, as they account for about 26% of all the candidates. Approximately 25% are older than 55.

Table 78 Number and proportion of prospective renters by age groups. Flanders. December 2003

	Number of prospective renters	Proportion of prospective renters
<20	937	1.29%
20-29	13.850	19.13%
30-39	18.180	26.50%
40-49	15.046	20.79%
50-59	9.533	13.17%
=>60	13.611	18.80%
invalid	230	0.31%
Total	72.387	100%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij, 2004

²³ Figures for Flanders ; housing is a responsibility of the regions.

Table 79 Number and proportion of prospective renters older than 55 years. Flanders. december 2003

	Number of prospective renters	Proportion of prospective renters
<55	54.176	74.4%
=> 55	17.981	24.84%
invalid	230	0.31%
Total	72.387	100%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004

A breakdown by family composition shows that 41% of the prospective renters live alone while 22% mainly women. are single persons with one or more children.

Table 80 Number and proportion of prospective renters by family composition. Flanders. December 2003

	Number of prospective renters	Proportion of prospective renters
1 person	29.952	41.38%
2 persons	18.566	25.65%
3 persons	10.741	14.84%
4 persons	6.108	8.44%
>5 persons	5.187	7.17%
invalid	1833	2.53%
Total	72.387	100%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004

Table 81 Number of prospective renters with one or more children by gender. Flanders. December. 2003

	Number of prospective renters
Men	2.081
women	14.218
Total	16.299
As a % of total population on a waiting list	22.52%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004

Furthermore 80% of the candidates on the waiting list have the Belgian nationality ; 16% are non-EU citizens.

Table 82 Number and proportion of prospective renters by nationality. Flanders. December. 2003

	Number of prospective renters	Proportion of prospective renters
Belgian	58.173	80.36%
Non-Belgian (not EU)	11.645	16.09%
Non- Belgian (EU)	1.565	2.16%
Unknown	532	0.73%
Invalid	472	0.65%
Total	72.387	100%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004

Finally, a breakdown by income (combined net taxable income) reveals that, in almost 40% of cases, no income data could be obtained. The largest proportion of prospective renters belongs to the income category earning between 10.001 and 20.000 euros (net annual income).

Table 83 Number and proportion of prospective renters by income group. Flanders. December. 2003

	Number of prospective renters	Proportion of prospective renters
0-10000 euro	12.917	17.84%
10001-20000 euro	23.621	32.63%
20001 euro en more	8.193	11.32%
Income unknown	27.656	38.21%
Total	72.387	100%

Source : Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004

If one relates the number of households on the waiting list with the total number of social rented homes, then it appears for 1999 (the year for which data are available for the three regions) that the number of households on a waiting list in Flanders and Wallonia corresponds with roughly 40% of the total supply of social rented homes. In Brussels, this proportion was more than twice as high (90%). It also emerges that, in contrast to the situation in the two other regions, the proportion of households on waiting lists in Brussels has only increased since the 1990s. If we compare the number of prospective renters in Flanders in 2003 (72.387) with the supply of social homes (127.567) (Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij), then it appears that the number of applicants corresponds with 55% of the housing supply.

Table 84 Number of households on a waiting list for social housing in % of the social housing supply

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Brussels		67.6	70	80.4	89.3	92.5	
Flanders	54.3	48.6	43	41.3	39.8		
Wallonie	47.7	37.6	38.3	37.2	37.8	40.5	45

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Social Insluiging

Only 6% of the Belgian households rents a dwelling from the social housing services.

Waiting time

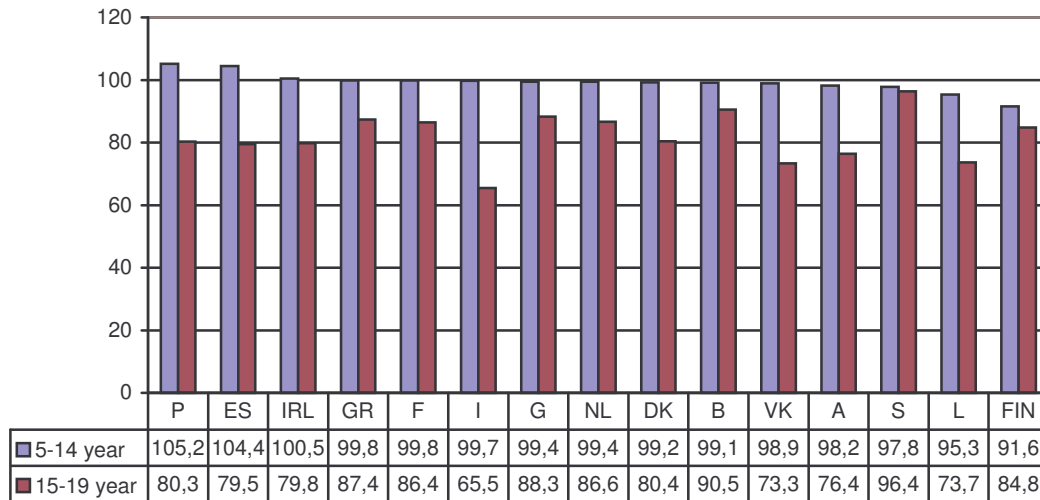
In 2003, the average waiting time for prospective renters with a current dossier was about 744 days. The average waiting time of dossier which were closed in 2003 (candidates getting a dwelling at their disposal) was 637 days (Vlaamse Huisvestingsmaatschappij. 2004).

4.3.3 Education

Every year, the Flemish authorities publish a series of education indicators and put these in international perspective ("Vlaamse Onderwijsindicatoren in international perspectief"). It emerges from the 2003 edition that, as in most European Union member states, almost everyone in the 5-14

age category participates in education²⁴. In terms of participation in education by 15- to 19-year-olds, our country performs particularly well in European comparative perspective. Over 90% of Belgian youngsters belonging to this age group participate in education, which is the second-highest participation rate within the EU.

Figure 13 Educational participation. 15-19-years old. by age group (1999-2000)



Source: Vlaamse onderwijsindicatoren in internationaal perspectief (based on OESO-data)

Post-war education policy was, among other things, aimed at a democratisation of education. One of the prime objectives was to make education more accessible and to enhance the participation rate of youngsters from all social strata (Deleeck, 2003). Despite all efforts to achieve this goal, the democratisation of education has still not been completed. This is apparent from, among other things, a comparative study into the degree of educational participation in Flanders in the period 1976-1992 (See Tan, 1998/1999). Today, girls and boys participate to roughly the same degree in higher education. On the other hand, participation in education still appears to be dependent strongly on the individual's social background. By way of illustration, we mention that only 16% of children with a low-skilled father and/or mother were enrolled in higher education in 1992. Among children with high-skilled parents, the comparable rate is more like 59%. A similar picture emerges in relation to the socio-professional category to which the household head belongs: 41% of children from white-collar households continue on to higher education, compared to just 14% of children from blue-collar backgrounds (See Table 26) (Deleeck, 2003).

²⁴ If participation is higher than 100%, this is mainly due to the coverage of the UOE tables in the OECD countries in question)

Table 85 Participation in tertiary education (of 18 – 25 years). by educational attainment and socio-professional category of the head of the household. Flanders. 1976-1985-1992.

	1976	1985	1992
Educational attainment			
low educational attainment	44	38	52
higher secondary education	37	22	30
high educational attainment	44	38	52
Socio-professional group			
blue-collar	7	9	14
white-collar	30	27	41
other	20	21	28
Total	17	18	29

Source : 1976. 1985: CSB surveys; 1992: fusiebestand CSB + PSBH.

Higher education other than university has been democratised to a greater extent than university education. If working-class children or children with low-skilled parents take the step towards higher education. they mostly choose for non-university studies. Thus. the gulf remains wide. especially in university education. Children from white-collar households participate 4 to 5 times more in university or higher education than children from working-class backgrounds. Children whose parents are high-skilled participate 5 to 6 times more than children with low-skilled parents (Deleeck.2003).

Table 86 Participation in tertiary education at the university (UHO) or outside the university (HOBU) (of 18 – 25 years). by educational attainment and socio-professional category of the head of the household. Flanders. 1976-1985-1992.

	Participation HOBU versus UHO					
	1976 CSB		1985 CSB		1992 CSB-PSBH	
	HOBU	UHO	HOBU	UHO	HOBU	UHO
Educational attainment						
low educational attainment	7	4	8	4	12	5
higher secondary education	22	15	8	14	21	9
high educational attainment	15	29	17	21	23	30
Socio-professional group						
blue-collar	5	3	7	3	10	4
white-collar	16	13	14	15	23	19
other	12	9	9	11	17	11
globale participatie	10	7	10	8	17	12

Source: 1976-1985: CSB-enquêtes; 1992: fusie-bestand: CSB+PSBH.

These social inequalities have hardly changed over the past 20 years. Despite a sharp increase in schooling (including among the lower social strata). the gulf between higher and lower social categories has remained about the same.

However. there remains little room in higher education to reduce inequalities. in view of the barriers that are already thrown up in the lower levels of education. For example. in Flemish secondary education. 46% of children with low-skilled parents are behind at school. compared to 29% of children of high-skilled parents. In addition. working-class children and children with low-skilled parents also

remain overrepresented in non-general secondary education. 24% of children of low-schooled parents follow vocational training, compared to just 4% of children whose parents are highly schooled. Often, they end up in these vocational programmes after an exhausting and discouraging elimination race. The high dropout rate in vocational training is indicative of this: in Flanders, no fewer than 55% of youngsters in vocational training are behind at school (Tan, 1998) (Deleeck 2003).

Comparable situations exist today in relation to children and youngsters from ethnic minority backgrounds (Rottiers et al. 2004).

4.3.4 Financial services

In 1987, a central office for credit to private persons was established in Belgium, with the purpose of registering all default of payment in relation to sales on instalments, loans on instalments, and personal loans with deferred payments. Since 2003, the office registers not only default of payment in relation to credit, but also information regarding consumer credit and mortgages concluded by individuals for private purposes. This registration is considered to be a preventative measure against the accumulation of excessive burden of debt. Creditors are required to provide the central office with information regarding the individual who has taken the credit, as well as details about the credit agreement and any default of payment. The information that is stored by the central office must be consulted by credit providers i) before concluding or altering a consumer credit or mortgage agreement ii) prior to making a credit card available. The annual report of the central office mentions the number of times that the database is consulted by credit providers (in March 2002: more than 5.2 million times) but it gives no information about how often credit is refused on the basis of information that is made available (Centrale voor Kredieten aan Particulieren, 2004). Perhaps it is worth noting that, in 2003, the number of people who were registered by the office as 'individuals burdened with problematic debt' amounted to approximately 5% of the adult population (National Action Plan Social Inclusion).

4.3.5 Transport

A. Flemish 'target-group' policies

(extracted from Schotte & Van den Bosch, 2004)

The Flemish government encourages the use of public transport and enhances its accessibility by bearing part of the cost for the user. In this respect, it pursues a so-called 'target-group policy'.

The purpose of the basic mobility project is to provide everyone with an opportunity to travel and to participate in societal life. In order to encourage the use of public transport, specific and targeted measures are taken. The past years, this policy line has been extended to increasingly broad population groups. In 1997, a pilot project was launched whereby subsistence benefit recipients could travel by tram or bus at fixed reduced rate. As the measure proved successful, it was subsequently

extended to those entitled to the guaranteed income for the elderly and non-Belgians on subsistence welfare.

Next, the policy line was pursued further by offering free public transport (bus and tram) to youngsters and the elderly. Children under the age of 5 always travel for free, while children aged between 6 and 12 travel for free if they are accompanied by an adult holder of a season travel card (with a maximum of four children per adult). In 2000, the Flemish government also decided to make tram and bus travel free for the 65+ age group: people belonging to this age category are provided with a travel pass that entitles them to free public transport by bus or tram throughout Flanders. An agreement has been reached with the Walloon public transport TEC under which the travel pass is also valid across the linguistic border. The rationale behind the measure is that pensioners often cannot afford a car. As the cost of public transport might also discourage them to travel, there is a danger of some elderly people becoming socially isolated. The introduction of the free travel pass was intended to prevent this.

The authorities have also tried to improve access to public transport for other population groups through specific measures. Youngsters under the age of 25, for example, can buy season tickets at reduced rates. The past two years, reduced season ticket rates for buses and trams have also been introduced for the only remaining age category, i.e. the 25- to 65-year-olds.

Together with the introduction of these special rates, a number of measures were taken for the benefit of certain social groups. Some now travel for free, while others can travel by tram and bus for between 12.5 and 25 euros a year.

The introduction of free public transport and reduced travel rates has certainly had an effect. The number of pensioners travelling by bus and tram has increased strongly in recent years, and the reduced rate for youngsters has also proven to be a success.

Efforts are also made to make rail travel more accessible to certain population groups. Elderly persons, for example, are entitled to a reduced rate of 3.00 euros for any two-way journey in second class undertaken on Mondays to Fridays after 9.01am.

To ensure basic mobility, the authorities have also taken measures to improve regional public transport services. The purpose is to prevent certain population groups or areas from becoming isolated and suffering the social and economic consequences that this would entail. In concrete terms, this policy means that all residential areas in Flanders must be served by a minimum of public transport provisions and that the nearest bus stop should always be within walking distance. A distinction is however made in terms of place and time. In urban and metropolitan areas, the nearest bus stop should lie within 500 metres; in the urban periphery and in smaller towns, the maximum distance to the nearest bus stop should not exceed 650 metres; and in rural areas, the maximum distance is 750 metres. The frequency of public transport is higher during peak-hours than during off-peak hours, and a distinction is also made between weekdays and weekends. As a rule, each

residential centre is served by at least one bus per hour. This universal public transport service provision was laid down by decree in 2001. The Flemish public transport company De Lijn committed itself to realising the objectives of the basic mobility project within 5 years. Since 2001, a series of measures have been introduced to this end. And in 2002, public transport services in 154 Flemish municipalities were improved in this manner.

B. Accessibility

At present, there is still some inequality between people in terms of mobility. A substantial proportion of Flemish households still have no car. Yet, it must be said that everyone can acquire 'access' to mobility. In order to achieve sustainable mobility and to reduce transport poverty, transport inequalities between various social strata must be kept down to a minimum. In the short term (by 2005), achieving basic mobility for people without a car is the priority. This will be achieved mainly by continuing the chosen strategy of cheaper public transport for certain target groups. There are also plans to introduce a system of mobile services, which is based on the opposite principle: the less-privileged are involved in society by bringing services to them.

Nevertheless, the lack of travel autonomy is not only a matter of income; it is also connected with quality of service and accessibility of the entire system. For this reason, additional flexible transport services will be developed to fill certain 'gaps' in passenger travel. Examples that come to mind are car-sharing systems, post-transport services, such as rental cars and taxis, demand-led public transport...

Road density

Belgium has 472 kilometres of road per 100 km². This is by far the most dense road network in the EU-15. Even the country with the second densest road network (the Netherlands, with 306km/100km²) comes nowhere near. However, if one expresses road density in relation to the total population, then it appears Belgium (14km/1000 inhabitants) does not have the densest road network at all. Sweden, France, Finland and Austria all have 1 to 2kms more roads per 1000 inhabitants than Belgium. Ireland even has 25km more.

Table 87 Road systems of European Member States

	Area	Population	Road system	Population density	Road sytem density	Road system/ population
Country	1998 (x 1000 km2)	1998 (x 1.000.000)	1996 (x 1000 km)	(inhab./km2)	(km/100km2)	(km/1000 inhabitants)
Austria	83.9	8.1	129.7	97	155	16
Belgium	30.5	10.2	144.1	334	472	14
Germany	357.0	82.0	649.7	230	182	8
Denmark	43.1	5.3	71.7	123	166	14
Greece	132.0	10.5	114.3	80	87	11
France	544.0	58.8	964.3	108	177	16
Finland	338.1	5.2	77.7	15	23	15
Italy	301.3	57.6	306.6	191	102	5
Ireland	70.3	3.7	91.5	53	130	25
Luxembourg	2.6	0.4	5.3	154	204	13
Netherlands	41.5	15.7	127.1	378	306	8
Portugal	91.9	10.0	118.3	109	129	12
Sweden	450.0	8.9	138.2	20	31	16
Spain	506.0	39.4	162.5	78	32	4
UK	244.1	59.1	393	242	161	7
Total EU	3.236	375	3.494	116	108	9

Source : Febiac (based on Transport in figures. European Commission)

4.4 Social Networks

4.4.1 Neighbourhood participation

A majority of all Belgians has contact with neighbours on a regular basis. More than 70% says to talk with their neighbours at least once a week. About 12% of the Belgians has rarely contact or even never contact with people living next door. If we compare these figures with those of other European countries. we have to conclude that of all Europeans. Belgians tend to have the least frequent contacts with neighbours.

Table 88 Percentage of population aged 16 and over talking to neighbours. 1999

	EU	B	EL	E	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	UK
At least once a week	81	71	96	90	89	80	70	86	79	78
Once or twice a month	10	17	2	5	7	10	14	8	12	13
Less than once a month or never	9	12	2	5	4	10	16	6	9	9

Source: Eurostat 2004

4.4.2 Friendships

Almost 80% of all Belgians indicate to meet (at home or elsewhere) others at least once a week. Only 4% says never to meet other people.

Table 89 Percentage of the population aged 16 and over meeting people (at home or elsewhere). 1999

	EU	B	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	UK
At least once a week	81	78	90	92	66	97	81	85	74	80	87
Once or twice a week	14	18	9	6	26	3	13	13	16	17	10
Less than once a month or never	5	4	2	2	8	1	6	2	9	4	3

Source: Eurostat. 2003

5 Social Empowerment

5.1 Knowledge Base

5.1.1 Application of knowledge

In 2001, the Centre for Social Policy of Antwerp published a paper on the intergenerational mobility in education during the 20th century which was based on a cohort-analysis of Flemish men. The question was addressed whether the influence of father's education on the educational attainment of men has decreased or not in the course of the 20th century (Van den Bosch, Tan, De Maesschalck, 2001).

Descriptive results, as well as the estimates from an ordered probit model suggest that there has indeed been a tendency towards greater intergenerational equality regarding education during the last century. The empirical analysis reveals enormous gains in education of men whose father had elementary education at most: among those born in the beginning of the century, a large majority also got only elementary education, while in recent cohorts this group has been reduced to a tiny majority. The proportions obtaining higher levels of education have steadily increased; in the most recent cohorts the percentage having a diploma of lower secondary education has slightly fallen, as more persons move onto higher secondary education. Among men whose father had lower secondary education, the gains in educational attainment are smaller, mainly because they started out from a more favourable position. More steady decreases are observed in the proportions of men obtaining elementary education or lower secondary education (from the 1910-19 cohort on), while more men have moved onto to higher education. Among men whose father had higher secondary education, the proportions getting only elementary or lower secondary education were quite small to begin with, and the main evolution is an increase in the proportion of men getting higher education. Among men whose father had higher education, no clear trends could be observed. There has been thus a considerable equalization across men from different social backgrounds in the chances to reach higher levels of education.

Yet, important inequalities in educational attainment between men with different social backgrounds remain even for the youngest cohorts. Despite the great gains in education made by persons with less favourable social backgrounds (compared with stability in educational attainment for those whose father's were more educated), the levels of education of fathers and sons in the youngest cohorts are still strongly correlated. Only men whose father had only elementary education have a significant chance of obtaining no more than elementary education themselves, and the proportion moving onto higher education in this group is very much smaller than among men whose fathers had obtained higher levels of education.

Moreover, in all cohorts there are important differences in the level of education attained by sons whose fathers are in different professions. Sons of white-collar workers, senior employees, employers and those engaged in the liberal professions move on to higher levels of education than the sons of blue-collar workers and of farmers. Across cohorts, these differences have been considerably reduced, however. The position of the sons of the small self-employed is somewhat in between, but over time they maintain their relative advantage relative to blue-collar workers. The results also suggest, though less clearly, that father's occupation has become less important as a determinant of educational attainment than father's education.

For further reading, analyses and methodological notes see : Van den Bosch & Tan, Intergenerational mobility in education during the 20th century- a cohort analysis of Flemish men.

5.1.2 Availability of information

Literacy

Figures from the International Adult Literacy survey show that about 18% of the Flemish population aged between 16 en 65 is functionally illiterate.

Table 90 Percentage of functional illiterate (population 16-65), level 1 of the 'prose literacy' scale of the International Adult Literacy Survey, 1994-1998

	S	DK	FIN	NL	D	Flanders	UK	IRL	P
1994-1998	7.5	9.6	10.4	10.5	14.4	18.4	21.8	22.6	48

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Sociale Insluiking

Since the early 1990s, there have been so-called 'Centres for Basic Education' in Flanders whose primary task is to reduce illiteracy and innumeracy. The target group consists in adults who are in need of basic education in order to be able to function properly in our society or to undergo further training. The courses are therefore designed to teach or enhance the basic competencies that one needs in society and in life in general. The education provided is mainly of primary and lower secondary school level.

Availability of free media

A. Printed press

The Belgian Constitution (art.25) guarantees freedom of the press. This means that (preventive) censorship on publications is prohibited.

B. Television

Until 1987, three public law institutions held a legal monopoly on broadcasting: BRT (CRT since 1998), RTBF and Belgisches Rundfunk- und Fernsehzentrum, for respectively Dutch-, French- and German-language radio and television broadcasts. Then, a decree was passed creating the possibility of establishing a non-public broadcasting company. At the same time, the ban on the broadcasting of

commercial advertising on radio and television was lifted. This led to one Francophone and one Dutch-language company being granted exclusive broadcasting rights as commercial. non-public television stations for their language area. This exclusiveness was, however, not to the liking of the European Commission, which invoked distortion of competition. The monopoly of the Dutch-language commercial. non-public television company was abolished on 1 January 1998.

C. Radio

The public broadcaster also used to hold a national radio monopoly. This was abolished in 2001, so that commercial stations can now also obtain a licence for nationwide broadcasts.

Access to internet

As in many other European countries, internet access in homes is gradually growing in Belgium. In 2000 one out of five households was connected to the internet, in 2002 almost 41% of the Belgian families had an internet connection at home. According to the European Social survey of 2002/2003 more than 55% of the Belgian never used internet, 18% used it daily.

Table 91 Percentage of households who have internet access at home. Europe, 2000-2002

	2000	2001	2002
EU (15 countries)	18.3	36.1	38.9
Belgium	20.2	34.7	40.9
Denmark	45.3	58.9	55.6
Germany	13.6	37.9	43.3
Greece	5.8	11.7	12.2
Spain	9.6	23.4	29.5
France	12.9	26.2	35.5
Ireland	17.5	46.2	47.9
Italy	19.2	32.9	27.3
Luxembourg	26.9	43.6	39.9
Hungary	2.6	:	:
Netherlands	46.1	58.5	65.5
Austria	16.9	46.2	30.9
Portugal	8.4	23.4	15.9
Slovenia	21 (i)	24	:
Finland	28.2 (i)	48.1	44.3
Sweden	47.5 (i)	64.3	64.2
United Kingdom	24.4 (i)	46.5	49.7

Source : Eurostat

Table 92 Internet use in different European countries (% of individuals aged 14 and over)

	B	EL	E	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
Never use	56.3	86.6	75.1	58.3	69.8	80.4	40.7	69.9	64.1	43.9	33	51.4
Everyday use	18.1	4.2	9.3	13	9.9	5.7	21.7	14.8	10.6	18.8	27.8	17.7

Source: European Social Survey, 2002/2003

5.1.3 User friendliness of information

Provision of information in multiple languages

As was pointed out in the introduction, our country has three official languages and four linguistic regions: the Dutch-language region, the French-language region, the German-language region and the bilingual Brussels Capital region. Each Belgian municipality unambiguously belongs to one –and only one– of these linguistic regions. In a number of expressly determined areas, Belgian law regulates language matters. These areas are the administration, justice, education and corporate life. In each of these fields, a simple principle is applied: the official language is the language of the linguistic region. However, the notion of a “linguistic region” is not merely descriptive. It is also a legal notion. In other words, the Dutch-language region is not the area where Dutch is spoken in practice, but the area where Dutch has to be used in the fields specified by law.

In the bilingual Brussels Capital Region, the competent authorities are required to use both French and Dutch when communicating messages and announcements (i.e. all non-personalised information carriers, including municipal information leaflets, street signs, etc). For all personalised written or spoken communication and for all personal official documents, the authorities must use the language of the citizen’s preference: either Dutch or French. Deeds, certificates and licences must, in other words, be drawn up in Dutch or in French depending on the choice of the citizen involved.

Finally, there are a number of so-called ‘facility municipalities’ in our country. These municipalities offer municipal services in another language than the official language of the region to which the municipality belongs (linguistic facilities). In other words, the Flemish facility municipalities offer French services, while the Walloon facility municipalities provide Dutch and German services. The municipalities in question are a number of municipalities in the Flemish periphery of Brussels and certain municipalities along the language border.

The fact that Belgium has three official languages means that a lot of the information about and from public institutions (e.g. on websites and in information brochures), especially concerning federal matters, are automatically made available in both Dutch and French, and often also in German. Moreover, information on websites is often also provided in English.

Availability of free advocacy, advice and guidance centres

In the section on ‘social inclusion’, we already focused on the availability of entirely or partially free legal assistance in Belgium. In the past, a number of centres were established where citizens could obtain free legal advice. In the judicial district of Brussels, for example, there is an office for legal assistance (‘Bureau voor Juridische Bijstand’) and a so-called ‘Justice House’. The former is a service that is made available by the Bar and that is exclusively concerned with providing free legal assistance. Anyone, irrespective of income, can call on the service for information and free legal advice. The justice houses (established by the government) serve a broader purpose: they inventory, enhance, coordinate and supervise existing initiatives in relation to paralegal services per judicial

district. In addition to providing volunteer lawyers who can give free frontline legal advice, these houses also offer to support to victims, sensitise the public, conduct social studies (e.g. into the household situation), mediate in criminal cases, assist the convicted etc. There are 28 such centres in our country as well as 28 offices for legal assistance. In both cases, half are Dutch-speaking and half are French-speaking. Furthermore, the public can often also obtain free frontline legal advice from the so-called Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMWs) and through numerous local private initiatives (Federale Overheidsdienst Justitie, 2003b).

5.2 Labour market

5.2.1 Control over employment contract

Trade union membership & characteristics of Belgian syndicalism

(Extracted from Deleeck, 2003)

Unlike in most other countries, in Belgium there is not just the one trade union, but several trade unions operating in parallel to each other. This situation has grown historically out of ideological differences. Each ideological 'pillar' (socialist, christian democrat and liberal) has its own trade union, with specific characteristics. Attempts to merge the three or to create an institutional trade union movement have all failed (unlike in the Netherlands). The different trade unions do frequently deliberate and take joint action.

The three unions (ACV, ABVV and ACLVB) are recognised employees' organisations holding a monopoly on the representations of workers. In order to gain full recognition, an employees' organisation must have more than 50.000 members and be organised interprofessionally (i.e. in all branches of industry). Only representative bodies have a seat on the national and sector-wide social deliberative bodies. Moreover, only they can propose a list of candidates for the works council, and they are empowered to pay out unemployment benefits. They are the negotiating partners of employers.

The balance of power between the three trade unions can be measured in terms of their membership. Figures show that a shift has taken place in recent decades, which is partly due to changes in terms of the composition of the labour force (more white-collar employees, more women, more highly educated individuals) and professional activities (more tertiary and quaternary).

Table 93 Evolution of trade union membership

	Socialist movement		Liberal movement		Christian-democratic movement	
	number	index	number	index	number	index
1940	545.224	100	86.260	100	339.769	100
1950	631.281	116	75.681	88	567.587	167
1960	716.628	131	111.407	129	761.05	224
1970	836.963	154	123.710	143	965.208	284
1980	1.126.814	207	200.000	232	1.339.079	394
1985	1.106.000	203	210.000	243	1.363.919	401
1990	1.029.000	189	213.098	247	1.430.571	421
1998	1.209.759		217.435		1.614.526	

Source : Matthys. R.. Belgoscopie. 1988 en mededelingen van de vakbonden.

From an international comparative perspective. Belgium has a high union density (i.e. trade union membership in relation to size of the labour force). rating just behind the Scandinavian countries. In the 1980s. union density declined in most Western countries. except in Scandinavia. In Belgium. too. after a spectacular increase in union density in the first half of the 1970s. there was a slight decline. According to Brown et al (1995). the rate of unionisation amounted to 83% in Sweden. 53% in Belgium. 32% in the UK. 30% in Germany. 26% in the Netherlands. and 9% in France. Belgium's high rate of unionisation can be explained in terms of its long trade union tradition. within a system of consultation and consensus. and by the fact that unemployment benefits are paid out via the trade unions.

As a result of this high trade union density. the trade unions have substantial financial means at their disposal (membership fees and administrative allowances for paying out unemployment benefits).

Coverage of collective agreements

The Belgian consultative system unfolds on three levels: negotiation and consensus at the national (inter-professional) level. at (professional) sector level. and at company level. There is a hierarchy between these levels in the sense that general agreements at a higher level may be worked out or complemented at a lower level. As a rule. the consultation is bipartite (involving employers and employees). Tripartite consultation (which also involves government) also occurs. but this has not been institutionalised.

The basic notion constituting the foundation of bipartite consultation is that the two parties involved should determine autonomously how to organise labour relations. without government intervention and without calling on external bodies (e.g. labour court) in the event of conflict. This autonomy is absolute in the case of collective agreements on conditions of labour (and to an extent in matters regarding workers' social security. given that this is dependent upon the individual's labour performance and is financed through social contributions by employees and employers themselves).

A. Bipartite consultation at the national level

At the national level, agreements are reached within the National Labour Council (NLC; Nationale Arbeidraad - NAR). Collective labour agreements concluded within the NLC are declared binding by Royal Decree, after which they apply to all relevant enterprises and employees. Negotiations may concern minimum wage, increases in holiday pay, etc.

B. Bipartite consultation at sector level

The purpose of equal representation committees within sectors of industry is to conclude collective labour agreements for a sector or subsector; to prevent and resolve conflicts between employers and employees; to advise the government at its request or on the committee's own initiative about any areas belonging to its field of competence; to work out sector-specific regulations; and to apply labour law. As such, they are the most important consultative bodies at sector level. They decide which conditions of labour should be applied in specific branches of industry, particularly in relation to wage scales (minimum wage levels per age and per level of qualification) and working hours. If a collective agreement reached within an equal-representation committee is confirmed and declared binding by Royal Decree, then the stipulations apply to all companies belonging to that sector of industry. Such agreements may cover every aspect of labour relations that is not governed by existing regulations and laws. For that matter, the law only lays down minimal norms and basic principles which are subsequently upgraded and elaborated through collective consultation. Topics that may be governed by collective agreements include: trade union representation, job classification, working hours, overtime, remuneration, bonuses, index clauses, absence from work, holidays, complementary pension schemes, etc.

C. Consultation at company level: the works council

Under the law of 20 September 1948, works councils must be established in all private-sector enterprises usually and on average employing 100 workers (or more). The councils are equal-representation bodies and they are chaired by the employer (or his representative). The workers' representatives are elected by the employees of the company from lists put forward by the three representative trade unions. From a financial, economic, technical and social perspective, the works council is empowered to formulate advice and to gather information. In the social domain, the works council sometimes has power of decision (with regard to annual holidays, drawing up and altering labour regulations, supervision of educational leave, etc.). Furthermore, the works council -like the trade union representation- monitors whether social legislation in general is properly applied.

The initial expectation that the works councils would provide a form of co-management on the part of the workforce was, in fact, never realised. On the one hand, there are many employers who fail to meet or only partly meet their obligations vis-à-vis the works council; on the other, the expertise of the employees' representatives is inadequate for managerial purposes, or, to be more precise, the representatives are not able to deal with the often complex issues involved and they also lack access to vital information. The fact that the works councils fulfil an advisory role means that, in practice, they have little genuine power.

D. Tripartite consultation at the national level

Besides the bipartite consultation between employers and employees, there is also consultation in which the government participates as a third party. No separate institution or procedure has been established for this purpose: this kind of consultation takes place whenever it is deemed necessary and in whatever manner circumstances dictate. In the past, during periods of social tension, large-scale national labour conferences were called. Especially since 1975, governments have also organised more restricted tripartite consultative rounds at the highest level, primarily to gauge the response of the social partners to government plans or in order to get negotiations started.

5.2.2 Prospects of job mobility

Work based training

According to Eurostat, about 70% of Belgian companies organise training for the benefit of their employees (together, these companies employ almost 90% of all workers). Of all Belgian employees, about 41% undergo in-company training. Table 6 shows that there is little difference between men and women in terms of participation in training within the company.

The average number of hours training per participant is 31, but average for female employees is considerably lower than for men (Table 6). The number of hours of in-company training per employee is approximately 13, which corresponds to about 1% of the total number of hours performed (Table 6). The cost of training provided by companies amounts to just over 1% of the total personnel cost. Per participant, the cost of training amounted to 1431 euro in 2000. If we break this figure down by gender, it appears that expenditure on training for men (1642 euro) is higher than that on training for female employees (1056 euro).

Table 94 Continuing vocational training (CVT) in enterprises (1999)

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
Training enterprises as a % of all enterprises	62	70	75	18	36	76	79	24	88	22	82	91	87
Employees in training enterprises as a % of employees in all enterprises	88	88	92	56	64	93	92	56	96	52	95	98	97
Participants in CVT courses as a % of employees in all enterprises	40	41	32	15	25	46	41	26	41	17	50	61	49
Hours in CVT courses per employee (all enterprises)	12	13	9	6	11	17	17	8	15	7	18	18	13
Hours in CVT courses per participant	31	31	27	39	42	36	40	32	37	38	36	31	26

Source: Eurostat 2003

Table 95 Work-based training. Belgium. 2001-2002

	2001	2002
Enterprises providing training as a % of enterprises which have registered their social balance	13.9%	13.2%
Cost of training in % of the costs for staff	1.48%	1.35%
Average cost per trainee. in euro		
Total	1431€	1369€
Men	1642€	1579€
Women	1056€	1032€
Proportion men/women	0.64€	0.65€
Number of persons in training. as a % of total effective working		
Total	41.4%	40.9%
Men	41.7%	40.0%
Women	40.9%	42.3%
Proportion men/women	0.98%	1.06%
Average number of training hours per trainee		
Total	33.2%	31.0%
Men	37.4%	34.9%
Women	25.6%	24.7%
Proportion men/women	0.68%	0.71%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Tewerkstelling

Life long learning

In 2002, approximately 6.6% of the Belgian population aged between 25 and 64 took part in some kind of course or training²⁵. However, age, level of schooling and nationality are important determinants for participation in life-long learning. Proportionally, men participate slightly more than women (6.8% vs. 6.3%). And youngsters participate substantially more than the older age groups: while only 3% of those aged between 50 and 64 undergo training, the participation rate among the 40- to 49-year-olds is 6%, and that of workers aged 25 to 29 is as high as 11%. Moreover, there is quite a lot of differentiation by level of education: the higher educated clearly participate more in training. About 11% of the population aged 25 to 64 and holding a university degree participate in training, compared to just below 6% among adults with a degree from secondary education. Of those whose level of education is lower, not even 3% participate in training. As regards nationality, there are striking differences between holders of an EU nationality and others. The participation rate among Belgians (5.8%) is comparable to that among workers from other EU member states (4.7%). But individuals with a non-EU nationality clearly participate a lot more: approximately 12% were undergoing training or taking a course in 2002, implying that their participation rate is twice as high as that of other Belgian citizens. Finally, if we break down the figures according to activity status, we notice little difference between those in and those out of work: the participation rate for the unemployed is 7.2%, compared to 6.8% for those in work. There is however a substantial difference between the employed and the unemployed on the one hand and the economically inactive on the other. Of the latter group, only 3.7% take part in any form of training.

²⁵ Defined as participation in a course or training programme during the four weeks prior to the labour force survey.

There is also strong regional variation. While the trends are the same (more training among youngsters, the higher-educated and non-Europeans), the extent to which the various groups participate is not the same everywhere. People in Wallonia (generally and by subcategory) participate far less in training than do people in Flanders and Brussels. The older age categories participate slightly more in life-long learning in Flanders, while life-long learning is more popular among the younger age groups in Brussels (see Table). The higher-trained the group under consideration, the higher the participation rate in life-long learning. However, Wallonia does perform worse than the two other regions. It is also the case that the unemployed participate more than the employed, except in Brussels.

Table 96 Percentage of the population (25-64) that received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Belgium and EU-15, 1996-2003

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
EU-15								
total	5.7	5.8	:	8.2	8.5	8.4	8.5	9.7
females	5.5	5.7	:	8.6	8.9	9.0	9.2	10.4
males	5.9	5.9	:	7.9	8.0	7.9	7.9	8.9
Belgium								
total	2.9	3.0	4.4	6.9	6.8	7.3	6.5	8.5
females	2.5	2.6	3.8	6.1	6.0	6.9	6.3	8.7
males	3.4	3.4	5.0	7.8	7.6	7.7	6.8	8.3

Source : Eurostat. Free data

Activation

Table 99 provides an overview of the number of participants in professional training programmes and in other policy instruments relating to employment, expressed in terms of % of the unemployed jobseekers. The measures encompass vocational training programmes, job rotation schemes and job-sharing schemes, employment incentives, incentives to establish an own company, etc. Figures show that the activation rate increased from the late 1990s and subsequently declined again. While in 2001, still about half of the unemployed jobseekers were participating in a re-employment programme, this proportion amounted to only 31% in 2002. Proportionally, women participate slightly more than men in programmes aimed at achieving labour-market re-entry.

Table 97 Number of long-term unemployed within an activation plan as a % of the total population long term unemployed. Belgium, 1998-2002

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Total	42.7%	45.4%	47.4%	50.0%	31.8%
Females	43.5%	47.9%	50.2%	53.4%	32.1%
Males	41.7%	41.8%	43.4%	45%	31.6%

Source : Nationaal Actieplan Werkgelegenheid

5.2.3 Reconciliation of work and family life

Percentage of labour force actually making use of work/life balance measures

Cf. socio-economic security

5.3 Openness and supportiveness of institutions

5.3.1 Political system

Belgium has a representative democracy. Giving direct power to the people is generally being considered as against the constitution²⁶. This implies that referenda meant as an instrument for giving the people decision-making power as well as referenda meant as an instrument to consult the people, are regarded as unconstitutional. Only at the level of the provinces and the municipalities referenda can be held but a) only on strictly local matters. b) the referenda can only be used to consult the people, not for giving them decision-making power.

²⁶ However this is subjected to discussion amongst constitutional specialists.

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Annex Social Quality indicators

Indicators of Socio-economic Security

Domains	Sub-domains	Indicators
Financial resources	Income sufficiency	1. Part of household income spent on health, clothing, food and housing (in the lower and median household incomes)
	Income security	2. How do certain biographical events affect the risk of poverty on household level. 3. Proportion of total population living in households receiving entitlement transfers (means-tested, cash and in-kind transfers) that allow them to live above EU poverty level
Housing and environment	Housing security	4. Proportion of people who have certainty of keeping their home 5. Proportion of hidden families (i.e. several families within the same household)
		Housing conditions
	Environmental conditions (social and natural)	8. People affected by criminal offences per 10.000 inhabitants 9. Proportion living in households that are situated in neighbourhoods with above average pollution rate (water, air and noise)
Health and care	Security of health provisions	10. Proportion of people covered by compulsory/ voluntary health insurance (including qualitative exploration of what is and what is not covered by insurance system)
	Health services	11. Number of medical doctors per 10.000 inhabitants 12. Average distance to hospital, measure in minutes, not in meters 13. Average response time of medical ambulance
	Care services	14. Average number of hours spent on care differentiated by paid and unpaid
Work	Employment security	15. Length of notice before employer can change terms and conditions of labour relation/contract 16. Length of notice before termination of labour contract 17. proportion employed workforce with temporary, non permanent, job contract 18. Proportion of workforce that is illegal
		Working conditions
Education	Security of education	22. Proportion of pupils leaving education without finishing compulsory education (early school leavers) 23. Study fees as proportion of national mean net wage
	Quality of education	24. Proportion of students who, within a year of leaving school with or without certificate, are able to find employment

Source: M. Keizer and L.J.G. van der Maesen: Social Quality and the Component of Socio-economic security 3rd Draft, Working Paper, Amsterdam, September 2003

Indicators of Social Cohesion

Domains	Sub-domains	Indicators
Trust	Generalised trust	25. Extent to which 'most people can be trusted'
	Specific trust	26. Trust in: government; elected representatives; political parties; armed forces; legal system; the media; trade unions, police; religious institutions; civil service; economic transactions
		27. Number of cases being referred to European Court of law
		28. Importance of: family; friends; leisure; politics; respecting parents. parents' duty to children
Other integrative norms and values	Altruism	29. Volunteering: number of hours per week
	Tolerance	30. Blood donation
		31. Views on immigration, pluralism and multiculturalism
	Social contract	32. Tolerance of other people's self-identity, beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle preferences
		33. Beliefs on causes of poverty: individual or structural
		34. Willingness to pay more taxes if you were sure that it would improve the situation of the poor
		35. Intergenerational: willingness to pay 1% more taxes in order to improve the situation of elderly people in your country
Social networks	Networks	36. Willingness to actually do something practical for the people in your community/ neighbourhood, like: picking up litter, doing some shopping for elderly/ disabled/ sick people in your neighbourhood, assisting neighbours/ community members with filling out (fax/ municipal/ etc) forms, cleaning the street/ porch/ doorway
		37. Division of household tasks between men and women: Do you have an understanding with your husband/ spouse about the division of household tasks, raising of the children, and gaining household income?
		38. Membership (active or inactive) of political, voluntary, charitable organisations or sport clubs
		39. Support received from family, neighbours and friends
Identity	National/ European identity	40. Frequency of contact with friends and colleagues
		41. Sense of national pride
	Regional/ community/ local identity	42. Identification with national symbols and European symbols
		43. Sense of regional / community / local identity
	Interpersonal identity	44. Sense of belonging to family and kinship network

Source: Y. Berman and D. Phillips: Indicators for Social Cohesion, 5th Draft, EFSQ Working Paper, Amsterdam, June 2004

Indicators of Social Inclusion

Domains	Sub-domains	Indicators	
Citizenship rights	Constitutional/ political rights	45. Proportion of residents with citizenship	
		46. Proportion having right to vote in local elections and proportion exercising it	
	Social rights	47. Proportion with right to a public pension (i.e. a pension organised or regulated by the government)	
		48. Women's pay as a proportion of men's	
	Civil rights	49. Proportion with right to free legal advice	
		50. Proportion experiencing discrimination	
	Economic and political networks	51. Proportion of ethnic minority groups elected or appointed to parliament, boards of private companies and foundations	
		52. Proportion of women elected or appointed to parliament, boards of private companies and foundations	
	Labour market	Access to paid employment	53. Long-term unemployment (12+ months)
			54. Involuntary part-time or temporary employment
Services	Health services	55. Proportions with entitlement to and using public primary health care	
		Housing	56. Proportion homeless, sleeping rough
			57. Average waiting time for social housing
	Education	58. school participation rates and higher education participation rates	
		Social care	59. Proportion of people in need receiving care services
			60. Average waiting time for care services (including child care)
	Financial services	61. Proportion denied credit differentiated by income groups	
		62. Access to financial assistance / advice in case of need	
	Transport	63. Proportion of population who has access to public transport system	
		64. Density of public transport system and road density	
Civic / cultural services	65. Number of public sport facilities per 10.000 inhabitants		
	66. Number of public and private civic & cultural facilities (e.g. cinema, theatre, concerts) per 10.000 inhabitants		
Social networks	Neighbourhood participation	67. Proportion in regular contact with neighbours	
	Friendships	68. Proportion in regular contact with friends	
	Family life	69. Proportion feeling lonely/isolated	
		70. Duration of contact with relatives (cohabiting and non-cohabiting)	
	71. Informal (non-monetary) assistance received by different types of family		

Source: A. Walker and A. Wigfield: The Social Inclusion Component Of Social Quality, EFSQ Working Paper, Amsterdam, September 2003

Indicators of Social Empowerment

Domains	Sub-domains	Indicators
Knowledge base	Application of knowledge	72. Extent to which social mobility is knowledge-based (formal qualifications)
		73. Per cent of population literate and numerate
	Availability of information	74. Availability of free media
		75. Access to internet
		76. Provision of information in multiple languages on social services
Labour market	User friendliness of information	77. Availability of free advocacy, advice and guidance centres
		78. % Of labour force that is member of a trade union (differentiated to public and private employees)
	Control over employment contract	79. % Of labour force covered by a collective agreement (differentiated by public and private employees)
		80. % Of employed labour force receiving work based training
	Prospects of job mobility	81. % Of labour force availing of publicly provided training (not only skills based). (Please outline costs of such training if any)
Openness and supportiveness of institutions	Reconciliation of work and family life (work/ life balance)	82. % Of labour force participating in any "back to work scheme"
		83. % Of organisations operating work life balance policies.
	Openness and supportiveness of political system	84. % Of employed labour force actually making use of work/life balance measures (see indicator above)
		85. Existence of processes of consultation and direct democracy (eg. referenda)
Public space	Openness of economic system	86. Number of instances of public involvement in major economic decision making (e.g. public hearings about company relocation, inward investment and plant closure)
	Openness of organisations	87. % of organisations/ institutions with work councils
	Support for collective action	88. % Of the national & local public budget that is reserved for voluntary, not-for-profit citizenship initiatives
Personal relationships	Cultural enrichment	89. Marches and demonstrations banned in the past 12 months as proportion of total marched and demonstrations (held and banned).
		90. Proportion of local and national budget allocated to all cultural activities
	Provision of services supporting physical and social independence	91. Number of self-organised cultural groups and events
		92. Proportion of people experiencing different forms of personal enrichment on a regular basis
		93. percentage of national and local budgets devoted to disabled people (physical and mental)
Personal support services	94. Level of pre-and-post-school child care	
Support for social interaction	95. Extent of inclusiveness of housing and environmental design (e.g. meeting places, lighting, layout)	

Source: P. Herrmann: Discussion Paper on the Domain Empowerment, 3rd Draft, ENIQ October 2003

Annex Collective data

1. Socio-economic security

Domain: Financial resources

Sub-domain: Income security

3. Proportion of total population living in households receiving entitlement transfers (means-tested, cash and in-kind transfers) that allow them to live above EU poverty level.

At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers: total

The share of persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income

	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after
EU 15	25	16	24	15	24	15	23	15	24	15
EU 25	:	:	:	:	24	15	:	:	24	15
Belgium	26	14	25	14	24	13	23	13	23	13
Germany	22	12	22	11	21	11	20	10	21	11
Greece	23	21	22	21	22	21	22	20	23	20
Spain	27	20	25	18	23	19	22	18	23	19
France	26	15	25	15	24	15	24	16	24	15
Ireland	32	19	32	19	30	19	31	20	30	21
Italy	22	19	21	18	21	18	21	18	22	19
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	:	19	9	20	10
Netherlands	23	10	21	10	21	11	21	10	21	11
Portugal	27	22	27	21	27	21	27	21	24	20
Slovenia	17	11	17	12	18	11	17	11	:	:
Finland	23	8	22	9	21	11	19	11	19	11
Sweden	28	9	28	10	28	9	27	11	27	10
UK	30	18	30	19	30	19	29	19	29	17

Source: Eurostat; free data, social cohesion

At-risk-of-poverty rate before and after social transfers: males and females

The share of persons with an equivalised disposable income below the risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income

	1999		2000				2001					
	males		females		males		females		males		females	
	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after	before	after
EU 15	23	15	25	16	22	14	24	16	22	14	25	16
EU 25	23	15	25	16	:	:	:	:	23	14	25	17
Belgium	23	11	26	14	22	12	25	14	21	12	25	15
Germany	20	10	21	12	19	10	22	11	20	10	23	12
Greece	22	20	23	21	22	19	23	20	21	19	24	22
Spain	23	18	23	19	21	17	23	19	22	17	25	20
France	24	15	25	16	24	15	25	16	23	15	24	16
Ireland	28	17	32	20	29	19	33	21	29	20	32	23
Italy	20	18	21	18	20	18	21	19	21	19	23	20
Hungary	:	:	:	:	18	9	19	10	20	10	21	10
Netherlands	21	10	22	11	21	11	21	10	21	12	21	11
Portugal	27	19	28	22	26	19	28	22	25	20	24	20
Slovenia	17	11	19	12	17	10	18	12	:	:	:	:
Finland	19	9	22	12	18	9	21	13	17	9	20	14
Sweden	26	9	29	10	26	10	28	11	25	10	29	11
UK	27	18	32	21	26	16	32	21	26	15	32	19

Source: Eurostat; free data, social cohesion

Domain: Housing and environment

Sub-domain: Housing conditions

7. Proportion of population living in houses with *lack* of functioning basic amenities (water, sanitation and energy)

Percentage of household lacking at least one of the three basic amenities by income group, 1999

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
All households	21	19	10	38	62	11	16	15	12	89	4	-	11
Household income less than 60% compared to median actual current income	35	33	25	70	84	24	33	40	16	96	9	-	16

Source: Eurostat 2003, Living conditions in Europe

Domain: Health and care

Sub-Domain: Health services

11. Number of medical doctors per 100.000 inhabitants

Number of practitioners per 100 000 inhabitants

	EU15	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
1997	-	386	345	410	428	325	214	578	-	306	296	278	168
1998	368	395	350	426	436	426	219	583	295	312	300	278	172
1999	375	405	355	438	444	328	227	589	311	318	306	283	176
2000	-	411	359	-	454	329	250	599	321	325	308	-	180
2001	-	419	362	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Eurostat, Yearbook 2003

12. Average distance to hospital, measure in minutes, not in meters

Proximity to hospitals by income (% having access to a hospital in less than 20 minutes by quartiles of household-equivalence income)

	Total	Lowest quartile	Highest quartile	Difference in percentage points
EU 15	52,8	44,9	60,4	15,5
Belgium	66	53,6	78,9	25,3
Germany	52,7	48	56,8	8,9
Greece	39,9	35,7	44,3	8,5
Spain	41,4	38,4	44,2	5,8
France	54,4	43,4	65,3	21,9
Ireland	44,6	40,5	48,7	8,2
Italy	60,9	47	75,2	28,2
Hungary	31,4	16	46,8	30,8
Netherlands	72,5	66,8	77,8	11
Portugal	37,8	27,2	49	21,9
Slovenia	37,9	30,5	46,2	15,7
Finland	50,9	48	53,8	5,8
Sweden	58	56	60	4,0
UK	45,5	34,2	57,8	23,6

Source: Eurobarometer 52.1

Domain: Work

Sub-domain: Employment security

17. Proportion employed workforce with temporary, non permanent, job contract

Proportion employees with a contract of limited duration (temporary job contracts)

	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	total	females	males	total	females	males	total	females	males	total	females	males
EU 15	13,2	14,2	12,4	13,4	14,5	12,5	13,4	14,5	:	13,1	14,3	12,1
Belgium	10,3	13,7	7,7	9	12,1	6,6	8,8	12,1	:	7,6	10,3	5,5
Germany	13,1	13,4	12,8	12,7	13,1	12,5	12,4	12,7	:	12	12,2	11,8
Greece	13	14,7	12	13,1	15,7	11,5	12,9	15,4	:	11,3	13,4	9,8
Spain	32,7	34,9	31,4	32,1	34,6	12,1	31,6	34,1	:	31,2	34,2	29,2
France	14	14,8	13,3	15	15,7	14,3	14,9	16,3	:	14,1	16	12,5
Ireland	9,4	12,1	7,1	4,6	5,8	3,6	3,7	4,5	:	5,3	6,3	4,5
Italy	9,8	11,8	8,5	10,1	12,2	8,8	9,5	11,5	:	9,9	12,1	8,3
Hungary	:	:	:	:	:	:	7,5	6,8	:	7,4	6,8	8
Netherlands	12	15,4	9,4	14	17,2	11,1	14,3	17,5	:	14,3	17	12,2
Portugal	18,6	20,4	17,1	20,4	22,7	18,4	20,3	22,1	:	21,8	23,4	20,5
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	:	:	13,1	13,3	:	14,7	16,7	12,9
Finland	18,2	21,2	15,2	17,7	20,9	14,5	17,9	22	:	17,3	20,5	13,9
Sweden	13,9	16,6	11,2	14,7	16,9	12,1	14,7	16,9	:	15,7	17,9	13,3
UK	6,8	7,5	6,2	6,7	7,7	5,7	6,7	7,5	:	6,1	6,8	5,5

Source: Eurostat; Statistics in Focus

Sub-domain: Working conditions

20. Number of fatal accidents (fatal / non-fatal) at work per 100.000 employed persons (if possible: per sector)

Incidence rate of accidents at work. Incidence = (number of accidents at work that occurred during the year/number of persons in employment in the reference population) x100000

	1994		1998	
	non-fatal	fatal	non-fatal	fatal
EU 15	4539	3,9	4089	3,4
Belgium	4415	6	5112	3,1
Germany	5583	3,7	4958	3
Greece	3702	4,3	2936	3,7
Spain	6166	7	7073	5,5
France	5515	4,3	4920	4
Ireland	1494	3,9	1433	5,9
Italy	4641	5,3	4105	5
Hungary	:	:	:	:
Netherlands	4287	:	3909	:
Portugal	7361	8,4	5505	7,7
Slovenia	:	:	:	:
Finland	3914	3,6	3435	2,4
Sweden	1123	2,1	1329	1,3
UK	1915	1,7	1512	1,6

Source: Eurostat; Statistics in Focus

Evolution of the accidents at work, 1998 = 100

	1997		1998		1999		2000		2001	
	serious	fatal	serious	fatal	serious	fatal	serious	fatal	serious	fatal
EU 15	100	100	100	100	100	85	98	82	94 (p)	79 (p)
Belgium	96	100	100	100	96	106	82 (b)	100	83	124
Germany	101	90	100	100	99	80	96	70	88	65
Greece	113	76	100	100	93	170	88	73	86	78
Spain	95	115	100	100	107	91	108	85	106	81
France	101	103	100	100	101	85	102	85	98	79
Ireland	115	120	100	100	90	119	72	39	105	43
Italy	100	84	100	100	99	68	99	66	92	62
Hungary	103	97	100	100	93	107	94	95	86	71
Netherlands	107	140	100	100	108 (b)	107	105	106	92	79
Portugal	100	108	100	100	92	79	88	104	:	:
Slovenia	106	130	100	100	102	88	98	83	94	105
Finland	98	117	100	100	91	75	89	88	87 (b)	8 (b)
Sweden	81	169	100	100	107	85	111	85	113	105
UK	102	100	100	100	106	88	106	106	110	92

p) provisional value

b) break in series

Source: Eurostat, free data, employment

Fatal work accidents (per 100 000 employed persons), 2000

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
Total	5	5	4	3	7	6	2	7	2	9	2	2	2
Age group under 25	3	7	3	1	5	4	-	7	1	5	1	3	1
Age group 45 and over	7	6	5	5	10	10	-	10	4	16	3	3	3

Source: Eurostat 2003; Living conditions in Europe

21. Number of hours a full-time employee typically works a week (actual working week)

Hours worked per week of full time employment

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
EU 15	42.1	42.1	42.1	41.9	41.7	41.6	41.4	:
Belgium	40.3	40.6	41.2	38.4	38.5	41.2	41.4	41.3
Germany	41.6	41.7	41.7	41.8	41.8	41.6	41.4	41.0
Greece	44.6	44.4	44.5	44.7	44.2	44.2	44.2	44.4
Spain	42.2	42.3	42.3	42.2	42.1	42.0	41.8	41.6
France	41.2	41.1	41.0	40.9	40.2	39.6	38.9	40.7
Ireland	43.9	43.2	42.9	42.1	41.9	41.5	41.2	41.0
Italy	40.6	40.5	40.6	40.5	40.6	40.6	40.5	40.5
Hungary	42.1	42.0	41.8	42.0	41.9	41.5	41.4	41.4
Netherlands	41.5	41.3	41.0	41.0	41.0	40.9	40.7	40.6
Portugal	43.7	43.1	43.1	42.4	42.0	41.9	41.9	41.6
Slovenia	43.6	43.8	43.9	43.6	43.1	43.2	43.1	42.6
Finland	40.5	40.9	40.9	41.0	40.9	40.7	40.6	40.6
Sweden	41.4	41.4	41.3	41.3	41.2	41.0	41.0	40.8
UK	44.8	44.9	44.8	44.4	44.2	44.2	43.9	43.8

Source: Eurostat; free data, long term indicators, people in the labour market

Domain: Education

Sub-domain: Security of education

22. Proportion of pupils leaving education without finishing compulsory education (early school leavers)

Early school-leavers - total - Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
EU 25	:	:	17.2 (p)	16.5 (p)	15.9 (b)
EU 15	20.5 (p)	19.4 (p)	18.9 (p)	18.5 (p)	18.0 (b)
Belgium	15.2 (b)	12.5	13.6	12.4	12.8
Germany	14.9	14.9	12.5	12.6	12.6 (p)
Greece	17.8	17.1	16.5	16.1	15.3 (b)
Spain	29.5	28.8	28.6	29.0	29.8
France	14.7	13.3	13.5	13.4	13.3 (b)
Ireland	:	:	:	14.7	12.1 (b)
Italy	27.2	25.3	26.4	24.3	23.5
Hungary	13.0	13.8	12.9	12.2	11.8 (b)
Netherlands	16.2	15.5	15.3	15.0	15.0 (p)
Portugal	44.8	42.9	44.3	45.5	41.1
Slovenia	:	:	7.5	4.8 u	4.3
Finland	9.9	8.9 (b)	10.3	9.9	10.7 (b)
Sweden	6.9	7.7	10.5 (b)	10.4	9.0 (b)
UK	19.7 (p)	18.3 (p)	17.6 (p)	17.7 (p)	16.7 (p)

p) provisional value

b) break in series

Source: Eurostat SC053 IV.5.1

Early school-leavers - males and females - Percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training

	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males
EU 25	:	:	:	:	15.0(p)	19.5(p)	14.2(p)	18.7(p)	13.9(b)	17.9(b)
EU 15	18.4(p)	22.6(p)	17.1(p)	21.6(p)	16.6(p)	21.2(p)	16.1(p)	20.9(p)	15.9(b)	20.2(b)
Belgium	12.7(b)	17.7 b	10.2	14.8	12.3	15.0	9.9	14.9	10.8	14.7
Germany	15.6	14.2	15.2	14.6	12.8	12.2	12.6	12.6	12.6(p)	12.6(p)
Greece	14.8	21.2	12.9	21.8	13.0	20.4	12.3	20.1	11.0 (b)	19.6(b)
Spain	23.6	35.4	23.2	34.3	22.2	34.9	22.3	35.4	23.4	36.1
France	13.4	16.0	11.9	14.8	12.0	15.0	11.9	14.9	11.6 (b)	15.0(b)
Ireland	:	:	:	:	:	:	10.8	18.5	9.2(b)	14.9(b)
Italy	24.2	30.3	21.9	28.8	22.6	30.2	20.7	27.9	20.1	26.8
Hungary	12.7	13.3	13.2	14.3	12.6	13.3	11.8	12.5	11.1(b)	12.4(b)
Netherlands	14.9	17.5	14.8	16.2	14.1	16.5	14.3	15.7	14.3 p)	15.7(p)
Portugal	38.8	50.7	35.4	50.3	37.0	51.6	38.1	52.9	33.8	48.3
Slovenia	:	:	:	:	5.6	9.3	3.3	6.2	2.3	6.2
Finland	7.9	12.0	6.5(b)	11.3(b)	7.7	13.0	7.3	12.6	8.6(b)	12.9(b)
Sweden	6.1	7.7	6.2	9.2	9.7 b	11.3 b	9.3	11.4	8.2(b)	9.8(b)
UK	19.3(p)	20.1(p)	17.8(p)	18.8(p)	16.6(p)	18.6(p)	16.6(p)	18.8(p)	16.4(p)	17.0(p)

p) provisional value

b) break in series

Source: Eurostat SC053 IV.5.1-2

2. Social cohesion

Domain: Trust

Sub-domain: Generalised trust

25. Extent to which 'most people can be trusted'

Proportion of the population who thinks that most people can be trusted

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	SL	FIN	S	UK
most people can be trusted	29,3	34,8	19,1	38,5	22,2	35,2	32,6	21,8	59,7	21,7	58	66,3	29,9
you cannot be too careful	70,7	65,2	80,9	61,5	77,8	64,8	67,4	78,2	40,3	78,3	42	33,7	70,1

Source: European Values Study; A third Wave (question 8)

Extent to which the population thinks that most people can be trusted, 2002

The table includes the country means in a 0-10 scale, where 0 means the distrust and 10 means the trustfulness

	B	D	EL	E	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
country means	4,81	4,61	3,64	4,86	5,46	4,54	4,08	5,71	4	3,98	6,46	6,09	5,05

Source: European Social Survey (ESS) 2002

Sub-domain: Specific trust

26. Trust in: government; elected representatives; political parties; armed forces; legal system; the media; trade unions, police; religious institutions; civil service; economic transactions

Trust in different institutions in European countries 2002/2003

	Trust in country's parliament	Legal system	Police	Politicians	European Parliament
Belgium	4,99	4,39	5,64	4,28	4,88
Germany	4,47	5,73	6,73	3,5	4,46
Spain	4,83	4,31	5,43	3,37	4,8
Finland	5,79	6,75	7,95	4,78	4,88
UK	4,68	5,03	6,04	3,79	3,61
Greece	4,83	6,27	6,43	3,46	5,69
Hungary	5	5,11	4,91	3,88	5,67
Ireland	4,43	5,14	6,53	3,75	5,11
Italy	4,83	5,49	6,66	3,54	5,51
Netherlands	5,22	5,38	5,82	4,87	4,67
Portugal	4,44	4,26	5,13	2,82	4,76
Sweden	5,92	6,06	6,76	4,72	4,02
Slovenia	4,04	4,28	4,89	3,07	4,65

Source: European Social Survey 2002.

Remarks: The table includes the country means in a 0-10 scale, where 0 means the distrust and 10 means the trustfulness.

28. Importance of: family; friends; leisure; politics; respecting parents. parents' duty to children

Proportion of the population for whom work, family, friends, leisure time, politics is quite or very important in its life (those two answer categories are taken together)

	work	family	friends	leisure time	politics	religion
Belgium	92,8	97,6	89,1	86,2	33,1	47,6
Germany	82,7	96,9	94,5	83,2	39,5	35
Greece	87,2	99,1	85,5	76,9	34,9	79,7
Spain	94,6	98,9	86,6	80,9	19,3	42
France	94,8	98,2	94,4	88,1	35,4	36,9
Ireland	84,7	98,5	97,3	86,9	32,1	70,7
Italy	95	98,6	89,8	81,2	33,8	72,1
Hungary	88,7	97,8	82,3	79,7	18,2	42,3
Netherlands	86,5	92,7	96,3	94	57,7	39,8
Portugal	95,1	98,7	87,9	83,7	27,1	75,5
Slovenia	95,8	97,2	88,3	79,7	14,5	36,6
Finland	89,2	96,2	95,2	90	19,8	45,1
Sweden	91,1	97,9	97,6	93,9	55	35
UK	78,6	98,8	96,6	92,5	34,3	37,4

Source: European Values Study; A third Wave (question 1)

Domain: Other integrative norms and values

Sub-domain: Altruism

29. Volunteering: number of hours per week

Volunteer work and informal help among persons aged 20-74 (Hours and minutes per day)

	B	D	F	HU	SI	FIN	S	UK
Volunteer work and help among women aged 20-74	0:10	0:15	0:14	0:08	0:06	0:16	0:12	0:14
Volunteer work and help among men aged 20-74	0:11	0:17	0:18	0:13	0:11	0:16	0:12	0:10

Source: How Europeans spend their time everyday life of women and men – Luxembourg

30. Blood donation

Blood donation (%), 2002

	EU	B	D	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
Yes	31	23	31	25	38	32	24	26	22	39	25	32

Source: « Le don de sang », Eurostat, 2003, p.2, Eurobarometer 58.2

Sub-domain: Tolerance

31. Views on immigration, pluralism and multiculturalism

Proportion of different opinions according to the inclusion of immigrants in different countries, 2000

Country	Let anyone come who wants to	Let people come as long as there jobs available	Put strict limits on the number of foreigners who can come here	Prohibit people coming here from other countries
Belgium	7,4	33,5	50,5	8,6
Germany	4,5	32,6	56	7
Greece	3,5	40,9	41	14,6
Spain	19,1	56,2	22,4	2,3
Ireland	8,3	46,7	42,1	2,9
Italy	9,7	47,4	38,3	4,6
Hungary	2	12	59,1	26,8
Netherlands	3,9	35,9	55,6	4,7
Portugal	11,5	61,4	23,2	3,9
Slovenia	4,6	48,1	38,9	8,4
Finland	10,4	34,7	51,9	3
Sweden	16,3	54,4	28,7	0,5
UK	4,3	34,1	48,5	13,1

Source: European Values Survey 1999/2000, Q74

Proportion of different opinions in connection with the cultural identity of immigrants in different countries

Country	For the greater good of society it is better if immigrants maintain their distinct customs and traditions	For the greater good of society it is better if immigrants do not maintain their distinct custom and traditions but take over the customs of the country
Belgium	28,1	71,9
Germany	23,8	76,2
Greece	68,7	31,3
Spain	52	48
Ireland	56,7	43,3
Italy	59,7	40,3
Hungary	33,4	66,6
Netherlands	29,1	70,9
Portugal	48,9	51,1
Slovenia	30,8	69,2
Finland	32	68
Sweden	36	64
UK	44,7	55,3

Source: European Values Survey 1999/2000, Q75

32. Tolerance of other people's self-identity, beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle preferences

Typology of people according to their attitudes towards minorities

Proportion of the population that is intolerant, ambivalent, passively tolerant and actively tolerant by country

	Intolerant	Ambivalent	Passively tolerant	Actively tolerant
EU15	14	25	39	21
Belgium	25	28	26	22
Germany	18	29	29	24
Greece	27	43	22	7
Spain	4	18	61	16
France	19	26	31	25
Ireland	13	21	50	15
Italy	11	21	54	15
Netherlands	11	25	34	31
Portugal	9	34	44	12
Finland	8	21	39	32
Sweden	9	15	43	33
UK	15	27	36	22

Source: Eurobarometer 2000 survey

Tolerance of other people's self-identity, beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle preferences

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU
Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	2,57	1,91	3,64	2,67	3,39	1,9	1,88	1,7
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	3,64	2,36	2,88	2,35	3,06	2,35	2,39	2,12
Taking and driving away a car belonging to someone else (joyriding)	1,2	1,24	1,39	1,64	1,38	1,11	1,46	1,14
Taking the drug marihuana or hashish	1,72	1,91	2,04	2,16	2,15	1,99	2,03	1,26
Lying in your own interest	3,62	3,32	2,58	2,93	3,71	2,32	2,41	2,53
Married men/women having an affair	2,72	2,85	2,12	2,48	3,52	1,84	2,75	2,1
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	2	1,8	1,66	1,68	2,08	1,42	1,5	2,67
Homosexuality	5,22	5,69	3,39	5,51	5,27	4,4	4,83	1,45
Abortion	4,45	4,61	4,18	4,34	5,64	2,9	4,04	3,92
Divorce	5,64	5,86	5,42	6,1	6,32	4,8	5,14	4,5
Euthanasia (terminating the life of the incurably sick)	5,83	4,34	3,49	4,73	6,16	3,31	3,86	3,83
Suicide	3,27	2,61	2,26	2,77	4,34	2,07	2,28	1,56
Throwing away litter in a public place	1,48	2,22	1,88	1,86	1,62	1,81	1,58	1,72
Driving under the influence of alcohol	1,64	1,45	1,49	1,52	1,88	1,4	1,43	1,16
Paying cash for services to avoid taxes	4,29	2,89	3,46	3,35	4,18	2,89	2,5	2,62
Having casual sex	2,86	3,15	3,6	3,92	3,91	2,71	3,07	2,74
Smoking in public buildings	2,92	4,05	4	3,74	3,38	3,33	3,46	2,85
Speeding over the limit in built-up areas	2,39	1,99	2,19	1,93	2,84	1,85	2,61	1,98
Avoiding a fare on public transport	2,39	2,13	2,89	:	2,71	:	2,17	:
Sex under the legal age of consent	:	2,64	4,57	:	:	1,45	:	:
Prostitution	:	4,19	2,37	3,25	:	2,54	2,4	:
Political assassinations	:	1,49	1,93	:	:	:	:	:
Scientific experiments on human embryos	2,07	1,52	1,38	1,74	:	1,92	1,95	:
Genetic manipulation of food stuff	2,42	2,21	2,32	2,05	:	:	2,31	:

Tolerance of other people's self-identity, beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle preferences (continued)

	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK	Total
Claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to	1,51	2,03	2,82	2,3	2,08	1,99	2,28
Cheating on tax if you have the chance	2,67	2,45	2,34	2,46	2,41	2,42	2,63
Taking and driving away a car belonging to someone else (joyriding)	1,34	1,62	1,68	1,31	1,29	1,21	1,41
Taking the drug marihuana or hashish	3,06	2,02	2,3	1,65	1,77	3,1	1,83
Lying in your own interest	3,14	2,45	2,54	2,71	2,56	3,01	2,85
Married men/women having an affair	2,69	2,47	3,47	2,36	2,38	2,31	2,56
Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties	1,58	1,77	1,78	1,43	1,83	1,77	1,82
Homosexuality	7,8	3,19	4,62	4,94	7,65	4,89	4,3
Abortion	5,4	3,81	6,19	5,42	7,38	4,54	4,58
Divorce	6,54	5,46	6,58	6,64	7,8	5,57	5,51
Euthanasia (terminating the life of the incurably sick)	6,65	3,5	5,37	5,4	6,07	4,99	4,82
Suicide	4,34	2,2	3,54	3,04	4,12	3,16	2,63
Throwing away litter in a public place	1,7	1,83	1,94	2,27	2,72	2,61	1,88
Driving under the influence of alcohol	1,44	1,83	2,04	1,35	1,35	1,51	1,54
Paying cash for services to avoid taxes	4,2	2,25	3,28	3,48	3,78	3,53	3,25
Having casual sex	3,7	2,76	4,08	3,75	4,8	3,44	3,15
Smoking in public buildings	3,81	3,34	3,57	3,1	3,18	4,02	3,51
Speeding over the limit in built-up areas	1,8	2,38	2,93	2,82	2,72	2,3	2,33
Avoiding a fare on public transport	2,72	:	:	2,36	:	2,68	2,82
Sex under the legal age of consent	:	:	5,78	3,31	:	1,96	2,53
Prostitution	:	:	3,31	3,2	:	3,42	2,84
Political assassinations	:	:	:	1,44	:	1,99	1,63
Scientific experiments on human embryos	2,5	:	1,86	2,47	:	2,35	2,08
Genetic manipulation of food stuff	3,07	:	2,83	2,6	:	2,3	2,42

Source: European Values Survey 1999/2000, Q65, 1-10 scale

Sub-domain: Social contract

33. Beliefs on causes of poverty: individual or structural

Proportion of the population which considers (respectively) unfortunateness, laziness, injustice and the modern progress as the most important reason for living in need

	unlucky	laziness or lack of willpower	injustice in society	part of the modern progress	none of these
Belgium	26,8	16	35,3	20	1,9
Germany	11,7	28,4	36,9	19,6	3,5
Greece	14,3	29,8	18,2	34,4	3,3
Spain	19,8	19,6	48,4	10,4	1,9
France	14,4	11,4	44,3	26,9	2,9
Ireland	23,2	20,6	33	19,3	3,9
Italy	19,5	23	37,7	15,6	4,2
Hungary	13	27,6	37,7	18,8	2,9
Netherlands	32,8	14,3	25,8	17,5	9,7
Portugal	23,3	41,9	21,6	11,6	1,6
Slovenia	10,4	33,2	35,4	17,3	3,7
Finland	14,8	23	23,8	35,3	3,1
Sweden	10,2	7,1	49,5	33,1	0
Great Britain	16,4	24,6	30,5	24,4	4,1

Source: European Values Study : A third Wave (question 11)

38. Membership (active or inactive) of political, voluntary, charitable organisations or sport clubs

Proportion of people member of non-governmental organizations (NGO's) in different countries, 2002/2003

	B	D	EL	E	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
Male	65,1	72	24,8	36,7	68,6	37	27,9	84,4	31,1	51,3	64,6	82,8	71,4
Female	57,1	61,7	16,4	29,5	59,3	24,9	17,7	77,4	18,6	33,3	57,2	78,8	62

Source: European Social Survey 2002/2003

Proportion of population which belongs to....

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I
social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people	11,4	3,9	10,2	3,7	5,6	5,9	6,4
religious or church organisations	12,2	13,5	11,8	5,8	4,3	16,2	10,3
education, arts, music or cultural activities	18,9	7,9	11,2	7,3	7,8	10,1	9,9
trade unions	15,7	7,2	6,5	3,5	4	10	6,2
political parties or groups	7	2,8	4,9	2	2	4,4	4,1
local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality	5	0,7	2,8	2,2	2,3	5,6	2,4
third world development or human rights	9,8	0,6	1,8	2,4	1,4	2,4	2,9
conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights	10,4	2,7	5,8	2,5	2,2	2,8	3,8
professional associations	8,3	4,4	7,7	2,6	3,1	7,7	7,1
youth work	7,5	1,9	2,5	2,6	2	7,1	4,2
sports or recreation	23,8	28	9,6	8,5	16,4	27,6	11,5
women's groups	8,7	3,6	2,2	2,3	0,4	4,4	0,4
peace movements	2,3	0,2	2,9	1,6	0,5	1,7	1,4
voluntary organisations concerned with health	5	2,5	3,6	2,7	2,5	4,1	4,7
other groups	10,6	3,9	6,8	3,7	6,9	5,4	2,6

Proportion of population which belongs to.... (continued)

	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people	1,9	21,6	2	5,4	10,4	20,8	6,7
religious or church organisations	12,1	35,1	5,6	6,7	47	71,5	4,9
education, arts, music or cultural activities	3,4	46,2	3,1	9,2	14,3	26,4	9,7
trade unions	7	23,4	1,7	16,9	32,3	64	8,2
political parties or groups	1,6	9,5	0,9	3	6,6	10,6	2,5
local community action on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality	1	7,4	1	9,2	2,6	9,5	3,8
third world development or human rights	0,3	24,6	0,8	0,8	5,9	15	2,6
conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights	1,7	44,3	0,5	3,3	4,4	11,3	1,5
professional associations	3,7	18,5	1,1	6,7	5,6	14,5	1,6
youth work	0,8	7,3	1,2	4,5	6,7	6,9	5,7
sports or recreation	3,8	50,3	8,6	16,9	23,7	37	3
women's groups	0,3	4		1,9	4	3,5	1,7
peace movements	0,3	3,4	0,6	0,8	1,3	1,5	0,6
voluntary organisations concerned with health	2	9,6	2,2	2,9	9,2	6,7	3
other groups	2,6	9,7	3,2	9,9	11,8	25	5

Source: European Values Study; A third Wave (question 5)

40. Frequency of contact with friends and colleagues

Frequency of spending time with friends

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
every week	50,2	49,3	62,1	67,5	58,5	72,1	61,9	37,0	66,7	63,6	57,7	60,3	66,5	74,2
once a week	30,9	36,7	23,6	18,5	28,0	21,1	20,2	29,1	25,5	14,5	25,7	27,7	28,2	18,5
few times a year	14,1	12,3	11,3	10,1	11,0	5,3	13,3	22,0	6,5	16,3	14,0	11,0	5,0	5,2
not at all	4,9	1,7	3,1	3,9	2,5	1,6	4,6	11,9	1,3	5,6	2,6	1,0	0,3	2,1

Source: European Social Survey (Q6A)

Frequency of spending time with colleagues

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
every week	12,9	11,3	24,1	27,0	12,5	25,0	16,8	13,6	14,7	35,4	24,4	23,3	17,8	18,6
once a week	22,5	27,0	23,3	18,7	18,7	27,5	21,9	17,3	29,2	17,8	25,6	23,8	35,9	24,2
few times a year	33,4	39,9	21,6	18,8	24,0	20,4	26,4	20,5	38,3	16,5	28,2	33,8	37,0	26,8
not at all	31,2	21,8	30,9	35,4	44,7	27,0	35,0	48,5	17,7	30,2	21,9	19,1	9,3	30,3

Source: European Social Survey (Q6B)

Domain: Identity

Sub-domain: National / European pride

41. Sense of national pride

Sense of pride : proportion of the population which is proud of being (country) / European

	EU15	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
national pride	85	83	66	96	92	86	96	93	84	92	96	90	90
european pride	61	64	49	64	74	58	75	81	62	66	73	70	47

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 6;: full report (categories very and fairly proud taken together)

Sense of national pride

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
very proud	24,3	16,8	65	44,1	39,7	71,8	39,3	50,9	19,5	79,1	55,7	56,1	41,4	50,5
quite proud	50,9	50,8	25,6	45,2	49,6	26,2	49	38,4	60,5	17,7	34,9	37,5	45,6	39,5
not very proud	17,5	24,3	8,6	7,8	7	1,7	9,8	8,5	14,8	2,3	7,4	5,6	11,6	7,9
not at all proud	7,3	8,1	0,9	3	3,7	0,3	1,9	2,3	5,2	0,9	2	0,9	1,4	2,1

Source: European Values Study; A third Wave (Q71)

Sub-domain: Regional / community / local identity

43. Sense of regional / community / local identity

Which of these geographical groups would you say you belong to first of all?

	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
locality or town	32,1	55,2	44,8	45,6	43,7	56,6	53,4	67,3	39,1	36,3	52,8	48,9	58,7	48,9
region of country	20,3	29,6	12	16,5	12,1	15,8	10,6	6,3	7,7	16	8,7	12,3	9,5	13,7
country as a whole	27,9	10,1	33,2	26,8	28,5	24	23,3	20,1	41,2	41,6	32,1	31,2	22,4	28,4
Europe	9,3	2,9	1,2	1,7	4,3	2,2	4,2	2	4,8	1,6	2,4	3,2	4,2	1,9
world as a whole	10,4	2,2	8,8	9,4	11,4	1,4	8,5	4,3	7,2	4,5	3,9	4,4	5,3	7,2

Source: European Values Study; A third Wave (Q67)

3. Social inclusion

Domain: Citizenship rights

Sub-domain: Constitutional / political rights

46. Proportion having right to vote in local elections and proportion exercising it

Proportion voting in national elections (as the percentage of the voting age population)

	B	D	EL	EL	F	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	SL	UK
1995-1999	83,2	:	83,9	80,6	59,9	66,7	87,4	:	:	79,1	:	71,1	:	69,4

Source: IDEA (1997), Voter Turnout from 1947 to 1997 and OECD : Society at a glance 2001

Sub-domain: Social rights

48. Women's pay as a proportion of men's

Gender pay gap

as the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
EU (15 countries)	16	16	15	16	16
Belgium	10	9	11	12	12
Germany	21	22	19	21	21
Greece	13	12	13	15	18
Spain	14	16	14	15	17
France	12	12	12	13	14
Ireland	19	20	22	19	17
Italy	7	7	8	6	6
Hungary	22	18	19	20	19
Netherlands	22	21	21	21	19
Portugal	7	6	5	8	10
Slovenia	14	11	14	12	11
Finland	18	19	19	17	17
Sweden	17	18	17	18	18
United Kingdom	21	24	22	21	21

Source: Eurostat; free data, employment

Earnings of men and women

Annual gross earnings of women as a percentage of men's, 2000

	EU15	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
Industry and services	75	83	-	80	77	82	-	-	73	71	79	86	68
Industry	77	83	78	83	73	84	-	-	77	67	82	89	69
Mining and quarrying	75	99	91	81	-	92	-	-	-	94	77	90	68
Manufacturing	75	79	76	74	-	79	-	-	75	65	80	89	68
Electricity, gas and water supply	78	68	82	81	-	83	-	-	81	89	77	83	70
Construction	88	99	91	94	102	100	-	-	82	90	82	90	76
Trade and repairs	72	79	74	76	-	77	-	-	68	71	73	83	63
Hotels and restaurants	79	91	-	77	-	85	-	-	82	74	90	90	72
Transport	84	91	-	64	-	90	-	-	74	98	87	92	81
Financial intermediation	62	70	75	73	-	64	-	-	62	80	57	66	46
Real estate	70	76	-	91	-	72	-	-	70	71	75	78	66

Note: The share refers to full-time earnings.

Source: «Living conditions in Europe», Eurostat, 2003, p.60

Sub-domain: Economic and political networks

52. Proportion of women elected or appointed to parliament, boards of private companies and foundations

Proportion of women in national governments and parliaments, 2001

	B	D	EL	ES	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK	Total
government	22,2	38,6	12,5	17,6	29,4	21,9	10,3	36	9,8	38,9	50	32,9	24,7
parliament	24,6	29,8	8,7	27,1	8,3	14,2	10,2	32,4	20	37	44,3	17	20,5

Source: Europäische datanbank Frauen in Führungspositionen (www.db-decision.de)

Domain: Labour market

Sub-domain: Access to paid employment

53. Long-term unemployment (12+ months)

Total long-term unemployment

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
EU 15	4.9	4.4	4.0	3.5	3.1	3.1	3.3
Belgium	5.4	5.5	4.9	3.7	3.2	3.5	3.7
Germany	4.9	4.7	4.3	3.9	3.8	4.1	4.6
Greece	5.3	5.8	6.4	6.0	5.4	5.1	5.1
Spain	8.9	7.6	5.9	4.7	3.9	3.9	3.9
France	4.8	4.6	4.2	3.6	3.0	3.0	3.4
Ireland	6.0	3.9	2.6	1.6	1.2	1.3	1.5
Italy	7.5	7.0	6.8	6.4	5.8	5.3	4.9
Hungary	4.5	4.2	3.3	3.0	2.5	2.4	2.4
Netherlands	2.3	1.5	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.0
Portugal	3.3	2.2	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.8	2.2
Slovenia	3.4	3.3	3.2	4.1	3.5	3.4	3.4
Finland	4.9	4.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.3
Sweden	3.1	2.6	1.9	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0
UK	2.5	1.9	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.1

Source: Eurostat; free data, social cohesion

Long-term unemployment: females and males (1997-2000)

	1997		1998		1999		2000	
	females	males	females	males	females	males	females	males
EU 15	5.8	4.2	5.4	3.7	4.7	3.3	4.2	2.9
Belgium	7.1	4.2	7.0	4.5	5.9	4.1	4.6	3.0
Germany	5.6	4.3	5.3	4.2	4.7	4.0	4.2	3.7
Greece	9.3	2.8	9.9	3.1	10.5	3.7	9.8	3.5
Spain	14.1	5.7	12.4	4.8	9.4	3.7	7.6	2.8
France	5.7	4.0	5.5	3.9	5.1	3.5	4.4	2.9
Ireland	5.1	6.5	2.8	4.6	1.9	3.2	1.0	2.0
Italy	10.5	5.7	9.5	5.4	9.3	5.2	8.8	4.9
Hungary	4.0	4.9	3.9	4.5	2.9	3.6	2.5	3.4
Netherlands	3.1	1.8	1.8	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.0	0.6
Portugal	3.6	3.0	2.7	1.9	2.1	1.5	2.1	1.4
Slovenia	3.3	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.0	3.4	4.1	4.0
Finland	4.9	4.9	4.0	4.3	2.8	3.2	2.7	2.8
Sweden	2.0	4.0	1.8	3.2	1.4	2.2	1.0	1.7
UK	1.5	3.3	1.2	2.5	1.0	2.2	0.9	1.9

Long-term unemployment: females and males (continued) (2001-2003)

	2001		2002		2003	
	females	males	females	males	females	males
EU 15	3.7	2.7	3.6	2.7	3.7	2.9
Belgium	3.6	3.0	4.1	3.2	4.0	3.4
Germany	4.1	3.7	4.2	4.0	4.6	4.6
Greece	8.6	3.1	8.3	3.0	8.5	2.8
Spain	6.3	2.3	6.3	2.3	6.0	2.4
France	3.7	2.4	3.5	2.6	3.9	3.1
Ireland	0.8	1.6	0.7	1.7	0.9	1.9
Italy	8.0	4.5	7.2	4.1	6.7	3.9
Hungary	2.1	2.9	2.1	2.7	2.3	2.5
Netherlands	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.6	1.1	1.0
Portugal	1.9	1.2	2.2	1.4	2.6	1.8
Slovenia	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.3
Finland	2.3	2.7	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.6
Sweden	0.8	1.2	0.8	1.2	0.8	1.2
UK	0.8	1.7	0.7	1.4	0.7	1.4

Source: Eurostat; free data, social cohesion

Domain: Social networks

Sub-domain: Neighbourhood participation

67. Proportion in regular contact with neighbours

Percentage of population aged 16 and over talking to neighbours, 1999

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
At least once a week	81	71	-	96	90	-	89	80	70	86	79	-	78
Once or twice a month	10	17	-	2	5	-	7	10	14	8	12	-	13
Less than once a month or never	9	12	-	2	5	-	4	10	16	6	9	-	9

Source: Eurostat 2003, Living conditions in Europe

Sub-domain: Friendships

68. Proportion in regular contact with friends

Percentage of the population aged 16 and over meeting people (at home or elsewhere), 1999

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
At least once a week	81	78	-	90	92	66	97	81	85	74	80	-	87
Once or twice a week	14	18	-	9	6	26	3	13	13	16	17	-	10
Less than once a month or never	5	4	-	2	2	8	1	6	2	9	4	-	3

Source: Eurostat 2003, Living conditions in Europe

4. Social Empowerment

Domain: Knowledge base

Sub-domain: Availability of information

73. Per cent of population literate and numerate

Competence poverty: proportion of educationally „poor” individuals in different countries based on literacy competences

	B	D	EL	F	IRL	I	HU	P	FIN	S	UK
students aged 15	19	22,6	24,4	15,2	11	18,9	22,7	26,3	6,9	12,6	12,8
Population aged 16-65	15,3	9	-	-	25,3	-	32,9	49,1	12,6	6,2	23,3

Source: PISA2000; Adult Literacy Survey, 1994-98

75. Access to internet

Internet use in different European countries (% of individuals aged 14 and over)

	B	EL	E	IRL	I	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S	UK
Never use	56,3	86,6	75,1	58,3	69,8	80,4	40,7	69,9	64,1	43,9	33	51,4
Everyday use	18,1	4,2	9,3	13	9,9	5,7	21,7	14,8	10,6	18,8	27,8	17,7

Source: European Social Survey, 2002/2003

Domain: Labour market

Sub-domain: Prospects of job mobility

80. % of employed labour force receiving work based training

Continuing vocational training (CVT) in enterprises (1999)

	EU	B	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	NL	P	FIN	S	UK
Training enterprises as a % of all enterprises	62	70	75	18	36	76	79	24	88	22	82	91	87
Employees in training enterprises as a % of employees in all enterprises	88	88	92	56	64	93	92	56	96	52	95	98	97
Participants in CVT courses as a % of employees in all enterprises	40	41	32	15	25	46	41	26	41	17	50	61	49
Hours in CVT courses per employee (all enterprises)	12	13	9	6	11	17	17	8	15	7	18	18	13
Hours in CVT courses per participant	31	31	27	39	42	36	40	32	37	38	36	31	26

Source: Eurostat 2003, Living conditions in Europe

Distribution of companies and enterprises that provide vocational training, 1999 (%)

Branch	B	D	E	HU	NL	P	SL	FIN	S
Industry	68	73	38	34	90	19	53	77	90
Commerce	72	83	41	39	87	24	30	85	94
Finanacial services	100	100	74	79	97	67	66	100	100
Economic services	86	87	41	48	90	43	60	86	90
Other public and personal services	75	89	33	35	88	29	69	93	100
Other	63	65	29	31	86	18	46	79	84

Source: Eurostat 2002, Statistics in Focus

Annex Social Quality theory

1 Introduction

In the 1990s representatives of universities from different European countries started to elaborate the theory of social quality. Stimulated by neo-liberal globalisation and the dominance of economic interests and herewith related economic thinking and policies in the process of European integration, they were searching for an alternative. Important was to develop international standards with which to counteract the downward pressure on welfare spending (the race to the bottom). But which standards were acceptable, which theoretical criteria could be applied and why? The social quality initiative addressed these questions and could be seen as a possible theoretical foundation upon which judgements for acceptable standards could be made. The initiative was launched formally under the Dutch Presidency of the European Union in 1997. The European Foundation on Social Quality, localised in Amsterdam was founded and presented its first study; *The Social Quality of Europe* (Kluwer Law International, 1997; paperback version by Policy Press, 1998). Social quality is a new standard intended to assess economic, cultural, and welfare progress. One that can be used at all levels to measure the extent to which the daily lives of citizens have attained an acceptable level. It aspires to be both a standard by which people can assess the effectiveness of national and European policies and a scientific yardstick for evidence-based policy making. Its ambition is to contribute to public policies that improve the democratic relations on European and national levels and that enhance social justice and equity in the cities and regions of Europe.

From the beginning the theory's aims has been to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of societal processes and to develop an interdisciplinary approach. The social quality approach is a strategy for analysing the reciprocity between societal structures and actions of citizens. The most renewing aspect of this approach – and especially in this respect social quality differs from the traditional (passive) welfare policies – is the addition of the concept of empowerment; a concept that strengthens the roles of citizens in their communities. The goal is to contribute to the personnel development of citizens to enable them to elaborate their own conditions for social quality in daily circumstances.

The first study delivered the points of departure for the Amsterdam Declaration of Social Quality (June 1997) which opens with the words; *“Respect for the fundamental human dignity of all citizens requires us to declare that we do not want to see growing numbers of beggars, tramps and homeless in the cities of Europe. Nor can we countenance a Europe with large numbers of unemployed, growing numbers of poor people and those who have only limited access to health care and social services. These and many other negative indicators demonstrate the current inadequacy of Europe to provide social quality for all citizens”*. This Declaration was finally signed by thousands scientists all over Europe and presented solemnly to the President of the European Parliament in October 1997.

In this appendix to the national reports about the indicators of social quality we will not present the whole theory, but only the aspects relevant for the application of this theory and for the analysis of societal trends and processes in the European Union. The project, for which these national reports

are made, tries to determine and compare the nature of social quality in the different European countries.

2 The European Network on Indicators of Social Quality (ENIQ)

2.1 The Foundation's second book as point of departure

The policy of the European Foundation on Social Quality is based on five pillars: (i) theorising social quality, (ii) developing its measurement instruments, (iii) applying these instruments to policy outcomes as well as circumstances in cities and regions, (iv) disseminating the Foundation's outcomes, and (v) stimulating public debates. In January 2001 the Foundation published the outcomes of the 'permanent symposium' about social quality and the outcomes of its projects in a second book; *Social Quality, A New Vision for Europe* (Kluwer Law International, 2001). In the Foreword of this book Mr. R. Prodi, the former President of the European Commission, says that "*The concept of quality is, in essence, a democratic concept, based on partnership between the European institutions, the Member States, regional and local authorities and civil society. Quality conveys the sense of excellence that characterises the European social model. The great merit of this book is that it places social issues at the very core of the concept of quality. It promotes an approach that goes beyond production, economic growth, employment and social protection and gives self-fulfilment for individual citizens a major role to play in the formation of collective identities. This makes the book an important and original contribution for the shaping of a new Europe*".

Thanks to this work the Foundation was rewarded for a manifold of grants. The most important were, first, a grant by DG Employment and Social Affairs for analysing employment policies from a social quality perspective. The main theme concerned the way the social quality approach may underpin flexibility and security in employment. The outcomes were published by Berghahn Journals in the double issue of the European Journal of Social Quality in 2003. The second important grant was rewarded by DG Research to develop a robust set of indicators with which to measure the conditional factors of social quality. This resulted in the start of the European Network on Indicators of Social Quality in October 2001. Representatives of fourteen universities in Europe and of two European NGOs participated in this network (see page iv of the national report). They were funded to appoint part-time junior scientists as assistants.

2.2 The challenge of the Network Indicators

The network had to deal with a couple of challenges. Within the network people, firstly, used different interpretations of the social quality theory. Secondly, they used different research methodologies. Thirdly, they had different cultural backgrounds (including different scientific backgrounds; like economics, political science, sociology, social policy), and fourthly, they had to deal with the language problem for proper communication. Therefore one of the major objectives of this network was to develop a common understanding. This goal was reached by a combination of deductive and inductive analysis in different stages of the project. In the first stage a preliminary consensus about the theory – discussed during plenary sessions - was tentatively applied in the fourteen national contexts. It concerned the first assessment of data availability in national and European databases for one conditional factor of social quality. The outcomes stimulated to deepen the common understanding and relationship between the four different conditional factors of social quality. The next stage was used for a second tentative application, now for all factors. The outcomes of the second exploration of data availability paved the way for the elaboration of the commonly accepted interpretation of the conditional factors (see below).

Especially thanks to the input by the network, the co-ordinating team and its advisors could specify and clarify the theory by defining the essence of the four conditional factors from a new interpretation of 'the social'. This was done also by analysing the general scientific and European policy debates about the concepts. The outcomes of this theoretical work paved the way for the third (and last) exploration of data availability in the fourteen countries, resulting in the national reports about indicators of social quality. In other words, the work by the network stimulated an incessant reciprocity between empirical exploration and theoretical work. The outcomes of this theoretical work and the interpretation of the outcomes of the national reports will be published in the Foundation's third study, forthcoming at the end of 2005.

3 Some aspects of the theory and its indicators

In this section a short overview will be given of the theoretical research of the project. This theoretical background is essential to understand the choice of the indicators for social quality on which the empirical research of the national reports is based.

3.1 The reciprocity between structure and action

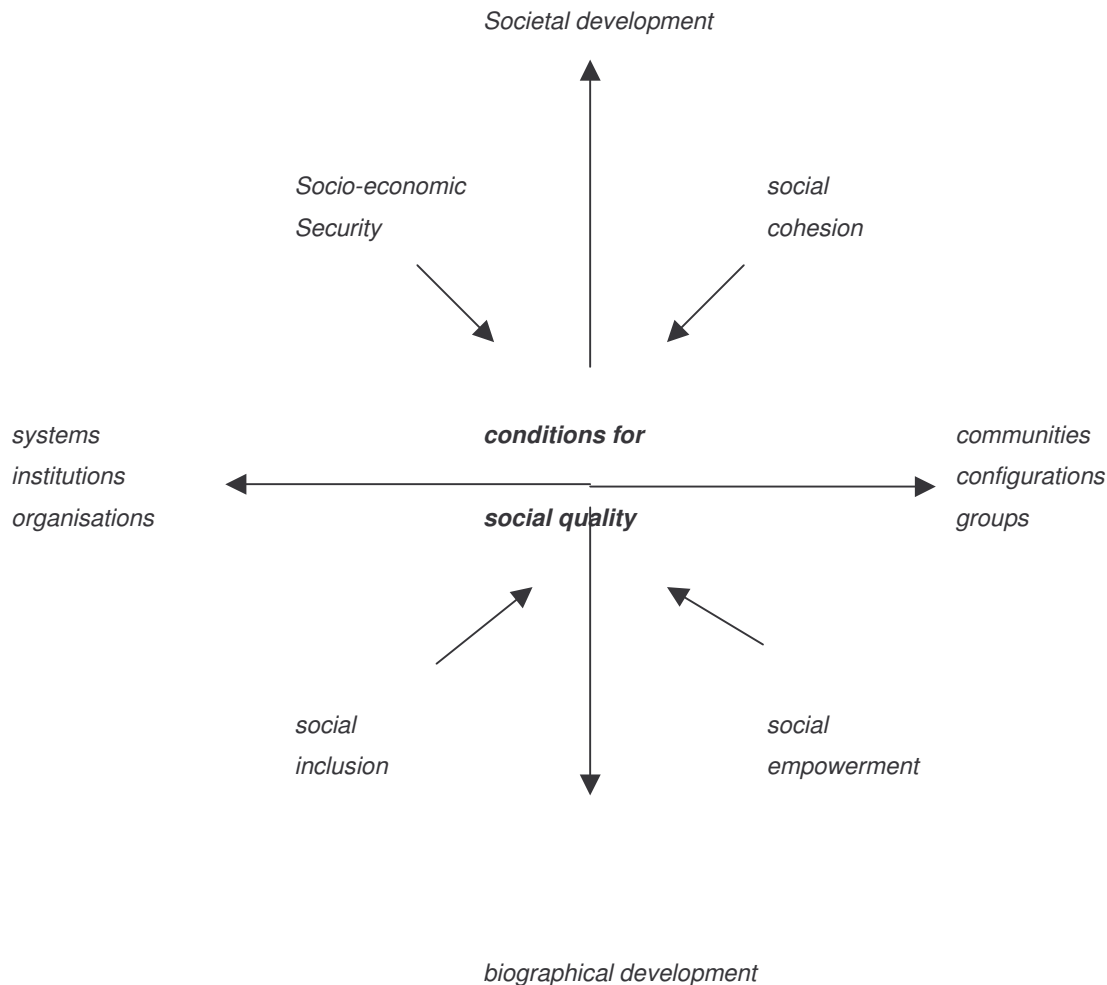
A fundamental problem of any comprehensive theoretical approach is to grasp the structural and dialectical interdependence of what Emile Durkheim called 'social facts'. The reason for mentioning Durkheim here is that in his definition of 'social facts' he explicitly showed the supposed independence of 'the social'. We should however remark that 'the social' can only accurately be understood by reference to the individual as actor. The actual problem can be seen in the fact that we are challenged to think the seemingly impossible – the simultaneity of independence and dependence. Furthermore, we have to accentuate the position of individual people as social actors in order to realise the goal of social quality, namely understanding the reciprocity between social structures and actions of citizens.

The social quality approach tries to resolve the actual tension behind action and structure in a dialectical way. Social science is by definition a theory of action (this is not the same as the so-called 'action theory'), as the social cannot be imagined without actions or interventions by individual people. Instead of leaving this to spontaneous and voluntarist assessments it is proposed to search for criteria that allow the analysis of the developmental interconnectedness of both, the biographical and societal momentum of interaction; (i) amongst individual people, (ii) between individual people and society, (iii) amongst societal subsystems and not least (iv) between the various social actors and the natural environment. The social quality approach can serve as a comprehensive or meta-theory for addressing this interconnectedness. Rather than referring to actors and structure, this approach refers on the one hand to biographical and on the other hand to societal development. At the very same time, another reference is made to systems on the one hand and communities on the other hand.

3.2 The four conditional factors

Starting point of developing such a perspective is to look at a common denominator, i.e. criteria which are necessary for their constitution. This is not achieved by looking for minimal standards. Rather, the idea is that there should be a strong commonality in terms of the recognition of all four angles of the social fabric. This is meant to be a substantial dimension of the relationship between action and structure. We recognise four conditional factors of social quality, namely: (i) socio-economic security, (ii) social cohesion, (iii) social inclusion, and (iv) social empowerment. These four conditional factors define the concrete qualitative frame, in which society, individuals and their interaction develop.

Figure-1 The quadrangle of the conditional factors



This frame refers to the institutional level and the space for direct interaction. Furthermore it refers to the development of the actual interaction and the behavioural framework for this interaction. Each of these conditional factors has a different meaning, specific for what could be called 'elements of the social', i.e. for societal processes, biographical processes, systems and institutions, and communities and configurations. However, at the same time all of them are – individually and by their interaction – crucial as conditional factors.

3.3 A referral to the four constitutional factors

As important as this is, it is necessary to go a step further. Namely, to be able to go further into detail of analysing the actual interaction between people, we have to look as well for constitutional factors that realise the individual's competence to act. These factors are derived from the first basic assumption of the theory of social quality. It says, that individual people are essentially social beings.

They interact with each other and these interactions constitute the collective identities as contexts for their actions, resulting in processes of self-realisation.

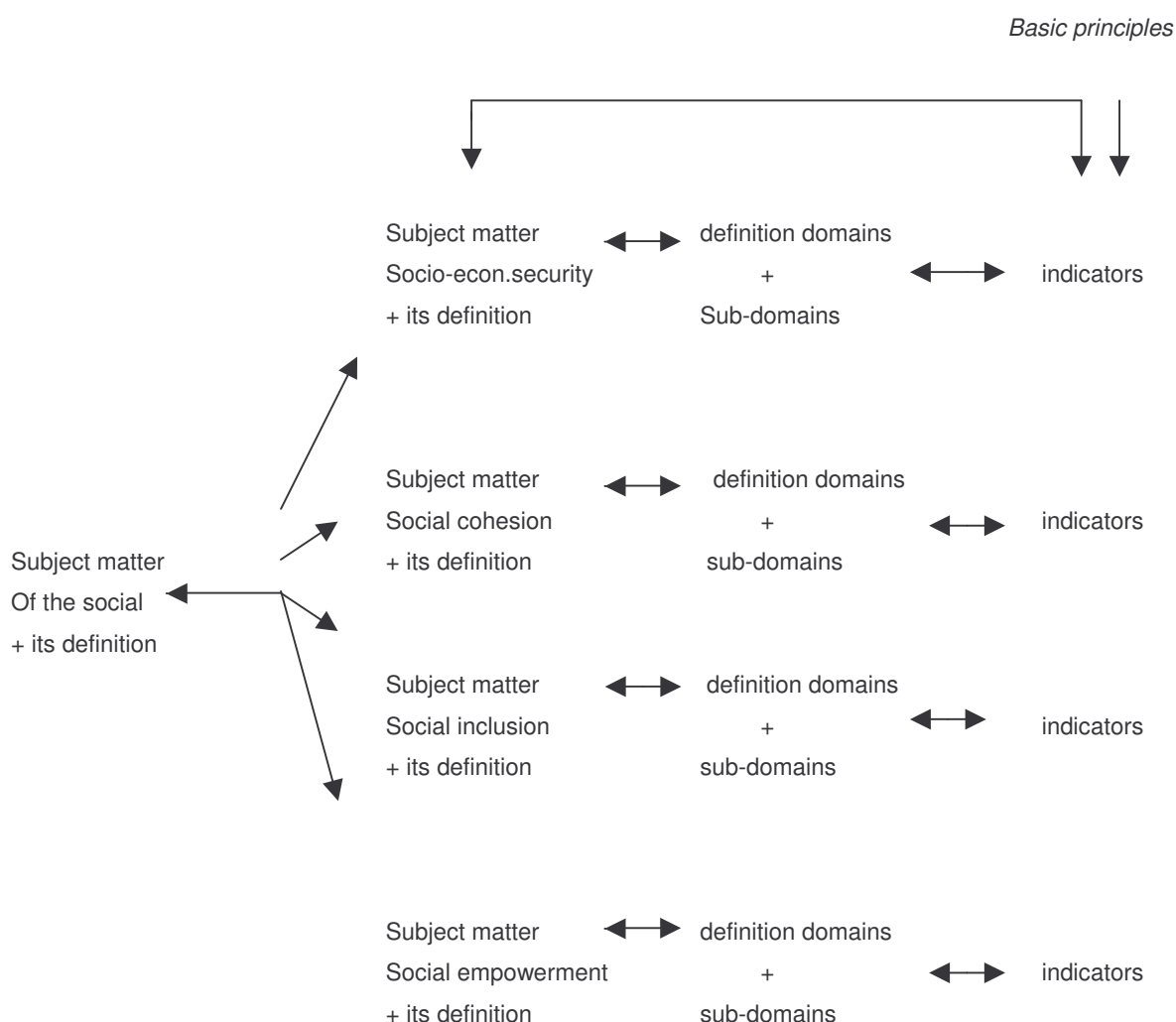
This theme is presented for the first time in the Foundation's second book of January 2001 and will be elaborated in the Foundation's third book. The relationship between the constitutional factors and the conditional factors – theoretically and practically – will be analysed. For the European Network on Indicators of Social Quality the nature of the conditional factors in the fourteen national countries is the 'heart of the matter'.

4 The national reports about the indicators of social quality

4.1 The steps made by the network

The measurement tools of the conditional factors are indicators. Indicators of social quality are thus – to be precise – 'indicators of the conditional factors of social quality'. As said, the network's challenge was to develop a robust set of these indicators. A condition was to clarify and to elaborate the social quality theory. This was done by applying deductive and inductive approaches that increased the understanding of the nature of the four conditional factors substantially. Thanks to four plenary sessions of the network's participants and three plenary sessions of their assistants, all those engaged could reach an agreement on the final definition of the four conditional factors, and recognise their domains and sub-domains. This delivered the consensus necessary for the development of indicators for all sub-domains that are relevant for the understanding of the nature of the conditional factor in question. The outcomes of this process are presented in the national reports. The following steps are made to syntonize all relevant concepts and to define the set of indicators: firstly, to determine the subject matter and definition of the conditional factors; secondly, to relate these definitions to each other as well as to the subject matter of 'the social'; thirdly, to determine the conditional factors' most essential domains; fourthly, to determine the nature of the sub-domains. As argued already these steps were based on the reciprocity between empirical explorations in the different countries and theoretical elaboration of the conditional factors of social quality, thus between inductive and deductive approaches. It may be illustrated as follows:

Figure-2 Determination of related concepts

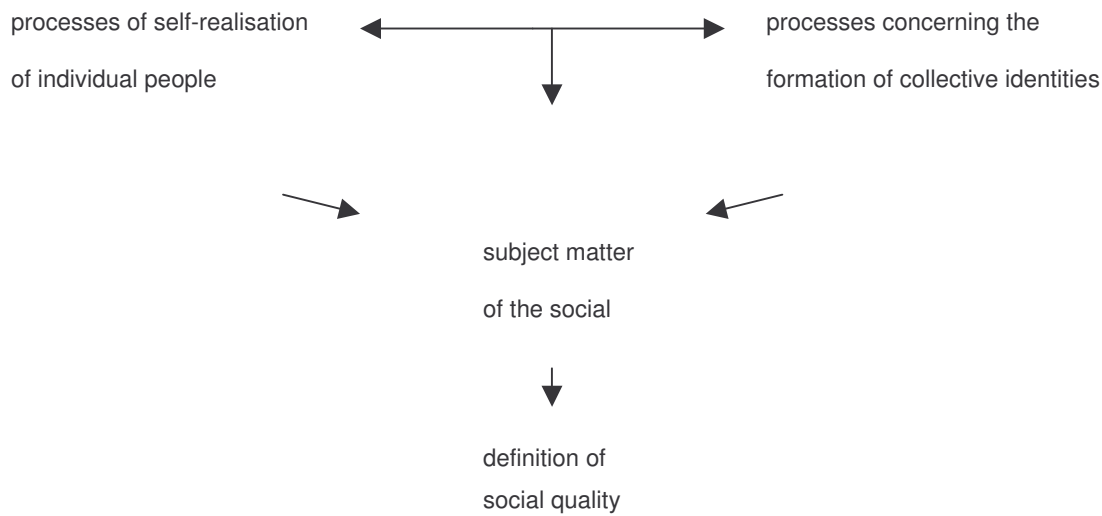


4.2 The definitions of the four conditional factors

The process resulting in the definitions of the relevant concepts will be extensively described in the network's Final Report. At this stage we will only present the consensus about the definitions of 'the social' and the four conditional factors.

The social will come into being thanks to the outcomes of reciprocal relationships between processes of self-realisation of individual people as social beings and processes leading to the formation of collective identities. Its subject matter concerns the outcomes of this reciprocity. The definition of social quality is based and derived from this reciprocity. **Social quality** is the extent to which people are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potentials.

Figure-3 Subject matter of 'the social' and the definition of social quality



The herewith related definitions of the four conditional factors are:

- Socio-economic security is the extent to which individual people have resources over time.
- Social cohesion is the nature of social relations based on shared identities, values and norms.
- Social inclusion is the extent to which people have access to and are integrated in different institutions and social relations that constitute everyday life.
- Social empowerment is the extent to which personal capabilities of individual people and their ability to act are enhanced by social relations.

We mean by individual people, 'social beings' that interact with each other and influence the nature of collective identities. These collective identities on their turn influence the possibilities for self-realisation of the individual people. Thus this theory is oriented on social life, not on individuals potentials only. The theory rejects individualistic oriented propositions. Furthermore, there exists a form of overlap between the four conditional factors. This plays a role on the level of defining domains for the factors. In some cases domains can play a role in two or three different conditional factors. But the way of analysing these domains will differ by their sub-domains and indicators, because they are determined by the specificity of the conditional factor in question.

5 Conclusions

In all national reports the domains, sub-domains and indicators are presented in order to assess the data availability for these indicators. At this stage we will summarise some results of this approach:

- The indicators reflect processes of interacting social beings. In comparison with other approaches, the social quality approach has paid a lot more attention to the theoretical foundation of the indicators. It distinguishes ‘the social’ from the economic. Or more precise, the economic is seen as an aspect of ‘the social’ as is the cultural, the juridical etc. This prevents the trap of explaining social policy (or welfare policy) as a productive factor for economic policy and economic growth. The social has its own *raison d’être*.
- For the first time in the academic world concepts as socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment are theoretically related with each other. The social quality theory demonstrates the intrinsic affinity of these four conditional factors. Herewith it addresses the existing scientific and policy-making fragmentation.
- Thanks to the applied method we have the possibility to analyse the nature and relationships between different policy areas. For example the relationship between economic policy, social policy and employment policy – see the Lisbon strategy – cannot be properly analysed without an intermediary. Social quality and the knowledge about the nature and changes of the four conditional factors deliver the points of departure for such an intermediary.
- The network has constructed indicators for measuring the nature and changes of the four conditional factors. By applying these indicators we dispose of a new tool for international comparison that is based on theoretically grounded concepts. Thanks to the application of this tools we are able to analyse the convergence and divergence between the Member States of the European Union with regard to these conditional factors of social quality. This could have added value for international comparison.
- Thanks to the assessment of the data availability of the indicators – as is done in each national report – we recognise the highly differentiated character of the countries of the European Union. This differentiated character cannot be captured by a reduction to a small number of social models. At the same time we recognise an intrinsic affinity in the emphasis on equity and solidarity between most of the countries involved. This outcome of the national reports will deliver good points of departure for future research on the comparison of the essence of the developmental approach of the European Union, the USA and the Asian countries.