

Changing patterns of political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels Capital Region. The October 2000 elections.

Dirk Jacobs
Marco Martiniello
Andrea Rea

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Abstract

The October 2000 elections did constitute a landmark for the political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels Capital Region. There was a remarkable increase of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU - mainly Moroccan – origin. In this contribution we want to discuss the changing patterns of political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels Capital Region as seen in the most recent local elections. We will try to contextualise the electoral success of Turkish and (mainly) Moroccan politicians and the poor involvement of EU-citizens in the recent elections. To this purpose, we will also have to discuss the political situation in the bilingual region of Brussels, Belgian citizenship law and regulations on political participation of foreign residents.

Introduction

In October 2000 some of the foreign residents were for the first time able to vote and stand as a candidate in Belgian municipal elections. Indeed, due to the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty non-Belgian EU-citizens were able to register as voters and participate in the local elections. Non-EU residents, however, were not allowed to vote or stand as a candidate. EU-citizens hardly made use of their newly granted rights to local political participation. Nevertheless, the October 2000 elections did constitute a landmark for the political participation of immigrant origin citizens, at least in the Brussels Capital Region. There was a remarkable increase of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU - mainly Moroccan – origin. Indeed, 20-25% of the politicians of the municipal councils in the boroughs of Brussels, Schaarbeek, St-Josse and Molenbeek are now of immigrant Turkish or Moroccan descent. This is quite remarkable, since the Belgians of non-EU-immigrant origin only make up maximum 9% of the electorate. A number of related events have the potential of changing the face of politics in the Belgian capital. Several Belgians of immigrant non-EU origin have become aldermen. Policy plans are increasingly focussed to disfavoured neighbourhoods with high proportions of immigrant inhabitants. Inner-party conflicts between “autochthonous” and ethnic minorities’ politicians are surfacing.

In this contribution we want to discuss the changing patterns of political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels Capital Region as seen in the most recent local elections. We will try to contextualise the electoral success of Turkish and (mainly) Moroccan politicians and the poor involvement of EU-citizens in the recent elections. To this purpose, we will also have to shortly discuss the political situation in the bilingual region of Brussels, Belgian citizenship law and regulations on political participation of foreign residents. Our main aim is to sketch the situation in general terms. We will pinpoint to a number of interesting patterns which have recently occurred in Brussels. Most of them require further attention and analysis, but we are limited by the constraint of article length to develop them all.

The institutional setting of the Brussels Capital Region

Belgium can be considered to be a clear example of what Kymlicka (1995) has called a 'multination state'. Since 1993 the Belgian constitution recognises that the constitutive nation is not a homogeneous entity. The constitutive nation of the Belgian state is instead seen to be the sum of national (“autochthonous”) sub-groups with (or which strive towards) an own cultural identity. The (new) constitution, indeed, clearly departs from the postulate of a multination state and recognises the rights of (partial) self-determination of those groups which are seen to be the constitutive elements for the Belgian nation (Martiniello, 1997, p.71). The constitution states that the Flemish, Francophone and Germanophone groups are the fundamental cultural communities of Belgium. This postulate then serves as the basis for organisation of

the entire Belgian political field. The Flemish-Francophone divide, however, clearly constitutes the central political axis.

Belgium is, however, not only officially built out of three Communities (a Dutch speaking (=Flemish), French speaking and German speaking community), it is also officially the sum of three territorial entities, the so-called Regions (Flanders, Wallonia and the Region of Brussels-Capital). The Region of Brussels-Capital, an enclave within the Flemish Region, is an official bilingual (Dutch and French speaking) region. Both the Flemish and the Francophone Community have jurisdiction in the Region of Brussels-Capital. The region contains nineteen autonomous municipalities. The sum of these nineteen autonomous municipalities is in ordinary life often referred to as the 'city of Brussels'. This could (and often does) create some confusion. The Region of Brussels-Capital is not a city in exact legal terms and has no city government as a whole, but it is a region and has its own regional government and representative body alongside nineteen municipal councils. Only one of those municipalities is officially named 'the city of Brussels' (in Dutch: "Brussel", in French: "Bruxelles"), contains the historical (and touristic) centre and is the actual capital of Belgium. We will be dealing with the entire Region of Brussels-Capital here.

According to the Brussels Region statistics office, the Region of Brussels-Capital had 959,318 inhabitants in the year 2000, of which about 274,000 (28.6%) were non-Belgian residents. Of the about 686,000 Belgian inhabitants (71.4% of the total population), approximately 15-20% has Dutch (Flemish) and 80-85% has French as the mother tongue. . Although the Flemish are clearly in a minority position in Brussels, Dutch is in principle used next to French as a fully fledged official language, given the official bilingual status of the Brussels Capital Region. The exact procedures to ensure this are the result of over three decades of difficult negotiations and complex reforms, which cannot possibly be exhaustively discussed in the limited context of this paper (for further reading in English see Roessingh, 1996; Fitzmaurice, 1996).

Citizenship law and political participation of foreign residents

Until recently only Belgian citizens were allowed to participate in elections. Belgian politicians have been remarkably reluctant in enfranchising foreign residents. This was, as has extensively been discussed by Jacobs (1998, 1999, 2001), mainly due to polarisation and electoral struggle over the anti-immigrant vote in the 1980s and early 1990s and to the disruptive effect of the Flemish-Francophone cleavage in the second half of the 1990s. It took till early 1999 before Belgium finally enfranchised EU-citizens in compliance with the Maastricht Treaty and the derived European directive. Foreign residents from EU-countries were thus able to participate in the most recent local elections which took place in October 2000. To be able to participate, they had to register as voters in advance. For Belgians voting is compulsory. Non-Europeans, however, were not allowed to vote in the local elections. Anticipating the 2000 local elections, the former Dehaene-II government had included a special clause in the constitution stipulating that the electoral laws could only be modified in order to enfranchise third country nationals after the year 2001. The electoral law has not been modified yet. The new 1999 'purple-green' government Verhofstadt, a coalition of socialists, right-liberals and ecologists, has opted to further liberalise nationality acquisition rather than enfranchise non-European foreign residents. Although socialists, ecologists and the Francophone right-liberals supported enfranchisement, the Flemish right-liberals were able to veto change in this matter up till now. It seems the other coalition partners were temporarily willing to drop the issue in exchange for the new (and - in international comparison - very open) procedures for nationality acquisition.

As in most European countries *ius sanguinis*, the intergenerational transmission of citizenship, constitutes the basic principle of access to Belgian state-citizenship. Children born to Belgian nationals are automatically attributed Belgian nationality at birth. However, progressively (in 1984, 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2000) *ius soli*, the acquisition of nationality due to the place of birth, has been introduced in Belgian citizenship law. Although the 2000 reform was supposed to allow a larger participation of former foreign residents in the 2000 local elections, it only had limited effect on the increase of Belgian voters for the October elections due to slow implementation. For the political participation of Belgians of immigrant origin in the 2000 local elections, the 1984 and 1991 reforms are hence to be considered most relevant.

In 1984 an option-procedure was introduced, based on *double ius soli*. Every person born on Belgian soil from a parent born in the territory is granted Belgian nationality by declaration made by the parent(s) on behalf of the child before the age of 12. In addition, an option-procedure was installed based on single *ius soli*. Every person born on Belgian soil who has been living in Belgium at least one year before the date of application and who has lived for a period of 9 years or between the age of 14 and 18 on Belgian territory can *apply* for Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 22. In addition, every person not born on Belgian soil but residing there for at least one year before the age of six, who has been living in Belgium at least one year before the date of application and who has lived for a period of 9 years or

between the age of 14 and 18 on Belgian territory can *apply* for Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 22.

In 1991 the importance of *ius soli* in the Belgian Nationality Law was significantly enhanced. While in 1984 double *ius soli* was still linked to a voluntary act of the parent(s), i.e. a declaration on behalf of the child before the age of 12, it is implemented (quasi-) automatically from the 1st of January 1992 onwards. The new procedure is introduced for the so-called 'third generation immigrants': Every child born on Belgian soil from a parent also born in the territory, automatically (and in 1992 retro-actively) acquires Belgian nationality. There is, however, a 'residence' condition for the parent(s): he or she has to have been living in Belgium for at least five years of the ten years preceding the birth of the child. In addition, a new option-procedure was introduced for 'second generation immigrants' born on Belgian soil. The Belgian nationality can be acquired for a child born on Belgian soil by declaration made by the parent(s) on behalf of the child before the age of 12. The child must have been staying in Belgium since birth and the parents must have been living at least ten years in Belgium before its birth. Belgian state-citizenship is automatically granted *unless* the 'district attorney' within two months judges the parents have other motives for applying the Belgian nationality for their child (for example: an improvement of the own residence status) than the well-being of the child. If the parents have not made (or could not make) use of this possibility to opt for Belgian nationality for their child born on Belgian soil, the person involved can him- or herself still opt for Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 22 (option-procedure of 1984). In addition, a new procedure was introduced allowing to persons (born on Belgian soil and since birth residing there) to demand Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 30. Belgian nationality is automatically granted *unless* the 'district attorney' within two months judges that the applicant has an unfavourable penal record. In 2000 the conditions for the option-procedure were simplified. Adults born in Belgium or who have been living in Belgium for seven years and have a permanent residents status, can opt for the Belgian nationality. The 'district attorney' has one month time to block the acquisition of Belgian citizenship.

In Belgium, naturalisation is discretionary. It can be refused and there is no right of appeal against a refusal of citizenship. Discretionary naturalisation is in essence not a *right* one can make use of but a *favour* which one can be granted. This is symbolically made clear in the Belgian system in which naturalisation is still 'politically' decided upon by parliament. Loss of the old nationality is in principle not a condition to acquire Belgian nationality (albeit that simultaneous possession of Belgian state-citizenship in combination with possession of state-citizenship of most other European countries is ruled out by the Treaty of Strasbourg). Since 1996, all adults who have been residing for five years (three years if one has a refugee-status) can apply for naturalisation. The applicant has to fill in a form giving information about his income, education, knowledge of language, etc. and has to give a motivation for the application. In addition some Belgian people have to vow for the applicant. The 'district attorney' there upon has four months time to investigate the 'will to integrate' and the penal record of the applicant. The application is then sent to the Chamber (one of the two bodies of parliament) that decides if the applicant will be granted Belgian nationality. Since 2000 the residence requirement has been dropped to three years (and two years for refugees), the 'district attorney' has one month to investigate the demand and the test of integration has been dropped.

It is unknown how many children of foreign residents in Brussels exactly acquired Belgian nationality due to the gradual introduction of *ius soli* in 1985 and 1991 in Brussels. It is obvious that, while the population of foreign residents entails about 30% of the total population of the Region of Brussels-Capital, the proportion of people of foreign descent must be well over one third of the total population. It can, however, not exactly be said how large the immigrant community exactly is. There have never been any attempts made - or the data were at least never published - by official administrations to chart the ethnic groups of the city (the only official data available are based on the criterion of nationality). One estimate has been that there are about 53,000 Belgians of foreign non-EU descent in Brussels (Martiniello, 1998, p.138). If one uses the same method of calculation to make an estimate of the Belgians of EU-descent as Martiniello (1998, p.137) has used to calculate the Belgians of non-EU-descent, there would be 30,000 Belgians of foreign EU-descent in Brussels. The total Belgian population of foreign origin would thus be constituted by 83,000 persons. This would imply that approximately 38% of the inhabitants of Brussels are of immigrant origin. Martiniello (1998, p.138) has estimated that there were about 35,500 Belgian voters of foreign non-EU origin in Brussels in 1996, thus constituting 6,6% of the electorate. If we take into account the effect of the 2000 reform of the Belgian nationality law, it seems fair to estimate the number of voters of foreign non-EU descent to have been around 40,000 in the 2000 local elections.

Enfranchisement of EU-citizens

In Belgium voting is obligatory. The 1994 European directive on EU enfranchisement, implementing the Maastricht Treaty, does however not allow nation states to force EU-nationals from other countries to

make use of their right to vote in local elections. To counterveil this dilemma, it was decided to demand of EU-citizens to register as voters if they would want to make use of their right to vote in accordance with the Maastricht Treaty. To register as voters, they should send a written demand to the municipal administration well over two months prior to the election date. Once registered as voters, they would then be obliged to actually go and vote, just as is the case for all adult Belgians who are automatically obliged to participate in the elections. A number of municipalities (as Brussels city) systematically notified all their EU-citizens how to register to vote and the federal and regional authorities had distributed leaflets explaining the procedure. Nevertheless, only a small minority of the EU foreign residents did actually take the effort to register to vote. In the entire Region a mere 9.6% of the EU-citizens registered to vote. It is quite remarkable that mainly those municipalities which host important EU institutions (as the Commission, the Parliament, Council of Ministers) on their territory - Brussels, Elsene, Etterbeek - had the lowest participation rates. The scores for the different municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1 SOMEWHERE HERE

In most municipalities, the importance of the EU-foreign residents in the electorate is rather small due to the limited registration rate. The overall percentage of EU-citizens in the electorate is a mere 2% in the entire region. In municipalities as Brussels and Elsene the electoral strength of the EU citizens is remarkably limited (1.7 and 2.5%), although there is a much larger potential. If they would all have registered to vote, the EU foreign residents could stand for 19.6% of the total electorate in Brussels city, while they could even stand for 28.4% in Elsene. Partly as a result of the low EU participation rate, not a single non Belgian EU citizen got elected in Brussels city, the capital of the European Union. In neighbouring Etterbeek, however, a Dutch citizen did get elected on the ecologist list. It is, however, unlikely that this is particularly due to EU votes. It is more probable his election is due to support of Flemish Belgians.

With regard to electoral importance of the registered EU voters, Saint-Gilles is a notable exception within the Brussels Region. In Saint-Gilles the registered EU foreign residents accounted for 7.2% of the total electorate and thus constituted a considerable electoral force. The EU potential is, however, no less than 35% of the electorate. Only a fraction of this potential had been mobilised. It is nevertheless worth noting that the electoral importance of this group was anticipated. There is a significant Spanish working class community in Saint-Gilles – which has quite a different socio-professional profile than the ‘Eurocrats’ and more transient young European professionals in the most other municipalities of Brussels (Eggerickx et alii, 1999) - which has been actively targeted by the local political parties. Candidates of Spanish origin figured prominently on the list of the socialist mayor Charles Picqué and of opposition party Ecolo.

Overall one must conclude the political participation of EU foreign residents in the municipal elections of October 2000 was very modest. There was a very low participation rate and hardly a non Belgian EU-citizen got elected into a municipal council of the Brussels Capital Region. There can only be one conclusion: although the demographic importance of the EU residents is significant in the Brussels Capital Region, on the local political level they are of minor importance.

The October 2000 elections : The electoral success of Belgians of non-EU origin

The results of the October 2000 local elections in Brussels were remarkable in several respects. First of all, a few surprising changes of coalitions occurred in some municipalities. In the city of Brussels and in the municipality of Ixelles (Elsene), the liberal federation PRL-FDF lost the mayorship. In Molenbeek, the PRL-FDF federation in power with the francophone socialist party PS was expelled in the opposition to give space to a new red-green coalition (socialists-ecologists). The projections based on the results of the regional elections of 1999 predicted a regression of the PS, a progression of the green party ECOLO as well as a status quo for the PRF-FDF federation. The results of the elections only confirmed the predictions in the case of ECOLO since the PS progressed whereas the PRL-FDF federation regressed. To what extent those changes are linked to a better access to local political participation for the population of origin remains difficult to assess with precision. Unfortunately there are no exit-poll data, as the research group ISPO has been able to collect in Flanders, available for the elections in Brussels – this has up till now been judged by financiers as being too costly in exchange for too little return - which would allow us to make valid inferences. But we think one cannot rule out the plausible hypothesis that there is a correlation between the growth of the number of voters of foreign non-EU descent between 1994 and 2000 on the one hand and the results of the three parties mentioned, on the other hand.

The remarkable increase of the number of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU origin was another major feature of these local elections (Rea, 2002). In the previous municipal elections, held in 1994,

the participation and success of Belgians of non-EU foreign origin was still modest. Only 14 Belgians of non-EU foreign origin were elected on a total of 650 local councillors for the 19 municipalities of Brussels (see table 2). This was already a progress since until then, the representation of immigrant ethnic minorities in local political life has been non-existing even in the municipalities and neighbourhoods where immigrant origin citizens were significantly concentrated.

TABLE 2. SOMEWHERE HERE

Table 3 clearly shows that most candidates of non-EU origin did not initially occupy a so-called 'eligible position' on their party list submitted to the electorate. With the ranking on the electoral list, the parties express their own preference of who should get elected. Thanks to personal preference votes which they managed to obtain, candidates of non-EU origin succeeded in overcoming candidates which were initially in a better position. Without going into a detailed analysis – for which there is no space here - of all preferential voting and patterns of seat allocation, it is fair to say that they were elected thanks to preference votes. It should be noted that there is no limit to the number of preference votes a voter can cast within one and the same list and that the electoral system is more or less proportional (Imperiali-system).

TABLE 3. SOMEWHERE HERE

Who votes for whom remains a good question to pose. It is undisputable that voters with a non-EU background certainly supported them. This phenomenon has been widely commented as being 'ethnic voting', in combination with ideological preferences. But it is as unchallengeable that non-immigrant "autochthonous" voters also voted for some of them. One might talk about 'symbolic voting' here, through which "autochthonous" electors wanted to make clear to the (mostly mainstream) parties of their choice that they supported the inclusion of politicians of immigrant descent in the political system. Once again, precise answers cannot be given about the importance of the different types of preference voters since we unfortunately do not possess any exit-poll data on Brussels.

This effect of preferential voting, most probably to be seen as a mixture of 'ethnic' voting and 'symbolic' voting, was repeated in the 1995 and 1999 regional elections (see tables 4 and 5). In fact, during the 1999 elections, it was partly anticipated, in the struggle for the 'immigrant vote'. This led in 1999, to the election of 8 Belgians of foreign non-EU origin, on a total 75 MP's in the regional parliament.

TABLES 4 AND 5 SOMEWHERE HERE

It is interesting to note that the preferential voting does not manifest itself to the same degree for the right-liberal (conservative) candidates. Table 5 shows that the 2 elected right-liberal (PRL-FDF) candidates did relatively poor in terms of preference votes when compared to socialist and green candidates even though in absolute terms, their performance remains remarkable.

In the 2000 municipal elections (see tables 6 and 7), the struggle for the 'immigrant vote' was even more apparent and important. In fact, parties were not very selective in recruiting immigrant origin would be politicians, in a number of cases, much to the dislike of immigrant associations -as shown in 31 interviews with leaders of immigrant associations in Brussels, conducted in the course of 2001 (Jacobs & Swyngedouw, 2001). The phenomenon of success of preferential voting for immigrant candidates reappeared and even shattered all expectations. Out of 653 municipal councillors, now 90 are of non-EU immigrant background.

TABLES 6 AND 7 SOMEWHERE HERE

The success of immigrant origin citizen candidates due to preferential voting is, as we have noted before, most probably the result of a combination of ethnic voting (votes of Belgians of immigrant origin) and symbolic voting (votes by white Belgians who want to support immigrant origin candidates as a symbolic gesture in favour of immigrant origin citizen representation). Probably ethnic voting alone can - even mathematically - not explain all preference votes for immigrant origin candidates.

In a number of municipalities this had as a result that there was almost 'mirror-representation' of third country nationals and Belgians of non-EU-origin despite the fact that non-EU foreign residents were still not enfranchised. In other municipalities, there seems even to be an over-representation of citizens of non-EU origin in the local council. As shown in table 8, a comparison of the percentage of seats gained by non-EU origin candidates on the one hand with the percentage of non-EU residents (without Belgian nationality) in a given municipality on the other hand, hints at overrepresentation of inhabitants (both Belgian as non-Belgian) of non-EU origin. But we have to be very cautious here since the table does not

include Belgian citizens of non EU-origin. As we said above they are very numerous in certain municipalities. Therefore, the first column of the table is an underestimation of non-EU origin population. In the end of the day, the alleged overrepresentation of citizens of non-EU origin could well be significantly reduced or even cancelled. Once again, we should remind there is no possibility of knowing this for sure, since there are no official data available on ethnic background.

TABLE 8. SOMEWHERE HERE

What is further remarkable is that a lot of the elected are of Maghrebian, and more precisely Moroccan, origin. We had already seen this pattern in the 1999 regional elections, and it reappears - albeit less radically - in the 2000 municipal elections. Now Moroccans do constitute the largest group of foreigners in Brussels, but it is still a remarkable result. Fennema and Tillie (1999), who have been doing innovative research into differences in political involvement of ethnic groups, would explain this with the model they have used for the Netherlands by referring to the strength of ethnic civic community among these groups. It would be interesting to test this for Brussels, since at first sight, their model does not seem to work in this specific case. Paradoxically, in data collected by Swyngedouw, Phalet and Deschouwer, it has been found that participation levels in associational life of Turks are much higher than those of Moroccans (Swyngedouw, Phalet & Deschouwer, 1999). Equally, most observers claim social cohesion and social networks are stronger amongst Turks than amongst Moroccans. This would be linked to differential migration histories: there was predominantly chain-migration among Turks, while migration patterns among the Moroccans were much more diverse. We would thus expect more (successful) political participation of Turks than of Moroccans, in the logic of Fennema and Tillie, but we actually find the reverse in Brussels. The reasons why this is the case, still have to be explored (for an attempt see Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2002). Most likely the higher political involvement of Moroccans is related to the fact the overall level of language proficiency of French – the dominant political language in Brussels – is a lot higher than of Turks.

Another crucial dimension of the political participation Belgian non-EU origin citizens is that 11 elected councillors of non-EU origin have been appointed aldermen in the weeks and months after the election. Although of course on a much lower level, one could say the alderman in the city government is the equivalent of a minister in the federal government. Aldermen have substantial power in local politics. They enjoy some degree of autonomy to impulse and implement local policies in their sphere of competence. The emergence of alderman of non-EU origin is yet another step in the political participation of immigrant origin population and maybe in the empowerment process of previously excluded groups in local politics. It is also interesting to note that only 2 of these aldermen are not in charge of social competences. One is in charge of local finances and the other one for public works. All the others are in charge of either sport and youth, education, social integration, employment or culture.

What does the increased success of immigrant Belgians of non-EU origin lead to? What are the effects? It is still too soon to judge any effects in policy changes but clearly the large success of immigrant politicians (some really 'fresh') creates tensions within local party sections. A notable example has been the local socialist party section in the city of Brussels. It has been reported that some of the elected Belgians of Maghrebian origin have for a while been insisting on having more power. In doing so, they referred to their electoral results and to the fact that they hold 7 of the 13 seats of the PS in the city council. What is equally clear, is that immigrant politicians do have power or venues to power, especially at the moment of coalition formation. Some have become aldermen (symbolically but also *de facto* quite important!). Others have played a decisive role in coalition formation since in a number of cases, with a few seats one can make the difference between alternative majorities. There is a notable instance in Vorst-Forest where by leaving the PS to join the PRL-FDF federation, 2 councillors of Moroccan origin provoked a change of coalition and offered the mayorship to the PRL-FDF federation. Belgians of immigrant origin can and have thus really played a significant political role in local politics of Brussels.

It is to be seen what the effect of enfranchisement of non-EU nationals will be in Brussels. It will probably remain rather limited, because we already have an extra-ordinary situation of representation at the moment. A further increase of immigrant politicians in case of enfranchisement cannot be ruled out, but will probably not take place. Probably the political parties will become more selective again in their choice of candidates in the future, given the amount of criticism they have been faced with. There also appear to be legislative plans, which were partly launched in response to the huge success of politicians of non-EU origin and related to inner party tensions, to modify the electoral law in limiting the number of preference votes one is allowed to cast.

Concluding remarks

We have a new era in Brussels politics since the local elections of October 2000. There was a remarkable increase of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU - mainly Moroccan – origin. Indeed, 20-25% of the politicians of the municipal councils in the boroughs of Brussels, Schaarbeek, St-Josse and Molenbeek are now of immigrant Turkish or Moroccan descent. This is quite remarkable, since the Belgians of non-EU-immigrant origin only make up maximum 9% of the electorate. The success is the result of the importance of preferential voting by both ‘old’ Belgians (‘autochthonous’ Belgians) as ‘new’ Belgians (Belgians of immigrant origin). A number of related events have the potential of changing the face of politics in the Belgian capital. Several Belgians of immigrant non-EU origin have become aldermen. Policy plans are increasingly focussed to disfavoured neighbourhoods with high proportions of immigrant inhabitants. Inner-party conflicts between ‘autochthonous’ and ethnic minorities’ politicians are surfacing.

Identity politics has always been important in the Belgian capital. Up till now Brussels politics was dominated by the linguistic divide between Flemings and Francophones. Now there is the additional pluri-ethnic dimension, with Belgians of Moroccan origin in the spotlight. Strangely enough, the EU-citizens do not join in the power struggle. Have they nothing to defend? We observed the low EU-participation and the large success of Belgian immigrant politicians of non-EU origin. Is this to be interpreted as a good or a bad sign? One could argue in both directions. On the one hand, it might be preferable that those groups who need emancipation the most, are most successful in having representatives. From this perspective, it is a good thing that politicians who are closest to the disfavoured neighbourhoods (and their partly disenfranchised population) are (over)represented. On the other hand, the fact that socio-economically well-off groups, as the EU-citizens (making abstraction of the South-European working class communities) do not politically participate might be a sign – but this is just a hypothesis - that local politics and local political representation is somehow losing its importance and that these groups have other means of power and venues at their disposal to defend their interests (more effectively).

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About the authors:

Dirk Jacobs (°1971), MA in Sociology (1993, University of Ghent) and PhD in Social Sciences (1998, Utrecht University), is currently affiliated as a postdoctoral researcher of the National Fund for Scientific Research FWO-Flanders (Belgium) to the ISPO (Institute for Social and Political Opinion Research, K.U.Leuven) and is an adjunct assistant professor at the Catholic University of Brussels (KUBrussel). He has published on issues as political participation of immigrants, ethnocentrism, identity politics and debate analysis. (e-mail: dirk.jacobs@soc.kuleuven.ac.be)

Marco Martiniello (°1960), BA in Sociology, University of Liège; PhD in Political Science, European University Institute Florence (Italy) is Senior Research Associate at the National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) and Lecturer in Politics at the University of Liège. He is the director of the Centre d'Études de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations (CEDEM). He is the vice-chair of the Association Belge de Science Politique. His latest books include *Minorities in European Cities* (London : MacMillan, 2000, co-edited); *La nouvelle Europe migratoire. Pour une politique proactive de l'immigration* (Bruxelles : Labor, 2001). He has published widely on issues dealing with migration, ethnicity, racism and citizenship issues in the European Union and in Belgium. (e-mail : M.Martiniello@ulg.ac.be)

Andrea Rea (°1959), PhD in Social Sciences (2000, Free University of Brussels) is Professor at the Free University of Brussels and Director of the Group for studies on Ethnicity, Racism, Migrations and Exclusion. He has published on issues such as immigration policies, integration of immigrants, labour market and racial discrimination, racism in Europe (e-mail: area@ulb.ac.be)

Table 1. Number and percentage of EU-citizens who registered to vote in the municipalities of the Region of Brussels-Capital

Municipality	Number of adult EU-citizens	% of the potential EU-electorate on the total electorate	Number of EU-citizens on electoral list	% of adult EU-citizens who registered to vote	% of EU-electorate on total electorate
Anderlecht	9,847	16,2%	1,132	11.5%	2.2%
Oudergem	2,766	12,6%	318	11.5%	1.6%
St-Agatha-Berch.	1,153	8%	125	10.8%	0.9%
Brussels	17,043	19,6%	1,196	7%	1.7%
Etterbeek	6,473	22,5%	501	7.7%	2.2%
Evere	2,044	9%	224	11%	1.1%
Vorst	6,383	19,8%	554	8.7%	2.1%
Ganshoren	1,204	7,7%	234	19.4%	1.6%
Elsene	15,566	28,5%	989	6.4%	2.5%
Jette	2,516	8,5%	317	12.6%	1.2%
Koekelberg	1,450	13,1%	146	10%	1.5%
Molenbeek	5,832	13,7%	489	8.4%	1.3%
Sint-Gillis	9,875	35%	1,425	14.4%	7.2%
Sint-Joost	2,116	19,8%	170	8%	1.9%
Schaarbeek	11,498	17,7%	971	8.4%	1.8%
Ukkel	10,105	18%	772	7.6%	1.6%
Watermaal-Bosvoorde	2,043	10,9%	319	15.6%	1.9%
St-Lambrechts-Woluwe	6,453	18%	685	10.6%	2.3%
St-Pieters-Woluwe	5,879	20,7%	953	16.2%	4%
Entire region	120,246	18,1%	11,520	9.6%	2%

Source: Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment ISPO- KULeuven

Table 2. Candidates and elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels, local elections of 1994

	Candidates of non-EU origin	Elected councillors of non-EU origin
Anderlecht	9	1
Berchem	1	0
Bruxelles	22	3
Etterbeek	6	0
Forest	2	1
Ixelles	8	1
Koekelberg	1	1
Molenbeek	18	1
Saint-Gilles	8	1
Saint-Josse	8	2
Schaerbeek	18	3
Uccle	1	0
Woluwé-Saint-Lambert	2	0
Total	107	14

Source : Based on a patronym analysis by GERME-ULB of data of the Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000

Table 3. Elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels in 1994 according to the initial position on the list and their preference

	Initial position on the list	Position obtained thanks to preference votes	Number of elected councillors on the list
Romdhani M. (Bruxelles Ville - PS)	10	4	8
Ouriaghli M. (Bruxelles Ville - PS)	24	5	8
Hariche (Bruxelles Ville - PS)	35	6	8
Bouarfa S. (Schaerbeek - PS)	4	1	4
Zeguendi K. (Schaerbeek – FDF)	7	5	7
El Arnouki (Schaerbeek – Ecolo)	23	5	5
Smahi A. (Saint-Josse - PS)	25	3	16
Mantrach J. (Saint-Josse – Ecolo)	2	2	2
Mokhtari H. (Forest - PS)	25	6	9
Boeckstael – Abib N. (Anderlecht – Ecolo)	2	2	4
Ben Ottmane A. (Ixelles – Ecolo)	5	2	5
Mghari A. (Koekelberg - FDF)	10	4	5
Bouselmati M. (Molenbeek – Ecolo)	2	1	3
Dougna A. (Saint-Gilles – Ecolo)	1	1	3

Source : Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment GERME-ULB

Table 4. Candidates and elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels, Regional elections of 1995

	Initial position on the list	Position obtained thanks to preference votes	Preference Votes
Bouarfa S. (PS) elected	9	3	2 505
Romdhani M. (PS) elected	24	11	1 595
Ouezekhti M. (Ecolo) elected	6	4	1 492
Daif M (PS) elected	51	12	1 311
Maadour El M.(PSC)	7	11	1 075
Laanan F. (PS)	46	17	1 015
Zeguendi K. (PRL-FDF)	35	53	896
Fargaoui A. (PS)	58	21	837

Source : Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment GERME-ULB

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Source : Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment GERME-ULB

Table 5. Candidates and elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels, Regional elections of 1999

	Initial position on the list	Position obtained thanks to preference votes	Preference Votes
Saïdi F. (Ecolo), elected	7	3	4 737
Boudjaoui F. (Ecolo),	37	9	1 979
Lahssaini F. (Ecolo), elected	12	10	1 967
Cherké A.(Ecolo)	22	12	1 713
Bouselmati M. (Ecolo),	17	13	1 703
Ouezekhti M. (PRL-FDF), elected	10	24	2 465
Derbaki A. (PRL-FDF) elected	21	31	1 702
Daïf M. (PS), elected	12	3	4 235
Bouarfa S. (PS), elected	5	4	3 013
Romdhani M. (PS), elected	16	9	2 045
Azzouzi M. (PS), elected	38	10	2 025
Koyuncu R. (PS),	64	12	1 812

Source : Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment GERME-ULB

Table 6. Elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels according to the party, local elections of October 2000

	Ecolo	PS	SP	PRL- FDF- MCC	Agalev	PSC	CVP	Total
Anderlecht	2	3		2				7
Auderghem								
Berchem								
Bruxelles	3	7		2		1		13
Etterbeek	3	2		1				6
Evere	1	1						2
Forest	2	2						4
Ganshoren	1							1
Ixelles	3	3						6
Jette	1		1					2
Koekelberg		3						3
Molenbeek	3	7		1			1	12
Saint-Gilles	4	3				1		8
Saint-Josse	4	5		2		2		13
Schaerbeek	3	2		5				10
Uccle	2							2
Watermael								
Wolw St-Lambert					1			1
Woluwé St-Pierre								
Total	32	38	1	13	1	4	1	90

Source : Based on a patronym analysis by GERME-ULB of data of the Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000

Table 7. Elected councillors of non-EU origin in the 19 municipalities of Brussels, their percentage of the total number of elected councillors in each municipality, October 2000

	Total number of seats	Elected councillors of non-EU origin (value)	Elected councillors of non-EU origin (%)
Anderlecht	43	7	16,3
Auderghem	29	0	0
Berchem	24	0	0
Bruxelles	47	13	27,7
Etterbeek	33	6	18,2
Evere	31	2	6,5
Forest	35	4	11,4
Ganshoren	25	1	4,0
Ixelles	41	6	16,6
Jette	33	2	6,1
Koekelberg	25	3	12,0
Molenbeek	41	12	29,3
Saint-Gilles	35	8	22,9
Saint-Josse	27	13	48,2
Schaerbeek	47	10	21,3
Uccle	41	2	4,9
Watermael	27	0	0
Wolwé St-Lambert	35	1	2,9
Woluwé St-Pierre	33	0	0
Total	652	90	13,8

Source : Based on a patronym analysis by GERME-ULB of data of the Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000

Table 8. Percentage of elected councillors of non-EU origin in 6 municipalities of Brussels and percentage of non-EU population

	non-EU population (%)	Elected councillors of non-EU origin (%)
Anderlecht	13	16,3
Bruxelles	18,4	27,7
Ixelles	13	16,6
Molenbeek	23,2	29,3
Saint-Gilles	17,4	22,9
Saint-Josse	35,5	48,2

Source : Ministry of the Interior, Department of Elections, 2000, treatment CEDEM-ULG