



Leonardo Partnership - 2009-1-DE2-LEO04-01694 1

“IBP – The immigrant’s business plan“

Kick-off meeting in Paris from the 15th till 18th of October 2009 at ITG Conseil

Project Meeting No. 1: ‘Ethnic economy in the partner countries’ – Kerstin Weertz, EU WAREHOUSE

In our first meeting we have – among other - addressed the ‘ethnic economies’ in the participating countries of the project.

For Belgium I would like to give you various quotes from a recent survey “[How tolerant are Belgians towards ethnic minorities? from March 2009](#), which has been executed by Ipsos through the agency of **Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism**. The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism want to conduct a study to measure the degree of tolerance of the Belgian population - that is to say, tolerance specifically towards ethnicity.

The **survey** is available in [NL](#), [FR](#) and [EN](#) – and apart from the aspects we are looking at in our project, it is a very good read. You will also find the three versions on our website as well as a report on migration (only in NL and FR).

The ‘Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism’ is a public institution that aims to promote equal opportunities and that fights any type of exclusion, restriction or preferential treatment based on legally stipulated criteria. The Centre also oversees the respect of the fundamental rights of foreign nationals and observes the nature and scope of migration flows. Furthermore the Centre stimulates the fight against human trafficking. It is based in Brussels. More information: <http://www.diversiteit.be/index.php?action=onderdeel&onderdeel=4&titel=Home>.

Here you find a choice of relevant quotes from the Survey: “How tolerant are Belgians towards ethnic minorities?” which contribute to our discussion (I have highlighted some passages for better reading in red / yellow):

1. 2. UNDERSTANDING MINORITY GROUPS (pages 14ff.)

It is important to know what one understands by the term of minority groups: what's they are, what country they come from? In minority group is a broad notion, which includes a large number of different groups. These different minority groups are not always seen in the same way.

The following **minority groups** were nominated:

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a) Westerners

These minority groups that are to a large degree attached to the Belgian culture perceived positively. It includes people from neighbouring countries (Germany, France, Holland: almost no difference with Belgians), people from southern countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal who have been living in Belgium for a long time and seemed to be well integrated into Belgium) and Americans (USA: the same trend, they contribute to filling the coffers of the Belgian state, they only come into Belgium if they have work). These minority groups are not on balance Belgian culture, they fit well into this culture.

b) East Europeans

The perception of this group is slightly negative. The positive side of this group is that it is perceived as a group motivated to work "in construction, housework". Furthermore the cultural conflicts remain rather limited and this group integrates well. The negative side is that this group is closely related to 'black' work.

c) Asians

This group also seems to integrate well, but people are not very familiar with this group. This cultural community seems to adopt a rather reserved attitude.

d) Africans (Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Angola...)

This group is perceived in very stereotyped way and inferior. What characterizes the people in this group is their happy "vivacious" temperament and the importance they attach to their appearance. "a lot of colors, they are sensitive to appearance and luxury". Their philosophy of life is very varied: oriented more towards pleasure and less to work. Africans also live more in community and that can create a nuisance.

e) Maghreb people (Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia...)

In terms of the way they live this minority group is very different from the way people live in Belgium and this often leads to conflicts. They too attach a lot of importance to living in community. That is why this group is considered rather negatively by Belgians. The difference between the two cultures is considerable. Furthermore it is a large group which is felt as being a threat. There seems to be a lack of integration and their subconscious motivation is vague. Furthermore they want to claim their rights.

However there is a difference between the generations. The younger generation is a little closer to the Belgian culture.

Conclusion:

There is a very diverse perception of the different minority groups.

It is therefore important in the questionnaire not only to refer to the minority groups in general but also to ask specific questions for each minority group.

One respondent might be very tolerant towards one group (for example, Americans) but very intolerant towards another group (for example, Moroccans).

1. 4. EXPECTATIONS OF MINORITY GROUPS

The dominating feeling is that the minority groups often put themselves above the law and are not sanctioned by the legal authorities. This produces a feeling of frustration ("they have the right but we don't"). ...

The following conditions for accepting them are mentioned:

a) Knowledge of the language(s)

Knowing the language is essential for everyone to be accepted in Belgian society (“my friend's daughter married a Turk who speaks Dutch perfectly”)

b) Work ethic

Furthermore being willing to work is also an essential condition. It shouldn't cost the Belgian state anything. Furthermore there seems to be a clear preference for newcomers being in good health since they are not likely to cost the state any money.

c) Accepting Belgian culture

Furthermore they must also accept the way that Belgians live. Their religious convictions should not become fanatical.

“Send them back home if they live like where they come from”

d) Family groups

Family groups is not a major problem if it is limited to the closest members of family (1st degree)

e) Training

Training is considered as a less important point as long as the person wants to work.

f) Colour of the skin

No comments were made about the colour of the skin

g) Conditions for expulsion

It is clear that these minority groups cause a nuisance for Belgium that is reason for expelling them.

...

In addition the **attitude towards work** is equally important. They must show some initiative to work. After a limited period people without work should be sent back. ...

1. 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITY GROUPS

People are honest enough to admit that it is not always easy for minority groups. The **opportunities are much more limited** and that is certainly true for the job market. “just their name alone”.

There are several reasons for that. Poor linguistic ability, lack of motivation to work “don't come to work on time “and furthermore the fear of negative reaction by clients “if I had the choice I would rather go for a Belgian in order not to loose clients“.

Respondents do not see this as a sign of Belgian intolerance but just the situation (for example not adapted to Belgian life: not having the required qualifications). “perhaps they are not adapted to our system “.

2. EXPERIENCE OF MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (pages 19ff.)

2.2.1. Advantages of the multicultural society

e) Taking on less desirable jobs

Minority groups take on jobs that Belgians don't want, so the feeling that they are stealing the jobs from Belgians does not exist. According to the participants they are often trained at 1 degree less than Belgians, which is why they are suitable for these jobs. “When you see road works you only see people of foreign origin, I don't know who would do it instead of them “ “ Little jobs like cleaning “ . The question is how will that develop in future: what will happen if the minority groups no longer want to do these jobs?

9. Ethno-centrism (pages 76ff.)

9.1. Negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities

Theoretically ethno-centrism implies two different attitudes: a positive attitude towards the in group and a negative attitude towards the out group. In measuring this, as proposed in the feasibility study and in most studies, only the negative attitudes have been studied.

In general there are as many Belgians thinking one can rely on Maghreb people, Turks, East Europeans and sub-Sahara Africans, as Belgians who think one cannot rely on them (about one in three).

Within the minority groups confidence is highest towards sub-Sahara Africans (34%), followed by Turks (33%), Maghreb people (31%) and East Europeans. Those who show the least confidence are the over 55's (35%) and the least qualified (35%). Confidence in Africans is significantly higher among young people (42% versus 34%), the more qualified (45%) and Brussels people (44%).

Over 4 out of 10 Belgians think that Maghreb people, Africans, East Europeans and Turks come to Belgium to benefit from the social security (respectively 48%, 43%, 43% and 44%).

Amongst the minorities under review the Maghreb people are considered as those that benefit the most. Those that particularly share this view are the over 55's (55%), the least qualified (55%), inactive people (51%), Flemish (52%) and rural populations (54%).

9.1.1. Attitudes towards ethnic minorities on the job market

In general 40% of Belgians think that it is detrimental to the Belgium job market that the Maghreb people, Turks, East Europeans come and live here. This negative attitude is less marked towards sub-Sahara Africans: 'only' one out of three Belgians think that their presence is detrimental for the job market. **The negative attitude towards the three minority ethnic groups indicated above is significantly stronger among the least qualified people.** However an equally high percentage (40%) claims that the presence of ethnic minorities is not detrimental for the Belgian job market.

In the same way 30% of Belgians think that Belgium should not allow Maghreb people, Turks, East Europeans or Africans to come and work here.

Approximately one in four Belgians is not in agreement with this idea; those that particularly think that Belgium should indeed allow East Europeans to come and work here are the 18 to 34-year-olds (51% versus 43%), the best qualified (54%), employees (49%) and inhabitants of Brussels (59%). Those who think significantly more that Africans should not be authorised to come and work here are the over 55's (32%), the least qualified (36%), workers (37%), Walloons (32%) and rural populations (33%).

The opinions are mixed concerning non-repatriation of minority ethnic groups if the number of jobs diminishes in our country: approximately 40% are of the opinion that in such a case they should be sent back, whereas 35% of respondents think that they should not be sent back. The differences between the minority ethnic groups are negligible. Those who particularly agree with this opinion are the over 55 is (44% versus 40%), the least qualified (48%), workers (45%) and rural populations (46%).

One quarter of the Belgian population consider that average salaries are generally reduced because of the people from minority ethnic groups coming to live and work in Belgium. Those that tend to particularly share this opinion are workers (31%), the least qualified and middle-aged people (29%) and men (28%). 39% of Belgians think differently.

...

According to just under half the population (45%) the people from minority ethnic groups who come and work here take on jobs for which there is a shortage of labour. 24% of Belgians think the opposite.

12. Mistrust about the job market ... (p. 87f.)

The profession for which Belgians have the most confidence if it were to be conducted by a person from a minority ethnic group is the plumber: 69% of Belgians would have confidence in their plumber, whereas 27% would not have confidence in him. Pharmacists follow close behind (69% favourable opinions and 28% unfavourable). Next come teachers (66% - 30%), house cleaners (64% -- 31%), doctors (64% -- 32%) and policemen (63% -- 32%). The lawyer is the person in whom Belgians would have the least confidence if this person were from a minority ethnic group: 58% of the population would have confidence, 35% would not.

...

In general workers, over 55's and the least qualified people are the categories with the least confidence in people from minority ethnic groups. On the contrary young people, Brussels people and the most qualified people have the most confidence.

What do Belgians expect of ethnic minorities?

Above all Belgians expect of ethnic minorities that come to live in Belgium that they show a willingness to work and the ability to adapt; they must accept and follow the way of living in Belgium and be able to speak at least one of the three languages of the country. Belgians also expect of non-indigenous people the professional ability that Belgium requires. To a lesser degree being well-trained is also considered as a significant condition.

The willingness to work is an important condition for living here, which is seen by the fact that more than four Belgians in ten think that non-indigenous people who are unemployed long-term should be forced to return home. To a certain degree it is contradictory to note that the willingness to work is just as important. In any case we note that 40% of Belgians considered that it is detrimental for the Belgium job market

that Maghreb people, Turks and East Europeans come to live here. 30% of Belgians are also of the opinion that Belgium should not authorise Maghreb people, Turks, East Europeans or sub-Sahara Africans to come and work here.